

**MIGRATION AND EMANCIPATION: THE TENSION BETWEEN
GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY**

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FOREWORD

This report is divided into four sections. In the first section – the social field of migration – our aim has been to make explicit the concepts, theories and methods which underlie the research and which have been used in the subsequent analytical work. To understand the category **migrants** we need to identify the two major areas of social, economic and political change in which migration is embedded: a) **the dynamics of globalisation and b) its impact on the (re)construction of identity**. So we will introduce migrants as agents experimenting with as well as suffering and participating in the dynamics and tensions of both spheres. We will start by offering an overview of some of the structural elements of economy and politics, without which it is impossible to understand contemporary processes of migration, and more specifically, those at work in the context of Catalonia (Spain). After this, we will introduce some of those sociological and anthropological perspectives which offer fruitful conceptual tools for approaching the life trajectories of migrants. Finally, we will offer observation concerning migration and contrasted with the findings from empirical work shown in the biographical interviews. This empirical work is based on the **analysis of our main case study** and a further **five cases** (section 2), following the principles of **the biographical interpretative method**. Our approach takes into account the reciprocal influence between the inductive and deductive logic behind our methodological approach, and this section is to be understood as an intermediate stage of analysis and not as a final product. More specifically it is aimed at obtaining an empirically rooted basis for **comparing cases** (section 3), **generating new hypotheses, and contrasting them with previous ones** (section 4), and with the meaning of migration and the strategies of migrants, thus coming back to the social field described in section 1.

1. The social field of migration: globalisation and the (re)construction of identity

1.1. Globalisation and migration

Researchers see globalisation as the background to the contemporary phenomenon of migration. The most relevant features of globalisation can be summarised in terms of the global organisation of production where technological advances, advantages of political predictability, low costs and access to appropriate labour take place. This leads to an unregulated global market of financial transactions and the segmentation of the labour force into segregated groups (ethnicity, age, gender, etc.). Structural inequalities between regions have their roots in an uneven pace of development as well as an uneven distribution of resources (Peterson, 1997). As pointed out in the Report of the United Nations Programme for Human Development (1992) there is a process of further pauperisation in already poor areas contrasting with the wealthier living conditions in the most developed countries. Following the fall of the Wall, international agencies (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) did not respond to the commitments agreed with the developing countries, thus reinforcing their critical situation. For many Third World countries the 1980s have been considered the ‘Lost decade’, even while international economic growth registered a significant increase compared with the previous period (3.4% for 1980-89 and 2.4% for 1965-1980). This statement is actually used to show how economic growth is not a guarantee of improvement in living conditions in either the national or the international context. In fact, in the poorest countries the informal sector of the economy has expanded in the 1980s and 1990s.

These processes of globalisation, a late capitalist pattern of development, have been

questioned, since only through high levels of inequality can this kind of development be maintained. The global organisation of production and investment has taken precedence over the Nation-State, threatening the functions of Welfare States in industrialised countries and its hitherto legitimation as a regulator of the economy. But the separation of financial capital from the economic, social and political priorities of States has led to a neo-imperialism and protectionism in the industrialised countries (Castells, 1997). Therefore the compatibility between national democracy and the open market is a fallacy. The pattern of dependence and exploitation between rich northern countries and poor southern countries is nowadays reinforced by globalisation. Within this context **migration** represents for the poor countries a key resource for facing poverty and deprivation. Migration is understood as a social and economic alternative, but industrialised countries are increasingly restrictive in the permeability of their boundaries. Experts in migration issues are concerned about the difficulties of stemming migration flows as long as industrialised countries — explicitly or implicitly — demand cheap workforces for specific sectors of their economies, thus promoting a sexual ethno-stratification of the labour market (PNUD, 1992).

1.2. Global economy and identity movements: the Catalan context

According to Peterson (1996), some expected that the advent of the global economy would bring about the disappearance of nationalism and other movements based on what Castells (1997) labels as ‘resistance identity’, that is, religious fundamentalism, territorially based local community movements, or any other movements ‘building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society’. Instead, both authors confirm the **rise of ‘resistance identity’** as a response to globalisation. The fact that in Spain strong national identities are included within the framework of the State¹, and the fact that this report has been based on the analysis of interviews of migrants living in one such region — Catalonia — raises the challenge of understanding the interplay of varying identity-related discourses in the context of the receiving country. Following Castells’ definition (1997) we understand identity as the *process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning.*

In order to understand the tension between the global and the local in Spain we must necessarily consider three historical and socio-demographic features in the second half of this century which have had an impact on the social construction of migration and migrants in Spanish and Catalan society. We are specifically referring to the **pluri-national nature of the Spanish State**, the difference between the **‘internal’ and ‘external’ migration flows² in the 60s, and the new immigration³ from the beginning of the 80s until the present day.**

Firstly, nationality or national identity in Catalonia rarely equates with citizenship, the latter understood as the membership of a nation-state. Catalonia's concept of identity is based mainly on linguistic but also on historical, political, and cultural criteria, rather

¹Spain was declared in the Spanish Basic Law a ‘nation of nationalities’ (Constitución española 1978, Art.2). In 1979, the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia provided the institutional basis for Catalan autonomy within the framework of Spain.

²By ‘internal’ migration we mean interregional migration from impoverished Spanish regions such as Andalucía, Galicia, the Canary Islands, etc. to the more industrialised north of Spain (Basque Country and Catalonia), and by ‘external’ we refer to the Spanish emigration to northern and central European countries between 1959 to 1973.

³By ‘new’ immigration we refer to those migrants coming from other countries.

than on ethnic, territorial, or religious criteria. Catalan nationalism has traditionally been oriented towards Europe. Cosmopolitanism is combined with an increasing tendency towards a linguistically distinct society. This means that migrants from non-Spanish speaking countries coming to Catalonia are confronted with a situation of bilingualism, with Catalan being enshrined as Catalonia's own language, which is the language of prestige, and with an overlapping of discourse of identity based on cultural criteria. This has implications for immigrants from Third World countries who might be subject to a double process of discrimination: a judicial discrimination regarding the Spanish state, and a linguistic — and therefore social — discrimination in Catalonia.

Secondly, in contrast to the Spanish State, immigration is not a new phenomenon in Catalonia; in fact immigration is a structural feature in Catalonia. The effects of interregional immigration account for 60.3% of Catalonia's population (in 1986) or, in other words, from the six million people living in Catalonia, 3.6 million are the direct or indirect product of internal immigration during the 20th century (more specifically, from 1955 to 1975, during the last twenty years of the Franco dictatorship (Cabré, 1989). Within this period the most industrialised cities needed to expand their workforce for their emerging industrial economies. In spite of the large numbers of non-Catalan speakers, linguistic normalisation has progressively taken place in Catalonia. During this same period large numbers of Spanish workers emigrated to central and northern Europe to seek employment.

Finally, after 1975 internal migration starts to decrease due to the economic crisis, and is substituted by the increasing external migration flows. Catalonia has a migrant population of about 4%, which is the highest percentage of migrants in all Spain. However, in general Spain has — officially — a migrant population of less than 2%, approximately, which contrasts with the higher percentages of other European countries. Almost two million Spanish migrants still live abroad, which means that for each immigrant who lives in Spain there are three Spanish emigrants living abroad. Significantly, 66% of the immigrant population come from other European countries. Immigrants from 'Third World' countries started to come in the 1970s, but it was not until the beginning of the 1980s that they became socially 'visible', while Spain was negotiating its access to the EC. The open migration legislation became very restrictive as reflected in the *Ley de Extranjería* from 1985, in accordance with the Schengen agreements of 1985. The (social-judicial) term 'extra-comunitarian immigrant' was created for labelling those who came from poor countries. Since this law was passed in 1985 thousands of immigrants, mainly from Northern Africa, have been expelled from the Spanish coasts. In 1991 a 'special period' for regularisation was opened for the 'illegal immigrants' and since then the law has allowed a maximum of 10,000 long-term permits — 6000 of which are specifically given for domestic work — and another 10,000 permits for temporary jobs in the agricultural and service sectors. At present 45% of these new migrants come from Morocco; 25% from Africa, 20% from Latin America, and 10% from Asia. The three most important sectors of activity for them are street selling, domestic work and agriculture. Their level of self-organisation is still very weak in Spain (Dahiri, M; García Acosta, D; 1994; Quaderns Serveis Socials, 1996; *El País*, 3.2.98, 15.2.98).

Significantly, the reasons for migrating have been the same for internal (or inter-regional) migrants as for external or post-colonial migrants, that is, structural inequalities between regions. However, the living conditions in Catalonia have been different in the sense that — not solely but predominantly — the latter (external migrants) are the object of discrimination and racism (Dorronsoro, 1994). This allows us to introduce a further dimension to our description of the social field of migration.

1.3. Racism and its rhetoric

Many studies demonstrate the existence of **racism** in Spain, which has traditionally operated against gypsies⁴, and more recently against the immigrants from the 'Third World' countries (Santamaría, 1994; San Román, 1996). A recent survey by the Complutense University of Madrid shows how three out of four students over 13 years old are in favour of more restrictive measures against new immigrants from Third World countries. They believe that immigrants take the jobs of national workers and that they bring drugs and delinquent activities with them (El País, 1998). In addition to racism based on phenotypical differences, another phenomenon is at work: many authors define the new exclusionary discourse as 'neo-racisme diferencialiste' (Taguieff, 1985), 'culturalist alterophobia' (San Román, 1996) or '**cultural fundamentalism**' (Stolcke, 1994). This is based on the emphasis on 'cultural differences', that is, on 'different identity, traditions, cultural legacy or heritage between groups' at a territorial level, which leads to the idea of *incommensurability*, and therefore *incompatibility* of cultures. These kind of discourses are ways of understanding cultures through an essentialist perspective, which equates national identity with cultural exclusivity, thus prioritising identity over other categories as 'citizenship'. Underlying this discourse there is a legitimisation of perceiving immigrants as a threat against the national-cultural identity of the nationality (Catalonia) or the nation-state (Spain).

However, as research in the field of social psychology has shown, there is a difference between prejudice as attitude, and racist or discriminatory practice as behaviour (Tajfel, 1981). Despite both racist prejudices and practices, significant efforts at fostering communication and negotiation — especially at a local and educational level — have been made. Focus on children of the first generation of immigrants is one of the key areas of participation, and interaction between regional and local institutions and different collectives of migrants in Catalonia and Spain at present are aimed at integration⁵. But, how does research on migration deal with integration?

1.4. Migration as a social construct

Migration has traditionally been studied from the **perspective of immigration**, which means that the focus has been put on the conditions under which migrants 'integrate' (or not) in the receiving country. Research from different disciplines shows how the institutional, media-based and even academic discourses are based on the treatment of the 'immigrant population' in terms of 'deficit', or 'lack' (of rights, access to stable living conditions, cultural adaptation, etc.) and therefore of immigration as a (social) problem (Santamaría, 1994). According to other authors, 'immigration' seems to have emerged as a European social concept at the same time as its related statistics. What is most worrying about immigration from a European perspective is the visibility of the *Other* (Rogers Stainton, 1996). In this sense, the **ethnocentric and problematising discourse of migration in social sciences has also been to some extent substituted by more serious attempts to critically examine the 'problem of immigration'**. These have introduced critical, global, dynamic and complex approaches which stress

⁴ Gypsies constitute the most important ethnic minority collective within Spain. Even though they are juridically Spanish citizens, they are socially the most excluded group in Spanish society.

⁵ This can be shown by the emphasis of local and regional government on putting forward different co-educational programmes for children of various ethnic groups (El País, 17.02.98).

the interplay between both the sending and the receiving contexts: how migrants interact with the receiving population and how, as with the ‘mirror effect’, the way they settle tells as much about them as about the receiving context, and its actual problems in terms of marginalisation, precariousness of labour or social inequalities.

Concepts such as ‘**migratory field**’, (Kaplan, 1993; Parramón, 1996) overcome the restrictive approach to migration, and can be considered as an indicator of the shift away from limited views of migration. The ‘migratory field’ reveals the link between the experiences and objective conditions lived in the place of origin and in the place of destiny. It implies a trans-national and circular approach which considers the process of migration as a complex process of change and not simply as a process of interchange. According to this perspective, the migration process starts before leaving the country of origin and is not necessarily closed by settlement in the country of destiny. Changes, continuities and specific re-adaptations at the level of perception and action take place according to the cultural legacy of the migrant. The specific way of combining these elements is related to the social conditions in which the migrant lives. Some authors argue that migrants experience a situation of ‘fertile chaos’ which may or may not lead to a positive interrelationship with the receiving culture. Therefore the ‘myth of return’ might be lived in a problematic way, or might be integrated into everyday life as an ambivalent feeling, between loyalty towards the culture of origin and aspirations of integrating in the new country. In this sense, ‘integration’ can be understood through its psychosocial dimension, according to which the migrant incorporates different elements in a selective way and assumes the universality of specific values.

1.5. Migration from the biographical perspective

This perspective allows us to introduce our own theoretical and methodological tools for approaching this category. The use of a **biographical perspective** makes necessary the understanding of migrants as both ‘emigrants’ and ‘immigrants’, and the exploring of the biographical trajectories and strategies of migrants, taking into account their contexts of origin in interaction with their living conditions in the new society. More specifically, we attempt to explore whether people's biographies are structured by the experience of migration, or to what extent their status as ‘immigrants’ or ‘emigrants’ is perceived as a source of meaning and experience; whether migration constitutes a turning point in the lives of our interviewees; whether migration could be understood in terms of a project of life itself (in order to start a new project of life or give continuity to one which existed before); how migrants define and are defined by the structural conditions and identity discourses in the specific Spanish and Catalan context. In short, turning to the very first question from the perspective of a sociology of knowledge (Berger; Luckmann, 1988) our starting point is to transform migration from a social into a sociological question. In Rogers’ terms, we challenge the attempts to materialise ‘immigration’ (Rogers Stainton, 1996). To do so we will necessarily have to consider how structural constraints from our migrants’ context of origin and context of ‘settlement’ shape their patterns of orientation and action, and how their capacity to change and actively participate in their environment is reflected through their strategies.

According to these considerations we can try to articulate some general hypotheses, which will be contrasted or tested with the biographical interpretative analysis. The empirically grounded analytical work will allow us both to rethink our understanding of the theoretical frame or social field of migration, and to suggest new hypotheses or lines of interpretation, thus following the exploratory logic of our ‘de/in-ductive’ methodological approach.

1. *The phenomenon of migration is a product of economic inequalities in a context of globalisation.*
2. *Migration is related to a logic of temporal and spatial continuity. Both the context of origin and the receiving context are operating in migrants' strategies.*
3. *Ethnicity plays a significant role in the (re)construction of identity in the context of migration.*

2. THE CASES

As we could see in section 1 we have opted for focussing on the experience of migration – and therefore have chosen migrants in our sample corresponding to our own image of the ‘new immigrants in Spain’. This means, leaving out other groups or collectives which might share some of the experiences of these new migrants. We are referring to the internal migrants as defined in the previous section, or to ethnic minorities, and more specifically, to gypsies⁶. Even though these collectives might share some features with our interviewees, we are interested in exploring the experiences of those people who have settled in Spain recently (within the last fifteen years and the concurrent consolidation of democracy and economic growth) and have come from so-called ‘Third World countries’. Another reason of interest is that, even though it is a recent phenomenon in Spain, and the percentages of these kinds of immigrants are very low, the prospects for the future are of increasing rates, given the dynamics of globalisation and Spain’s geo-strategical position.

2.1. Case study: Monica

2.1.1. Biographical data analysis

‘The formal life’

Childhood and adolescence years: period of stability and upward social mobility

Monica was born in 1968 to a working class family in a small town in Peru. She is a member of an extended family. During her first seven years she lived with her grandmother. Both of her parents had stable jobs which allowed the family to pay for a private school for the children. Despite being fired from the company Monica’s father was able to set up an orchestra where Monica was to meet her future husband.

The general context of the family background seems to be of stability and family upward mobility. However, the fact that Monica lived seven years with her grandmother could signal a strategy of turning to the extended family network in order to face economic hardships. The experience of living with her grandmother does not necessarily imply that it’s an important element in Monica's biography. In Latin America it is a common pattern of family organisation to live as part of an extended family and intra-generational relationships are more present in everyday life. But given the fact that all her other siblings remained in the parental home, this early experience

⁶ The fact of not having included gypsies in our sample is due to our focus on migration and not on ethnic minorities which historically live in Spain. Besides this, our attempts to contact even one gypsy failed. Consequently, we are aware that this report leaves out one of the most significant communities in Spain being exposed to exclusion and racism. In some sense, by not including them in our sample we have reinforced the invisibility of this group.

could have been experienced as exclusionary. Establishing their own enterprise in the music world shows how the family reached a relatively high level of well-being and social status. Living professionally from music in Latin America is not only a culturally integrated activity, but positively connoted. Monica's everyday family life may have started to change, especially given her own involvement in the orchestra as a singer. This course might have led her to abandon her educational path. Meeting her future husband, who seems to have middle class origins, opens up two possibilities: either she continues singing in the orchestra (emancipation project) or she leaves this activity because of a new project of partnership (traditional pattern). In any case the hypothesis of her upward social orientation pattern seems to be reinforced. The fact that her boyfriend combines study with the orchestra could be understood as a project oriented towards integration and upward mobility.

Establishing her own family: breakdown of family economy and downward mobility

At the age of 16 Monica left the orchestra and one year later had a child whose health was poor. They all moved and her husband left his studies at University in order to earn a living for the family. One year later the orchestra went bankrupt and both her father and her husband were jobless. Monica then started to work in the informal economy by selling the sweets and food she cooked at home. A second son was born four years after the first.

This period of Monica's life could represent a turning point, in the sense that it is precisely when establishing her own family that more resources are needed. The fact that the income of the couple stems from the extended family economy — represented by the orchestra — sharpens the crisis and limits the scope of alternatives available in the kin network. Her husband's decision to leave his studies reflects his family commitment and the rupture of a middle-class professional career. At this stage of her life, when she is in her early twenties, Monica is confronted with a completely new situation. She has to look for a job at all costs. This might have dampened her hopes of upward mobility and may have been a source of humiliation. The general context of crisis due to neo-liberalist policies in the 1980s, however, may have palliated this hypothetical experience of failure. An opposite hypothesis would be that Monica didn't actually give up her social mobility aspirations and family project. The birth of her second son could be proof of this. The fact that she does not try to marry after the birth of her first son could be a sign of a trusting relationship with her partner in a societal context which — in the case of lower classes — makes no pressure to formalise a partnership through marriage. In any case the impact of the crisis is determining of her husband's future life trajectory. Within this context of sudden instability and precariousness it is very unlikely that they will have more children. However, not only Monica's own family but the country's cultural pattern of reference may lead her to wish for an extended family.

Under these economic life conditions it is very likely that Monica, her husband or both of them consider the possibility of migration for a long period. Migration could be oriented towards the capital (Lima) implying that Monica does not want to separate too much from her origins. In this case the nuclear family would move to the big city. Another possibility would be to move to another Latin American country or to the United States, thus following a common American pattern of migration. In this case it is more likely that only one of them would move. Finally, migration to Europe could be an alternative destiny, above all, if some contact person offers them help in the migration process. Also, in this case it is very unlikely the family as a whole would

undertake to travel.

‘The informal life’

The migration process: illegality and risk

In 1995 Monica migrated to Argentina for five months in order to work as a domestic assistant. During this year the family debts increased and she couldn't afford the children's schooling. Her husband tried to enter the police force but he did not succeed. Monica migrated to Spain after mortgaging her mother's house and husband's saxophone. As an illegal immigrant she could stay in neither France nor Spain. She asked for political refugee status in Germany. After one month she managed to arrive in Barcelona and from there she contacted her brother-in-law in Valencia where she stayed for one month without finding a job.

Thus migration is confirmed by the fact of travelling to Argentina. The general context of instability and desperation, and the perception of a lack of opportunities for the future are deeply rooted in the population. For this reason, other countries like Argentina seem to offer a reasonable possibility of reaching a better standard of living when compared to the home country. But in this case Monica may have adapted badly and failed to find another leading to her return after five months. Other reasons apart from the economic ones could have contributed to her decision to come back: missing the young children, the hardships of living alone without networks of support as a woman in a foreign country, or the pressure of her husband who may have had difficulties in coping with life without her. The economic factor seems to be at least one of the most influential reasons for coming back and readapting her strategy. Inter-American migration is not a feasible option anymore. Given the precarious situation in which the family lives, her departure to Spain shows how radical the new family strategy is: they are forced to invest the resources of the familial network, the last thing they have, in order to buy the plane-ticket, and thereby run a high risk of putting not only themselves, but Monica's parents in a vulnerable position.

Monica has had to assume the breadwinner role of the family, which means dispensing with the previous pattern of family organisation based on male breadwinners (represented by father and husband). In the general context of working class Latin Americans, a female breadwinner is not too uncommon. However, it is very uncommon that both partners live apart from each other. For this reason it is very likely that their separation has had a big impact on Monica's trajectory. Separation from her small children must have been a significant element in Monica's decision to migrate and must have had a big impact on her experience of migration. Considering all the hurdles she had to overcome before arriving in Spain, her decision to migrate to Europe seemed to be a well-planned decision and an irrevocable one, since she had invested too much to come back empty-handed.

The existence of the brother-in-law shows the importance of the network for starting a migration process. The fact of her not finding a job and leaving Valencia reveals how this relative will not be a key factor for her integration in the working sphere, thus leaving her alone in her search for a stable context in which to live. We could interpret this situation as very risky and she as very vulnerable: she is both alone and in a judicially illegal status.

Two radically different paths could result from this situation: either she could consider the possibility of returning to Perú, or she could try to find an activity in the informal

sector just to stay in Spain and earn some money to send to her family. Within this context she could try to gain access to the caring professions, the demand for which is increasing in the framework of the Spanish tertiary sector. Women coming from Perú, the Philippines and other countries are working to a disproportionately large extent in the domestic sector by taking care of old and sick people, usually without legal documents. But it is also likely that she could become trapped in criminal networks concerned with drug dealing or prostitution.

Life in Barcelona: stability and risk

Finally she came to Barcelona and found a stable job as a domestic assistant to a fifty year-old invalid woman. She has managed to pay back her debts both in Barcelona and Perú. In December 1996 —thanks to a working contract arranged by a friend of a friend, Maria — Monica's husband joined Monica in Maria's flat. He is working in the informal sector as a bricklayer's assistant. The children have stayed in Perú with Monica's mother, though unfortunately the oldest son has psychological problems. Monica's younger sister is preparing her documents to come to Barcelona thanks to Maria. At the present time Monica is preparing her own documents to obtain a passport and Spanish nationality. Monica and her husband spend their leisure time at home.

Monica has been able to reach a relatively stable position through this job and to therefore become a pioneer within her family in the migration project. Hers is a path of migration common in the last few years to many women from Latin America and the Philippines; they come first and save enough money to bring their husbands and children together. Her relationship with Maria seems to have been a key resource for Monica's strategy, thus replacing the lack of a solid contact with her brother-in-law. The arrival of Monica's husband could be interpreted as the starting point for reunifying the family. If we take into account the fact that Monica is attempting to obtain Spanish nationality we could hypothesise that her future life project is oriented towards staying in Barcelona. However her son's health problems may constitute a factor which pushes her to re-orient her plans and consider the possibility of working in Spain just for a period. The feeling of having abandoned her children may become critical and could play a role in her present and future strategy. The fact of remaining at home during her free time, without opening herself to local networks could reinforce the temporary nature of her presence in Barcelona, or could imply that she is afraid of going out because of her illegal status. Another possibility for this enclosure is the demanding nature of her job, which may subject her to a situation of 'neo-slavery'.

To conclude, we can summarise this section by dividing Monica's life history into two parts. The first is represented by stability and a project of emancipation through upward social mobility. The turning point represented by the rupture of bonds with the legal labour market through her father — and later on through her husband marks the beginning of a new way of living embedded in illegality, lack of rights and exploitation. According to the biographical data presented so far, a family-oriented survival strategy seems to explain Monica's migration project. However, the migration experience may have changed her pattern of orientation regarding her social position in the new society.

2.1.2. Assumptions for a thematic field analysis

* Monica could present herself mainly as a bad mother and wife as a result of the separation from her children through migration. Arguments and self-evaluations would

be the outstanding type of text. The use of the first person could be indicative of her blaming herself for the family problems. The themes constituting this thematic field could therefore be placed around the constellation of ‘me’ in relation to the ‘family’.

* ‘We (poor Peruvians) as victims of circumstance’: no possibility of choice and therefore a resigned attitude. Themes: misery, poverty — of the family but in the broader social context of the country (mainly narrative interview through epic narratives and reports) — and the migration process seen within the constellation of injustice (use of argumentation).

* ‘Me as a fighter for my children and the future of the family’: non-resigned attitude towards poverty and clear aspiration to improving life conditions. The themes would focus on family values and her responsibility towards children and parents. The migration would be presented as the only possible option in order to escape from misery and to have an opportunity of social improvement. A combination of narrative and argument would be the most typical text.

Self-presentation in the interview

In the main narration, Monica presents herself as somebody who has sacrificed herself in order to overcome the poverty of her family. She constructs her life story focussing on the sacrifice which had already started in Perú — when the father’s enterprise broke down — and culminates with her migration to Spain. The function of her presentation in the interview is to show the interviewer — and maybe herself — that she is a good mother who fights for the well being of her children. Therefore, despite the narrative form of the interview, there is a tone of justification underlying her account. Strategic evaluations and argumentations like *‘I couldn’t bear the idea of leaving my children’*, *‘I thought about it many times’*, *‘I run the risk’* are a sign of this.

A striking feature of her case is apparent already when the clarification of the interview contract takes place at the beginning of the interview. She starts by saying she had been in the process of recollection during the days before the interview, and is very willing to present a narrative account of her life. *‘I will tell you the story, shall I?’*. She starts with an evaluation of her childhood *‘My childhood was very happy, I could have lived with my parents but my grandmother took care of me (...). I suppose that I was happy for that reason’*. She then briefly introduces her family history by narrating very positive memories and finishes this chapter by making a final evaluation about her project to have her own family, and how this event was a mistake given her youth. Immediately after, she makes an initial evaluation *“we were not accustomed to suffering and everything started then”* which introduces the main theme of the interview, that is, her migration experience. From that moment on the story is constructed in such a way as to equate sacrifice with migration and suffering. Epic narratives are the predominant type of text. The use of the present tense when referring to the migration episode reveals how present and vivid this experience still is for her. The migration story finishes with another reference to her sacrifice, and she decides to cut short the story at this specific point: *‘Thank God I’m here, this is the whole story of how I arrived here’*.

In her **narrative as a whole**, that is if we take into account the presented elements which derive from the internal and external questions, we can reconstruct other life-stages which were either poorly developed, or completely absent in her main-narration. We refer to her childhood and adolescent years in Perú, which are

presented as a mythified period of happiness and absence of deprivation, from her present perspective of deprivation. Furthermore, another life stage is presented when specifically asked about it, namely, her present life in Barcelona. Barcelona represents for her the possibility to pay back all her debts and to fulfil her aspirations for material improvement.

2.1. 3. Case Structure

The experience of migration in Monica's case structures her fighting strategy, but must be regarded as a consequence of a conflictive and key situation which has its origins in the establishment of her family. In other words, the **problem of the case** is the ambivalence or contradiction that she experiences between her understanding of what a mother's role is or should be — that is, a loving mother who does not separate from her children — and her decision to migrate, in order to earn enough money to improve her family's living conditions and escape from poverty. Her **response** to this problem is to prioritise the economic and material aspect of her responsibility as a mother against the emotional/cultural aspect of motherhood, and in so doing, she pays a high price. That is the reason for which she migrates, and despite having gone through much hardship, she still considers it a good decision, because she is successfully coping with the challenges imposed by herself. Her **perception of the problem** is related to her own feeling of failure for having married too young. It is from that moment on that she considers all her problems arose. Underlying her perception of this problem we find a subtle but clear complaint about her husband, in the sense that he has not been able to fulfil the duties of the male role as breadwinner from the beginning. In the end, she has assumed the breadwinner role, whilst her husband has not assumed the mother/caring role. It is an unresolved conflict which makes her feel uneasy and guilty regarding the abandonment of her children. Her feelings of guilt are sharpened by the psychological problems of her oldest son.

Although she has constructed a story in which she equates migration with suffering and sacrifice, her one year's experience of stability in Barcelona, based on a trustful relationship with Maria, has given her the strength to pursue her future-oriented fighting strategy, consisting of working and earning money. She has made an investment for the future regardless of two major conflictive situations: first, her separation from the children and secondly, her vulnerable and risky status as an illegal immigrant. Her opportunities are severely limited: her family — and not only her children and husband but her mother and some of her sisters — are currently dependent on her. For this reason it is unthinkable for her to abandon her present strategy (in contrast to their brother-in-law who came back to Perú because he was not able to endure the situation, and is now asking her for help). She has become the hope for her family and her own hope is to bring her children with her. Migration has restructured Monica's biography in such a way that return is not possible.

We could hypothesise that if Monica persists with her strategy, she will be able to succeed in bringing together the family. However, she is running a high risk based on the particular relationship between her and Maria. As a severely disabled woman (Maria suffers from ELA disease) Maria may die, or no longer be able to pay her a salary anymore because of her own precarious economic conditions, or continue helping her as she has been doing so far. The fact that Monica barely goes out in her leisure time may be a proof of her fear that something may happen to Maria and she could lose her. The exterior world is too dangerous for Monica given her — legally —

precarious situation. With Maria, Monica feels protected and — at least in the micro-cosmos of Maria's flat — integrated. Her relationship with Maria is based on reciprocity, solidarity and mutual dependence. So Monica's well being and her future plans depend strongly on Maria, who is currently her only guarantor. Neither the Spanish Welfare State nor the irregular income of Monica's husband can provide a secure ground on which to survive.

On the one hand, Monica's case show how vulnerable and fragile the positions are of those immigrant women who come as illegal immigrants and who now work in the domestic sector. The relationship between Monica and Maria could be representative of the kind of unequal (often exploitative) exchanges or interplay of demand and supply between the North and the South. Whereas very few Spanish women are willing to accept a job like Monica's, Monica could never have found a job with such benefits in Perú. On the other hand, Monica's case is an example of how migration may also provide a way of reaching a better social position, compared to the pre-existing living context, and introduce more flexibility, information and therefore more possibilities of changing a previous pattern of orientation.

In this case we cannot speak of social integration, but two of the most relevant resources for social integration have been achieved, namely, a working contract and a solid and trusting relationship with someone.

2.2. Juan Manuel

The interviewer met Juan Manuel in the Ramblas, which is the main tourist street in Barcelona, where many immigrants play music or sell merchandise. Juan Manuel was selling cheap jewellery. After broadly explaining to him the objectives of the research, and asking him if he would like to participate, he agreed to meet the following day with the interviewer. The information he gave the interviewer that first day was that he was an 'illegal' immigrant from Colombia, who had been sleeping on the streets for the last few days. The interviewer gave him the address of a public shelter nearby, where he and his wife went to sleep that night. The morning after he phoned the interviewer in order to meet at the harbour. The interview was held at the harbour station, where he and his wife had kept their luggage. The interview took about two hours, and although it seemed that he felt like telling us much more about his life, he had arranged an appointment with his wife, and we had to interrupt the interview shortly after the end of the main narration. Juan Manuel accepted the money which the interviewer offered him for the time he had spent talking without selling, only after receiving a promise that the money came from the University and not from the interviewer's pocket. Juan Manuel offered help to make contact with other immigrants. Some days later, he phoned again to give the interviewer the number of another Latin American immigrant.

The data presented above concerning the context of the interview, and more specifically, the extremely informal nature of the first contact, suggests already that Juan Manuel was not only well-disposed to be interviewed, but showed a particular interest in the whole project.

Juan Manuel (JM) was born in 1960 in a very poor suburb of Bogotá (Colombia). His grandfather was a Spanish emigrant who had made a fortune in Bogotá and, apart from his wife, had an Indian 'querida' (lover). JM's mother was born out of that relationship. JM's mother married a man from whom she separated when JM and his twin brother were born. JM and his twin brother are the youngest of eight siblings. JM's mother had

several partner relationships until 1978, when she definitively established her own family with a black Colombian. JM's mother is illiterate and worked as seamstress until she was fired from her workplace because of back pain. JM went to school and completed his education in Bogotá, where he studied Pedagogy at the State University, specialising in Educational Planning. In 1987 JM got his University degree with a project on alphabetisation in an extremely poor suburb of the city. In 1988 he travelled to Poland with a grant from the Embassy. He lived in Poland for five years, where he completed his PhD. in Economics. He came back to Bogotá in 1993. He stayed there looking for a stable job but did not find one. He worked on a voluntary basis on further alphabetisation and cultural projects in the suburban areas around Bogotá until January 1996, when he decided to return to Poland. He married a Polish student of Anthropology in May of 1997. Both of them are now (summer 1997) in Barcelona, having travelled around many cities within Western Europe.

From the data presented above we could examine two background dimensions which might play a significant role in JM's life trajectory. Firstly, we could explore the link between JM's class origins, his choice of studies and his migration to a socialist country. His educational trajectory could correspond to the 'common pattern' of those Latin American students who go abroad to receive further education. But JM emigrates to Poland after having returned to his own country. Secondly, his family constellation (he himself being a grandson and son of mixed marriages) might have provided the pattern for his own partnership relationships and migratory trajectory. Bearing in mind both of these dimensions of JM's actual life we can now focus our attention on his narrated life.

JM presents his biography in a mainly narrative way, though with many evaluations in his narratives. After a long silence once the initial question has been put (*'life experiences of people from different countries in different situations in the framework of a European research project'*), and some clarifying comments to define the contract of the interview — *'you don't want me to lie, I guess'*⁷ — JM narrates his life over the course of two hours. The only interruptions take place in some emotionally-loaded episodes of his life, where he has to pause for breath. JM introduces his life using a 'we' perspective, which refers to him and his twin brother. He starts recollecting his childhood memories to trace their joint path, until they were 10 years old, and how they gradually separated: *'I was the leader of the two of us. I appreciate the fact of having company throughout my childhood, but we had very different interests in life'*. He then introduces two other significant people in his childhood. His mother, whom he describes as an extremely beautiful woman with a very strong personality — *'She was a lion for her children, nobody would touch us; I think I was in love with her'* — and his eldest brother, who replaced his absent father and took care of all the children: *'I've a moral duty towards him'*. JM's evaluations give us a picture of a defensive atmosphere within a dangerous suburban context, and strategic family links in a big family without a father.

JM shifts to the theme of education, yet without leaving the 'we' perspective, with which he includes his twin brother. After primary school his brother leaves school, and JM describes this episode as the beginning of the separation between them: *'My brother had difficulties after leaving school, but I continued studying'*. At this point the beginning of a rupture with JM's context of origin might come to the surface. By introducing the 'I' perspective JM starts referring to a constellation of themes contained in the field of education: school, youth, university and work after university. These

⁷Interestingly, JM refers to the work of Oscar Lewis 'Los hijos de Sánchez', which is based on biographical interviews as a story of migration.

themes are deeply interrelated throughout the main narration of the interview, and are structured by a biographical overall view, which we could define as ‘still educating myself through life’ (thematic field). JM inserts political arguments and evaluations concerning his ideological position while narrating his educational trajectory: ‘*During those years (60s and 70s) I felt very connected to revolutionary socialism. I still read the Cuban press today. I feel very comfortable within that ideological system*’. This ‘comfort’, however, is as we will see, of a fragile nature.

By ‘education,’ the interviewee means a sphere of life which can be divided into two different sub-spheres, namely, the formal and the informal educational spheres. Whereas the first is associated with *the ‘false side of life’, or ‘politics’*, the second is associated with ‘*humanity*’ or simply ‘*life*’. JM reconstructs different stages of his life according to a radical distinction between the formal and the informal education he received and sought in life. In a formal sense, for instance, JM presents himself as a not specially brilliant student. From the informal perspective, however, he recognises that he has educated himself through reading, through cinema, etc. which are resources that helped him to be a good student at school. His University experience is viewed from the same double perspective: his formal education (significantly ‘pedagogy’) does not satisfy his interest for understanding people, other cultures, and life. We could understand his choice of studying pedagogy as a way of helping his illiterate mother, of alphabetising his immediate environment, as a resource to fight against vulnerability in a hostile context. But what he positively appreciates is his experience of working on his degree project, where he was able to develop his skills and knowledge, without feeling like a ‘cheat’. Similarly, his doctorate in Poland is undervalued as a ‘*formal step to go through (...) all the statistics I consulted in Colombia were false*’. In contrast, his life in Poland is evaluated in very positive terms: ‘*I learned how to move around the world, I learned to be alone, to ask for food without knowing the language, to love the essential nature of human beings, I learned what racism is, what alcoholism is about, about people suffering from loneliness, a real socialist worker, a real socialist housewife, a real socialist student...and then how everything changed*’. Obviously, he is referring to the changes taking place after the Fall of the Wall in 1989.

His decision to emigrate to Poland for the first time in 1988 was for (argued through) two different reasons: firstly, he had separated from his girlfriend in Colombia and had closed a biographical period; secondly he wanted to discover other cultures. JM describes how the fact that he knew some people in the Polish Embassy in Colombia helped him to get a grant for his doctorate. Given his ideological commitment a socialist country was probably his only option at that point. JM’s migration experience — which is not finished yet — could be also understood as a process of ‘still educating himself’. His first migration to Poland, therefore, is not economically oriented, but culturally-ideologically oriented. However, his coming back to Colombia in 1993 seems to have been a response to a more material requirement. Like many other socialist countries in the early nineties Poland was transforming into a market economy. He explains his return to Bogotá with the argument: ‘*I really did expect to get a good job with my doctorate, and hoped to save sufficient money to take my Polish girlfriend with me*. But, as he himself recognises later on: *I think I came back too early*’.

Actually, his experience back in Colombia from 1993 to 1996 can be regarded as a rupture of his previous path, a turning point in his life trajectory, in the sense that he hasn’t got over the episode yet. JM was not only not offered any good jobs, but had to witness a dramatic political and social climate in his country, marked by violence and the impact of the neo-liberal policies undertaken by the government. He realised how his friends and siblings had adapted to the neo-liberal, clientelist policies and increasing violence without revolting. JM was at that time too ‘old’ to get a formal job in the

labour market according to his qualification, and he re-entered the informal circuits in the suburbs. This meant not being able to save enough money to establish himself in Bogotá and take his girlfriend with him. When narrating the destruction of the suburbs (where he had been working during his studies with his old friends) JM cannot help breaking into tears. After a silence, JM shifts to a new subject, namely his last year back in Poland from 1996 to 1997, where he could re-adapt himself, since he had his girlfriend and was able to build up solid networks: *'It was easier to come back to Poland than to Colombia'*. JM omits the specific reasons why he decided to return to Poland, but we can hypothesise from his narratives that the episode is lived through not only as an objectively hard situation, but as a personal failure. JM finishes his narration with a closed final statement: *'I'm not returning to Colombia. At least, not for two years. This is what I can tell you for your interview'*.

When asked about his presence in Barcelona and his future plans, JM briefly reports how he and his girlfriend (now wife) decided to travel around western Europe (Germany, France, Spain) in order to get to know new places and new people, before going back to Poland the following Autumn. Once there, they would have to rely on their networks (friends and wife's family) because the room they had rented had disappeared in the floods⁸.

JM's reconstruction of his biography, the thematic order followed in his narratives, and the importance attributed to the distinction between formal and informal (or de-institutionalised) education in life might be connected with his own biographical experience as the son of a wonderful woman who, despite being illiterate, knew how to raise a family and was intelligent in life. In spite of suffering dyslexia — something JM hints at but does not confirm — JM's mother was very intuitive. In fact, his mother's intuition could be interpreted as symbolic of a feature which JM attributes to all Latin Americans: *'Intuition is something which allows people to survive, but it is not good for making progress or for acquiring stability in life'*. It may even be said that some resentment against Latin culture can be read from his words: *'in Poland many people are racist against Latinos, but I can understand that we are lazy, always arrive late, talk a lot and say nothing. I myself am glad to have developed my European side. Latin Americans are extremely intuitive, but intuition is not enough'*.

According to the data derived from his self-presentation we could develop the hypothesis that JM feels betrayed by his formal studies, and therefore he rejects any institutionalisation of knowledge. He claims a level of reflexivity beyond formal education. Yet at the same time, he is very critical of 'rationalist' explanations of things (which is paradoxically something he has acquired through his formal studies). Therefore, even though JM does not explicitly establish this connection in his narratives, a more in-depth analysis of the interview could lead us to a hypothesis regarding his biography as a tension between his successful formal educational career, and his failure in achieving stability in his life (having no stable job, no stable family until very recently, no stable place to live in). It is a tension between trying to be consistent with his ideals, and feeling guilty for escaping from things. Migration for him has represented — and still represents — the possibility of broadening his mind and becoming better equipped, more flexible, in life, of getting to know many different people, countries, political systems etc. It is a 'cosmopolitan' biographical pattern which is somehow connected to his family origins, of which he seems to be proud. At the same time, however, migration also represents the painful and frustrating experience of not finding a place to live without contradictory moves on his part, and to

⁸JM is referring to the big floods of summer 1997 which affected many places in Eastern Europe.

some extent, it might represent the feeling of escaping from places (from himself?). Thus, in order to justify his decision to not go back to Colombia JM recalls the words of a poet who said *'one should live where one feels good, regardless of where one comes from'*. It is a way of justifying his trajectory as a permanent migrant and his current situation of not having clear perspectives for his future. However, JM acknowledges having made a 'mistake' in 1993, when he returned to Colombia. He could see how his old committed friends adapted to the system in order to get some stability, whereas he himself tried to keep his communist ideals, within a context of 'unrestrained capitalist values'.

It is very likely that JM has not worked through that experience yet. In other words: that experience or 'biographical mistake' is still structuring his pattern of orientation and action. We think that JM might be afraid of returning to Poland and suffering from the same disenchantment which he suffered in 1993 in his country of origin. Therefore he is still a migrant and we can consider him as someone still searching for a place to live without having to betray his deepest beliefs in life. Another hypothesis would be that JM differentiates between that experience in 1993 (which we have considered as a turning point in his biography) and the possibility of his going back to Poland, since, as he says in another context in the interview, *'as a stranger you do not have anything to lose'*. From this perspective the risk involved in coming back to Poland (where despite having lost their flat they've kept up good relationships) is far weaker than the risk of going back to Colombia, which represents an 'undigested' biographical experience in a socially and politically unfavourable context.

To conclude by simplifying this case, we could say that the problem of JM's case would lie in the **contradictions between ideals and the impossibility of fulfilling them in practice**. In other words, **'not to have found his place in life'** (both at a territorial and symbolic level). His perception of the problem is of not coming to terms with this situation, and his response is to maintain a fighting strategy of **searching for this place through migration**. Consequently, JM's case should be regarded as much from the **perspective of an emigrant** as that of an immigrant, and **migration constitutes the tool or resource through which JM develops his biographical trajectory**.

2. 3. Samur

This interview was held in the shop where Samur works. The interviewers had gone to that shop some days before, and asked him whether he would like to be interviewed, after explaining to him the context and general aims of the research. He proposed a meeting two days later in the evening since not many clients came in at that hour. We would be able to hold the interview without too many interruptions, despite the fact that someone he knew from the neighbourhood came into the shop during the interview, and sat with us for the rest of the time.

Samur was born in Jaipur (Northern India) in 1963. He is the third of six siblings. His family belongs to an Indian caste, that of a caste of traders (jewellery trade). Samur's parents emigrated to Spain in 1935/1940 (?)⁹ and returned to Jaipur in 1960, where they

⁹Samur could not remember exactly when his parents emigrated to Spain. It is important to know whether it was in 1935 or in 1940, because of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. When asked specifically about it, Samur shows reluctance to give detailed information about his family history in general terms. Two hypotheses might explain his reluctance. The first one is linked to the cultural pattern inherited from his cultural and social environment, which does not make it easy for him to talk about 'private' issues. The sphere of feelings is almost absent during the interview. The second one is related more specifically to his own family. The family occupational tradition (trading with diamonds) is not

stayed until their death some years ago. Samur's father had a goldsmith's business in Melilla. His three sisters still live in the extended family home with their husbands and children. His two brothers have continued the family business in different parts of the world. One of them lives in Chile and the other in Tenerife (Canary Islands). Samur lived in the family house and worked in the family business until 1982. At the age of 19 Samur left India and his family and has not been back since then. He has lived for fifteen years in Sierra Leone (Africa), Hong Kong and Great Britain. In 1992 he finally established himself in Barcelona, after having tried to settle in other big Spanish cities. He graduated in Business Studies, and worked as a tradesman in different countries and environments. Four years ago he started his own shop of Indian souvenirs in the old district of Barcelona. He is self-employed. Last year he bought a small flat in a central suburb of the city, where he lives on his own. Samur could legalise his situation as an immigrant and has been renewing his residence permit every year. With the new regulations of the Foreign Law, he will get a permanent residence license within two years.

The initial contract of the interview was hard for him and for the interviewers. We repeated the opening question several times ('life experiences of different groups in different European countries'). He gave us some biographical data about his place and date of birth etc. but in a telegraphic way, and after that he asked us to switch on the tape recorder. He then started to tell us about his education and working trajectory. We finally came to an agreement on how to proceed, and he then reported some of the chapters of his life, mostly related to his business career.

Both his main narration and his answers to our questions took the form of report and argument. The most outstanding themes contained in the main narration were the family business and his own business, which he linked through the evaluation: '*the family business was complicated and I left it*'. However he does not refer again to the 'complications' that pushed him to leave his country and his family until the present day. When asked specifically about it, he justified his decision as '*something which may happen in any big family, where all members do not think the same, and where one of them decides not to work in the family business*'. Later on, however, he denied the decision to emigrate as made solely by himself. The father's control was the attributed cause for that significant event in Samur's life. Thus, on the one hand, our interviewee presents himself as a 'lone fighter' or a 'self-made man', that is, someone who has sought and achieved a fairly stable economic position through his own personal efforts in the business world, far from the family influence. The themes of 'business trajectory' or 'personal economic success' and 'experience of migration' are structured by the thematic field of 'failure or success depends on oneself'. However, the data with which he provided us about his working trajectory informs us about (dark) business done with family acquaintances or kinship links. Samur may have undergone a lot of family pressure and rigid control in all the jobs he had before coming to Spain. So, when asked to tell more about his experiences in Africa, Hong Kong etc. his answers report and argue his steps under the same principle: '*They needed someone to rely on, so I went to Sierra Leone*'. On the one hand, Samur refers to uncles, family friends etc. as his contact persons for working in the different countries where he has been living. Yet he manifestly under-evaluates the support received by them in order to integrate at a professional level. Here again Samur turns to the leit-motif of the 'self-made man' in order to present himself.

transparently described by Samur at any occasion. The frontier between illegality and legality seems to be very diffuse when he refers to the family business. However, he does not explicitly refer to it as being 'illegal'.

His entrepreneurial initiative of establishing a shop and himself in Barcelona is actually his first business which seems to be far from the family sphere of influence. A few acquaintances of his from his same community were the link through which Samur decided to stay in Barcelona. Despite not having a solid social network, Samur was able to rely on these acquaintances from this same community to get help for the legal arrangements. It took only a month and a half to get his working license. He presents this fact as the 'normal' way for any immigrant who wants to settle in Spain. It is again the structuring principle in his biographical self-presentation (*'as a legal worker you don't have problems. Failure or success depends on oneself'*) which might explain his attitude of minimising the legal hurdles which (mainly Third World) immigrants face in setting up a business.

We could therefore interpret Samur's decision to come to Spain as a turning point in his life, even though he refuses to acknowledge differences in his global arguments about migration. Instead of this **he presents his migration experiences within a logic of continuity**: (migrating has been) *'normal for me. Not a conflict, not a contrast, nothing at all. I've spent 15 years moving around the world and therefore I feel neither Indian nor Spanish; I am a mixture. Wherever I go I stay and adapt myself. I speak English and Spanish. I understand a bit of Catalan, too. If 40 million people live in Spain, why shouldn't I?'*

In fact, migration to Spain is, in Samur's case, a very well known pattern. Not only is he the second generation of migrants in his family (as his parents had lived already in Spain), but he shares with his other brothers this migrating pattern. Moreover Barcelona represents yet another country, after fifteen years of migrating around the world. Nevertheless, if we confront his presentation with the objective data we find out that Spain seems to be the 'end station' of this long chain of migrations. He has bought a flat for which he is paying a mortgage, he has established his own business as a long-term project. The arguments favouring the hypothesis of a turning point in Samur's life are reinforced by his own arguments when specifically asked about the differences he can observe between a country like Spain and the previous countries where he had lived before: *'In Sierra Leone, for instance, I could earn a lot of money but you never knew if a civil War would break out the next day. Here I earn only a little, but I know no civil War will break out tomorrow. I prefer a more certain future to money'*.

Even though the family dimension – in terms of control and influence upon Samur's working and migrating experiences – still remains a relatively obscure point in his self-presentation, we could conclude that **migration has represented for Samur a way of becoming not only economically but personally independent**. In other words, migrating has meant for him **emancipation from the family sphere**. The case of Samur makes evident how, despite an apparent 'economic migration', this is the story of an emancipation and, more specifically, an emancipation from family and kinship links. Another interesting point to be raised in Samur's case is the way in which he omits any ethnic connotations in his long migrating experience. **'Adapting himself' to any context** seems to be an assumed and well-known pattern for Samur. His position in the social structure (young, male, educated and with economic capital) allows him to construct his identity according to a pattern of **'universal citizenship' within a (neo)liberal context**, thus avoiding self definition in terms of ethnicity or belonging to a specific community, nation, nation-state etc.

2. 4. Fatima

This interview was made through a contact with an anthropologist who is a specialist in African cultures. We contacted a 45 year-old woman from Morocco who was reluctant to be interviewed. She expressed her disappointment at permanently being offered help without ever receiving feedback in terms of an improvement in their position. By 'their' she was obviously considering herself as a member of the 'immigrant collective'. However, she proposed arranging an appointment at her place and for the interview to be held with her oldest daughter. Finally we carried out the interview with 16 year-old Fatima at the interviewee's home. When the interviewers arrived, some family members were in the flat (Fatima's father and sister). Later on, two brothers and Fatima's mother came in. Some Moroccan friends of the family joined us in the end. After the interview we were offered some cakes and tea and had an informal chat with the mother. She complained about the hurdles surrounding legal steps necessary in order to get a residence license and about the precariousness of the working conditions for migrants living in Catalonia.

Even though the interviewers had expected to hold the interview with Fatima's mother, we agreed to accept her proposal for the following reasons: it seemed interesting to us to know something about the experience of a young person interacting with other people of her age in school. The schooling experience seemed to us a key element for exploring a different dimension of the interplay between integration/exclusion for this category (when compared to the experiences of adults). Another point of interest lies on a hypothesis based on the temporal dimension, according to which the 'future' has a relevant meaning given the interviewee's early age, in terms of where and how to develop one's life project.

The singularity of this interview presents in itself certain handicaps which must be taken into account when analysing the data. Fatima is a young and shy person who has not chosen freely to be interviewed. Her narratives are therefore very poor, and the interview cannot be labelled as a 'biographical interview' as such, but as a semi-structured one. The interviewers have tried to follow a biographical, reconstructive approach in spite of the poor narrative in the interview.

Fatima was born in 1981 in Casablanca. She is the third daughter of six children, the two youngest of which were born in Barcelona. She is the oldest daughter. In Morocco they lived in an extended family. She went to Primary school until she was ten years old, when she came to Barcelona. Her father was unemployed in Morocco and came to Spain in 1986, where he found a job as an electrician. The rest of the family remained in Casablanca for four years. Her father visited them during holidays. Fatima's mother and the children came to Spain to spend the summer time together. Fatima's father had to face many difficulties in order to get the documents required for reunifying the whole family. The children came to Barcelona in 1990, when Fatima was nine years old. Her mother stayed in Casablanca living with an aunt. Fatima entered a State school in the same suburb where they lived, knowing neither Spanish nor Catalan. One year later she was able to speak Spanish. She received special lessons at school, together with other immigrant children. At school Fatima lived through difficult situations like being expelled from the class because she was speaking Arabic with some of her classmates. At the age of twelve she and her eldest brothers went to Morocco on a journey organised by the Moroccan Embassy for the children of Moroccans living in Barcelona. Once there she visited her grandparents and an uncle. Fatima and her family settled in a working class neighbourhood and some years later they moved to the inner city, where they could develop a community network with other immigrants, most of them Philipinos. Today they live again in the suburb where they had lived before. Fatima is currently at secondary school. Her older brothers are finishing secondary school.

Looking at the most relevant biographical data presented so far, we could offer an hypothesis about the conflictive nature of the migration experience for Fatima. Firstly, migrating implies shifting from a constellation of an extended family to a constellation of a split family (firstly, absent mother; later on, nuclear family). We assume that Fatima will develop an adult role, which will be reinforced by the fact of being the oldest daughter. Secondly, she is confronted with the challenge of having to learn one (or two) foreign languages and integrating into a new educational system. She may have faced humiliating situations in the school context, which may have had consequences for her presentation of her new life in Spain.

If we focus now on Fatima's self-presentation, the first significant aspect to consider is the shortness of her life account, and the difficulties in generating narratives. The most commonly used types of text are reports and evaluations. The use of evaluations expresses her feelings about her experience of living in Barcelona. She uses argument to make a distinction between her life in Morocco and her life in Spain. Fatima develops two different themes during the interview process, namely, 'her life in Casablanca' and 'her life in Barcelona'. Whereas the first is evaluated as an open, peaceful and happy world structured by family/kin and social relationships; the second is described as closed and *'more difficult, more problematic. Here time goes by very fast; over there the rhythm of life is slower. Here you have to know each other very well to be in touch with someone; over there you make relationships easily'*. The same dichotomised pattern is used to present her life in two different suburbs of Barcelona. Whereas the first one was more open and friendly — *'you could play in the streets'* — the second one is presented as more closed and boring: *'Here everything starts and finishes at home; everything is closed. From work to home'*.

In order to exemplify the problematic nature of her life in Barcelona, Fatima refers to the experience of racism at school. *'Racism exists in school. Not only among classmates, but also among teachers. Often I had to hit my classmates when they called me "you, shit Moroccan (Moor)"'*. Nevertheless Fatima presents herself not as a victim of racism but as someone who is integrating and adapting well, yet keeping a distance from her new life. *'I'm making friends at school, but they are not real friends'*. In short the thematic field around which the themes of school and consequences of migration are presented could be defined as 'in spite of racism, the necessity of learning a different language, the absence of an extended family and sociability, I'm adapting'.

Fatima presents her own adaptation or integration through being prepared to understand her situation as an 'other' for the others. In other words: she is starting to understand the prejudices from the view point of others, but is able to minimise them when comparing the common elements she shares with them. *'Even though they consider me different because I belong to a different race, I'm a human being like them. I've been learning that we have not come here to ask for charity and that many Spaniards have emigrated too. The Earth belongs to all of us'*.

When asked about her future aspirations Fatima expresses her desire to study computing sciences at University and get a qualified job *'like everybody who studies'*. However, she has a realistic view of the specific risks and limitations regarding her situation. She is aware of the fact that getting a job is difficult in Spain, and still more difficult for immigrants, who do those jobs which are not performed by Spaniards anymore. *'I want a decent job. I do not want to be a cleaning lady'*.

The mechanisms or resources through which Fatima is able to carry out this reflexive exercise is the combination of family school experience. On the one side, family —

mainly her mother — act both as a shelter against external aggression and as a powerful socialising agent in promoting Fatima's reflexive attitude towards her place in society, and consequently in the construction of her identity for adulthood. On the other hand, at school Fatima does not experience only prejudice against herself, but is at times treated like her other classmates. School represents a diversity of attitudes and — often contradictory — experiences, something which she can find in society as well. Indeed, her strategy could be defined as an integrating strategy in which reflexivity gives her tools to defend herself from prejudices and actively responds to them.

In conclusion we could say that **the experience of migration is closely linked with Fatima's construction of her *self* in the interplay between a local and a universal or global identity.** Her position as the eldest daughter in a stable family constellation within the Moroccan culture allows reflexivity to emerge. This **reflexivity enables her to transform past experiences of humiliation into the search for a more comprehensive explanation which goes beyond her personal experience and looks for the social roots of her own and her family's life situation.**

2.5. Vania

The first contact was made through a relative of Vania, a middle-aged woman who works as a cleaning lady for an old man. This woman refused the invitation to be interviewed on account of her shame at not being able to express herself correctly. She introduced us to Vania as a possible candidate for the interview. We decided then to try Vania, a young woman from El Salvador who also works as a cleaning lady for another family in Barcelona. Vania accepted the interview with a very open attitude. She expressed her availability to collaborate, *to do us a favour*. This attitude could be interpreted in the context of a situation of change and vulnerability (in this case migration) in which often help is needed. She expressed her willingness to help others in the same way she is being helped. The interview was carried out in the interviewee's home, before she started for work in the morning. At that moment nobody was there, and the interview took place in a very private and intimate atmosphere. Vania showed deep concentration while narrating her story, which shows how seriously she took the interview process.

Vania is a 28-year-old woman. She was born in El Salvador into a poor family. Her father works as a bricklayer, and her mother works as a housewife and has also been working in the informal sector in order to improve the low family income. Vania is the sixth of seven children. Vania's father was alcoholic and big arguments between Vania's parents took place during her childhood. When Vania's father returned home drunk, Vania protected him from the aggressive reactions of her older brothers and sisters. Vania was twelve when her father became extremely ill in 1979, and had to leave his job, while her mother was pregnant with her youngest child. Due to the dire economic family situation the children were distributed among different aunts. Vania became ill after being separated from her parents, and her aunt decided to bring her back home. The rest of the siblings were brought back home as well. After the birth of her little sister in 1980 Vania's father's health started to improve and he changed his attitude towards all family members. He started to invest money in the house. Vania did not study after compulsory schooling, and she started to work in a factory. Because she did not earn enough she was economically dependant on her parents. At the age of 22 she met her boyfriend. Her father did not accept this relationship, but Vania continued seeing him.

In 1990/91 Vania's brother came to Barcelona without documents. His girlfriend and her mother-in-law who were both working in Barcelona helped him. In 1994 Vania's sister

emigrated to Barcelona too, but with a legal working contract. Vania was continually asked to join them but she always refused. In 1994 she started to have problems with her boyfriend, after finding some love letters at his place. After a period of crisis she decided to travel legally to Barcelona. However, she and her boyfriend had already planned to marry before leaving the country. Vania found out that her boyfriend had been cheating on her and she tried to commit suicide by taking some pills. Vania was very ill, she suffered a heart attack, and she was in a coma for three days. Then, some time after leaving the hospital, Vania emigrated to Barcelona and went to live with her brother and sister-in-law. After an adaptation period of four months, she started to work as a baby-sitter. At present she is living in the house of her sister's friend, an orphaned young man with whom her brother and sister have established a close relationship. At the present time Vania is waiting for the arrival of another sister from El Salvador, who will come legally through the employers of her sister.

Vania's narratives are very rich and emerge from a very vivid process of recollection. This might reflect the fact that the process of recollection had started prior to the interview, and that the interview might act as a therapeutic exercise. The narratives she uses to give us details from her life are focussed on the episode of migration. The interview is therefore the story of her migration process, and the aim of her presentation is to explain why she has migrated from El Salvador to Spain, and the meaning of this process for her life. Vania presents her story through an 'I' perspective, in spite of the continuous links with the family as the basic context in which her story takes place. From this we might hypothesise that the motivation for her migration is to be understood in personal rather than in family terms.

The main narration is introduced by the migration experience of her brother and sister as an opportunity to stress that she was not involved in that process, because she was well integrated in her own country. *'My brother and my sister asked me if I wanted to come but I said: no. I didn't want to because I was working, I had my boyfriend, someone that I loved very much'*. Vania refers specifically to her close relationship with her father, and describes herself as having been very spoiled by him. She quotes her father's words that she would be the only one among his children who would not emigrate: *'My daughter, Vania, will not leave El Salvador, this is her country, this is her country'*. She also refers to her strong commitment to her boyfriend as a reason not to leave. *'He was an orphan and I took care of him'*. Following on from this, we might infer that Vania has developed a mother role towards both her father and her boyfriend, thus revealing the centredness of family care in her pattern of orientation. Yet, a brief reference to the theme 'problems with my boyfriend' introduces one hypothetical reason for her decision to migrate. On the basis of this hypothesis, migration could be interpreted as a way of escaping from a painful situation, namely to forget a failed love story. But then she immediately shifts to an explanation of why people decide to stay in Spain, by using herself as an example of the economic dimension of migration.

In her main narration Vania prioritises the economic motives for migration. Thus she takes up evaluations and arguments to explain the public dimension of migration. However she combines this kind of 'global' discourse on migration with personal episodes in her narratives. She describes the painful experience of her first four months in Barcelona during which she hoped to salvage her relationship with her boyfriend. In spite of this pain she recognises that she felt supported by her siblings and employers. Vania reports the end of their relationship by recalling a phone call: *'When my boyfriend told me I should have my 'own' life, I suddenly realised that our relationship was over'*. This moment could be understood as a turning point in Vania's life, which implies the emergence of a new Vania. She presents her life in Barcelona as a discovery process: she's discovered another meaning for and value of money with which she can do things that she never had done before; the feeling of being independent without having an overprotective

father, and a sense of responsibility and individuality. *'In El Salvador I always had a meal prepared for me because my parents took care of me. But here I must work, I have to run my own life. In Barcelona I have more responsibilities than in El Salvador. Here I have learnt to take care of myself and I have been able to earn money for myself and to send home'*. In short, **Vania presents her story as an emancipation through migration which is both economic and familial.**

When invited by the interviewer to go into detail about her life in El Salvador, Vania introduces two decisive elements which help us to better understand her life trajectory. Firstly Vania describes how her childhood has been touched by her feeling of being stigmatised for being poor. She always felt inferior in comparison to her aunts (who had a better economic position). For this reason she marks a boundary between her nuclear family comprised of *'my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters'*, and her aunts. The family's success in achieving material welfare through the migration of the three siblings can be interpreted as an opportunity to show how *her* family has been able to improve their situation. From this perspective, Vania defines herself as integrated in a kind of *'successful team'*. She is not only proud of it, but she feels very happy to be able to demonstrate to her aunts the upward social mobility of the family. The second element she introduces is the intense and dependent relationship with her father and her boyfriend. The attitude she develops towards her father, above all in the most conflictive moments, reveals how she adopts the role of carer with him, by developing a mothering role. She describes the same situation with respect to her boyfriend. *'I was very good to him, because he was an orphan and grew up alone, only with two sisters. I wanted him to find in me a warm and protective relationship. I was his girlfriend, I felt that I was everything in his life. I have always been like a wife, or even more as a mother, as a most dedicated mother'*. Vania's possessive and therefore conflictive relationship with her father — *'my father was very jealous of my boyfriend. When I arrived home at night he scolded me'* — is gradually replaced by the centrality of her boyfriend. When asked to say more about it, Vania reveals one of the most important experiences in her life: the rupture with her partner which leads her to attempt suicide. Significantly, Vania does not face this subject until the last part of the interview, after two hours of interaction. This fact reveals how difficult it is for her to explain this event, and the importance of an atmosphere of trust for talking about it: *'It is something that I have explained before, therefore I can explain it to you'*.

If we now look at the main narration retrospectively we can see how this painful experience is decisive in deciding to migrate. In fact migration is Vania's only biographical resource for overcoming her pain and despair. We can see in her narratives signs of blaming herself for having invested so much in her partner relationship. *'I have done so many things for him, I dedicated my life to him for five years, we were about to marry, I loved him so much, it was so strong the pain, so deep the sadness'*. This self-criticism is relevant to understanding the emergence of a manifest feeling of individuality. As she says, *'in Barcelona I learnt to think about myself and not only about the others'*. In conclusion we can say that Vania presents two Vanias, separated by the change that the migration experience brought: the 'Salvadorian Vania', a good woman who was oriented towards the care of her father (and later on her boyfriend) in order to strongly defend the unity of the family against social stigma; and the 'Barcelona Vania', a more reflexive and individualised Vania, who continues defending the family values but who, at the same time, is developing her own project in life. However, if we compare the biographical data with her self-presentation, we can understand her strategy as an **escape strategy from the problems of a partner relationship, which in the end turns out to be an emancipating strategy.**

Emancipation (mainly from her boyfriend but also from her family) through migration can be defined as the key element of this case. Migration is experienced as a successful opening up process in individual terms and an upward social mobility process in family terms (regardless of the specific reason for migrating). In strategic terms Vania orients her present life to work, and to consolidating her social networks to make it possible for other family members to migrate, while her future is oriented to achieving an economic autonomy in order to develop an autonomous life in Spain or in El Salvador. It is an entrepreneurial strategy, which does not exclude the possibility of returning home one day and setting up business in El Salvador.

2.6. Ramon

The appointment with Ramon was made thanks to a friend of the interviewer. Ramon was working for a relative of his, repairing a shop in a popular neighbourhood of Barcelona. He immediately accepted the invitation for the interview. The interviewer arrived at his house before him. His wife, his mother-in-law and his children were there. All of them were very distant and a little bit surprised. The interviewer tried to start a conversation but they didn't follow it up. The home was tidy and with a conspicuous presence of technology (TV, radio, computer). Some elements reveal the link with their culture of origin, for instance, the absence of rigid doors (wood) substituted by curtains. After more than half an hour he arrived from work and started to talk immediately. From that moment on the family virtually disappeared in order to preserve our privacy. The interview took three hours and was both intense and fluid.

Ramon was born in 1960 in a large village in Costa Rica. He is now 38 years old. He is the fourth of seven brothers and sisters. Throughout his life in Costa Rica they lived together with their parents in a house of their own, in a modest neighbourhood. His father worked at a plantation owned by a US enterprise. His mother worked as a housewife and cooked at home for the informal economy. Since childhood Ramon combined work with school. At the age of seven he started to help his mother selling food in the upper-class suburbs. In the evenings he went to school. He finished compulsory school at the age of thirteen, one year later than usual. His father couldn't pay for him to attend secondary school, as he had done with the eldest sons, because the hurricane *Sisi* destroyed the plantation and he became unemployed. For a month he worked for his teacher by looking after her garden. Ramon knew a group of boys who played football with whom he exchanged services: he played football with them and they bought all his food. He continued working with his mother until he was fourteen or fifteen.

He started an apprenticeship in trade at the age of seventeen or eighteen, and worked as well for a planting enterprise from the US. He finished at the age of twenty four. He then studied to become a white-collar worker and, at the same time, he undertook a training with the Trade Unions. Between the ages of seventeen and nineteen he had had a partner relationship with a woman with whom he had two children. At the age of nineteen or twenty he worked as a taxi driver in a banana plantation. In 1979, he met his present wife. Ramon was one of the few workers who were not dismissed when the US enterprise left Costa Rica due to political and economic instability during the Sandinista Revolution (1979/80). He continued working for the same company against a background of labour conflict. In spite of this tension all the workers kept up football matches. The national owners were helped by the military forces against the claims of dismissed workers. Political and economic problems continued until 1985. The workers who were employed set up a collective fund to help all the others, and started setting up co-operatives. During this period of time Ramon was studying and he and one friend actively participated in the student movement. They claimed the right to free lessons during both day and night shifts.

After one year of struggle the demand was conceded but Ramon and his friend were not accepted in the State school, and finally they had to finish their studies at a fee-paying public school.

Ramon married in 1984, when he was twenty four, the same year that he finished his studies. Between then and 1986 two children were born. His wife came to Spain in 1986, six months before him. She had a relative in Barcelona who helped her. She started to work as domestic assistant for an upper-class woman. Ramon came in 1987. He lived first with an aunt of his wife in a working-class suburb of Barcelona, but subsequently rented a room. The two children remained in Costa Rica with their grandmother (mother's side). After a week he started to work with some cousins of his wife as a brick-layer and he registered in a Technical School of Construction (?). One month later, he and his wife rented a house where they lived with a sister and brother of Ramon, who joined them later. After one year he left the job with the cousins and began to work in a shop. Some time later he decided to work on his own. His wife had to have an operation and two months later she was dismissed. From that moment on she hasn't had a stable job since then.

One and a half years after his arrival, the two children (who were about four years old) came to Barcelona. During this period Ramon decided to rent a flat in another neighbourhood just for his wife and children. In 1991 he decided to buy a flat and the woman who employed his wife in the beginning acted as guarantor for a bank loan. At this point, his mother-in-law, his two eldest sons (18 and 19 years old) and his mother migrated to Barcelona, and two more children were born. Family life became more complex with children from different mothers living together. At present only the two grandfathers, and two uncles (Ramon's side) remain in Costa Rica. The rest of both families (Ramon's and his wife's) have emigrated to Europe. The children were given nationality very soon, but Ramon and his wife couldn't regulate their judicial situation until 1990. In order to get the residence license, he presented his documents as an autonomous entrepreneur and a student, and his wife presented a contract arranged by a friend especially for this. Now all the nuclear family members have both nationalities.

Recently Ramon has had problems with his older sons. One of them didn't go to school, and the head master phoned home to inform him of this situation. One night, after a serious argument about his son's bad school marks, one of them ran away from home. After negotiations in which Ramon's sister acted against him, the Social Services of the city council and the Regional Government decided to give the custody of both children to Ramon's sister, arguing that Ramon had made them go to work when they were legally under age. At present both live with his aunt and grandmother (Ramon's side). Ramon continues to work on his own and is following a course on building techniques.

Analysing this biographical data we could hypothesise that Ramon has been socialised within the framework of the family unit in which the sharing of residential space is very important. Apart from the role of this latter element as a defensive resource in a poor milieu, cultural elements linked with patriarchal structures could be reinforcing the weight of the nuclear family unit. Probably this constitutes a strong pattern of orientation in his life trajectory. His personal commitment in following an educational path reveals his striving for upward social mobility and towards his integrating into the social environment of his city, thus breaking the institutional social and spatial segregation. Football could be understood as a sign of this integration. The political socialisation through work and his educational level shows what kind of tools he has with which to defend himself in conflictive situations in the labour market or in the public sphere. Yet, his fighting spirit seems more linked to an individualistic strategy than to a collective one. Migration appears to be the result of his wife's migration, in turn due to the need to improve their economic situation, but it does not seem to constitute a turning

point in his life. However Barcelona could bring about many changes, above all, in terms of acquiring more independence (not only in the labour market sphere, but in the domestic-family sphere through a process of emancipation from his family of origin). At this point the conflict with the two oldest sons may also be experienced as a turning point because this event breaks the family unit and his strategy for re-unifying the extended family in Barcelona.

Ramon presents his life story through a combination of evaluation and argument around the differences between life in his country of origin and Spain. In this sense, we can read his story as being built around 'my life in Costa Rica' and 'my life in Spain'. In Costa Rica memories of good moments, of family unity and the communitarian atmosphere involving people from different social classes are highlighted. In Spain personal effort and struggle are a result of his work-centred mentality and his aspirations for family improvement, especially for his children in terms of study and personal independence.

In the main narration Ramon introduces his life as a combination of work and education. Work represents a means to survive and education represents his aspirations to improve his personal and family situation. These could be a key elements to understanding his strategy, a strategy involved in a process of overcoming assigned inequalities. A constellation of factors have led to the fact of migration. The economic factor is obviously underlying the process, but we could hypothesise that the initial idea was a provisional one, that is, Ramon and his wife were in a conflictive process in which our interviewee was pushed into a decision between living in Costa Rica alone or living with his wife and children in Spain. As he says: *'and finally I came here in 1987. She was already here and I decided to come as well, above all because of the economic situation...she told me that she had decided to stay in Barcelona, and then I decided to come'*.

After this, Ramon introduces one of the key elements of the interview, namely, his evaluation of the atmosphere of living together as good, as are the relationships within the family and the community: *'(...)about living together the best thing has been the unity within the family, with friends, with neighbours, with everybody'*. Our hypothesis is that, on the one hand, Ramon explains his life from the present perspective of tiredness and loneliness. On the other hand his experience acquired through his education in the Unions, and through his experience in the nationalisation and cooperativisation process in Costa Rica, has provided him with important resources for facing the challenges and risks in the labour market.

Through external questions the process of migration emerges in its complex and conflictive dimension. Migration is explained in terms *'by the situation, by immaturity...nowadays I would not decide to come, the fact of being young made us wish to know...'* and not by an elaborated project. His own perception about the migration experience is that of an unrewarded sacrifice: *'The idea is that you want the best for your children in order to be someone tomorrow; in my case, I have done this for that reason, more than for any other, and also on a youthful impulse Nowadays I wouldn't come because here too many things have to be sacrificed. Over there life demands less sacrifice. Here, you don't have time, when you arrive from work you can't do anything else. There you can have free time everyday'*. We think that this evaluation/argument is the key element of his self-presentation: **he presents himself as a victim of sacrifice**, since his family is not living together in solidarity anymore as he had expected after migration. The intervention of his sister in accusing him of exploiting his two eldest sons produces in Ramon a deep feeling of vulnerability, loneliness and impotence. The administrative decision to give the custody of the two children to his sister breaks the family unity and makes evident how his sacrifice of migrating has been only a relative success. This event could be interpreted as a turning point in his life because from that moment on Ramon

decided *'to forget this chapter and to live only for the rest of his family, although I can't accept a process like this, especially when it has been promoted by a relative'*. He concludes this chapter of his life with a significant final evaluation: *'this is my story, nobody can imagine what can happen in life, there there were beautiful things, but after coming here everything has deteriorated into quarrels and turned against me'*.

In order to summarise and focus the attention on the structural elements of this case we will offer a composite view of Ramon's life story: Ramon is a young-middle-aged man whose life history is based on work and education on the one hand, and family on the other. In the first domain Ramon presents himself as a fighter and as a successful individual in a very complex socio-political and economic context. To work is a survival imperative for him and all the people of his social class. Study is the distinctive element that guides his life towards a better social position in his own community, but it is also a strategy for facing and overcoming the existing inequalities in a very segregated society. **Therefore education has been a defensive tool in a risky and dangerous context. His 'communitarian' family, neighbourhood and 'collectivistic' working socialisation has had a big impact on his pattern of orientation but it has not prevented him from learning to deal with unstable and conflictive situations by using a very individualistic strategy.** In fact to be able to bear this need for continual adjustment within his immediate ecosystem, Ramon needs a lot of support in the family domain. For Ramon family is the only space of stability, of non-competitive struggle; it is the place of co-operation and solidarity. This reflects an **idealist and non-conflictivist imagery of family relationships, which contrasts with the actual conflict in his family, and more specifically with the rupture with his two eldest sons. When the 'unrealistic' peaceful family life is broken, the private becomes public. From being a fighter and a successful self-made man, Ramon adopts the role of a victim.** He has accepted his defeat in the family sphere expressing his feelings of vulnerability and impotence from an individualistic perspective. In the frame of work and social relationships he has personal resources to fight, but in the family and institutional framework he is very weak. One way of resolving this situation is by moving again into the public sphere, where he knows how to act. Ramon wants now to study Law in order to protect himself and his family from different kinds of injustices.

His perception of **migration is therefore connected with the family rupture** which has taken place recently. **Migration is nowadays a synonym for scarcely rewarded sacrifice, and consequently it is understood as a loss.** It represents a loss of harmony in the family sphere which implies that it pushes him to deal with competitiveness, conflict and inequalities within both the private and public spheres. The future perspective consists of working and studying on the one hand, and aspiring to further strengthen the family links and the father's authority with his little children on the other.

3. Comparing the cases

In order to proceed with the work of comparison we have selected two analytical dimensions on which to map our cases. Firstly, the **structural conditions of life and the meaning attributed to them** and, secondly, the **spatial/temporal axis** which is constitutive in any process of migration. With both dimensions we attempt to respond to the requirements of the biographical perspective, which locates biographies in the intersection between individuals and their social-structural constraints. The biographical approach to migration, understood as a process, implies the analysis of the interplay between different biographical, spatial and temporal categories. It is what some authors have called the 'migratory field' (see section 1). The moment of migration objectively

marks a 'before' and an 'after', and a 'there' and a 'here'. The possibility of permitting the subjective dimension to emerge, however, reveals the complexity of the logic between what we call the 'context of origin' and the 'context of settlement'.

Firstly, the **informal context** in which our four Latin-American interviewees live in their **countries of origin** (**Monica** in Perú, **Juan Manuel** in Colombia, **Ramon** in Costa Rica and **Vania** in El Salvador) is decisive in their life strategies. By 'informal context' we mean a subordinated position in the economic structure, without a solid coverage of labour and welfare rights in the countries above mentioned. However, this lack of regulation of institutional and working conditions is compensated for by solid or stable family and community links, which provide the interviewees with a certain degree of protection. The communitary sphere operates in order to cover the basic social needs and comes into action in dangerous or very risky situations¹⁰. Nevertheless, the working strategies in the informal or black market are of a 'survival' nature, thus impeding more articulated collective-oriented strategies to improve their living standards. Therefore the logic of informality is self-reproductive. *Intuition is not enough for survival*, says Juan Manuel. This view throws light on the decisions to migrate for those who are not content to just 'survive', but have aspirations and projects for improving their lives. Accordingly, we will now broaden the focus on the objective conditions by incorporating the subjective dimension of their life conditions within their contexts of origin.

For Monica, Vania and Juan Manuel migration is a response or strategy to their refusal to accept their life conditions. For Monica and Vania poverty is experienced as a shame, as a matter of indignity. Migrating for them means recovering dignity for themselves and their families. But whereas Monica's migration is strictly motivated by the need she perceives to improve the family situation, for Vania migration involves also a sentimental rupture with her boyfriend. For Juan Manuel the first step towards overcoming the restricted horizon of his background has been to study. Migration for him is a consequence of the impossibility of finding a 'place' in his country of origin where he could develop a 'socialist life project'. Migration represents for all three the possibility of constructing a better future. **Samur's** context of origin is notably different from the rest of our interviewees, in the sense that he comes from a caste system (Indian) which is characterised by a very closed and institutionalised family pattern. Both social and economic relations are regulated by his belonging to this specific caste of traders. Although Samur's economic conditions in his context of origin made it possible for him to stay in India, his family's strategy of pursuing business through migration led him to migrate for the first time at a very early age. However his subsequent migration experiences (the last of which is to Catalonia) must be interpreted, as in the cases of Vania, Juan Manuel and Monica, as a response to a perception of non-acceptance of his situation, and more specifically, as an emancipation from the constraints imposed by the caste/family system.

The cases of **Ramon** and **Fatima** can be seen as contrasting. Ramon shares with other migrants a life in an unstable occupational, social and political context, but through his 'collectivist working socialisation' in the public domain he feels integrated. This difference is fundamental to understanding his acceptance of his life conditions in Costa Rica and his migration as a product of a family reunifying strategy, rather than an individual project of improvement. Similarly to Ramon, Fatima is a 'passive subject' of migration, in the sense that it is her parents' strategy of reunifying the family which forces her to migrate. As we shall see this is a key aspect for understanding Ramon's and Fatima's rendering problematic their situation through migration in the 'context of settlement'.

¹⁰ As shown in Ramon's case he and his workmates organised a collective fund after they were fired from their workplace.

Within the ‘**context of settlement**’ we can see how two of our interviewees, Monica and Juan Manuel, still live in a very informal context. This informality is reflected in their judicial status as ‘illegals’, which confers on them a position of risk, since they can be expelled at any moment. Domestic work in a feminised Latin American sector in Monica’s case and ambulant selling in Juan Manuel’s case, are signs of this informality. In spite of this, Monica is able to maintain almost the entire extended family. Thanks to this achievement she can tolerate the painful experience of having ‘abandoned’ her children (seen from the point of view of a public definition of the ‘good mother’), by contrasting it with the imagery of the ‘breadwinner role’ which she has prioritised. In contrast to Monica, Juan Manuel does not have a clear place to settle (coming back to Poland seems to be one alternative, but due to the political climate this might not be optimal) because he is still looking for a place where he can follow his aspirations, regardless of physical boundaries. Underlying this search we find the failed experience of integrating himself into the chaotic capitalist structure of Colombia. **Migration in both cases is a non-closed process, since it has a strong influence on their perception of their lives and strategies.** Monica is held in a ‘**double presence**’ in spatial and temporal terms: she is ‘here’ earning money to invest it ‘there’, where her children live. She is simultaneously living both realities. Juan Manuel has neither found his ‘here’ nor cut off or broken the relationship with ‘there’. Mobility structures his pattern of orientation and action. Time and space are in his case ‘relative’, in the sense that they are lived in relation to or depending on a future place where he would develop his *self*.

Both Vania and Samur have reached a fairly consolidated position in the receiving country. They have acquired the status of legal migrants within a short period of time. They have been able to settle without many hurdles, thanks to a variety of resources. They are young, single and educated. Yet they both mirror their different positions of origin. Vania works as a domestic assistant, thus reproducing the logic of the international gender division of labour. Samur sets up a business, thus reproducing the entrepreneurial family pattern. Vania has family support through her brother and sister and Samur is alone, but very open to the community network in the neighbourhood, where many other migrants from different origins live. Through migration Vania fulfils both the objectives she had before coming: to get over the rupture with her boyfriend, and to reach a certain economic autonomy which allows her to participate in the upward social mobility of the family. Once here Vania starts to redefine her personal and family role, replacing the collective-oriented project of migration with that of her own emancipatory project. *‘In Barcelona I learnt to think about myself and not only about the others’*, says Vania. Migration changes her perspective of her life-trajectory to one with a greater autonomy than that in her previous life in El Salvador. In a similar way to Vania Samur has had the opportunity to construct and redefine his ideal of an autonomous life project, in his case through his experience of 15 years of migration. In Barcelona he has found the place where he can put into practice his neo-liberal ideals and combine them with his aspirations which are those of a young person who wants to enjoy ‘freedom’.

Vania’s and Samur’s future strategies are not conditioned by the fact of having migrated anymore. They both have the opportunity to develop a new life project based on emancipation (from economic dependency and from dependent family links) and reflexivity. However this emancipatory project has different connotations in both cases. Emancipation in Vania’s case does not mean radically cutting the family links. Vania lives her ‘double presence’ because of her responsibility towards her parents and sisters. Gender and class origins explain how she simultaneously lives her family’s upward social mobility and her own emancipation, and how Samur — as a male son of a wealthy family — is able to develop not only an autonomous but an

individualistic life project. His decision to cut with the family links also means cutting the unified time and space of production, which is inexorably linked to the time marked by the economic organisation of the kin. The 'here' connected with the 'future' is the decisive dimension in understanding his strategy.

So far we can say that **Monica, Juan Manuel, Vania and Samur share the experience of migration as a response or solution to their biographical situation within the contexts of their origins and aspirations for their future. For them migration has been (is) an alternative, an option, a possibility to improve their lives.** In their countries of origin they have not found this alternative. Except for Monica, the rest share the experience of migration as a personally emancipating life project.

In Fatima's case her non-voluntary migration confronts her with a situation where she has to deal with experiences she had not reflected on before. She has a favourable family context despite the precarious legal and economic position of her parents in Barcelona. Her integration into the Catalan school system posits new challenges in cultural terms. More specifically, she has to deal with two new languages and new social relationships. Fatima is overcoming her feelings of exclusion and experiences of racism at school through constructing an identity based on ideals of equality: *'I'm a human being like you. This is like this in spite of it belonging to another race'*. She claims her right to live 'here' without wanting to give up her rights to her cultural specificities (in her case religion, food etc.). Migration is forcing her to re-construct her identity. In this sense migration is presented as a problematic experience, and an idealisation of the 'there' takes place. However, her future oriented strategy 'here', will probably compensate for the tensions she is suffering. **Fatima shares with Ramon a current perception of migration as problematic. Both of them construct their narratives in terms of a comparison between 'their lives there' (in Casablanca or in Costa Rica) and 'their lives here' (in Barcelona), in which they positively evaluate the first.** In Ramon's case, the economic conditions in the context of settlement have improved. However he has failed to reunify the family, which was inseparable from his project of migration as such. Ramon is suffering from the fact of having lost the custody of his two eldest sons in Barcelona and he is now in the process of re-assuming it by changing his strategy. This painful rupture has reinforced the process of idealisation of the 'there' (his life in Costa Rica) and rendering problematic the 'here' (his life in Barcelona) mainly in terms of loss. *'Nowadays I wouldn't come, because here so many things have to be sacrificed. There life demands less sacrifice. Here you don't have time. When you arrive from work you can't do anything else. There, you have free time every day'*, says Ramon. Migration represents the loss of those values which he most appreciated, above all, family cohesion and community links. Migration in his case is presented as a barely rewarded sacrifice.

For those within our sample who consider migration as a 'solution' the sense of benefit compensates for the sense of loss, in spite of the objective conditions in the context of the settlement. Those who have not been active agents in the process of migration link problematic factors in the settlement with the process of migration.

4. Conclusions and emerging hypotheses

The first significant element derived from the comparative analysis is that **migrants do not define themselves as such, even though migration has often constituted a key event in their biographical trajectory.** This means that 'immigrants' only exist where they are asked to justify themselves as such. Our interviewees are individuals who have

left their countries of origin pushed by a specific constellation of biographical factors against a background of risk and vulnerability. They share with most of their fellow-countrymen structural inequalities in terms of class, gender and also ethnicity. What distinguishes them from their fellow-countrymen is that they have a perception of non-acceptance of their situation, and therefore specific aspirations regarding the future, which they transform into resources. These aspirations are of a different nature. For some of them the family's future lies in the foreground, for others their own emancipation is the reason for migrating; some use migration as a tool for overcoming a personal crisis, others are simply passive agents of migration. This makes more complex our first general hypothesis, according to which the phenomenon of migration would be mainly a product of economic inequalities in a context of globalisation.

This leads us to consider the importance of an **interrelated view of migration** in temporal and spatial terms, as shown through the concept of '**migratory field**'. Firstly, it is impossible to understand migration without considering our migrants as both emigrants and immigrants, and secondly, it is impossible to understand 'immigrants' without considering the 'natives'. For instance, we can not explain our main case study (Monica) without considering her as an 'emigrant' from those conditions in Latin America which force her and her children to live in a context of poverty without future prospects of improvement. As an 'immigrant' in Barcelona Monica is fighting to avoid exclusion for her family. Her strategy involves consciously placing herself at risk. This risk involves both Monica's position in the Spanish/Catalan social structure (judicial status as 'illegal', subordinated position within the labour market, etc.) and Monica's relationship with her immediate social environment (mainly in terms of her relationship with her employer, Maria). Regarding the institutional sphere she feels — and is — at the mercy of policy measures, but in her everyday life she is able to negotiate and to establish solidarity links beyond her contractual relationship with Maria. This relationship, however, could further imply a pre-modern or feudal relationship in which she could be exposed to a situation of neo-slavery. Monica's double role as a breadwinner and mother structures her 'double presence' across time and space, in the sense that she lives simultaneously two different realities: that of her children in Perú and that of breadwinner in Barcelona. Thus we would confirm our second working hypothesis, and approach migration via a circular and dynamic process, which starts before migration and is still operating after arrival.

In a sense, in contrast with other categories¹¹, **future** for our migrants has a distinctive feature, that is, the **aspiration for change**. Future here means the construction of a project for life, as a result of a reflexive process which has taken place some time before. Change means adapting to new situations, adopting new perspectives, languages, habits, negotiating with new actors, etc. Certainly, our interviewees are not only 'interchanging' but 'changing' themselves and their life projects, regardless of territorial, cultural or ethnic differences with the mainstream population. Through their strategies and everyday actions they cast doubt on the rhetorics of exclusion based mainly on racial or cultural differences. Consequently they challenge legal and socio-political discrimination and social stigmatisation. Migrants defining themselves as "citizens of the world" might sound anachronistic in a context of rising nationalism and, more specifically, ethnic nationalism (Castells, 1997) but this has been certainly the case with most of our interviewees.

This last aspect makes it necessary to go deeper into the analysis of another absence, that is, the **absence of an ethnic identity** among our interviewees. Certainly our interviewees have not primarily defined themselves as members of a specific ethnic

¹¹ When referring to some other Sostris categories such as young graduates or early retired, etc.

community, in spite of the existence of discourses based on ethnic identity (often originated by dominant institutions) in their countries of origin. Neither do they express an ascription to their specific nation-states. This could be explained by the imperative to adapt to the receiving country, which is linked to their determined aspiration to improve their life conditions. Another complementary hypothesis could lie in the fact that for some of our interviewees this improvement, as we have seen, is closely linked with their personal emancipation and individualisation, something which often co-exists with other values in their socialisation background. This latter hypothesis can be explained by three variables: education, age/generation and the penetration of western/capitalist values in the framework of globalisation. Indeed formal education and the youth of most of our interviewees have been revealed as crucial resources for understanding migration as a project beyond the economic dimension, that is, as a project of emancipation.

We could consider Samur's story as an extreme case in which ethnicity is 'abolished' in his narratives, since he constructs his life history out of his context of origin, and his identity exclusively in terms of class by assuming the principles which guide contemporary western societies from a neo-liberal perspective. *'I've spent 15 years moving around the world, and therefore I do not feel either Indian nor Spanish. I'm a mixture. Wherever I go I stay and adapt myself (...) If 40 million people live in Spain, why shouldn't I?'*, says Samur. But also Juan Manuel, this time from a Marxist perspective, is similarly representative of a lack of an ethnic or territorial ascription. *'I learnt how to move around the world, I learnt to be alone, to ask for food without knowing the language, to love human beings in their essential qualities'*, says Juan Manuel. Vania's case tells about her self-discovery as an emancipated woman after having migrated, thus questioning her previous mother role towards her father and her boyfriend, and about developing an autonomous life project. **Here we could say that migration leads to a (re)construction of an identity which is not necessarily linked either to an ethnic identity, or to an ascription to a nation-state, but to a plurality of identities based on individualisation and personal emancipation.** This would refute or strongly relativise our third hypothesis, according to which ethnicity plays a significant role in the (re)construction of identity in the context of migration.

Interestingly, another absence deserves comment: linguistic and cultural specificities in the Catalan context have not emerged as discriminatory or problematic elements for the adult interviewees' integration. Their integration into the Spanish informal — and even formal — labour market pushes them towards other kinds of discriminating factors which overshadow the former. The Catalan nationalist discourse has not penetrated into this sector of population yet¹². In other words: **the (re)construction of identity of our interviewees is not linked with the existing overlapping Spanish and Catalan nationalist discourses about identity.** However, as shown in Fatima's case, the children of the migrants living in Catalonia are more confronted with the linguistic/cultural dimension of migration through the compulsory status of both Catalan and Spanish in the educational system. In any case, given their youth and the similarities between the languages this issue does not seem to represent a problem.

'Searching for a place' through migration becomes a feasible strategy in order to develop different aspirations in the biographical agendas of our interviewees. Juan Manuel is still searching for a place in which to develop a socialist utopia. Samur has found the place where he can develop his neo-liberal utopia. Vania has discovered the

¹² The raising of this problem in the dominant Catalan discourse is taking place in a current debate between the 'born Catalans' and the 'second generation' of internal immigrants from the 1960s, regarding the use of Catalan as the prevalent language in Catalonia.

place where she can develop her emancipation as a woman. Monica has found a place in which to develop her role as breadwinner. Ramon and Fatima are questioning their present place as a consequence of their biographical re-definition. **In this sense our interviewees' major source of meaning is linked more to their roles (as young people, mothers, breadwinners) in everyday life as tools of emancipation than to cultural attributes.**

Yet despite against the interviewees' claims for modern values they must face the constraints imposed by the **ambivalence of society, government policies and economic organisation** in the Spanish and/or Catalan context. On the one hand the dynamic of the labour market attracts them but, on the other hand, the State — through judicial regulations and institutional policies — obstructs their integration as citizens. In short, the institutional and social discourse favouring integration and tolerance coexists with the institutional and social discourse of 'cultural fundamentalism'. Far from feeling able to modify the institutional frame in which they live, the scope for negotiation for our interviewees is restricted to their most immediate environment. It is at this specific level that migrants become agents of change. The gap between their agency and the excluding reality of policies and certain social discourse makes evident the relevance of the political dimension for this category. The absence of substantive citizenships rights puts the integration of migrants and the legitimacy of the Spanish State at risk.

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