

Planning scenarios for popular economy based on commerce in public space

Planeación de escenarios de la economía popular a partir del comercio en espacio público

Planejamento de cenários de economia popular baseados no comércio em espaços públicos

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Abstract

Introduction: This article comprises the analysis of popular economy in public spaces, based on scenario planning, approaching it from a foresight perspective. **Objective:** The study aims to analyze the possible scenarios of popular economy derived from commerce in public spaces in a city of the Caquetá department (Colombia). **Methodology:** A mixed-design, descriptive-type investigation was carried out using the SEARCH method to achieve this. **Results:** The findings present three scenarios resulting from the development of popular economy in the territory: 1) social chaos and insecurity; 2) weakening of the economic and tourism potential; and 3) widening of the economic development gap compared to the national average. **Conclusions:** The study highlights the reasons that have led to considering popular economy as an issue to be addressed by national public management. Additionally, the main challenge for territorial entities is to define assertive solutions through public policies to reduce informality or, at the very least, improve the population's living conditions.

Keywords: quality of life; trade; urban space; poverty; security.

JEL: E26; E44; J46; O17; P17.

Resumen

Introducción: Este artículo comprende el análisis de la economía popular, en espacios públicos, a partir de la planeación por escenarios, un acercamiento desde la prospectiva. **Objetivo:** El propósito del estudio, es analizar los escenarios posibles de la economía popular a partir del comercio en espacio público en una ciudad del departamento del Caquetá (Colombia). **Metodología:** Para ello, se llevó a cabo una investigación de diseño mixto, tipología descriptiva y haciendo uso del método SEARCH. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos plantean tres escenarios producto del desarrollo de la economía popular en el territorio, 1) caos social e inseguridad; 2) debilitamiento del potencial económico turístico; y 3) aumento de la brecha de desarrollo económico con respecto a la media nacional. **Conclusiones:** Se destacan las razones que han llevado a considerar la economía popular, como un aspecto por tratar desde el accionar de la gestión pública a nivel nacional. Así mismo, el principal reto que tienen los entes territoriales es definir soluciones asertivas a través de políticas públicas para reducir la informalidad o al menos mejorar las condiciones de vida de la población.

Palabras claves: calidad de vida; comercio; espacio urbano; pobreza; seguridad.

JEL: E26; E44; J46; O17; P17.

Resumo

Introdução: Este artigo compreende a análise da economia popular, em espaços públicos, com base no planejamento de cenários, uma abordagem prospectiva. **Objetivo:** O objetivo do estudo é analisar os possíveis cenários da economia popular com base no comércio em espaços públicos em uma cidade do departamento de Caquetá (Colômbia). **Metodologia:** Para isso, foi realizada uma pesquisa de tipologia descritiva com desenho misto, usando o método SEARCH. **Resultados:** os resultados sugerem três cenários resultantes do desenvolvimento da economia popular no território: 1) caos social e insegurança; 2) enfraquecimento do potencial econômico para o turismo; e 3) aumento da lacuna de desenvolvimento econômico em relação à média nacional. **Conclusões:** Destacam-se os motivos que levaram a considerar a economia popular como um aspecto a ser abordado pela gestão pública em nível nacional. Da mesma forma, o principal desafio para as autoridades locais é definir soluções assertivas por meio de políticas públicas para reduzir a informalidade ou, pelo menos, melhorar as condições de vida da população.

Palavras-chave: qualidade de vida; troca; espaço urbano; pobreza; segurança.

JEL: E26; E44; J46; O17; P17.

Introduction

In the Colombian context, according to data from the Departamento Nacional de Planeación [National Planning Department] (DNP, 2023), for the period 2023-2026, a total generation of 1.7 million jobs, mostly formal, is projected, aiming to reduce informality and extreme poverty to levels of 55.4% and 1.9%, respectively. Currently, the national level of informality stands at 59%.

Therefore, reducing this economic and social phenomenon is one of the main challenges for the current government, whose strategic objectives include the development, consolidation, and visibility of popular economy. The latter is recognized as a set of:

Trades and mercantile occupations (production, distribution, and commercialization of goods and services) and non-mercantile ones (domestic or community) carried out by low-scale economic units (personal, family, micro-businesses or micro-enterprises) in any economic sector [...] carrying out their activities individually, in economic units, or organized associatively [...] these activities generate significant social and economic value (DNP, 2023, p. 135).

Nonetheless, since 2019, specifically from Law 1988 and Regulatory Decree 801 of 2022, territorial entities have been urged to formulate and implement a public policy focused on informal trade, which is already a reality in some cities of the country, such as Neiva and Ibagué.

In the case of the municipality of Florencia, it is both a challenge and a necessity to respond to this request for the construction and implementation of a document that will dignify the living conditions of informal workers and their families, in line with the recovery of public spaces (Fernández, 2017). According to the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [National Administrative Department of Statistics] (DANE, 2023), the informality rate has remained stable in recent years, affecting nearly 6 out of 10 people (in 2022, this indicator was at 59.1%). On the other hand, unemployment, as of October 2023, reached 14.1% of the total economically active individuals, a trend that has been decreasing but remains above the national average (which covers 23 territories), currently at 9.5%.

In the region under study, some advances have already been made with the formulation of this public policy. However, after two attempts, its approval by the municipal legislative body has not yet been achieved. According to data recorded by the Secretary of Entrepreneurship and Tourism of the locality, by 2023, it is estimated that at least 1,200 informal vendors are permanently fluctuating, engaging in commercial practices in the streets (popular economy), thus invading public spaces without proper planning.

This region, despite having an economic culture based on cattle ranching and agriculture, has boosted a sector that, for approximately thirty years, had been left behind due to the presence of violence in the territory, following the signing of the peace accords with the guerrilla group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] (FARC). This refers to tourism, which has currently generated a prioritization scheme in the

municipality's development plans, thanks to partial access to natural attractions, the development of ecotourism, and the creation of sectoral companies or operators aiming to attract more tourists, both national and international.

The following sections theoretically contextualize some necessary elements for the development of this study, starting with the concept of economic dynamics, subordinated to the principles of scarcity, limited resources, and the capitalist logic driven by man, his personal and financial interests; in other words, his entire life project and activities focused on wealth accumulation, access to power, and management models aimed at creating subordination among different forms of production.

Globalization consolidated the various ways of generating employment processes solely to maintain social classes, under a perspective of two extremes: those who control the productive factors and those who must be part of various labor systems to access compensation or remuneration for the services provided as the only means to achieve true class consciousness (Terrazas, 2022).

Despite this, contemporary Latin American history shows strong resistance from middle-class social groups who, regardless of the advances in emerging economies and studies on tax evasion (Pedroni et al., 2022), seek to establish their own income-generating mechanisms (Duek, 2020), without following the educational logic of obtaining professional training for a better quality of life, which today no longer guarantees any type of security or measurable probability of success. Instead, it has promoted unequal progress (widespread unemployment). Within this scenario, what is conceptually known as popular economy emerges, with some variations such as "social" or "solidarity"; hence, the birth of the concept of "social citizenship" (James, 1990). This is important to consider as the fundamental principle of this type of economy is based on reciprocity and the equitable and supportive distribution of surpluses (Askunze, 2013).

Chena & Roig (2017) assert that this concept should be analyzed within the dynamics of indebtedness, complementing the success of capitalist systems. People, lacking knowledge in savings and personal finance activities and being part of a market saturated with offers at different prices and communication systems that encourage compulsive buying, from a psychological perspective, fall into the trap of "having" or owning to survive. This leads them to seek new options

to balance their own economy, even resorting to pluriactivity, that is, holding multiple jobs (Charmes, 2019).

Maldovan (2018) explains how neoliberal trends influenced the economic dynamics of Latin American countries, promoting the globalization of poverty as an alternative to address the increase in unemployment levels and the decrease in the quality of life for the less privileged. Similarly, the recovery of democratic systems—namely, advancements in public administration—saw the emergence of popular economy as a fitting complement to the productive apparatus of these regions. In other words, popular economy arrived as a central element of local entrepreneurship, intertwined with the challenges of progress and territorial development, but with one aspect remaining unresolved: informality.

From these debates, two perspectives of action emerge. On the one hand, there is the academic vision related to the conceptual research of the various subcategories of popular economy. On the other hand, there is a political conception aimed at social transformation for all stakeholders involved in its dynamics; ultimately, both seek to neutralize the consequences of poverty and unemployment.

Popular economy emerges to give new meaning to a series of practices in collective and individual resource management, rooted in the principle of informality. It encompasses the revaluation of moral and social dimensions, giving prominence to those involved in its activities, and granting them the space they deserve in places where the gap between the wealthy and those who must work to access wealth continues to grow. One of the reasons that justifies the development of this research is to understand these relationships, which have been understudied from a socio-cultural and informal economy perspective (Maldovan, 2018; Vanegas et al., 2023).

Razeto (1993), as cited by Maldovan (2018), explains the origin of the popular economy concept: “a notable multiplication of small initiatives, organizations, and experiences [...] it is the economic mobilization and activation of the world of the poor, in search of an autonomous solution to their own needs and shortages” (p.13). The term is related to the heterogeneity and, at the same time, the integrality of an entire social, economic, political, and cultural system, valued through entrepreneurial actions that recover people's productive abilities, turning them into creative beings

with autonomy and the ability to work from family cooperation and the need to restore their quality of life, becoming increasingly efficient and therefore sustainable (Dean, 2014).

In addition, Coraggio (1993) reaffirms that informality is defined as an overlap of illegality, the small size of businesses, low productivity, individual work, and the use of public space (street vending). The author acknowledges that the “informal” operates within a chaotic dynamic that surpasses the logic of formality and expands into paradigms related to survival. As Millar (2014) stated, precariousness must be seen as something politically subjective, representing another way of being in the world, from imaginaries of well-being and the use of public space—a scenario that has become a projection of poverty and the absence of public management action.

Therefore, to overcome this economic reality, solutions are expected from theoretical currents or schools of thought such as 1) the neoliberal experience, which advocates for popular economy initiatives to transition from informality to formality; 2) the business-modernizing perspective, which relies on public administration to support the financing of these business units, allowing market dynamics to determine their continuity; and 3) the solidarist perspective, which emerges to support popular proposals such as cooperativism and the cultural revival of everything that primary communities represent, based on solidarity and reciprocity (ethical sense).

Likewise, Coraggio (2007) confirms that popular economy may differ from the use of the term “informal.” Conceptually, the former encompasses elements such as the development of activities to meet urgent or immediate needs, empirical knowledge for the development of forms of work, support and cooperation networks, and tasks that complement all popular initiatives (support from public and/or private management). The author acknowledges that the “economic” is expressed in a much broader sense than merely “informal,” as there are domestic units capable of contributing financially to the taxation process required of the entire business apparatus in each territory. However, these practices are undoubtedly anchored to capitalist thoughts of individual wealth accumulation, distancing themselves from a social commitment to the common good (society's holistic well-being).

Sarria y Tiriba (2004) complement the relationship between popular economy and informality, arguing that the dimensions of these two concepts go beyond mere material profitability. Their primary goal is the reproduction of quality of life on a broader scale, where at

least the Basic Unmet Needs (BUN) are met, and the possibility of being part of a supply and demand market that makes them visible as a work option is recognized, culturally and cognitively adapting (popular practices in resource use and product design). This can only be acknowledged with governmental support (through public policies) that encourages them to optimize their productivity and business vision toward development and continuous improvement, to facilitate fair and supportive trade, close gaps, and achieve social progress (Jácome y Páez, 2014).

Martínez (2015) recognizes that popular economy plays a highly prominent role in the entire commercial and territorial development sphere, as it tries to complement the capitalist model. It even becomes a non-substitutable and conscious option to tear down the barriers that capitalism has created to accumulate wealth among only a few. The popular economic sense comes to instill values such as respect for the historical and cultural processes that shape each region, reaching social innovation frameworks for the construction of organized and valued scenarios within the framework of a social and supportive alternative. This helps provide individuals or citizens with the tools and capacities to defend what represents them, beyond individual benefit, towards a collective and fair benefit (Campagne & Pecqueur, 2014).

Popular economy cannot only be viewed from a purely urban perspective. It extends to rural areas, where various productive initiatives are identified that aim at building supportive communities. These communities have suffered the effects of violence and vulnerability, as a consequence of migrating to different areas in search of better living conditions without proper support. This has led them to use their ingenuity and resilience to promote ways to generate resources for their subsistence (Martínez, 2015; Rebaï, 2014).

In this case, Chena (2018; 2011) acknowledges that financial exploitation relationships are useful in capitalist spheres to keep informal workers in debt, ensuring their future actions to recover what was invested and lent, generating hierarchies with permanent but invisible subordination, all anchored to the use of capital (Wilkis, 2013). Some of the relationships explained by this author are reflected in two aspects: 1) economic, access to loans with usurious interest rates and high levels of insolvency among the population; and 2) commercial, the production of low-quality goods, which correspond to low demand.

Campana y Rossi (2020) argue that the world of work has changed, and it is necessary to recognize domestic units engaged in popular economy without falling into gender discrimination. The emergence of unions and productive structures that advocate for the well-being of a collective is evident. This collective demands permanence in market systems to fulfill the objectives of their life projects. The idea of leaving behind the immediacy and pragmatism of neoliberal structures is reinforced, promoting solidarity that will allow, through public administration, the recovery of values that promote well-being, such as trust, identity, justice, and fraternity, among others (Coraggio, 2018).

Acevedo (2017) explains that informality in Colombian cities like Barranquilla can be understood through variables such as informal groups that weave into the commercial dynamic (their willingness to formally associate), the use of public space (to avoid administrative costs, and the responsibility of complying with commercial law), and basic, often polluting, marketing practices. Currently, these aspects manifest in Florencia as follows: 1) the existence of three organizations or associations advocating for the rights of informal vendors; 2) the use of public space has led to a series of legal rulings and restrictions to prevent evictions, thus avoiding inconvenience for passersby; and 3) the development of commercial activities that create disorder and pollution in all social areas of the city.

Based on the above, the following question was formulated for debate: What are the possible scenarios for popular economy based on commerce in public spaces in a city in the department of Caquetá (Colombia)? To answer this question, three research objectives were established: a) to characterize the actions of popular economy among the population of public space vendors in the area under study; b) to describe the scenarios of popular economy from commercial practices in public spaces; and c) to analyze the challenges and future actions that must be considered to reduce the likelihood of informal scenarios occurring in the territory.

Methodology

The development of this study employed a mixed-methods approach that integrated both explicit approaches for social sciences inquiry under the paradigm of complementarity (Bisquerra, 2004), namely, qualitative and quantitative. The typology used was descriptive with a cross-sectional design to understand the reality at a given moment (present) of the subject under investigation. Additionally, for the planning and identification of scenarios, the prospective methods of Mojica (2008) and Jouvenel (1964) were studied to outline possible futures based on the “art of conjecture.”

Specifically, the SEARCH method was used, which, according to Sapio (1995), is one of the independent methodological proposals to measure uncertainty without relying solely on quantitative processes for scenario construction. This is because it involves an organized sequence of stages based on the decomposition of an identified and measurable problem with constant, predictable, and uncertain variables (Kahn, 2009; Pagani, 2009).

In this case, following Sapio (1995), the selected variables remain stable over time and are predictable, meaning they are susceptible to being forecasted, with a very low probability of change in the future (Vergara et al., 2012). Additionally, uncertain variables were considered, which lack certainty regarding changes in the coming times. Based on this, scenarios were constructed and formulated, which, as explained by Bañuls & Turoff (2011), arise from the intersection of variables. These variables are subjected to cross-impact analysis for a better combination of the expected future. These scenarios were evaluated by a group of experts or members of an interdisciplinary team (Weimer, 2008) who recognize the problem and have studied it in the municipal context of Florencia through their research or business experience. The use of expert panels was delimited according to studies conducted by Abdixhiku et al. (2018). The methodological sequence used in this research comprised three phases, described below.

Phase I: Characterization of Commercial Practices

This phase involves fulfilling the first objective of the study, i.e., the characterization of the actions of popular economy among street vendors in the area under study. A survey technique was used with a structured questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions,

covering topics such as productive activity, public space, commercialization systems, family economy, and future projections. A probabilistic sample of 262 individuals was calculated (with a confidence level of 95% and an approximate margin of error of 5%) from a quantifiable population of 820 informal vendors, based on data reported by the Secretaría de Emprendimiento y Turismo de la Alcaldía de Florencia [Secretariat of Entrepreneurship and Tourism of the Florencia City Hall] between 2021, 2022, and 2023. It is important to note that the reference for the concept of informality or informal vendors is based on national regulations, particularly Law 1988 of 2019 and Decree 801 of 2022.

Phase II: Scenario Planning

Next, experts or development agents, through a semi-structured questionnaire interview, reviewed the results of the initial phase. They discussed topics such as success factors, challenges and perspectives, opportunities and threats, and stakeholder commitments for scenario planning. The selection of this population was carried out using non-probabilistic sampling. The selection criteria were: 1) being a professional residing in the city of Florencia, who has conducted studies on informality or works in the public and/or private sector; 2) having the willingness and time to participate in the project; and 3) knowing the reality of informality in the municipality. Fifteen experts were selected, and using the SEARCH method, the scenarios were formulated.

Phase III: Conclusion

This phase addressed the third objective, which was to analyze the challenges and future actions needed to reduce the probability of informal scenarios occurring in the territory. The technique implemented was a *focus group*. Meetings were held with the experts from the previous phase to present the established scenarios and propose challenges for their fulfillment or adaptation over time.

Results

The findings are presented in this section to meet the specific objectives mentioned earlier.

Characterization of Informal Actions in the City

Informal vendors present themselves as commercial actors who occupy public spaces with the sole purpose of maintaining a basic income source for their individual and/or family economy. They believe their presence in these spaces is not an act of rebellion or personal choice but rather a necessity to find alternatives not provided by government and/or private sector initiatives. The results reveal their actions in terms of productive activities, their use of public space as a citizen's right, commercialization systems, the influence of household economics, and their future projections in popular economy.

Indeed, the surveyed vendors were categorized as stationary, semi-stationary, or mobile, in line with the classifications outlined in Law 1899 of 2019, which regulates at least five typologies for this population. All of them have similar initiatives and views, demonstrating a homogeneity of practices and reasons that justify their involvement in street commerce.

The productive activities most commonly highlighted vary in scale. Three out of five vendors produce food items to sell in parks, public transit zones, and commercial establishments, with a focus on fast food, particularly products made from meats and/or tubers like potatoes and cassava. In most cases, these vendors are semi-stationary and use two-wheeled vehicles powered by mechanical energy, such as bicycles or simply walking. The remaining proportion, approximately two out of every ten vendors, sell products not manufactured by the population under study, especially textiles and/or stationery. As for popular knowledge, most have found commercial success due to municipal citizens' consumer preferences, and their culinary practices focus on skills developed through experience or trial and error, often as part of pilot projects that have proven successful. Many also base their choice of commercial activity on careful observation, identifying which products are categorically profitable, thus establishing additional competition.

Regarding the use of public space, vendors feel intimidated and mistrustful. While they acknowledge that their actions represent an improper cultural practice, they view it as a necessity

for fulfilling their personal and commercial needs. They assert that securing sales is only possible if their business is located near active, high-demand market areas. Some mentioned that they initially tried to operate from the sidewalk in front of their homes, but this didn't work, so they moved to central areas of the municipality, where a higher level of demand increases the likelihood of sales. On the other hand, they recognize that public space belongs to everyone and believe they also have the right to use it under the conditions life imposes on them, establishing themselves as merchants who need to work to survive.

As for commercialization systems, vendors prioritize strategies related to cost leadership, offering prices below the regional average. They acknowledge that they do not have the same comfort conditions as formal merchants operating in established businesses that do not invade public space. According to G. Ramírez (personal communication, August 24, 2023):

It's not the same to stand in the middle of the street having an empanada with an oatmeal smoothie as it is to sit at the bakery down the street where there are chairs, at least a fan, and you don't have to worry about a vehicle coming by and endangering your life, at worst. Of course, it's more expensive for the customer there, but we offer a little less comfort at a price that fits their pocket.

This sentiment was echoed by the majority of informal vendors surveyed.

It is a fact that was confirmed by all vendors, that the reasons justifying their presence in the streets or pedestrian zones of the city are related to overcoming unemployment and engaging in activities for which they were not trained, but which became necessary to sustain their families or even their well-being (for those living alone). The presence of individuals over 60 years old (senior citizens) stands out, many of whom, for instance, have been abandoned by their families due to a series of poor decisions they made in the past (according to them). This presents a category that could be further explored in a psychosocial study to determine the personal causes that led them to take street vending as a last resort. This is based on stories and accounts from the vendors themselves, which include statements such as "I'm here because I had no choice, I couldn't study a career" (E. Figueroa, personal communication, May 2, 2023), "this happens when you don't listen to your parents" (Galíndez Soto, personal communication, June 21, 2023), and "this is the result

of paths you take in life out of youthful stubbornness or rebellion” (B. Pérez, personal communication, May 17, 2023).

Regarding future projections, there is no clear or consistent vision. In most cases, they focus on living day-to-day without thinking about what will happen in the coming years. This explains why only a few enjoy their work in the streets, especially when their income is not stable and sales do not always reach a breakeven point that would allow them to save (generate surplus). The likelihood of remaining in public spaces increases, as they expect the state to be responsible for improving their conditions as citizens within the Colombian social system.

The results of this phase present two perspectives on informality. One reveals that the primary reason for their presence in the streets is the limited formal employment options in the municipality. The other highlights their justification for operating outside the law, prioritizing the need to meet the basic needs of their families and themselves. These findings are consistent with Acevedo (2017), who acknowledges that street informality extends beyond a legal perspective. As legal subjects, these individuals also develop social, relational, spatial, and physical dimensions through culture, which surpass their subsistence practices when there are insufficient opportunities to improve their conditions. The informal worker should be seen as a person who values their life, accepts their reality, and prioritizes "dignified informality" over other forms of behavior that focus on insecurity and crime. Ojeda y Pinto (2019) further contribute to this view, arguing that responsibility is mutual. The problem should not only focus on those who violate public space but also on those responsible for restoring it and granting land-use permits. Municipal administrations must regulate this issue to enable dignified work for all citizens.

Informality Scenarios in the City from the Perspective of Development Stakeholders

For this phase, 15 experts were selected, including professionals (3), business owners (4), social and/or guild leaders (3), and academics (5), who have addressed the issue through their work or research. Interviews and meetings were conducted with them to forecast possible situations or realities for the next twenty years regarding the development of informality in Florencia.

In an initial exercise, key problems related to the topic and their critical factors were prioritized. Table 1 shows the issues most frequently selected by the experts. They were organized into eight sub-scenarios (S) grouped into three categories of analysis.

Table 1

Initial Categories and Key Factors of Informality for the Future

Name	Key Factor
S1. Quality of life of informal vendors	Economic (short and medium term)
S2. City image and its impact on tourism	
S3. Market saturation	
S4. Public force for eviction and recovery of the surroundings	Public space
S5. Security and public order	
S6. Employability and entrepreneurship systems	Regional development (long term)
S7. Behavioral changes in the formal productive sector	
S8. Migration, emigration, and immigration processes	

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Each of the nine sub-scenarios was evaluated using a numerical scale ranging from one (1) to five (5), where the lowest value corresponds to an unlikely scenario, and the highest value corresponds to a probable scenario. Table 2 reviews the average of the expert evaluations.

An equal relationship (50/50) is observed between the number of sub-scenarios categorized as probable and unlikely. Regarding the highest probability of occurrence, it was found that sub-scenario S3 is the most likely (86%), followed by S1, S7, and S2. Subsequently, a cross-impact matrix was designed using *Scenario Wizard Basic 3* (a foresight software), which yielded three combinations with strong consistency.

Table 2

Average Rating of Sub-Scenarios

Sub-scenario	Classification	Probability	Result
Quality of life of informal vendors.	4.2	84%	Probable
City image and its impact on tourism.	4.0	80%	Probable
Market saturation.	4.3	86%	Probable
Public force for eviction and recovery of the surroundings.	3.7	74%	Unlikely
Security and public order.	3.9	78%	Unlikely
Employability and entrepreneurship systems.	3.6	72%	Unlikely
Behavioral changes in the formal productive sector.	4.1	82%	Probable
Migration, emigration, and immigration processes	3.9	78%	Unlikely

Source: Prepared by the authors.

According to Bañuls & Turoff (2011), cross-impact analysis allows for the evaluation of a set of future events (sub-scenarios) and the verification of their potential effect based on the combination between them, thereby determining their probability of occurrence (Fuchs et al., 2008). These selected combinations result in the construction of scenarios (Godet, 2000), which in this study amounted to three, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Scenarios with High Consistency

Scenario No. 1	Scenario No. 2	Scenario No. 3
Total Impact: 18	Total Impact: 17	Total Impact: 16
S1. Quality of life of informal vendors	S2. City image and its impact on tourism	S3. Market saturation
S5. Security and public order	S5. Security and public order	S4. Public force for eviction and recovery of the surroundings
S7. Behavioral changes in the formal productive sector	S8. Migration, emigration, and immigration processes	S8. Migration, emigration, and immigration processes

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, in Table 4, the probability of occurrence of the three identified scenarios was calculated based on the data from Table 2 and organized in descending order of probability.

Table 4

Probabilities of Occurrence of the Scenarios

Scenario No. 1		Scenario No. 2		Scenario No. 3	
Sub-Scenarios	Probability	Sub-Scenarios	Probability	Sub-Scenarios	Probability
S1. Quality of life of informal vendors	84%	S2. City image and its impact on tourism	80%	S3. Market saturation	86%
S5. Security and public order	78%	S5. Security and public order	78%	S4. Public force for eviction and recovery of the surroundings	74%
S7. Behavioral changes in the formal	82%	S8. Migration, emigration, and	78%	S6. Employability and	72%

productive sector	immigration processes	entrepreneurship systems
Probability of occurrence	53.73%	Probability of occurrence
	48.67%	Probability of occurrence
		45.82%

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Next, the description of each of the scenarios is presented, which was validated by experts in focus groups.

Scenario No. 1 - Social Chaos and Insecurity

This scenario envisions a greater upsurge in street vending. Informal vendors will take to the streets en masse to sell their products, as there is an emphasis on rising unemployment rates and limited opportunities for entrepreneurship. Consequently, poverty levels will increase, along with the arrival of new members of the target population, who may migrate to the city in search of a place for themselves. With no form of control in public spaces, there is a perception of greater insecurity in these scenarios and difficulties for pedestrians and vehicles navigating the streets. Furthermore, the idea among formal merchants is reinforced towards practices such as tax evasion or the misuse of public space; it is even highlighted that there is a significant possibility of transitioning to informality to reduce their operational, administrative, and tax expenditures.

Scenario No. 2 - Weakening of Tourism Economic Potential

In this situation, a weakening of the city's image begins to take shape concerning other territorial and international spheres, which would primarily affect tourism in the area, leading to a decrease in demand and, consequently, difficulties for the economic development of the productive apparatus. There is also a vision of continued processes of emigration and immigration among members of the informal vendor population, who will have to relocate to different parts of the country to improve their conditions. It is even expected that individuals originally from the city will migrate to other municipalities, as insecurity and vehicular chaos compel them to make decisions such as selling their properties and moving to areas with better living opportunities.

Scenario No. 3 - Increasing the Economic Development Gap Relative to the National Average

There is a noticeable saturation of product (goods and services) offerings in the city. Informality begins to pose greater competition to formal businesses, with the lowering of their prices due to potential inflation increases in the coming periods and a decrease in the purchasing power of the middle or working class. This relates to findings by Velásquez (2018), who defines it as unfair competition. As a result of this market loss for those who pay their taxes and other contributions, the state tends to favor the approval of public policies that, on the one hand, ensure the possibility of entrepreneurship through a transition to formality, but, on the other hand, seek in every way to reclaim public space for the enjoyment and well-being of all its inhabitants, thus allowing for a more balanced level of competitiveness. For this final scenario, the contributions of Coraggio (1993) should be considered, which relate to the use of practical rationality through the instrumental management of two fronts: the cultural (learning and training for the acquisition of new civic values) and the economic (ensuring material survival with justice and equity).

Challenges to Consider for Adjusting Informality Scenarios in the Territory

After validating the scenarios with experts through focus groups, several challenges were identified that must be addressed to understand informality in the city from the perspective of popular economy.

The first challenge is to understand that within informal vending, there are individuals who are rights holders requiring state attention and should not be excluded or marginalized due to their vulnerability or actions in favor of illegality. In particular, attention is drawn to vendors over 60 years of age (the elderly) who have lost everything due to poor decisions made in the past or who have been abandoned by their families, making it difficult for them to find employment in any company. From the perspective of popular economy, informal vendors should be represented as social beings requiring all kinds of constitutional guarantees, just like any other person with favorable conditions for maintaining their quality of life.

Secondly, informal vending has been viewed as a strategy to evade taxes or, as Peterson (2010) cited by Bromley & Wilson (2018) states, an “exit” option from the excessive regulation of the formal economy. In response, experts believe that, in the absence of organized public space,

monitored by the establishment of regulatory guidelines for its proper occupation, these types of realities arise that must be addressed to reach consensus. Relocation is presented as an alternative to reclaim citizen transit areas, but it requires careful and feasible work that ensures the new space provides sufficient market conditions for commerce, equal to or better than what is maintained when the central city space is invaded.

Thirdly, unemployment is an indicator that must be reviewed and prioritized within the region's economic programs. If informal vending is a consequence of this social condition, efforts should be combined to provide entrepreneurs and business owners with the tools to maximize their business returns, thus encouraging them to create work systems that reduce informality. It is necessary to examine aspects of popular economy with the market potential to link them with the tourist routes promoted in the city, aiming to connect the local knowledge related to gastronomy or the development of artisanal products.

Fourthly, informality on the streets should not be viewed with feelings of distrust, fragility, or pity. There is a need to shift the paradigm towards the transformation of informal vendors into potential entrepreneurs capable of improving the economic conditions of the region's productive apparatus. Although these individuals may lack academic training and experience in managing organizations, they have acquired skills for work and life that must be studied in depth to improve popular economy practices, especially in cities like Florencia, which has become the epicenter of cultural mixtures in the southern and interior regions of the country. This proposal aligns with the views of Chen & Carré (2020), who recognize that popular economy is undervalued and stigmatized for its effects on development and demands an examination from sociology and anthropology to achieve a deeper understanding of its role as a transversal axis of productivity in territories.

Conclusions

It can be inferred that informality in the city of Florencia has been increasing in recent years as a consequence of rising indicators such as unemployment and extreme poverty. With limited employment options within a productive apparatus characterized by low levels of industrialization and few guarantees of generating sufficient returns to maintain a payroll, social groups with a differential focus and high vulnerability emerge to embody, through their own and

family actions, the pragmatic exercise of a popular economy in the public space of the territory, fostering a questionable image among tourists arriving in the municipality, characterized by individual representations of insecurity and little progress; in other words, a perspective that does not represent a city but rather a "town."

The characterization of the informal population's work in the municipality was developed from the perspective of a popular economy, revealing some comparative elements that determine cultural knowledge regarding practices in the production of goods with basic quality standards, aimed solely at serving the general population to create a source of income based on a strategic component of cost leadership, prevailing over other activities associated with the use of force, violence, and crime to contribute to family economics. Indeed, popular economy manifests in the commercial conditions of the public space in Florencia, but it is only perceived by pedestrians traversing these areas without vehicles.

The presentation of three scenarios of informality in the city showed a probability of occurrence of up to 50%. In most cases, these scenarios exhibit negative nuances due to the proliferation of informal commercial activities, starting with street vending. Experts believe this problem tends to increase over time, which may lead to effects that could jeopardize tourism development, the municipality's primary economic focus at present. Therefore, it is deemed pertinent to unite efforts for the implementation of a public policy that, in the long term, presents dignified work opportunities through the strengthening of entrepreneurship for those wishing to invest in business creation and support for entrepreneurial groups with development potential for job generation (government management).

Future challenges and actions that should be considered to adjust the informality scenarios in the territory were analyzed, highlighting the relocation of informal vendors without violating the principle of market proximity and monitoring their commercial activities through a sensitization process to prevent them from returning to the streets. Additionally, as the main line of future research action, a cultural, anthropological, and social review of productive practices is required to more specifically determine the popular knowledge and skills, a key element that can serve as a strategic aspect to encourage territorial tourism.

These findings contribute to Fernández (2017) arguments regarding a change in the representations of public space usage by informality, emphasizing the consolidation of a popular economy that focuses its efforts not on maximizing profits and wage subordination but rather on the reproduction of life, that is, the notions of well-being for oneself (as rights holders) and for others (the environment, security). In this way, it is essential to establish optimal scenarios, as proposed by Coraggio (2007), where the state enhances its planning for the execution of public policies, avoiding improvisation to address situational emergencies and creating participatory budget management schemes aimed at heterogeneous communities that are organized and capable of discussing their priorities.

It is important to note that one of the study's limitations was the limited receptiveness of informal vendors when soliciting their willingness to answer the survey questions sincerely. A defensive attitude is perceived whenever they are asked about their occupation of public space, the activities, and the resources they use to produce the goods and services they sell on the streets.

This research serves as pioneering documentary support to justify the need for the approval of public policy for informal vendors in the city of Florencia, among the municipal legislative collective and local administration, as the persistence of the issue may affect other development sectors such as tourism and public safety. Another line of research that may arise is the correlational analysis between street vending and the city's image from the perspective of national and/or international visitors.

Ethical Considerations

The present study did not require approval from an Ethics or Bioethics Committee, as it did not use any living resources, agents, biological samples, or personal data that pose any risk to life, the environment, or human rights.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to this article.

Author Contribution Statement

Cristian Hernández Gil: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing: Review & Editing.

Diana Ali García Capdevilla: Research, Resources, Visualization, Supervision, Project Administration, Funding Acquisition.

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