

# Daily practices and territorialization processes: giving visibility to the informality experienced at traffic lights

*Práticas cotidianas e processos de territorialização: dando visibilidade à informalidade vivenciada nos semáforos*

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## Abstract

In this article, it was sought understand how daily practices occur in the process of territorialization of workers at traffic lights in the city of Maringá - PR. The theoretical contribution is supports on the concepts worked by De Certeau (2014), De Certeau, Giard and Mayol (2013) and Raffestin (1993). Therefore, through qualitative research, participant observation and thematic oral history interviews were carried out with workers between the months of May and September 2018. To interpret the data collected, the interviewees' narratives and the observations annotated in a field diary. The analysis allowed us to verify appropriation practices, resistance practices and small tricks. It was observed that time, age and hierarchy are fundamental in power relations and allow workers to territorialize space. Thus, in the midst of the uncertainties and prejudice they deal with daily, they resist, make bricolagens and build territorializations with the practice of informality.

**Keywords:** daily, territorialization, informality, street work

## Resumo

Neste artigo, buscou-se compreender como ocorrem as práticas cotidianas no processo de territorialização de trabalhadores nos semáforos da cidade de Maringá - PR. O aporte teórico se respalda nos conceitos trabalhados por De Certeau (2014), De Certeau, Giard e Mayol (2013) e Raffestin (1993). Para tanto, por meio de pesquisa qualitativa, realizou-se observação participante e entrevistas de história oral temática com trabalhadores entre os meses de maio e setembro de 2018. Para interpretar os dados coletados, foram utilizadas as narrativas dos entrevistados e as observações anotadas em diário de campo. A análise permitiu verificar práticas de apropriação, práticas de resistência e pequenas artimanhas. Observou-se que o tempo, a idade e a hierarquização são fundamentais nas relações de poder e permitem que os trabalhadores territorializem o espaço. Assim, em meio às incertezas e ao preconceito que lidam diariamente, eles resistem, fazem bricolagens e constroem territorializações com a prática da informalidade.

**Palavras-chave:** cotidiano, territorialização, informalidade, trabalho de rua

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## 1 Introduction

From the 1990s onwards, the combination of technologies and the competitiveness of global trade caused deep changes in Brazil's market environment and economic structures (Costa, 2010b; Costa, 2010a). Through this process, greater privatizations and openness to international trade resulted in a productive restructuring, which affected employment levels and their quality regarding the flexibilization of employment relationships and labor regimes (Costa, 2010b).

In this context, Ulysea (2006) states that there was an increase in labor informality as a result of the growing number of self-employed workers without a signed employment record (a Carteira de Trabalho). This is because the population began to find its source of income in informal activities, usually precarious and irregular as Costa (2010a) points out. The growth in the number of workers on the streets of large Brazilian urban centers selling clothes, food, and products imported from China, etc. was already evident in that period.

In addition, for Mattei (2018), from 2015 onwards, the economic crisis caused a reduction in economic activities that directly affected the Brazilian labor market, impairing the prevailing scenario in the period 2003-2014. In order to picture it, in the years 2015 and 2016 the country lived with one of the largest economic recessions recorded in its history, negatively affecting the various social segments, especially the working class due to unemployment and wage drop (Mattei, 2018).

Given this scenario, in 2017, labor reform took place based on the law (Lei No. 13.467/17) with the promise of the immediate creation of thousands of jobs. However, it was found that the law contributed to the transition from formal to informal employment, the latter occurring amid deregulation, lack of protection, and drops in contributions necessary for retirement (Pochmann, 2020). In agreement with these arguments, Mattei (2018) claims that the law focused on reducing labor costs and increasing business profits, disregarding the legality of precarious work and the imbalance between capital and labor with respect to relations of production.

This scenario is still unsettling, since in the 1st quarter of 2021, according to data collected by IBGE (2021), Brazil reached the mark of 14.8 million people seeking employment and 34.0 million people acting informally, which shows a large number of Brazilians without workers' rights. According to Anjos, Fraga, and Teodósio (2020), there are people who enter the world of informality due to the difficulties they find to reintegrate into the labor market, while others resort to these activities to complement their income.

Although unemployment can be an important factor in increasing informality, there are also other causes for it. As Cacciamali (2000) states, the informal sector can absorb some types of workers: those who are unable to enter the formal sector due to factors such as age, sex, skill, etc., the unemployed excluded from the labor market due to the economic cycle, and those who see informal activities as a means to survive.

However, where are they? Workers who act in informality are in several places, but the subject who works on the streets, specifically at traffic lights, is central to this research. As Nascimento, Reis, and Teodósio (2017, p. 1085) explain, "people who make their living by working on the streets need to reinvent themselves to stay there, getting out or being tangent to the traditional logic of the capitalist system". It is assumed, therefore, that the subject who works on the streets (and at the traffic lights) needs to act between the gaps to try to circumvent the dominant power, and then carry out his work in the midst of the obstacles that arise on a daily basis.

This daily life is discussed by De Certeau (2014) and De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol (2013) through the concepts of tactics, strategy, and convenience that provoke their invention.



In this research, it is assumed that through these daily practices, the subject resignifies certain spaces, that is, territorializes them (Raffestin, 1993), making them his own from the relations of power. Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand how daily practices occur in the process of territorialization of workers at the traffic lights of the city of Maringá-PR.

Hence, this article is organized into five parts, including this Introduction. In the second part, the theories that grounded the construction of this study are presented. In the third part, the methodological procedures are shown. The fourth part presents the analysis of observations and interviews. Lastly, in the fifth part, the conclusions are drawn.

## **2 The intermingling of daily practices and territorialization processes**

Everyday life is not just about routine or simple daily events, it happens by means of subtle movements which are carried out by the people who reinvent it all the time. In such a manner, it is possible to mention Michel De Certeau, an author who dedicates his studies to this man (or woman) he calls ordinary, that is, those people apparently weak in society. According to De Certeau (2014), those people have a dominated status, which does not mean that they are amenable or docile. On this wise, the ordinary man is not only a subject who accepts everything that is imposed on him but can circumvent what is formally established, and make bricolages with it.

In the words of Courspasson (2017, p. 848), De Certeau understands everyday life "as a resistance sphere", and for Souza Filho (2002), ordinary people act in the daily world through tactics of doing, anonymous inventions, and deviations from what had been established by the dominant power. In this way, everyday life can be understood as a space of struggles, since De Certeau attributes an important role to the power relations that reflect on the social construction of everyday life (Barbosa & DAvila, 2017).

These power relations happen in everyday life, are present in several territories, and can resignify them. For this reason, Souza (2009) understands the territory as a force field, because in addition to referring to a spatial dimension of space, depending often on its material dimension, it is also intangible by itself since it is a social relation. In such a manner, Raffestin (1993) studies territory from a relational perspective, since it is constructed by social relations that happen at a place and are usually imprinted by power.

De Certeau (2014) understands that these practices refer to the ordinary man's "ways of operating" and are seen as strategies and tactics, in which the everyday becomes understood not only as a routine but as a movement. For the author, the strategy is practiced by the subject of power and is operated in a planned and calculating way, and can be defined as the calculation of the relation of forces, in which a subject of will and power can be isolated. Moreover, according to the author, the strategy is postulated from a "proper" space, which gives subsidies for the threats to be managed, that is, it is through the strategies that the rules of the game are established. The "proper" to which De Certeau (2014, p. 94) refers to it's regarded as the victory of space over time, allowing it to "capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances", providing legitimacy to the one who holds it and being able to see from afar and anticipate time.

The tactics, in turn, are practiced by the subject who, using their tricks seeks to circumvent the formally established. For De Certeau (2014, p. 95), it "operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids." The subject who has power and privileged space can manipulate strategies on its targets, the latter must manipulate actions, in a calculating way, so they can subvert the established order (Palhares, Carrieri, & Oleto, 2019).

Thus, "thinking about tactics implies dealing with the dissolution of the established

order since this ordering is in the sphere of strategy" (Honorato & Saraiva, 2016, p. 177). Moreover, according to these authors, while the strategy controls the space in which its power predominates, resistance appears, which implies tactics. Therefore, although they are distinct strategies and tactics cannot be seen in an antagonistic way because they coexist.

Hence Raffestin (1993) argues that all work, energy, and information transform space into territory, revealing that power permeates such relations. According to the author, space pre-exists in any action. That is, it is a given element as if it was raw material or something without meaning which will then become territory from the action of a subject.

[...] space is where activities of all kinds happen, strategies are drawn, and battles take place to defend them. So, space cannot be treated as neutral since it is already occupied, and organized, having been the settling of struggle and ideological confrontations that change over the years (Correia, Pereira, & Carrieri, 2019, p. 31).<sup>1</sup>

Raffestin (1993) considers that every project is based on a piece of knowledge and practice, on actions and behaviors that suggest the possession of semic systems - codes and symbols. It is from this idea that territorial systems arise and through an original representation the subject can decide to build various types of textures and, later, articulate it all or only some points in networks, says Raffestin (1993).

Here, the subjects act through their practices and power relations. According to Raffestin (1993) although not discernible, the territorial system has an existence that needs to be taken into account since it interferes with individuals' strategies, which can be a strategy or a tactic, according to De Certeau (2014). The author states that every practice carried out in space is induced by a system of actions and behaviors, and can be considered a territorial production, succeeding in meshes, nodes, and networks, because "no society, however elementary, escapes the need to organize the operative field of its action" (Raffestin, 1993, p. 150). Since it is organized hierarchically, in accordance with the author, the system allows the control of everything that can be distributed, allocated, or owned by individuals, ensuring power.

In this context, the meshes, for Raffestin (1993), refers to the limit which explicitly or implicitly, demonstrates how a group relates to a portion of space. The nodes mean where the actors are located, alias, those who can help or not, or those who have access or not to certain resources (Raffestin, 1993). And networks, according to Raffestin (1993, p. 156), are "a system of lines that draw the mesh", which can be abstract or concrete and should ensure communication, but it often ensures only what is in their interest or in the interest of their group.

De Certeau (2014) states that space is considered a practiced place, e.g. a street that becomes space through the subjects' practices. For this purpose, according to Courpasson (2017), De Certeau aspires to discover the resistance of the lived to the conceived, through close observation of everyday practices. In accordance with Sousa Filho (2002, p. 4), De Certeau is interested "not in the cultural products as offered in the goods market, but in the different ways of "socially marking the distance" adopted by consumers in the acts of consuming". Thus, through tactics and strategies, the subject acts in the territory in his proper way (De Certeau, 2014) and according to his intentional objectives (Raffestin, 1993).

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<sup>1</sup> From the quote in Portuguese, "o espaço é o lugar onde as atividades de todos os tipos acontecem e lá é que são traçadas as estratégias e onde acontecem as batalhas para defendê-las, sendo assim o espaço não pode ser tratado como sendo neutro, uma vez que já se encontra ocupado e ordenado, tendo sido um espaço de luta e confrontos ideológicos que se alteram ao longo dos anos".

Another point worth mentioning is the concept of convenience, a term coined by Pierre Mayol, Michel De Certeau, and Luce Giard, in a study about cultural practices of city users in the space of the neighborhood. The convenience would be a tacit contract, which aims to remove what is not convenient and keep the daily life of individuals in order. To this end, it occurs in the midst of the collective, given that the public and the private do not have significance without the other (Mayol, 2013). In the space of the neighborhood or in any other group, there is a relationship between individuals and, to maintain their homogeneity, they need to renounce certain aspects related to their will and be in accordance with standards of the collectivity.

It is understood, then, that the subjects' practices (De Certeau, 2014) occur in the territorial system (Raffestin, 1993) and cause the processes of territorialization of people who work at the traffic lights. De Certeau himself (2014) says that practices allow the appropriation of organized space. Therefore, it is observed that they are inserted in the everyday life of the business, whether formal or informal (Palhares, Carrieri, & Oletto, 2019), showing that it is through the actions of the subjects, whether in the condition of tactic, strategy or convenience that the territorialization process takes place.

### 3 Methodological paths

To achieve the objective proposed in this research, a qualitative study was carried out through participant observation and thematic oral history interviews. The researchers remained in the field between May and September 2018. During this period, participant observation was carried out with five workers at five intersections of a large avenue in the city of Maringá. Since it is an avenue that connects the entrance and exit of the city, it became possible to feel the subtleties working more deeply at some points, such subtleties that made it possible to acknowledge the reasons for people to choose those traffic lights or even the products they sold there. In this period, the researchers' main activities were to sell together with them and take care of the sales point. All the activities, sensations, and observations were recorded in field journals.

It should be noted that, according to Vieira and Pereira (2005), participant observation is the technique in which the researcher is totally or partially inserted in the field of study undergoing, at that moment, a process of "acculturation" and experiencing the everyday life of the analyzed group. On that subject, participant observation was favorable for the proposed study, because, as Vieira and Pereira (2005) point out, one of the ways to study the nature of a culture or subculture is to observe the functioning of a given group or organization on a daily basis. Here, the characteristics of the culture being observed will become evident as the relationships between individuals, the language used, the symbols, the images, and the day-to-day routines become known. Thus, by exploring the rationality of the various aspects of a given culture, it is possible to discover that there are historical explanations for the ways in which things are done.

During the participant observation, 17 thematic oral history interviews were developed with several workers at the traffic lights along this avenue, including those in which participant observation was performed, except for one who did not want to be interviewed. With this, it became possible to find a plurality of people who work there, young, old, men, and women. One aspect considered in this choice was to reflect on the different types of products that were marketed by them, as well as the different points of the avenue in which they were located





because both the products and the points have their own peculiarities. It should be noted that the names used to refer to them are fictitious.

**Table 1** - Description of respondents

Name	Crossing with Avenida Colombo	Type of work	Age	Time of work at traffic lights in Maringá
Alfredo	Avenida Morangueira	<i>Panfleteiro</i> <sup>2</sup>	38	8 months
Augusta	Avenida Duque de Caxias	<i>Cocada</i> (coconut candy), peanuts, and <i>paçoca</i> (peanut candy) vendor	62	7 years
Orlando	Avenida 19 de Dezembro	Napkins vendor	60	3 months
Jorge	Avenida Mandacaru	Gum vendor	24	7 months
Roberto	Rua Paranaguá	Candy vendor	40	1 year and 6 months
Alice	Avenida Bento Munhoz da Rocha Netto	Chocolate truffle vendor	33	1 year
Osmar	Rua Paranaguá	Candy vendor	61	6 years
Luiz	Avenida Pedro Taques	Juggler	42	18 years
Pedro	Avenida São Paulo	Bread vendor	32	2 years and 3 months
Mário	Avenida Duque de Caxias	Sells water, UV automotive protectant, <i>paçoca</i> , phone chargers, and Brazilian flags	58	5 years
Regina	Avenida Morangueira	<i>Paçoca</i> and peanut vendor	54	10 years
Inácio	Avenida Mandacaru	Gum and candy vendor	72	4 years
Estela	Rua Paranaguá	<i>Panfleteira</i>	32	1 year
Sérgio	Avenida Tuiuti	Sells <i>paçoca</i> , water and fruit.	29	8 months
Eduardo	Avenida Morangueira	Water vendor	29	1 year
Ricardo	Avenida Duque de Caxias	Gum vendor and unhoused beggar	30	4 years
Lucas	Avenida Duque de Caxias	Unhoused beggar	19	2 years

Source: elaborated by the authors (2018)

Analyses of thematic oral history interviews as well as observations were made through a confrontation between theory, respondents' narratives, and notes from the field journal. Thus, in the process of analyzing and interpreting the speeches and observations of the subjects, we sought to make dialogues with the theories used (De Certeau's everyday life and Raffestin's territorialization) in order to achieve the objectives of the research.

#### 4 Daily practices and territorialization process at traffic lights in the city of Maringá

During the stay in the research field and during the interviews, it was noticeable that the age, the city in which they live, and even the jobs in which they previously had are aspects that are somehow intertwined in the understanding of the reason for being in the traffic lights, and consequently, the daily practices in the territorialization process.

<sup>2</sup> *Panfleteiro* and *panfleteira* refers to a man or woman, respectively, whose job is to distribute flyers on the street.

For lack of choice, that is... there are many people giving resumes, few opportunities. When you find something to do, people want to exploit you... So, the way I found to support my family was this (Roberto, candy vendor, 40 years old).

Oh, because I was missing things at home, you see? We have to appeal to something, right? That's where [my] daughter thought of selling candy at the traffic light was what gave money (Osmar, candy vendor, 61 years old).

Oh, because it's hard to get a job, too, right? And here I even earn well too. I can get some good money. I work from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eduardo, a water vendor, 29 years old).<sup>3</sup>

It is noteworthy that at the traffic lights, working people are mingled. Thus, it is possible to realize, based on the carried-out literature review, that unemployment is not the only trigger of informal work exercised at the traffic lights, but it is optional by some workers, due to benefits such as freedom and autonomy.

I decided to work at the traffic lights for the sake of freedom. You don't have a boss. You work any time you want. And there's always money. You don't have to wait until the fifth or twentieth working day. There is money every day [...] (Sérgio, candy vendor, 29 years old).<sup>4</sup>

Based on their memories, the work carried out informally at the traffic lights is a means of survival for these workers who flee from what is "right" for society. After all, perhaps this one has the idea that a person is in accordance with his standard when he has a working record on the employment record booklet. But what about when due to unemployment, age, or family conditions, the person finds himself/herself with no alternative to having this working record? At this point, the traffic light becomes a means of making a living, as is the case of Augusta who comes from another city and has the traffic light as her livelihood.

However, the presence of beggars and the use of beverages and drugs were observed. In this way, the traffic light has heterogeneity since it can be a source of money for people who are unhoused.

I am 19 years old. I was born in Loanda, then my mother passed away... She was 26. Then I came here to live with my father, but it didn't work out, I stayed with him until I was 16, then I came to the street and I'm still here. It's been about two years [that I'm on the street] and all this time I've been begging at the traffic lights (Lucas, unhoused and beggar, 19 years old).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From the Portuguese quotes, “Por falta de opção, é... Tem muita entrega de currículo, poucas oportunidades. Quando você arruma algum bico pra fazer, o pessoal quer te explorar... Então, a maneira que eu encontrei de sustentar a minha família foi essa (Roberto, vendedor de bala, 40 anos)”; “Ah, porque estava sentindo falta das coisas em casa, né? A gente tem que apelar pra alguma coisa, né? Aí foi onde que a [minha] ‘fia’ achou de vender bala no semáforo que dava dinheiro (Osmar, vendedor de bala, 61 anos)”; “Ah, porque está difícil também emprego, né? E aqui eu até ganho bem também. Dá pra mim tirar um dinheiro bom. Trabalho das 11h00min às 16h30min (Eduardo, vendedor de água, 29 anos)”.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese, “Decidi trabalhar nos semáforos por causa da liberdade. Não tem patrão. Horário que quiser. E sempre tem dinheiro. Não precisa esperar o dia cinco, nem o dia vinte. Todo dia tem dinheiro [...] (Sérgio, vendedor de bala)”.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from Portuguese, “Tenho 19 anos. Eu nasci em Loanda, daí minha mãe faleceu... Com 26 anos. Daí eu peguei e vim aqui morar com meu pai, daí não deu certo, fiquei com ele até os 16 anos, daí eu vim pra rua e agora eu estou na rua. Faz uns dois anos [que estou na rua], por aí, e todo o tempo que eu estou na rua, eu estou pedindo no semáforo (Lucas, pedinte em situação de rua, 19 anos)”.

Thus, each one of them have their own singularities. Informality performed at traffic lights is a practice of resistance, because people are doing it due to unemployment, the option of not entering the formal labor market and/or living on the street, and to continue working even after retirement. These various aspects made the individual perform this practice and transform the traffic light, in the words of De Certeau (2014), into a practiced place.

In addition, everyday life at traffic lights demonstrates actions, gestures, and words that reveal the ways of making the ordinary man. Although the “rules of the game” are established through strategy, there are those who circumvent such rules. As well as, workers maintain a constant relationship with other workers, drivers, and passers-by who pass through the traffic lights. These relationships are present in the daily lives of such workers and the result observed are approximations or distances between the subjects who are at the traffic lights, based on the territorial system mentioned by Raffestin (1993) and the daily practices mentioned by De Certeau (2014).

At the traffic lights, there is the implicit practice of demonstrating that that space has an owner. In most cases, they use trees and signs to store their belongings and even if it is a small detail, it demonstrates that that point is already appropriate and dominated by a worker. These practices were observed as follows: When Augusta arrives to work there, she hangs her bags on the coconut tree; João puts his bag on the signpost; and, Osmar, when he arrives, puts his wooden stool on the street median and puts his belongings on the tree. Here, it is clear that this practice describes well what Raffestin (1993) calls meshes and nodes since that refers to the boundary, even if it is not drawn literally, and this refers to where the actors are located.

In addition, the placement of nails in the trees is directly related to the practice of appropriation and shows who is the "owner of the point", as this is where they keep their belongings. In this way, it was possible to verify the appropriation in the situations mentioned and, even more, what is public, and what should be of everyone and not something particularized. Thus, based on the ideas of De Certeau (2014), it is perceived that a space that once had no meaning, starts to have the marks of the workers who use that space.

The everyday life at traffic lights also reveals that each worker establishes the days and hours to work, consuming in his own way what is imposed on him, in the words of De Certeau (2014). For this reason, it has been observed that most people have certain days and periods to work, as well as those who set a day to work, and one day to prepare the products for sales and another one to rest.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. [...] Because one day we prepare the products, the next day we sell what we prepared (Regina, paçoca and peanut vendor, 54 years old).

I usually take Mondays and Tuesdays off to rest since I work the rest of the days, right? On Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays I work in the afternoon [...] On Saturdays and Sundays, I work in the morning, because to me... They are the best days because there are people who are not working. For example, today you see this car flow here, but most of them are working. Most of them can't have an offer there to give you (Luiz, juggler, 42 years old).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Translated from the interview in Portuguese, “Terça, quinta e sábado. [...] Porque um dia a gente prepara a mercadoria, no outro dia a gente vende a mercadoria que a gente preparou (Regina, vendedora de paçoca e amendoim, 54 anos).”; “Eu geralmente eu tiro a segunda e a terça-feira pra mim descansar, porque eu trabalho no resto dos dias, né? Na quarta, quinta, sexta eu trabalho no horário da tarde [...] Sábado e domingo eu trabalho na parte da manhã, porque são pra mim... São os melhores dias, porque tem pessoas que não estão trabalhando. Por



Thus, it is reaffirmed that there is a transformation from a place to a space, a space full of meanings that have ways of making the ordinary man who, through their daily practices, assign another meaning and leave their marks, transforming the traffic light, as stated by De Certeau (2014), into a practiced place.

On the other hand, workers deal with prejudice from drivers and passers-by daily, however, because they have this job as their livelihood, they find loopholes to mitigate the situation, that is, they need to know how to play the game.

I reach out to people and tell them a story and they give me the money. Any story, I'll make it up right away. You say, look: "Good afternoon, madam! I came from [made-up place] and I need some help. I wasn't even going to ask you for money, it's just that I'm really hungry, I needed to eat." Then the woman gives me the money [laughs]. There are times I go with the same story all day. Sometimes I change. Then I have to invent another one. Then I stop and think, "What story am I going to make up to get some money?" Otherwise, I don't get it, if I only ask I don't get any (Lucas, beggar and unhoused, 19 years old).<sup>7</sup>

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Everyone thanks you. It's hard one who sometimes passes by crying, and grumpy. Sometimes it's because of family trouble, right? When I see that there is something, I keep walking. I offer. When people don't open the car window, we see that they already have a problem, so we just keep walking (Regina, *paçoca* and peanut vendor, 54 years old).<sup>8</sup>

Another issue to be highlighted is that, in the case of vendors, the products they sell derive from facilities, as noted with Inácio: he buys the boxes of gum at a candy distributor that is located near the intersection where he works. That way, he doesn't have to worry about taking a number of boxes to the traffic light, since when he's selling and he runs out of gum, he just takes the money and buys some more. Thus, even the choice of traffic lights can be characterized as a practice from the De Certeauian perspective.

Oh, because here there are two more here that are relatives, who are also vendors, that way we are close, right? And it's near the restroom from the gas station, right? Near

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exemplo, hoje você vê esse fluxo de carro aqui, mas a maioria deles, eles estão trabalhando. A maioria deles não pode ter uma oferta ali pra te dar (Luiz, malabarista, 42 anos)".

<sup>7</sup> From Portuguese, "Eu chego nas pessoas e conto uma história pra elas e elas dão o dinheiro, ué. Qualquer uma, eu invento na hora. Você fala, olha: "Boa tarde senhora! Eu vim de não sei da onde e eu estava precisando de uma ajuda. Eu nem ia pedir dinheiro pra senhora, é que eu estou com fome mesmo, eu queria comer". Daí a mulher vai e me dá o dinheiro [risos]. Tem vezes que eu vou com a mesma história o dia inteiro. Tem vezes que eu mudo. Daí eu tenho que inventar outra. Daí eu paro e fico pensando: "qual história que eu vou inventar pra mim ganhar dinheiro?" Senão não ganha, se for só pedir não ganha (Lucas, pedinte em situação de rua, 19 anos)".

<sup>8</sup> Translated by the authors from Portuguese, "Todos agradecem. É difícil um que às vezes passa chorando, mal humorado. Às vezes problema na família, né? Quando eu vejo que tem alguma coisa, eu já passo reto. Eu ofereço. Quando não abre o vidro a gente vê que já está com algum problema, a gente passa reto (Regina, vendedora de *paçoca* e amendoim, 54 anos)".

the place where we drink water too, which has a water dispenser. So, it's easier, right? For us (Regina, *paçoca* and peanut vendor, 54 years old).

[...] Nobody goes there, so I prefer to be in an isolated place, because, for example, here... If I worked here, the cars are already coming from there, and there [where they come from] are people working there already, in those traffic lights, taking offers there, then they come here discouraged thinking "ah, one more...". So that is how I think, so I'd rather go somewhere where there's no one. [...] I like to work at the city entrance and exit. I don't like to work in the middle of the city (Luiz, juggler, 42 anos).<sup>9</sup>

It was observed that the workers choose traffic lights with more red light timing or those with fewer people, as in Luiz's case, who likes to work isolated. In this way, workers strategically act when they choose the traffic light, since they take time to act and then, perhaps, have a higher profit.

In general, the practice of dividing ranks happens in the daily life of traffic lights. Here, Raffestin (1993) refers to the meshes, which concern limit and demonstrates how a group relates to themselves in a portion of space. The meshes in the traffic lights demonstrate the limit that a worker "dominates", where each one is located, and where it already has an owner. Thus, the worker approaches or distances the one who can bring him some benefit, which results in territorialization.

We divide the time; each one works a little. When one is tired, he sits to rest, and the other works (Roberto, candy vendor, 40 years old).<sup>10</sup>

To have a better understanding of these narratives, we mention Raffestin (1993), who states that all practice carried out in space is induced by a system of actions or behaviors and can be considered a territorial production, succeeding in meshes, nodes, and network since every society needs to organize where its action will take place. Thus, the small practices of workers at traffic lights contribute to the organization, hierarchy, and delimitation of a territory.

Thus, in the relationships that are established in daily life, there is the practice of individuality, that is, usually workers with more time at traffic lights rather work alone, not admitting the presence of other workers, even though they do not know why this new person is there. In this sense, to remain alone, the worker talks or even argue with the new one so that they can look for another traffic light. About this situation, the following note was made in the field journal (on August 1, 2018): 'Roberto and Osmar did not allow the presence of other workers, and Osmar told a man who was raising money to make lunch for people who are living on the street: "there is a point there! Here we already have two".'

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<sup>9</sup> Translated by the authors from Portuguese, "Ah, porque aqui fica mais dois que são parentes, que é vendedor, fica perto, né? E fica perto do banheiro, perto do posto, né? Perto do lugar que a gente toma água também, que tem bebedouro. Então, é mais facilidade, né? Pra gente (Regina, vendedora de *paçoca* e amendoim, 54 anos)"; "[...] Lá não vai ninguém, daí eu prefiro estar em local isolado, porque, por exemplo, aqui... Se eu trabalhar aqui, nesse farol aqui, os carros já estão vindo de lá, já tem pessoas trabalhando lá naqueles faróis, pegando oferta lá, chega aqui desanimado, "ah, mais um". Então, é assim que eu penso, daí eu prefiro ir num lugar onde não tem ninguém. [...] Eu gosto de trabalhar em saída e entrada da cidade. Eu não gosto de entrar no meio da cidade (Luiz, malabarista, 42 anos)".

<sup>10</sup> From Portuguese, "A gente divide os espaços de tempo, cada um trabalha um pouco. O outro está cansado, senta pra descansar, o outro trabalha (Roberto, vendedor de bala, 40 anos)".

This territory demonstrates the existence of power relations (Raffestin, 1993), where the "older" workers at the traffic lights have a feeling of ownership for that space, dominate, and do not allow the presence of others. Thus, the act of letting or not letting another worker at the same traffic light or the act of appropriating some spaces causes territorialization.

The possessive pronoun "mine" is present in day-to-day work, considering that the subjects consider themselves owners of that space. For Souza (2009) the territory is understood as a force field because in addition to referring to a spatial dimension of space, it is still intangible itself since it is a social relationship. As well as, to Raffestin (1993), the space is a place or a field of possibilities, which from the social relations of communication territorial systems arise and the actor can decide to build different types of meshes and articulate all or only some points in networks. In the narratives of interviewees, this is noticeable.

I've been working here for ten years; one respects the other. If someone comes and there are already two or three vendors, this person looks for another traffic light, it's like that. Except that I don't leave mine, because it's my place... If they think the space is small, they look for another one because there is a place that I'm already used to, right? I already have my customers too (Regina, *paçoca* and peanut vendor, 54 years old).

When others arrive, then I talk to them. Because I've been working for a long time. That's harder, right? Strange people come in, right? [When there are] a lot of people, one hinders the other, right? Then, it is more difficult to sell, right? They don't have the knowledge. I'm going to talk to the person since I've been working here for a long time, right? So they can get another traffic light to work at. (Mário, water vendor, 58 years old).<sup>11</sup>

The "new" workers who arrive at the traffic lights have the habit of asking permission for the one who is already working and that is where the power relations between them occur. And if this request for authorization does not occur, the "older" workers talk and/or argue with those to look for another traffic light. This was very clear on the day that a girl was on her first day of work at the traffic light and went to ask permission from Mario to work in the same place as him, but he did not let and she left. In this sense, as Raffestin (1993) says, individuals act in the territorial system and delimiting would be to isolate or subtract momentarily or even manifest power in a precise area in order to territorialize. The excerpt below shows this:

There are people who come here, who never came, the first time, see us distributing, and come to ask permission to sell there (Alfredo, *panfleteiro*, 38 years old).<sup>12</sup>

The narrative and observations are in line with the fact that street work has increased in recent decades, demonstrating that people who survive from work on the streets need to "circumvent" the capitalist system (Nascimento, Reis, & Teodósio, 2017).

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<sup>11</sup> From Portuguese, "Aqui faz dez anos que eu trabalho aqui, só que um respeita o outro. Se chega, tem dois, três vendedores, o outro já vai procurar outro semáforo, é assim. Só que do meu eu não saio, porque meu lugar... Se eles acharem que está pequeno o espaço, eles que procuram outro, porque ali o lugar já estou acostumada, né? Já tenho os meus fregueses também (Regina, vendedora de *paçoca* e *amendoim*, 54 anos)"; "Quando chegam outros, aí eu vou conversar com a pessoa. Porque eu trabalho há bastante ano. Aí é mais difícil, né? Entrar gente estranho, né? Muita pessoa, um estorva o outro, né? Aí fica mais difícil pra vender, né? Não tem conhecimento, né? Eu vou conversar com a pessoa que eu trabalho há bastante ano ali, né? Pra pessoa arrumar um sinaleiro pra ela trabalhar, né? (Mário, vendedor de água, 58 anos)".

<sup>12</sup> Translated from Portuguese, "Tem gente que vem aqui, que nunca veio, primeira vez, vê a gente entregando e vem pedir permissão pra poder vender ali (Alfredo, *panfleteiro*, 38 anos)".

Linked to this, time has a preponderant role in the territorialization process, as it makes the subject who works at the traffic lights able to resignify and territorialize. In this sense, according to Raffestin (1993), the systems of meshes, nodes, and networks, are hierarchically organized, allowing ensuring control over what can be distributed, allocated, and/or possessed.

Still referring to power relations, Ricardo and Lucas, both beggars, only stay at the traffic light after Augusta leaves. This is because, according to them, she has an advanced age, 62 years, and she is also working at that traffic light for a long time, 7 years. In the observations, it was possible to notice that sometimes Lucas would arrive to ask the drivers for money and Augusta would tell him to go later, after she left. She, therefore, uses her “proper” (De Certeau, 2014), to achieve her objectives and territorialize (Raffestin, 1993).

In addition, Lucas reported that when a new worker arrives at the same traffic light he is at, he has to pay for the point and can be characterized as a strategy, from a De Certeauian perspective, to have power in the territory. That is, referring to Augusta, Lucas uses a tactic, while when new workers arise he uses a strategy.

I'm here every day and someone else shows up... Or else he pays for the point or else he goes to another point. Each R\$ 2,00 that he makes, one is mine. Each R\$ 3,00 that he makes, one is mine. If someone else comes, we'll do it. For every R\$3.00 he makes, one is mine (Lucas, unhoused beggar, 19 years old).<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, some workers visibly have advantages in the power relations that occur at traffic lights, being demonstrated that the workers themselves see that they have their “proper” (De Certeau, 2014) in that territory. Regarding this, it was written in the field journal (August 27, 2018) that one afternoon it was very hot and all the workers had left, and Inácio, who is 72 years old, continued working. When questioning him on this, he said: “so you can see the situation. People are disconsolate. You see the struggle that I have! People only buy from me because of my old age.” Therefore, the factors of time and age are aspects that contribute to the territorialization process.

The case of the *panfleteiros* stands out because they are not selling, only distributing flyers. This, in a way, demonstrates that they have their “proper” too (De Certeau, 2014), as they will hardly be sent away by other workers. João, for example, does not allow the presence of people who can get money from drivers, such as vendors, beggars, or other jugglers, but when it is a *panfleteiro*, he “lets” the person work, because he takes care of the “his” salespoint since the traffic lights are his livelihood.

One can also mention the networks that, according to Raffestin (1993, p. 156), are “a system of lines that draw the mesh”, which can be abstract or concrete, which should ensure communication, but often only ensure what is in its interest or in the interest of its group. Soon, the worker will connect with the one who will provide him with some benefit, as in the case of the *panfleteiro*, because the driver usually opens the car glass more easily, but will push away the one who wants to get money or the one who is selling the same product.

In this regard, the elderly and *panfleteiros* are the ones who most hold their “proper” in that territory and are able to territorialize it more easily, because the *panfleteiros* are not selling anything and, in the case of the elderly, the feeling of respect for them, as well as empathy on the part of the drivers, perhaps predominates. Here it is necessary to reflect, since in our society,

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<sup>13</sup> From Portuguese, “Estou aqui todo dia e aparece outra pessoa... Ou senão ele paga pelo ponto ou senão ele vai pra outro ponto. Cada R\$ 2,00 que ele ganhar um é meu. Cada R\$ 3,00 que ele ganhar, um é meu. Se vier outra pessoa nós fazemos isso. Cada R\$ 3,00 que ele ganhar, um é meu (Lucas, pedinte em situação de rua, 19 anos)”.

in general, the elderly are stigmatized and often left to mercy, because they are no longer productive. Only in street work, the perception that was had is that the elderly man circumvents this situation and knows how to use this characteristic in something that gives him an advantage and his relationships. That is, here the roles are reversed, because the elderly is respected and, apparently, the feeling of empathy on the part of the drivers is greater in relation to them. In addition, it is observed that the elderly themselves know how to strategically use this advantage they have at the traffic lights, which makes them able to territorialize.

It was noticed that at the traffic lights, the workers have a prejudice against themselves. Mário once said that juggling is not a profession but a “vagabond” thing, since they are content with coins and said: “real work is sales because it is a real effort just like mine”. It implies that selling is part of an “elite” and other types of work are not.

In a complementary way, there is a hierarchy between the workers themselves, as if they were the established ones and the others were outsiders. In the excerpt “now what I don't like is when it gets full of indigenous people, these people... The addicted people when they arrive asking for money” from the narrative below, it is clear that Inácio is superior to the addicted people and the indigenous people:

What I like most about the traffic light here is the friendship I have with people, which whom I already have many acquaintances. now what I don't like is when it gets full of indigenous people, these people... The addicted people, when they arrive and ask for money. I don't like it very much. I think it's bad, right? I ask God to let them go (Inácio, gum vendor, 72 years old).<sup>14</sup>

With regard to relations with drivers, it was possible to perceive a certain respect for them while the workers depend on them. In this sense, the practice of convenience was perceived (Mayol, 2013) when workers try to treat them well, with the thought that they are the ones who “bring food to the table” and on another day drivers can come back and buy their products. If you treat them badly, they may look for another vendor. Sometimes, even if we are treated badly, we need to ignore it.

If the person doesn't want it, I thank her and walk away. I thank them and also walk away, because today they don't want it, but tomorrow they might want. It's not because he doesn't want it today, “no, today I don't want it,” no, but tomorrow he'll be there and he'll want it. You have to be polite. If you are impolite, even if the person mistreats you, if they happen to mistreat you, you cannot disrespect or mistreat them because you depend on them... We depend on them (Orlando, dishcloth vendor, 60 years old).

Always treat people the same, because, in fact, I depend on them, right? To me... To me... Whether they buy it or not, I can depend further ahead if they don't buy it, right? And they might want to buy one day, who knows (Pedro, bread vendor, 32 years old).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> From the interview in Portuguese, “O que eu mais gosto aqui do semáforo é a amizade que eu tenho com as pessoas, que eu tenho muito conhecido já. Agora o que eu não gosto é quando fica cheio de índio, essas pessoas... Esses nórias quando chegam pedindo aí. Eu não gosto muito não. Acho ruim, né? Eu peço a Deus pra eles irem embora (Inácio, vendedor de goma, 72 anos)”.

<sup>15</sup> In Portuguese, “A pessoa não quer, eu agradeço e vou embora. Agradeço e vou embora também, porque hoje ele não pega, mas amanhã ele pega. Não é porque ele não quer hoje, “não, hoje eu não quero”, não, mas amanhã ele está passando e ele vai querer. Tem que ter educação. Se você não tiver educação, mesmo se a pessoa te maltratar, se acaso acontecer de maltratar, você não pode desrespeitar e nem desmaltratar, porque você depende deles... Depende deles (Orlando, vendedor de pano de prato, 60 anos).”; “Sempre tratar as pessoas da mesma forma, porque, na verdade, eu dependo delas, né? Pra me... Pra me... Elas comprando ou não, eu posso depender



Convenience occurs in the midst of the collective (Mayol, 2013), that is, there must be the self and the other. Thus, at traffic lights, there is a relationship between workers and drivers, and in order to maintain their homogeneity, they need to renounce certain aspects related to their will and be in accordance with the standards of the community, since a worker who is not convenient will be sent away and will not be able to work. That is why, according to Mayol (2013), convenience is an implicit contract in order to establish order.

As well, smiling and saying good morning is convenient, in the same way, that it is a strategy. This happens to the *panfleteiros* themselves, as this is how they manage to captivate the driver and make him accept the flyer. It is noteworthy that, in the *panfleteiros'* case, drivers tend to lower the glass and receive the flyer, which does not happen most of the time with vendors and other workers.

Saying good morning and showing the flyer on the glass. Then they open the windows, say good morning and receive it. And the smile, right? What captivates them the most is the smile (Estela, *panfleteira*, 32 years old).<sup>16</sup>

However, what was most cited by the workers regarding the drivers is the prejudice and ignorance. Many times the workers said the drivers think they are not workers, but drug addicts.

What I like the least is the people. Because they are some who it is nice to approach and there are others that it is not. Ah... Negativity, selfishness, perhaps, revulsion. There are some people who I like to approach. There are others that you even avoid, when you are getting close you avoid them because you already know that this person is not well or she/he has some issues.... There are a few good things about the traffic light, those are the people who give me money, but on the other hand, there are people who... People who mistreat. It's not mistreatment, is it? They ignore you. It's worse than saying no, I guess. So for me, it's always people (Sérgio, gum vendor, 29 years old).<sup>17</sup>

Finally, to be able to territorialize and assign meanings to what was previously only a space, the informal worker needs to live with the prejudice, ignorance, and lack of education of some people. This is because, if you do not get used to this scenario, it becomes difficult to (live) daily under the traffic lights and, thus, territorialize.

We are already used to it [laughs]. It doesn't make that much difference anymore. Sometimes we get upset about one or another, but it's something you don't even remember the next day (Pedro, bread vendor, 32 years old).<sup>18</sup>

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mais na frente se elas não comprarem, né? E elas vão querer comprar um dia quem sabe (Pedro, vendedor de pão, 32 anos).”

<sup>16</sup> From the interview in Portuguese, “Dando bom dia e mostrando o panfleto no vidro. Daí eles abrem, dando bom dia e entregando pra eles. E o sorriso, né? O que cativa mais eles é o sorriso (Estela, *panfleteira*, 32 anos).”

<sup>17</sup> Translated by the authors from “O que eu menos gosto são as pessoas. Porque têm pessoas que dá gosto de chegar perto e têm outras que não dá. Ah... Negatividade, egoísmo, talvez, nojo. Ai tem pessoas que dá gosto de chegar perto. Tem outras que você até evita, quando você já passa perto, você já até evita, porque você sabe que a pessoa não é de bem com a vida ou está com problema, daí... Tem umas coisas boas do sinaleiro, são as pessoas que me dão o dinheiro, mas por outro lado são as pessoas que... As pessoas que maltratam. Não é maltratam, né? Ignoram. Pior do que falar um não, eu acho. Então pra mim sempre são as pessoas (Sérgio, vendedor de bala, 29 anos).”

<sup>18</sup> From Portuguese, “A gente já está calejado já [risos]. Não faz mais tanta diferença assim. Às vezes a gente fica chateado com algum ou outro, mas é coisa que no outro dia você nem lembra mais (Pedro, vendedor de pão, 32 anos).”

Thus, workers at traffic lights break the rules from the moment they are unemployed, or living on the streets, or even when their age does not allow them to enter the formal labor market, and they resist in the midst of uncertain work, full of prejudice on one part of the society. But it is through practices (De Certeau, 2014) - often doing bricolage and resisting the dominant power, whether a public body or even society - and relations that territorialization happens (Raffestin, 1993). Thus, workers assign meanings to traffic lights, transforming them into their workplace.

**Table 2** – Main research findings

Aspects presented in the bibliographic review	Narratives/annotations
Appropriation practices	Putting nails in trees. Bags hanging in the trees. The assemblage of stools to sit on.
Resistance practices	Transformation of traffic lights into workplaces.
Clever tactics	Choice of the best days and times to work. Storytelling to get money.
Time	Application for permission to work at the same place.
Age	Purchase of products because of advanced age.
Hierarchy of differences	Indigenous people and addicted people are seen as inferior.
Bricolages	Transformation of traffic lights into workplaces.
Lack of option	Many handed-in resumes, though, few opportunities.
Freedom	Choice of the best days and times to work. Freedom Absence of a boss.
Meshes	Division of spaces.
Practice of individuality	Do not allow the presence of other workers at the same traffic light.
“Proper”	<i>Panfleteiros</i> , elderly people, or those who have worked longer at traffic lights.
Convenience	Connecting with the <i>panfleteiros</i> . A good treatment for drivers. Salutations.

**Source:** elaborated by the authors (2018)

## 5 Conclusions

Everyday life is movement, not just about routine and something unimportant. At every moment the ordinary man is acting in it, and in this way he invents it from small actions. Then the ordinary man resists, not necessarily doing what has been established by the dominating power, but rather the different use of what he consumes.

These movements and resistances take place in the territories, which are full of power relations. It is through practices and relationships that the ordinary man acts in spaces, or in territorial systems, attributes meanings to them, and leaves his marks, often attracting or distancing all those who can bring him some benefit.

Present in everyday life and in the territories, informality is a phenomenon known in the Brazilian context, and the practices of these activities are visible in different situations. This happens due to the increasing unemployment rate, but also due to the choices of the subjects who seek autonomy in carrying out their activities. But, being it a choice or not, what is perceived is the presence of precariousness in this type of work.

To achieve the objective of the study, it was observed that on the streets, specifically at the traffic lights, workers seek to circumvent these situations by transforming the traffic lights in their territories. In this direction, it was possible to perceive that the traffic light is a field of

forces, with power relations, in which tactics, strategies, conveniences, delimitation of space, and creation of networks are visualized, which allows the territorialization process to happen in a context of informality.

Finally, in view of the study of workers who do not have an employment contract from the point of view of De Certeau's everyday life, it is considered that work at traffic lights is a form of survival, but not only that: it is also the place where there are hierarchies, vanities, creativity, and power relations. Through these aspects, they territorialize the spaces of passage in their workplaces (Anjos, Fraga, & Teodósio, 2020). Thus, it can be emphasized that those who survive through informality at traffic lights, however discredited their work may be, they assign meanings to them and territorialize through tiny actions, causing what could only be the intersection of some streets to come to life in the space of the city.

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