

## Conclusions

Throughout this piece of work I have tried to provide a highly detailed description of my experiences on a street corner in the neighborhood of Tepito, trying to interpret the cultural dimensions of drug trafficking as well as some of the experiences of those who participate in it. It is really necessary to recover the complexity of the cultural dimension, going beyond the clichés, observing how this class of “errands” are embedded in a much wider array of practices, which in a certain sense share exactly the same logic: Ivan provides his services to guarantee his survival. His friends, acquaintances and neighbors come to him as a recognized member of the community, someone who perhaps inspires more confidence than many of the players or institutions which are perceived as alien.

In this sense it appears that the meeting with Ivan and the description of one part of his way of living, endows a certain humanity on the personalities who live from the profits of stupeficient sales, thus changing the black and white stereotypes of our public culture, which seeks to construct heroes or villains on one side or other of the law. I am not squeamish about stating, because it is something I experienced on the ground, that it is difficult to

frame an empathetic relationship with someone like Ivan, but at least as readers we can reflect on what other options Ivan might have had on returning to the neighborhood after ten years behind bars, in a city and a country which still have not resolved basic problems of poverty and exclusion, and instead have opted for policies that punish and point the finger at individuals.

I should indicate some of the limitations of the project, in order to be fair in terms of this document's focus, and to try to break the black and white stereotypes permeating public discourse. Ethnography is a method which demands a solid time investment to produce the best results, detailed descriptions and deep analysis of the people, what they get up to and the reasons they perceive as underlying these practices. The time invested in building this diary was very limited in comparison to professional practice and I will come back to this issue further on. It is an invitation to continue thinking about other actors, the police, officials, other narcotic sellers or the street market traders themselves, who have had little exposure here and whose tales and practices are also asking to be explored.

The time limits were not a product of my decisions except in cases where I really thought I was putting myself at risk; rather they arose from the same environment of insecurity and violence of the neighborhood. As I have pointed out in the text, the dialog which Ivan and I started in the street could

be seen as a betrayal by some of the people with whom transactions are made, placing both of them at risk. This ended up imposing a completely different pace on the research demanding greater flexibility of the researcher and his strategies for constructing the information.

In a country in which violence has increased in countless spheres, exercises such as the one I present here call for reflection on the factors limiting the production of knowledge, and hence the creation of public policies or interventions depending on this. I want to emphasize that this is not just a problem that concerns ethnographers with a “calling to be a lightning conductor,” as I have described myself humorously at times. In reality a great number of researchers working on much more traditional subjects such as work, health or education, have severe difficulties getting close to people to be able to document problems which can be hard to change if the conditions to understand them cannot be guaranteed.