Chapter 4

Some Experiences of Puebla’s Entrepreneurs in New York: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

For decades, New York, and the tri-State area, has become a major attraction for Poblano immigrants seeking opportunities. Some of these immigrants, not only have worked to send remittances to their families in Mexico, but also have made their way to become productive, social and political entrepreneurs in the communities of destination and/or origin. But what are the conditions that have allowed certain Poblanos to become economic, political and social entrepreneurs in the so-called Big Apple and its surroundings? What have been the challenges they have had to overcome? And what is their relationship with their origin communities in Mexico? These are the main research questions of this study part.

INTRODUCTION

In the collective imagination, the figure of the Mexican immigrant in America is recreated from a series of assumptions that typecast all migrant people with having poor educational background, with an inability to assimilate into the place of destination, in low skill jobs, though better paid than in Mexico, and unwilling or without real opportunities to develop business, community or political projects in the places where they have established beyond Mexico’s borders.

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That picture is not completely far from reality according to a series of observed elements in several of the socio-economic processes present in the Mexico-US migration. However one should not generalize this perception, because despite a series of legal, labor, social, political and even language vicissitudes, there are Mexicans living in the United States that have been able to standout and undertake important endeavors in different areas in their new communities.

New York City, due to a number of historical, economic and political conditions, has become one of the places for excellence in the United States to gestate the so called seed of immigrant entrepreneurship. In the case of Mexican nationals, in general, and Poblanos, in particular, the so-called Big Apple also has emerged as an ideal place to undertake not only productive projects, but also to carry out social and community actions in order to improve the lives of Mexicans settled in this American city and its metropolitan area.

But what are the conditions that have allowed certain Poblano to become economic, political and social entrepreneurs in the so-called Big Apple and its surroundings? What have been the challenges they have had to overcome? And what is their relationship with their origin communities in Mexico? These are the main research questions of this study part.

The main objective is to determine the major social, economic and political causes that have allowed certain Poblanos to become entrepreneurs in the US city, New York, that with its high migration of people from the central Mexican state has received the nickname “Puebla York”.

This research part from the idea that entrepreneurism cannot be classified only in economic activities, i.e. business, since it covers more areas of human efforts. The word entrepreneur obtains an economic look from the eighteenth century, when the Irish economist Richard Cantillon’s first used it in his work to refer broadly to people who started a company with innovation (Giurfa, 2010). The word entrepreneur, which is of French origin (entrepreneur) and was used in the sixteenth century to refer to those who traveled to America in search of new opportunities, is applied today to define those who are not afraid to do different things or take alternative paths to later include others in different types of projects with a significant share of innovation (Osorio, 2011).

And while thousands of Mexicans venture to cross into the United States, not all immigrants can be considered Entrepreneurs, since this implies, for practical purposes of the investigation:

*Being able to create something new or to give a different use to something that already exists, and thus having an impact on their lives and of the community in which they live. At the same time, this individual not only has new ideas, but also is flexible enough to adapt and has the creativity to transform every event, whether positive or negative, to an opportunity (Formichella, 2004, p. 4).*

In this way, the spectrum of research is directed towards a group of eight economic, social, community and political entrepreneurs who left Puebla to grow in several areas as individuals, but whose actions have impacted in some way on a collective level in New York and in their original communities.

As part of the research, specialized literature on the migration of Poblanos in New York, as well as entrepreneurs are consulted, and a series of data and statistics are compiled that permit the development of a questionnaire to be applied to a group of entrepreneurs from Puebla who live in the New York tri-state area. The research is qualitative and the application of questionnaires was chosen through in-depth interviews to determine priority areas that have allowed some Poblano immigrants to become economic, social and political entrepreneurs.