

The peddler's informal work in Mexico City's subway*

El trabajo informal de los vagoneros en el Metro de la Ciudad de México

O trabalho informal dos ambulantes no metrô da Cidade do México

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21803%2Fpenamer.9.16.340>

Abstract

This paper focuses on analysis of the decisions made by peddlers to continue working on the streets, specifically selling apocryphal items. Those decisions are based on the working conditions in the informal sector. To collect data, the participant observation was used, as buyers; 8 interviews with vendors, aged over 25, were conducted. These sellers are engaged in the sale of pirate compact discs (CDs) inside the wagons of the Sistema de Transporte Colectivo (STC) Metro Line 8 in Mexico City. The results show that economic income, financial compensation, the working day and the satisfaction of working in the informal sector makes those people keep on working within the framework of informality.

Key words: Street vendors, Informal sector, Job insecurity, Wagon drivers.

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este artículo es presentar un estudio exploratorio a partir de un caso que explica de qué forma las condiciones laborales propias del sector informal pudieran determinar la decisión de los vendedores ambulantes de permanecer en este en su modalidad de comercio ambulante, específicamente en la venta de artículos apócrifos. La manera en que se operacionalizaron las proposiciones planteadas en la presente investigación fue a través del uso de la observación participante en calidad de compradores y de la aplicación de ocho entrevistas a los vendedores ambulantes mayores de 25 años que se dedican a la venta de discos compactos (CD's) piratas dentro de los vagones del Sistema de Transporte Colectivo (STC) Metro de la Línea 8 de la Ciudad de México. Los resultados arrojan que el ingreso, las remuneraciones, la jornada de trabajo y la satisfacción que da el trabajar en el sector informal hace que los sujetos de estudio decidan trabajar en el marco de la informalidad.

Palabras clave: Comercio ambulante, Sector informal, Precariedad laboral, Vagoneros.

Resumo

O principal objetivo deste artigo é apresentar um estudo exploratório a partir de um caso que explica como as condições de trabalho no setor informal puderam determinar a decisão dos vendedores ambulantes permanecerem em sua modalidade de comércio ambulante, especificamente na venda de produtos apócrifos. As propostas levantadas nesta pesquisa foram realizadas através do uso da observação participante com compradores e da aplicação de 8 entrevistas com os vendedores ambulantes maiores de 25 anos que estão envolvidos na venda de discos compactos (CDs) dentro dos vagões do Sistema de Transporte Público (STC) Linha de Metro 8 Cidade do México. Os resultados mostram que a renda, as remunerações, a jornada de trabalho e a satisfação que dá o trabalho no setor informal faz com que os sujeitos deste estudo optem por trabalhar no âmbito da informalidade.

Palavras-chave: Vendedores ambulantes, Sector informal, Insegurança no emprego.

How to cite this article: Ramírez, E. & Tunal, G. (2016). El trabajo informal de los vagoneros en el Metro de la Ciudad de México. *Pensamiento Americano*, 9(16), 78-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21803%2Fpenamer.9.16.340>



Received: July 11 de 2015 • Accepted: September 23 de 2015

* Artículo derivado del proyecto de investigación titulado: "Género y trabajo informal".

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Introduction

Undoubtedly the contemporary mutations of work are associated with the exhaustion of the productive paradigm that was almost generalized in almost all countries in the early years of the 1980s. In this sense, mass production in series of standardized products is in crisis, the welfare state is exhausted, the policies of Keynesian demand are no longer viable, the expansion of mass consumption is slowing down, collectivism in labor relations ends, stability in employment falters, real wages cease to grow, and social security coverage is restricted. All of the above gave way to a more flexible accumulation model that translated into an organization of work based on total quality, labor culture, consensus, the participation of workers in the work processes, constant and comprehensive training, the reintegration of functions, teamwork, continuous improvement, polyvalence, and the consequent transformation of labor precariousness (Tunal, 2006) measured through temporality, vulnerability, wage insufficiency and lack of labor protection (Rubio, 2010).

Such transformations in the formal labor markets have led to changes where it has been shown that these also express very precarious situations (Banda & Chacón, 2005), sometimes even more than those presented in the informal sector. For example, in many formal enterprises, hiring for a predetermined period

of time without social security and low wages begins to predominate, which generates a great deal of instability in the workforce. The formal sector has usually been linked to a modern capitalist sector and a very special type of work: wage labor.

This sector was born in the nineteenth century when a major industrial reserve army emerged that was quickly incorporated into the formal labor market characterized by the existence of [...apparently...] stable contractual relations, relatively high wages, social security, employment stability, and more or less good working conditions (Pries, 1992, p.9).

In contrast, it is common for the informal sector to be associated with a traditional sector composed of labor force with low qualifications. In general terms, much of the literature considers that this arises in large part by:

... (I) accelerated population growth [...] translated into a surplus of labor power; II) the large volume and intensity of migratory flows generated by underemployment; unemployment and, consequently, the existence of a permanent mass of labor in conditions of extreme poverty; (III) the heterogeneity of the productive structures in which different forms of work organization are combined and coexist, such as work-

ing and non-wage labor; IV) that the use of advanced technologies has diminished the ability of formal labor markets to absorb labor; V) little investment in human capital, which has produced a lot of workforces that does not cover with the requested qualifications in the formal type jobs; (VI) the large lack of adequate incentives for savings and investment, the direction and volume of credit, (VII) a regressive distribution of income; (VIII) the limited range of consumption, and (IX) the implementation of inadequate fiscal policies, which have introduced rigidities in labor markets (Tunal, 2005II, p.47).

The first investigations on the origin, causes, and growth of informality, are overcome when trying to characterize the informal sector, since they do not emphasize that labor informality has multiple dimensions and, because it is not a heterogeneous process, it must be explained with basis on the historical context of each country as well as the characteristics of each region where it is expressed (see Busso & Pablo, 2010, Núñez & Gómez, 2008, Tokman, 1995). In this sense, it would be necessary to highlight the studies of the informal sector within the labor transformations already mentioned. This gives the possibility of detecting that in the informal sector begin to present non-precarious situations where workers not only earn a higher income than jobs offered by the formal

sector, but also flexibility in the work process is a decision that allows many of these to be more time with their families and, consequently, feel satisfied. In no way, we are saying that in the informal sector situations of precariousness are not expressed, but what we want to emphasize is that currently, this is not a characteristic that only defines it (Ortiz, 2009).

It is important to recognize that, although the labor market in countries such as Mexico has long been the informal sector, it has been studied as an atypical situation in labor markets in that country, which has led to the study of this from the theories that have been built around formal labor markets (Salas & Rojas, 2007). Obviously, these have not only moderately explained the phenomenon of informal work, but have also neglected their study giving priority to the study of formal enterprises, which incidentally, represent a minimal part of the Latin American labor reality.

In general terms, in this article, we first present the procedures used to apprehend our observation units, some characteristics of the itinerant commerce in Mexico, the profile of the study subjects investigated and the conclusions that we reach after analyzing the proposed associations.

Investigation's nature

The general objective of this article is to an-

alyze how the labor conditions of the informal sector could determine the decision to remain in this modality of street vendors, specifically in the sale of apocryphal disks within the wagons of the subway line 8 of Mexico's city during the second quarter of 2014 taking as a historical frame the 20th of July of 1994, date in which this line began to operate. Specifically, we will focus on how economic income, working hours and job satisfaction can influence the decision of the *wagon vendors* to work within the framework of urban informality.

Mexico's city subway started its activities on September 5, 1969, and to date it travels almost all the city and it is the most important transportation system of its citizens. Subway line 8 was opened on July 20th, 1994, and begins its journey from the 1917 Constitución Station to Garibaldi Station. At present, there is a great influx in this line not only of the "... 32538964 people [...] [...] who transferred between January and May 2014..." within the total of their 19 stations" but also of the 2868 *wagon vendors* "...which 1266 are women and 1590 men, [...] although reality shows that this amount can be up to three times higher" (Fuentes, 2012). This has increased the illegal and apocryphal sale of various products such as compact *pirate* discs.

As an independent central variable, we use the working conditions of the informal sector in its mode of traveling in the subway.

Although it is clear that the determination of working conditions involves the measurement of a large set of indicators, for reasons that are due to the operationalization of the proposals assumed in this article, we only measure the decision to continue or not in the informal sector related to the revenues derived from the sale of *pirate discs* in the subway, the working day associated with this type of work, and the satisfaction that can be felt by working as a *wagon vendor*. This decision is made because most of the studies on informality address to economic and non-accommodative issues in the formal sector, forgetting that many of the people working in the informal sector have been born and raised in the informal sector which required more studies related to subjective aspects such as the decision to remain or not and not to take the informal situation into account as an insufficiency of the formal sector to absorb labor (see Tunal, 2010).

Age' selection of our study subjects is due to the fact that one of our analyzed variables is the decision to remain in the informal sector so that the observed individuals had to have a prior work history in the informal sector that would allow them to know what causes to remain in such sector. In this sense, those under 25 years of age have little or no permanence within the informal sector, which is why it is not possible to observe what was proposed in the present investigation.

We use as methodological dimensions the *wagon vendors* affiliated with some organization of street vendors and those who are not affiliated to any of these. For the first dimension, it is understood that those *wagon vendors* belong to an organization and, therefore, their work is regulated by someone else, while the second dimension refers to completely independent *wagon vendors*. The indicators used indistinctly for each of the methodological dimensions were men and women affiliated or not to some organization of street vendors. Although this gives us a total of eight cases that represent each and every one of the problems that were presented in this research, this cannot be taken as a representative sample but an exploratory case study.

On the other hand, sub-variables that allowed us to operationalize our main independent variable were: I) the economic income understood as the monetary amount that is received from the illegal sale of records in the subway; II) the working day considered as the time that implies the sale of discs on subway's facilities, and III) the satisfaction of belonging to the guild of the *wagon vendors*. We note that we use sub-variables interchangeability both at the level of indicators and methodological dimensions.

In the first instance, the application of the participant observation was carried out since

it allowed us a systematic and reliable record of the behavior and *wagon vendors'* behavior. In that context, this instrument helped us to participate in the problem studied by making us proceed as potentially interested passengers in the purchase of a *pirate* disc. In this sense, we moved along all the stations of subway's line 8 on its two directions during a full week at different times because, as we mentioned earlier, the street trade is a very volatile activity, meaning, that the number of *wagon vendors* varies according to the days and hours of the day depending on the number of passengers, the relaxation or absence of police, the celebration of one particular day, the payment days of the consumers, etc.

The second technique that we used was the application of an open and closed questions interview with a 45 minutes duration that was given to eight *wagon vendors* selected as *vital informants* from the procedure of the previous participant observation¹. It is important to note that our interview contained each and every one of the relations established in the matrix of congruence proposed in the approach of the research problem. The type of interviews carried out in our research was structured as a re-

¹ The number of the interviews not only alludes to the fact that this is an exploratory study and that when applying the Key Informant Technique the saturation criterion used in properly qualitative research was reached. We are aware that this obviously limits the scope of the results, which we hope will be greater in the further research that we are currently carrying out.

sponse to a previous plan in which we selected sub-variables that translated into very specific questions that allowed us to operationalize the specified relationships in the present investigation. In this sense, this methodological instrument was applied to four affiliated *wagon vendors* to an organization of which half were men and the other half women and where each of these represents each established age group. In the same way and distribution, four other interviews were answered by *wagon vendors* not affiliated with an organization. In summary, we can observe that the proposed administration of the interview integrated each and every one of the associations proposed in our dimensions proposal, indicators and sub-variables.

Finally our unit of analysis refers to the studies on the itinerant commerce which understands how the "... trade in fixed station that uses metallic anchored structures on the sidewalks; the trade in semi-permanent posts, located in removable structures that allow the temporary appropriation of the public space and the so-called bullfighters, that expose their merchandise in a piece of cloth and 'bullfight' the authorities that intend to remove them" (Silva, 2010, p.204).

Obviously, this is framed in research on the informal sector and labor markets, but for space, issues could not be incorporated in this

article, although as authors we have previously worked on various studies on such topics.

The Informal Sector

Informality as concept emerges from the 1972 International Labor Organization (ILO) report on the worker's conditions in Kenya, and it is from this point of view that diverse perspectives begin to emerge, which were and have been the basis for characterizing informality. It is precisely from these perspectives and especially from Kenya's report that the informal sector is posed "... as a significant area of the labor market (in terms of employee numbers, productivity and income level in relation to the agricultural sector)" (Klein, quoted by Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.131). Therefore, being an important source of labor market that concentrated a large number of workers and part of the productive process, it was proposed that the informal sector will generate growth "... so it was necessary to eliminate any obstacles, meaning, regulations, and to promote the purchase by the State of goods and services produced in..." (Klein, quoted by Busso & Pérez, 2010, p. 131) such sector.

Although the majority of studies have seen the informal sector as a strategy to lift thousands of workers from this type of labor practice and to solve the unemployment problem, other approaches state that the informal sector "...does nothing more than reproduce a place

of subordination [... of informal work...] in the economic structure and, therefore, it is indispensable to dissuade and eliminate it” (Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.130). In both cases, the practices carried out by governments have been contradictory, while the excessive bureaucracy and public officials' corruption only strengthen this sector and/or weaken support programs for the legalization of informal trade practices.

Obviously, the responsibility of the informal sector's existence is not only of the governments but also of the civil society that tolerates and buys the products and/or services by the informal sector. It is a complicated situation because neither the purchasing power in countries like Mexico allows access to the products and/or services offered by formal companies. The experience of posing as buyers allowed us to observe that in this synergy also are closely involved the buyers who reject the *wagon vendors* when they are not interested in buying anything, but accept them when they have no interest in any of the products offered by these. In both cases, they do not denounce this practice to the authorities, although they are aware that the *wagon vendors* collude with the authorities.

Due to the relevance of the phenomenon, the ILO was interested in not only seeing the informal sector as an area of labor insertion, or where their activities are outside the institu-

tional legal framework but as a sector in which workers perform activities that were protected and thus ensure their integration into society. That is why at the beginning of the 21st century this agency tried to modernize the activities of this sector. In this sense, Tokman “... proposes strategies to guarantee informal workers *full economic citizenship*” (Busso & Pérez, 2010, p. 131). Therefore, it proposes to formalize informal activities through association with a cultural transformation, meaning, a change in the way that informal workers, socially and economically are considered, with the objective of supporting the people who were performing this type of activities and integrating them into society.

It is then that from this perspective that it was intended to make the informal sector functional and the study about who are the people that make up this sector began. In this regard, results showed that it is the “...set of non-professional self-employed activities, unpaid family workers, employers and employees of micro-establishments and domestic service...” (Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.137) who belong to this sector. Although the activities number within the sector has increased, the supposed functionality of the sector depends on the context or the specific conditions of each country or region. It is in this sense that for some researchers such sector “... has a compensatory role in the labor market that avoids the sharp

rise in unemployment. [...] [... meaning...], that it grows and decreases to some degree the inadequacy of formal employment” (Persia, quoted by Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.135).

We insist, conceptions about informality are diverse and a thorough review would go beyond the limits of this article. That is why it would be worth explaining now the causes of the informal sector in Latin America and especially in Mexico. In this sense, we consider that the informal sector in Latin America

...it originates in the wake of import substitution industrialization where the process itself [...] operates as a pole of attraction of rural migrants to the cities that industry is not able to absorb, given the dependence situation demanded by a relatively high and increasing number of resources per worker employed in relation to the situation faced by developed countries at the time of their expansion (Persia, quoted by Busso & Pérez, 2010, p136).

This is why, at first, a great flow of migration from rural areas to the city is generated in search of work and, later on, the inability of the formal market to absorb the labor force that generates unemployment, which makes it possible for these people to choose for performing other types of activities as a way of survival which is characterized by being informal.

By 1974 in Latin America the informal sector was distributed in this way; 41.1% of the workforce [...] [...such sector...] was female, compared to 27.7% in the formal sector; and more than 20 percent were outside the central age range - from 18 to 54 years of age - compared to 12 percent of the formal sector. This workforce [...] [...of the informal sector...] represented a disadvantage in its educational level: only 30% - in relation to 45% of the formal sector - exceeded the primary level of education (Persia, cited by Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.138).

We can see that the characterization of the informal sector is multidimensional and depends on what some author wants to emphasize (education level, sex, age, source, a number of earnings, etc.). For the Mexican case, the definition and use of the term informal sector was disseminated in 1974, based on research carried out by the Programa Regional del Empleo para América Latina (PREALC), and the Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS), was the first national agency to use this term in 1975, when it raised the need to investigate this sector with the aim of referring it to public policies. The STPS asserts that the informal sector is composed of “unpaid workers, regardless [...] family members or not, and salaried workers who do not have social benefits and who do not have a labor contract, as well as those economic units that do not possess the corresponding register” (Ramos Soto, 2008).

On the other hand, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) conceives the informal sector as the work “... not protected in the agricultural activity, domestic salaried service and subordinate workers that, even if they work for formal economic units, do so in ways that avoid registration with social security” (Granados, 2007)

In spite of the work carried out by PREALC and the STPS in 1975, it is until the 1990s that the study of the informal sector in Mexico takes on a new air since:

... almost all region's economies were embarked on a substantial process of restructuring oriented to the insertion of the region into the world economy [... through the deregulation of...] economy and [...the privatization of...] public enterprises which marked the significant reduction of labor per unit of production (Persia, cited By Busso & Pérez, 2010, p.151).

This, in turn, intensified unemployment and, consequently, the exacerbation of such sector. In addition to this situation, the Mexican crisis of 1994 and 2008-2009 marked the growth of the informal sector as well as the type of activities that were generated within it. As a result of these crises, the expansion of the informal sector has undergone significant changes, as the proportion of young people

and adults as well as men increased in self-employment. Specifically, such sector in Mexico currently “... is mostly composed of men, with a low level of education, since 8 out of 10 people employed have a complete secondary education or less” (CESOP, 2005). This situation could be supported at least for our subject's study since the sale of *pirated discs* in subway's facilities is more visible the presence of men than of women.

Although the described crises influenced in the expansion and the transformation of the informal sector in Mexico, it is important to mention that the people that are within the informality not only can be inserted within this one for the reasons previously mentioned that have to do with the economic crises, insufficient creation of formal jobs, low increase of internal gross or by the relationships that are created between the companies of formal and informal sectors of the economy. Also, access to this sector may be due to the fact that it offers, for some people as our subjects' study, adaptable and malleable conditions which can generate a certain type of satisfaction that influences the decision to belong to the informal sector, beyond the supposed excellent conditions offered by the formal sector. What we have to recognize is that this sector is constantly changing due to social and historical context and the political and economic conditions of each country or region. In addition to this, it

should be added that the activities carried out within the informal sector are very volatile.

As a result of collaborative work of INEGI with the ILO and international experts on the subject, the expanded concept of informality is presented, includes not only the use of unrecorded economic units where the business and the person are the same thing and is known as informal sector (street vending, food preparation and other services offered on public roads, home and craft industries, etc.), but it also incorporates all not registered work with social security, whether or not operating in economic units typical of the informal sector”².

Additionally,“... they are developed with a low level of investment, human capital and productivity [...and, therefore, is about low...] [...] quality jobs” (CESOP, 2005), which are normally expressed in the so-called ambulant trade.

The street vendors in Mexico’s City

The informal economy is a source work generator in Mexico, as well as in its economy. In its form of informal commerce in Mexico, for the year “... 2000 there were street vendors representing 3.3% of the population employed in the country. Of 1.3 million people employed in

this activity, 60.3% were self-employed workers and 22.7% were salaried workers” (CESOP, 2005). This implies that most street vendors did not have the benefits of formal work such as social security and other benefits. Thus, by the third quarter of 2000, “...64% of street vendors earned less than three minimum wages³, that proportion was 46.7% for the total employed population. In fact, only 18% of street vendors earned more than three minimum wages” (CESOP, 2005). It is, therefore, that for 2003 “... street vendors conform one of the most prevalent occupation groups in Mexico, despite having lower incomes than in the total informal sector, earning on average 2.1 minimum wages per day in 2003” (CESOP, 2005).

In Mexico, the use of the informal commerce term focuses “... primarily on partially regulated commercial activities carried out in public spaces other than public markets, such as streets and parks, basic core of street trade” (García, 2001) and in the case of the *wagon vendors*, it is exercised within the public subway transport in which there is a large concentration of people who travel daily to different places in Mexico’s city.

² <http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/espanol/prensa/.../comunica3.doc>

³ For the convenience of readers other than Mexicans, all figures given in this research were converted from Mexican pesos to US dollars at the exchange rate on June 3, 2014. According to the Comisión Nacional de Salarios Mínimos (CONASAMI) the daily minimum wage for June 2014 and applicable to area “A” in which the Federal District is located was \$ 5.06. See: http://es.coinmill.com/MXN_USD.html#MXN=9600000, & http://www.conasami.gob.mx/t_sal_mini_prof.html

Street trade, for being an activity that is practiced in the public highway, has been a controversial subject due to the diverse conflicts that have been generated around it and which have to do, mainly, with the way this activity is controlled without affecting the users. Although plans have been generated to regulate this type of activities, it is possible to verify that they have not worked since the number of ambulant merchants is increasing in the subway. Some of the plans generated to reduce this type of activity are the Programa de Mejoramiento de Comercio (PMCP) created in July 1992, during Víctor Manuel Camacho Solís' government (1988-1994) which "...involved 27 centers of construction of popular commerce in which it would relocate near 10,000 itinerant merchants..." (Silva, 2010, pp.195-196). The main objective of this program was to relocate street vendors in malls so that their situation could be formalized, or through a training program under the cooperative regime (see Ruiz, 2010). Among other things, this did not work due to people's inability to pay the high costs of the premises, as well as because the income received was lower than the obtained in street vending.

In addition to the above, various difficulties for staying within these small malls increased with the conflicts generated in these years. However, as for 1994, a new federal government began, and with it new administrative

authorities in the Federal District Department; emitting for January 1997 the Programa de Reordenamiento del Comercio en Vía Pública. Some of the objectives of the program were: improving the working conditions of street vendors through the transition to a formal economy which involved control of their activity; the eradication of "... the commercial activity of spaces prohibited by law; to control [...] [...the...] anarchic growth and the appearance of new points; eliminate or reduce the effects of this commercial activity, and accelerate the relocation of informal sellers to formal spaces" (García, 2001). For this reason, the Mexican government had the urgency to create new spaces in which more control over this type of activities would be theoretically possible. From this point on, "the scope of application for 1997 was 45,000 street vendors distributed in 125 concentrations located at subway stations with 5700 vendors, 121 around hospitals covering 1300 merchants, and 236 delegations point that comprised to 38,000 street vendors" (García, 2001).

The following year the Programa de Mejoramiento del Comercio en la Vía Pública was implemented, in which commerce in specific public spaces was allowed and a revision was suggested to the Bando de Ordenación y Regulación del Comercio en la Vía Pública created in 1993. Although during those years the government implemented public policies to

control the growth of the street commerce, we can say that these did not work because the relations of the organizations with the political parties have always been present not only in the streets, but also inside subway's facilities where the struggle for the public space of the organizations with the authorities is constant since the demand for access is increasing. Therefore, despite the fact that the government of the Federal District in charge of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), "... tried to break with the great organizations that emerged under the mandate of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), supporting other organizations of new party leaders or trying to maintain some ties with the PRI leaders, a greater internal democracy of the organizations was not promoted, which has led the PRD to create more severe measures for street vendors" (Silva, 2010, pp.195-196). Obviously, as long as street vending depends on the "... powerful leaders colluded with subway authorities and political parties, the entrance to the traveling commerce in this means of transport will continue to be observed because the social networks established between these characters and the workforce possess the necessary resources in terms of essential contacts to access the activity" (Ruiz, 2009, p.132).

It should be mentioned that other reactions of the government against street vendors occurred on October 12, 2007, where the silent

eviction of 25,000 merchants working in the Centro Histórico was witnessed and a police encirclement created with approximately 1200 people, also alerted that those who tried to settle in the streets would be sent to the civic courts and thus sign them as administrative offenders. Likewise, in theory, the Ley de Cultura Cívica currently punishes those who are caught selling goods in the occupied areas (Silva, 2010).

It should be added that these programs were not aware that street vendors are not a homogeneous group and that it can be categorized or grouped only by the type of goods they sell, where they sell and what means they use to sell, as well as their employment status. It is important to mention that street vendors should not only be characterized by the type of means they use to sell their goods, but also according to the economic way of operating, the place where they operate, and/or the infrastructure used to carry on this activity.

Also, street selling is expressed through various means and ways, since "... each type of street vendor has a distribution throughout the day mainly based on the products they sell. For example, food, fruit, and beverage appear early in the morning for breakfast and increase again at lunch time. Vendors of clothes, and other items such as pens, notebooks, calculators, etc., start selling a little later" (CESOP,

2005). This way of working also characterizes the *wagon vendors* since the sale of discs may depend on certain factors detached from their working environment.

Although most definitions about the street vendors refer to the people who sell products or services in semi-permanent posts, for the purposes of the present study, the closest definition to our study subjects is that of those people "... who carry their goods, tools or instruments in bags, backpacks, boxes, buckets or in the hands, associates to public spectacles, traffic lights and high vehicular traffic, public transportation, door-to-door vendors" (García, 2001).

In 2005"... in the metropolis area of the Valle de Mexico [...] [...there existed...] approximately 201570 street vendors [...] [...concentrated mainly in...] the delegations [...] Gustavo A. Madero, Cuauhtémoc, Álvaro Obregón and Iztapalapa, as well as in the municipalities of Coacalco, La Paz, Chicoloapan and Tlalnepantla. According to this same study, street workers work less than eight hours, four days a week and have income up to two minimum daily wages" (CESOP, 2005). We are aware that the number of sellers may be greater because being such a volatile activity that depends on various factors to be done does not allow accurate figures on the number of people working as street vendors, and it is even more complicated to ac-

curately record the number of people that are inside the subway's wagons that come and go when arriving at each one of the stations.

Undoubtedly, street commerce is a complex issue because, although it absorbs a large amount of labor that has not wanted or could be incorporated into the formal sector, it has negative effects on the national economy as these are activities that evade the treasury and that, as in the case of our study's, are products of apocryphal origin. According to the Procuraduría General de la República (PGR), so far of 2014 in the Federal District were found more than "... 21,000 apocryphal articles, electronic gadgets, and 10 thousand *pirated* music compact discs were seized, as well as 50 thousand blank discs for reproduction. However, with the support of the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública of the capital, agents of the Ministerio Público de la Federación de la Unidad Especializada en Investigación de Delitos contra Los Derechos de Autor y la Propiedad Industrial, conducted operations at several stations of the Transporte Colectivo Metro)" (CRÓNICA / NTX, 2004).

Evidently, for the analysis of the itinerant commerce, the origin of the merchandise is extremely important since it can become of imports not registered in the national accounts, meaning, under the crime of smuggling. In this sense, we are talking about the set of goods objects of the transaction to which they can be

analyzed in function of their productive origin or the infrastructure used to sell them and in a secondary way by the costs incurred by the sale. We reiterate that informality and illegality can cause confusion, although in practice both phenomena are confused, complicating the monitoring of illegal practices carried out through street vending. Although street vending has several economic implications, it should be noted that through this activity sellers minimize costs to users and have the possibility to cover basic consumption needs of groups with low-income levels (García, 2001) and allow them timely purchases that prevents consumers from going to specialized places where the products and/or services demanded can be legally acquired.

In summary, we can say that, not only the growth of urban informality in its mode of street commerce has to do with low economic growth, low job creation, rural-urban migration, and low wages, but also that the authorities have been tolerant to these activities creating a demonstration effect that has made street vending a viable work option outside regulatory frameworks. Obviously this contradicts the general Mexican legislative structure that considers the profession's freedom of Mexican citizens, as long as it is lawful, as a means to provide the resources to meet their needs, and the participation of the government in regulating the main commercial exchanges, as well

as the protection of the minimum rights of the consumers in the processes of commercial exchange (see Secretaría de Gobernación, 2014). The point is that they are the same authorities who punish and stimulate the street trade generating a synergy that, although in practice balances the supply and demand contradictions of the labor market, in its codification of the regulations stipulated around this regard.

We should first reflect that informal work is not an atypical expression of capitalism, but rather an expression of labor reality in at least regions such as Latin America. In fact, the mode of global accumulation has shown that in developed countries the growth of the informal sector has not only been one of the results of neoliberal policies (see Carnoy, 2000), but also the prelude to a new type of workers under labor relations very different from those experienced by the worker until the processes of productive restructuring initiated in the late 1970s -at least in terms of the modeling mode of global accumulation (see Pacheco *et al.*, 2011).

It should be recognized that the informal sector is not only confirmed by people who, for several reasons, could not join any of the formal labor markets, but there is empirical evidence that some workers have decided to belong to such sector for the conditions it offers or because they have been born and grown un-

der the informal sector. We insist that informal work, beyond being a working expression, is a condition of life. The latter obliges the students of the subject to analyze the informal sector from the daily life, and therefore, to incorporate variables that account for this phenomenon (see Adler *et al.*, 1987; Berger & Luckmann, 1968; Goffman, 1989; Maffesoli, 2001), and Maffesoli, 1979.

Who are the wagon vendors?

On the one hand, within the first age range that we determined in this investigation, that covers adulthood and comprises between 25 and 59 years, our interviewees were mostly found at the age of 27 years, and only one woman presented the age of 32 years. In the second rank that goes from 60 years onwards, the ages of our interviewees varied although none passed the 70 years since a man was 62 and the other was 66, while one woman was 60 and the other 65. On the other hand, all the interviewees have basic schooling that includes primary and secondary education, since two women had completed primary school, men did not, one woman and one male completed secondary school, two men and one woman did not.

The marital status of each also varied, since of the four men, two are single, one is married and the fourth is widowed, whereas in the case of women one is in a free union, two of

them are married and one is single. It should be mentioned that, of our eight subjects interviewed, only one man is a widower, 62 years old and has no children, while the others, although some are single, have between two and four children - as in the case of a man and two women who, although they are single, have three children each-.

Despite the fact that the choice of our study subjects was the same number of men and women who sell *pirated discs*, a significant difference exists in the subway between men and women sellers, as there is a greater number of men, which only confirms our information about the existence of a sexual division of labor where women assume roles that have to do with home or another type of activities that do not require great physical effort.

It is a reproduction that is taken to the labor world, but which has its origin in ancestral forms of cultural codifications that allude to what should be a man or a woman. In both cases, the social construction of the genres has been accompanied by a value scale in which men and women are socially valued differently. While gender assessments have mutated over the years, the idea continues to prevail that it is women who have to care for children beyond whether or not they work outside home. This gendered pattern is still reproduced in most of the occupations

that women have in the labor markets, that is, many of the jobs that women have today are associated with the figure of the maternal and the consequent care of household (Arcos & Tunal, 2014, pp. 48-249).

As mentioned in the participant observation register, the highest concentration of women selling within the subway offers food, while men, who present themselves like a *strength figure*, sell records. In this context, women's activities in itinerant commerce are increasing⁴. Even with the alleged increased incorporation of women into new workplaces, the sale of *pirate discs* in the subway's facilities shows a sexual division of labor with ancestral origins - at least in the sale of *pirate discs* in the subway. However, it should be noted that, despite the complications that this work entails, examined women are inserted into this type of activity for reasons related to the maintenance of their children, which perpetuates the so-called double working day that many working women are exposed.

As for the difficulties that we endure to find elderly people, as we have already mentioned, it may be due to the *wagon vendor's* activity implies a physical strength that requires moving quickly from one car to another carrying

speakers, discs, and a CD player for almost six hours a day. Although the discs' weight varies, the subjects interviewed asserted that this becomes an average of 2.75 kilograms to which they have to add the average weight of the speakers that is of 5.25 kilograms.

Although in much of literature low schooling and the presence of children as one of the main causes of belonging to the informal labor markets are associated, in the present research we could realize that, although our observation units only have primary or secondary, and some of these cases are not concluded, none of them asserted that they joined the itinerant commerce due to their school level, but because of the working conditions of the *wagon vendors* that allows them to spend more time with their family. In this regard, it should be noted that, although the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with being a *wagon vendor*, many of them stated that they would leave this activity if they found a job with higher incomes and working hours that would allow them to be more time with their family.

It should be noted that almost all interviewees said that they are *wagon vendors* because this activity allows them to have more time than the one that would give them a job in the formal sector to be with their family. In this sense, several situations should be highlighted: (I) that although the analyzed subjects

4 In "... the first quarter of 2014 shows the total employed population, 27.7% are men [... and 30.5%... women]" <http://www.inegi.org.mx/Systems/ThemesV2/Default.aspx?S=est&c=25433&t=1>

expressed that being a *wagon vendor* allows them to have more time to be with their family – a situation that they would hardly find in the formal sector - they would wish to have more time than they already have to spend; II) the previous situation is not different from the workers in the formal sector, since carried out studies in this regard refers to one of the labor demands of the formal workers is associated with a reduction of the working day that allows employees to have more time with their family (see Cestari, 2013), and III) how significant it is for the subjects studied to have time to share with their family.

As for the work history, of the eight interviewees, four of them affirm that they worked the first time like traveling merchants - among them three men and one woman-. The other four engaged in activities such as construction, floor polishing, cosmetics, and cooks, although it should be noted that all these jobs were in the informal sector. On the other hand, the work performed before starting to work on the subway cars did not vary, since four of them continued to carry out the same activity that has to do with the traveling trade for these two men and two women. In the case of the other four, only two of them had formal employment with a contract and benefits as the law requires as access to social security, vacation bonus, vacations, etc. Among them was a woman who worked in DHL as a promoter and for dismiss-

al reasons she stopped working there, while the other who was working as a security guard in a control area opted to work inside the subway due to the previous employment had to cover double shift which prevented him from sharing more time with his family. The other woman and a man, although they were not inside the street selling before entering the subway cars, carried out activities that were located inside the informality like domestic chores and the newspapers' sale in a fixed position.

Only one of the eight interviewees asserted that the cause that he began to sell inside the wagons of the subway had to do with the lack of studies. While the other seven stated that it was mainly due to the low income and the lack of flexibility in the work days offered by the previous job before working as *wagon vendors*. Among the secondary causes, they spoke of labor conflicts, school rejection, dismissals, lack of work in formal enterprises and ease of entry into the informal sector. In relation to the time they have been working inside the facilities of the subway, it is the same that they have been selling *pirated discs*, that is, 60, 36, 24, 12, 8⁵, 3 and a month, respectively.

Now, of the eight interviewees, only two people perform, in addition to the sale of records, other types of activities that do not have

5 In the case of two people

to do with the street selling, but that is part of the informality. A man works as an usher in a family business, while a woman works as a stylist only at the end of the school year since she makes hairstyles at graduate's homes and for their female relatives attending to the end-of-course festivities. In spite of the fact that the other six subjects analyzed do not carry out other types of activities different from itinerant commerce, one of the men mentioned that sometimes the type of merchandise that he sells inside the wagons changes, but that is occasional because the *pirate's disc* sale is the merchandise that he gives a priority.

It is possible to observe that, although our units of observation did not have extensive labor trajectories inside the sale of *pirate disc* in the subway's facilities, they did have long labor trajectories that have to do with activities pertaining to the informal urban sector in its modality of itinerant commerce. Also, because they do not have much time as *wagon vendors*, but within the informal sector, the spatial location of the *wagon vendors* examined has been very volatile, that confirms one of the dynamics characteristic of roving.

Similarly, those who have had a job within the formal sector have not remained in it because of the presence of economic crises where the first layoffs usually occur in the field of the female labor force or the labor precariousness

of the lowest levels of occupational structures in the formal sector. This is exemplified by the woman who worked at DHL and was dismissed under the economic crisis in Mexico at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century and the man who worked in security and who had laborious work hours.

The collected data give us enough evidence to suppose that, not only the low income obtained in previous jobs and the rejection in the formal sector are factors that can explain the reasons why many workers increase the ranks of the informal sector, but also these were born and grown in the dynamics of work informality which has always remained within this mode of street trading. This leads us to suggest that the reasons why some workers are in the informal sector should be found beyond the sphere of work and focus on everyday life. In this sense, we believe that many of the policies that regulate the informal sector have failed because they insist that it is a labor expression and not a socio-cultural manifestation.

In relation to work organization we can observe that only one woman of eight interviewed claimed to have entered to sell in the subway without knowing anyone; while four men claimed to have been informed about the job through friends and three women commented that they learned through their relatives as they also work inside subway's facilities.

As for belonging or not to an organization, the four *wagon vendors* that do not belong to any organization affirmed that it does not need any type of requirement to enter to work inside the subway's wagons nor to be affiliated with any organization, although they said that if one does not belong to any of these, the challenges to carry out this activity are strengthened since there is no information on the operations implemented by public officials responsible for monitoring that no person without exception uses the subway's facilities for different purposes which it was created. For their part, the *wagon vendors* that are affiliated with an organization expressed that for selling in subway's facilities it is necessary to speak with the leader or person in charge of the organization and / or to present to the organization an ID's copy that allows it to have a sellers' register inside subway's facilities.

It is important to mention that of our eight study subjects, only four are part of an organization since this was raised from the outset in this investigation, so the following data only refer to these. While being within the organization allows the affiliates greater knowledge of how to work within this organization, we were not able to obtain all the information required in our interview because the people who run the organization that belongs to the investigated subjects prohibit them from providing answers on issues related to the political sup-

port they receive, as they have apparently had prejudicial previous experiences where *their information has been misused, disseminating it in media such as radio and television (sic)*.

Regarding the period that each of the interviewees is affiliated with the organization, it is the same that they have selling *pirated discs* inside the subway wagons, which is five, three, two and a year, respectively. Likewise, the four also mentioned that every Wednesday they meet at the Centro de Cultura y Arte Circo Volador located just outside the La Viga subway station, where meetings are held to inform them, to warn them and to give them indications about the surveillance -mainly-. Other optional activities they perform in the organization are \$ 16.00 raffles of each month where those that participate have to contribute approximately \$ 1.59. These raffles allow the participating *wagon vendors* investing in merchandise or cover other types of expenses.

On the other hand, they also have to grant a mandatory monetary quota to the leaders or organization managers where each one of the interviewed said that this oscillates between \$ 3.97 and \$ 7.55⁶. When making this quota they are assigned a ticket that distinguishes them from those who do not belong to the organi-

6 It is important to mention that only one of the interviewees refrained from giving this information for fear of reprisals imposed by the organization to which it belongs and that prohibits giving this type of information.

zation. The interviewees mentioned that when giving such quota they feel safe to go with the leader in case of presenting a problem among the same itinerants - mainly-.

As for the political party that supports the organization to which *wagon vendors* belong and the number of affiliates in that organization, only one of the four interviewees knew that approximately 350 people were within the organization and that they received support from the PRD. The remaining three said they were unaware of this information. It is because of the above that we could not know the name of the organization, what kind of support political parties provides and the money that is assigned to public officials that protect the affiliated *wagon vendors* to an organization taking into account that it is prohibited the roving in subway's facilities.

As for *wagon vendors* are organized for the sale of *pirated discs* in subway's facilities, salesmen that belong to an organization, two of them mentioned that some of the activities that they realize inside the wagons depend on the stations, meaning, there is a segmentation along Line 8 where each one exerts the sale of a specific product to avoid conflicts between his partners. The products sold by *wagon vendors* are non-slip gloves, nail files, the Metropolitan Handbook, children's toys, bracelets, sweets and *pirate discs* - among the most com-

mon. The distribution of the sale of products in Line 8 wagons is as follows: from the station Apatlaco to the station Constitución de 1917 various items such as gloves, files for nails, bracelets, etc.; from the station Coyuya to the station UAMI *pirate discs* and from the Iztacalco station to the Cerro de la Estrella station are sweets. It is thus that in the section that goes from Apatlaco station to the Cerro de la Estrella station all the mentioned products are sold, while in sections that do not overlap these are sold indistinctly, although it is important to mention that there is respect among *wagon vendors* to let sell to the first one that enters in the station -as long as it belongs to the organizations.

This distribution in products sale is not only due to a better distribution of these but also to a strategy that allows street vendors not to be detected so easily by subway's authorities. Another section in which *wagon vendors* sell and where there is no segmentation based on the products offered is the one that goes from the Chabacano station to the Garibaldi station in which each one of them chooses to sell in the stations that cover that section since the surveillance of *berets*⁷ is greater. Due to the weight of the horns, *wagon vendors* stay in one place and shout to promote the *pirate discs* they offer. The way that *wagon vendors* go from one

⁷ Wagon vendors call the policemen who protect the subway's facilities for the berets they use.

wagon to another depends on the number of passengers in these wagons is reduced and the respect to other *wagon vendors* that are waiting their turn to promote their products, as long as they belong to the same organization. Obviously the above creates conflicts between the *wagon vendors* and the collateral inconveniences that this implies for the passengers.

Now, all our interviewees, regardless belonging to an organization or not, said that the advantages of belonging to this have to do with the type of information that they provide on the vigilantes that will be in certain days, and in this way prevent them in case they must or not take measures to take care that their merchandise is not retained as well as to avoid being taken to the public ministry. In addition to the monthly raffles, another benefit of belonging to an organization is that, in the event that some *wagon vendors* have economic problems, the leader of the organization makes them known to the other *wagon vendors* of the organization and these - along with the leader- sympathize with the partner who has problems contributing money to help him. On these occasions, they are also given an economic support. In the same way, belonging to an organization generates and strengthens relationships of respect between *wagon vendors* and allows them to sell in an organized way.

According to our units of observation, the

disadvantages of belonging to an organization are to pay dues every Wednesday, as it decreases the income of these. Also, the leaders of the organization only provide information on possible operations but do not defend them from the authorities in case of being arrested. Another disadvantage is the meetings that they have to attend, which decreases the time to sell inside the subway. *Wagon vendors* that belong to an organization said that these take the time to start and finish that takes them a lot of time outside the subway. Precisely these disadvantages motivated the *wagon vendors* that do not belong to an organization to work independently.

As for the instruments of labor and merchandise that carry the subjects analyzed, all affirmed that each one buys his equipment and the corresponding merchandise, that is, each one chooses the merchandise and the equipment that will use. In the case of *pirated discs* sale of musical genre depends on the taste of the seller and the songs that are in fashion, while the number of discs and the equipment - the horns and the CD player - depend on the investment of each seller makes, in such way this oscillates between \$ 71.49 and \$ 158.87. This expense depends on in turn of the site where *wagon vendors* get their supplies so they look for places like the Mercado de Tepito and La Merced where they find them more economi-

cal⁸. The average cost of each disc for wholesale and before being resold is \$ 0.34 which are purchased once a week.

While informal work in the form of street vending does not require the high level of technology nor the qualifications and credentials requested in the formal sector, *wagon vendor's* work has an occupational structure with a set of rules that, although they are not codified, they have to be fulfilled. For example, being incorporated into an organization that regulates the *wagon vendor's* work carries a series of practices that have advantages or disadvantages according to how and who looks at it. It is interesting to note that *wagon vendors* have more seniority selling articles in the subway's facilities are those that are affiliated with some organization.

Although in exchange for a fee they give information to *wagon vendors* on the authorities and make supports through money raffle, the organization of street vendors does not provide security since it does not prevent that *wagon vendors* are arrested by the authorities or that their merchandise ceases to be held because, being an illegal activity, the sale of *piracy* is punished by the Ley de Cultura Cívica with the detention from 13 to 24 hours so all our inter-

viewees said they had been arrested at some point and have fulfilled that arrest, a situation that keeps them in a state of permanent uncertainty. It is therefore that the organization only plays a role of administrator of the dues and regulator of the spaces in which the affiliates must sell.

In summary, all the interviewees own their business and, consequently, they decide the type of merchandise to sell, the type of equipment to use and the extension of the working day. Of course, the equipment and the merchandise are bought in places where the cost is lower which allows them to have higher profits. Also, although *wagon vendors* offer products of poor quality and do not offer guarantees, they are very attractive for subway's users where they offer a greater variety and quantity of songs and a lower cost unlike those offered by the formal sector.

On the revenue side, the data collected indicate that these were \$ 15.89 for the case of three women, while two men earned \$ 7.94 and the remainder reached \$ 9.53, \$ 11.92 and \$ 23.83, respectively. However, the last income they got from the sale of *pirate discs* and which currently continue to receive is for four of our interviewees of \$ 23.83, while for two of them of \$ 16.68, for only two women the income was \$ 15.89 and for the person who perceives the highest income, unlike the others, is \$ 23.83

8 Other places that were mentioned by the interviewees to obtain economic supplies to the wholesale are the outskirts of the stations Chabacano, Fine Arts, and UAMI, respectively.

or more. However, even though between the first admission and the last one, a difference of approximately \$ 7.94 is shown, the subjects examined expressed that this is not enough to meet their daily needs. In this regard, seven of the interviewees mentioned that the income depends on the time worked in the wagons, whereas only one woman said that the income is associated with the attitude with it is sold since users perceive or realize this.

Of the interviewees, only two people perform or perform independent work activities on the sale of *pirated discs*, including the man we had said who works as an occasional usher in a family business and earns an income of \$ 7.94, and the woman that asserted that as a secondary activity was a stylist every school year, the income earned by her was \$ 15.89. Also, the two subjects that said they sometimes change *pirated discs* for other types of products, expressed that the income obtained is the same, but what varies is the time in which the income is obtained, meaning, the income made by the sale of *pirated discs* is obtained in a shorter time while the sale of other products requires greater number of working hours.

We can observe that the daily minimum wage for 2014 applicable to the area "A" in which the Federal District is located was exceeded by the income obtained by *wagon vendors* which amounted to more than three minimum wag-

es⁹, which is greater than the one they could obtain these formal work (see Comisión Nacional de Salarios Mínimos, s.f). Even so, this income does not meet their daily needs possibly because the interviewees have between two and four children that require support. Similarly, although this income is greater than the one obtained in a formal job, there is a certain type of uncertainty in the *wagon vendors* because for them the income is determined by the working time and, therefore, it is not a stable income since it depends on a working day and not on factors such as the number of users inside the wagons nor holidays, and also nor the time of day - as in the case of the sale of food - where it is visible the presence of some roving sellers at mornings or afternoon.

The present investigation, the number of users in the wagons does not imply a greater number of *wagon vendors* since when the number of users is bigger, in the wagons complicates the access of these because the space to work is reduced and it causes annoyances to the users (see Ruiz, 2011). It is also shown that the income of these is determined by the number of worked hours so that the majority works daily as they stated that the income obtained from the sale of *pirated discs* reaches only for the daily food of them and their families.

9 Even for those who give their share and are affiliated with an organization.

It is interesting to observe how they obtain higher income than those derived from a formal job, the *wagon vendors* said that they *live to the day (sic)*. In theory, this could speak of more precariousness in the formal sector workers that earn a daily minimum wage. Obviously, a study should be done to collect information in both sectors for workers in similar circumstances. In addition to this, flexibility in working hours, being a business owner and being close to their families makes the *wagon vendors* prefer this type of work than those offered in the formal labor markets, which incidentally, have more restriction in its access.

As we mentioned above, the income for most of our observation units revolves around working time inside the wagons, so that of our eight interviewees, only one woman rests twice a day, while the others work daily on a mixed schedule - including holidays - while a single man claimed to work only in the mornings.

It should be noted that the number of hours in which they do this activity is for the majority of cases less than the working day marked by the Ley Federal del Trabajo, since of the eight interviewees one of them works five hours a day, another two work only six hours a day and two more work eight hours a day. Only one woman exceeds the working day marked by the law since she affirmed to work 12 hours daily. The rest also varies since three of the subjects

analyzed decide to take half an hour to rest, while others take 20, 60 and up to 190 minutes, respectively. It is important to mention that the breaks are determined according to *wagon vendors'* daily needs as some decide to occupy that time to eat or rest. Only one woman said she did not rest because, despite the fact that she stopped attending certain hours on the subway, she had to take and pick up her children to school.

While the current changes in labor markets have led to an increase in competition within formal enterprises with their consequent flexibilization of activities and labor deregulation, it should be clarified that the work carried out within the framework of the informal sector is characterized by high degrees of labor flexibility; in fact many work activities were already flexible before it was coined and established as a form of work organization so-called labor flexibility. At least this can be observed in *wagon vendors* subway's line 8 which carry out activities whose income depends on the number of worked hours. It is in this vein that they decide how many hours to work, how to do it, what days of rest to have and what kind of products to sell. It is for this reason that Tunal (2007) asserts that "... for some people, this form of work has allowed greater flexibility in their daily lives - including work - and, consequently, greater satisfaction" (p.53). Regarding job satisfaction, we found that, of our inter-

viewees, three men and two women stated that they liked their work¹⁰ only because they are the owners and this allows them to establish their working days, along with the time and hours of rest because they choose what they want to sell. While for a man and a woman the problems with the users and the authorities do not like their work. Also, another woman said that her job pleased her only because she is close to home. We can observe that, although the amount of the income of *wagon vendors* is not something that they are satisfied with, however, the flexibility of the work that allows closeness with their relatives makes the sale of *pirated discs* a reason to be labor satisfied.

On the other hand, the investigated subjects asserted that they did not know the opinion that other people as neighbors and public officials had of their work, therefore they did not know if they valued or not. However, they mentioned that people close to them as their family did have an opinion about the *wagon vendors* work. In this regard, four women interviewed affirmed that their families value their work as they are also working inside the wagons, while a man asserted that his family does not value his work as a *wagon vendor* as they consider it demeaning. Another man said that his family

is unaware of the activity he performs because he performs two activities, as *wagon vendor* and usher in a family business so there is some confusion between his relatives. In the case of the other two men, these expressed that they do not know the opinion that their families have about the work that they perform.

For the interviewees that belong to an organization, they consider that their leader values their work and for this reason, he makes raffle every month. As far as the value that the users assign to this work all the *wagon vendors*, except a woman, consider that their activity is not valued by these as they are constantly subjected to various insults and to the indifference of the passengers - situation that this woman understands due to the stress that the noise of the horns generates in the users that return tired of their work to their homes-.

Now, all the studied subjects consider that their work environment is bad since they are constantly arrested and taken to the Public Minister by the *berets* where they have to remain from 13 to 24 hours of arrest or *to pay a fee that affects their economy (sic)* since this is between \$ 11.92 and \$ 15.89 so they prefer to remain in detention to spend the money obtained in their work day. In addition to this, they feel humiliated by the users that ignore them or that look at them with disdain. Although over time they gain experience, going

10 Of the people who mentioned that they liked their work, all specified that they only liked for flexibility and income, however, they stated that they would prefer to have another type of work where the income was higher and allow them to work without fear of being arrested to be subordinated by someone.

up and down running between one wagon to another, makes the *wagon vendors* at first do not feel satisfied with their work for this reason. On the other hand, the salesmen who belong to an organization asserted that the work environment among colleagues is pleasant as they are known and respected to sell, while the *wagon vendors* that are not affiliated with the organization said that, with difficulties already mentioned, the *wagon vendors* affiliated with the organizations put obstacles to them to avoid that they offer their products in the wagons freely and in most of the cases these do not let them sell.

It is due to the previously difficulties exposed that all our interviewed signed that they do not would like to continue working within the subway and that, if they had the opportunity even if they had to be subordinated to a boss, they would change jobs. In the meantime, they continue to sell inside subway's facilities hoping that the harassment of *berets*, leaders of organizations and public officials as well as insults by users cease.

Although informal work is constantly associated with those that were unable to access formal employment due to low level of education, migration, unemployment generated during economic crises as well as other factors, it is worth mentioning that in some cases people are inserted into this sector for reasons that

have to do with the satisfaction of performing activities such as the sale of *pirated discs* in the subway's facilities. Likewise, our study subjects affirmed that the causes that led them to work within the facilities of this were the fear of not perceiving a greater income in other jobs as well as having no one to take care of their children. The fact of having always carried out activities within the informality generates a certain type of security to them since they have gained experience in this work.

Although many workers have been born within the informality, for the reasons put forward throughout this investigation, they decide to remain within this. For the particular case of our study subjects, although they like this activity because they perceive a higher income than a formal job, as well as being their own owners and having a flexible working day, they would not like to continue working within subway's facilities because of the difficulties involved in carrying out this type of activity as the danger represented by the sale of *pirated discs* in the wagons as well as by the insults of the users.

We underline that most vulnerable groups in the formal labor markets do not differ much in the informal sector since we could observe that it is the women who have to cover a double working day and the older adults whose same condition only allows them to have as

an option the informal sector. To this must be added the inherent precariousness that most literature associated with informal workers. Specifically, the *wagon vendors* work in the sale of *pirated discs* is part of a set of activities that escape the world of work and therefore is not only expressed through different precarious but also to levels of satisfaction different from those of the formal sector. In this sense, what may seem precarious and unsatisfactory for an employee of the formal sector, it is not for a worker that works within the framework of informality and vice versa. In this vein, Rubio (2015) insists that the "... operationalization of precariousness in self-employment in the informal sector requires a different perspective that adds more appropriate characteristics to the precarious dimensions taken into account in the current literature on the subject" (p.136).

Conclusions

One of the major problems current in Mexico is that, under the dynamics of globalization, more and more formal labor markets place greater restrictions on the entry of workers into working conditions similar to those in the so-called informal sector. Although this mode of accumulation has contributed to this situation, and contrary to what many authors assert, we cannot find explanations of the origin and development of the informal sector only in the neoliberal policies characteristic of the new forms of accumulation. In fact, the

vast majority of workers in the so-called Third World were already precarious before the advent of globalization. In this sense, the analysis of this sector has to do more with structural historical issues, which escapes to the analyses that depart properly from the informal sector as a labor-only expression.

It is because of the above that this sector is not homogeneous since it is expressed differently by specific junctures not only at the regional or national level but within a single city. Such is the case of our observation units that do not work on the streets but inside subway's facilities. The above has obviously given a different and complicated nuance to the analysis of the so-called ambulant trade.

In theory, the sale of apocryphal products in subway's facilities is prohibited and, therefore, an administrative fault that must be monitored by the corresponding authorities. The reality is that they are precisely those who perpetuate the *wagon vendor's* existence arriving at agreements outside the law in which *wagon vendors*, via their leaders, *offer* the authorities dues to allow them to sell without their goods being held or detainees. Likewise, political parties appear to be vigilant for this type of activity with arguments that appeal to the right to work and the guidelines established by human rights institutions, but actually, act with a view to obtaining political votes or support to face

to opposing political parties. Undoubtedly, this complicated set of favors complicates the analysis of street vending.

Although we recognize the structural historical part of the informal sector, informal sector workers were not necessarily forced out of the formal sector or precarious. The point is that not only many of them have never had a job in formal labor markets, but because they have agreed to their interests, they have decided to remain within the framework of labor informality because it allows them to reconcile their labor world with their domestic world, which represents something very important for these because the sphere of the familiar juxtaposes the structures of their work activities. That is to say, many of the workers of the informal sector grew under the experience of the labor informality of their relatives so that there is no street commerce as a labor project but as a project of life.

With this, we are not saying that in the informal sector do not experience situations of precariousness, but these depend on the indicators that are used in their detection and measurement. It should be remembered that many of the indicators that weigh the precariousness in the work were made for labor expressions typical of the formal labor markets, which, incidentally, neither today nor in the past reflect the labor reality of regions such as the Latin

America. It is thus that the study of the informal sector will have to incorporate different indicators that explain to this one beyond the explanations only centered in the labor dynamics.

To the previous thing it should be added that, workers like any social subject evaluate the costs of opportunity that implies whether or not to belong to any of the labor markets, which leads us to emphasize that both the formal and the informal sectors have advantages and disadvantages that motivate workers to remain in any of these, even with the precariousness that any decision that takes implicit leads. It is precisely this argumentation that scarcely appears in the literature in the informal sector since it is generally assumed that the permanence or not to that sector goes beyond the subjects as if they were *cultural idiots* without the power of evaluation and, consequently, of the decision. We insist we do not deny that many workers have remained in the informal sector because they do not have the qualifications required by formal labor markets, but we must also recognize that there are other workers who not only decided to belong to the informal sector but also find themselves satisfied to be there.

What we can observe is that, although the informal sector is generally governed by the customs and customs established by its mem-

bers, there is a structure of occupations with their respective vulnerabilities. Thus, for example, not belonging to an organization of street vendors or not having a blood or created family can lead the subjects to situations of precariousness. It is in this sense that, for the study of this phenomenon rather than talk of precarious work should be the talk of social precariousness. We reiterate, it is not that for workers in formal labor markets, family ties are not important, but these are expressed in different degrees from those expressed by workers in the informal sector where the structure governing labor is not codified agreements in an internal regulation of work, but that the solidarity and the belonging to the neighborhood surpass the occupational and professional identity.

This research, like many others, concludes that the study of the informal sector tends to be very complex not only because of its volatility, but also because it is not expressed purely. In this way, we can find informal labor practices within some companies in the formal sector such as those previously exemplified. Similarly, the regulation of street vendors' organizations, the link with political parties and the authorities, mean that, beyond the customs and practices that govern informal workers, a series of formalities that are more similar to those of the formal sector are transposed to the informal one. By this, we mean that neither before or now the world of work has been separated

from other spheres of life, but this dichotomy has obeyed a research strategy that has resulted in *origin inconsistencies* in the study of both sectors.

Finally, we mean that we are aware of the study's limitations and the results generated new and different research questions that we could not address because of the limitations involved in determining our objectives. It is from the above that our research does not attempt to close the discussion on the issues raised here, but rather expects the scrutiny of other investigations that have reached different results or that have different theoretical and methodological approaches to those used here.

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