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Challenging Narratives of 'Native Flight' in a Small Town. Reflections on Moral Economies and Space

Dr. Martin Lundsteen
martinlundsteen@gmail.com

Abstract

Taking its point of departure in the case of Salt, a small town located next to Girona (Catalonia), this paper analyses the everyday negotiation of the emerging 'super-diverse' reality outside the metropolis, yielding a specific focus on the role of space. Via an analysis of the social production of space in this rural-urban locality, accounting for the contested understandings of space and belonging, the dominant narrative of 'native flight' is challenged. In fact, often research on social problems in poor neighbourhoods ignore the deep connections between everyday interactions in space and the inherent structural tensions, due to ethnic, racial, class and/or gender inequalities. Instead, in this paper focus is put on the vernacular groupings put in practice in the specific context of a small town thereby revealing how the dominant narratives neglect how this is embedded within the 'social production of space'.

Author's biographical note

Martin Lundsteen (PhD, MA in Social Anthropology from the University of Barcelona, BA from Roskilde University) is Associate Researcher at GRITIM-UPF and Professor in the Master's program in Migration Studies at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. He is also Assistant Professor at ESCODI, University of Barcelona, and UOC. He has been Visiting Academic at COMPAS and ISCA, University of Oxford (from Sept. 2012 to Nov. 2013), at the Department of Geography, Loughborough University (March 2017), and at the Department of Anthropology and Global Centre for Criminology, University of Copenhagen (March to June 2019). He has participated in several international research projects. Currently, he is participating in a I+D+I on the different developing frameworks of moral economies and perceptions of justice in the context of economic crisis, and another on peripheral religiosities. He is a member of the Research Group on Reciprocity (GER), and the research-activist collectives Observatory of the Anthropology of Urban Conflict (OACU) and Stop Islamophobia (SAFI). He has published on several subjects, such as critical studies of race and ethnicity, Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, and critical studies of migration and 'super-diversity' in relation to urban studies. And just recently signed a book contract with Rowman and Littlefield International in their series Challenging Migration Studies.

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the everyday negotiation of the emerging 'super-diverse' reality outside the metropolis, in a small Catalan town, yielding a specific focus on the role of space. To do this, analysis is put on the relations between the different inhabitants of the central district of Salt - a place where several relevant conflicts took place in 2010-2011 between groups defined as 'migrants' and 'native'- and space.

We see that amongst a great part of the Spanish residents[1] a narrative of White flight is being put forward to explain recent socio-demographic and urban changes in the neighbourhood. Similarly, a specific historical relation to space and investment in it is being used as a means to justify an exclusionary/primary belonging in place as opposed to the recent arrival of migrants, who are primarily depicted as 'invaders'. Moreover, a moral representation is made in terms of commitment and work in the neighbourhood, where the 'foreign populations' are depicted as civic and moral transgressors mainly due to their different form of being.

Although 'the crisis' is experienced on various scales and in different domains, creating a situation of profound anxiety and insecurity, an "ontological insecurity" (Giddens, 1990; Bauman, 1992; Young, 1999). A situation mainly produced by the flexibility of the labour market, and the worsening of labour-market conditions and unemployment (van Marle and Maruna, 2010: 8), which deeply affects the lives of the working classes and precarious populations, resulting in a constant instability and uncertainty in their livelihoods, alongside a perpetual competition for basic resources in a situation of scarcity.

Similarly, many inhabitants have been evicted from their homes or are struggling to pay their rents. As a result, neighbourhood community debts are high, and hence basic community services are abandoned. Consequently, on an everyday basis social conflicts in these social spaces pit the residents against each other, in conflicts often defined by ethno-cultural markers and with moral frameworks linked to discourses of civility and an imagined neighbourhood identity, product of historic struggles for

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[1] Here 'Spanish' refers to people who have Spanish nationality and are part of the ethnic majority group.

improvement. In fact, questions of identification and community centres the debate: new residents are often depicted as invaders and breakers of moral codes, who create feelings of insecurity and alienation among the older 'native' residents.

However, the starting point of this article is that these changes should not be analysed *per se*. Rather, these dynamics should be understood in their relation to the changes that have taken place in the real estate market and concerning the labour market demands. As a matter of fact, this analysis is profoundly inspired by Elias and Scotson's (1965) analysis of the ways in which internal divisions among workers were produced in several neighbourhoods in a suburban area of a large and wealthy industrial town in central England in the 60s. In their account the neighbourhood is historically a politically charged category that gives symbolic meaning to the social space: it can promote certain forms of exclusionary belonging, based on class inequalities or certain local ideas of belonging and native-ness, while also providing solidarity and equality. This is an interestingly open-factorial analysis which shows the importance of locally produced categories in close relation to space and time. However, it also tends to ignore underlying structural categorisations on which these symbolic communities depend, categorisations which are often translocally (global) important (Southerton, 2002).

In fact, although mobility and space are two recurrent themes of contemporary migration studies, focus has usually been given to them separately. The chief aim of this investigation is to follow recent trends in research on migration and urban research placing emphasis on the local-global processes of mobility and settlement, time and space at different scales. Thus, the research begins from an understanding of space as a social construction, and thus when striving to understand social conflicts, social groupings and intergroup relations, we would have to analyse them as social practices in and about space. Following this, special attention is given to spatial practices and the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1996), paired with an examination of the different discourses and strategies employed.

Hence, the present proposal is the mixture of a more grounded theoretical and methodological framework paired with a focus on the production of space, and with attention to the perception of the inhabitants, their livelihood, representations of space (through media portrayals and other narratives) and the policies implemented in space (both urban policies and what is dubbed as policies of quieting). A nascent holistic

analysis of space which points out a lack in most of the studies of the urban and migration: attention to the moral economies working in and in relation to space.[2]

1. The Setting

At the beginning of February 2010 a small town in the northern part of Catalonia called Salt caught media attention. Some 300 inhabitants had interrupted the town hall meeting which as a consequence had to be cancelled. No clear spokesperson emerged, but the main claim that arose was that the demonstration was a response to an intolerable rise in crime in the town with an associated increasing sense of insecurity. These statements often had a strong undercurrent of racism, when some of the interviewed people suggested that the increase in crime was directly linked to the growing number of migrant population in the town (ACN, 2010).[3] Other incidents followed, and a specific analysis came to be developed, both among the general population and observers: the conflicts were 'cultural conflicts', rooted in a decade of non-Spanish immigration with a resulting 43% of migrant population. The problem was represented as one of 'convivència', meaning that the conflicts were products of cultural/ethnical differences and the conflictual cohabitation of these, epitomised through the 'non-integrable moors'.[4]

However, the problems of Salt go beyond 'convivència'. Salt is one of the most deprived municipalities in Catalonia and it has been even more affected by the economic crisis than most of Spain, with exceptionally high evictions and unemployment rates (amongst young people it is around 60 %). As a matter of fact, the social fabric of the small town has undergone a small revolution in the last ten to fifteen years: due to a rapid population growth from 20.000 to 30.000 linked with the simultaneous migration processes of inwards-moving residents largely from the Global South and outwards-moving residents, principally old 'internal migrants' from the south

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[2] As always others have somehow been there before, obviously, see for instance Back (2009) and Gidley (2000), both of which have been great inspiration for this paper.

[3] See also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQFyHBQn1ew&hl=fr&gl=SN

[4] The exact development of the different tense moments is analysed in-depth elsewhere (Lundsteen, 2015b: 60-82), where other sources consulted are mentioned. In summary, the underlying data is a mixture of archival work (reviewing newspaper clippings from the 2000-2013), and interviews with the main councillors in charge at the time of the tensions and several of the residents involved in the tensions in one way or another. For more detailed information, see Lundsteen (2015b: 36-47).

of Spain. In this way Salt is a paradigmatic example of a larger tendency in the geography of Spain and more generally of the South of Europe, where there is a drift towards a cohabitation of an old and precarious 'native' population with newly arrived, young but also indebted population, in suburban deteriorated spaces.

In fact, the identified features and contradictions make it a privileged case for an ethnographic analysis of the relations between migration and space, with specific attention to everyday intergroup relations, conflicts and coexistence. More so because of the interesting social context of a small town – a setting to which very little anthropological attention has been granted within the broader fields of urban anthropology and anthropology of migration (Goebel, 2011).

The fact is that new social conditions have arisen in rural or semi-rural areas which had until recently not been exposed to a high degree of ethnic and cultural diversity. While, until recently, a large amount of research in migration studies has focused mainly on the transformations brought about in the social composition of the urban spaces of the big cities or metropolis of the world of the Global North (such as London, Paris, New York, Chicago, and Barcelona, to name a few). However, recently a new focus of attention has developed in migration studies – although largely originating within the disciplines of geography, anthropology and sociology – on studying these inter-ethnic relations in the setting of small and medium-sized towns (Lundsteen, 2015, 2010; Berg & Sigona, 2013; Rogaly & Qureshi, 2013; Phillimore, 2013; Erel, 2011; Goebel, 2011; Bell & Jayne, 2009; Garland & Chakraborti, 2006). In fact, some authors even argue that in recent decades we are seeing a geographical spread of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007), i.e. the diversification of diversity; an observation which has recently been revisited in an interesting and rather more nuanced way (Vertovec, 2019).

This paper engages in a dialogue with these two strands, situating itself within an emerging strand of research in the interstices of urban and migration studies, by focusing on the interplay between space and diversity in the setting of a small town. In that regard Salt indeed renders an interesting case. Located in the north of Catalonia, it is semi-rural and has about 30,000 inhabitants. Of these, little more than 40% have another nationality than Spanish, and so there are more than 60 different nationalities, and even more languages spoken. According to the great majority of the neighbours this

super-diverse context had seemingly not been problematic, until 2009-2010 when several tense moments and social conflicts took place between Spanish-nationals and foreigners. Conflicts which were dubbed 'cultural conflicts'. In fact, the hypothesis that laid the ground for the ethnographic research on which this paper is based, was that these social conflicts could serve as an interesting analytical moment for an examination of the local negotiation of social boundaries, as well as unravel the importance of other more global political and economic processes related to this.

1.1. Data

As mentioned earlier, this paper rests upon ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the period of 2011-2014 (see Lundsteen, 2015b: 36-47, for more details), living in the town for more than a year in three different locations in the Centre neighbourhood. During this time, more than 50 inhabitants from different parts of the town were interviewed on the recent social conflicts and changes that had taken place in the town in the period 2009-2012. The interviewees were of different nationalities, but generally the Spanish residents were interviewed mainly regarding their vision on the urban and social changes experienced in town. On the other hand, the data regarding the migrants' vision and livelihood is built on a mix of observation and informal interviews.

During the ethnography and especially via participant observation, several sites in the town were located as of special relevance to the study. In this paper, focus will be on the specific neighbourhood situated in the surroundings of the Catalonia Square (see Map 1). A case from which more general ideas are drawn out as it renders paradigmatic of a general tendency in the small town.
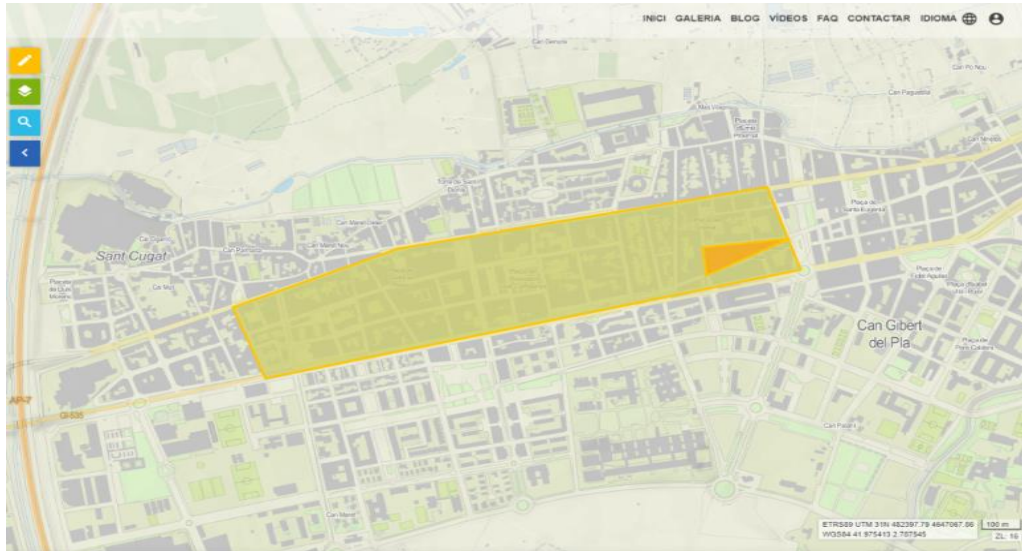
Map 1: Catalonia Square in Centre Neighbourhood. Source: INSTAMAPS.

2. Spaces of *Convivencia* and Conflict: Urban Change and Migration

Considering the ethnography in general, the first thing that stands out is that a large majority of the Spanish nationals express a divide between 'those from outside' and 'the ones from here' or ' the usual ones', divisions which could easily cross the symbolic boundaries of ethnicity and culture, and which mainly refer to the temporal settlement of the inhabitants. However, in this case, they coincide with a grouping of the 'old migrants' - from other parts of Spain - and the Catalans, against the foreign nationals, the 'newly arrived' ('nouvinguts') or 'migrants'.

In fact, in the hegemonic vision of the social space of the town, these so-called 'foreigners' ('estrangers') are continuously blamed for the negative changes perceived in the town: for instance, it is said that they are the reason a large group of Spanish nationals have left town, and that the social and physical space of the Centre neighbourhood (see Map 2 for the neighbourhoods) has deteriorated. However, I argue that these changes should be understood in relation to changes in the real estate market in the region and specifically the neighbourhood, and the labour market; in sum, the production of space and the economy.

Map 2: Map of the town with the neighbourhoods. Source: City Council

For instance, we see how the liberalization of the real estate market in the late ´90s created a new situation, fostering speculation in the real estate market and, above all, important urban transformations –and disinvestments in the neighbourhood in question. A process which implied, and at the same time produced, specific kinds of mobility and immobility (people who would move in and out, and other who could neither), to which end the 'foreigners' played an essential role.

When analysing the data more closely, five stages of urban transformation and mobility become apparent:

Stage 1 (1960s-70s). This was an era marked by the socio-economic effects of the Spanish Civil War: Some regions of Spain were having serious problems of supply, while others began to prosper at the industrial level; the industrial bases, founded in the colonial era, were already in place and in this new stage more labour force was needed or could be used. These two phenomena generated a socio-spatial and human re-configuration at state level: Large groups of people migrated from the rural regions and desolate areas of Spain (often Andalusia, Murcia, and Galicia) to the industrial and tourist zones (Basque Country, Madrid, and Catalonia). A development that, at the level of Salt, being as it was the industrial centre of the area, meant a new socio-spatial configuration with the arrival of migrants from other parts of Spain and thus a

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spectacular increase in inhabitants. With this huge influx of people (around 5,520 in the period 1950-1970) large parts of the Centre neighbourhood and more specifically the Catalonia Square were rapidly built with poor materials and without barely any infrastructure (roads, streetlights, etc.).

Stage 2 (1980s-90s). During the Transition, in the ´80s and the ´90s, through neighbourhood struggles for improvement, the square experienced an important process of improvement in terms of infrastructure, but the buildings did not see any improvements nor refurbishment.

Stage 3 (late 1990s-2000). The liberalization in the laws of land ownership promote a greater commercialization and speculation within the housing sector, of which a great proportion had until then been semi-public. In this context, a great deal of home-owners benefitted from the huge increases in the valuation of their flats (according to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics the prices increased by 180% in Spain in the period between 1998 and 2007).[5] As a consequence, many neighbours of Spanish nationality left the neighbourhood, ensuring individual progress moving to newly built housing in other parts of the town (e.g. the neighbourhood of *La Maçana*) or villages with more 'quality-of-life'. At the same time, this mobility was partially made possible due to the settlement of people from outside who would envision their own individual social mobility through the acquisition of housing stock. These would often have been rushed into specific areas, such as Salt, niche sectors often promoted by agencies and made possible by racist practices in the housing market (see Lundsteen & Sabaté, 2018, for further details).

Stage 4 (2000-2007/8). In this phase, the abovementioned patterns of mobility continue and intensify. At this point, people were beginning to leave also because of their old neighbours moving out and because of the people who were arriving; xenophobia, fear and racism are important factors in this regard. Although flats were being sold at increasingly high prices (the peak was reached in 2007), at the same time the town and the area around the Catalonia Square were experiencing a growing territorial stigmatization. The buyers and therefore the residents in the area were mainly 'foreigners'; and the increasing numbers seem to have incited some of the remaining

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[5] INE: https://www.ine.es/

neighbours of Spanish nationality to move out as quickly as possible. Obviously, while this in part should be considered a racist or xenophobic practice, however an equally important reason to move is similar to the pyramid scheme. Often promoted by the real estate agencies operating in the territory, the idea was that this moment would not go on for long and that one should take advantage of the situation and earn some money, and most importantly, get out before the flats would lose value and thus be a looser in the game of social mobility.[6] Ironically, though, these inhabitants had often been lured into the scheme already too late, and had accepted expensive mortgages that they would later not be able to pay, therefore being forced to move back once the prices had dropped. Meanwhile, the flats were often sold under fraudulent conditions, a practice Dymski (2009) has called 'racial exploitation'. In the real estate sector of Salt, a similar thing took place (Bernat, 2014; Lundsteen & Sabaté, 2018), where people signed (subprime) mortgages despite the agents' knowledge of the signer's incapability or improbability to fulfil the conditions of the agreement.

Stage 5 (2008–). In the last stage, once the crisis in the real estate sector kicks in, no more inhabitants can move out. Granted that the mortgages were no longer easily given, in fact, often a lot of the real estate agencies and banks in the area had closed, and the prices of the flats had decreased considerably. At the same time, due to the foregoing process of stigmatization, a lot of the remaining Spanish residents had ended up feeling 'trapped in the misery'. Simultaneously, the crisis contributed to an increasing instability and precarity among the workers (both Spaniards and 'migrants'), who were often forced to turn to informal economic practices to survive, and who would no longer be able to fulfil the financial agreements of the neighbourhood communities, thus aggravating the deterioration the neighbourhood had been experiencing since the beginning of the ´90s.

The following section will focus on how the different inhabitants experience these changes in the urban and socio-demographic landscape, the social space of the neighbourhood, how the migrants live in it, how the media portrays the changes and, finally, what policies have been implemented to curb the 'problems'.

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[6] For instance, Pere -a 52 years old resident in the Centre neighbourhood- tells us how "They have come to my house and, they didn't oblige me to sell but they said 'well you have to sell, because this will be full of immigrants and you won't be able to live here (...) and, well, the prices will fall".

3. Practises, Discourses and Policies on Diversity and Urban Change

3.1. Narratives of 'native flight'

Despite previous experiences of depravity and deterioration, especially in the ´80s due to the economic crisis, often when I spoke to inhabitants with Spanish nationality who had been living in the town for several decades, they told me stories about how 'great it was before' and how 'well it worked socially'. They recalled a prior experience of a specific kind of feeling-as-a-community or belonging-in-community, which had been lost, as the following quote illustrates:

> *A: We have lost our identity... It's that simple*
> *Q: And what was that identity?*
> *A: Look, for a starter you didn't see any satellite dishes when walking the street (...) in all the shops we knew each other well... You'd go to the park and play with the kids and you wouldn't be afraid of leaving them alone for a while, and now it's not like that, now you don't know any-body. All the shops are [owned by] Moroccan, blacks, and so on. And the square, you won't go there because the on-ly thing you'd find is young people selling drugs... And the children, none of them are from here (...) Everything has changed, everything... Before we all knew each other, and now we don't know anybody* **- Pilar, Spanish woman, 58 years old, living in the Barri Centre**

One could argue that this is an idea very similar to the traditional communities of which Durkheim, Weber and Tönnies spoke, and which presupposed some kind of previous cultural homogeneity. As a matter of fact, the interviewees would often talk about a cultural homogeneity based on shared histories of migration, as they had often come from the same region in Spain. In the words of a 60-year-old resident:

> *Here a man by the name of Joan lived… On the second floor a woman called Asunción lived. On the third floor Fina lived. On the fourth a single mother with two*

children. On the third everybody was from here, on the fourth everybody was from here. People paid their community bills and obligations. And here you would only hear two languages, Spanish and Catalan, and everybody understood each other. Now they don't.

Nonetheless, although not explicitly stated by the interviewees, they often shared both residential spaces and spaces of leisure, and a lot of them even worked in the same factories. In this sense we see how the neighbourhood as a notion not simply refers to a geographical space, but rather a complex social web of relations and a collective project. Through the social struggles aimed at improving the neighbourhood, the neighbours became known to each other and created social ties that would bind and remain, and which would foster certain experiences of sociability. A specific moral community and "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1977) emerged from the everyday experiences of conflicts and sharing co-existence of the inhabitants; a kind of "place habitus" or neighbourhood conscience, similar to the working-class conscience that Thompson (1968) talked about. In other words, the neighbourhood is here a practical experience and a common feeling which is translated into some sort of collective conscience of being neighbours.

In the 90s, however, important socio-economic changes took place which would lay the foundation for the future changes to the neighbourhood and the city. The increasing improvement in the labour conditions, social mobility, consumerism and individual prosperity of some, seem to have induced a need for social improvement in terms of housing and living, or at least a specific idea of progress was promoted in Spain, especially through homeownership (Palomera, 2013), thus leading to the first rupture of the social ties.

Because the neighbourhood was in decline and new attractive zones were being built, and at the same time values were increasing, the dream of a better life seemed to become reality. For instance, according to some of the neighbours who moved out, one of the reasons that made them move was the increasing deteriorating state of the neighbourhood, whereas the neighbourhood to which they moved was completely new. Hence, in the past the deteriorated state of the neighbourhood had been the reason to put in collective efforts and mobilizations, now each inhabitant would seek out his or her

own fortune individually, this way leaving the neighbourhood in a deteriorating state and with broken social ties. The community experienced a loss in their social project, which would often be read as a consequence of moral code-breakers: the new neighbours.

In fact, when talking to some of the Spanish neighbours who did not leave, the reason to the 'native flight', as they coined it, should rather be found in relation to the arrival of the new foreign inhabitants. This way the deterioration is presented as the result, and not the reason, of the mobility.

> *that doesn't matter, they might have left because their standard of living made it possible to buy a house in Caldes (Malavella) and so they left, the first ones... of course, at that time (...) an (real estate) agent would come to you and say «you put your flat for sale because now you can acquire a house or a living standard», «great» and so they started to sell (...) the real estate agencies started selling flats, and they sold them to the immigrants (...) the first ones left for this reason* **- Concepción, Spanish woman, 48 years old, living in the Barri Centre**

Those who stayed, now seemed to direct their struggle against what they perceived as a socio-urban degradation provoked by the newly arrived neighbours. Nonetheless, this symbolic formation, based on a romanticization of the past, pitting the established against the outsiders, complicates the creation of a new shared social project for the community. Despite the inherent aim for a good life and social justice present in this formation and conscience, by, for instance, prioritizing the collective interest of the neighbourhood, improving the social space, over the private interests of speculation. It is also strongly exclusive, casting on the social space a specific moral project of belonging-in-space, ignoring that the aim might in fact largely be shared by all the neighbours. Who do not want a cleaner, safer, and much more cohesive community, we might ask. Hence, the initial question of socio-spatial inequality has been displaced discursively and vertically: from putting emphasis on the aspects of the common conditions of neighbours and workers now the struggle seemed rather to be expressed in cultural terms; a social construction of space and community which poses the

newcomers, the other neighbours, the migrants, as the degrading agent, an enemy to the community.

Thus, focus is put principally on a supposed erosion of the imagined community of the neighbours, and above all, the loss of sociability related to it, and a deterioration of the social life in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood identity is for these inhabitants at a loss. According to them, this is clearly an effect or product of the new super-diversity. Paraphrasing some of the ideas of Putnam (2000, 2007), they believe that the arrival of culturally different inhabitants has made the coexistence difficult, because it makes social cohesion impossible; quoting Pilar again: 'Social life is good as long as you're with people from here… and they're together with theirs, it's all good when we live our life separately.'

The social and urban developments in town are constantly seen with the lenses of 'us' and 'them', and a convergence is established between the community of old (Spanish) residents and a national sense of belonging to the neighbourhood; a convergence which is opposed to the migrant community in general, hence excluding them as a part of the neighbourhood community. This clearly comes to the forefront when talking about young people in the town or 'local business'. According to the main narratives, put forward by the Spanish residents and associations, there is a lack of young people, despite the fact that there are now more young people in the town than ever (these are just descendants of migrants or recently arrived). Similarly, they say, the number of local shops is decreasing, when in fact there is a very active local business community (mainly sustained and held up by migrants).

3.2. Precarity, scarcity, and other economic strategies of survival in the margins

In the case of Salt, as in many other neighbourhoods where unemployment is high, an important part of the population is forced to resort to precarious economic practices, or, said differently, to look for other ways to access the resources considered necessary for their reproduction. Thus, we find informal labour activities (production and labour relations) such as domestic and cleaning workers, and others that are linked to displaced consumption such as the sale of drugs, or the resale of merchandise through street vending, all of which ensure a minimum of income and consumption.

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Another type of activity very widespread in Salt, and typical of the informal economy, is that of criminal activities; practices which can be complementary to basic social benefits and low income, and sometimes even constitute the only source of income. Despite the negative impact these activities might have on the community, we must not forget that often they are not chosen as such, being very precarious and insecure, but they do in fact constitute quick ways to access economic resources, which are often short in these spaces.

In another vein we see communal, self-help and domestic activities, such as domestic work (manual, and reproduction, cleaning, to mention a few) and, for example, the collective gardens, with which a piece of land is rented in common, a piece which is either subdivided into units that are then worked individually or is shared both at the work level and at the fruit level. As for mutual help between neighbours and friends / acquaintances (sometimes subject to payments), against the most stereotyped views, it is common to hear stories of mutual help between 'indigenous''and 'immigrant' neighbours.

There is also a large second-hand market based on informal relationships (friendly or family relationships) and formal ones (there are a few stores, called 'traces', which are dedicated to the resale of second-hand products). Another extreme but very illustrative example that I have observed on several occasions, is the people who are dedicated to buying used cars in Catalonia and then sell them in some African country (mainly in the sub-Saharan area).

Alongside this informalization of the economy, many inhabitants have been evicted from their homes or are struggling to pay their rents. As a result, neighbourhood community debts are high, and hence basic community services abandoned. Consequently, on an everyday basis social conflicts in these social spaces pit the residents against each other, in conflicts often defined by ethno-cultural markers and with moral frameworks linked to discourses of civility and an imagined neighbourhood identity, product of historic struggles for improvement. In fact, questions of identification and community centre the debate: new residents are often depicted as invaders and breakers of moral codes, who create feelings of insecurity and alienation among the older 'native' residents.

3.3. Narratives of insecurity: The media

During the last decade, the idea was promoted and became hegemonic, that there is a problem of insecurity and coexistence in Salt due to a high level of criminality, an issue almost always directly or indirectly linked to the high registers of immigration. However, this perception is indeed subjective and socially constructed, and therefore, like any language and symbol, it is political. Although, as argued, crimes or misdemeanorours occupations of buildings purchase and sale of drugs, theft, etc.- are indeed part of the social reality of the neighbourhood, the insecurity issue is not as cunning nor increasing a problem as some might want it to be.

Through a review of the articles published in municipal or regional newspapers and magazines, one can confirm that the issue has been pressing already since the 1980s, where already then it was related to a growing conflict and immigration (at that time the 'internal migration').

Similarly, we see how the first time there was a kind of demonstration in relation to insecurity was in 2004, more specifically on July 18, when a demonstration 'against citizen insecurity' took place (López, 2004). The interesting thing is that the incident is almost identical to the demonstration that took place in 2010, even in the form and the prelude. The only apparent difference is that on this occasion the protesters do not manage to capture the same media nor institutional attention. The issue – migration and insecurity- has therefore been recurrent and not at all particular to the year 2010, 2004, nor to the 'new migration'.

Nonetheless, from the first manifestations and until the special period of 2010-2011, a discursive change can be noticed concerning the problems of the town. This change becomes increasingly evident in the newspaper clippings, especially from the year 2009 onwards. At a general level, the media are beginning to echo an alleged increasing conflictual situation in the municipality, which has to do, on the one hand, with the high percentage of 'migrants' mentioned above and, on the other, with the 'sensation of insecurity' linked to a supposed increase in crime rates. It is difficult to establish if this discursive change is the cause or effect of a change of perception in civil society, but I have been able to verify that it only partially corresponds with the sensation that the inhabitants with whom I have spoken have been transmitting to me. In

contrast, a large majority of them did identify the Centre neighbourhood as a conflictual area.

Be that as it may, from 2010 onwards Salt began to receive a lot of attention from journalists looking for stories, most of which would put emphasis on the high percentage of migrant population living in the town as well as on an atmosphere of continuous tension between residents, who were distinguished by nationality, due to a rise in crime. For instance, a small and seemingly insignificant incident -a simple discussion between two residents in the centre over a parking lot- turned into a fight, which was described in several newspapers as particularly representative of the 'special situation' the town was experiencing.

In this sense the media played an important role in stigmatizing the city, conveying an image/representation of chaos and a general sense of insecurity mainly through Spanish and Catalan television channels, and calling for policy measures to curb the insecurity, now hegemonic. And thus it reached a point where Salt got famously known at State level even, as another 34-year-old informant living in the Old neighbourhood, Marta, recalls: '[S]ometimes I talk to friends of mine from Barcelona and even from Madrid who say "wow, Salt your town, how dodgy!"'. The depictions have generally been negative, sensationalists and alarmists with headings like 'Salt, a steamer – A report: The laboratory of hate', a newspaper article appeared in the Spanish Madrid based newspaper El País, 7th of March 2010, and 'Salt: Conviviality test/trial', a documentary prepared by the regional (autonomous) television channel TV3, televised the 11th of May 2010.

3.4. Policies of embellishment and quieting

In close relation to the narratives, visions and social realities, real tense moments arising from different social inequalities, different measures have been put into practice. Amongst these we can find, on the one hand, 'soft policies', which are mainly aimed at strengthening 'social cohesion', and community projects led by NGOs targeting 'intercultural conviviality', as well as, on the other hand, 'hard policies' such as the installation of CCTV, closing potable water fountains and an increase in policing plazas and other public places in the town centre. These last ones I have coined 'policies of quieting', in an attempt to explain their symbolic efficacy through the double effect and

raison d'être both as calming and silencing measures. All of these policies have been implemented to counteract what is perceived to be the problem. Analysing their inherent problem formulation, therefore, is key to understanding what the problem is perceived to be (Bacchi, 2009).

The policies adopted to curb this trend in fact seem to have adopted the initial premises associating insecurity with petty crime, often committed by young 'migrants', and likewise, although in a much subtler way, disqualifying any kind of juvenile discontent or protest, branding it simply as problematic and loutish behavior; despite an objective problem of juvenile unemployment which offers few future prospects, especially for the ethno-cultural Others. In fact, the town council and with it the police department have increasingly chosen to rely on punitive measures to deal with the increasing precarious situations of some of the marginalised populations, thus coinciding with a general tendency to punish poverty (Wacquant, 2009).

In this sense, due to the criminalization, stigmatization and social unrest fuelled by the media, as well as the political pressure exerted by local right-wing formations, such as *Plataforma per Catalunya*, different strategies of pacification, i.e. punitive and regulative measures, have been put into practice in public space. These policies, which were seemingly aimed at the general population, however, in the end mainly targeted the migrant population as they are the most destitute and impoverished layers of the local society (Lundsteen, In Review).

At first, during 2008-2010, the municipality and the police decided to respond firmly in a supervisory and punitive sense. On the one hand, the mayor and the alderman of security asked publicly, and on several occasions, for a heavier police presence, and demanded that judges and prosecutors be tougher on who were referred to as 'multiple offenders'. On the other hand, local and regional police forces carried out 'stop and search' campaigns, often using ethnic profiling, despite this being an illegal practice (García Añón, et al., 2013).

Later, from 2010 to 2012, 23 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras were installed, which in Spain is a fairly large number, also considering the size of the town. As a final measure within this line of action, in 2011, a pioneering program called 'Passadissos nets, segurs passadissos' was introduced, based on the model of a similar

programme in New York, called 'Clean Halls programme' (Cosculluela, 2012). This programme allowed police to patrol with a canine unit in neighbouring communities that had agreed to the initiative and included 56 neighbourhood communities, representing a total of 1,143 homes, in 2015.

At the same time, during the last ten years, similar repressive policies have increasingly been implemented. These policies, mainly based on what has been called a 'citizenist discourse' (Alain, 2001), have included a reform of the bylaw of civic ordinances, civic agents, the obligation to remove any satellite dish from the facades of buildings (Iglesias, 2008), surveillance, the control and expulsion of informal street workers, and the closing of public drinking fountains. These policies were mainly based on the idea that there had been an 'invasion' of public space by the migrant populations.

These measures were allegedly employed to foster a sense of belonging among the inhabitants and improve *convivencia*, due to a greater sense of security and therefore mutual trust. Yet as shown elsewhere (Lundsteen & Fernández, In Review) they have ended up avoiding or redirecting existing social problems and conflicts and stimulating an atmosphere of tension and distrust towards designated groups of inhabitants; i.e. non-EU immigrants.

In fact, these *policies of* quieting, intended at calming and preventing social conflicts and frictions that could arise between what is generally perceived as the 'native' population and immigrants, divert the discomfort by implicitly blaming outsiders for the evil inflicted on the 'national body', while, at the same time, they convey a sense of calm because they relieve the increasing social insecurity and uncertainty in terms of labour, which are the social side effects of on-going economic policy restructuring. Nonetheless, although these policies, both the direct immigrant policies as well as the indirect repressive ones, might help superficially, they fail to target the underlying problems.

4. Towards an anthropology of 'moral geography' or rather an urban anthropology sensitive to moralities?

The abovementioned domains are all important, while they (also) order the social space of the city in moral terms. In fact, until now we have seen how 'the crisis' is experienced on various scales and in different domains, creating a situation of profound anxiety and insecurity, similar to what sociologists in the 1990s called an "ontological insecurity" (Giddens, 1990; Bauman, 1992; Young, 1999). A situation mainly produced by the flexibility or the informalization of the labour market, and with it the worsening of the conditions of employment and unemployment (van Marle and Maruna, 2010: 8), which deeply affects the lives of the working classes and precarious populations. Moreover, these changes and the insecurity induced by structural changes are spatially fixed, i.e. they are expressed geographically in specific regions and neighbourhoods, such as the central district of Salt, which then potentially become zones of inequality and with it social conflicts. Areas where the unemployment is much higher than other places (in fact, Salt is both amongst the most affected by unemployment, and amongst the poorest municipalities of Catalonia), resulting in a constant instability and uncertainty in the livelihoods and regarding their prospects, alongside a perpetual competition for basic resources in a situation of scarcity amongst the inhabitants.

It is in order to explain and articulate the different domains and their interrelation, that I have found the idea of an anthropology of moralities and spatiality of great heuristic value, allowing as it does for an integral analysis at the intersection of these issues. But let us first ponder on in what sense the idea of moral economy can help us. How should we indeed define 'moral economy'? Although paraphrasing Jean-Baptiste Say's (1821) foundational definition of political economy, I will here consider moral economy to be the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations *in social space*. The following is as much inspired by the ideas of moral economy laid out by E.P. Thompson (1968) and James Scott (1985). It should in this sense be thought of as an initial theorization of how we might consider this anthropology of 'moral geography': Through their bodily experiences in space, always in relation to the production of space, the inhabitants live out, alter, understand and inform this same space. Processes which are often set in a complex web of different and competing ideas of morality concerning what is

considered correct or expected or desired behaviour in space. Although these ideas have been forged historically, however, they intervene and dialogue with, and are thus both transformed and reproduced by, a much more anarchic and chaotic reality; what we could call the cacophony of practises in space. Therefore, the resulting social space is considered as the continuous production of this relation.

In this sense we should understand the perception of a loss of identity, as stated in the ethnography, as related directly to the understanding that an invasion of public space is taking place, and perceptions of imposition of other cultural values and norms, as well as different kinds of threats. These discourses (or representations of space) end up taking the form of moral judgements about which values and social practices are more correct and appropriate. This way certain practices are deemed more acceptable than others, and thus, projecting culturally latent but hegemonic values onto the neighbourhood. The consequence is that in these narratives some neighbours are deemed more 'neighbours' than others; more 'at home' than others, as Ghassan Hage states it:

> *[B]ecause 'home' refers more to a structure of feelings than a physical, house-like construct, it is fragmentary images, rather than explicit formulations, of what the homely nation ought to be like that we obtain by listening to people's comments. Together, however, these fragments show the national home to be structured like many other images of homely life, around the key themes of familiarity, security and community (Hage, 1998: 39–40).*

This way, certain symbols like a headscarf of certain skin colour, are perceived as social markers of group boundaries which raise frontiers between culturally incommensurable communities, due to which people finally end up gathering according to the ethno-cultural appropriateness and comfort. Consequently, this kind of culturalist readings finally self-fulfil their prophecies and naturalise the created divisions, as well as the cultural conflicts between them. That is, these narratives culturalize the social conflicts in the specific space, writing out the space in it, essentializing the behaviour and drawing boundaries, with the aim of maintaining the privilege over the space.

Due to the writing out of the space, despite its intrinsic role in the issue, it is extremely important to remember the foregoing production of space and the relations produced, often ignored in the discourse of the people interviewed. As well as the dividing and stratifying social effects of the crisis, where the great majority affected by unemployment and foreclosures have been the migrant population. In the aftermath of the crisis, the extreme precarity leads to debts in the neighbourhood communities and as a consequence the degradation of the shared space, and social conflicts and sometimes even insecurity.

It is in the predominant academic analysis of these situations that the lack of a holistic vision becomes most apparent. In fact, following Palomera (2013: 10), I believe a tendency has been underway in recent decades related to social conflicts in urban peripheries of Europe often highly influenced by the notion of social capital as developed by (Putnam (2000), leading to a plethora of studies placing importance on concepts of social capital, social cohesion, and social mixing. A tendency which has run parallel to a revival of the role of 'civil society', as opposed to the State, and on promoting self-help and community programmes (Goonewardena & Rankin, 2004: 118–119; Etzioni, 1993).

In this line of thought, the main focus is applied to the archetypical indicators of social cohesion as conceived in the heyday of the birth of sociology, thus classifying neighbourhoods in high or low cohesion according to whether they have weak or strong ties, little or strong civic engagement, and high or low inter-ethnic/social class mixing and so on (Koutrolikou, 2012). As Palomera (2013: 10) notes, 'some authors have criticized this version of social capital in relation to neighbourhoods, reminding that Bourdieu's original concept involves a wider field of structural inequality and domination (Morrow, 1999; Narotzky, 2007)'. In this sense, some studies even explain tensions in impoverished neighbourhoods as a result of 'low social capital', and/or see residential mistrust and apprehension as a result of a lack of common norms (Putnam, 2007; Goodhart, 2004). The fundamental critique that must be put forward of these analyses of social problems in poor neighbourhoods is that they obfuscate the deep connections between everyday interactions and the structural tensions, due to ethnic, racial, class and/or gender inequalities, that underlie them.

But more importantly, returning to the initial argument of the paper, is their lack to connect with the spatial context in which the tensions and cases under study takes place. Something which an anthropology and with it the ethnographic purview with their holistic approach is able to address. However, this anthropology must be both focused on the mobility and social formations constructed socially in time AND in space; an anthropology attentive to both spatial and social formations, an anthropology of the moral geography or rather an urban anthropology sensitive to moralities and moral communities. An analytical endeavour which might potentially lead to evidence on openings to how to create alternative social projects in the communities and eventually a radical urban politics of difference (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005).

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