

NATIONAL REPORT ON CATEGORY I: UNIVERSITY GRADUATES WITHOUT STABLE EMPLOYMENT.

Elisabet Tejero and Laura Torrabadella

I. CASE STORY .

Introduction

This is the story of Nicolas. Nicolas belongs to the generation of the later sixties (last years of Franco's regime) and has had the opportunity of going to University. This would not have been easy for a member of a family of working class origin in previous periods of Spanish history. Throughout the democratic period university has become more accessible for all social classes, since such opportunities have been strongly fostered by educational policies of the socialist government. For this generation the transition from University to the labour market is shaped by the impact of the current economic crisis, which has affected the labour market. This has meant not only a difficult access to employment, but also suffering the consequences of the growing precariousness of work.

1. Family background: learning traditionalist values from an extensive family.

Nicolas was born in 1965 in Barcelona within a family from a working class origin. Nicolas' family is an example of a traditional distribution of gender roles: whereas Nicolas' father is a wage-earner, more specifically a white collar worker in a steel factory, his mother does reproductive work at home, taking care of the family. Nicolas has an older sister who has followed a different educational trajectory from that of Nicolas. She left school earlier than him, has not gone to University and has been working in different low-paid jobs until the present moment.

Nicolas and his family live in a working class suburb in the periphery of Barcelona, in a building erected during the forties when the city periphery experienced an important growth due to the immigration from other parts of Spain.

Nicolas's grandparents from his father's side, were immigrants from Valencia who settled in Barcelona during the Civil War. His other grandparents were both librarians. During his childhood years Nicolas was very close to his grandparents, especially to those on mother's side. One of the main aspects of the influence of the grandparents on Nicolas came from their interest in providing him with a good education. Nicolas stresses on many occasion the importance of having been a good student for the others:

“I've always been known for being a good student”(…)“all my life as a student has been ok” (1/28); getting good marks has always been a reason for joy for parents and grandparents”(4/24).

Apart from being a good student Nicolas was socialised into a 'male' value-system, which instilled in him the norm of becoming a future "breadwinner" and responsible member of the family. According to this imagery Nicolas had an "exemplary" childhood. He was obedient, disciplined, earned good marks at school and defined his childhood as "a happy period in his life" (1/32) The Catholic education received from his family gave him a frame of Christian values and ethics that can be seen to have had a significant impact on his later development as teenager. All these elements constitute a legacy of a conservative social pattern which emerges throughout different stages of his life.

Nicolas' socialisation process in his early years was embedded with expectations of upward social mobility through school. *The sixties and seventies were years of economic growth and cultural development, in which university became progressively more open to society, providing opportunities which were especially significant for the working class. During those years there was a strong correlation between high-level studies and obtaining a good job, since the growth of the size of the State apparatus and the modernisation process of the productive sector demanded a much better educated workforce.*

For Nicolas' family, who had lived through periods of instability as a result of the War and the post-war experience, the expectations put on Nicolas' education were an aspect of their hopes of improving their social status. In that sense, the influence of his grandparents from mother's side and of his mother herself have played a significant role, as we see in key moments of decision in his life. Moreover, it seems clear that more family pressure converges on Nicolas (as a male child) than on his sister. This gender split becomes more evident when it comes to the University years.

To conclude, this first period of Nicolas' life can be defined through his integration into a family constellation embedded with traditionalist and conservative values. This provided him with a normative framework which will be seen to have a conflictual outcome in his future trajectory.

2. Adolescence and youth: revolutionary ideas within a traditional domestic framework.

The period of adolescence and youth brings a change in his life. He passes from an apparently non-problematic period in his life (childhood) to a conflictual one. Nicolas is influenced by his wider social environment in particular through a school friend, whose father was an activist of the communist trade union. This experience leads him to become interested in a new conception of society, the core of this being the idea of the role played by power relationships and socio-economic inequalities. Presumably, this is the moment when Nicolas starts feeling closer to the public sphere. He then takes part in a new project of socialisation, which brings him into contact with community values and a dimension of social criticism. On the one hand, the political dimension of this period is lived through as a very rich process of self-development and provides him a strong identity through communism. On the other hand, it provides him with the appropriate tools for taking a distant position in relation to his family. However, his political commitment does not interfere with his educational trajectory based on his family's expectations. Similarly, his family does not interfere in his decision to join the Communist Party, which is seen by them as an

extravagant action but not as an obstacle to his future career. As a result of this he presents his political socialisation not in terms of conflict within his family, but of a conflict within himself. . But as we understand it from the analysis, family relationships are the real source of conflict which emerges for him in this period. His stubborn denial of any kind of conflict around family in fact may be thought to hint at its existence:

“I can’t complain myself, as far as family life is concerned, I didn’t miss anything. I have never had a problem”(1/32).

There is another apparent contradiction, which lies in the relationship between his growing adherence to the communist ideology and his religious values. Nicolas does not live through this situation in contradictory terms but in a complementary way. The shared universal values about human beings within for both philosophies -Communism and Christianity - is the justification he uses to emphasise the consistency of his ideals:

“I consider myself agnostic and I believe a bit of everything in the things taught to me, above all in Christianity, Evangelism and so on, but in a rather sceptical way. It was a bit contradictory, because on the one hand I was Marxist-Leninist and very very leftish and on the other hand I had deep beliefs too(...) but it was perfectly compatible for me. I’ve always put the example of the Liberation Theologians from Latin America, Marxist priests, as many others along the history” (5/36-50).

In Catalonia the political transition period took place with an opening to the left through the legalisation of the Communist Party (1977) among other episodes. A progressive sector within the Catholic Church emerged and actively participated with political commitment, thus contributing to the transition process to democracy.

Nicolas experiences his new political commitment in very idealistic terms, placing the Marxist utopia in the core of his own identity. His strong criticism of the capitalist system is developed under an ideal conception of justice, equality and solidarity. As a

result of the strong link between his ideology and the process of reconstruction of his personal identity, it happens that when his ideology comes into crisis, his identity comes into crisis too.

“ I didn't like the society I lived in; but contrary to the past it does not affect me anymore now, maybe the reason was idealism of the adolescence which made me see things differently, we become worse and worse, we are more aware of what we are, because I don't think that I was such a nice person as I believed to be (5/7-12). “(After the Wall fell down) you don't have a guiding pattern orienting your life anymore, it is rather hard” (9/3)

3. University experience: pragmatism versus idealism.

The decision moment of entering university is crucial for Nicolas' s life course. His political commitment during the last years before entering University could have been understood as a conditioning factor in his choice of university studies. However, the decision of opting for economics is not a result of his political calling but rather a result of his having taken into account the goals which are important for his family. For them -and more specifically for his mother- studying economics is considered the best way to guarantee his professional future and to have the possibility of an upward social mobility. Considerations of social status are one background element when having to make a decision.

“ It was the most pragmatic solution, I thought I would have more opportunities, but in the end this isn't true. Being an economist had a prestige and all those silly things” (5/57-6/2).

The expectations of his parents and grandparents from mother's side (who were dead at that time but have been very present in Nicolas's life) play a strategic role in the moment when Nicolas is confronted with crucial decisions

From that moment on, Nicolas starts developing a pragmatic strategy in order to avoid any kind of conflict with his family. To avoid this, he locates the conflict in himself and in ideological terms. His first years at university were years of a disenchanted attitude towards people, towards justice, towards university and lastly

towards society. His expectations of a revolutionary utopia and his confidence on human beings and the potentialities of the Communist Party in transforming society were gradually broken.

During the first years of his studies Nicolas combined university with temporary jobs, such as working in MacDonaldis during Christmas time. This is the only professional experience which he evaluated in positive terms, because of the good atmosphere he found in which he could share experiences with people like himself. This shows how distant he felt from his colleagues in economics since they belonged to another social milieu, and how close he felt with young people who have to do paid work. The third year at university was a conflictual moment, and expressed his permanent contradiction between doing what was expected of him and what he really wanted to do. He was about to leave his studies but finally he decided to continue with a resigned and sceptical attitude towards his studies in economics and his future work. During the last years at university Nicolas started to work in the import/export department of a company, in a temporary job.

During Nicolas' last period at university the fall of the Berlin Wall took place. The radical criticism of the communist system and the social situation in the Eastern European countries provoked his definitive political disenchantment, which is reflected in his abandonment of the Communist Party. After having finished his studies, Nicolas took a sabbatical year oriented towards enclosure in the family and the domestic sphere. He remained at home and cut all his social bonds, that is, he voluntarily went through a process of social "disaffiliation".

All these biographical events converge on Nicolas' life through the structuring of a pragmatic and conservative strategy very linked to family expectations and recognition. The cost of this strategy could be measured in terms of a deep frustration and disenchantment, its outcome being an enclosure in family life. In general terms, university is not an integrative experience for him.

4. Back to the family sphere: opting for a conservative strategy.

After his sabbatical year Nicolas started to work in the import/export department of another company. The temporary working conditions have some degree of stability, even though they belong within a logic of precarious jobs within that sector of the market. This allows Nicolas to live in the present without suffering any kind of pressure from the family and the outside world. The material stability gained through his job does not lead him to leave the family flat and emancipate himself from them. On the contrary, the family sphere represents for him a privileged shelter of privacy, intimacy and protection from the raw conditions of lies, corruption and hypocrisy in the public sphere, as he sees them. Nicolas's strategy of coming back to the family rests on the acceptance of an implicit contract between him and his parents, with very high costs for him. Different episodes of his biography in the present time can be read as indicators of a specific family negotiation. While Nicolas is rejecting the challenge of 'climbing up' in his professional career, his mother is pushing him to reconsider his decision. Similarly, a lot of pressure is put on him to marry his present girl-friend, even though he explicitly says he does not want to. His parents provide him material and emotional support but not for free. In effect, there is a tension between the constraints of the family's expectations, and his reluctance to accept emancipation in traditional terms and to assume the responsibilities expected of him as an adult.

“When I finished my studies I was very happy, but afterwards...they (parents) see that I do not have so many opportunities, so they want me to do some further studies now, for them it is easy to say and they are not the only ones but other people give me the same advice...and my mother even wants me to become manager of a company, which I refuse completely” (10/7-15).

The contradictory nature of family relationships is lived through passively, and by avoidance of conflict which would arise if his own expectations were confronted with those of his mother. Nicolas recognises the contradiction between his (former) revolutionary thoughts and his comfort-loving attitude, but in reality he is trapped by a tension between "renewing the contract" with his family, which means responding to the social expectations of his parents, and his voluntary and self-aware postponement of emancipation.

“When talking about marriage, I’m not very fond of it, but maybe in the future I’ll do it, but regarding children, I think I’ll never have some, but she (girlfriend) doesn’t think like me and this is a big problem, I think they don’t believe me, my parents neither. It is a very personal thing. I don’t want to think about the future because of this, it may be a problem of inconsistency or irresponsibility but I don’t want, I’m more worried about the issue of marriage and children than the issue of work. If nobody depended on me, as I am now, I live well, but there are some people who start depending on me and this is a problem. Given the circumstances I live well and I’d stay here (parents’ house) for many years, but you are getting older and I don’t know...(13/29-42).

This takes us back to the tension between the obedient and non-problematic child he had always been and the rebel of his adolescent years. The conservative logics developed during his youth seem to have prevailed over any other alternative. Up to the present moment Nicolas is actively postponing his emancipation or, in other words, is living in a transition period which is becoming stable.

5. Conclusions: Nicolas’s experience of risk and exclusion

When trying to explore the dimension of risk and exclusion in Nicolas’ biography, we can see how a dialectic is operating between a strong political socialisation obtained through social relationships outside the family, and a strong normative framework of values inculcated through his family. As pointed out above, the logic of the family influence prevails over his own politicised identity as the result of subtle mechanisms of blackmail which take place within the family. The disenchantment produced by the impossibility of finding a place within the Marxist utopia reinforces his enclosure in the family sphere. He has established a dichotomy between the private and the public sphere, and has opted for the first of these. Within the family he finds a comfortable and 'safe' place which he is able to control. By contrast, the public sphere has become a threatening place without clear points of reference for him, since his former frameworks of orientation have gradually disintegrated. He resolves this tension through a conscious self-exclusion from the outside world, by developing a very pragmatic, conservative and defensive strategy. His pessimistic and sceptical view of society and mankind denote a growing individualism.

However, individualism in his case is not to be understood as a principle for living as he wishes, since it has tremendous costs for his autonomy. He is permanently renewing a contract with his family and acting under its pressure as a result of this contract. At the same time, he avoids any kind of conflict, the acceptance of which might otherwise lead him to rethink his family role and social position. The fact of maintaining the present family contract could be interpreted as a factor of risk for Nicolas, in the sense that it forces him to follow a traditional life pattern, thus preventing him from feeling free to accept and defend alternative ways of living.

The case of Nicolas shows how integration through family networks is not necessarily limiting risk, but may generate its own risks as a side effect. At a material level, he hardly lives in a risk situation. In his case the focal issue is the process of construction of his social and personal identity. The global situation of economic precariousness and ideological confusion affecting young people, among them young graduates, may be experienced as social conflict within the family arena, and may therefore be transforming the traditional role of the family. The paralysing and individualist strategy of Nicolas calls attention to the processes of social 'désaffiliation' and its costs for welfare in society.

II. GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON UNIVERSITY GRADUATES WITHOUT STABLE EMPLOYMENT

1. The transition period from University to Labour market: a process of emancipation?

There's a common understanding about the University being the lever for emancipation. Whereas twenty years ago the shift to the market was short and clear, nowadays this transition period is much longer and more complex. This has a direct impact on the actual possibilities for gaining access to those steps commonly considered as necessary for emancipation, namely leaving the parents' house and earning a stable income. Unlike in other European countries, the fact of leaving home in Spain remains closely linked with economic independence and/or marriage.

The low rate of experiences of cohabitation before marrying, at least compared to other European countries, reflects the immediate shift from family life to marriage for most young people (Flaquer, 1995). According to a Spanish study on youth lifestyles (Injuve, 1996) the proportion of Spanish young people who are not 'self-sufficient' has doubled from 1984 to 1995. 52% of those between 25 and 29 years of age, live in their parents' house, and 57% are unmarried at the age of 29. Only 15% live with their partner.

If we now have a look at our sample we can see that five out of our six interviewees live at home with their parents. Only Alfons left home and lives in a flat with a friend. The catholic and traditionalist values fostered by Franquism has definitively had an influence upon cultural and family patterns in Spain, but there is an evident material need for this option too. Neither the employment opportunities nor housing policies are facilitating the transition to emancipation for young people.

According to the Labour-age Population Poll (EPA 1990), 24,56% of university graduates between 25 and 29 are unemployed. As reflected in a survey made by the Labour Department of the Catalan Government, 94% of the new labour contracts made in 1996 were of temporary nature. As many scholars have pointed out, the Spanish Labour Reform (Workers Rule) from 1984 fostered the temporary labour contracts in which has been called a "Spanish path to flexibility". A rapid 'precarisation' of labour relationships has triggered a process of dualisation of the labour market. This has had a negative impact on the professionalisation of well-educated young people (El Pais, 22.02.94). The trend towards precarisation was reflected in the pattern of the apprenticeship programme put forward by the last socialist government, which has led to an increase of youth employment, but with very negative costs for the young employed. So, most of the new jobs for young people are very precarious and degrading, with bad working conditions and very low pay. Significantly enough, they are called 'rubbish contracts' by many young people. Precarisation can be also seen through the growing acceptance of lower incomes and a lower professional status than they had originally aspired to, by the young employed themselves. The proportion of unemployed in Catalonia willing to accept a job with a

lower income has increased from 17'6% to 32'6% between 1991 and 1995. The willingness to accept a lower working category among the unemployed has also increased from 18% to 34%. (El Pais, 24.11.96)

All our interviewees have gone through the experience of precarious jobs. They have shifted from job to job since they graduated, but have never worked in stable employment. Most of them (Toni, Margarita, Adela, Montse and Nicolas) started to work during their studies in 'student-jobs'. After their graduation all of them have been confronted with precarious jobs and some of them (Margarita, Alfons) have even offered themselves to work for nothing, their main goal being to obtain entry into the labour market. Throughout these years (they graduated between five and seven years ago) some of them have abandoned the idea of finding a stable job and they have held on to the temporary work they have, in other cases (Alfons) the option has been to refuse precarious jobs until the situation becomes unbearable. In all cases friendship networks are their main channel for finding work. Hardly none of them has made use of the formal public employment offices for seeking a job. In the cases where they did, they have abandoned the idea, after being unsuccessful in their attempts.

Apart from the statistical or descriptive trends pointed out above, it is important to explore the meaning of having gone to University for this generation. Excepting in the case of Nicolas, they all chose their studies out of some sense of vocational calling. Some of them (Montse, Alfons) changed university in order to choose a subject closer to their interests. The fact of finding and giving a sense to their experience at university allows us to evaluate this stage of their lives from a perspective of integration. At the same time, their expectations regarding a decent job through university were high. However, they started changing their image of good opportunities in the labour market, and therefore of emancipation, during the last years of their degrees, that is, in the early nineties. Because of this disappointment and lowering of hopes, some of them have undergone a crisis (depression or breakdown as in the case of Nicolas and Anna) during the last period of their studies.

Their initial expectations were based on the expectations of their parents, and on the employment recovery during 1985-1991, a period of economic euphoria due to the preparation of the Olympic Games, the Universal Exhibition of Seville, and the 'cultural capital' status of Madrid. During those years our interviewees were still studying. They were also encouraged by the employment in the public sector during a period of growth of the Spanish Welfare State. The two biggest employing sectors in Spain are the public sector and large companies, which give employment to 68.9% of University graduates (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1987).

This contrasts with the new trends of the present generation of students who no longer follow a vocational path. Only one third of secondary school students are following a vocational path in Spain, compared with much higher percentages in some other countries. The needs of the market show a preference for technical studies and versatile studies like economics and law.

To conclude, our interviewees have experienced a situation where having a degree no longer guarantees obtaining a good job. Some recent studies show that, contrary to what was the case in the past, nowadays a university degree is becoming a "necessary" but not "sufficient" requirement to obtain a job. (Casal et al. 1988). As we see, five out of seven interviewees in our sample were overqualified for the kind of jobs they do, and this leads to an unsatisfactory experience of work.

As a result of this situation, we may ask if the precarious labour market conditions for young Spanish people will act as a factor dissuading young people, especially if they are women or from the working class, from going to university. In fact, both these groups have more difficulties in obtaining entry to the labour market. The best profile for getting a first job is that of a man, from a well-off family with university studies and coming from the richest areas of Spain. To conclude, university studies, therefore, may be a context for social integration, but is not necessarily a route to emancipation.

2. Negotiating family contracts.

As pointed out above, hopes of getting a good job for this generation in part arise from their parents' expectations. The idea of an upward social mobility through university is deeply rooted in the minds of the post-war generations in Spain. A combination of generational and class elements shapes the expectations of our interviewees parents' in regard to the future status and economic position of their children. The expectations for children whose parents belong to a lower-middle class (Adela, Nicolas) are of upward social mobility through university. Even though the experience of frustrated expectations is similar across the different social classes, its impact is clearly different. Whereas the upper middle classes have the financial resources necessary to face this new situation (the case of Alfons is a good example of this) the lower middle classes may not agree or be able to take on the risk of seeing their children remaining unemployed, after having been to university. For young people themselves, it is hard to accept the possibility that they will live in worse conditions than their parents. At the same time, parents do not easily accept that their children live in poor conditions.

As a result of this situation, relationships between parents and their children are being subject to several transformations, in the dimensions of economic and emotional reciprocity. This leads to a **rethinking of the idea and praxis of emancipation**. Parents and children are confronted with the need of (re)negotiating the family contract. This means going into adulthood whilst remaining within the family household. A specific interaction between tradition and modernity is the outcome of this. Each family member has a high level of autonomy to decide on his or her own life, but at the same time is subject to a more 'democratic control' (Flaquer, 1996).

If we now focus on our sample we can see that in all cases family provides economic and emotional support. This situation is to be interpreted as a new contract between the generations: while our youngsters have to accept to live with their parents if they do not want to lose their economic security (a situation which was unthinkable during the seventies), their parents have to 'recycle' themselves in order to reconcile themselves to their role as welfare providers. Parents and kin in general have to be

more flexible and to establish new forms of co-operation and solidarity, which trigger new forms of conflict. One of the forms of underlying conflict detected in our analysis is what we have called 'emotional blackmail'. As we saw in Alfons's and Nicolas's cases, they are subtly forced to study what their family believes to be a 'degree with a future' (i.e. for finding a proper job) in compensation for their apparently unconditional support during their studies of their children. Whereas the first opts for breaking this contract (and starts to study something he really likes), the second one accepts the contract, but not without important consequences for his identity, both in professional and psychological terms. In the case of our female interviewees the contract is made in similar terms. However, the social pressure that they receive to find a stable job is not so high as for males, and therefore similar forms of emotional blackmail like in Nicolas's case (when having to choose the studies) are less apparent and probably less significant.

To sum up, we can pose the question whether family is impeding the social exclusion of young graduates. On the one hand the family's role of support is facilitating access to a living, and is covering basic material needs; on the other hand, a side-effect is operating, that is that the family may be acting to discourage or prevent the full emancipation of the young graduates.

3. Perception of risk experiences and biographical strategies

We can now explore whether it is appropriate to understand the situation of young graduates as a **risk** situation. If so, we can identify the meanings of risk for this generation and to what extent it is leading to exclusion processes. Finally, we can pose the question of how far risk is shaping their life-strategies.

The fact of not entering in the labour market in stable conditions leads to a situation of broken expectations of becoming self-sufficient. We have detected how our interviewees undergo a process in which there is a tension between their own expectations regarding emancipation and the facts of the present economic situation. This generates uncertainty, insecurity and, in short, a **perception of risk**. Even before

finishing university studies, young people start feeling an unease regarding their future.

In this situation a vivid expression of the subjective (and prospective) dimension of risk emerges. They see themselves as the next victims of an inexorable process leading to unemployment or labour precariousness. This is for instance the case of Adela who suffered a depression one year before finishing her studies. As derived from our interviews there is hardly a future perspective, in other words, there is a tendency to avoid thinking about it. As Nicolas argues: *“I do not like to think about the future. As the present situation is not very good (...) it is no use to spoil your life with it”*.

The present situation is lived through as an experience of exclusion, as our interviewees are aware that their social integration and therefore an important part of their social role depends on their integration in the labour market. But at the same time, they are also aware that they can rely on their family's support and that they share this situation with many other young people and friends, who share with them a youth culture. These are two important key elements for not yet feeling excluded in a global sense. But their dependence on the family, and on their relationships with friends lies on a fragile or unstable equilibrium. They benefit from material security but are confronted with a big contradiction. This lies in the fact of not being able to find a way out of a period in their lives which is expected to be provisional.

The process of constructing their own identity appears to be very complex. There is a kind of confusion about their identification with different roles. Being in their late twenties or early thirties, they have an ambiguous position, in being children still living at their parents' house. They are well educated but do not have a proper professional experience and they have sentimental relationships without being able to stabilise them. This ambiguity does not prevent them from being very **reflexive**. They have got the resources for developing a reflexive attitude, but they do not have the practical tools for social or political participation. As many experts have argued, there are no operative channels of communication between formal

organisations such as political parties and trade unions and young people in general and, among them, university graduates without stable employment. So, our interviewees live this conflictual situation in an individualised way, even though they are able to locate the sources of it, outside in the social system. They do not feel guilty by their not succeeding in finding a job and the social status that goes with it, but they do not think of the possibility of articulating a collective strategy.

As reflected by Beck's theory (1986) risk is a collective experience in the sense that it is objectively shared by many people, but it is subjectively lived through in a very individualised way. In the case of Alfons, frustration emerges when his rich curriculum proves to be an obstacle to finding a job. He spends eight months looking actively for a proper job, but does not share his experience with some friends of his who are in the same situation. This is a general tendency shared by the rest of our interviewees. Even Nicolas, who has had a very politicised trajectory, opts for a very individualist strategy as a result of his disenchanted attitude towards human possibilities. According to some authors (Castel 1995) we are now experiencing a 'negative individualism', that is, individuality and subjectivity are lived through as a burden, as an experience of loneliness and confusion. Therefore, far from relating risk to a 'constructive' risk with open expectations for the future, the nature of the risk we derive from the experiences of our interviewees is more destructive and negative.

The origins of their frustration and of their perception of risk are to be found in the objective working conditions that our interviewees have had to go encounter. Being confronted with a harsh labour market reality, they have believed that the only way to go ahead is to accept underqualified jobs and, as we have seen, have even been disposed to work for free. Margarita, for instance, makes tremendous efforts and sacrifices to keep her unstable and badly paid job in order not to break the social bond and lose her participation to the public sphere. To conclude, our interviewees are confronted with a very complex process of 'self-exploitation' if they want to maintain a (fragile) link with society through their participation in the labour market. The fact of assuming this 'self-exploitation' contributes to the complex process of constructing the identity of this specific group. It is a new experience for graduates to work under such occupational conditions.

As a result of the elements described so far, we can hypothesise that the **strategies** of our interviewees are immersed in a pragmatic and conservative framework of values. The present ideological debate on the 'end of ideologies' and the theories that stress the inexorability and inevitability of capitalist market logics are obviously reinforcing the present conservative climate. Uncertainty and awareness of vulnerability make them feel fixed and rooted in the perspective of the present, often without any clear project for the future. The emergence of a utopia or project of a collective kind is not thinkable within this context. Contrary to the aspirations of revolutionary young people (very vivid in other socio-historic contexts) our interviewees have not transmitted any hint of personal or collective dreams regarding their future. Both objective and subjective conditions are leading to a minimising strategy, that is, defending those resources of integration they have: family and social networks, education.... Their 'non -fighting' attitude is to be explained through their socialisation in a context of welfare and acquired social rights. But risk and uncertainty about the immediate future has also become a paralysing factor, precluding an offensive strategy to get a job and find a place in society. Subjective factors are therefore objectively preventing alternative strategies of integration. As we have seen in Nicola's case a 'getting by attitude' is the defining feature guiding his strategy and it could be generalised for most of the cases.

Conclusions.

To sum up, we are going to review those mechanisms which, according to the insights gained through our interviews, are operating in the dialectics between integration and exclusion processes. In spite of the precariousness and difficult situation in the labour market, we have seen how family and kin do operate as safety nets, thus facilitating social integration. Other integrating sources are networks of friendship which act as channels of information in order to get a job. Neighbourhood and participation in the city life are also significant elements in the everyday life of this group.

Integration, however, does not imply emancipation, understood as the step of leaving the parents house and becoming an autonomous subject. A (re)negotiation among the family members takes place, as we could see with consequences of different kinds. Solidarity and co-operation between generations are in process of transformation and conflict is also emerging. Behind a more 'democratic control' (when compared to previous generations where the split between parents and children was clearer) old forms of conflict and new dependency links appear. As we have seen, one of the side effects of the role of integration played by the family is the tendency to mitigate social conflict and subsequently to impede awareness of sharing problems at a more collective level. The transition to adulthood takes place within the domestic sphere, in a context of having access neither to the primary or formal sector of the labour market nor to housing.

As we have seen, labour market policies for young people have caused precariousness for those who have got a job, while there is still a high proportion of unemployed young adults who are seeking for their first job. Many of the problems of having access to the labour market for young people have been attributed to a deficit in the educational level of graduates. Against this assumption the empirical evidence derived from our interviews and recent studies show the fallacy in the often-repeated view that there is a 'lack of preparation of young people for meeting the needs of the labour market'. It is rather the precariousness of the labour market which does not meet the needs of educated young people. At present, Spain has the most educated workforce of its history. In order to understand the impact of not entering the labour market for the present young graduates, it has to be taken into account that the educational policies since the post-war period have promoted the idea of emancipation and social mobility for graduates.

Another source of emancipation, namely, young people's access to decent living conditions, has also been obliterated through actually restrictive housing policies. Therefore the gradual loss of social rights, such as the right to work and the right to have a dwelling, hinders the necessarily conflictual dimension of the emancipation process, and the construction of the social identity of this group.

However, this does not prevent young graduates from being reflexive and from using their reflexivity to locate their social problems in the public sphere. The main obstacle which impedes them from designing a strategy and a project for the future and for their integration in the labour market is the uncertainty and perception of risk, which goes beyond individuals but is lived through individually. In a changing economic and political context characterised by risk and uncertainty, it is very difficult for individuals to make their personal and social resources operative. In other words, they have many resources in terms of educational background, family support and support systems linked to the 'welfare state' which turn out not to be effective when they are faced with the present crisis of the labour market. This situation shows the difficulties of maintaining links with society, and in the process of constructing their own identity. The lack of a future perspective and of projects for the future is a key element for understanding the common difficulties in devising a strategy. The biographical experience of having been rejected several times when trying to find a job obviously discourages the development of a dynamic and creative strategy. This perspective enables one to understand their conservative and somehow paralysing strategies, in the sense of being ready to accept any kind of job and acceptance of some situations of self-exploitation.

All this leads to a landscape of social fragmentation in which political participation by young people is diminishing. As a result of this, a loss of negotiating power and social rights can be observed. There may exist more or less favourable backgrounds to support a young person through the transition period from university to the labour market, but the general climate of social atomisation does not contribute to thinking and acting collectively. The consequence of this situation could lead to a growing number of 'supernumeraries' (Castel, 1995), in the sense that such persons gradually lose their roots as citizens, and thus fail to find social space for integration.

The present debate around integration and exclusion processes of young graduates is, as pointed out above, of a political nature. Accordingly the challenge of integration goes beyond the economic approach which is assumed when exclusion /integration is described within the framework of globalisation.

References:

- CASAL, J., MASJOAN, J.M., PLANAS, J. (1988), *Elementos para un análisis sociológico de transición a la vida adulta* en “Política y Sociedad”, nº1, Madrid.
- FLAQUER, L. (1995), *El modelo de la familia española en el contexto europeo* en Sebastià Sarasa i Luis Moreno, in El Estado de bienestar en la Europa del Sur, CSIC, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Avanzados, Madrid.
- FLAQUER, L. (1996), *Familia, desigualdad e identidad* in “Claves de la Razón Práctica”, nº161, Madrid.
- GARCÍA, E. (1987) *Acerca de algunos elementos ideológicos en el debate sobre escolaridad de masas, desempleo juvenil y división del trabajo* in “Mientras Tanto”, Madrid.
- ICE (1995) *Itineraris de formació i inserció professional dels nous titulats universitaris*, UAB Barcelona.
- MARTIN, A., NOGUERA, M. (1995) *Paro juvenil y economía sumergida en España*, Departamento de Sociología UAB, Barcelona.
- MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN Y CIENCIA (1987) *El mercado de trabajo de los titulados universitarios en España*, in “Colección Universidad -Educación”, Madrid.
- MONTORO, R. (1983) *Universidad y paro: reflexiones críticas sobre el desempleo de licenciados universitarios* in “Reis”, nº24, Madrid.
- RESA NESTARES, C. (1996) *Juventud, Trabajo y Exclusión Social* in “Temas para el debate”, nº17, Madrid.
- SANCHÍS, E. (1992) *Mercado de trabajo juvenil* in “Revista Papers de Sociología”, nº25 UAB, Barcelona