

Everyday struggles of illegal immigrants in New York¹

Luchas cotidianas de inmigrantes ilegales en Nueva York

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Summary

The work addresses the hegemonic processes that have arisen between Mexican immigrants and the state in New York City over the past four decades. We describe the disorganized and spontaneous daily struggles that a group of subjects perform in creative ways to resist, accommodate, reinterpret and crack the impositions of power in the political and economic spheres. Specifically, we address the challenge to the punishment of deportation through the reincomes of immigrants to the United States and to accommodate the state's power by bringing a life in the shadows, the different reinterpretations and the easing of immigration laws to access legalization, creative ways of self-employment, theft and sabotage of the work day and self-inclusions in the health system and the dual use of social assistance programs. The working methodology was planned in two phases. In a first division we divided the informants into three stages-1978-1989, 1990-1999 and 2000-2014- according to their arrival times in New York City and we worked with 55 of them through structured and semi-structured interviews to learn about your tactics would be in power relations. The second phase was proposed from the participant observation technique during the summers of 2011 to 2014 to learn about the subjectivities and contests that unexpectedly occur in the development of everyday life. The analysis and presentation of the information was carried out through thematic analysis, organizing and guiding the interpretation.

Keywords: Hegemony, class, culture and illegal immigrants.

Resumen

El trabajo aborda los procesos hegemónicos que se suscitan entre los inmigrantes mexicanos y el Estado en la ciudad de Nueva York en las últimas cuatro décadas. Describimos las luchas cotidianas desorganizadas y espontáneas que un grupo de sujetos realizan bajo formas creativas para resistir, acomodarse, reinterpretar y agrietar las imposiciones del poder en los ámbitos políticos y económicos. Concretamente, abordamos el desafío al castigo de la deportación a través de los reingresos de inmigrantes a Estados Unidos y el acomodarse al poder del Estado al llevar una vida en las sombras, las diferentes reinterpretaciones y la flexibilización de leyes migratorias para acceder a la legalización, las formas creativas de auto-emplearse, robos y sabotajes al fragor de la jornada laboral y las auto-inclusiones en el sistema de salud y el doble uso de los programas de asistencia social. La metodología de trabajo se planeó en dos fases: en la primera dividimos a los informantes en tres etapas —1978-1989, 1990-1999 y 2000-2014— acorde a sus tiempos de arribo a la ciudad de Nueva York y trabajamos con 55 de ellos a través de entrevistas estructuradas y semiestructuradas para conocer sus tácticas contestatarias en las relaciones de poder. La segunda fase se planteó desde la técnica de la observación participante durante los veranos de 2011 a 2014 para conocer las subjetividades y contiendas que se presentan inesperadamente en el desarrollo de la vida cotidiana.

Palabras clave: Hegemonía, clase, cultura, inmigrantes ilegales.

¹ I dedicate this article to my students and colleagues from BALEVI and UNILIVI who gave me moral and labor support at critical moments of health. Thank you for the affection for my person.

INTRODUCTION

The population of Mexican origin is the largest in the United States. In 2021, Mexicans remained the largest group of immigrants in the neighboring northern country, accounting for about 24 percent or 10.7 million of the 45.3 million foreign-born residents.² Two years earlier Migration Policy Institute (2021) estimated that approximately 5.3 million (48 percent) of the 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from Mexico (Rosenbloom and Batalova, 2022). Mexicans are by far the largest part of the undocumented immigrant population in Spain. It is estimated that, of approximately 21,036,500 immigrants of Hispanic origin, 7,410,000 are undocumented, and Mexicans are 63.6 per cent. Also, it has been documented that more than half of the undocumented Hispanic population resides in states such as: California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois (Millet and Pavolon, 2022). In New York, Mexicans represent the third largest population of the majority minority, just behind Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, with a population of approximately 457,288. For undocumented Mexican immigrants, the presence of 180 thousand is spoken in 2016 and most come from the states of Puebla, Oaxaca and Guerrero (Sepúlveda, 2016).

It would be feasible to assume that this population, living in a sanctuary city of immigrants, experiences a life in relative calm in the persecution of its “American Dream”, but on the contrary, it is different the negative situations that suffer in the economic, political and social fields. Only the facts and quantities of deportations in the last four administrations would have to be seen in order to realize that the punishment of the same is a latent constant for all undocumented immigrants. Nowrasteh (2019) estimates that in the William Clinton administration (1993-2001). A total of 869,646 migrants were deported, in George W. Bush’s (2001-2009) 2,012,5392 million foreigners, in Barak Obama’s (2009-2012) 3,066,457 and in the first two years of the Trump administration 551,449. Guillen, Noricumbo and Sevilla (2017) estimate that the number of Mexicans deported from 2003 and up to 2007 was just over 500,000 annually. In 2008, the deportees amounted to 577,826 cases and in 2009 it increased by 4.1 per cent. In the following years the deportations began to descend, in 2010 there were 469,268 cases and by 2015 the numbers reached 207,398, but in 2016 there was an increase of 219,932 deportees. In the last two years, the

² Despite the continued popularity of the United States as a destination, the population of Mexican immigrants declined by approximately 1 million people (or 9 percent) between 2010 and 2021 (Rosenbloom and Batalova, 2022).

events of returns of Mexicans from the United States increased 60.5 by the way, that is, from 160,689 in 2021 they increased to 258,007 cases in 2022. The deportees were from the states of the southeast of the country, among them Chiapas with 29,534 events, Guerrero with 26,075, Oaxaca 22,929, Puebla 21,086, Veracruz 20,869 and Michoacán 17,164 (INM, 2023).

The deportation of immigrants is part of a broader framework of the slogan and punishment that goes further from the State. The production of illegality also manifests itself in negative social perceptions against immigrants (De Genova and Peutz, 2010), therefore it is common to listen to social slogans of old and other recent apparitions to blame the immigrant from stealing jobs from the natives, making wages cheaper, not assimilating to American culture, introducing new foreign customs, being a social burden, causing high tax payments for the misuse of social services, committing criminal actions, bringing diseases to the U.S., and so forth. The success of illegal immigrant production not only manifests itself in legal and constitutional limitations, but also in the development of anti-immigrant sentiments that culminate in building them as “illegal” and/or “criminal” (Liette and Konick, 2012; Vera, 2012).

In recent years Donald Trump stood out for being the most Mexican candidate and president, as our fellow nationals became one of their preferred targets by characterizing them as crime-causing, drug smugglers, rapists, “bad men”, among other highly destructive qualifiers (Hines, 2019). In addition, their policy proposals directly or indirectly abused their civil rights, while creating acts of hostility, fear and vulnerability, reducing equality of legal protection, and creating prejudice in eligibility for public assistance programs (Fitzgerald, Lopez, McClean, 2018).

Given these situations, it is appropriate to ask whether the Latin immigrant community, specifically the Mexican one, faces these political, economic and social attacks, namely the concrete forms with which they contend and how they can be understood. immigrant struggles. These questions are the ones that give way to the development of this document and will be addressed under the gramscian proposal of hegemony, understanding that in the relations of power between the State and the immigrants a series of constant struggles develop. Therefore, immigrants, in a disorganized and spontaneous way, carry out creative forms of resistance, accommodation, reinterpretation and cracking to the impositions of power. In the particular case of Mexican immigrants in New York City, we argue that the struggle of the international proletariat would not be possible without the production of a Latin quarter, of which immigrants take a series of own gadgets of

their culture, as social relations, values, among them class solidarity, and new moralities, to consider what is right and wrong in opposition to the ideas of the ruling class.

The methodological strategy for the collection of information consisted of two phases. In a first we place immigrants in stages from their arrivals in New York City. We created three stages: the “pioneer” who arrived from 1976-1989, the stage of the “accelerated migration” from 1990-1999 and the stage of “migration consolidation” from 2000-2014. For data collection, we based on the application of semi-structured and structured open interviews with 20 informants from the first and second stages and 15 immigrants from the third stage, who had the objective of obtaining specific information about border crossing issues, arrived in New York City, the production of the Latino neighborhood, problems they faced in the labor field, the paths and dreams of legalization, their labor trajectories, income and distribution of housing, living and social relations, use of social assistance programmes, the subjectivities and implications of anti-immigrant policies and solidarity of class or individual forms to cope with their vicissitudes. The selection of informants considered the variables of gender, age, migratory status, and labor scope to have a broad spectrum of information.³

In the second phase of data collection, the field work was developed under the technique of participant observation in order to be close to the research subjects. This technique was vital to document the daily alliances and supports offered by the subjects in the neighborhood, to listen and observe these actions or solidarity speeches at the pressing moments of their daily life and to capture these spontaneous struggles. In four seasons of fieldwork, from June to August 2010 to 2014, we had the opportunity to live with first and second stage informants, talking with them on the weekends in their departments. Meanwhile, with second and third stage informants, as we are contemporary, we have a closer cohabitation when we meet them to play football, have breakfast, eat or watch television. The fieldwork was also based on panoramic descriptions-participants of patriotic festivals, religious holidays, breaks and cohabitation in parks, restaurants and other public spaces. Finally, to be able to consider the subjectivities and contests inside the workplaces, he rescued the multiple

³ Our choice of 40 informants between the first and second stages was based on the majority exodus of people from the population to the USA between the years 1980 to 2000. While the choice of 15 informants between the third and fourth stages was due to the marked decrease of migratory arrivals due to the technological and military reinforcement of the border that has diminished the illegal crossings.

work experiences that we face as a migrant more from 2001 to 2014. This allowed us to get information enough about the races that workers, men and women, deploy on a day-to-day basis in their jobs. The analysis and presentation of the information was carried out through thematic analysis, organizing and guiding the interpretation.

HEGEMONY, CLASS AND CULTURE TO EXPLAIN IMMIGRANT RACES

There is a vast literature that has documented the immigrant struggles under various theoretical and transcendental moments. Usually, clubs and associations or civil and religious organizations have been the most long-lived forms of immigrant contention that have been documented. Authors such as Escala-Rabadan (2014), Chávez (2008), Coutin (1998), Fox (2006), Goldring (2002), González (2009), Santamaria (2007), Rivera (2004, 2008) and Varela (2008), points out that these groups rely on collective identities that sometimes overlap with ethnicity, work, religion and country or place of origin with the objectives of rescuing or maintaining national culture and identity, demanding improvements in local living conditions, instructing migrants on their civil rights, encourage them to participate politically in the place of reception and origin and to fight for recognition and inclusion in the place of reception. These studies have shown that immigrant communities are organized to show the strength of their presence, their role as workers, to be members of the community, to oppose different anti-immigrant laws, to seek recognition of rights, legalisation of their migratory status and dealing with mechanisms of criminalisation and vulnerability of work (Coutin, 2007; Sandoval, 2007).

Other studies focus on spontaneous, disorganized and individual struggles based on the culture and space where the daily life of immigrants develops. Dohan (2003), analyzing the fight against poverty in two neighborhoods of Los Angeles, California, places the development of a legal and illegal economy, the use of social networks to use and use social assistance to cope with their conditions. Survival precariats. Sarah Mahler (1995), in her work with Salvadorans in suburban Long Island, documents ways to make money out of state margins through the informal economy of regional consumption products and with the sale of documents. false migration. The same situations show Hagan and González (1993) in a community of Guatemalans in Houston, Texas, evidencing the particular ways of interpreting the proposals of the IRCA Program in their favor and beyond the legal margins of the State. obtain legal residence. Finally, in the heat of the interactions between the empelados and the employer, Aquino (2010)

shows us how the domestic workers of Oaxaca articulate moral discourses to preserve their dignity and criticize the life forms of their employers and their families.

This work adds to those who present the development of disorganized and cultural practices, such as the importance of family and friendship networks, values and moralities deployed in a specific space. We start from the premise that illegal immigrants living in a state of fear of being detained and deported, by living concrete forms of exclusion and disenfranchisement such as being unable to move freely between their places of origin and (i) the right to work and to be excluded from certain services in the welfare state, such as social and medical insurance, they unfold a series of disorganized daily struggles with the intention of dealing with the vicissitudes they suffer in New York City.

In the intention of documenting how power relations are lived, and how these resistances become body and discourse, the term “Gramscian” of hegemony is of vital importance (Liaudat, 2016). For Gramsci the hegemony is extremely fluid, flexible and fragile, it does not have a single definition because it is not a theoretical concept bounded or ideology finished, but through it allows us to question how it is produced and reproduced the power relations that underpin various forms of inequality in a specific historical space and time (Crehan, 2004; Roseberry, 2002).

Therefore, hegemony cannot be thought of as a form of finished domination, Roseberry (2002) asks us to think of the relations between the ruling groups and the deputies characterized by the dispute, the struggle and the discussion. Far from taking for granted that the subaltern group passively accepts its fate, Gramsci clearly provides for a much more active and capable sub-alternate population. Nevertheless, it places the action and the confrontation within the formations, institutions and organizations of the State and civil society in which the subordinate populations live (Roseberry, 2002).

For Roseberry (2002, 2004) this is the way hegemony operates, and invites us to use this concept not to understand consensus, but to understand the struggle; the ways in which the process of domination itself shapes words, images, symbols, forms, organizations, institutions and movements used by the subaltern populations to speak of domination, confront, understand, accommodate or resist it. So hegemony builds a material and meaningful common framework for living through social orders characterized by domination, talking about it and acting on it. Without a doubt the Mexican migratory practice of more than half a century in New York

City and the production of Latin neighborhoods, will allow us to document multiple ways of responding, resisting and reinterpreting the state's attacks. These forms of subaltern contest will put them in the development of the experiences that shape the Mexican immigrant culture and which in turn is articulated with the idea of a social class of international proletarian workers who before the impositions, limitations and punishments of the ruling class, are maintained in a constant struggle from their own cultural gadgets.

In the present study we understand the culture of a social group like that which encompasses the works, the modes of thought (among which is the philosophy, as a way of acquiring a coherent view of the world), and also the ways of life and feeling. Like Gramsci (1967), we think of culture as the first to shape forms of emancipation of the proletariat, that is, a means of self-education of the masses. Therefore, the practices, expressions and discourses of immigrants will be important to document them to take into account, within the proletarian culture, the creation of new customs to give them new meanings, to create new habits of life, new thinking and feelings that promote a different view of the dominated class. Culture, understood as the way of life, willing to consider all the forms of life, to feel and to act, has relevance to being a critique of the civilization of capitalism (Buci-Glücksman, 1978).

In taking into account the cultural practices of Mexican immigrants we do not intend to extol, romanticize, celebrate their differences or see them suspended in time with their unique and different practices to others, but we seek to consider in culture the typologies of a class, since the realities of experiencing and living the social class refer to their cultural and inversely characteristics of their class belongings. Both allow us to consider the ways people have to see the world, their way of living and actively understand their place in the reality in which they live (Crehan, 2004). In addition, for Hall (2005), in social class practices and relationships, certain values and meanings characteristic of the class are present and culture is lived.

In the culture of Mexican immigrants, we intend to identify a hidden discourse composed of linguistic, gestural and practical manifestations that circulate outside the public sphere and which complicate the relationship between dominant culture and Popular culture. The various forms of interpretation of the expressions of the dominant culture, crossed by structures of thought typical of the popular sectors, which many times go against what is expected with the imposition of an official discourse, are other

means of determining a constant tension and struggle between social classes (Liaudat, 2016).

Culture will give us clues to unravel the formation of social classes in order to investigate the processes of domination, but, at the same time, it makes it possible to investigate the contestatory forms of the oppressed. This interpretation of culture will allow us to show an ethnographic wealth of invisible practices of the subaltern sectors that are rarely documented. It will give us access to a heuristic approach of interpreting their cultural codes, the political intention of enaltecer, claiming or visibilizing their practices and realizing a more thorough understanding of the power relations as they are experienced by subjects in a given time and context (Liaudat, 2016).

However, for Gramsci a decisive demision of inequality is the inability of the subaltern people to produce a coherent interpretation of the world in which they live, of being susceptible to questioning the existing hegemonic interpretations, by definition they conceive the world from the perspective of the dominant ones (Crehan, 2004). This incoherence is part of their common sense, which for Gramsci is always a negative quality that reflects the condition of the subalterity itself. As he writes in a passage, common sense takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is a conception that, even in an individual's brain, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsistent (in Crehan, 2019).

But it should not be forgotten that common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but it is in continuous transformation, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with the philosophical opinions that have penetrated everyday life (Crehan, 2004). Furthermore, no one escapes from common sense, we all live in a world of common sense, but it is not the same for all: "Every social class has its own common sense". We all continually channel the stream of events surrounding us into familiar accounts, making sense of what would otherwise seem random. The knowledge we use comes from the circles in which we move and from our own life experiences, mediated by the stories we have. Over time, this knowledge becomes a solid and persuasive core from the point of view of the emotions with which we contrast both what happens to us and the way others explain the world to us. At any historical moment there will be multiple accounts, some closely connected and overlapping, other conflicting and contradictory, but all of them are, for some rational beings, self-evident truths (Crehan, 2019).

If common sense, as Gramsci and its readers points out, is inconsistent, fragmentary and even in some cases of each subject, as it could serve for the

immigrant struggle and attempt to reverse the situation of domination that they experience. Gramsci states that in the common sense of the subaltern there exist elements of “good sense”, which represent the consciousness born of the concrete experience of the subalterity, are potentially the seeds for the emergence of new narratives policies to challenge existing hegemony in ways that go beyond mere defensive resistance (Crehan, 2019).

This research does not propose to see in the actions of immigrants suitable ways to empower themselves, to disappear or to reverse the power of the ruling class. Rather, we place, together with the development of their precarious lives, the elaboration of creative arguments and strategies to resign, contradict and oppose the mechanisms of coercion. In other words, in the face of all the depredations of the political class and the owners of the means of production, we attach importance to the creative abilities of immigrants as a genuine source of their potential political prerogative and their social dignity (De Genova, 2006).

The research suggests that these resistance practices are possible because the proletarian class has produced spaces characterized by the development of a dense fabric of social networks, experiences, moralities and values, which are the support material that gives meaning to its defense mechanisms. For this reason, spaces such as Latino neighborhoods are vital to give them shelter and security, to keep them as international workers, to deal with the exclusion of the state, to reinterpret the laws of migration, to strengthen ties of affection and kinship and deploy subaltern solidarities for the purpose of suspending illegality. We meditate on the fact that power relations have enabled the emergence of neighborhoods that give the possibility of identifying themselves as members of a community and sharing similar interests, for example, as workers, peasants or other labels local or regional.

Likewise, within these concrete spaces, they have maintained or reinvented values of cooperation and reciprocity that give way to a necessary morality in the face of the new economic realities that live to underpin the continuity of themselves and their community, especially in transnational spaces. For example, the private values and the individual norms proposed in neoliberalism are attacked with the subaltern solidarities upon being retaken as characteristics of the dignity of popular culture and opposed to the dominant culture. We will show how the moral of the subaltern culture allows the illegal actions to become normalized in the Latin neighborhoods, while allowing them to face their economic precariousness or allow access to spaces and social benefits of the which are excluded. Finally,

we will delve into how the interior of the community develops a language of resistance and challenge constituted by stories and materialized in memories, traditions and hopes (Roseberry in Gomez, 2008; Thompson in Meiksins Wood, 1983, 1995).

MOBILITY PRACTICES IN THE SHADOWS AND REINTERPRETATION OF MIGRATION POLICIES

The trick of hiding in the shadows

Raids on illegal immigrants have been a constant in New York, reminiscent of immigrants who arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For this time, at work, in their homes, in subway stations, and for minor crimes, several illegal immigrants were detained and deported for up to two and three times. These “embarrassing” events for immigrants did not end with their career paths, it was only a “bad time or bad luck” that put pause on the achievement of their work goals. For the deportees, the idea of re-entry was unavoidable, because they were not assumed as criminals. From their own perceptions, they were workers who had not broken the laws and their clandestine returns could happen at any time.⁴

Through the cases of four migrants arrested at their workplaces and one more at the train station during the 1980s, we showed that the border posed no problem to re-enter. During this time, the Immigration Naturalization Service was not responsible for verifying whether migrants detained at the border had previous criminal records or deportations. Consequently, there were no severe laws that would punish reentry and establish fear in migrants in their desire to return to the “north.” For this reason, Solomon, Czech, Martin, Pancho and Silvano re-entered after having suffered deportations in the early 1980s.⁵ Each one of them narrated no inconvenience for their re-entry, and to date three of them are still living in New York, they became legal residents and subsequently obtained citizenship. Only one maintains his status as illegal despite 40 years of immigration practice. Another return to his home community and he did not return to New York due to the lack of economic resources to finance his trip underground, but he has never ruled out the possibility of returning to the “Big Apple”.

⁴ It must be considered that in the 1980s the technological and human deployment was not as large as today. For this decade the forms of border crossing were fast and secure and the economic coyotes were low. This was why there was an oscillatory migratory practice because many were returning to their place of origin to visit the family or to be in community and religious festivals.

⁵ All the names of the informants throughout the work respond to pseudonyms.

First and second stage informants reported that arrests in public places declined, but INS visits to workplaces during the 1990s and in the first decade of this new century were more common.⁶ Along with the raids in the workplace, we are faced with at least a dozen cases of deportations of young gang members who have committed serious crimes, such as injuries to seconds, theft and sale of drugs and false documents. These cases are exceptional in order to understand the struggle to remain in NYC, despite being the subject of laws and damages to society.

We followed up on three cases, that of Sufridor, Parrandas, and Manoso, who, after being detained for several months in early 2002 for serious crimes, ended up being deported and with the country's re-entry ban, but after a few months in their native place sought the means to continue their migratory trajectories. One of the first dilemmas for them was to successfully fight the border, as their deportations were preceded by bans on re-entry for 5 or 10 years, an eventual detention by Border Patrol agents could cause them to prolonged lockdowns.⁷ For all three of the so-called "line" crossing-"guaranteed" form of crossing without so much walking and avoiding the surveillance of migratory authorities-it was the option to arrive in New York. It did not matter to pay amounts of up to five thousand dollars in 2003 as long as they had the opportunity to reunite with their families. Luckily for all three of their crosses were successful, in less than a week they teased the border to reach their destinations.

The strategy of the three did not conclude with their arrivals to NYC, he continued with the search for secure means of social and labor reinsertion. The first was the abandonment of their former residence zones to move to suburbs away from the city or to change state. The second was to turn to their social networks to work alongside their relatives in informal jobs. And, to conclude, for a while they used false documents by changing their names. This trio of immigrants are still living in New York and New Jersey. Parrandas and Manoso moved away from the gangs and, with the passage of time, made their way into salaried jobs and formed their families. Both were able to get legal documents with the help of their spouses, despite

⁶ The common was to find notions of the probability of migration to visit their places of employment or to ask their employers to check the authenticity of their Social Insurance. These situations immediately alert the subjects to leave the job.

⁷ If a foreigner reenters the United States without government approval after a criminal conviction for a felony or three convictions for a misdemeanor drug-related or anti-person offense, he is punished with: fines or imprisonment for a maximum of 10 years and may be at the age of 20 in the event that the person has committed certain serious crimes. These punishments can be together or separated.

their criminal background. Suffering remains in the shadows of illegality, but in it she has forged a life alongside her family like anyone else.

In these three stories the challenge is not only to cross and reside in the country or the city of New York, but also to not allow the State to determine the type of subjects that it wishes to have on its territory and not to let it decide on the conclusion of their immigrant lives. We are in a race where, on the one hand, the State acts with the vigor to punish the illegal immigrant through deportation and, on the other, it is precisely this deportation and exclusion that immigrants use to live in the shadows hiding from the state. We can consider the return as a “strategy” that powers the agency of people who have been deported, to be those who shape their trajectories and to resist the power that led them to their expulsions (De Genova, 2010; Radziwinowiczowna, 2018).

Self-legalization of illegals and reinterpretation of immigration laws

Once the strategies for arriving in New York were described, we went on to account for the ingenious ways to be able to access the dream of legalization. Our objective for this section is to make explicit the cultural artifacts of the subaltern class and the production of the Latin neighborhood for the development of infra-political practices that lead them to the achievement of migratory documents false and legal. We begin to account for the development of an illegal market for the sale of false documents derived from the State’s designs to consider the legal stay of an immigrant and his needs to enter the working environment.

In the Latino neighborhoods, the culture of illegality has been a constant through the sale of regional edible products, of pirate merchandise—such as music, clothing, and footwear—and through the sale of false documents. The latter have been necessary to comply with the tightening of labour laws requiring employers to apply for work documents. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of the neighborhood reprove the actions of these subjects, the community has normalized the presence and actions of these individuals for being necessary for a large number of undocumented subjects.

“We leave the talk for next week because I have to go to the American Consulate”, Marcos said with sarcasm when he was conducting an interview on the Bay Shore, Long Island in July 2012. For more than one person the comment of the informant has nothing out of the ordinary, his statement implies having an appointment for the purpose of solving or performing some processing concerning his immigration status. However, going to the American Consulate is an analogy used by migrants to say they will go to

the Roosevelt Avenue in Queens to buy documents such as Green Card and Social Security. The majority of inhabitants of the neighborhood reprove these actions and the subjects that carry them out because they damage the image and morality of the immigrant subject dedicated to the work. However, no member of the neighborhood dares to denounce them or ask them to withdraw from the corners where they discreetly and with a low tone of voice repeatedly say to the passers-by the words “social, social paisa”, indicating the offer of false documents.

For years both documents have been the ones required to be hired labor, which has resulted in the emergence of a clandestine market for falsification and sale of the same. In counties like Brooklyn and Queens, illegal immigrants who arrived in the early 1980s remember that it’s always been easy to get them. The immigrants narrate that in the first few years of arrival there were few street vendors who offered both documents, but the possibility of getting them has never ceased to exist. At present, Queens County has been popularly erected for migrants from around New York, New Jersey or Pennsylvania as the place where “citizens quickly become legalized and even become citizens”. Neighborhood members normalize the sale of fake documents and make them part of the Latino neighborhood’s variety of offerings. The actions of these subjects become permissible in understanding that they are indispensable for large immigrant segments that only come with the goal of working and aiming for less precarious lifestyles.

Arguments to legalize their immigration status

One of the great dreams for those who have prolonged their migratory trajectories or have decided to stay in New York City is to be able to legalize their stays in order to visit their homeland, have better job offers and access to some social assistance programs, but in recent years the paths to legalization have been put aside for exclusion and deportation. In fact, in the last four decades, the IRCA law and 245 (i) are the only legal means that have opened up the possibility of obtaining a legal residence. Based on these two programs and through the practice of “marriage for papers” that took place until the end of the year 2000, we captured information that allows us to see the anxiety, desires and legal reinterpretations for adjusting their migratory status. These strategies are documented in the ways in which Coutin (2007) and Hagan and Gonzales (1993) did so, under a reinterpretation and relaxation of the laws in order to access them, but in our case we also add to the development of the Latin Quarter that allowed

the presence of institutions, social relations, circulation of information and moral support for obtaining legal residents.

Under the proposed IRCA law, several immigrants who arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s agreed to shelter under it, but many others who arrived in the same year, two or three years later did not meet the requirement. time of stays in the country to benefit from it. In the face of this choice, social relations between Latinos within the neighborhood became relevant to the relaxation of the rules dictated by the State. Social relations served as the first means of information to let the immigrant community know about the benefits of IRCA, as well as family, friends and acquaintances, who recommended lawyers, civil organizations and religious who supported immigrants by charging them minimum fees or providing totally free services. It is worth noting that several Catholic churches offered guidance to access the adjustment of their migratory status, and it was with them that many immigrants had the confidence to come close to asking about their cases.

On the other hand, some employers were prepared to give letters of employment to a factory, restaurant, etc., proof of stay before 1986, letters of salary income and recommendations. In cases such as those in Guera and Ale, it was the same employer who encouraged them to begin their legalization procedures and offered their support to them, considering them to issue any documents they needed, they said. In addition, legalization would not have been possible without the advice of Latino lawyers, who were instrumental in providing aid, encouraging and locating the channels through which they could be beneficiaries of this law despite the lack of compliance with some of the the requirements of IRCA. Thanks to the support of employers, lawyers, civil and religious organizations and the information circulating in the neighborhood, several immigrants were able to obtain their Permanent Residence Card.

Another of the arguments used during the 1980s and even part of the 1990s was to agree to “marriage for papers”. This type of economic, nail, and legalization agreements for others were among Latinos, basically among Mexicans and women from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic-legal or citizen residents of the United States. The deal was to pay amounts initially between two thousand to ten thousand dollars by the end of the 1990s for a “false” marriage, that is, without a marital life together, only with the aim of starting an arduous process until two or three years in which the wife requested to grant legal documents to the spouse. This was a fraudulent route that ceased to be practiced when the authorities detected

these practices and began to make more complex the requirements for initiating procedures for regularization of migratory status.

Illegal immigrants give a different interpretation to laws, which make them according to their needs in order to benefit. But there is no need to detract from the importance of the neighborhood, with its cultural ones, such as its close social relations and mutual aid and its material coatings of institutions and professional and religious services, which allow the migrant to develop forms of contention that challenge or contradict the state established.

Labour exploitation resources and practices against labour exploitation

Without a doubt, it is in the working environment where the illegality is expressed under different forms of submission by employers, for example, with high degrees of labour exploitation extending their working days, belittling their jobs and with a lack of salary payments or payments below the law, among other forms. Therefore, it is here that we also find daily answers to these vicissitudes, we show how immigrants are forging autonomous spaces to deploy infrastructural actions of resistance and in order to regain their dignity as workers.

We present different actions to address labor domination, for example, through informal economy practices as an alternative or complement to their salaried jobs to resist during economic crises and sometimes with intent. to escape depressed wages and labor alienation. We immediately consider the practices of infrastructure such as sabotage, looting and the dead to show insubordination in the places where they experience and visualize domination and their dominators, but also as practices where the morality and dignity of their work and their people recover when they resume their speeches, contradict the orders of their employers or break with the rhythm of their working days. The actions of plunder that they commit are understood, as they are linked to the precarious conditions of their lives, as complementary to the low salaries granted by employers and their subjectivities on labor justice when they think they are recovering those who do not entitle them in their pay payments.

Ways of working and widening the salary

After the financial crisis of 2008, a large sector of immigrants suffered from the reduction of working hours or the loss of work. Some had the opportunity to find part-time or full-time jobs, but others were forced to

look for alternatives in the informal trade in regional food products and souvenirs. On Roosevelt Avenue, in the parks and outside of the Jackson Heights and Elmhurst/Corona churches, the weekends were noticed more people presence offering Mexican cravings, typical sweets, flowers, clothes, pirate dvds, crafts and jewelry, among other things. Wandering the streets, entering restaurants, pizzerias or cafeterias and prostrades on the sidewalks, these itinerant workers without city permits for their commercial activities were trying to survive the critical economic moments.

Others, taking advantage of the neighborhood's growing Latino community, saw in the food sale a family alternative to mitigate the lack of economic income. This activity forced the search for a strategy to circumvent the authorities in the absence of permission for this commercial activity and required the participation of all the family members for its proper functioning. From the concinas of their departments, the families bet on cooking their dishes to offer them by telephone to their different relatives, friends and acquaintances. Some enabled some space in their departments to give the possibility of going to taste the dishes and others preferred that the children take the food to the customer's home.

Some, seeing the economic returns, tried to establish their businesses operating every day of the week extending their services to formal shops and nearby factories. This activity did not correspond only to the unemployed, but also to employees in factories or other workplaces. Men and women implemented the sale of regional products with their co-workers as an alternative activity to generate other economic income. At the end of the workweek, when employees are usually paid, several used to offer, during lunch, pozole, tamales, empanadas, gelatins or any other Mexican or Central American whim. Others resold gold and silver jewelry, clothing, perfumes and footwear.

The fall of jobs, low wages, the rise of prices in foodstuffs, the payment of income from housing, public transport, etc., forced more than one to rely on informal trade along with their performance as a wage worker. Some of them, prior to, during and after this economic juncture, placed in the informal trade a way of life that allows obtaining net monetary income by evading taxes of the city, state and federal, of being its own bosses, to escape the subjugation of the employers and their strenuous working days. Informal trade is part of the cultural strategies among members of the same class not only for the sale of typical regional foods, but also because the interior of the same class is in solidarity with the identification and identify

themselves as members of a working class who need support in the face of the economic precariousness and critical moments they suffer.

Sabotage and robberies in workplaces

Immigrants build ideas of what good job offers should be based on paying fair wages, kind employer dealings, enhancing unique tasks each day, over-time pay, holidays and paid holidays, etc. However, few informants said they had jobs of these characteristics. For this reason, the workers have resorted to the “theft ant” of food or objects of factories and sabotage as forms of protest against the meagre conditions to which they are subjected.

From their subaltern position and from their common sense, the immigrants explain the ways in which they feel they are exploited laborally. In these explanations are the tensions that drag on their employers and against “the government” and justify them from their conditions of being undocumented workers, but on many occasions they cannot hide their passivity and the job exploitation they let know the answers they perform in the day to day, individually or collectively and without a deep organization. In this case, any act they do has the goal of destabilizing the interests of the employers.

For example, we saw as jobs where staff were lacking, some working in adulthood were encouraging younger workers to leave the job and not continue to bear the conditions of low wages, cutting hours and ill treatment of the managers. Therefore it was common for them to circulate information about job offers elsewhere, several women workers considered that convincing at least one partner was a cause for joy and triumph because leaving a vacancy contributed to increase the constant problem of lack of personnel and delay in daily production.

Another situation of contention was to take back the actions and speeches of the employers and production managers with whom they had been affected. For example, before completing their eight hours of daily work, newly-entered employees were sent to their homes on low-production days in order to save on wage payment. Also, those who exceeded the forty hours of weekly work did not receive overtime pay, as the supervisors argued it was the worker’s fault because they knew that 40 hours were worked weekly and that number of hours were the same. Only that they could afford. In days of high production and the request of the chief of the same to stay one or two more hours, the employees took advantage to remember that they had once mentioned the number of hours of work and had not paid them overtime, The majority of them left barely satisfied their day,

leaving the missing production to be thrown out and feeling their work dignity.

In the service sector, one of the most requested by immigrants, the speeches and practices of sabotage are also constant. "Let them be chuffed for not paying me well", Jonas told Tony to his regano for bringing food and kitchen utensils from the restaurant where they worked to his department. This phrase is common to manifest the insubordination of employees to the injustices in their places of employment. The "chingar" acquires the sense of attacking the interests of the employer and repairing the tort that the employees feel, so they seek to supplement their wages with the theft of vegetables, fruits, meats, soap and even bathroom paper. Theft is not only thought of as the popular act of justice in the relations of production, but also allows for closer relations among the subordinates. Ruben and Roque, who were in the same restaurant, commented that for years they had carried out these actions and had never been caught thanks to teamwork. Thus it was common to bring meat, fish and fine seafood to their homes.

Insubordination under the theft not only occurs as part of the tensions between employer and employee, but is a situation of survival and dignity. So thought Vidal, who throughout the year took out of the factory, he worked portfolios, bags of hand, bracelets, necklaces, sunglasses, etc., so that during the summer he would sell with his family in the street tianguis. The sale of these items represented that extra income that the factory does not offer, but that it made cash under the theft.

Finally, we compiled several stories of labor insubordination, of making dead time and of recreating spaces where their dislikes and corages against employers and managers flourished when they were exposed among co-workers. All this through the obliteration at times of work with the wine or liquor that ferret out of the restaurant cellars. The stories of Ruben and Roque at the Caribbean food restaurant did not differ from what happened at the French restaurant where Juan and Andres, the Jew where Tony, Jonas and Primo, the Italian where JM and his brother Mariano were, all worked. They were in Queens and Manhattan; or the American where Pancho and Manuel or the Italian where Amando and Marcos worked on Long Island. While some consumed liquor and others had beers, some made it during the working day and others at the end of it, some were hiding in recondite places of the kitchen and others in the dressing rooms, all agreed that their places of labor supplied part of the consumed under the plunder.⁸ We

⁸ Although I also found anecdotes of subjects who were pillaged and dismissed. At best, some were sanctioned with suspensions for a few days or gave them a second chance.

do not notice the existence of shame in the informants when telling these stories or repentance of having done it, but of rejoicing because these practices are answers to chartering to arduous working days and are opportune moments for appropriate a space where they can curse, mock and express speeches of non-conformity against the bosses or owners.

The practices of theft and sabotage are complementary strategies for the survival of immigrants in the face of the payment of depressed wages. In addition to being acts of labor justice where their morality of being a good worker is not contradicted, on the contrary, it is recovered once employers have demoted it by failing to grant appropriate recognitions and salaries. Thus we consider the expressions of immigrant insubordination have the characteristic of being struggles for what they consider to be just.

The farce and the benefit of the double use of social assistance

We believe that denial of access by health institutions and programs of economic or food aid to subjects with illegal immigration status would be the common denominator that we would find due to the decree of the Law on Personal Responsibility and the Reconciliation of Opportunity to Work (PRWORA) or also known as the “Reform of Social Benefits”, decreed in 1996 by President Bill Clinton and Congress. PRWORA reduced the amount of federal spending for low-income families, put a cap on the number of years a person could receive government social assistance, and required recipients to work within two years receive benefits. It also included legislation that limited funds for unmarried parents under the age of 18, improved legal management of child support, and limited funds available for immigrants (Haskins, 2009).

Despite these legal measures, we expose as years ago, to use the public health service, the immigrants supported the illegality to have totally free attention. Next, we address the Family Assistance programs with Dependent Children (AFDC),⁹ Program for Women, Babies and Children (WIC)¹⁰ and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known

⁹ The Aid to Families with Dependent Children was a federal assistance program in effect from 1935 to 1996 created by the Social Security Act and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provided financial assistance to children whose families had low incomes or none. This program grew from a minor part of the social security system to a significant system of state-administered welfare with federal funding. However, he was criticised for offering incentives for women to have children and for deterring women from joining the workforce. In 1996, the AFDC was replaced by the most restrictive Temporary Assistance program for Needy Families.

¹⁰ Women, babies, and children (WIC) program protects the health of women, infants, and children up to five years of low income, through nutritious food, healthy eating information, and medical referrals.

as the Food Stamps Program, to account for the reinterpretation and dual use of the same by the parents of the new citizens' faces New York.

Self-inclusion in the health system and the dual use of social assistance programs

When we began to investigate the impact of health care reforms on the denial of services to illegal immigrants we expected to find access totally denied to them, but during the decade of 1980 to 1990, immigrants placed methods to make use of public health institutions without paying a single cent. The immigrants realized that the hospital staff did not care or had the means to verify if the name, identification and address of the patient were true. Therefore, the illegal patients provided false names and addresses so that the receipt of recovery would never reach them or in case of providing the correct address the name was false. For several years this was the system implemented to make medical services totally free. The strategy of working with a name and false documents or being able to get the same as many times they wanted with other names had been extended to the health system to make use of it without any inconvenience.

In the late 1990s, the practice of falsifying personal information was forgotten thanks to the government order that instructed New York City hospitals to provide consultations to illegal immigrants at low costs. In addition, they were given the possibility to obtain medical treatments without total health care fees, immigrants may qualify for affordable health insurance or totally free coverage if they check for economic income low. That's when the migrants sought other resources to be able to benefit from medical assistance at low costs. While those with a legal status have complications to gather the requirements or be able to misrepresent information, the undocumented, sometimes with the complicity of the employer, provide letters that lie in the actual salary of each week to be able to access free health insurance. When the employer's support is not given, there is still the alternative of using family or friendship networks to obtain letters from other employers. For example, Alberto turned to family networks when after having had heart surgery, the hospital charged him with an amount of around 40 thousand dollars, despite having had emergency insurance. His brother-in-law, general manager of a restaurant, gave him the necessary letters of work to get much of his debt to him.¹¹

¹¹ In some cases, green light is given for illegal immigrants to undergo emergency surgery. But they are not eligible to be eligible for an organ transplant just like legal residents or citizens.

Some immigrants commented that in the face of medical attention for a disease of grave and a large economic debt, they would have the possibility to leave definitively from the country or they would seek to move to another state to work with another name. Dona Macaria said, “ that cannot be done by those who have ‘papers’ because where they are charged. Nor can they lie in their economic income statements because it would cause them trouble with IRS.¹² For her, in a sense, this is a clear disadvantage of legal and pro-illegal immigrants. Finally, when the employer refuses to collaborate and in the networks they have not been able to find who provides them the documents, the immigrants resort to decrease their working days in such a way that their salaries are the appropriate ones for power qualify for medical insurance at low costs.

We closed this paragraph by considering the cases of illegal migrants benefiting from the prenatal care program for pregnant women (PCAP) to consider how those considered sanctuary cities operate with some deference to the reproductive health of future immigrant mothers regardless of their immigration status. In this case we highlight how some of them when they have prenatal health coverage to take advantage of their illnesses. This is the beginning of the indirect means with which illegal immigrants can benefit from the birth of children in US territory. Such was the case of Lucrecia, who with a smile on her face told us that, after the birth of her first daughter, an operation of the gallbladder was performed and her problems of sight were dealt with. Later, she was surprised to see the state of the hospital’s account at the top of the \$60 thousand, but she said she was worried because she knew that her health insurance covered all the expenses. The history of Lucrecia is not isolated, but we could consider it one of many as part of the support that the State offers to be able to make free use of health institutions within the established legal frameworks.

The dual use of social assistance programmes

We conclude by describing how economic and food supports to new citizens-children of immigrants-take intricate directions to their economic goals or needs. Social aid programs are administered and reinterpreted by mothers giving them a sense of benefit and family goals. Once again, we emphasize that the dual use of government programs would not be possible without social networks and the development of the Latino neighborhood,

¹² Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is the federal instance of the United States Government in charge of tax collection and compliance with tax laws.

both of which allow the normalization of the development of practices contradictory to the objectives of the State.

Among the social assistance programs the immigrants use most are Welfare, a program that responds to families who have little or no income; the program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or better known as AFDC, which helps economically, but requires the beneficiaries to find a job within the years of receiving the aid; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, better known as WIC, that protects the health of low-income pregnant women after delivery, to nursing mothers, infants and children up to 5 years of age who are at nutritional risk; and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), previously known as the Food Stamp Program, which provides monthly electronic benefits to low-income, elderly, and disabled workers to use as cash to buy food in authorized food stores less.¹³

Eligibility for one of these welfare programs depends on several factors, including tests of gross and net income, personal identification, proof of home, number of family members and crisis situations. Family members such as medical emergencies, pregnancy and homelessness and unemployment among others. Similar to the health insurance, in the process of these programs it is recurrent to go to subtle means to present documents that guarantee the obtaining of the same. Again we find the tactic of seeking with employers, friends and family the issuing of letters of work with false information about their weekly economic income, or of omitting information from the wage labor of one of the wife's work is hidden.

We obtained little information about the beneficiaries of the AFDC program because after 1996 the rules for accessing it became more rigid once the federal government handed it over to the states. However, we knew of the cases of five families benefiting from it, with three of them we had direct talks and with the other two we knew their cases from third parties. Of these families, three of them were made up of single mothers with three, two and one child. As they were the only support of the family, they were seen with the need to obtain all kinds of social assistance to cover the expenses of their children's income and support. While the other two families took the financial aid without really needing it. The interesting thing was that the economic support they received was saved month by month in order to acquire a property for their children in the father's hometown in Guerrero.

¹³ The information of the programs was obtained from the page <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/>

Food Stamps is the program par excellence of immigrants to be able to make a double use for the purpose of having another means of income for the food consumption or monetary saving of the family. To this end, social networks and the Latino neighborhood have been key to being the place where illegal practices normalise giving a different sense to this program. Beneficiaries receive monthly economic amounts on electronic cards to purchase all types of food intended for consumption by people, except those who are prepared in the store, as well as cleaning products, tobacco, alcohol, gardening or containers, they are excluded to pay with this card, but the commercial development of Latin markets allowed pacts between clients and owners to cover with program funds products that are not on the list.

Another strategy is to convert credit cards into current money. This is possible thanks to the social networks between family members or friends, with those who agree to pay with the card the products that need the latter and then pay back the amount paid. In this case the latter do not get any benefit, but they do so as one more of the favors that are carried out by family ties or friendship.

Some informants analyzed this program as an alternative to meriting their work times and rhythms. Others being unemployed determined to rest for a few weeks and survive for it while with government support. This also translated into the no need to work overtime or reduce pressure on their weekly maintenance cats, “while Food Stamps took care of food, they were in charge of housing expenses”, they said.

CONCLUSIONS

The work has shown the relations of power that arise between the State and the international proletarian class. Tacitly, we pay for information to show the disjointed, but ingenious ways in which immigrants settle, resist, reinterpret and contradict power. That is to say, we treat the relations of power not as total domination, but rather we privilege the free will of the dominated to make the struggle notice in constant reworking, in different moments and scenarios. We highlight, as Gramsci proposed, that hegemony is a concept that allows us to consider non-passivity and the constant struggles of the subaltern. We emphasize that in these subaltern struggles, the production and consolidation of the Latin quarter has been fundamental for the immigrants to deploy a series of actions of their own culture, for example, values such as solidarity and new moralities with which they face

their vicissitudes and generate a vision of the world different from that of the ruling class.

In this way, we began analyzing how, in the face of the legal measures of control, punishment, exclusion and deportation of undocumented migrants and with criminal records by the State, the former have found in a life in the shadows the roads appropriate to take advantage of their exclusion. Neither higher walls nor greater technological and human surveillance have prevented the re-entry of deported migrants, their family or work lives are more decisive for their income than the punishment imposed by the migratory authorities. Likewise, we stated how the same documents with which the State has determined the legality and illegality of the subjects have been taken by the immigrants, the obtaining of the false Green Card and Social Security have been necessary to be able to continue to work as labour migrants. The reinterpretation of State measures did not stop with these measures, we also describe some ways of understanding and coupling federal immigration laws to the needs and conveniences of the undocumented. We find reinterpretations and relaxation of some migratory laws in the terms of the subjects and not of the State to access the legalization of their migratory status.

Being the labor activity one of the most important actions of immigrants and where the most infamous conditions of the working class are located, we document the same amounts of contention. Through the disorganized actions in the restaurants and factories, manifested in the robberies, sabotage and dead time, we exposed how the proletarians develop daily contests in order to regain their dignity as a worker and the economic surplus that the employer does not grant to them. We frame these practices with the development of class moralities that the subjects do not think they are looking at, but rather recoding their dignity by not having the payment, treatment and fair recognition of their employers.

Finally, the immigrant strategies to make use of health care and social assistance programs left us forms of self-inclusion outside the margins of the State, again with the use of information distortion to obtain benefit of both programs and make use of the same according to the needs of the families. Such is the case for those who benefit from the Food Stamps program and those with the help of social networks and the normalization of illegal practices in the neighborhood can take advantage of their precarious living situations.

We cannot consider that under these practices immigrants are breaking the health system, they are sabotaging the nation's coffers, not much less

that they are encouraging and increasing crime with the falsification of documents and resume other identities. In the balance, the negative actions, the impositions, the labor farms, the racial discrimination that they suffer, the use of free mobility due to the political measures incentives by the State, etc. The study does not intend to celebrate these actions or to encourage them in the immigrant community to continue to commit them. Rather, our goal was to see how hegemony is lived, resisted or reinterpreted, and that the international proletarian class, from its common sense, is constantly developing resistance strategies to mitigate or lengthen its stays.

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