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(Re)fashioning Philippine street foods and vending

B. Lynne Milgram

Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences and School of Interdisciplinary Studies, OCAD University, Toronto, ON, Canada
Corresponding author: B. Lynne Milgram; e-mail: lmilgram@faculty.ocadu.ca

A hallmark of many Global South city streets is ambulant vendors' daily trade in prepared and fresh foods. Yet governments often restrict such informal and sometimes illegal enterprises, privileging instead privatized and sanitized streetscapes—policies that disrupt urbanites' livelihoods and their consumption options. Engaging these issues, this article analyzes how street food vendors in Baguio, northern Philippines, mitigate the constraints of government street vending bans to establish viable and alternative food provisioning enterprises. I explore how vendors' location-responsive political, social, and economic practices interweave with new street market design and consumption patterns to yield a distinctive taste of place while underpinning livelihood sustainability. Exercising "street politics," some banned vendors joined the established Harrison Road Night Market, while others collectively established distinctive storefront eateries. That city officials enabled the legitimacy of formerly illegal and informal street vendors by incorporating their enterprises into these registered commercial venues evidences officials' complicity in formalizing informality when this policy is to their advantage. I suggest that through their politics-on-the-edge, Baguio's relocated street food vendors emerge as effective visible actors in public arenas that have largely excluded their voices in where, and the conditions within which, they work.

Keywords Philippines; Street Food Vending; Street Politics; Informality; Urbanization; Place-Making

In many Southeast Asian cities, a hallmark of urban streets is the vibrant trade in a range of prepared and fresh foods that ambulant and fixed-site vendors sell throughout the day. Before the strict street clearances of 2011 and 2014 in Baguio, northern Philippines, for example, vendors working throughout the city's busy downtown streets displayed their goods on ground cloths or carried their offerings in rattan and plastic baskets, conveniently enabling urbanites to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables as well as popular *kakanin* or snack foods, such as cooked rice cakes, fried bananas, roasted peanuts, and *balut* (boiled mature eggs). At major intersections, vendors positioned their mobile cooking carts to sell items such as steamed corn and barbecue meats and fish, while outside the city's Central Business District, ambulant neighborhood sellers are still able to make the rounds of community streets calling out the types of produce they offer. The wide variety of street foods that Baguio vendors were renowned for hawking across multiple sites materially fostered the city's rich "urban texture" (Bayat 2012, 120).

In cities worldwide, however, government visions of modern development continue to favor privatizing urban public spaces (building shopping malls and high-rise complexes) and establishing sanitized streetscapes, both of which jeopardize the security of street-based livelihoods for vendors and limit residents' consumption choices (Brown 2006; Cross and Karides 2007; Garcia 2017; Graaff and Ha 2015; Greenspan 2018; Hansen, Little, and Milgram 2013; Ta 2017). In Global South cities such as those in the Philippines, governments have long supported policies that variably restrict, allow, tax, or ban street vending (Guerrero 1975; Milgram 2009, 2011, 2014, 2015a). This is especially evident in Baguio, the administrative, education, and industrial center of northern Luzon, where, since the 1970s, growing rural-to-urban migration and a lack of employment options have left many people little choice but to engage in other-than-formal-sector work (e.g., street vending, consignment sales) to meet their daily subsistence needs (Bello 2005). Rather than leave the Philippines to find employment, men and women who have access to some capital have forged innovative avenues of street-based work by selling a variety of goods, such

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as used clothing, cooked foods, and fresh produce. However, because Philippine street vendors usually sell their products in central urban locations, their enterprises contravene municipal bylaws that prohibit conducting private commercial businesses in public spaces (City Government of Baguio 2000 – 1). Thus Baguio's municipal government has vacillated between granting street vendors the status of "maximum tolerance" in the late 1990s (Milgram 2009, 118) — the right to sell in specific places at specific times — and outright bans on street vending in 2011 and 2014.

In this article, I draw on the practices of Baguio's street food vendors — on the types of foods vendors sell and on their livelihood strategies — to argue that the collision of growing urbanization, the lack of income-generating opportunities, and people's advocacy for viable employment have led to new forms of livelihood characterized by complex intersections of formal/informal work, place-making, and everyday street politics. I analyze how location-responsive political, social, and economic practices interweave with new street food market design and consumption patterns to yield more sustainable livelihoods and a distinctive taste of place — a specific destination consumers seek to access dishes uniquely associated with, for example, street foods and street dining. In this light, Baguio's new street food venues in the Harrison Road Night Market and in storefront eateries are not only sites of work but also places in which urbanites can recapture gastronomic experiences of the home-made, given the increasing presence of mass-produced foods offered in fast-food chains (see Besa and Dorotan 2006; Yasmeen 2000, 344; 2006).

Being challenged that their informal and "extralegal" (Smart and Zerilli 2014) trade contravenes appropriate development, however, has not prevented Baguio vendors, individually and collectively, from pursuing their right to street-based work by engaging in what Asef Bayat (2012, 119) terms "street politics" and Benjamin Kerkvliet (2009, 235) identifies as "everyday" and "advocacy politics" (e.g., running from police, lobbying and petitioning politicians). To secure their livelihoods, street food vendors convinced the Baguio city government to exempt them from the 2011 ban on street sales in the city's Central Business District, arguing that the food provisioning services they offered benefited urbanites across classes. In mid-2014, when city officials subsequently prohibited street-based sales of food, sellers lobbied politicians for the right to relocate to the popular Harrison Road Night Market established in late 2011 (Milgram 2014). Other food sellers who were unable to secure a night market site due to limited allocations rented storefronts in which to continue their "outdoors economy" (Bayat 2012, 113) — but inside.

While activities such as street vending and small-scale self-employed enterprises have been most often posited as "informal" — positioned outside of, or circumventing, state regulation, protection, and recognition — recent scholarship argues that informality is, in effect, "a deregulated rather than unregulated system," maintaining its own operational logic (Roy 2009b, 83). Formal and informal activities thus interconnect in multiple ways such that both spheres are integrally interdependent and both are regulated through the context-specific rules, associations, and institutions that actors establish to achieve their specific ends (Smart and Zerilli 2014, 225; Yasmeen 2006, 32 – 34). That the Baguio city government has enabled the legitimacy of formerly illegal and informal street vendors by incorporating their enterprises into registered commercial venues evidences that policymakers are complicit in "formalizing informality" when this policy is to their advantage, namely, when it increases city rents and taxes (Smart and Smart 2017, 437). By successfully establishing their resituated sites as distinctive destinations for unique eating experiences, Baguio's relocated food vendors have crafted a moment of urban spatial fluidity and frontier culinary experimentation that begs analysis with encroaching urbanization.

I started the fieldwork on the Harrison Road Night Market in early 2011, when the Baguio government permanently banned most street vendors from their downtown locations. I subsequently charted vendors' advocacy to reestablish their businesses on Harrison Road as a night market (Agreda 2012; Milgram 2014), and I continued to investigate the 2014 ban and relocation of street food vendors specifically. My research assistant in Baguio and I conducted fifty-eight formal and conversational interviews with food vendors, the vast majority of whom were women between twenty-two and sixty-six years of age. Since I interviewed some of these women in their former street locations, we were able to follow up with more informed interviews in their new selling sites. Finally,

we conducted three additional interviews with Baguio municipal counselors and followed their Facebook pages, consulted the Baguio City Hall Records and Research Offices to trace municipal government policies regarding street vending, and attended the monthly committee meetings at City Hall with the Baguio City Market Authority and the Committee for Marketing, Trade, and Commerce.

To situate Baguio's changing street food trade, I first review studies outlining how food consumption and sales curate meaning in urban place-making. Drawing on Baguio food vendors' specific livelihoods, I then analyze the extent to which relocated street food sellers can operationalize opportunities and mitigate the constraints they face as they map, unmap, and remap the character of their businesses as permanent elements in Baguio's changing urban foodscape.

Street foods and the taste of place

In his research on street vending in Mumbai, India, Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria (2016, 5) asks whether there is "a place for the vada pao [fried chicken balls] in globalizing Mumbai?" *Vada pao*, like locally renowned Philippine cooked rice cakes (*suman*) and *balut*, is an everyday street food consumed by a broad spectrum of consumers as a quick snack, prepared takeout meal, or special treat. In cities like Mumbai and Baguio, these tastes of the street represent symbolic representations of a "gastronomic townscape" (Parham 2015, 95). Food has long been an integral part of the street's function and identity in cities worldwide. Food sales create economic spaces, and by provisioning people with inexpensive meals, street dining simultaneously creates spaces of consumption while enabling social spaces in which urbanites can interact with one another (Fernandez 2000; Hansen, Little, and Milgram 2013; Kaller, Mayer, and Kear 2017; Kawarazuka, Béné, and Prain 2017; Tinker 1997).

As studies have widely argued, a place such as the street is not an inert container—not simply a location or space in which we live and work; rather, place is made through people's "lived experience[s]" (Rodman 1992, 640). The transformative potential of food in such place-making is acutely evident, as Susan Parham (2015, 71) notes in "the everyday interplay between people and food in and around food markets and food shops … [as such interactions are] perhaps the most important way that food has been central to urban life, to ordinary city space, and to urban social practices over time." Thus "specific practices" such as street food sales and consumption, as Margaret Rodman (1992, 642) argues for place-making in Vanuatu, "can work spaces so as to become places." In this context, the meaning of people's "out-of-home" (Parham 2015, 72) preparation and consumption of food emerges as a processual project activated by a range of actors across political and socioeconomic sectors making place meet their needs. As a long-standing critical element in urbanism, food spaces such as street foods and markets thus reflect "location-responsive" spatial qualities that contribute to a "food-related sense of place" (Parham 2015, 71). Crewe and Lowe's (1995, 1877) concept of "microgeographies of retail" further illustrates this point. They suggest that when similarly oriented stores are located in a specific urban locale, such as with Baguio's street food enterprises, a distinct geographical retail identity develops to attract like-minded businesses that, in turn, appeal to consumers who identify with the types of goods these enterprises offer.

With growing urbanization, especially in Global South cities, the current paradox is that at the same time as many cities seek to cleanse their streets of messy vendors, open-air markets and the custom of eating outside in public places or eating on the run are gaining acceptance and popular appeal. In Baguio, for example, while city officials strictly enforce street vending restrictions in downtown streets, they also recognize that vendors' varied food offerings ensure the success of the street markets they actively promote for special events, such as at Christmas, for the February Flower Festival, and for the June 12 Independence Day celebration. William Whyte (1980, 50) suggests, "If you want to seed a place with activity, put out food."

Concomitant with the growing popularity of consuming food in such "outdoor rooms" (Parham 2015, 71) is a movement in which local foods formally considered inexpensive commodities largely consumed by the poor have

morphed from "hunger" foods into "heritage" foods actively pursued by urbanites and tourists across classes (Van Esterik 2006; see also Littaye 2016; Matejowsky 2013; Sébastia 2017). In the Philippines, such formally distained foods include *balut*, *suman*, and *sisig* (fried pork cheeks, snout, and ears). The growing demand for such mundane and formally marginalized items means that these foods now engender an informed taste of place (see Trubek and Bowen 2008).

Baguio residents pride themselves on knowing which street vendors offer the most distinctive meals, whether the criteria are price, "authenticity," innovation, or performance in preparation. Indeed, in 2016, Michelin, the renowned arbiter of culinary excellence, created a special category recognizing the prowess of street food vendors. The 2016 and 2017 Michelin stars awarded to a Singaporean food hawker specializing in a chicken and rice dish and to a Thai vendor known for her crab omelet (Canadian Broadcasting Company Radio Radio 2016; Holmes 2017) clearly evidence street food's coming of age as a respected cuisine with its own parameters of place-based taste and heritage—a journey street foods have traveled from their former "nowhereness" to their current distinctive "somewhereness" (Trubek and Bowen 2008, 25).

Advocating for security in street vending

Bayat (2012, 110) argues that the neoliberal city is a "city-inside-out," where a growing section of the urban population, the subaltern, are compelled to conduct their daily activities in public spaces and streets, in an out-of-doors economy, because the city has become unaffordable to them. As Douglass, Ho, and Ooi (2008) remind us, in situations of limited infrastructural development, the street, public markets, and other public spaces become crucial settings for inventing ways of being sociable, earning a living, and gaining recognition. With colonial governance in Global South cities, however, came the concept of open space as "civic space" (Anjaria 2016, 20), and the question of who controls this space emerged. Governments' modernizing agendas have resulted in the bifurcation of public and private space—a "conceptual mapping" (Anjaria 2016, 19; see also Douglass, Ho, and Ooi 2008), resulting in the oppositional positioning of open, nondomestic space with circumscribed private, contained space. Scholars analyzing such spatial shifts have argued that "the transformation of hawking in open space into the transgressive act of hawking in *public* space" stemmed from colonial governments seeking spatial control and adopting the "transnationally circulated discourses" identifying street visibility with "backwardness" and a remnant of past practice (Anjaria 2016, 20, 22, emphasis original; see also Leshkowich 2014, 190–91). By considering that the prominent visibility of vendors' outdoor street trade represents an inappropriate face for modernizing cities, governments to date continue to devalue the street's social and economic roles (Garcia 2017; Graaff and Ha 2015; Hansen, Little, and Milgram 2013; Meneses-Reyes 2018; Ta 2017).

To this point, Anjaria (2016, 22) notes that "categories such as 'modern' and the vernacular do not simply index discrete cultural practices but animate local contestations, anxieties, and aspirations." With Baguio's poor housing conditions, lack of social services, and dearth of employment options, for example, the city's street trades have mushroomed to reveal a "troubling muddling of the public and private" (Anjaria 2016, 23)—an urban character constantly under threat of extinction by governing officials. Scholars documenting processes of urbanization worldwide have demonstrated, however, that being modern in cities is achieved not only in the built environment but also in a diverse "cityness" (Robinson 2006, 10; see also Cabannes and Marocchino 2018; Douglass, Ho, and Ooi 2008) realized in flexible private and public spaces and enacted in innovative socioeconomic performances. How, then, do the dispossessed, such as Baguio's omnipresent street food vendors, redirect capital encroachment to secure their livelihoods?

Following the 2014 ban on street food sales in Baguio, vendors successfully advocated, as noted, to move their enterprises to the Harrison Road Night Market, or they rented storefront sites—both initiatives evidencing that a formidable resistance to creeping urbanization is already taking place. While Baguio vendors' opinions differed

regarding whether their alternative sites benefited their businesses, both Harrison Road and storefront sellers agreed on the advantage of not being constantly pursued by police. By engaging in "street politics" (Bayat 2012, 119) or "everyday politics" (Kerkvliet 2009, 232), Baguio vendors have activated any elasticity in their positions to mitigate government efforts to contain their practices; they developed wider networks of solidarity and refashioned how their street trades are publicly perceived, both of which further secured their relocated enterprises more on their own terms. Such everyday politics of the street encompass "a set of conflicts and the attendant implications between certain groups or individuals and the authorities, which are shaped and expressed in the physical and social space of the streets … [and often in the form of] unorganized and unassuming non-movements" (e.g., placing goods in unoccupied spaces, subletting space, offering bribes) (Bayat 2012, 119, 121; see also Kerkvliet 2009, 232).

In addition to engaging everyday politics or "non-movements," Baguio vendors pursue their claims through what Kerkvliet (2009, 232) terms "advocacy politics." To oppose government efforts to eliminate their businesses, vendors formally organized government-registered associations,[1] mounted public protests and petitions, and personally met with officials in "direct and concerted efforts" (Kerkvliet 2009, 233) to openly advocate for "alternative futures" (Bayat 2012, 118; see also Chiu 2013; Hsu 2010). Yet, because the distinction between everyday, non-movement, and advocacy politics is not hard-edged, vendors tack back and forth, blurring any boundaries among these actions. Baguio vendors thus sustain their livelihoods through the simultaneous parallel processes of dispossession and repossession—actions that turn urban physical and social space into sites of protracted negotiation for control and place-based meaning—in both their Harrison Road and storefront sites.

Baguio and its street food trades

In the early twentieth century, the American colonial government in the Philippines established Baguio as its mountain summer resort to escape the hotter lowland climate. With a population of approximately three hundred thousand, Baguio is the government, education, and administrative center for northern Luzon's mountain provinces. The city's numerous universities, along with its government services, extensive public market, and new shopping malls, provide the customer base that those starting new businesses seek. Most retailers and wholesalers across business sectors, however, must negotiate individualized strategies to realize the potential of this urban market. While the national government's development polices have enabled greater competition in sectors previously accessed primarily by well-off urbanites, Philippine leaders operating within a "soft state" (Bayat 2012, 124) have not constructed an infrastructure that can achieve effective political and economic transformation for the majority of the population (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2012, 98–99).

The shortage of locally based employment opportunities for Baguio's growing population is evidenced, as noted, in the city's extensive street vending trades, in which selling foods is prominently represented. Throughout the Philippines, as in much of Southeast Asia, women are the primary street and market vendors, building on their history as the main household financial managers and on their customary engagement in small-scale, self-employed public sector trades (Mills 2016). While the majority of Baguio's street food and current storefront vendors are women, consistent with past practice, the shift to stationary cooking sites in both the Harrison Road Night Market and storefront eateries means that more husband-and-wife teams as well as individual men are working in these reconfigured food enterprises. As the majority of Baguio's street vendors have worked illegally and periodically, there is no accurate count of the total vendor population, but estimates place the number of vendors who work throughout the city at five thousand to six thousand. To secure their right to work, Baguio's street vendors have had to consistently exercise "advocacy politics" (Kerkvliet 2009, 233) by submitting petitions and lobbying local government officials such that in the late 1990s, as noted, some vendors obtained "maximum tolerance"—permission to legally sell goods in particular street locations at particular times (Milgram 2009, 118; 2011). As Philippine municipal elections occur every three years, however, a change in mayoral leadership

potentially brings a shift in street vending policies, depending on the municipal agenda and what section of the electorate the current mayor is courting.

Thus, in 2011 and again in 2014, following the 2010 and 2013 municipal elections, respectively, the then reelected mayor forged ahead with the city's modernization agenda, including his election promise to strictly enforce street vendor clearances — actions that officials have repeatedly implemented in the past but that they have been variably successful in enforcing (Milgram 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015a). Street vendors can regain the hard-won rights they may lose during such crackdowns only by continuing their overt and under-the-radar activism — engaged advocacy for which Filipinos have a long history (Thompson and Batalla 2018). In response to the 2014 street selling ban, then, vendors already in government-registered associations met with members of the Committee for Marketing, Trade, and Commerce to voice their concerns. They also attended the committee's monthly meetings, during which officials designate a time for public consultation, as they recognize the power that vendors hold as a substantial block of municipal voters. Vendors' advocacy ultimately culminated in the late 2014 committee decision to grant food vendors, through a lottery process, the right to conduct business in an expanded portion of the already established Harrison Road Night Market. This popular street market operates along a one-half-kilometer stretch of Harrison Road, a major public road that is closed to vehicular traffic daily from 9:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. (Milgram 2014; See 2012) (Figure 1).

Indeed, the city government maximized its initiative of formalizing food vendors' previously informal trade by raising the daily rental rate for vendors' new Harrison Road locations from twenty-five to fifty pesos (US$0.50 – $1.00) and by increasing the original number of allotted food-selling spots from twenty-three to more than one hundred sites, while additionally enabling ten coffee vendors to operate "roving" (ambulant) businesses. Some food vendors who did not obtain a night market site collaborated to collectively rent downtown storefronts, obtaining municipal permission to operate multiple enterprises within a single commercial venue. Other vendors moved to community satellite markets outside the Central Business District, while still others maintained their illegal street trade while attempting to avoid the police. For many of the city's relocated food sellers, this shift from informal, ambulant, and often extralegal practice to legal and formally fixed-site enterprises has meant that vendors have devised innovative channels through which to maintain the urban texture of their street-specific cuisine, as the following case studies illustrate.

Reconfiguring street food vending

Harrison Road Night Market food vendors

By 8:30 p.m., as one approaches Harrison Road where the night market will soon be in full swing, one can hear the buzz of excitement as vendors selling a wide range of goods (used and new clothing, DVDs and CDs, local crafts, and food) perch on the side of the road ready to set up their displays exactly at 9:00 p.m., when the market officially opens. Along one-half of Harrison Road, vendors are assigned a 1.5 × 1.5 meter space clearly numbered and marked in paint on the road. These borders may become elastic, however, when sellers exercise everyday politics to expand or contract their spaces if, for example, a vendor's site is vacant when the seller does not arrive for work, or if vendors sublet a portion of their space to a fellow seller — both of which contravene the night market rental agreements (see Milgram 2014). Given that vendors submit their weekly rental payments in advance and directly to the Office of the City Treasurer, the night market managers do not collect dues or assign space for sales but rather carry out general administrative duties, such as supervising adherence to the market's operating hours and to the parameters of signage and hygiene and ensuring orderly commercial transactions. If, however, a vendor does not appear for work, a night market manager could accept a payment or bribe to enable an itinerant vendor to sell in the unoccupied space, or the administrator may overlook this infraction — periodic occurrences integral to the informality of this formalized market.

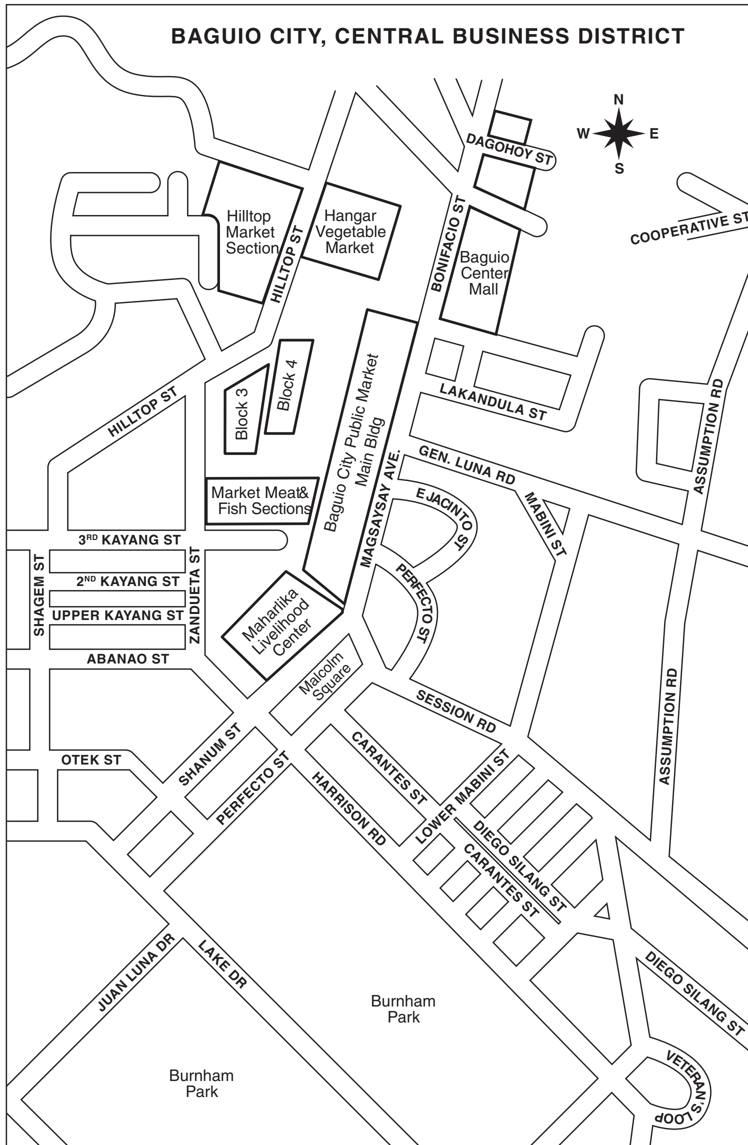

Figure 1 Map of the Central Business District, Baguio, Philippines.

The clouds of steam rising from either end of Harrison Road periodically part to reveal food vendors preparing their offerings to entice urbanites' participation in the market's out-of-doors dining experience. The prepared foods most commonly served and similarly priced throughout the night market include hot dogs and hamburgers sporting a range of toppings; *siomai* dumplings; *balut*; steamed sweet corn; macaroni mixtures in a cup; a range of barbecue meats, including the local specialty of one-day-old chicks (*odocs*); fish and chicken balls; *suman*; and a variety of drinks. These foods attract consumers across classes, both residents and visiting tourists who want a meal or snack while shopping for a bargain or for a unique item, or simply while roaming the market for entertainment and to experience one of Baguio's renowned tourist attractions (see Milgram 2014; TripAdvisor 2019).

Entering the night market at the busy Magsaysay Street entrance, one immediately smells the aroma rising from Leena's soup cart.[2] Leena, fifty-two years old and a former ambulant public market vendor, has been feeding diners in the night market since its inception (Figure 2). Given Baguio's cooler temperatures, Leena decided to sell hot

Figure 2 A soup vendor works in the Harrison Road Night Market, Baguio, Philippines. Photograph by the author.

chicken and macaroni soup and a local favorite variation on rice porridge (*arroz caldo*), ornately topping each dish with different meat and vegetable garnishes. Leena's brisk business provides customers with both takeout and seated dine-in options, the latter facilitated by two long tables with chairs that can accommodate ten to twelve customers. One of Leena's diners explained, "I like the home-cooked quality of Leena's meals and the wide range of toppings she offers. And I particularly like being able to sit down to avoid spilling my soup" (interview, February 12, 2015).

Because Leena's business demands efficient service, she has had to adjust the type of utensils she uses, cognizant of the hygiene challenge of not having running water. Leena thus serves her soups in colored plastic bowls encased in thin, clear plastic sleeves. When clients finish eating, employees simply remove the bowl from the used plastic sleeve, which they discard, subsequently inserting the bowl into a new clean sleeve. The dine-in issue, however, remains a source of tension among vendors who cannot accommodate this service due to their space restrictions and among city health officials who insist that fixed-dining facilities are permitted only in appropriately registered restaurants. Despite authorities' periodic dismantling of such table-and-chair setups, vendors like Leena activate everyday street politics by resurrecting these structures (albeit often in a diminished form) once a suitable lag time has elapsed. The popularity of Leena's soups evidences the distinctive taste of her site, while Leena's eat-in option conflates an inside–outside dining experience.

Directly across the street from Leena, husband-and-wife team Susan and Peter, both in their early forties, distinguish their prepared food business by fostering customer participation. Before moving to Harrison Road in late 2014, Susan worked as an ambulant food vendor in the public market, offering precooked meals to shoppers and merchants. In their current night market site, Susan and Peter artfully display precooked pieces of chicken, fish, sausage, and spring rolls in containers arranged on a wood counter attached to the front of their gas-fueled cooking cart. Using tongs that Susan and Peter provide, customers choose their pieces of food from the display and hand these to the chef, who quickly wok-fries diners' choices to complete the cooking process. While one partner cooks, the other prepares the takeout meal by placing a bed of rice in a Styrofoam container, into which the cooked meat or fish and a garnish are placed.

Given the growing competition among night market food sellers, Susan and Peter expanded their menu to include "Shanghai"-style spring rolls that they showcase in a constantly replenished stack on their cart's countertop. The continuous sound and smell of spring rolls frying in sizzling oil prompts customers to spontaneously add this item to their meal or to simply eat one while waiting for their dinner to be prepared. Part of the appeal of street

foods for customers is the participatory nature of ambulant dining—moving among carts, making spontaneous decisions, innovatively combining foods from various sources. Susan and Peter foster this street dining dynamic by having customers choose the items they want to eat, thereby engaging them in what Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (1998) term the "experience economy." As these authors note, "commodities are fungible … services intangible, and experiences *memorable*" (Pine and Gilmore 1998, 98, emphasis in original). Peter and Susan have thus "wrap[ped] … inherently personal" gestures (Pine and Gilmore 1998, 100) around their commodity transactions—purchasing a prepared meal—such that customers actively co-create their dining experience. Such face-to-face interactions more integrally link consumers and retailers to distinguish street food dining from what are often more disengaged restaurant encounters.

In another popular Harrison Road street site, Patricia and Allan, thirty-two and thirty-four years old, respectively, cook their unique version of *sisig*. "When we started our night market business in early 2015," Patricia explained, "we identified *sisig* as a food that no one was cooking because it is time consuming to prepare. We have to chop, season, and lightly pre-fry the meat at home to prevent spoilage later when we serve it" (interview, May 27, 2016).

At Patricia and Allan's Harrison Road site, bright lights mounted on a frame attached to the cart and continuous flames rising from the cooking woks announce their eatery and enable customers to view the chef's signature performance cooking. As with Susan and Peter's offerings, customers participate in the composition of their meal by having the *sisig* cooked to order—medium or well done and with or without chili—a taste of the street that Nicholas Gilman (2011, 20) terms "before the eyes dishes." But, as Patricia explained, "when officials are in the market, we limit the cooking flames we generate as the city is more strictly monitoring some aspects of food preparation. When they leave, we return to our cooking performances to generate sound, light, and distinctive aromas" (interview, May 27, 2016).[3]

At the opposite end of Harrison Road, Ludi, sixty-six years old, started her market enterprise in late 2014 selling *bibingka*—pounded rice flour-type pancakes she prepares from glutinous rice, coconut milk, and cane sugar cooked in small ceramic charcoal-fired burners. As an ambulant street vendor, Ludi sold prepared snacks, such as fried bananas and sweet potatoes, to *jeepney* (open-back truck) drivers and passengers at local transportation hubs. At the night market, Ludi decided to offer slow-cooked *bibingka*, as other vendors were already offering a variety of prepared *suman* wrapped in banana leaves.

In contrast to the performance cooking integral to Patricia and Allan's eatery, Ludi uses a low-key presentation—charcoal-fired clay burners for cooking and banana leaves for packaging her *bibingka*. On her display table, Ludi operates four small burners. Each burner supports a metal pan lined with two banana leaves that serve as the mold for the rice flour batter. Ludi pours the batter into the lined pans, covering them with customized metal lids. On top of each lid, she places hot coals such that the batter is cooked from two directions to instill the distinctive smoky taste. When the batter is cooked, Ludi adds slices of salted egg, grated cheese, and coconut shavings according to her grandmother's recipe.

Ludi explains that she can only operate four burners at one time, even with the assistance of her husband, who constantly stokes the charcoal. As the entire *bibingka* cooking process takes about twenty minutes to complete, Ludi's customers, standing in mesmerized silence, are as enthralled by this quiet performance as they are with the frantic activity of the *sisig* preparation down the street. Ludi's *bibingka* stall has become a destination for tourists seeking "authentic" street food and for local urbanites wanting to taste their region's culinary history.[4]

Vendors reimagine storefront cuisine

Former street sellers who currently conduct businesses in storefront locations operate from early morning until early evening to best serve their regular customers, namely, local students and workers. Thus these storefront enterprises

do not compete with the night market food vendors, whose sales do not begin until 9:00 p.m. To optimize their collective locations, vendors agreed to offer diners a wide choice of dishes in one location, and thus each vendor prepares a different type of food. In such storefront sites, one or two vendors position their formerly mobile carts on either side of the store's entrance—usually the vendors who first rented the premises—while the other food carts line the interior store walls. This arrangement enables a central common area for customer seating. In a mini–food court format, customers can visit each cart to assemble a multicourse meal, choosing among main courses, desserts, and drinks. Carol, a thirty-two-year-old drink and dessert vendor, explained, "Although our businesses are *kanya kanya* [independent], most vendors cooperate with each other within our shared space" (interview, June 15, 2016).

Storefront vendors explained, however, that although conducting business in such formally rented sites means they are no longer chased by police, new challenges have arisen. As Evelyn, a twenty-nine-year-old storefront soup vendor, stated, "we have had to rent premises on less expensive side streets although we are still located in the city's Central Business District" (interview, June 16, 2016). There are dense concentrations of storefront eateries located, for example, on the busy web of side streets bounded by the major vehicular and pedestrian arteries, Harrison Road and Session Road, as well as on the three Kayang Streets adjacent to the steadily busy Baguio City Public Market and bounded by Abanao, Zandueta, and Shagem Streets (Milgram 2015b) (see Figure 1). "In our new sites," Evelyn continued, "we need to encourage consumers to turn the corner to reach our shops" (interview, June 16, 2016). Many storefront vendors thus advertise their locations by mounting illustrated signs that announce their food specialties and by having different cart owners take shifts outside the store to call patrons' attention to their varied offerings. Edward, fifty-two years old and a former ambulant food vendor, explained that "storefront vendors walk a fine line to distinguish our eateries as our transformed businesses constitute a new type of food experience"—one turned outside in. "Because our enterprises are now stationary and inside," he continued, "we need to differentiate ourselves from the city's regular restaurants by promoting the edgy outside eating experience people expect from us" (interview, June 17, 2016).[5]

Before the 2014 street clearances, Edward used his food cart to sell skewers of cooked meat and fish to students attending Baguio's Saint Louis University. To continue working, Edward rented a storefront on a side street one block from Session Road and recruited four other former street vendors to broaden his site's offerings, which now include fried meats, boiled vegetable balls, beef noodle soup, dumplings, sweet corn and corn soup, assorted drinks, and small cakes. From his stationary cart at the storefront's entrance (Figure 3), Edward sells skewers of fried and boiled fish, chicken, and vegetables. Edward purchases his produce each morning in the Baguio City Public Market and cleans, precooks, and organizes the skewers at home. Upon arriving at the storefront, Edward artfully stacks the product-specific sticks on the countertop of his cart, presenting an irresistible enticement to customers passing by. Although Edward offers each of his products throughout the day, he explained, "I have to calculate the volume of food I display to attract customers while balancing this presentation with the number of skewers I will actually sell" (interview, June 17, 2016).

Directly behind Edward's cart, Elizabeth, thirty-nine years old, sells chicken noodle soup and fried chicken, closely adhering to her family's recipes. Before the street vending ban, Elizabeth sold prepared foods to residents leaving or entering the city from her display at the Camp 7 *jeepney* transportation hub. Once relocated in her storefront site, Elizabeth distinguished her dishes by adding more meat to her soup and offering customers a variety of garnishes and the option to add an egg. Elizabeth explained, "Although my current expenses are higher given the extra soup toppings I offer and the better-quality meat I use, I am confident the risk will work to my advantage as my customers are becoming regulars often lining up at meal times" (interview, June 17, 2016). Edward continued,

> When customers congregate outside our storefront, we encourage them to linger as we know this creates a sense of expectation resulting in other people stopping to eat here. However, this means we have to offer patrolling police a meal so they will overlook that our customers may block pedestrian traffic.

Figure 3 A vendor serves barbecue foods from his food cart in a storefront eatery, Baguio, Philippines. Photograph by the author.

In addition to storefront vendors offering typical Filipino dishes, a number of Korean merchants, primarily women, have established small side-street eateries specializing in Korean street foods. Since the early 2000s, Baguio has welcomed a growing population of Korean immigrants. In 2012, Elsie, forty-two years old, for example, started cooking selected Korean foods to sell door-to-door to her neighbors. In mid-2015, she rented a space in a side-street storefront eatery and expanded her menu to include meat and vegetable dumplings, cooked rice cakes, fish soup and cakes, and hot dogs coated in a flour batter and fried. To distinguish her hot dogs from those widely sold by other vendors, Elsie uses imported Korean flour for the batter, explaining, "Korean flour cooks and tastes better, but I use local hot dogs because they are cheaper" (interview, July 5, 2017). Like other storefront vendors, Elsie continues to cook selected foods during the day so that the sounds of sizzling oil and boiling water mingle with different aromas to attract customers. Elsie stated, "My customers, both Korean and Filipino, tell me they like the variety of sauces I make: hot chili, garlic, sweet garlic, sweet pepper, and tomato, toyomansi [soy sauce with citrus]. If people like your sauces they will come back to you" (interview, July 5, 2017). To accommodate her growing clientele, albeit having to activate everyday politics, Elsie explained further that "on weekends when my customers line up, I will put out sidewalk seating to encourage them to stay. But, I have to quickly take the chairs inside the store if officials come by; then I wait a bit before making seating again available" (interview July 5, 2017).

Storefront vendors agreed, moreover, that by continuing to devise innovative and high-quality dishes in their on-the-edge sites, their inside–outside eateries are being recognized as destination dining options. Baguio's shopping mall workers who finish their shifts at 10:00 p.m., for example, have especially embraced Harrison Road's food stalls. As night market vendor Leena stated, "customers arriving from work after 10:00 p.m. are more interested in eating than in shopping. These customers come here to relax and share a meal. Our eateries are not just an add-on to shopping" (interview, May 29, 2016). Both Baguio's street and storefront eateries thus emerge simultaneously as economic, social, and provisioning sites that enable residents and visitors to eat quality foods on their own but still in the company of others.

Conclusion

Although street food is in no way a new phenomenon, how and where it is prepared and consumed is currently being reshaped by street vendors' advocacy, municipal regulatory constraints and opportunities, and a

gastronomically informed customer taste. Studies analyzing the modernizing policies of cities globally evidence that processes of displacement—how governments dramatically face-lift and even erase the communities in which people live and work—clearly link the capacity of capital to produce wealth that supports corporate-friendly structures with the marginalizing consequences of such actions for those on the ground struggling to fulfill their everyday subsistence needs. As in other modernizing Global South cities, in Baguio, officials initially enforced street vending bans through violence (physical removal of vendors from the street), then later through containment (e.g., supporting night market relocation). It is within this context that Baguio's street food vendors have operationalized place-based movements to contest their disenfranchisement through "survival by repossession" (Bayat 2012, 124).

Vendors responded to the Baguio government's exclusionary agenda privileging sanitized and controlled streetscapes by successfully lobbying to expand the number of night market business sites and by collaborating to rent storefront venues for their recrafted enterprises. To stretch the parameters of their containment and resist their regulation to the edge of institutional state power, vendors embraced "life as politics" (Bayat 2012, 119) by refashioning their relocated businesses into highly sought-after destinations for their singularly prepared foods.

Although the intent of Baguio's 2014 street food vending ban initially appeared to erase this trade, officials, in effect, applied "regulatory techniques" to orchestrate "a complex [spatial] choreography" that resulted in new urban "frontiers" that could both augment the city treasury (Roy 2004, 154–55) and refashion streets and storefronts as loci of gastronomic taste. In this light, as Ananya Roy (2009a, 159–60) notes, it is the "dialectical movement between insurgency and institutionalization"—the "politics of inclusion"—activated by both vendors and municipal officials that enables "the ideal of inclusion [to be] formalized" and continually negotiated.

Baguio's street food vendors have thus dramatically altered the perception of their work from an informal trade considered "an embarrassment" to a regionally unique practice that government and urbanites actively promote in blogs, advertising, and tourist literature as a sign "of innovation, ingenuity, and small-scale entrepreneurialism" (Anjaria 2016, 8; see also See 2012; TripAdvisor 2019; Yasmeen 2000, 348–49). As Hou (2010, 2) suggests, examples of such "self-made urban spaces, reclaimed and appropriated sites … created by predominantly marginalized communities" through legal and not-so-legal means, provide timely expressions of informal collective spheres in contemporary cities. The popular integration into everyday city life of street foods stands in stark contrast to the creeping standardization of food offerings increasingly available in Baguio's expanding fast-food chains, such as Jollibee, McDonald's, Chowking, and Dunkin' Donuts—offerings that Yasmeen (2000, 344) terms an "industrial palate" and "placeless sources of food."

Through their politics-on-the-edge, Baguio's relocated street and storefront food vendors have asserted their place as legitimate and visible actors in public arenas that have largely excluded them from having a voice in where, and the conditions within which, they work. Rather than simply accepting their right to the city as only "a right of consumption" to "consume what city life has to offer … after it is produced," Baguio's street food vendors advocated for the right to determine specifically "what is produced" and to participate, as they have, in how it is produced (Marcuse 2012, 36).

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Notes

1 To more effectively advocate for their demands, street vendors organize associations based on their street location or on the type of goods they sell and register their organizations with the national government's Securities and Employment Commission (SEC) (e.g., Harrison Road Night Market Food Vendors Association, Kayang Street Secondhand Clothing Vendors Association) (Milgram 2009, 2011, 2014).

2 All personal names of people mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

3 In late 2017, the city government introduced policies to restrict cooking in the night market. To date, vendors continue to negotiate with officials to continue this practice, and many vendors "defy the order," which is variably enforced (Catajan 2017, 2019; TripAdvisor 2019).

4 Yasmeen (2000, 348) demonstrates that Bangkok consumers increasingly favor "discovering" street foods situated in up-scale hotels and in plazas rather than on the street, where they fear crowds and food poisoning. While Yasmeen supports preserving the long-standing cultural meanings in street foods, she warns of potential "museumification" if change is not integrated into contemporary street food composition.

5 In Singapore, formerly ambulant vendors faced a similar challenge to attract customers when the government relocated their eateries to stationary hawker courts (Parham 2015, 104, 111).

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