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**PHD Thesis**

**-Summary-**

**BORDERING THE CITY, ORDERING THE PEOPLE:  
EMOTIONAL CONTROL AND BUREAUCRATS'  
CONTRADICTIONS, BARCELONA CASE STUDY**

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My thesis analyses bordering practices within urban space, taking into consideration the interventions conducted by social services and local police forces in urban space. I base my study on an empirical and contextual research conducted in Barcelona between 2016 and 2020, built on ethnographies, active participation and interviews with state agents.

The study links migration studies and urban studies, using bottom-up and top-down perspectives while analysing the institutional practices targeting the undocumented migrants living or working in the street. I focus on forms of control of undocumented migrants, what I have considered bordering practices within the nation-state.

In the last decade, Spanish cities gained autonomy and promoted a decentralisation process in relation to the Spanish state departments in charge of applying the Immigration Law. The city became a potential sanctuary in times of practices of strict control of mobile people and their settlement within the European Union.

At the same time, it is in this urban space where everyday interactions between institutions in charge of managing migration and migrants occur, where the state is “felt” and crafted through these encounters, procedures and paperwork. Simultaneously, it is also within the city where the borders become omnipresent and manifest themselves in different ways, some of them more visible – police raids and racial profiling in the street – or rather invisible – bureaucratic procedures, interviews in order to gain access rights and resources in the city. All these physical or bureaucratic boundaries produce a sense of uncertainty and economic and social precarity for the ones affected by them, producing the category of the “deportable” (De Genova 2002) person.

Within this context, my research questions focus on the role of the city in mitigating or reinforcing these strict regulations of the Immigration Law. The lines between national immigration policies and local policies often overlap. However, access to education, healthcare or housing can be facilitated by local policies, offering migrants not only access to their rights, but also the possibility of settling in, of being considered a neighbour in the city, being part of the community.

My doctoral research is focused on how local policies and practices, managed by city institutions and agents, reinforce or challenge the bordering practices designed by the National Immigration Law, facilitating the migrants' control or inclusion, contributing in this sense to the field of migration studies.

My central question developed in this research focused on how institutions and their practitioners included or rejected undocumented migrants at a local and municipal level, contributing to the formation of a social and racial order in the urban space and multiplying the logic of borders within the state.

Within the city, access to housing became a key point proving the intersection between migration regulations – national and local – and access to rights. Consequently, I focused on the situation of migrants with a precarious legal status living in informal settlements in different areas in the city of Barcelona. This central question developed in several other issues: Who are the unhoused migrants using the street to live or to work? How do institutions, neighbours, and unhoused people interact within the neighbourhood?

I centred my study in the street interventions of practitioners working within municipal departments and NGOs in charge of migrants' inclusion. I try to show how they relate to the Immigration Law, where this Law is

contested and where it is reinforced, which is the space left for local decisions and protocols and where the subjectivity of the practitioners plays a key role. These regulations are translated into daily practices implying a connection between the practitioners, which I consider bureaucrats on the whole, and the migrants. I try to analyse this connection more deeply in order to understand the bureaucrats' contradictions and justifications during their interventions.

Secondly, I centred on how social relationships are created in the neighbourhoods through the interventions of these institutions, the neighbours, and the people with a precarious legal status. I studied the relationships of the institutional street team when they interact with the neighbours and the unhoused people. Starting with these interventions, I analysed the emergence of a surveillance system targeting unhoused migrants, including complex forms of policing.

During these interventions, I observed the gap between the structural/organizational constraints which the practitioners are facing and their moments of agency, analysing at the same time the role of emotions.

This fieldwork allowed me to address the affective contradictions working beyond protocols and local regulations, which play a central role in the inclusion or exclusion of migrants from the city. Based on the extensive literature on street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980), I tried to expose their agency and power within the migration regimes.

Studying the protocols and the practitioners involved in different inclusion programs managed by municipal institutions sheds light on the complex, multiple and subtle apparatus controlling migrants in modern Europe. On the one side, I studied the local programs carried out for the inclusion of people, despite the strict Immigration Laws. On the other side, I paid attention to the street-bureaucratic interventions (Lipsky 1980) with migrants and especially on the role of emotions in evaluating, accepting, or

expulsing migrants from the city. Despite being considered a system governed by strict laws and regulations, I demonstrated that migration regimes involve a level of arbitrariness and unpredictability with effects for both the bureaucrats and the targeted migrants.

Analysing municipal interventions showed me the disconnection, fragmentation of the state institutions materialising the migration regime and the multiplication of state power through this fragmentation.

I begin my thesis with a brief introduction linking migration and urban studies in the recent years, focusing above all in access to housing for undocumented migrants living or working in the street. I continue explaining the institutional approach to migrants from the securitization of mobility, clarifying how security and insecurity are understood in the street by the bureaucrats acting on it, and how they explain themselves the goals and meanings of their interventions.

In the methodological chapter I highlight the difficulty of studying state institutions, gaining access to the state, the process of negotiation during the fieldwork and self-censorship. I explain at the same time my positionality as a researcher studying up, the institutions, and down, people living in informal settlements in Barcelona.

To understand better these street interventions, I clarify the housing access context in Spain and particularly in Barcelona, and how the gentrification process and housing rights intersect with the Immigration Law. I describe how the illegality and vulnerability of migrants is produced by the Immigration Law itself and how municipal regulations regarding the access to housing reinforce their exclusion.

Finally, in the analytical chapters of my thesis (5-6-7), I look at the interventions of the municipal bureaucrats and how their action implemented

a social and racial order in the neighbourhoods and reconfigured power, facilitating the expulsion of migrants from the neighbourhood.

In the Chapter 5, *The Patrols' City: Vigilance and Intimacy on Barcelona Streets* focused on the social vigilance of unhoused migrants in Barcelona's neighbourhoods producing the eviction of migrants and a new relationship between neighbours and institutions when citizens gained a new agency, becoming informants. Their interventions are not similar to those of the Police. However, social workers carry out a permanent supervision with dissuasive measures toward the unhoused people. Their general goal is to ensure the “*convivencia*”, a complex concept meaning both “togetherness” and public order. *Convivencia* is understood in a different way depending on whether we analyse the municipal policies implemented through this concept; also, “*convivencia*” shows different parameters in each neighbourhood. These social teams, including conflict management teams, collaborate with some of the neighbours in order to ensure this “*convivencia*” and a safe neighbourhood.

Within this context, security becomes the bond between neighbours and between the neighbours and the institutions which, in turn, changes the perception of the migrants with a precarious legal status living in the neighbourhood. In consequence, migrants become excluded from neighbourhood dynamics, turn into “risky” people and are perceived like a “threat”.

In Chapter 6, regarding the practitioners' emotions, I looked deeper into these street interventions, the dialogues and sense-making process during the interventions. I paid attention to the role of emotions – especially their annoyance – facilitating the exclusion of migrants from the city by imposing moral hierarchies.

There is extensive literature on the role of emotions within organizations. Based on this literature, I analyse how emotions born during face-to-face interventions of bureaucrats with migrants in the street circulate among them, within the institutions. In addition, these emotions are shaped by their previous experiences, training, and connections. In order to justify and legitimize their interventions, they need to create the figure of the “needy” migrant and the “failed” one, putting into practice a selection of people.

Concerning the role of the emotions in the decision-making process, I prove how street-level officials hold the power to apply the protocols according to their emotions and, in this way, they end up impersonating the power themselves; they are not mere neutral agents who put into practice the logic of the rule (Rhodes 2010). Simultaneously, they navigate the contradictions between the structure – rules, protocols – and the unpredictability and possibilities of the space of agency created through their face-to-face interactions with migrants. Particularly, I describe the annoyance, an emotion which not only justifies the selection and future exclusion of migrants from services based on a meritocratic criterion to access basic rights but also ensures the internal coherence of the organization itself.

In the seventh and last Chapter, I examine forms of control through “shaming” (*Chapter Cross-border Shaming and Un-belonging in a White Europe*). The way in which migrants are made visible or invisible to the others by state practices affects their relationship with others, with themselves, and with the place where they live. In the case of border-crossers, emotions such as “shaming” becomes a powerful tool to control bodies and perceptions, being at the same time a way in which the state becomes present in people's lives. In addition, I analyse how shaming installs forms of long-term control placing the migrants in a space of un-belonging, a symbolic space between the border and the full citizenship.

This mobilization of emotions exposed a sort of control involving the individual and institutional, the social services and the Police, proving the collaboration between the state and the individuals.

The results of street-level interventions do influence the policies carried out at a municipal level. In other words, these practitioners not only implement the law but also influence how this law is understood, with consequences for those affected: abandonment, confusion, up to the expulsion from the public spaces which people occupy in an improvised way.

I could conclude that forms of more invisible violence and control were linked with emotional control, leading, on the one hand, to the invisibility of forms of violence and, on the other hand, to their acceptance and normalization within the institutional interventions.



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