A Spanish Ghetto? The Effect of Intermediary Structures on the Integration of Second Generation Immigrants*

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses youth marginalization and the qualitative process of ghettoization in a disadvantaged area of Madrid. This ethnographic study examines the role of intermediary structures (family, ethnic community and civil associations) on the life trajectories taken by young people who have been excluded from the education system. The results of this research show that the protective effects of these structures depend on the quality of their social capital. This case study also suggests that this kind of capital arises from a specific collaboration between ethnic, religious and secular organizations in which women play a decisive role.

Keywords: 1. Second generation, 2. urban segregation, 3. ethnic communities, 4. social capital, 5. Spain

¿Un gueto español? El efecto de las estructuras intermedias en la integración de las segundas generaciones de inmigrantes

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la marginalidad juvenil y el proceso cualitativo de guetoización en una zona desfavorecida de Madrid. Un estudio etnográfico que examina el papel de las estructuras intermedias (familia, comunidad étnica y asociaciones cívicas) en las trayectorias de vida de los jóvenes excluidos del sistema educativo. Los resultados de este estudio de caso muestran que el efecto benéfico de estas estructuras depende de la calidad del capital social que sean capaces de generar, un recurso que surge de la colaboración específica entre las organizaciones étnicas, religiosas y seculares en las que las mujeres desempeñan un papel decisivo.

Palabras clave: 1. Segunda generación, 2. segregación urbana, 3. comunidades étnicas, 4. capital social, 5. España.

Introduction

In Europe, the existence of *urban ghettos* was not discussed in the literature until relatively recently. For a long time, the racial composition in French *banlieues* and British *inner cities* went unquestioned, and the situation of youth, most of whom were children of immigrants, was considered less serious than in the African-American areas in the United States or the *favelas* in Brazil. The welfare state, the *politique de la ville* in France, British multiculturalism and the existence of a large middle class were deemed to prevent social cleavage, and the marginalization of youth appeared less important than in other parts of the world. It seemed as though there was some protection in place against inequality and its consequences.

However, the dismantling of the industrial world in the 1980s began to open up social fractures in the capital cities of northern Europe and this new malaise became manifest through the eruption of the first urban riots in Lyon (France) and London (UK) in the 1980s. From that moment on, urban segregation and racial discrimination kept increasing in certain urban areas of France and the UK. Furthermore, chronic unemployment produced a specific kind of social organization marked by a street culture particular to youth, a breakdown in communication between the sexes, and the endemic use of violence. This has allowed some commentators to pick up the subject of the existence of ghettos in Europe (Lapeyronnie, 2008: 13). It would seem that a segment of the urban youth is now living a common experience of *disconnection* (Dubet and Lapeyronnie, 1992; Donzelot, 2011; Martuccelli, 2003) largely due to the weakness of the social networks (social capital) to which they have access. In other words, there seems to be a missing link between these youths and the opportunities available in the cities where they live.

The aim of this article is to assess whether a southern European country such as Spain is developing a similar social phenomenon. In Spain, despite the fact that immigration is relatively new, the migration boom which took place between 2000 and 2007 (Arango, 2009) in recent years caused an increasingly noticeable concentration of foreign populations in the most disadvantaged urban areas (Lora-Tamayo, 2007) in which services are substandard and there is a high

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level of unemployment and educational failure. Research related to these disadvantaged areas and the youth of immigrant origin is still embryonic compared to its development in Anglo-Saxon literature. In Spain, no mention was made of a 'second generation' until 2004, while issues of interethnic relations and delinquency in big cities were being researched in the USA as early as the 1920s (Park, 1928; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1920). In the 1960s, urban sociologists warned about the deterioration of social relations in low-income neighborhoods (Jacobs, 1961) or the emergence of a *culture of poverty* (Lewis, 1965). Similarly, in France and the UK, the industrial crisis and urban riots drew the interest of sociologists who began to focus on the poorest urban spaces (Dubet, 1987; Rex, 1982).

The most important piece of research recently developed in Spain is the Longitudinal Study of the Second Generation in Spain project (ILSEG by its acronym in Spanish), directed by Alejandro Portes (Portes and Aparicio, 2013)[1], co-creator with Rumbaut of the 'Theory of Segmented Assimilation.' This research produced optimistic results highlighting the progressive educational integration of young people, their growing academic expectations and aspirations and their positive identification with Spain. However, it did not ignore or deny the possible difficulties that were also present (discriminatory processes or school desertion and unemployment in some urban areas). For this reason, it is essential to focus on the problems involved in the integration of young people of immigrant origin in the most disadvantaged areas of large cities. It also means that this phenomenon needs to be observed while taking into account the importance of the *urban context of insertion* and the *role of the local community*. This piece of research was carried out in two stages: one between 2005 and 2009; and the other between 2010 and 2013, exploring those issues through a case study of one of the areas most afflicted by poverty in the city of Madrid.

The site of our study is the district of Cristobal de Los Ángeles, a geographically isolated area that has undergone demographic transformation and an economic crisis. It is a place no one would go to, except those who live there. It first housed Spanish rural migrants

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[1] ILSEG project (Longitudinal Study of the Second Generation in Spain) directed by Alejandro Portes and Rosa Aparicio (Princeton University and the Ortega y Gasset Institute). The results which are quoted were extracted from a working paper presented in May, 2013.

who arrived in the newly industrial Madrid of the 1960s, but is now occupied by over forty different nationalities. Between 2000 and 2007, its foreign population reached 41 per cent and young people of immigrant origin represented 57 per cent of its demography. It is an area deeply afflicted by unemployment (29.94 per cent), where youth experiences the greatest level of unemployment in Spain (55 per cent). These difficulties have affected the quality of its educational institutions where more than half of its students (aged between 13 and 16) are not able to gain the basic qualifications (equivalent to 5 A*- C at GCSE). Part of the local youth is thus left stranded in a kind of *no man's land*, a space of uncertainty where the control and responsibility derived from institutions lose influence. In this situation, family and the local community play a decisive role.

The choice of this extreme case responds to two core objectives. The first is to analyze the level of *disconnection* or *dissociation* (Castel, 1995) present among young people. The second is to evaluate the existence (or non-existence) of new *processes of ghettoization* in the qualitative rather the demographic sense of the term. To shed light on these questions, I have undertaken a careful examination of the roles played by *intermediary structures* (family, ethnic community and civic associations) on the trajectories of young people who have been expelled from the education system. In these cases, such structures tend to replace school and fulfill an essential role in the lives of the young. However, these structures can also become a source of isolation.

This article intends to demonstrate both the positive and negative functions of these structures in the lives of young people. It is divided into six sections. The first section addresses the theoretical framework, the objectives and the research hypothesis. The second briefly describes the methodology and the ethnography used. The experience of dissociation, the lifestyle that young people develop and their aspirations and expectations are presented in the third part of the article. The last three sections deal with the influence of the family, ethnic networks (ethnic associations and community) and civic associations (generally autochthonous or mixed, created by both Spanish and foreign volunteers, neighbors and social workers). In addition, this analysis will be sustained by examining various cases of young people. The findings, which are presented in the con-

clusion and over the course of the article, attempt to give an account of the limitations and opportunities facing young people who follow a path different from the mainstream.

Theoretical Discussion, Objectives and Hypothesis

The first objective of this piece of research is to describe the reality surrounding young people in socially vulnerable situations. We have resorted to the concept of *dissociation*, first coined by the sociologist Robert Castel (1995) so as to move away from the term 'exclusion' which seems to reflect an unresolvable situation: a society divided into outsiders (those excluded) and insiders (those included). *Dissociation* is understood as a process (akin to the path taken *before* failure is expressed) and thus makes it possible to understand the specificities of each case. Castel defines dissociation as a social experience that combines precarious employment with fragile family and community ties. However, he describes it as a situation that does not necessarily imply a complete disconnection from society (1995: 17).

The second objective is to describe the *environment of segregation* and the *street culture* these young people experience. In this case, we chose the term *ghetto* as used by Didier Lapeyronnie. In his opinion, a ghetto is not defined simply by poverty or segregation but rather by a lifestyle, a collective logic that isolates individuals from the rest of society, but at the same time protects them from any perceived external contempt. The ghetto is based on segregation imposed from outside, which thereafter acts as a compensation, due to a feeling of belonging to a different world that has its own rules and values (Lapeyronnie, 2008: 595).

The third objective is to understand the role played by *intermediary social structures* in the reintegration of young people. These structures are defined as social spaces situated in between state institutions and citizens: the social environments that enjoy the greatest proximity to individuals, such as family and community (informal networks, local associations, churches, mosques, and so on). To measure their effect, we used the classical definitions of *human* and *social capital* (Coleman, 1990). Human capital is created when people acquire a series of abilities and know-how through training or experience. However, it is

not necessarily linked to educational level, but is more appropriately measured by a collection of personal competencies, in particular social and communication skills that make it possible to adapt to various cultural contexts. Social capital resides in social relations, which have the quality of creating the necessary resources for the actors involved to be able to pursue their interests (Coleman, 1990: 304). Social capital exists in stable communities that produce bonds of trust and are based on norms of cooperation. As many researchers point out, the real issue is to know what kind of social capital is in place so that its positive and negative effects can be measured (Coleman, 1990; Putman, 1993; Portes, 1998; Pérez, 2003). Insofar as this concerns young people of immigrant origin, the *theory of segmented assimilation* has shown that the balance between acquiring the norms and values of the dominant society and maintaining ties with the ethnic community -a sort of *"selective acculturation"*- is conducive to the upward social mobility of young people and protects them from different forms of discrimination (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001: 52).

Nonetheless, other writers have warned that this 'ethnic embeddedness' (having relatives who work in the 'ethnic enclave' or being a member of ethnic associations) only helps young people when it links them to individuals who have significant resources at their disposal (Waters *et al.*, 2010:189). These social and ethnic networks can help to mitigate social disadvantages if they enjoy a certain 'quality,' but they can also constrain individual freedom, excluding certain individuals due to their beliefs, or hindering young people's access to new employment opportunities if those networks are closed and have limited resources (Waldinger, 1995; Ryan *et al.*, 2008: 686).

An in-depth inquiry into the two main dimensions researched –the *environment of segregation* and the *structures of civil society* it is constituted by– has allowed for the following hypotheses to be posited:

1) The social and human capital of the immigrant family are the attributes which most tend to determine the reintegration of young people in a situation of *dissociation*.

2) Ethnic communities, on the one hand, do have the capacity to exert significant control over young people, while, on the other hand, they can contribute to their isolation and lack of social mobility.

3) A kind of *collaboration between intermediary structures* (family, ethnic community, civic organizations) within *social spaces of local participation and action* reduces the likelihood of isolation and marginalization, the breakdown of inter-gender dialoguing and the emergence of violence in those urban spaces.

Experience is the Method

My interest in this issue began in France in 2004 where I was studying the type of urban violence in the *banlieues* at the time. These areas, that provide a wealth of both social and political information, led me to wonder what kind of conditions might be affecting youth of immigrant origin in Madrid. On my return to the city in 2006, at which time the population of foreigners in Madrid numbered 481,162, I decided to move to an area similar to those French suburbs in order to conduct an in-depth analysis for my doctoral thesis. I selected a traditionally industrial peripheral area hard hit by the economic crisis of the 1980s with a high proportion of foreign residents. I chose the area of San Cristobal de los Ángeles (in the Villaverde District).

I opted for an ethnographic approach, prioritizing observation and participation. The empirical research took place between 2006 and 2009. The method was based on experience (Znaniecki, 1992) and, as a methodological strategy, I set out to collaborate with one of the oldest and most embedded community associations in the area. During 26 months I was able to teach language and literature classes to young people who had dropped out of school. This enabled me to identify the age at which 14 to 18 year-olds were at a greater risk to experience dissociation. The association became an analytical laboratory, which allowed me to conduct a strategic sampling of cases within this age bracket and to follow their development over the course of two academic years. This sample was made up of fifteen young people, five of Ecuadorian origin, five of Dominican origin and five of Moroccan origin. Within each group, two girls were chosen out of every three boys in order to reflect the overrepresentation of boys at this center. These young people were interviewed on two occasions: once in June 2006 and again in June 2007, which enabled me to reconstruct their life stories and identify the chain of events that had weakened or

strengthened them during these precise moments in their life trajectories (Bertaux, 1976). In addition, five Spanish adolescents were chosen (also three boys and two girls) as a "control group" so as to observe the specific weight of the variables of *social class and ethnic origin* in these young people's reinsertion process. Furthermore, 79 interviews (including young people between 19 and 29 years of age, mothers and fathers, educators, religious leaders, members of neighborhood associations, and so on) and 15 focus groups were conducted (8 of which were comprised of young people of different ages, and 7 of which involved adults such as old age pensioners, educators, women, neighbors, police officers and members of immigrant associations).

Funded by the European Commission, I was able to return to the area five years later, in 2014, to evaluate the effects of the economic crisis and the new processes of segregation. On this occasion, I applied a different methodology, one inspired by Alain Touraine's *Sociological Intervention* (1978). The application of this method consisted of bringing together a group of 15 young people for 10 sessions in which they dialogued with key community members (a police officer, an imam, a teacher, an urban artist, a local politician and a member of a social movement). These sessions lasted between two and three hours per week over a period of three months. The group also met for closed sessions aimed at developing an analysis about social relationships. Five of those who participated were drawn from the original 2006 sample, thus offering an additional scope to the research from the perspective of their life trajectories. Group sessions were also complemented by biographical interviews and participant observation, which ensured methodological triangulation, bringing contradictions into focus, and assembling different analytical categories in the sense defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The hypotheses initially seemed unrelated. However, as the work moved forward, the data became more coherent, and the interconnections constituting the core of the sociological explanation presented in this paper were identified step by step.

Paths to Dissociation

Edwin sits in the middle of his group of friends, on the wall surrounding the basketball courts, where Dominicans hang out in San

Cristobal. He holds and defends his place proudly; this is because he earned it through a trajectory that everyone knows about. He arrived in the area at the age of five, having been separated from his mother for three years during which he lived with his grandparents in the Dominican Republic. He did well in primary school, but from secondary onwards his life turned into a succession of ruptures and violence, characterized by deep isolation and loneliness. At thirteen, after having been placed in a class for 'conflictive' students, he gave up studying altogether. 'They set you apart, supposedly you're not good enough to be in a normal class with others and study like the rest' (San Cristobal, February, 2009). He was expelled the day he threw a chair at a teacher, and used the opportunity to quit school for good. He was then 16 years old. About his stint in the educational system, he has only contempt. The first time I interviewed him in 2006, his primary aspiration for the future was to own a gun. In the second interview in 2014, he had already been through prison (for 9 months) for committing a violent robbery. He explained that it had been a very difficult experience because his daughter was born while he was in prison. However, he also told me how upon returning to his neighborhood, his friends' loyalty had grown stronger. Having gained prestige among his peers, Edwin recovered his place. Today, he returns to the wall surrounding the basketball courts and dedicates himself to petty drug trafficking (mostly hashish). Sitting there, he dreams of having a stable job one day so that he can live with his girlfriend and daughter.

Edwin describes the life of young people in San Cristobal as if they lived in a *different world*. In fact, he does his best to explain the norms and values of 'this world'. He often speaks of respect, family, fraternal solidarity and self-reliance, as well as the degree of protection and control he exercises over his sisters and girlfriend. 'My girlfriend needs to come round so that I can give her 800 euros… I prefer that she stays at home because the streets are dangerous.' He expresses pride at being Dominican and Latino, but also at being from San Cristobal. 'In my neighborhood, I feel at home. I can walk around safely without running into any trouble or getting caught slipping. I even know which cars aren't locked.' This marginalized space serves as a shield against external discrimination, but at the same time can be a trap. Outside the area, Edwin is a nobody, and because he has no

other choice than to stay where he is, it suits him to feed the discourse that identifies this urban space as a ghetto. Segregation is enforced upon him, and his survival depends on the maintenance of a culture of non-integration.

Edwin's case is extreme. Most young people who prematurely abandon their studies in San Cristobal (57 per cent in 2014) do not follow the same trajectory. They do not live in a *different world*, like Edwin says, but more precisely live *between two worlds*. They have a disorganized routine that they describe now and again, in their conversations, as 'hacer el gamba'[2] ('getting by' or 'fooling around'). This *in vivo* code —akin to what Glaser (1978) denotes as the codes directly taken from the language of the research subjects— is defined here with great precision by a 16 year-old Spanish boy:

> 'Hacer el gamba' is being at home, going down to the street, being in the street all fuckin' day till eleven at night, playing on the PlayStation, doing a little run on the 'ped, smoking weed, drinking liters and not working, or working for a couple of months, then dropping it… and wearing nice clothes.
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> [Fernando, held back in the third year of secondary school, is a 16 year-old member of a heavy metal band and volunteers in the neighborhood Association. He does not know if he will continue his studies after finishing compulsory education. San Cristobal, May 2007]

In Madrid, 'gambas' or 'gambitas' (or acts of witlessness) occupy a place between a normalized world (being in contact with the associations and still having friends at school) and an informal or 'street' world (connecting with groups with a close proximity to the informal economy). Some of them are enrolled in basic education programs but do not attend classes; others eventually get some kind of job but continue depending on their family, while others occasionally commit petty crimes without being serious offenders. In other words, they are by no means totally disconnected from society, but neither are they involved in the formal structures of integration (the education system or the labor market). They do not necessarily adopt the norms and values of street culture but remain under its influence. They are

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[2] "Hacer el gamba" literally means playing the fool. However, it connotes being a bit of a troublemaker, not caring about anything, having no focus, spending too much time in the streets; being 'wortless' may be the closest translation into English slang.

in contact with girls of the same age, but their discourse often goes against gender equality. This kind of discourse is as present among boys of Dominican, Ecuadorian and Moroccan origin as it is among those with a Spanish background. They are not direct protagonists of violence, but endorse and justify it, considering its use as legitimate in different situations (as self-defense in the street, at school and even at times against the police). Amongst the dissociated youth, symbolic power is bestowed upon those who strike the greatest fear in the hearts of others, using violence, challenging authority and belittling those attempting to study.

In relation to how they conceive the area and their future, on the one hand, they define the space as a ghetto condemned to violence, segregation and poverty. On the other hand, they extol the dignity of its inhabitants, the tremendous efforts they make every day, the ethnic diversity and the capacity for action possessed by the associations and social movements. They complain that they feel isolated and enclosed in an area lacking opportunity, but they will not commit to activities that would enable them to leave the area and gain access to new experiences. They oscillate between these two extremes, unable to make any sense of their lives. Usually, they remain caught in this contradictory and ambivalent discourse for a few years, postponing as much as possible their incorporation into the labor market, independence from their parents and any kind of serious relationship. Generally, at nineteen or twenty, they realize how difficult it is to recover lost time and they are obliged to choose between fully integrating into street culture, accepting precarious working conditions, or struggling to change their future through a part-time job and resuming their studies. As will be demonstrated below, the opportunities available to these young people relate predominantly to the role played by *intermediary structures* at this crucial point in their lives.

The Family as a Support System

A family that early on notices that their child is drifting off-track and takes appropriate measures to deal with this tends to become the most determining factor in terms of redress. This applies equally to Spanish offspring. The existence or lack of a strict father figure who exerts

control over the children and tries to limit their contact with the street while at the same time promoting contact with the family, communicating and instilling values (rooted in both their culture and that of the host country) is an element that tends to define whether young people growing up in a vulnerable environment like San Cristobal will sink or swim.

Indeed, this was the case of Tatiana, a young Ecuadorian girl who arrived in Madrid at the age of two and whose educational trajectory was fraught not only with violence ('I was insulted since the day I arrived. They called me 'blackie' and I'd hit all of them back'), but also with a lack of progress. In April 2005, her stepfather, a skilled immigrant (a technical engineer) who now runs one of the main restaurants in the area and is one of the 'immigrant leaders' within the *participation forums,* brought her to the Association. Her mother (a chef in Spain but with a degree in law) was worried because her daughter had not attended school for six months and had been reprimanded on various occasions for her bad behavior (Lucia, interview, February, 2007). Tatiana's parents were concerned about the 'bad company' she was keeping, specifically a gang of gypsies who did not attend school and spent all day in the street.

The parents' reaction was swift. They accepted that their daughter did not want to go back to school due to the conflicts she had experienced, but instead they imposed on her a strict agenda with iron control. This is how she describes it:

> Buha, man, when my parents found out…I managed to sneak out a few times but they wouldn't even let me go out to buy bread. My dad, because he found out that I had sneaked out, would start checking my phone to see what calls I was getting and everything. They kept me in the house, completely locked up. Then, they told me I was to help my mom at the lunch bar in the mornings, serving tables, and so on… And in the evenings, back home…That's what it was like since I left school (in March) until I came here (the Association, in September) to do basic IT.
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> [Tatiana was born in Quito. She is currently 16 years old, but arrived in Spain at the age of 3. She dropped out of school in her fourth year of high school (at age 15). Her path via the Association allowed her to finish her studies at in adult education center. She wants to be a policewoman. San Cristobal, May, 2007].

The first strategy used by Tatiana's parents was to isolate her for some time from the social environment she had been acquainted with. Her confinement at home enabled her to abandon some of the habits she had learned. Moreover, Tatiana's father's regular attendance at one of the most important participatory spaces in the area —the forum on education— facilitated the communication process with the Association educators which became an essential factor in the reintegration of this young girl into a path towards education. This typical case (as well as others in this research) demonstrates how the family can act as a vehicle for the favorable production of an environment of positive socialization for their children. Leaving school and joining an alternative education structure, where new relationships can be developed ('people who want to study, who try to help you when you don't understand, who give you good advice') and where one can learn to count on the support of new teachers ('another kind of completely different teacher who speaks with you, trusts you, doesn't shout at you, doesn't kick you out of class') has become a solution for many young people who have left the system prematurely.

The social and human capital acquired by young people through their families allows them to move forward. However, with regards to social capital, it has been demonstrated that the most vulnerable families are the ones in which the father and mother roles are hampered by employment duties (since both parents have to work full-time) or by the absence of one of the two major role models (masculine or feminine) from the household when the family has split apart. The families that transfer a better social capital to their children are those in which both parents are present at home. In this sense, the migration dimension and the family's country of origin do not constitute an important factor. This would be the case solely if migration were the cause of family disintegration. However, those problems are also produced by factors that have nothing to do with migratory patterns, and thus can be present in the same way in the case of young people from Spanish.

Concerning human capital, significant differences can be observed between immigrant families with a rural background (mostly Moroccans and Dominicans) and those from urban areas. In the former case, illiteracy and a limited understanding of the Spanish

language can often become insurmountable obstacles. The parents are unable to adequately supervise their children's education. Conversely, mothers with an urban background will tend to have more human capital that is often not translatable into academic qualifications but rather into the capacity to learn the language, to participate in parent-teacher associations (AMPAS) and to find alternative resources for their children to receive the support they need. In the case shown below, a woman from a middle-class family from Tangiers, a housewife married to a construction worker, explains how she visualizes her children's education:

> I was born in Tangiers and my father is an accountant. I completed high school and met my husband, and then we came to Spain. I had hoped to go to university, but I wasn't able to. It made me feel so frustrated that I started devouring newspapers, books, and television programs… I learned Spanish very well. Besides, I had arrived speaking French, English and Arabic. It's because of this that my goal is to educate our children. I help them with their homework and read with them…On Saturdays, they go to the mosque in M30 to take classes in classical Arabic. I make them understand that they have to succeed, achieve the necessary qualifications and go to University, that we have come here because there are new opportunities and that we are working hard so that they do better than us. I have studied, but it has been pointless. So, they need to make the most of all this wealth of knowledge. Because they have dual nationality, they shouldn't lose either of their cultures.
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> [Zaida is a 34 year-old Moroccan woman with three children. She arrived in Spain in 1999 and is married to a construction worker. San Cristobal, December, 2006]

However, not all families have access to those kinds of resources. In many cases, support and help must come from the outside. The immigrant community and civic associations, despite their limitations, are important sources of support for young people.

Is the Ethnic Community a Means to Control Young People in Difficult Situations and Reintegrate them into Work?

The immigrant associations in San Cristobal can be defined as small groups of people who meet on an informal basis. Most of them rely

on a leader who fulfills the role of building bridges to the rest of civil society. Occasionally, these associations influence community life and can have a positive effect on young people. This is the case of the women's associations (such as the Association of Muslim Women and the Association of Dominican Mothers), which define themselves as groups who fight to break stereotypes (against racism and Islamophobia), open up other spaces different from school for young people, through the organization of basketball tournaments, in the case of the Dominicans, and in the case of the Muslims, through debates about Islam in collaboration with more established associations in the area.

However, this determination to go out into public space, participate and improve young people's conditions has not found any governmental support. "We are five and most of us work," says the president of the Muslim Women's Association (Amad, San Cristobal, January 2008). "Without help, even if it is just a little, to pay for photocopies… we run dry, we lose motivation…"

The lack of support for these positive initiatives means that other more powerful groups gain greater influence over young people. This is the case of a Moroccan businessman, based in the area for over twenty years, president of the Muslim Association and owner of two grocery shops, one butcher's shop and three telephone/internet cafés. Thanks to his businesses and his association, and to his having opened the first prayer center in 2007, which brings male Moroccan immigrants of all ages together, particularly young men, he holds both economic and social power within the Moroccan community. The social capital that is deployed in this context is a source of both work reintegration and social control. The young people who have dropped out of school can count on this leader's support in order to find a part-time job, by helping out in one of his businesses. This provides them with a new routine and some independence from their parents. At the same time, their behavior is, to a large extent, under control. Furthermore, their immersion in the ethnic community allows for the development of a more spontaneous form of social control. Families can keep a closer eye on 'troublesome' youths and control their use of drugs or their participation in petty crime. This type of control also encourages attendance at the mosque. In the case of women, compliance with Haram

avoids unwanted pregnancies (one of the most important issues in the area among young people of Latin American origin).

However, this type of social capital can also generate a stalemate for the young people and constrain their individual freedom. The case of Salma whose mother found her kissing her boyfriend (a youngster of Dominican origin) at the entrance to the school serves as a good example. Her mother slapped her face in public and the incident marked a definite turning point in her life and in her family. Salma was born in Spain five years after her parents had settled in the country and she grew up surrounded by children of different backgrounds. She did relatively well at school and led a very similar life to her friends in third year of compulsory high school (ESO in Spain). After having been caught kissing, she did not return to the Association for two weeks, where she usually attended daily classes for educational support. When she finally reappeared, she was covered from head to toe and was wearing a hijab. Not only did her clothing change, but also her dreams and expectations. She dropped out of school in fourth year of ESO and stopped taking part in the leisure activities at the Association. The last piece of news about Salma was brought by her mother who visited the Association to ask the educators to convince her to at least sign up for the summer camp (Salma, San Cristobal, May, 2009).

Another case, which also highlights this point is that of Soumia, a young girl of 17, who arrived in Spain at the age of three from Meknes, Morocco. She has fond memories of middle school but she makes it clear that the hostile environment at high school made her drop out of school before finishing. She had been at the Association for a year and was planning to sign up for a course in hairdressing. But, something took place that changed her life. A family friend asked for her hand in marriage and Soumia spent six months wondering what decision to take. Her big dilemma, and she repeated it every day, was to decide between belonging to one world, or the other:

> 'My dream is to be a hairdresser, but if I decide not to get married, I don't know what will be in store for me. I don't know anyone. It's hard, really hard…If I fail and I don't do well everyone will have something to say about it and everyone will point at me. Also, I don't know if anyone will ever propose to me again in my life.'

[Soumia is 17 years old. She was born in Morocco and arrived in Spain at the age of 3 years. She married a Moroccan man at the age of 18 and is currently a housewife. San Cristobal, April, 2011]

If she broke with the narrative of the women in her family, she would have to walk that path alone. And she was not able to do so. The lack of support from the community made her choose the least risky option: to marry young, remain in the group, and immerse herself in it.

In the case of the Ecuadorian community, the young people who have dropped out of school tend to access work through their parents or close relatives. Numerous cases have been observed where young women have earned jobs as domestic workers due to the contacts they accessed through their mothers and aunts, or young men who work in hotels because they have been recommended by their father. However, the Ecuadorian community does not have an association in the area, neither is it organized to promote activities aimed at youth reintegration. What is noticeable nonetheless is that the youth organizations in the neighborhood parish are predominantly made up of Ecuadorians, who through their religious participation come into contact with other associative structures in the area.

The Dominican community, in the same way as the Moroccan, has the capacity to offer part-time employment to young people who have not completed compulsory education (in local businesses like bars, clubs, grocery shops, hairdressers and internet cafés). The trajectory followed by Wilson, who arrived in Madrid when he was six years old, serves as a good example. His mother was one of many women who initiated the family migratory pattern, working hard in the hotel industry to be able to bring Wilson and his younger brother over to Spain. Even though the children adapted to their environment reasonably well ('my cousins lived here at the same time and the area reminded me of where I used to live in Santo Domingo'), Wilson did not have an easy time at school. He had to repeat sixth grade and once in high school he began to fall behind. He became truant and developed a defiant attitude towards the teachers. He dropped out of school at fifteen, in the fourth year of ESO, and would spend his days in the street with his friends and girlfriend. His mother compelled him to join the Association and he was able to start an intermediate

course in hotel management. However, he gave up again because he was drawn into a proposition by a friend who managed a chain of clubs. At 19, he explains his occupation in this way:

'Are you working?'

'I've got something going, know what I mean? Not much, but you can make more money from it… there's a lot of people who live from this from what my boss tells me, he's a friend of mine. If you work nights you make more money… It's a music hall that's coming along… At the moment I'm helping him out, and he helps me out.'

[Wilson is 19 years old. He was born in Santo Domingo, arrived in Spain at the age of 3, and would like to work in the hotel industry. He has been in prison on two separate occasions. San Cristobal, June, 2012]

The music hall never took off and today Wilson is twenty-four years old and works seasonally in construction. 'I work often but not always,' he said, sitting on the same park bench as seven years before.

Networks that Cushion the Fall: Civic Associations as Spaces of Support and Belonging

The historical narrative of the San Cristobal inhabitants situates the neighborhood movement as the main agent of change in the area. 'Almost everything —the sidewalks, the schools, the health center, the new bus routes, the subway, and so on…— is due to the people's capacity to unite and protest,' explains the president of the Neighborhood Association. With the collapse of industrialism, most of the residents in the area have noticed their social and interpersonal relationships deteriorate, a change that urban sociologists, like Manuel Castells (1972), also noted in the 1980s. At the same time, with the rise of the Socialist Party to power, the neighborhood movement became institutionalized, weakening social and political participation at the local level. Despite these trends, the history of the associative fabric of the area shows that civic associations have kept on fighting to solve urgent issues, such as drug addiction, or insecurity in the 1980s and educational failure in the 1990s.

The demographic transformation of the area and the impact of the 2007 economic crisis have generated new uncertainties and con-

flicts of coexistence that the residents sought to address through a neighborhood participation forum. Furthermore, the reconstitution of the associative fabric (with the emergence of new immigrant associations) has coincided with the appearance of the *Indignados* (the outraged ones) and the *Mayo 15th Movements* in 2011, as well as the movement against evictions. Neighborhood participation forums are used to encourage people living in the area to participate in protests and to foster 'Real Democracy,' putting pressure on the administration and designing new projects that allow the local community to fight against the marginalization of youth and the symbolic construct of San Cristobal as a ghetto.

The associations are thus transformed into the only spaces that welcome the kind of young people who find themselves in a *no man's land*. As we have seen in the case of Tatiana, giving up can sometimes become a 'solution,' removing youths from an environment of adversity and opening up new opportunities. The lack of trust in the formal education system makes the time spent at the associations acquire the connotation of 'time off' —"a respite from the institutional world"— which allows young people to achieve a change of attitude, make new contacts and consider other life alternatives. The trajectories for overcoming the issues that were studied demonstrate that young people are not just victims of exclusion, but that with the necessary support, they are able to become active subjects with control over their own destiny.

In addition, for children of immigrants, the associations offer an intermediary place that has been lacking —a space in between two shores— which is needed to bridge the distance between family, ethnic community and the receiving society. Through these structures, it is possible to reinforce the values that are instilled at home. At the same time, new doors opened that can help children of immigrant origin to overcome certain restrictions imposed on them by the ethnic community and experience upward social mobility.

The case of Yasmina, of Berber origin from Alhucemas in Morocco, who arrived in Madrid at the age of 16 having completed her compulsory education at home, serves as a good example. Upon her arrival, her father's first instruction was for her to wear a headscarf. During the summer, she enrolled for Spanish classes at the local Association. Having made remarkable progress, her tutor encouraged her to carry

on with her studies the following year, asking her what she preferred to study. Yasmina, surprised by those possibilities, said that her dream was to become a nurse. However, the main obstacle was her father and her betrothed. She was engaged to one of her cousins and was to marry in 18 months. They did not impede her studies *per se*, as long as she was not yet married.

> 'Moroccans are very stubborn. I don't know how to explain this to you, it's as if everything in the future were bad… "You can't do this, you can't do that, no, no, no, you can't learn Spanish, you can't study…" Spanish people are different. They see the future as always good, that they will do better, that they will change. I want a good future.'
>
> [Yasmina was born in Alhucemas (Morocco). She lives with her husband and her son and works in a retirement home. San Cristobal, May, 2013].

The space for action was narrow, but fortune was on her side. Her tutor informed her that there was the possibility to do a one-year foundation course to become a *nursing auxiliary* with an additional three months of experience working in a hospital. This 'special person' (Portes and Fernandez, 2007) played a decisive role. The young girl was taken seriously, and was accompanied throughout the entire process. The burden of mediating between her, her family and the center for vocational training was shared. Her father was visited and was offered full information about the types of study that his daughter could take up, the kind of job it would lead to and the possibility of wearing the headscarf at the training center. The institute also accompanied her throughout her entire process of educational enrollment and integration.

This trajectory demonstrates the fundamental role intermediary structures play at the crucial moment when young people forsake school. In a second interview in 2014, I was informed that Yasmina had abandoned her vocational training to join the labor market. Her marriage and the birth of her first child demanded it. Nevertheless, her experience of the association helped her a great deal. First, it enabled her to resume her studies and then brought her into contact with new employment networks. It was through her foundation course that she was offered a job as a caregiver in a retirement home.

For her, this path changed her life without causing a break or conflict with her family.

Furthermore, through these structures young people access alternative and positive narratives about their area: solidarity, respect, closeness and the capacity for change are images that counteract the stereotypically negative images represented in the media and street culture. A genuine possibility of belonging to, and participating in a collective project is thus made available.

One of the trajectories analyzed in this piece of research makes it possible to elucidate this process. This can be illustrated by the case of Wanda (San Cristobal, July 2013), a young woman who suffered rejection and bullying by her peers at school and dropped out as a result of not being able to adapt to that environment. She left school in 2011 and got involved in the *May 15th Movement* (the Indignation Movement). She was among the protesters camping at the Plaza Mayor in Madrid throughout May. Her mother threatened to kick her out of the house if she did not resume her studies, but she did not respond to the threat and went to live for a time in Extremadura with her father. The problems involved in living with her father soon became apparent and her mother accepted that she return, but under the condition that she enroll in the local Association. There, Wanda discovered her dream: to join the struggle to improve the area and to help young people. She got involved in a community project called *Autobarrios.* Today she works alongside various architects and the *La Caixa Foundation,* on remodeling and adapting an urban space underneath the bridge that separates the area from the rest of the city. A stage and a series of facilities that enable public gatherings have turned it into a public space where young people come together, community projects are presented, and artists can make themselves known. Interaction and exchange between people and staff from other areas is generated, thus counteracting the isolation both the area and its young people experience.

Conclusion

An in-depth examination of my research findings make it possible to confirm that, today, in disadvantaged urban contexts, an increasingly significant number of young people, predominantly of immigrant origin, between the ages of 14 and 18, experience a process of *dissociation*. This refers to a group which lives for a time in *no man's land*, neither included nor excluded by society, severing ties with educational structures but remaining integrated into the family, the ethnic community or the local associative weave of relationships. This research further demonstrated that this situation is definitely dynamic rather than static. These young people wander in and out of this *no man's land*, repeatedly resuming their studies and dropping out of school. In some cases, they manage to escape this unstable environment for good (usually because they join a community movement or complete a training course). In other cases they remain engulfed in a devalued life that leads from one difficulty to another (via prison, for instance). This piece of research has identified serious problems that also exist in European countries, like France and the UK. However, it also points to some of the channels through which a solution can be found.

The family is the first intermediary structure analyzed. The case studies confirm the findings of Bourdieu's sociology of education (Bourdieu, 1970), namely that parents with social and human capital have more tools to support their children educationally, regardless of their economic capital and migratory experience. The contrast with Spanish youth (as a control group) reinforced this hypothesis. Aside from the fact that they tend to get better results, those who flounder within this group do so for the same reasons as their counterparts of immigrant origin: mono-parental families, low household income and limited social and human capital. The young people of Ecuadorian and Dominican origin are the group most at risk because they enjoy the greatest degree of freedom and the least parental attention. Besides, as opposed to the Spanish and Moroccan youth, they have a weaker bond with their ethnic communities or local associations.

The ethnic community plays a positive role because it provides a measure of control during adolescence and can be conducive to some limited integration into the labor force. However, in Spain

organized groups capable of supporting young people's social mo-
bility are yet to emerge. In this sense, ethnic communities can
even prove counterproductive when they hinder the completion of
training courses or constrain young people's personal autonomy.
The Moroccan community, for example, enjoys a social capital that
has the capacity to control young people, particularly young wom-
en. However, a separation of the sexes has not taken place in San
Cristobal, as opposed to parts of the UK (Joly, 2012) and France
(Lapeyronnie, 2008). It cannot be said that San Cristobal displays
this kind of community enclosure. Indeed, the economic structure
does not permit these groups to become self-reliant enough, and
men just as much as women need to seek a means to earn a living.

As other writers have already demonstrated (Waters *et al.*, 2010),
the bond between young people and their ethnic communities is only
positive if it is nourished by a *social capital* that connects young people
to new opportunities. This piece of research confirms that, in the case
of San Cristobal, this social capital issues significantly from the *ties
between different intermediary structures*. The connection between a
family, a local association and the Muslim, secular or religious com-
munity hugely increases the possibility that young people adapt to
their environment. The opposite —the breakdown of ties with those
structures— generates a void and a lack of belonging. It is not just a
question of a young person, on an individual level, being in contact
with associations, having a good relationship with his/her parents and
enjoying good ties with the community. Of course these conditions
are favorable, as demonstrated by the *Theory of Segmented Assimilation*
(Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). However, they are not determining
factors against new processes of *dissociation*. A young person who
has dropped out of school can attend the Association and go to the
Mosque on Fridays, but this will not enable them to change their des-
tiny. For this young person to abandon a type of life of little value, it is
necessary for the family, the community and the associations to work
together. The opening up of collaborative and communicative efforts
between different structures generates a newly-found confidence in
the young person; a feeling of belonging and a series of additional
opportunities that help him/her reconnect with the education system
or the local community.

In San Cristobal, unlike the French *banlieues,* contact between different groups and religions, and the bonds they develop via spaces of public participation have been conducive to the adaptability of young people and avoid the propagation of a "culture of segregation." The mobilization and participation tradition existing in this area plays a central role in the emergence of these ground-breaking initiatives, particularly since this kind of participation is facilitated by neighborhood and educational discussion and participation forums created and run by local residents. These civic and popular movements are today the actual actors of political change in Spain. In 2011, they backed the May 15th Movement —the *Indignados*— and today they support change through the emergence of new progressive political parties. In any case, the internal and external exchange (between structures and also with other participation platforms in different areas) that secures the associative networks in this urban space has the capacity to counteract the harmful effects of youth segregation and marginalization. In this sense, San Cristobal is not a ghetto, because street culture, represented by only some of the young people, has not yet become widespread. Neither has gendered alienation taken place significantly. Drug trafficking is not endemic and it cannot be said that violence occurs on a daily basis. Civil society is the only, and most valuable, source of social capital in this area and the main element preventing its decline.

Notwithstanding, despite the capacity for action civil society has in these urban contexts (in the Tourainian sense), the associations are hindered by a crucial lack of financial resources during this time of crisis. For these network dynamics to be set up in a systematic and stable way, it would first be necessary to reinforce the grassroots initiatives that emerge from immigrant communities and that trust in and cooperate with other organizations embedded in civil society. This is the case of the Immigrant Women's Association which enjoys extensive human capital and whose work is severely undermined by a lack of institutional support. The strengthening of these initiatives in disadvantaged areas would counteract the influence of specific kinds of social capital that curb young people's opportunities, progress and freedom, and, therefore, would allow trust to develop and reduce the estrangement that is taking place to-

day between young people and adults, men and women, immigrant communities and host countries, as well as poor segregated areas and the rest of the city.

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