

***Searching Expressions of Identity: Belonging and Spaces  
- Mexican Immigrants in New York***

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*Searching Expressions of Identity. Belonging and Spaces  
-Mexican Immigrants in New York-*

Liliana Rivera-Sanchez

*Introduction*

This document contains the first fruits of my research about how the Mexican immigrants are organized in New York. Particularly, I focus on the role of the Catholic Church in the incorporation of new Mexican immigrants in the city, through creating a community based organization dedicated to help in the development and assimilation of Mexican people in the Metropolitan area of New York. The core objective is unfolding some ideas about how the *Tepeyac Association of New York* is contributing in the process of incorporation of new Mexican immigrants into American Society.

The paper will offer, in the first section, a brief presentation of the main characteristics of Mexican migration to New York. In the second section, some features of the Tepeyac Association will be drawn, underlining relevant aspects to understanding the nature of organization and its depth impact on the Mexican Community. In forward, it will provide some insights of how the Tepeyac Association articulates two basic axes as organizational resources: the Catholic believes, specifically practices of popular Mexican religiosity, and “the immigrant condition”. Both resources reinforce a project of public visibility of Mexican immigrants in New York. The latter could be also interpreted as a symbolic reach to re-shape both an image of the Mexican nation and probably of an ethnic-national identity out the nation-state, such as a deterritorialized identity.

## *I. Imagining a Mexican Community in New York*

### *1. An Overview: Mexicans living in New York*

Mexican immigration to New York is a relatively new phenomenon, which was caused by a wide variety of labor market conditions in both countries, and can be seen as an effect of the globalizing economy. This immigration flow proceeded more slowly than the traditional Mexican migration to Texas and California. According to the 1997 Population Survey, seven million people, or 27 percent of the foreign-born persons residing in the United States, were born in Mexico. Three percent of this population lives in New York City. Because of the high number of undocumented immigrants, it is difficult to accurately measure the Mexican population in New York City<sup>1</sup>. It was estimated that in 1997 there were 230,000 Mexicans in New York City and an additional 100,000 in the metropolitan area. Presently, in 2001 it is estimated that there are approximately 500 000 Mexicans in the entire metropolitan area.<sup>2</sup>

In the last two decades, the Mexican population in the city has grown dramatically, not only through very high fertility, but also through internal migration (flows originating in other parts of the U.S.), but fundamentally by newcomer flows. Between 1990 and 1996, there were nearly 29,000 births to Mexican-born mothers, over three percent of all births in the city. Only Dominicans and Jamaicans exceeded the birth rates of Mexicans.<sup>3</sup>

Mexican migrants began coming to New York in the 1950s but their number increased beginning in the late 1970s and the mid 1980s. This increase in population is reflected notably in the US Population Census during last three decades. For instance, the population of Mexican origin in New York City grew from 7,364 to 21,623 between 1970 and 1980, and to 61,722 by 1990, increasing to 187 000 in 2000.<sup>4</sup> In other words, between 1980 and 1990 Mexican population in the city grew 185% and in the next decade (1990-2000) it grew by 203%. Nowadays Mexicans are the third biggest ethnic national group in the city after Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.<sup>5</sup> According to Robert Smith, the director of the Mexican Migration Project at Columbia University, the first Mexican immigrants came to New York more than 50 years ago, crossing the border on July 6 of 1943.

Although New York is not a traditional destination point for Mexican immigrants, newcomers continue to arrive in increasing numbers, breaking in some way with traditional migratory patterns to California and US border cities. Instead, they use previously established social networks such as direct or indirect contacts with immigrants already residing in New York. Most of them cross the border illegally in Tijuana (this is the most common route) paying between \$1 200 and \$2000 dollars (according to the

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<sup>1</sup> Bada-Garcia, Xochitl (1998) "Mexican Population living in New York City: New forms of organization for a vulnerable community" manuscript, New School for Social Research.

<sup>2</sup> cf. [www.tepeyac.org](http://www.tepeyac.org)

<sup>3</sup> Department of City Planning (1999), *The Newest New Yorkers 1995-1996*, New York City, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. The US. Population Census 2000

<sup>5</sup> Cf. The US. Population Census 2000

Tepeyac Association)<sup>6</sup>, which includes crossing the border and sometimes transportation to New York's airports. There, friends or relatives meet them, providing temporary lodging, as well as employment information. Almost 30 percent have a job waiting for them when they arrive.

New York City labor market has shown an intensive recruitment of unskilled workers, which has been occupied by immigrants. Between 1980 and the late 1990s immigrant workers increased their share of the total metropolitan employment from 22% to 33%. By ethnic group, foreign-born Hispanic workers showed the largest increase from 6% to 11%. By 1998 there were in New York City about 590,000 immigrant Hispanic workers, 339,000 (135%) more than 1980. It is outstanding how native whites and native blacks decreased from 56% to 47% and from 15% to 12% respectively. In addition, during the same period, immigrant Hispanic workers grew from 8% to 19% of the total workers with an education level less than high school. In 1998 72% of the Hispanic workers registered an education level equivalent to high school or less (Howell and Gester, 2000).

In the context of labor markets with requirements of unskilled workers, the youth migrant population finds an attractive niche. 60% of the total Mexican migration from the state of Puebla is between 15 and 24 years (Mexican Population Census, 2000). A majority of these migrants do not have more than the secondary school (ninth grade in U.S.). In 1995 about 25.9% of the total population from *La Mixteca*<sup>7</sup> (since this is the region from which the largest number of Mexicans have come to New York) was illiterate, this is a high percentage, considering that the national rate is 9.5%. Consequently, Mexican immigrants take unskilled jobs that a people of other national origin people do not, commonly the lowest income jobs. These jobs are in restaurants as cook in the best case, but more frequently as busboys, dishwashers, delivery-makers, or in cleaning jobs; they also work as car washers, flower sellers and attendants in laundries, delis and fruit-vegetable markets, some find work in construction and garment factories.

Causes of this high influx of immigration can be found both in New York and in *La Mixteca*. It is noticeable that most newcomers are coming from Puebla. *La Mixteca* was hit especially hard by the extended economic crisis of the 1980s in Mexico, the effects of which were intensified by the liberalization of agricultural and trade policies as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) beginning in 1994. More recently, the post-devaluation crisis of late 1994 also brought about increased migration and diversified the sources of Mexican immigration to New York. Recently, people from Puebla, Tlaxcala, Morelos, the State of Mexico, Jalisco, Michoacán, California (in the U.S.) and the Federal District have arrived in increasing numbers.

In prior paragraphs a portrait about the Mexican migration to New York was drawn as a reference for understanding both the context in which the Tepeyac

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<sup>6</sup> Singer and Massey (1998) estimated in 1998 that the cheapest fee for a "coyote" was \$300, but this fee did not include transportation to New York City, only to cross the border.

<sup>7</sup> The Mixteca is a region in the central part of Mexico, which spreads between the states of Puebla, Oaxaca and Guerrero. It is basically a rural and indigenous area, whose main economic activity is the season agriculture.

Association has been created and also the role that such organization may play (in fact, it does) for Mexican immigrant workers living here.

## 2. *Some Origins of the Tepeyac Association of New York*

The Tepeyac Association is a non-profit, community-based organization whose mission is to promote social welfare and human rights, specifically for “undocumented immigrants” in New York City.<sup>8</sup> The association informs and educates immigrants and their families about their rights and resources. In September 6, 1997 Mexican community leaders founded it and since then, it has been organizing Mexican immigrants in the five boroughs and some up-state areas of New York. Approximately it serves and influences over 10 000 members.

The community-based organization, called Tepeyac, gathers the Mexican community by organizing constituents into *Guadalupano Committees*,<sup>9</sup> the base-groups of the association. The committees have been strengthened with moral support from the Mexican Consulate in early 1990s to worship the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe and also to celebrate some important religious festivities into their parishes, mainly the annual celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, on December 12. The existence of 20 Guadalupano committees, as part of the association, can be identified in 1997 around the city and upstate portions of New York. Presently, 40 Guadalupano Committees constitute the Tepeyac Association (cf. Map in the appendix). Twenty of the Guadalupano Committees existed from 1980’s, they were exclusively working in religious activities within their parishes without communication or nexus among them<sup>10</sup>, another 20 committees were created during the latest 3 years with the direct support of the Tepeyac Association. But into the same parishes, many Mexicans, even those organized in groups, observed that they were not always welcomed in community parishes, because of they have other types of groupings into the Catholic Church. For instance, Mexicans are organized in Guadalupano Committees or according to local patron saints devotions; sometimes they do not participate in other kinds of religious groups that they perceive as foreign. The latter has been a challenge for the Hispanic Catholic Ministry in US, but fundamentally to integrate Mexicans into parishes.

During the last three decades, the Catholic Church has been observing the increasing Hispanic diversity in its parishes, similarly to that in American society in general, especially along lines of nationality, class and race. New immigrant waves from Latin America have posed many challenges to Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, and

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mission and Structure sections in <http://tepeyac.org>.

<sup>9</sup> Some “Guadalupano Committees” have existed since 1983. Interestingly, these committees very much resemble the Ecclesiastic Base Communities that spread in Latin America in the late sixties and seventies. Ecclesiastic base communities are small local religious groups in Catholic parishes created by pastoral agents-bishops, priests, nuns and lay people trained and commissioned by the Church. Most of them respond to a Jesuit formation and spend most of their time praying and reading the Bible, but also trying to connect these Biblical learning with the everyday life. Cf. Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde (1989) “The Progressive Church in Latin America: An Interpretation,” in Mainwaring and Wilde, *The Progressive Church in Latin America* South Bend, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, pp.5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Interview with Consul Jose Antonio Laguna. The Mexican Consulate in New York. December 11, 2000.

Mexican-Americans, the most established Latino immigrant groups, for sharing spaces within parishes. In some cases, belonging to community parish is determined by time or arrival, the newer arrivals are not always welcome in some parishes, feeling alike outsiders and foreigners in their own neighborhoods. The existence of multiple nationalities in a single parish sometimes also leads to other types of tensions. Since there is a close link between the construction on nationhood and local forms of popular Catholicism, according to the US Catholic church, each Latino nationality brings its own way of celebrating collective identity, including particular Catholic rituals and belief. In addition national differences generate affiliation to particular apostolic movements and then, competition between national groups, or increasing tensions between different pastoral approaches. Sometimes the Catholic Church itself, through some parishes and priests, rejected these differences and provoked tensions between parishioners, with the argument that “we are all Catholic”, generating in this way more polarizing conflicts. But the recognition of Hispanic diversity by the Catholic Church has opened other kind of Ministries with different Catholic national-ethnic groups.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, the recent and explosive increasing of Latino population in New York, particularly of Mexicans, their vulnerable condition into the labor market, the existence of a number of Mexican religious groups in several Catholic parishes feeling not-well established, also suffering from discrimination by earlier arrivals (often on basis of their ethnicity and socio-economic status), as well as the lack of Mexican priests; in general terms, the tension between multiplicity and unity in the parish, gave the idea to members of the Archdiocese of New York of creating a new group to assist to Mexicans particularly. This group could attend to the particular necessities of Mexicans within the Catholic Church of New York considering their conditions of being simultaneously in two worlds (Mexico and the US), and not just satisfying demands for the sacraments in Spanish and particular religious celebrations. A group of Jesuit religious people, who are part of the Jesuit International Ministries and US Jesuit Provincial, took the initiative into their own hands. They asked Cardinal O’Connor, who was the Archbishop of New York, to bring a Mexican cleric to help with the task. *Grupo Timon* (or the Mexican Task Force), from the Archdiocese, took the mission of the pastoral ministry with Mexicans. The first objective was to establish “a good communication” with them.<sup>12</sup>

Some meetings had been hold from 1995 and 1996 among Cardinal O’Connor, the General Vicar, the Bishop Sheridan, some priests and several Jesuit clergy people that observed that the Mexican presence was one of the most numerous and growing in some of neighborhoods and parishes in New York. Father Patrick D. Hennessy, a priest of Christ the King Church in the Bronx, had been holding meetings with priests and lay leaders of Hispanic Catholic ministry to determine ways of dealing better with the fastest growing Latino group in the Archdiocese. Fathers Jose Luis Bautista and Marcos Sotomayor from the Diocese of Puebla- Mexico, Father John O’Grange, who is the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. A Report of the Bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs (1999) *Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November, 1999 US.

<sup>12</sup> For having a complete history about origins and negotiations of Tepeyac Association cf. Rivera-Sanchez, Liliana. *Mexican Immigrants in New York. The Case Study of Tepeyac Association*, Research Report to the Pew Project-International Center for Migration, Ethnicity and Citizenship, New School for Social Research, May, 2001. 45 pp.

Pastor at St. Jeromes's Church in the Bronx, Neil Graham of Archdiocese of New York, Jim Joyce SJ as well as some members of New York Province Jesuits, among others, participated in these meetings.

The Church authorities for developing the pastoral mission with Mexicans chose Brother Joel Magallan, who has work experience with Mexican immigrants in Chicago. It occurred in one of those meetings in order to discuss the situation that Mexican immigrants were facing, as well as the relevance of creating a social organization in solidarity with their demands. He was commissioned to address "a sociological survey of what areas the groups of new Mexicans were coming from and to where they were migrating"<sup>13</sup>. Also, establishing some links to Mexico, the Bishop of Puebla was contacted for that may lead to Mexican Diocesan clergy coming for pastoral services in New York, as well some Mexican Jesuits in mission. In fact, the Mexican Jesuit Provincial, Mario Lopez Barrio SJ, proposed "an inter-Provincial team of Jesuits" to carry on this mission and for researching the viability of such project of organization. The main dilemma for the Catholic Church was related to how and whom would enhance the mission with Mexicans; moreover, one parish would not assume the responsibility on it, either a particular diocese or borough in New York. According to the Church, the pastoral project must be a collective mission between both different parishes and dioceses, eventhough primarily the initiative had been pushed fundamentally by Jesuits. Notwithstanding, after some debates in high spheres of the Catholic Church, the Jesuits became the commissioners for mentioned mission. A report became urgent to begin the mission with Mexican immigrants in the Archdiocese of New York.

Brother Magallan's report included not only data about who are Mexican immigrants and where are they coming from, but also about the situation of Mexicans in 13 parishes in Archdiocese of New York and 4 more from the Diocese of Brooklyn, as well as from some portions of up state New York, where are concentrated a large number of Mexican people.<sup>14</sup> The information was used to prepare a project of empowerment for the Mexican community, which included as basic goal the formation of community leaders in different parishes following organization traditions from origin communities. The main objective was to create a social organization for defending human rights of vulnerable Mexicans around the city, basically recent immigrant workers without information about labor rights and social services. But fundamentally, the association had to become a good place for Mexicans could identify themselves as part of Catholic community in the city and get certain sense of belonging. The Tepeyac Association was founded on September 6, 1997 with Guadalupano committees' leaders existed, who were invited by priests and representatives of Mexican Task Force. From the beginning, the new association had economic support of the Archdiocese of New York, through Catholic Charities and, later on its activities were financed by fund raising from international foundations.

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<sup>13</sup> Notes of Meeting. Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1996. Board Room, Jesuit Provincial Offices, p. 1. Located at Tepeyac Association Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Interview to Brother Joel Magallan, October, 2000. Also cf. Joel Magallan (1997) *Hacia un proyecto de apoyo a los mexicanos migrantes entre Mexico y Nueva York*, Puebla City, non-published.

One of the most important meetings took place on November 7, 1997. In this meeting was publicly presented a complete project for establishing a Mexican organization with specific goals and concrete activities. Cardinal O'Connor, Bishop Sheridan and Mexican Task Force team headed the meeting. One of the most urgent tasks, underlined in the project, was create an organization through the formation of "*animadores*" (leaders) into Mexican groups constituted in each parish. Those groups were called *Guadalupano committees* from the start, recovering the name of religious groups that existed in the city from 1980's. Formally, the Centro Guadalupano's Office<sup>15</sup> was inaugurated on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997. It is located at 14<sup>th</sup> Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues, justly at the heart of Manhattan.

"To make a good start", the project coordinators recovered groups already in existence and lay persons were invited to participate. Most of them were religious "*animadores*" or lay community leaders from different boroughs, but mainly from the Bronx and Staten Island. Following a traditional way to organize rural communities in Mexico, they respected hierarchies established in everyday interaction within neighborhoods, where Mexicans were grouped around parishes. Moreover, the *animadores* suggested themselves not use the name of "leader" because they thought that in Mexican history the name of leader has a pejorative connotation. They preferred use the name of "animador" to refer to a community leader or a principal member of Guadalupano committees. In this view, the association planned actions, respecting to the traditional forms of organization in origin communities of *La Mixteca*. For instance, all religious and social issues are had around celebrations and sacraments in their own annual liturgy, which is marked for the feasts of the patron saints. Similarly, in New York, all issues are now around the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the Patron Saint of Mexico. Due to the latter, Guadalupano committees became the best way to promote the relationship to Mexican people in parishes. It was the initial plan of the Mexican Task Force and specifically of the Tepeyac Association as main organizational strategy: in every parish in which there are Mexicans could have a Guadalupano committee, such as a way to integrate them into the US community Catholic Church, but also to assimilate them into American Society.

Still, members of the Mexican Task Force, and particularly Joel Magallan, who is the Director of the Tepeyac Association, were worried because these parish committees were exclusively dedicated to the worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe without addressing further social or political concerns. They wanted these groups to also wrestle concretely with social and political obligations in their settings. According to the main *Action Program* of the Tepeyac Association, developing and strengthening the Mexican community implies that *animadores* should facilitate participatory meetings to get an integral formation and information about their problems and possible solutions. The pastoral plan of evangelization included the goal to break the tension between a pastoral focus on the sacraments and one stressing social justice. In spite of the importance of efforts to link faith and social action through community church-based groups (Guadalupano committees), in the beginning these committees tendered mostly to emphasize the sacramental dimension; furthermore many committees fundamentally

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<sup>15</sup> Centro Guadalupano is the name given to the central office of Tepeyac Association.

emphasized particular devotions, but they coincided in having as the main devotion the Virgin of Guadalupe. However, over time Guadalupano committees got involved in other kind of themes through religious learning, including the translation of Biblical stories to everyday conditions, having information about rights, news, feeling supported and helped; in sum, following the Jesuit tradition, these groups evolved and constituted themselves as really community based committees –from social reflection and action, toward an almost exclusive focus on prayer and personal conversion.

Therefore, without leave behind its religious origins, Tepeyac Association became a community-based organization devoted to the *integral development* of the Mexican community. It was created one year after the passing of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRIRA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation (PRWORA) Act. In this context, the creation of the Tepeyac Association could be also considered as a response to the increasing anti-immigrant wave that has touched New York, a city that had usually been seen as relatively more friendly to both documented and undocumented immigrants.

According to some basic documents of the Tepeyac Association, one of the main goals is to promote Mexican community integration, *not assimilation*, into the economic, politic, cultural and religious life of American society; in other words, creating a Mexican community in New York. Therefore, the Tepeyac Association has become an angular piece in the defense of the human rights of Mexican immigrants, underlining the sense of belonging to an ethnic community with inviolable traditions and values, and promoting the way in which themselves can do value them. Later on I will discuss the ways in which Tepeyac reinforces new modalities of immigrant incorporation for Mexicans, through collective learning and the struggle for social recognition in the city, in sum through a project of public visibility. First I would like to outline the main accomplishments of the Tepeyac Association in these few years and the way it has enhanced a strong organization with Mexican immigrants, for understanding finally those new forms of incorporation. Meanwhile, in the next part, I would like to remark on what *Tepeyac* symbolizes for Mexicans and why the name and the devotion of the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexicans have become such excellent organization resources for the Tepeyac Association.

### 3. *The meaning of “Tepeyac” for Mexicans*

The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Patroness Saint of Mexico and the most important religious icon of Mexican Catholicism. The Legend says that in 1531, the Virgin Mary appeared three times in front of an Aztec peasant, Juan Diego. It was 10 years after the Spaniards had conquered the Aztec Empire, and the Virgin, who appeared with dark skin, told Juan Diego that she loved and protected native people, not just the Spaniards, who had invaded the Mexican land. The importance of the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe is that it managed to combine both the European Catholicism and the non-European features of native people’s belief. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared with dark skin and black hair, like a native woman. She revealed her petitions to a native indigenous man, making know that she was the protector to Mexicans in a moment in which the Mexican nation did not even exist and Catholicism was being implanted in America. The apparition of a native virgin represented the consolidation of Catholic belief in the new

conquered land and the incorporation of them into the popular indigenous belief and festivities.

The Virgin of Guadalupe asked Juan Diego to see that a temple was built by the Catholic Church to venerate the image of Mary, in the place where she appeared to Juan Diego met. It became the home of Mexican Catholicism. The hilltop where the Virgin of Guadalupe and Juan Diego met was called *Tepeyac* and on was built there the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, located at Mexico City nowadays. From that time on, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe represented the mother of Catholic Mexicans.

The Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol of Mexican national identity after that “she headed the struggle of Independence in 1810.” The image of the Virgin was printed on Miguel Hidalgo’s flag when he declared the starting point of the war against Spaniards, on September 15, 1810, and she represented from then the *grito de guerra* (the call for struggle) against oppression and injustice. Her image is related to arrival of a new era, the independent life of the Mexican nation and its very constitution as a nation. The name of Tepeyac also symbolizes a sacred place to Catholic Mexicans, the hilltop where the Virgin appeared and announced hope. These two elements of Mexican Catholicism have been recovered by the Tepeyac Association as symbols of the organization.

Brother Joel Magallan, one of the founders of the Tepeyac Association (TA), refers constantly to the Virgin of Guadalupe in his discourses, as a *symbol of hope against all hope* to undocumented Mexicans living here. “She represents a link to home for most Mexicans” Brother Magallan says. “We say that we are more *Guadalupanos* (devotees to The Virgin of Guadalupe) than Mexicans. We say that because Our Lady Guadalupe is our Symbol, our identity; Our Lady Guadalupe is stronger in the United States because she is the mother of the oppressed people, of the people who are being discriminated against. She is the protector, and so in New York City when we are feeling we are suffering that kind of situation, she becomes a stronger symbol to follow.<sup>16</sup>” Therefore, the Virgin of Guadalupe represents the protector, and the name of Tepeyac symbolizes the starting point to invigorate a new Mexican community in exile, according Tepeyac leaders, and its own identity even outside the national-state. Finally, Tepeyac is “the land of hope”; and the Tepeyac Association is a space to go looking for it. This symbolism is often present in the association’s public discourses, publications, and demonstrations.

Members of Guadalupano committees that existed before September 1997 elected the name “*Tepeyac Association*”. Representatives of committees voted in assembly, but the name of *Tepeyac* was initially proposed by Joel Magallan, as coordinator of the project. In this regard, following his formation as a Jesuit, he has used a “Liberation Theology” strategy, finding similarities between Biblical stories and the current situation of the immigrants, indeed finding similarities between the meaning of Tepeyac hilltop as “a land of hope” in relation to the organizational space of the Tepeyac Association, as a open window for immigrants. The Virgin of Guadalupe as the organization’s flag has

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<sup>16</sup> David M. Herszenhorn, “Mexicans unite to honor their spiritual mother”, in *The New York Times on the web*, National, New York Region, December 13, 1998.

played a pivotal function for mobilization, specifically in the task of creating a sense of community belonging. In fact, the annual celebration in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe (on December 12<sup>th</sup>) is a “*diasporic moment*” in New York Mexican cultural life, for it is an event that occurs simultaneously in different parts of the world where Mexicans live. This celebration is the most important event annually organized by the Tepeyac Association, which permits a reconnection with both the home country and the national identity. The double process of *unforgetting* and *remembrance* stitches together elements of the past in attempts to draw lines of continuity that buttress common grounds of belonging in the city. Community leaders of committees, through this remembrance ritual of the Virgin of Guadalupe, gain awareness that they are creating a community, that the community does not precede its organization, but rather, it needs places and spaces where the Mexican “spirit”, “feeling” and “pride” are performed.

#### 4. *Organization and Accomplishments*

*The Tepeyac Association of New York* consists of a network of 40 Guadalupano Committees, groups of Mexican people organized around parishes and neighborhoods. There are affiliated Guadalupano Committees both in New York City and portions of upstate New York.<sup>17</sup> Each Committee elects three representatives (President, Treasurer and Secretary). These Committee representatives constitute the General Assembly, which is the highest sovereign body. This body gathers twice a year to make the most important decisions through a secret ballot system.

Guadalupano Committees are grouped into regions, according population size and geographical location. Currently they are divided in eight regions; each region contents among four or five committees. The Committees representatives of each region elect one regional representative to be both the President of this region and a member of the Board of Directors, which is the intermediary body before the General Assembly. These representatives are elected for an initial two-year period and only can be re-elected for one more year, previous evaluation. The staff or team of support, plus the lay and religious advisors, a voluntary group, are part of the association, but have only moral authority. The latter members can speak but have no voting rights in the assembly. Brother Magallan belongs to the latter category; he is the Executive Director of Association and coordinates both the staff and projects, but he can not make decisions by himself. The Board of Directors gathers once a month to discuss the development of the ongoing projects (cf. Figure 2)

The Guadalupano Center, which is the administrative office and the place where most of the projects are developed, has only three wage-earning workers and operates thanks to the dedication and support of a band of volunteers. Several of the affiliated members have been able to render their voluntary work for Tepeyac Association. But also the group of volunteers is integrated by students from Mexican Jesuit Universities, for instance students of *El Instituto Tecnológico de Occidente (ITESO-Guadalajara)* or *Universidad Iberoamericana de Puebla*, who coming from Mexico to render social

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<sup>17</sup> Of these 40 committees, Brooklyn has three committees and Queens two. Manhattan holds the vast majority, followed by the Bronx. Cf. Map of Guadalupano Committees of the Tepeyac Association in the appendix.

training into different projects of the association with the Mexican immigrant community. Into these groups of volunteers are also included from housewives to several professionals, among them, photographers, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, graduate students, and others; some of them are Chicano or Mexican American people or just Mexicans, who reside in this city and participate in projects and activities according to their available free time.

The institutionalization process of the organization has been step by step. Its organizational structure was established in the very first meeting on September 6, 1997. On March 29, 1998 the General Assembly approved the first Statutes and elected the first representatives and then, the Board of Directors was integrated. On April 15, 1998 Tepeyac Association was *incorporated* in New York City Associations. On August 3, 1998 an Advisory Committee, integrated by a group of Mexican business people, was constituted as an organ of consultants and supporters. Finally, Tepeyac Association was approved as a Non-Profit Organization on January 26, 1999.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond the formal structure and the institutionalization process of the organization, there exist a process of organizational consolidation into Mexican neighborhoods and parishes, so called second phase of institutionalization. In only 3 years, the presence of Guadalupano committees increased from 20 to 40. Presently, Joel Magallan says that there exist more than 40 committees. There are approximately 44 committees working around in according to some Tepeyac Association leaders, but formally they have even 40 committees registered with membership.

The internal dynamic of Guadalupano committees is different with regard to the number of members in each committee, whether committee members are older or recent immigrants, undocumented or documented, whether there exist a *cacique* leadership, mobilization ability of representatives, leadership capacity, characteristics of relationship between committee members and priests in their parishes, the size of Mexican population in parishes, the presence of priests who speak Spanish, whether there exist disposition in churches to celebrate some particular ceremonies of the Mexican popular religiosity, such as *Quinceaneras* masses, as well as the degree of tension between committee members in relation to having a pastoral focus on sacraments and one stressing social struggle; these are among the most typical factors that determine the functioning of Guadalupano committees within parishes.

The consolidation of Guadalupano committees in parishes has followed a long process of negotiation between committee representatives and priests. As I have pointed out above, some of all committees existed before the Tepeyac Association did and some of them were working with the Mexican population in different religious activities within their parishes. But these committees often had difficulties in practicing their popular religious traditions. Some US religious leaders offered resistance to the Mexican popular religiosity and its practices. One problem often found, particularly in Brooklyn, was that during several years, Mexican groups were asking priests to celebrate of "*Quinceanera*" masses or three-years old children's presentation masses, but these kinds of celebrations

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Apostolate Report with the Mexican Community*, Bro. Joel Magallan Reyes, SJ, November 23, 1999.

were rejected. Since popular Catholicism has a long history of resilience and relative autonomy, its rejection and marginalization only serve to alienate Mexicans (and other Latinos) from the Church.<sup>19</sup> The Tepeyac Association and Mexican Task Force have recommended priests to offer such services to members of the Mexican community in their parishes and to take advantage of all Mexican religious practices to deep in the relationship with Mexican people, making them feel welcomed into the church community. These accomplishments have been relevant incentives to get the people to come together into groups, in order to create Guadalupano Committees in parishes where they did not exist. Similarly, the presence and acceptance of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in temples, as well as facilities to organize the annual celebration, on December 12<sup>th</sup>, have been excellent incentives in order to create and enlarge a community-based organization throughout the city.

In regard to the play role of Guadalupano Committees as organizational cells into parishes, a committee representative in Staten Island says: “Guadalupano committees can be a counselor for the Pastors, not an instrument to control Mexican people. People are tired of so much manipulation on them in Mexico through the leaders. Our *padrecitos* (priests) can not tell us what we have to do in order to organize our festivities, only we know about them. We want to follow with our patron saints celebrations and organized in Guadalupano groups, in view that we are in this manner”. In the beginning, when Mexicans were even few in parishes of New York, some priests tried of integrating them within other previous Hispanic religious groups, but the task was almost impossible. This attitude sometimes set these groups against those in the parish, who were involved in other pastoral approaches and even against each other. This division, in turn, makes conflicts in parishes, becoming symbolic competence in neighborhoods between different national origin groups.

Hence, Mexican *animadores* have been a link between parishes and Mexican people in neighborhoods. In many cases, they have been angular pieces for functioning of committees. But at the same time, they have also been responsible of what some committees are working as close organizations, for instance with almost exclusive membership for people coming from a particular town in Mexico. Besides external problems faced by Guadalupano committees to get social recognition into their parishes and neighborhoods, as wells as for establishing a good communication with priests, committees face internal leadership conflicts. One problem often found among committee representatives is related to who is the president of committee. Despite of the fact representatives are elected in assembly through secret ballot system, the election outcome might become a fountain of permanent conflict among families, between older leaders and newcomers in neighborhoods. It means that there exist fights to get the social prestigious of becoming a Guadalupano Committee representative, as part of the collective imaginary of Mexicans organized in the Tepeyac Association.

In my journey through Guadalupano Committees in Queens, we perceived that some internal conflicts are regarding to the presence of older community leaders in front

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. A Report of the Bishops’ Committee on Hispanic Affairs (1999) *Hispanic Ministry at the Turn of the New Millennium*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November, 1999 US.

of the newest. The first ones coordinate the labor in committees with only five or six members and themselves constitute the committee. For instance, in the particular case of a very successful committee of the Tepeyac Association, located at Jackson Heights, we observed that an older representative of the Mexican community before the parish operates as a coordinator of this Guadalupeano Committee from several years ago. Her leadership capacity is unchallengeable. She gets people together to organize demonstrations, protests, parades, rosaries, festivals, and so forth., but participants are not part of the committee. She assumes herself the central role in the task of preparing the Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the parish, she makes by herself from dresses for festivals to all food for rosaries and meetings, with the support of Mexican business people living in Jackson Heights area. Additionally, this committee counts with a musical band, two folklore ballets (for children and adults), a handicraft workshop, and also a football team (for children), each one has a director. Directors and the woman president compose the committee, justly in a neighborhood where a very large number of Mexicans live. In this case, it is difficult to identify who are part of the committee, permanently working, and who are available to mobilize them and to getting something, special religious services, medical or legal advisory, helpful in case of accidents, raids, etc. but without get establishing a social compromise with the organization.

In some committees we perceived that often a strong leadership could also represent an impediment to get involve a large number of people in. Moreover the distinction between newcomers and older immigrants is central in the way in which committee members get a good communication and relationship among them. For instance, we can find very large successful committees in Staten Island and Bronx; most of them integrated by *older immigrants*, fundamentally people with at least seven years living there. Probably most recent immigrants have even fear of involving in an organization, but they are the main focus of the Tepeyac Association and it is an ongoing task in Queens area, where more recently new Mexican immigrants are arriving in significant numbers.

The most important actions of Tepeyac for Mexican immigrants is its role in social mobilization for the defense of human rights of undocumented Mexicans and its activities in favor of General Amnesty for all illegal immigrants. The next section discusses the accomplishments of the Association in mobilizing people who before almost exclusively dedicated to religious activities in their parishes, and now are participating in public demonstrations on streets, asking with banners: "*Amnesty right now, because we produce in this country*" , say Mexican immigrants in New York.

In a period of three years, the Tepeyac Association has been able to reach thousands of Mexicans living in New York and has registered over 10 000 members. Currently, its newsletter, "*El Popocatepetl*" has a monthly circulation of five thousand copies which they say are insufficient to cover all areas where there are Tepeyac association members. "*El Popocatepetl*" has been the main vehicle of communication between the Association and the Mexican community. Using a "Liberation Theology" strategy of finding similarities between the Biblical stories and the current situation of the immigrants, all

texts in the newsletter are illustrated with cartoons in which actors are *paisanos*, speaking in Mexican popular jargon. This strategy has been effective to get Mexican families and workers are involved in activities beyond religious celebrations, because of Tepeyac emphasis on the idea that that precisely “the practical translation of the Catholic faith is action against social injustice”.

The newsletter addresses the main problems that Mexican immigrants are facing in New York. Different stories written by either observers or victims have been published in this paper. The newsletter constantly stresses the value of being part of an organization and also of a community. Among its themes, one finds a variety of topics that range from news about the latest negotiations for General Amnesty, counseling on health, sexuality and domestic finance, and tips for defending the human rights of all workers beyond legal status, to narratives about young people addicted to drugs and the latest stories of Mexicans arrested in INS raids. Also, *El Popocatepetl* is the means by which the organization calls to demonstrations and, in general terms, promotes the activities that they are leading.

Additionally, Tepeyac has a direct line of communication with a very prominent radio station in the city of Puebla. Every Thursday, Joel Magallan and Esperanza Chacon (she is a member of the Staff) broadcast their task, and also they give advice about preparation and prevention for those who are planning to immigrate to New York, as undocumented people. At the same time, *poblanos* (people from the State of Puebla) in New York have the opportunity to know about what is happening in their villages. For instance, throughout this program they got information about the situation in their local communities during eruptions of the Volcano Popocatepetl last December, when several villages in Puebla were evacuated due to the emergency. In the same way, in Puebla, relatives of immigrants get information about them through this program. Then, in a sort of mutual and transnational communication, *poblanos* in New York hear about patron saints celebrations in their villages, annual *ferias*, natural disasters and emergencies, political outcomes of elections, new organizations, unions and football teams, etc. “From the other side”, as Mexicans living here commonly say, they know about the meetings to organize parades, demonstrations against racism, discrimination and violations of human rights, as well as the way in which they participated in the big celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe at St. Patrick Cathedral. These are some of the services that Tepeyac renders to Mexicans.

The main activities and major proposes of the Tepeyac Association can be summed up as follows:

- A) To organize the Mexican community living in New York to preserve proudly their traditions and cultural roots through national and popular-religious celebrations such as Mexican Independence Day (September 15<sup>th</sup>), *Dia de Muertos* or Day of the Dead (November 2<sup>nd</sup> ), and the big celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12<sup>th</sup>), among others. **B)** To support Mexicans arrested during immigration work-site raids. Likewise, Tepeyac Association put pressure on the Mexican Consulate to install a 1-800 number to support the arrested immigrants at the detention centers, which the Mexican Consulate in New York finally established. **C)** To prevent fraud by

immigration lawyers, fraudulent attorneys who overcharge and cheat people with their services **D)** To denounce employers who violate labor rights, using several resources, including negotiations with employers, picketing and demonstrations against stores, restaurants, deli bars, contractors, etc. **E)** To give referrals to and support to workers whose human rights had been violated (providing legal advice and psychological support); at the same line, to educate Mexican people about labor and human rights through meetings and labor clinics in Parishes. **F)** To promote self-employment through the creation of *community based business* and cooperative societies both in Mexico and in the United States. **G)** To fight for a new General Amnesty to all undocumented workers by interceding political leaders, representatives and congresspeople. Also by demonstrations, religious marathons, Mexican parades and the organization of national networks with all the immigrants who face the same vulnerable condition. **H)** To promote the *official* establishment of a citywide holiday for one day of the year to celebrate ‘the Virgin of Guadalupe Day’ on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

The Tepeyac Association has established numerous relationships with people, unions, organizations and institutions that render their services, it has made possible to refer people seeking assistance to other places, depending on type of problems or needs: labor abuses, insufficient wages, accidents suffered on the job; immigration problems, raids, deportations, deaths crossing the border; health problems, people without adequate medical help. In the Educational field, they are promoting Spanish classes, for instance, for those who speak in their native languages (indigenous dialects), English courses and computer training, etc. With Youth people, Tepeyac has programs of drugs and alcohol counseling, H.I.V infected people, gangs, people in prisons, etc. They have also created support groups for gangs members and drug addicts trying to take them away from, promoting their enrollment in football teams and rock bands, for example. Likewise the Association is promoting a campaign to spread the use of condoms among Mexican population as a response to the increasing number of H.I.V infected Mexican youth in New York City. This is very innovative for a Mexican Catholic organization since the Mexican Catholic Church has always observed a very conservative position about the use of preservatives and all kind of contraceptive methods.

The Tepeyac Association is part of *The National Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty*, together with other Latino leaders of more than 160 organizations, unions and churches in the United States. Among others, it has established relationship and alliance in New York with: Latino Workers Center, Movement Latino U. S. A., Bronx’s Folk Club Latin-American Workers Union, Development Center for Dominican Women, Dominican National Congress, Caucus of Dominican Women, Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants, Humanist Center of Cultures, Center of Independent Agriculture Workers, Popular Dominican Movement, Immigrants in Action, We make the road by walking, National Network Against Raids Coalition for Human Rights, The Center for Justice, Center for Immigrants Rights, and Mexican-American groups. Finally, the association is one of four organizations responsible for the coordination of the struggle for the General Amnesty in New York.

In all of these activities Guadalupano Committees are involved and they ask to the central office of the Tepeyac to organize workshops and meetings in their Parishes according to specific needs. In issues related to immigration and amnesty, many committees have constantly asked advisory and they have received monthly excellent stories, through *El Popocatepetl*, about how a General Amnesty might change radically their live conditions in this country. Members of Tepeyac, in general terms Mexicans, have become ones of the most energetic participants and also the vast majority in public demonstration and marches for the General Amnesty of all undocumented immigrants. They have participated in all manifestations of this kind, even those in Washington D.C to ask an unconditional Amnesty in front of the US Congress House. The last time, approximately 30 buses exclusively members of Tepeyac Association went to Washington, DC It was on July 20, 2000.

5. '*Creating a sense of Mexican Community*': -how societies remember-

One of the most interesting characteristics of these demonstrations for the General Amnesty is precisely the mixture of national symbols and religious images that Mexican people carry during their long walks on the streets of New York. The Mexican flag and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe are present on banners asking for amnesty, respect for human rights and better labor conditions. These public manifestations work as strategies of visibility for Mexicans in the city and also as affirmation of their presence, in a sort of "point of suture" that secures the incessant movement of a community identity, thereby a cultural project in developing. In other words, three moments can be identified throughout these events in which the Catholic faith and nationalism are combined: foundations (constituted around traditions), settlement (configured around continuity) and the immigrant condition (which is about identity and difference). Such moments are deeply interconnected and permit us to prefigure some notions of how Mexicans incorporate themselves in the host society, precisely in the idea of identity as a *threshold* drawn on a sense of deterritorialized community, which spreads beyond the geographical limits of the nation-state.

I suggest that in this process of reconfiguration of identities and new forms of settlement, the Tepeyac Association has notably contributed through discourses, celebrations, festivities and in general terms, the collective strategies of remembrance used for creating *a community in continuity*, then narratives of reference. In the following sections some ideas about this way of incorporation will be addressed; but before, in the next paragraphs, some rituals and ceremonials will be presented that aid our understanding of how symbols of Mexicanness are recreating cultural repertoires in experience of the Mexican migration to New York.

The big celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12th at St. Patrick's Cathedral has become the most solemn and significant moment to pray and ask the Virgin for the miracle of the General Amnesty. Homilies of the masses have been perfect discourses for awaking Mexican people to the defense of human rights as undocumented immigrants, and fundamentally, "as workers who produce wealth in this country". The translation from Biblical stories to the current immigrant situation, particularly the

situation of Mexicans, has had an impact on the faithful. In the last celebration there was a direct message in favor of participating in mobilization to get an unconditional amnesty for all immigrants in US.

The Celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe and the representation of the Crucifixion of Jesuit Christ (*Viacrusion*) on Good Friday are the most highly resonant events for Mexicans organized in the Tepeyac Association. In the latter, a comparison is made between the crucifixion of Jesus and the long immigrant journey from crossing the border to the life experiences in the city (refer to 'exclusion, discrimination, exploitation and humiliation'). The metaphor of suffering is transformed into an image of collective suffering and further definitions of local particularity and 'community' give substance to the meaning of the immigrant condition as a condition of collective suffering. Moreover, this is suffering that results from the sacrifices of immigration. Indeed, sacrifice is a recurring image for the Mexican immigrants, but as all sacrifices involve redemption, the idea of sacrifice becomes a thread of continuity, a reminder of the immigrant condition and a binding element of a Mexican identity out the nation-state: "*Nosotros nos volvemos mas mexicanos en US*" (We become more Mexican in the US) a Mexican immigrant says in a demonstration. The immigrant journey grounds the emergence of distinct cultural forms that come not from discontinuity and rupture with the homeland, but rather from continuity through 'unforgetting', 'remembrance' in religious ceremonies, non-religious festivities and Mexican holidays celebrations.

An idea of sacrifice is also present in the celebration of *Dia de Muertos* (the Day of the Dead) on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Joel Magallan says: "the vigils were carried out to remember the hundred of migrants that, required for cheap labor by the economy of the US, have died in their intent of crossing the border, some attacked by racist groups, others not able to survive the cold, the heat, or the thirst, others have died by drowning". The image of redemption could be represented by amnesty for relatives, fellows, friends, and neighbors of 'the dead' in crossing the border.

In the case of the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Tepeyac Association annually sponsors, from 1997, the big Celebration in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 2000 Tepeyac organized the third citywide torch run with more than 1500 runners. This religious pilgrimage was planned to begin at St. Patrick's Cathedral. All runners followed only one route around the borough of Manhattan and at the end they took buses to their own churches. The Tepeyac Association celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a mass and a religious pilgrimage, which was conducted running on the streets of New York. Each Guadalupano Committee from the five boroughs of New York brought a torch to symbolize "the faith of the Mexican people". Runners took turns to carry their torches, according to an ancient Mexican religious tradition, carrying the torches from "the Mother Church to their own churches". Very early in the morning on December 12, Mexican people sang to *la virgen morena* (the dark skinned Virgin) the typical songs in all the neighborhoods where Mexican live. Groups of *Mariachis*, singers got together since the night of December 11 to sing the *Mañanitas* overnight. During the afternoon on December 12, they had free Mexican food and folklore dances for all neighbors around the five boroughs of New York.

The Committees of pilgrims were scheduled to gather around St. Patrick Cathedral, after a mass celebrated at the morning. All there representatives of each Guadalupano Committee got together, carrying the torches, outside of the Cathedral, beside the Altar in honour of The Virgin of Guadalupe. Torches and runners were blessed for the Vicars General of the Archdiocese of New York, Bishops Patrick J. Sheridan and Robert A. Brucato. Runners were sent in mission to their own churches to empower their people's identity, the heritage and faith of their ancestors, and announcing publicly this faith to the City of New York such as the Tepeyac Association envisioned. The latter symbolically represents the empowerment of the Mexican identity and community and pretends to announce that Mexicans, Joel Magallan says, "from today in forward, will take a common day off since Mexican people did not have any common day off in their work schedule".

One of the keys to decoding the meanings of the big celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe and its impact on, beyond the historical reason previously discussed in section 4, is observing the effort to recreate a community reference of Mexicanness from the Mexican immigrant condition. Furthermore it is a good way of recreating nationalism without the Mexican State as a direct reference, but rather in opposition to it. In other words, while Mexican immigrants are alienated from their home country, many of them express distrust and hostility towards the representatives of the Mexican State, especially regarding to the Mexican Consulate in New York City. Nevertheless, within the discourses, practices, celebrations of both the Tepeyac Association and committees, there is a prominent thread of nationalism. Thus, the Virgin of Guadalupe becomes a deterritorialized symbol of Mexicanness, which make it possible to break down geographical barriers and particular identities, at least during the big celebration. For this reason, being *guadalupano* for the Tepeyac Association is to recognize that the Virgin of Guadalupe is an unequivocal symbol of the uniqueness of Mexican religiosity. In fact, it is the unique factor that could generate mobilization, becomes a symbol of protest and unification for Mexicans in the double logic of *being here and to be from there*, recovering and transforming dissenting voices against the Mexican government.

Undoubtedly, the annual celebration in honour of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a *diasporic moment* for Mexicans in New York; it permits not only reconnection with the home country and the national identity, but also reconnection with the local homeland and local identities through the reconstruction of local festivities in each parish. The double process of 'unforgetting' and 'remembrance' in celebrations could be a manner of reconstructing nostalgically *the myth of the nation* and a sense of 'fellow countrymen' (*paisano*) outside of the nation state, where "the immigrant condition" is heavy baggage to be carried all alone.

*II) Some Remarks about Immigrant Incorporation. Do Mexicans incorporate in American society? Is the Tepeyac Association enhancing a model of incorporation?*

In this chapter I am going to highlights some elements for understanding how new Mexican immigrants are experiencing forms of incorporation related to different patterns of migration. The complex interaction between newcomers and the host society was

observed through my research journey in New York and from this empirical evidence some insights are offered in this chapter. A special consideration is that my lens to look at the Mexican immigrant condition is mediated by the experience of people affiliated to the Tepeyac Association, thereby some of my observations about immigrant incorporation must be understood in the context of the association. First, allow me a theoretical input and then, thinking from it.

*1. Another patterns of migration, new forms of incorporation*

Contemporary theories of international migration give us new insights to rethink about forms of settlement and incorporation of new immigrant communities in American society by analyzing the course of migration at each location and the importance of settled versus recurrent strategies of migrants. Some of the most important findings in this line can be found in studies on Mexican communities done by Massey, Goldring, and Durand during the last ten years, but also from classical works on segmented labor markets done by Michel Piore, for instance. Analysis of the same migration process provides insights about multiple ways of settlement and incorporation of new immigrants. With the image of *Bird of Passage* (Piore, 1979) can be observed that the process of migration across communities become temporary labor cycles but, at the same time and over years, a local way of life, in which labor migrants must to move to the US to get the resources to survive, locating them in the lowest step of the labor scale market. These workers are required by the global economic system and their main points of attraction, in this case the US labor market needs for this labor force for this unskilled to fill some jobs which are not required by local workers, but indispensable to a working system (Piore, 1979; Sassen, 1991). The dynamic between expulsion and attraction points of the labor force has generated different socio-cultural logics in the process of migration from origin communities in the Mexican case for instance, and those changes have affected forms of incorporation and settlement of these immigrant communities in the host societies.

Then, recovering elements from theories of international migration, social networks and transnational migration perspectives can be drawn some basic evidences (taking the case of some Mexican communities) on new forms of immigrant incorporation. Over time, labor immigrants, who in the beginning moved for opportunities for employment, now move to the US as part of life ritual. In other words, the migration becomes a ritual of passage for new generations in some communities. As a result, the transnational migration becomes self-reinforcing process and increasingly independent of the condition that originally caused it (cf. Massey *et al*, 1994). These theoretical positions coincide in that the accumulation of social capital produced by the experience of constant movements to the US and their origin communities reduce the risks and costs of migration, and then eliminate the selectivity of this process. Therefore, the accumulation process of social capital (experience, contacts, knowledge, related to labor markets and *coyotes* for instance), variation of amounts, and also cultural appropriation of these habits as part of the community background produce different migration strategies over time and across communities, creating migration patterns. However, I also suggest that these patterns of migration represent new forms of incorporation and settlement, which do not necessarily imply assimilation into the host

society, but also a sort of socio-spatial enlargement of community symbolic references across the border. Then, how we can talk about forms of accommodation which include ordered synthesis of old and new?

First, I suggest that it is absolutely inappropriate to talk about synthesis in cultural terms, new forms of incorporation or accommodation of new immigrant communities in American society do not imply a synthesis. If we take into account the fact that these new patterns of migration are based on constant movements of people, goods, information, images, in general terms circulation of symbolic goods, we can observe that immigrants are constantly linked to origin communities in a primordial order to get establish a community in the host society (Rouse, 1996); this is, in order to recreate an ethnic neighborhood, by social organizations with local reference, for instance a soccer team whose members are from the same shantytown in Mexico, or a Guadalupeño committee with members coming only from a single origin community in Puebla, Mexico, for instance. The first condition, in the case of Mexicans, when they come to the US is the transitory character of settlement, a transitional situation while they come back to hometowns (Massey et al, 1994). The latter is the most typical argument of Mexican immigrants in this city and one important socio-cultural barrier to permanent settlement in the host society.

Secondly, the apparent contradiction generated between to be and live in the host society and, at the same time, maintain solid links with origin communities through practices, celebrations, festivities, promotes the creation of ethnic neighborhoods/communities and new forms of socio-spatial appropriation, which produce new modalities of settlement and incorporation. These forms are not a product of synthesis, but also of *a recreation of significant*s in their condition as immigrants. The circulation of all kind of symbolic goods, money, people and information constitute a single community spread across variety of sites, what Roger Rouse (1996) has called *transnational migrant circuits*. We must also recognize these as new forms of incorporation in the context of a global system. At the same time, this form of incorporation is precisely a product of globalizing society and an effect of *translocal* transformation on socio-spatial relationships, as well as a form of settlement for new Mexican immigrant communities.

Processes of incorporation, assimilation and settlement in a global society can not be understood by reference to spatially demarcated national or local cultures in strict terms, the image of *spread community* implies, according to Roger Rouse, a recreation of symbolic references and socio-spatial transformations in which “separated worlds are nowadays in juxtaposition”. This precisely is a portrait of *Imagined Communities* in the terms of Benedict Anderson (1983), and this image is very close to the Tepeyac Association’s project in organizing Mexican immigrants around the city.

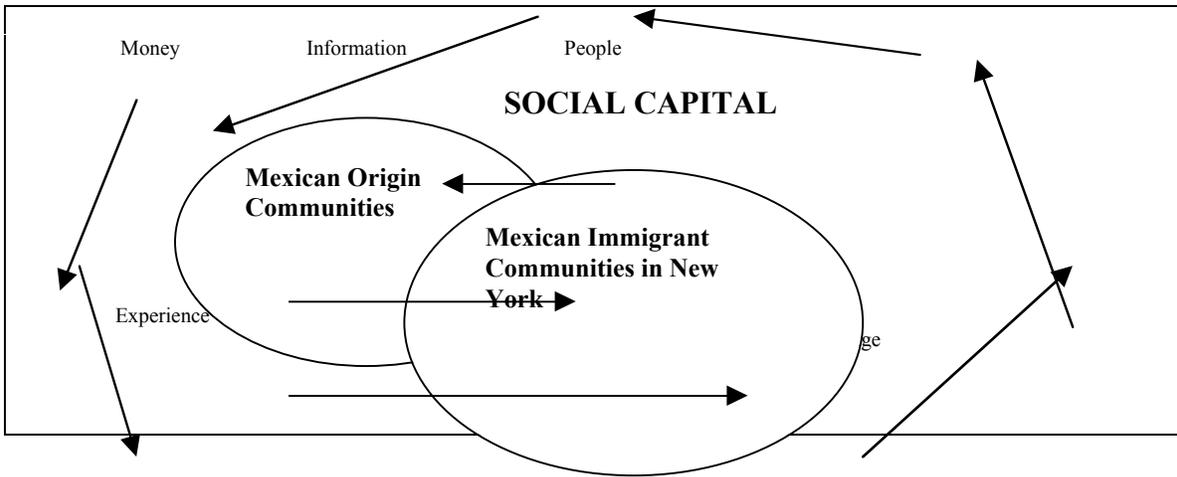
The Tepeyac Association in its everyday work with Mexicans in New York stresses this transmigrant circuit and enhances this way of incorporation through an idea of *spread community* and *diaspora*. Moreover TA reinforces this circuit by opening and enlarging channels for the circulation of symbolic goods, such as images from

communities through recreation of festivities, celebrations, rituals, kermesses and patron saint's feasts, which permit a local-global connection with the origin communities. In fact *remembrance* and *unforgetting* as organizational strategies are also enhancing the collective memory and thus, reinforcing the main resource of identity formation, but such identity can only be reconstructed in the local-global logic of the circuit.

Guadalupano committees are working in neighborhoods as forms of new socio-spatial relationships for immigrants, where local dimension adopts a new symbolic content. On the one hand, Mexicans are grouped into traditional organizations in parishes, but at the same time they are learning and enriching their cultural repertoires in their everyday interaction with other national origin groups, facing new problems in labor markets in which they are incorporated, etc. On the other hand, in their own rituals and celebrations they are including these repertoires enriched by constant encounters, but at the same time reinforced by a sense of belonging to an ethnic community outside their home country and a social organization (TA) that supports, educates, informs them about their rights in their new home.

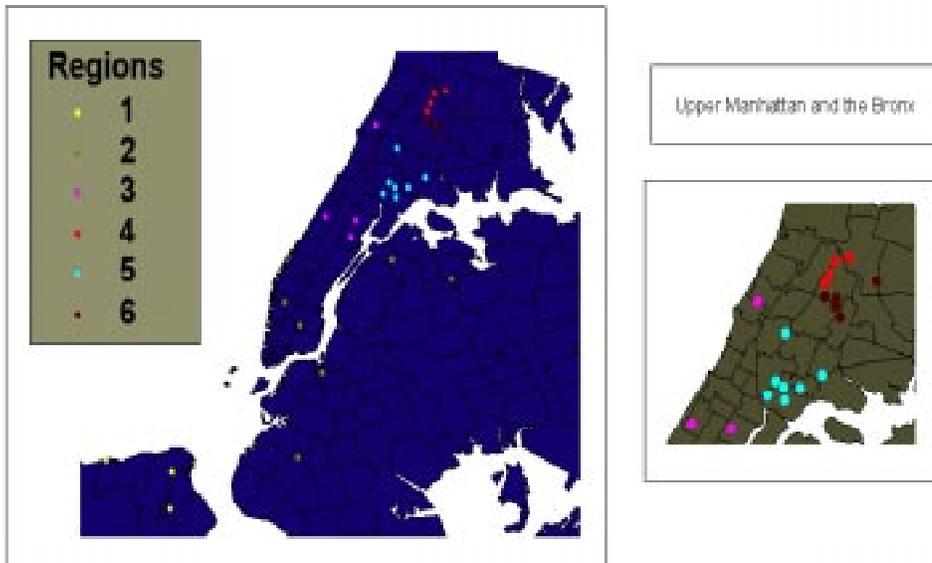
Different channels of the circuit are encouraged by Tepeyac, all rituals and celebrations are included in this category. Also, some of these work as key links for Mexicans at large, not just for Tepeyac members, for instance the weekly radio program, which is broadcasted by the Tepeyac Association providing information for both sides, Puebla and New York. Similarly, the newsletter *El Popocatepetl* is a means to have information in New York about their origin communities and new issues, setting a new agenda in immigrant life. In general terms, the symbols of struggle, faith and devotions of Guadalupano committees are meshed in ways comprehensible within the participants' past experience in Mexico, and the reality of their situation in New York today. This double reality also considered in the project of visibility of TA is an image of a new form of incorporation, such as a spread community. Allow me imagine this idea in black and white:

**A SPREAD COMMUNITY AS A NEW FORM OF IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION FOR MEXICANS**



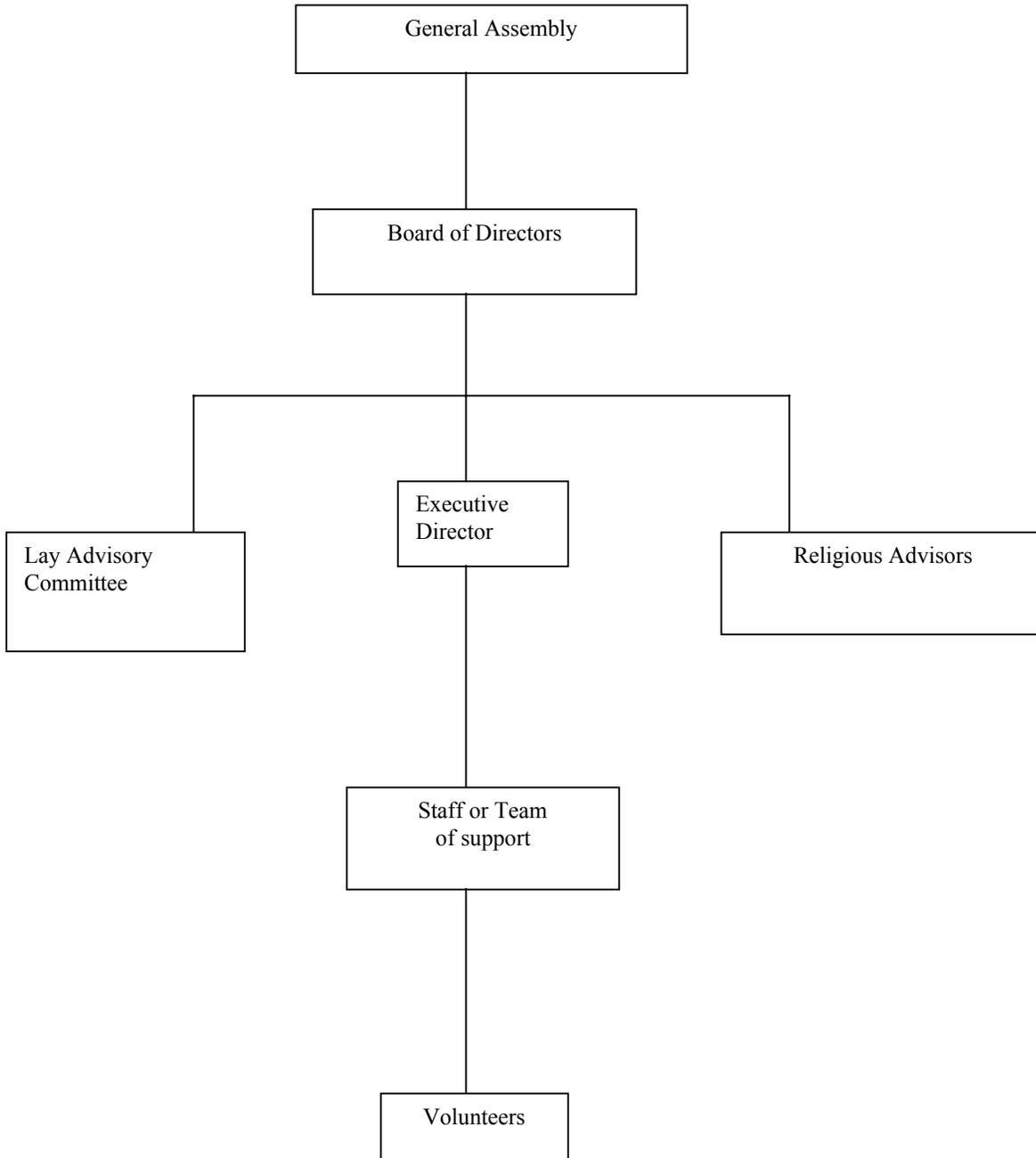


## Guadalupano Committees in New York City



Cartography: Juan Miguel Kanai, ICMEC, New School University

**Fig. 2 Organization Chart**  
**Tepeyac Association of New York, 2000**



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