

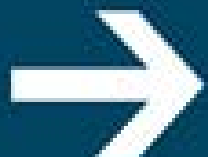


Erasmus+



# Socio-cultural Learning of Youth in Mobile Societies

# Ethnography



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ΔΗΜΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ



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## 1. Introduction

In 2015, hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants, mostly young people and children, were fleeing war, violence, persecution and poverty through Southern European countries, and especially Greece, which became the ‘escape route’ (Papadopoulos et al. 2008) to Europe. In the beginning of 2016, the movement of asylum seekers severely impaired by a series of regional political developments in Europe, including the sealing of borders with Greece by key Balkan and central European countries. The European Union reached an agreement with Turkey, according to which ‘all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands as of 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey’ (European Commission 2016). Due to the rising flow of asylum seekers to the shores of Greece and the immediate threat of their deportation, an asylum application in Greece became the only viable option for all those people who arrived in Greece after the 20th of March seeking security and protection. As a result, Greece has transformed from a short-term transit country to a long-term host country. Greece, as a host country since 2016, has established several hotspots, camps and organizations that provide various services and support to the refugees, such as NGOs and official structures provided by local, regional and national governments.

In Spain the situation is not as severe and dramatic as in Greece, but the number of international protection seekers increased significantly. In 2017, Spain recorded the highest number of applicants for international protection since the approval of the first Law of Asylum in 1984, 31,120 (CEA(R)), 2018). The application system is totally collapsed and refugees have to wait months in order to start the regularization process. The situation is extremely uncertain since the approval rate in Spain is just 35%, under the European average (CEA(R)), 2018). Furthermore, ‘migration hotspots’ - such as the metropolitan areas of Madrid and Barcelona and other places - show relatively high percentages of immigrant population, some of the neighborhoods with segregating characteristics. In combination with the severe economic crisis, more and more youth (of refugee, migrant or local origin) find themselves in vulnerable social situations and struggling for a better future.

The so-called ‘refugee crisis’ should be seen in direct relation with the economic crisis from which Greece, Spain and other Southern European countries have been suffering since 2009. This critical situation has a significant negative impact on youth status, especially of those at

risk, living in poverty and on the move. For young people from vulnerable social backgrounds (refugees, migrants, NEET), mobility (actual or imaginary) seems as the only viable solution and a way out of this bleak situation. In this sense, it has already become a core feature of their identity.

The project has an empirical orientation consisting in the collection of qualitative data from different countries of South Europe, such as Greece and Spain, in order to produce new findings about young people who live in precarity and are on the move (e.g. refugees, migrants, NEETS).

Researchers conducted fieldwork in these two countries selected as case studies in the project. Case studies are unique in terms of their geographical location, and people's values, attitudes and practices. However, the transnational nature of the project requires the uncovering of tendencies regarding everyday-segmented practices of young people across the countries of the study. In this context, the ethnographic team of the project implemented several particular techniques in their fieldwork, including: unstructured or semi-structured interviews with key participants; the creation of a detailed field diary to record observations, reflections and questions for further inquiry and information to support the interview material; and written records of informal conversations with individuals or groups. All of this material collected on English and in original languages. The transcribed interviews' documents have been stored in a private database of the project.

A central aim of our interdisciplinary research project is to do ethnographic qualitative research in different parts of South Europe, such as Greece and Spain, in order to envision similarities and differences concerning the life patterns of precarious young people on the move. The design and the content of the training the trainer's manual (see output 3), and the empowerment of vulnerable young people through the cultivation of soft skills and competences (critical thinking, communication skills, language literacy, commons ethics) in the next steps of the project, will be based on our ethnographic findings.

The purpose of the first chapter is to briefly describe the qualitative approach and to define 'ethnography'; also, to discuss its advantages and shortcomings, and to describe the tasks of this qualitative methodology in modern societies, and provide some practical methods when

doing fieldwork. The second and third chapter provide the specific empirical material about the two case studies conducted in Greece and Spain and critically reflect on their findings.

## 2. Ethnographic Methodology

### 2.1 The Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research takes many forms, each shaped by different epistemological traditions, philosophies about the nature of scientific knowledge and inquiry and varying prescriptions for methodological strictness.

Qualitative research scholars have provided a wide variety of ‘styles’ and differing perspectives that can lead to alternative decisions in designing and conducting research studies. Specific methods for data collection have been identified with qualitative research such as: observational methods, in-depth interview, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documents. In a sense, qualitative research is a blend of science and art. However, it is this mix that can leave unease about its use or worries about its inquiry methods. Qualitative research was often criticized as ‘unscientific’, ‘subjective’ and thus ‘invalid’ mainly by quantitative researchers influenced by positivism, which was the dominant paradigm within social research. Some qualitative researchers (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Cicourel, 1964; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) attempted to respond to these criticisms, to systematize and make official their methods, emphasizing the importance of strictness not only in data collection but also in analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) refer to this period as the ‘modernist’ phase.

Yet, as we shall see below, qualitative research is a skilled activity that provides unique understanding of people’s lives and the social phenomena that form them. Our particular approach to qualitative research is based on three central principles:

1. Research must be conducted in a rigorous way, which means that the project’s design and implementation is informed by an explicit methodology.
2. ‘Reality’ is captured in terms of the social constructs, beliefs and behaviors. Thus, it is recognized as fluid, diverse and multifaceted. Although, it is stable enough to inform the development of social theory.

3. Small-scale qualitative studies can be used to draw wider inference about the ‘social world’ (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Most of the qualitative scholars agree that qualitative research concerned with understanding the meanings that people attach to actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc. within their social worlds. (Bryman, 1988, 8).

Strauss and Corbin (1998, 11) by the term ‘qualitative research’ mean:

*any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.*

There are some key elements that are commonly agreed among the qualitative research scholars:

- i) The main aim of the research is the provision of an in-depth understanding of the social world of the subjects being studied, namely of their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives etc.
- ii) The sample is small in scale, selected on the basis of prominent criteria.
- iii) The collection of the data usually requires close contact between the researcher and the participants. The data collection methods are interactive and allow for emergent issues to be explored.
- iv) The descriptions are very dense and detailed. Information is rich and the analysis of the data is open to emergent concepts and ideas and develops explanations and typologies.
- v) Outputs tend to focus on the interpretation of social meaning of the world of the social actors of the research (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, 5).

## **2.2 Defining Ethnography**

Ethnography is a systematic approach to comprehending the social and cultural life of communities, groups, organizations, institutions and other settings (Le Compte and Schensul, 2010). The main aim of ethnography is to gain deeper understanding of social reality, however the issue of the de-colonialization of this methodology still matters. The ethnographer should avoid bias and ensure the accuracy of data. He or she builds on the perspectives of the people in the research field and uses both inductive and deductive techniques in order to develop socially

and culturally valid grounded local theories, which could be used locally and elsewhere (Le Compte and Schensul, 2010, 1). Ethnography derives from the epistemological position that the ways in which people construct and make meaning of the world and their lives are variable and locally specific (ibid, 2).

The primary source of information is observation in ethnography. Other sources of information, such as individual and group interviews, informal conversations, public and personal documents, newspapers, photographs, and audiovisual materials also serve this purpose. The researchers are present when things happen and see them with their own eyes. The ethnographer is the primary tool of data collection. Thus, their descriptions of the normal routines of a group, community, organization etc., are usually detailed, and their accounts are extremely vivid.

All these details could not be collected in a different way, for example by administering a questionnaire to the informants, or by interviewing some of them. Usually, there is a gap between the statements made by the social actors during interviews, or their replies in questionnaires, and their actual behavior (Heritage, 1984, 236). There is a gap between what people say or think and what they do, between sentiments and acts (Deutscher, 1973; Gilbert and Mulkay, 1983). The ethnographers must first investigate what people really do and the reasons they provide for doing it before interpreting their actions and sayings. Ethnography is designed for discovery previous to testing (Le Compte and Schensul, 2010, 2).

Ethnography comprises two research strategies:

- a) non-participant observation and
- b) participant observation.

In *non-participant observation* the ethnographer observes the events and the participants from a distance without interacting with them. The researcher do not interfere in the scene or with the participants actions in order to not influence their behavior.

In *participant observation* the ethnographer interferes with the subjects' actions and creates direct relationships with them; stays in their natural environment for a long time in order to



observe and describe their behavior and learn their codes so that to grasp the meaning of their actions.

Between the two extremes of non-participant observation and participant observation there are various intermediate situations. The extent to which the ethnographers participate and are involved in a group or an organization may vary considerably. Ethnographic research demands the researcher to strike a balance between the participation and the involvement in the social life of the subjects observed and the detachment from them so that he or she can effectively accomplish his or her scientific research. Even so it may be not possible to be a participant and a scientist at the same time (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979), however practically total empathy is impossible. Duranti and Goodwill say that ‘it is precisely the constant reflecting, taking notes, asking questions, completing questionnaires, taking photographs, recording and then transcribing, translating and interpreting imposed upon us by our profession that prevent us from getting completely ‘inside’ the culture which we want to study’ (1992, 20). Being simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the culture of the study is therefore an inevitable feature of the ethnographer’s role.

Spradley (1980, 58) recorded five types of participation and involvement:

Type of Participation	Degree of involvement
Complete	High
Active	Medium-high
Moderate	Medium-low
Passive	Low
Non-participation	No involvement

Between the two opposing extremes, that of complete observer (non-participant) who has no involvement and that of complete participant who has high involvement, there are various other roles or stances the ethnographer could perform in the research field (Denzin, 1970). A debatable methodological issue is the balance between participation and observation, or involvement and detachment (Gobo, 2008, 106). In the relevant literature three types of participant observation are distinguished:

- a. Covert observation: in this case the participants are unaware of the research's purposes and the identity of the researcher. The ethnographer acts undercover.
- b. Semi-overt observation: it is a situation where only some members of the group under study know the identity of the researcher.
- c. Overt observation: it is the most widely used technique by the ethnographers. All the subjects of the study know the purposes and the identity of the researcher. One of the main advantages of overt observation is that the ethnographer has a certain amount of freedom, because he or she does not obliged to play a specific role. On the other hand, the main disadvantage of this type of observation is that the researcher has to ask permission to conduct the research. Obtaining the permission often demands effort and a great amount of time. Our research adopted this type of overt observation.

Raymond Gold (1958) provided a description of observer stances when he or she is conducting field observations:

1. At one extreme is the *complete participant*. The researcher is a member of the group being studied concealing his/her researcher role from the group to avoid disrupting normal activity. The shortcomings of this stance are that the observer may lack objectivity; the social actors may feel embarrassed and betrayed when the researcher's role is revealed. Since the group members are being deceived, the ethics of the research is questionable.
2. In the *participant as observer* stance, the researcher is a member of the group being studied. All social actors are aware of the research purpose and the researcher's identity.

The ethnographer participates in the group who is observing and he or she is interested more in observing than in participating. This role also has drawbacks, in that the ethnographer needs to strike a balance between aims of the research and the level of confidentiality and trust provided to the group for the information they provide.

3. In the case of the *observer as participant* stance the members of the group being studied are aware of the researcher's observation activities. The main role of the researcher is to collect data, however the researcher is not a member of the group. He or she is interested in participating as a means for conducting better observation and, hence, achieving more complete understanding of the group's activities.

Actually, it is a peripheral membership role enabling the researcher to 'observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership' (Adler and Adler, 1994, 380).

4. The *complete participant* stance is at the opposite extreme stance of complete observer, where the ethnographer is completely not visible while observing or when he or she is in plain sight in a public place, yet the public being studied is unaware of being observed. In both cases, the observation in this stance is not noticeable to social actors.

On the whole, the most ethical stance is that of the *observer as participant*, as the ethnographer's research activities are known to the group being studied, yet the interest for the researcher is on collecting data, rather than participating in the activity being observed.

### 2.3 Ethnographic Interview

Ethnographic Interviewing is a major qualitative method for the collection of data. It is a particular type of discursive interview conducted during the fieldwork by the ethnographer. It aims to reveal the meanings used by the participants, and investigates unclear and vague aspects of the culture observed. The purpose is to bring out the cultural meanings of the main social patterns of the people of the study, and to test different hypotheses, which might explain these patterns.

In our research, we will investigate aspects of the identified people's cultures, which remain unclear or ambiguous even though they have been subject to close observation. In addition to the observation of the participants in the research, interviews will be also used in order to comprehend their beliefs, their economic capacity and strategies during crisis, and how they explain their practices and plans.

Unlike conventional interviews, in the ethnographic interview the researcher and the informant already know each other. Thus, between the two parties a different emotional climate is raised. Moreover, ethnographic interviews are not necessarily scheduled, but are usually spontaneously raised during the course of participant observation. Furthermore, they are likely to be more focused on specific topics, and to be shorter than discursive interviews. The ethnographer may ask a few questions about a scene observed to understand the meaning of a particular act or gesture, or the reasons of a reaction. In addition, knowledge or understanding is achieved by subsequent interviews during the entire course of the research.

Ethnographic interviews are useful as informants' accounts rather than as reality objective descriptions (Atkinson and Coffey, 2001). They are suited to the exploration and identification of thought patterns, cultural categories and shared meanings (McCracken, 1988, 7).

According to Spradley (1980), in the process of ethnographic interviewing *two distinct but complementary themes* are involved:

- a) Developing good relationship with those you are interviewing. Rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture.
- b) Attaining meaningful information. Eliciting information encourage the development of rapport.

Ethnographic interviewing usually proceeds through the following *four stages* (Spradley, 1980):

1. Apprehension - often interviews are uncertain in many aspects, and that may cause fearful feelings, both for the interviewee and the researcher conducting the inquiry. The most important thing is to get and keep informants talking especially for the first interviews.

*Descriptive questions* are very useful to begin the conversation and keep an interviewee freely express him or herself. Usually it does not matter what a subject talk about. When a person talks, ‘the ethnographer has an opportunity to listen, to show interest, and to respond in a non-judgmental fashion. These kinds of responses represent the most effective way to reduce an informant’s apprehension’. They develop a basic sense of trust that allows for the free flow of information.

2. Exploration - once rapport established, the researcher and the participant become more comfortable with each other. In this stage, both ethnographer and informant start exploring their relationship. They seek to trace what the other person is like, what the other person wants from their relationship. They listen, observe, and test each other. It is a process of becoming familiar with this new situation/setting. Exploration may occur when the ethnographer sets aside prepared questions to talk about something, or when each laugh at something said etc.

3. Cooperation – In this stage trust is established between the participants, and consequently, cooperation unfolds. This stage involves cooperation based on mutual trust. Now the ethnographer and informant know what to expect of one another, and they do not worry anymore about ‘offending each other or making mistakes in asking or answering questions’ (47). They both may offer personal information and feel free to ask questions.

4. Participation – In the last stage complete participation is almost achieved. The interviewee begins to perceive his or her role as a teacher to the researcher. Informants begin to be more confident and assertive. They provide with new information the ethnographer and help him or her in discovering the patterns of their culture. Spradley (2016) says that not all informants reach this last stage of participation. ‘If they do, they increasingly become participant observers in their own cultural scene’ (48).

Focusing on the interaction that goes on during interviews does not mean that we should not take the wider context of fieldwork into account. We should keep in mind that at the same time ethnographers will conduct participant observation.

It is worth to keep in mind that what engenders from an interview is not belong entirely to the interviewee. It is a product of the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, and takes places in a specific social setting and context.

## 2.4 Participatory Ethnography

Our research may be seen as an example of *participatory ethnography*, which is ‘made up of different voices and experiences that weave together different languages, beliefs, values and relationships with our informants’ (Blackledge and Creese, 2010, 58). This position is made up of a post-modern and a feminist epistemological perspective (Denzin, 1997).

They both break with traditional ethnography, which comprise objectivism, naturalism, colonialism, and exploitation of the participants. In this epistemological framework, a participatory ethnography is privileged which develops around the concept of ‘care’. Jointly the researcher and the participants design particular aspects of the project, discuss the findings and maybe write a part of the final report together. Our view is based upon a non-ethnocentric version of post-colonial cosmopolitanism that gives priority to real people, their social relations, and everyday life in general (Lefevbre, 2014; Hamnerz, 1990).

It is worth to mention that our view is different from that of ethicism, which underlines the notion of ‘justice’ providing a normative and absolutist position based on deontological ethical codes (Gobo, 2008, 137).

## 2.5 Ethical issues

The nature and the status of the participants (e.g. vulnerable young people on the move) and the social settings where research is conducted (e.g. camps) impose important ethical issues:

*Privacy*: The participants had the right to remain anonymous; therefore their real names have been substituted by symbols. Also, any situation that disclosed personal details omitted. Participants had the right of withdrawal from the research in any moment.

*Informed consent*: a set of practices designed to give participants the information they need to decide whether or not to take part in the research. In particular, when the participants were

adolescents, we asked formal permission from their parents and trainers. Informed consent obtained by having participants sign a consent form (see the appendix), which explains the aims of the research and asks for permission to handle their personal information. We guaranteed that participants (e.g. young people and youth workers) have understood the information and that participation in research is voluntary. During the interviews, the participants had been protected from any kind of physical and psychological strain and they had the right to withdraw from the sessions for any reason whatsoever.

The research team followed the ethical codes of professional associations (for example Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines available at [hyperlink \(SRA Ethics guidelines\)](#) in order to cope with concrete situations and ethical problems raised by a particular type of observation.

*Consequences for future research:* social researchers rely on being given access to settings, so they have an ethical obligation not only to the people studied but also to colleagues not to ‘spoil the field’, which may have the effect the subject of the research or other people in this setting refuse access in the future.

*Exploitation/Harm:* We recognize that any kind of research is a potential risk for the group’s identity, so we handled this issue with extreme care. Copies of the draft of the written report and the transcripts are available to any participant who requests them at any point during the duration of the project. We also encouraged the participants to express their opinion. We strongly believe that participants should be empowered by becoming part of the research process.

### 3. The Greek case study

#### 3.1 Details about the conduct of the ethnography

An ethnographic study conducted in four different structures in the premises of a Greek Non-Governmental Organization, ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth:

- 1) Youth Support Center (KYN), Spartis 9 street
- 2) Refugee hosting center, Diavata
- 3) Refugee hosting center, Lagkadikia (safe-zone of unaccompanied refugees)
- 4) Accommodation center for unaccompanied children, Pilea.

The basic research tools that were used by SLYMS ethnographic team were interviews (focus groups) and ethnographic observations. In the first two centers were used both research tools, whilst in the other two, the research team visited the centers in order to conduct interviews with the employees and young people. Twenty-two people participated in focus groups and interviews. More specifically, seventeen were young people, five teachers and other professionals working with young people. Three interviews and four focus groups were conducted with young people. In some of them youth workers and teachers participated in as interviewees. The young people of the study are coming from Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea, Congo, Libya and Burundi. Fourteen were men and three were women.

Young refugee women in general were overwhelmingly fewer in the refugee centers where the ethnographic study conducted. The majority of young people (twelve) who took part in the interviews were minors (15-17 years). There were also five young adults who were 18-24 years old. Their stay in Greece ranges from a few days to four years. Particularly, in many cases young people were fully embedded in the local society, while in some other cases they were trying to intergrade.

The interviews and focus groups lasted from 20/9 till 15/10 of 2018. Before this period, the research team was involved in preliminary arrangements with the representatives of ARSIS to get access to the field. The interviews with young refugees conducted mainly in English. In some cases, one mediator helped in the translation from French and Arabic to Greek. At the same time, three individual interviews and a focus group with teachers and other youth workers of the NGO ARSIS were conducted. They were also youngsters aged from 25 to 29 years old.



Four of them were residents of Thessaloniki and one was from Spain who is settled permanently in Greece.

Participants were fully informed about the objectives of the project before they took part in the interview processes. Actually, they signed a consent form in which they agreed to participate anonymously in the research. In each center there were individuals (stakeholders) who offered unselfishly to contribute as mediators between the researcher and the center as well as with young immigrants and refugees.

Regarding the observations, they were held solely in KYN and the Refugee Hosting Center in Diavata. A member of the research team performed an active role by participating in the lessons either as a student (attending Spanish language learning courses) or as a researcher. The lessons attended were Greek, English and Spanish language learning courses at KYN and Greek at the Refugees Hosting Center in Diavata. The role of the researcher, according to Gold's typology (1958), sometimes coincided with that of the 'participant as an observer' and sometimes the 'observer as a participant'. A common point in the two roles above is that the members of the study were aware of the researcher's identity and responsibilities. The difference lies in the fact that the researcher participated partly as a student in some subjects, while in others he had a role of an observer with few interactions with the research participants.

It is important to mention that in each of the four centers there is a specific plan of everyday activities for young people. These plans of activities are variable and flexible since the population is not stable and is constantly renewed. All centers also provide housing for young people, except KYN that focuses on psycho-social and educational services.

- 1) The target group of ARSIS Youth Support Center (KYN) concerns children, adolescents and young adults. The actions being developed as a part of an integrated support plan tailored to the needs and desires of children. These actions consist of creative workshops and lessons, which support and enhance the integration of these children in the official school system. Providing these actions and services, KYN aims to prevent or minimize the impact of negative factors and adverse conditions that can seriously abuse the lives of young people and lead to their victimization and social exclusion. The youth center is near to the city center. The center has three classrooms as well as staff and volunteers providing educational and psychosocial services.

- 2) Refugee hosting center in Diavata has been operating since 2017. It aims to provide temporary accommodation, education, protection and support services as well as integration of migrants and refugees. It is located ten kilometers away from the city center of Thessaloniki. This means that refugees and immigrants have the chance to be in touch with the cultural life of the city, even if it takes a lot of time by local transport to get there. The center hosts about five hundred refugees and immigrants. There are families and young people (mostly men), among them. The rooms in which people are staying are fully equipped containers. The camp has a non-formal 'school' with several halls, where classes are held for children, young people and adults. The lessons that are offered are mostly about Greek language, English language, Natural Sciences, Technology, and Boosting Teaching for compulsory schooling. The role of the 'school' in the camp is to meet the needs of young and adult refugees and migrants for lifelong learning, adaptation and integration to Greek society. In the daily lessons, most attendants are children, young people and middle-aged people.
- 3) Refugee center in Lagkadikia accommodates around four hundred people. The families and the unaccompanied youngsters are staying in containers. The purpose of the particular center is the same as Diavata hosting center. The distance between Lagkadikia and the center of Thessaloniki is about fifty kilometres. This means that, in conjunction with non-regular transport, the transportation to the center for the residents is quite difficult. Inside the center operates a non-formal 'school', which is much smaller than the one of Diavata camp. In school of Diavata, teachers focus mainly in Greek, English as well as in helping young people with their lessons of the official school. The part of the camp that the research team visited was a safe-zone where 14 to 18-year-old young people lived.
- 4) Accommodation center for unaccompanied children, in Pilea, has only thirty beds for unaccompanied minors. During the research, those responsible for the organization referred that it hosted thirty boys from 12 to 18 years. The aim of the center is not only to secure the fundamental rights of unaccompanied minors, but also to provide them safe living conditions and enhance their integration into the local community. The center was created in January of 2017. Specifically, the aim is to assist children's integration into public schools and support them, in close cooperation with the teaching staff,

by providing them teaching aids or other training programs. Some of the provisions are the following:

1. Psychosocial support
2. Legal support for asylum and family reunification procedures
3. Vocational guidance and preparation for the labor market
4. Medical services and access to health services
5. Organization of cultural and recreational activities, excursions and participation in social events
6. Informative meetings and seminars concerning the development of skills and empowerment of children and youth in the social life inside the center and in the local community
7. Three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner), considering age, eating habits and cultural peculiarities
8. Clothing and footwear
9. Personal hygiene and cleaning products
10. Products of everyday use
11. Transfer (via vehicles of the center and via local buses: cover the cost of unlimited routes or tickets)
12. Communication (access to electronic communications and video services, purchase of telephone cards).

### **3.2 The ethnographic analysis**

This study deals with young people on the move and the way they experience their precarious daily lives. Through the ethnographic angle of this particular research, there is a lot of evidence about the lives of young migrants and refugees, which reveal their values, desires, goals, aspirations, and the ways in which they actively shape their reality.

Migration, refugee flows, and ethnic-cultural diversity are among the most critical social phenomena in contemporary societies (Geisen, 2010). The political, economic and social significance of these phenomena has grown dramatically nowadays (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2013), as in public debate and official state policy they are related to crucial social problems such as poverty, crime, unemployment, political persecution, racism, social exclusion, and the social integration of young refugees and immigrants.

Youth mobility is largely linked to migration and refugee flows. Young refugees and immigrants, as a separate category, until recently were ignored by migrant studies and refugee studies or only second-generation migrants / refugees were considered (Geisen, 2010). However, in recent years, due to both the refugee crisis and the economic crisis, the research interest has shifted to the mobility of young people in general. It is a fact that today's young people are increasingly moving on a global scale (Robertson, Harris and Baldassar, 2018). Mobility seems to be a basic choice and a means for young people to meet their needs, such as a sense of security, but also desires, such as improving their economic situation and upward social mobility (Cairns, 2014; Robertson, et al., 2018).

It is worth to mention that the mobile young people of this study constitute a heterogeneous category of individuals from different economic, national, ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds. Their heterogeneity is also due to their different life trajectories (quality of life at present, place of current residence, education, work experience, age) life plans and pathways. Specifically, the basic social factors that lead to significant differences among the young people of the study are the following: A) socio-economic status, B) age, C) family ties, D) ethnic culture, E) immigration, F) residency and G) gender.

A) The social and economic status of the young people of the study concerns their previous status, before they arrived in the host country, Greece. Their previous status reveals their class origins and consequently their life and educational opportunities. A typical example are the unaccompanied young adolescences, who -in the most cases- have no money and usually try to survive exclusively with the benefits of the NGO ARSIS. Characteristic is also the words of a youngster, who claimed that

*'...who have their own money can meet their needs, while we rely on the 100-euro card... is difficult'.*

B) Despite that the traditional separation of 'adolescence' from 'adulthood' fades nowadays (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) it seems that adolescences have different opportunities than young adults. The main difference is that teenagers have the opportunity to attend school. This helps them to learn the language of the host country, to socialize, to study for several hours of the day as well as to hope that someday they can enter university. Young adults are in a more

disadvantaged position as they remain inactive at a 'productive' age due to unemployment and underemployment.

C) There are young people that are either accompanied by parents/guardians or young people who are unaccompanied. The two distinct categories do vary widely. The accompanied young people are under the protection of their parents/guardians and they can cover their social and emotional needs as opposed to the unaccompanied young people who are protected, temporarily by supportive structures, like ARSIS. As long as they are minors they are closely monitored by a prosecutor. In addition, unaccompanied young persons experience isolation and they are obliged to share their room with 'unknown' young people. This kind of protection is provided to young people until they reach adulthood. When this happens, they will have to search for a permanent house to live and find another provisional source.

Regarding the unaccompanied migrants and refugees, Cairns says (2010, 19) 'are no longer considered to be dependent upon adult migrants but are independent participants who develop new perspectives out of their given social conditions and try to implement them'. This active attitude is thematised in research with the help of concepts of belonging, cultural re-positioning and social mobility.

D) There are significant cultural differences between young people. An educator said: 'although we have here young people, we cannot put the Congolese with Pakistani and Afghan people at the same bag'. In few words, it is equally important that these differences are not neglected, because the cultural environment in which a young person lives can determine his or her future choices (Cuzzocrea, 2018; Geisen, 2010).

E) There is a distinction between economic migrants and refugees. In the present study, refugees are not considered only those who are officially recognized as refugees (ie from Syria), but also people who have left their homelands for various reasons. According to the young participants of the study the main reasons were two. The first reason was that they had been chased for their political or/and religious beliefs and the second was that their physical integrity and their life was at great risk. A typical example to this is the youngsters from Balochistan, who grew up inside a war zone in recent years. The Baloch are people who live mainly in the Balochistan region of the southeastern-most edge of the Iranian plateau in Pakistan, Iran,

and Afghanistan, as well as in the Arabian Peninsula. In the present study, several young people who came from the Baloshistan area live in the Refugee hosting center of Diavata.

F) One more differentiation is related to the time of residence of young people in the host country. Young people who participated in this research and have been for a long time in Greece are integrated to some extent, as opposed to those who came more recently. Integrated young people started to go to school, they have already made social contacts with other people and they have expressed their desire to stay in Greece, while the others are still in searching of their future destination because they are having difficulties in adapting and integrating to the host country.

G) The young women who participated in the research were comparatively much less than the young men. The reason behind this is explained by the representative of a youth center of ARSIS:

*'It is more difficult for girls to travel; travel is more difficult for them ... Not that it is easy for the boys, but if you see it with percentages there is a higher proportion of boys victims. However, several ARSIS youth centers provide services to unaccompanied girls, but they are fewer due to the number of the women. Most of the girls arrive accompanied in Greece and most of the times...they will come with their mom... or with their dad or aunts ... since girls are protected from their family anyway'.*

That is to say that, young girls tend to be perceived as more vulnerable in comparison to boys within the dominant patriarchal culture of their families and their countries of birth in general, and perhaps also by the trainers of the youth centers, as we saw in the above excerpt.

Several topics or categories were formulated on the basis of the analysis of the ethnographic material of this study. The encoding and creation of the categories was done by implementing the thematic analysis as it is proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The topics are the following: 1) 'Locked in their shells': a dual relationship of young people with the local society; 2) Seeking a way out; 3) Living in insecure and precarious presence with hope.

The data analysis has the following structure: first of all, there is a description and explanation before the words of the participants. Each participant has a symbol with its number. If it is a young person there is (Y), teacher (T), person in charge of a structure (S), mediator (M), and

researcher (R). The number next to the symbol indicates a specific person. Next to these symbols there is a first letter (D) which indicates each center coupled with a number of the corresponding center. The youth centers of the NGO ARSIS are listed as follows:

- Youth Support Center (KYN) (C1),
- Refugee hosting center, Diavata (C2),
- Refugee hosting center, Lagkadikia (C3)
- Accommodation center for unaccompanied children, Pilea (C4)

### **3.2.1 'Locked in their shells': a dual relationship of young people with the local society**

When different cultural patterns enter new spaces, it is possible to create 'hybrid' and 'pluralistic' youth cultures (Nilan and Feixa, 2006). From this perspective, young immigrants and refugees are perceived as active participants of their own mobility (Geisen, 2010). Typically, according to Levitt, (2001) transnational immigration involves significant transfers not only of economic but social and human capital. That is, a global flow of ideas, networks, behaviors, values and identities.

In the present study, the narratives of the participants reveal that when people on the move, especially youth, come in contact with the local community, they usually anticipate various difficulties to adjust in the new environment. This makes young immigrants and refugees rather cautious against the locals. At the same time, the locals seem to be 'frightened' with the new - albeit temporary- members of their local society. A representative of an ARSIS youth center characteristically says:

*S1 C4: We can't forget what those young people bring when they visit these societies and how they have been dealt with by the locals. It's not only what these young people offer morally, socially, psychologically, financially, but also how the local society react to them. That is, on the one hand, you get money, and on the other hand you are locked in yourself because you are scared. But you do not keep on learning. And then we make them (refugees and immigrants) locked in their shells. So, we (both sides) are becoming two remote persons and we do nothing to fix it.*

Young people's relationships with other people play an important role in their transition to adulthood (Wyn, 2015). Specifically, the representative of the youth center assumes that there is a kind of interaction between mobile youth and the local society. Indeed, the young people

who insert in the local society are not passive but active -albeit temporal- members of it, and their contribution in it should be recognised and analysed. Regarding the contact of the precarious young immigrants and refugees with the local community, what follows from what they say is that most of them have no close relationships with people from the local community.

R: *And do you have relationships with the locals? People from here, like people from Greece...*

Y1 C2: *Not more... no.*

R: *But... do you have friends from Greece?*

Y2 C3: *Yes. Just to say 'hello', 'hi', 'how are you'. No friends.*

However, there are few young boys who have developed close relationships with some locals. A typical example is that they are in sexual or romantic relationships with girls from Greece.

M3 C1: *The two of them (youngsters) have girlfriends, Greeks, the others don't have yet.*

T1 C4: *So yes, they have good relationship with people, because they attend school and... they hang out with Greek people. They go for coffee and... in Thessaloniki. They have girlfriends...*

Creating relationships with the locals is a main goal of ARSIS:

T1 C2: *We try to make excursions, letting the young people go out of the camp and to contact with the local society.*

T1 C3: *Yes, we go to the cinema (...) Imagine that the teacher we had last year asked me today: 'Can I come by and take the kids out for a coffee? (...)' We do many sports... we have some kids that... are in football in local team... and this is also a nice thing about the relationship of the people, of the kids with the locals... we are really happy with the staff of ARSIS, the local football team is a small group of non-professionals. They were very welcome and they said that they want the team to be multi-culti... people from all the countries... and I said 'ok'. This is something that I wouldn't expect... because this place is not so progressive, people are so conservative, but what happens in Gerakarou village is pretty amazing...ok yes, the clothes, the shoes and the participation in the local tournament were nice. They are also play cricket...people from the Pakistani community. They go to Iraklis (greek sports club located in Thessaloniki), they have formed a network of cricket... this week we have some youth that they have participated in a tournament in Corfu in international cricket tournament and this is nice. They meet people from other countries...and they do sports together. We provide educational activities like museums, tours around the city...people get to know the city... know how to move. Not only go to Aristotelous (the central square of Thessaloniki) and...*



It is worth to mention that the efforts of the employees of ARSIS to integrate young people into the local community is continual. Therefore, quite often the young people claim that it is like they live in a family within the youth centers.

*T1 C1: They try to lean on me. They have me like a benchmark, I'm probably one of the people... and obviously all the employers, right? Okay now they will not go to the lawyer to tell him (their problems) ... but they will try to approach me.*

*S1 C4: What I want them to do is to not forget that they are human beings. This is very important. They already know how to take care of themselves. This is not even an issue. They learn how to coexist with others. The rooms of the center are like they live in a campsite. You teach them how to cope with the difficulties. It's like a home.*

*T1 C3: I asked them 'do you want to be transferred in a shelter in Thessaloniki to be closer to the center (of the city)?', 'no, here is my village... my place', they say.*

Moreover, except form the aim of connecting mobile young people with the host society, there is a lot of work to be done in order to enable these young people to live their life with dignity.

*T1 C4: The aim is to be prepared when they reach adulthood, if and as long they are in Greece, they can be integrated in society, this means that they are normally enrolled at school. It is obligatory for them to go to school till 15 years old... so it is mandatory. Well, basically, socialisation and integration is our main goal.*

*T1 C4: Non-institutionalisation is the goal. We do not want for them to feel that they have been thrown into a warehouse, either waiting to leave or to ... grow up and to (...).*

Young refugees and immigrants in many cases face everyday practices of devaluation and exclusion (Geisen, 2010). It is important to note that the mobility of first and second-generation migrants, especially Muslims, is often seen as a threat to the security of the countries where they are settled due to Islamophobia and racism in general (Maira, 2009; Mandaville, 2009). In this research, the racist and xenophobic attitudes of the locals against young migrants and refugees prevents their integration in the new place. Many locals are rather suspicious of them, however they realise their fear of diversity:

*S1 C4: Yes. We fear the stranger from wherever he comes... (...) Today, kids told me that they had gone to Zara for shopping... and a security guy were constantly behind them. They showed*

*him the money, and one of them said, 'Look at my bag, I purchased them all'. It's an automatic move we'll do, you'll see the other who is foreigner, and you'll make the unconscious move to protect your bag. Because we have been bombed with fear, the same thing has happened to them. We just do not understand the affinity of fear. And that we are afraid of the same thing, a bombardment.*

It is interesting that young people are fully aware of the discrimination against them and speak openly about it. Below, in the first two cases where young people speak, they admit that the issue of racism and xenophobia is not an issue that exists only in Greece, but a general attitude that usually the majority of locals all over the world have for foreigners.

*Y2 C4: I think that (Greeks) don't have good idea about refugees in Greece, all Europeans also. They don't have a good idea of me, for all refugees, not only for Afghani or Pakistani or Bangladeshi. About all refugees. And not only in Greece, but all over Europe, like Germany, I have friends (there) and no one has a good idea about refugees. And I don't know why they don't have a good idea of me (...). And some Greek people when they see refugees... maybe they are...*

*R: Xenophobic?*

*Y2 C4: Yes. Something like that.*

*Y1 C4: I don't think that all Greeks believe refugees are bad. Sometimes I feel that refugees are bad and we make mistakes. I can see, I'm not a baby, what we are doing now. That's why some people think about it for refugees. I have also a British friend (...) It's amazing. I can't explain. She is like a brother, like a sister to me. At the same time, there are also the Nazis. We have many racists. It's everywhere in the world. So, there are reasons why Greeks and other people think badly about refugees. These are the reasons.*

*M1 C1: (refers to Y2) he tells me 'I want two things, the first one is I want to learn Greek well and I want to move ahead', and second 'I want to find a way to be integrated in Greek society'. And I said to him 'when I came here I rejected two things in my life, the fear, and the lack of self-esteem'. Why should I have a low self-esteem? Because you are black? Because you are a refugee? From the very beginning, if you want to do something and you have these things, you will never succeed. When they ask you 'who your family is'? you will say, 'This is my family, Stelios is a friend'. 'When I talk to Stelios I do not see that he is white, I do not see the skin, I see Stelios. (...) When you reach to this point, firstly, you will not see the colour of the skin'.*

### 3.2.2 The Greek Language as a means of social integration

A prominent factor that brings young people closer to the local society is to learn how to speak fluently the host country's language, particularly the Greek language. Those young people who are able to communicate in Greek, they have easier access to jobs, more opportunities for a better school trajectory, and more hope for the future. In other words, the good use of local language is an important tool of social inclusion (see also Craith, 2005).

Y6 C2: *I will carry on my studies the next year in nursing. If I didn't know Greek I wouldn't have done it.*

T1 C3: *The basic thing is that they speak Greek. Without it they are excluded from all that's happening. This is the main reason why young people are constantly asking 'when will I go to school? School, school, school'. It's not that they want to learn Greek, but they are motivated because they want to be integrated in society. To do something. To find a girl. To have friends .. to play football. It's normal. For every age.*

For those who are still learning Greek, the situation is quite different. These young people face great difficulties in learning the language and need time and continuous support from the youth centers providing Greek lessons. Although, most young people realise that if they want to stay in Greece, they have to learn Greek in order to join the local society.

Y1 C1: *For me, to speak the language is important, without language... nothing. I think that every country, if you go faster and you know the language, you have to learn the language for... you have to do it faster (now) than in the future.*

Y2 C4: *I think that language might help in the future for translations and to help someone if they need it.*

Y1 C4: *Yeah, of course. If I will live in Greece. I want to learn Greek and very fast. Because I spent already 2 years (here) and I can't do nothing if I don't know the language (...) The first step is to learn the language, where you live, in every country. If you don't know the language is very difficult, you spend the time.*

Y3 C2: *We have a language problem but... we can't speak with Greek people...*

Y4 C1: *I want to learn how to speak Greek very well and I will move on.*

T2 C4: *Most young people declare that they want to leave, yet firstly they struggle to integrate in Greek society. That's why they want to learn Greek.*

Y1 C4: *I have what I want but...the main problem is the language that we try to learn. People try to help me. I have so many teachers to help me. But I can't improve and I really want it. The main thing is that I want to study I want to go on... but the main obstacle is the language... to go to university first, then maybe I'll get some day there...*

The young people of the study intensely show off their sexuality and they look for sexual satisfaction and love affairs. They believe that language is very important to satisfy their needs and desires, and it seems as an additional motive.

Y4 C2: *I learn how to speak Greek because I want to find a girl.*

Y5 C2: *If you know how to speak Greek, you will find a girl, if not, you will not.*

Y1 C1: *I speak English (in girls that I meet) and they say to me 'I do not speak English' and I can't speak with them. I have to learn how to speak Greek.*

The liquidity of the current situation brings young people to an unfavorable position with regard to the choices they make. These options are often related to the learning of the Greek language that they may need, but they do not know if they will be in Greece in the future.

T1 C1: *They begin to learn German, at the same time English and at the same time they feel like 'I will...I will go a bit Greek'. So, they are also written in Greek (language courses) ...now for those who will leave in the future... there is a problem, because (laughs) when you start doing at the same time ... 3 new languages ... obviously you will not do anything.*

### **3.2.3 Seeking a way out through education**

Many young people of the study expressed a will to join the education system and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for their self-development. The values of the youth that took part in the research did not seem to be far from those of the young people of a Western country (see also Brendtro and Brokenleg, 2009). They are willing to learn, to study at a university or to continue their studies that had postponed in their birth country. Moreover, young people do not remain passive, but they are constantly trying to claim a better life with human dignity.

T1 C2: *Most young people at the age of 17, 18, 19 .... they are people who are searching too much to acquire ... some skills. Whatever form. If they are women, mainly with aesthetics and others (...). Generally, I see them moving towards a specific skill... and university. Mainly to study in university. That is, they are looking for a way to study in the university.*

Y1 C1: *Every day to feel something new. Something new to learn. This is life. Because you go outside, you see something new to do, to visit the market, something to know... a lot of conversations, this is a new experience (...). If you find something when you go outside... if you are not in home... you will find everything. You go out and you find. Don't stay at home and sleep, you need support, you need work, you need... you can't do anything. If you want to eat... if don't make the food you will be hungry. This is very simple. When you are hungry, you cook something to eat. If you really want something in your life you will find it. Anything.*

T1 C3: *These young people speak Greek and they.... they...desire a life in Greece. They have dreams, they have goals, they want to study and some of them they want to go to university. They want to be translators. They...they imagine things out of the camp. And school is very important for this. Very important.*

T1 for Y3 C1: *.... but the most basic one is to learn how to speak the Greek language. He wants it too much. It doesn't matter that he has no material goods.... all he wants is to load his mind spiritually... to learn things about the Greek language.*

Various solutions have been suggested by the teachers of the institutions that participated in the research about how young people will be integrated into 'Greek reality'.

T1 C1: *They want to find a way to be integrated in society, especially young people have a strong desire.*

T1 C3: *Yes to the bees... and the trees...and to make honey and products of honey...I think that it was very interesting for them. Some of them they start thinking 'ok, maybe I should do this agricultural thing'.*

T1 C3: *We have some programs...I remember...last year we had five children and we went to a seminar or ... something like this ... organized by Terre de homes, an NGO. It was about youthful entrepreneurship. How to open your own shop, how to find the revenue to do it ... and how to 'run' your own business ... but nobody cared about it.*

There are many obstacles for these young refugees and migrants to make their ‘dreams’ come true. The three most crucial obstacles for them are the lack of knowledge of the Greek language, the lack of financial resources, and how they will be able to get a job and enter the workforce. However, they do not give up and they keep on hoping and struggling.

*T1 C1: They aspire. Yes, Yes, Yes. Young people of these ages have many... Women who have children aged 25, 26 years and over, face more difficulties (...). The biggest problem is the illiteracy of some people in their mother tongue.*

*Y3 C2: I'm a rapper musician but I cannot do anything, because I'm refugee here. And I don't have (...) sponsor and I can't do anything, but I'll do it...yes, I'll do it.*

*T1 C3: In my opinion, if they really try to learn Greek and study ... They can spend three years learning Greek and struggling to be in school, and after that to attend an afterschool for adults. Then they have the real opportunity to study at a university, there are some who have done it and it is likely, but only if you are eighteen and you go to an adult school, afterschool and school-to-work combinations. It is something that can happen but for the children not. It is not serious to tell them 'go to study at a Greek school and then you will get a degree in high school'. No, they cannot. They are blocked because the system does not include them. All the measurements made by the ministry were not well designed as in an emergency case.*

Mobile young people have an increased sense of risk and uncertainty (Smith and Mills, 2019). The nowadays ‘paradoxical combination of the promotion of the value of individual responsibility on the one hand and the lack of individual control of the conditions surrounding young people’ (SLYMS, 2018, p. 8) contributes significantly to this. That is why young people often experience frustration and anxiety in almost all aspects of their lives, and their personal identity becomes fragile and constantly redefined (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). However, quite often the young migrants and refugees seem to be optimistic about their future. That is, even if they experience economic and job insecurity, they feel that their dreams can be realized in the near future.

*Y2 C2: I want to study computer science. It's my goal. When I was kid I loved it.*

*Y4 C3: I want to be a doctor. I was studying to be a doctor there.*

*Y3 C4: Me, pilot. After school I want to study and be a pilot. I like travelling in other countries in the world.*

T1 C3: *The best students have never attended school, (one) didn't know how to write in his mother tongue. The first language she learned to write and read is Greek. And .. I don't know, it has to be an inner power, she has the motivation and... She says 'I don't want to work, I'm 16 and I don't want to go to the fields, and I don't want to be unpaid .. I don't want ... I want a better adolescence because I'm 16 and I want to go to school'. So, I think that in this case she will make it, she will do it.*

T for Y2 C4: *Yeah, he wants to study something about football and get better about it. That's it.*

At the opposite end there is the landing of the young people in reality. In a nutshell, young people realise the current situation and strive for a realistic follow-up to themselves. Some of the basic things that young people seek and are referred to below are the concepts of 'stability' and 'ordinary person'.

Y1 C4: *I can't do what I want. I also thought I had a plan to help people if I could become a social worker because...I can understand how people are struggling, how people help each other. So, since that time, I've done a lot of things. And maybe I can become a social worker. It's easy for me if I could get started, if I could go ahead, maybe my dream is the success, the success... And ... I can also help other people.*

T1 C3: *I think the main problem of integration, when it comes to immigrants and refugees is... unemployment... precarity. This the problem that they face, and if they don't study... they won't have many chances to find a job, even if they've studied.*

Y1 translates Y4 C2: *He wants to study and take some lessons and find a job and that... He wanna do ordinary life. He wants to be a common person. Something like that...*

M translates Y2 C3: *He wants to improve in football, playing two days a week football here as well. Things that he feels needing is his family. He wants to...have his family near him. Also, not to...move to another place and start again every season. He wants stability...*

Y1 translates Y3 C2: *He wants to live in the city like an ordinary man ... here's different ... you know ...there are a lot of people ... all over ... And he wants to be an ordinary person.*

Y1 C3: *When I was in Turkey I was planning to go to Germany...(now) I cannot imagine to live there. But when I came here everything changed...I like to be here...*

Y4 C1: *The purpose was first to reach Turkey, and there I made the decision to cross Greece.*

### **3.2.4 Living in insecure and precarious presence with hope**

The needs of young people usually vary. However, food, housing, education, human relations, security and stability are some of the needs highlighted in the words of the young people and a teacher of the study.

T1 C1: *I think they need a stable benchmark. This is the problem. They cannot prioritize or hierarchize their needs and aspirations in a different way, and all because they are on the move. (...) They look for stability without having a point of reference themselves (...) They want to get an apartment to feel that there is their base and then they can ...*

Y2 C3: *You know ... people here get a cash card. This card has a thousand euros ... one hundred euros (...) and living is difficult. You have to buy food, tickets ... You can live with that money for ten days. For more money you need to find a job ...*

R: *So, from the things you need here, which things do you think are important and do not have them?*

Y2 C2: *Education.*

Y5 C2: *Better future.*

Y2 C2: *Protection and education...nothing else. We want to feel protected that's why we came here (...) just to save our life. Life is all we have, if there is no life, nothing exists.*

A main target of the youth centers is to protect those young people who are at risk. Mostly those linked to the smuggling of tobacco and /or drugs. These illegal activities involve a lot of risk, and the contact of young people with people in the above illegal circuits can have unpleasant consequences for themselves.

T1 C1: *I have met the case of a (unaccompanied) child who was in the classroom where a friend called him (...) and told him that a friend died and got up and left the lesson suddenly fearful. Such situations ...*



*T1 C3: Yeah... it is something that never stops, especially drugs. Cheap, dumb drugs, but they know that all these people are rewarding this... you know ... if you have a young one to do this illegal activity ... nothing will happen because the police will catch the young one and after a few hours he will be free. There is no consequence for anyone.*

Many young people are often forced to experience mental and physical inertia being NEETs, specifically they are out of work and formal education. Thus, their daily life consists of free time that they can take advantage of by going for free language learning courses, for a walk in the city center or staying in the 'structure' with their close friends.

*R: About your life here, in camp, do you want to tell me few things? ... How is your typical day?*

*T1 C2: They sleep all day.*

*Y2 C2: Sleep is better.*

However, the disadvantage for NEETs is that they are largely inactive and they are thus marginalised (Maguire, 2015). This is a common phenomenon especially for young immigrants and refugees (Pulman and Finnie, 2018), because they encounter a different from their own cultural, linguistic and, most probably, religious environment, which create additional difficulties in integrating into education and later in the labor market (Gökşen and Öker, 2017).

*T1 C2: They are trying to participate in every workshop and other things in ARSIS... (...) Boys are doing very well in sports...*

*Y3 C3: I go also to 'Metadrasi' for Greek courses, sometimes I go for boxing. Sometimes I go out just for fun...*

Salazar (2011) argues that one of the implications of mobility is that one is led to remain idle, accepting long-term unemployment, as he or she just expects the opportunity to go abroad. Nevertheless, in the current research even the most inactive young people have shown attempts to join society.

*T2 C4: In the night (the youngsters) are usually less (inside the center). In the evening are gathering, even if they go out they put limits in themselves because they are not imprisoned ... they can get out... they will come back, as well. It also helps partially in their socialization... it also important for the young not to feel that he is trapped, it is very important.*

Young people imagine themselves as a mobile person and feel that the process of mobility they are experiencing is some sort of ‘test’ in relation to the possible future choices they have to make in their lives. These choices are constructed by them as alternatives to manage the current limitations of the social contexts surrounding them (Cuzzocrea, 2018). In the present research, important is the fact that many young people are aware of the situation, they are aware that the possibilities given to them in the current conditions are limited, and they try to adapt their wishes to them. In the process of adapting to them, they are often optimistic and self-satisfied with what they have acquired as moving populations. For this, the new approaches to how imagination of youth mobility can be made visible, mainly focus on aspirations and hopes rather than on projects (Brannen and Nilsen, 2007), that is, they focus on situations that are not considered realistic.

*Y1 C3: A few months ago, I had many plans. Then, over the last few months, in the last few days, I continually think about myself...I'm thinking 'I can't do anything. It's not possible for me'. Then I wrote something I can do, and then I decided. I want to be a computer engineer but I can't. It is not possible...Maybe it's possible but difficult... I can't imagine my life, I can't do what I want.*

*Y1 C1: ...but it is difficult. I hope I will do it. I can fulfil my dream. I want to be able to hunt down my life. If you want to follow your dream you have to fight in life. It is the first thing you have to do.*

*Y2 C2: It's better than the other people who are out ... We were the only people who ... the others stayed out, spent about six months and still struggling for a container or ... we were the first people, like the first family, we had a container. And it was better for us. Everyone else has problems...*

Moving closer to youth mobility through Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, mobility is perceived as ‘embodied cultural capital’ (Cuzzocrea, 2018; Holdsworth, 2006). This means that the experience of abandoning the home and, later, mobility, has a direct impact on the dispositions and abilities developed by young people (Holdsworth, 2006). Through ‘embodied cultural capital’ life plans, desires and profound values can emerge. Some young people consider how they can find themselves in a better financial situation so they can also help other refugees. In this way, they show that they are grateful for their solidarity with them and want to repay it.

Y1 C3: *Yes, I have no other plans for my future. Okay...one plan is that ... everyone is interested or entitled to live his life. I want to stay (in Greece) and I don't think I need a million euro. I need some money for living, I will help people, and maybe I can help.... Nothing else. If I'll become rich somehow, I will not have a problem. I'll try to help people. This is a part of my life. I believe it from my heart.*

Y1 C1: *Yes, I have some plans in my mind. If I'll find a good job I want to support ... anybody. This is my good plan, my life plan. I find a good job ... I will help people. This is my life plan. My father gave me this advice.*

This point is particularly important because few researches have focused on how the imagination of future mobility affects the way a person is perceiving a place that is not currently considered a 'home' but perhaps in the future (Cuzzocrea, 2018). That is, imagination of future mobility, as a term, refers to how one imagines the place that he or she would like to live in the future. The 'imagination of mobility', challenges what Prince said (2014, p. 700), that 'no one can imagine his future without a place'. In addition, youth destinations become visible as contingent rather than predetermined (Robertson, et al., 2018), and young people are not considered to be embedded in a place (Cuzzocrea, 2018).

In an effort to clarify the above, it is crucial to elaborate how the concept 'home' is understood in different contexts. In Migration Studies, 'home' is usually defined as the place of origin of a person's family (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Nevertheless, in the contemporary discussion of young people in mobility, 'home' is considered to be the ideal place the individual imagines to want to live (Cuzzocrea, 2018). From the findings of this research it follows that for a young person the home does not necessarily correspond to the place of origin but the place where he or she feels more comfort, security and human contact. It is the place where he or she enjoys basic privileges such as housing, education and feeding and, finally, which give him or her the comfort to make plans for the future. This finding agrees with Brah (1996), according to which the 'house' is not the place where a person or his/her family has memories of it, but represents a lived experience of a specific place. In short, for young people on the move, 'home' is probably 'Ithaca' that (perhaps) have not yet discovered (see also Gropas and Triandafyllidou, 2014).

## **4. The Spanish case study**

### **4.1 Summary of the ethnography**

In Spain, fieldwork was conducted in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, Catalonia. It included two neighbourhoods of Barcelona (El Raval and Nou Barris) and the adjacent municipality of Hospitalet de Llobregat. These places share some basic characteristics such as a high percentage of migrant population (first, second and third generation), from many different countries of origin, as well as working class, and low-income households. They also show a high population density, challenging intercultural cohabitation.

We conducted fieldwork in four organisations: The CCAR is the Catalan Commission for Refugee Assistance and deals with families and individuals (minors, young people, adults, etc.) who are seeking international protection. The Foundation Itaca and the Association AEI Raval are youth and child-centred organisations that seek socio-educational support and integration for children and youth in the risk of social exclusion. Finally, we conducted fieldwork in an autonomous social Youth centre, the Kasal Joves Roquetes. This centre offers a space for teenagers and young people of the neighbourhood dedicated to music (providing rehearsal rooms for bands) and additionally ludic workshops in the afternoon.

Overall, we interviewed seven professionals (social workers, psychologists, social educators) and 13 young people. Of these young people six were teenagers (between 13 and 17 years old) and seven between 18 and 24 years old. The interviews were semi-structured and partly individual, partly group conducted, always responding to informants' preferences and practical reasons. We were able to conduct some non-participant observation in the Kasal Joves Roquetes (participating in two workshops). Due to challenges in the fieldwork – that we will explain in the next section - we were not able to do observation in the other organizations. There we focused on the interviews. Fieldwork was conducted between 01/10/2018 and 23/12/2018.

### **4.2 Limitations of the fieldwork**

During the planning of the fieldwork, we contacted with the Red Cross in the Catalan city Lleida. We considered this organisation to be of high value for the research thanks to their

extensive experience with refugees in Catalonia. Their positive response allowed us to be optimistic about doing fieldwork with them. Nevertheless, as time passed, more and more legal and bureaucratic demands from the headquarter in Madrid came up and precluded the start of the fieldwork. This implied many working hours, email writing and telephone calls, delaying the timetable of the fieldwork. Finally, it was not possible to realise fieldwork in the given timeframe; in fact, we are still waiting for the legal department in Madrid to accept a formal demand for cooperation. Cooperation with refugee organisation implies access to a highly vulnerable and sensitive population, in need for protection. This means that the barriers to refugee organisations are significantly higher than to other organisations; for example those who attend migrants and/or Youth.

We opted then for a redirection of the cooperating organisations and contacted with other organisations in Barcelona. We were eager to find an organisation addressing refugees in order to enable an interesting comparison with the case study in Greece. Luckily the Catalan Commission for Refugee Assistance, CCAR, was very cooperative since the very beginning and kept the legal and bureaucratic demands to a minimum. This allowed us to start fieldwork with them in October 2018. Due to the limitations of access to refugee organisations (in a short time period), the profile of organisations and population of interest was expanded. We contacted with several organisations that attend migrants and/or Youth and encountered very positive responses.

Fieldwork with the Kasal Joves de Roquetes was very easy since the beginning. Their open door allowed us to conduct all the fieldwork the time permitted (including non-participant observation). The organisations Itaca and AEI Raval were also really cooperative, although they had to deal with a lot of workload. This meant that fieldwork with them also had to wait until the middle of November 2018.

### **4.3 Contextualization of the ethnographic fieldwork**

All participants of the study were fully informed about the objectives and procedures of the project before they took part in the interview processes. They signed a consent form in which they agreed to participate anonymously in the research. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and later translated into English.

As we explained before, the population's profile was expanded and included hence four organisations and four different categories of young people:

- 1) Refugee Youth between 18 and 24 years
- 2) Teenagers and Young people that migrated together with their families and live already for some years in Catalonia ('1. Generation')
- 3) Young people from migrant families that were born in Catalonia or migrated as little children ('2. Generation')
- 4) Spanish and Catalan Youth from neighbourhoods that are considered marginalised and precarious

These young people share some basic characteristics. First of all, they share life experiences as a young person and related desires, needs and projections. All of these groups might be considered at risk of social exclusion and marginalisation. At least they encounter important barriers to (higher) education, the labour market, economic resources and an adequate living place. Apart from their similarities there are significant differences among them. For instance, integration issues have a different connotation for youth seeking international protection than for second generation young people, who have been living almost all their life in their neighbourhood in Barcelona. Relations to the territory they live in and the local population vary widely between these different groups. Nevertheless, correlations are not automatic: we can observe how characteristics of the territory, but also individual, family contexts and class contexts influence young people's sociocultural integration with the place they live, the culture of the welcome country and their relations with other native or not native young people. The comparison between their needs and demands, their territorial and social relations, identities and integration processes is highly interesting.

#### **4.4 Brief description of the cooperating organisations and the fieldwork conducted**

Below we will give a brief overview of the different organisations that have collaborated with this study – their objectives, projects and target population – and the fieldwork we conducted there, which results are going to be presented in chapter 5.

## **1. The Youth Centre Kasal Joves de Roquetes**

The Kasal Joves de Roquetes<sup>1</sup> is an Autonomous Social Youth Centre in the neighbourhood of Roquetes. Roquetes belongs to the Barcelonese district of Nou Barris, located on the hills on the outer northern borders of Barcelona. The neighbourhood was originated in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the mass migrant population from Southern Spain, this new neighbours found in this area a place to build their house as they were not able to access to other living places in the city. These families had to struggle during decades, demanding proper infrastructure, safe streets, access to city transport and portable water, houses and public services, etc. This led into a highly self-organized and protesting neighbourhood. The Social Youth Centre is the outcome of the social and political struggle, which started in the 1980s when young people demanded a proper space for them to gather. Formerly occupied, the actual Youth Centre is still characterized by an autonomous spirit and left-wing ideology. Nowadays it is subsidized by the Municipality of Barcelona, but a lot of the music and leisure projects are self-financed.

One of the principal features of the Centre is that it is self-managed by a Youth Assembly, called 'La Gestora'. This Assembly decides in weekly meetings on each and every action to take: which workshop to offer, where to spend the budget and which social worker to hire. The membership of the Youth Assembly is open to all participants of the Youth Centre; it is even desired that they become members, considering their involvement a counterpart to their 'use' of the facilities offered by the Centre.

The Youth Centre offers rehearsal rooms for bands without any costs. For many bands of the neighbourhood it is the only way to pursue their music, since they can't afford to rent rehearsal rooms in other parts of the city. This means that many of the people involved in the youth centre are musicians (dedicated to rock, punk, and alternative music). They are between 18 and 24 years old and strongly associated with the alternative music scene of the neighbourhood. This brings into play interesting features such as gender and social class. On the weekends the centre hosts concerts or music festivals, often in collaboration with other Youth Centres of the neighbourhood or sociocultural associations.

Moreover, the Youth Centre offers an open meeting space early in the afternoon (to play table football, to chat etc.), and workshops during the week, such as theatre, cooking, make-up

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kasaljovesroquetes.wordpress.com/>

techniques or self-defence. These workshops are based on young users' suggestions and they are always decided by the Assembly. Teachers are mainly young people from the neighbourhood. The participants of the workshops are usually younger than the musicians, between 13 and 17 years old. They have a different profile, since they are much less political and many come from migrant families. From time to time the Youth Centre organizes courses and trainings for young people (for example, training as a social instructor). In the summer they organize a leisure summer camp. Most of the participants of the Youth Centre share strong bonds and networks within the neighbourhood and show strong local identities.

In this context, we conducted a semi-structured group interview with the three social workers that work at the Youth centre (and they were selected by the Youth Assembly) and two individual interviews with members of the Assembly (a young woman and a young man). We also conducted a non-participant observation in two workshops – 'theatre' and 'make-up techniques' – and a semi-structured group interview with four participants of the theatre workshop. They were between 13 and 15 years old and from diverse origins (Nigeria, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Spain). We also did a semi-structured interview with a 24 year old participant, a single mother from Equatorial Guinea without legal residence permission (although she has been living in Spain since she was 10 years old).

## **2. CCAR/CEAR**

The Catalan Commission for Refugee Assistance<sup>2</sup> forms part of the National Spanish Commission of the same name (CEAR). Hence, they work closely together with Spanish and Catalan administrations. Through different programs and projects, they give support to all kinds of refugees: minors, families or individuals. Venezuela, Syria, Colombia, Ukraine and Palestine are the most common countries of origin for asylum seekers in Spain.

The State Program for the Reception of Asylum Seekers is the most important tool of the commission. This program gives multidimensional support to asylum seekers while they are waiting for the decision on their asylum status. It lasts 18 months and includes three phases: In the first phase (6 months) people live in a refugee centre with other refugees and learn the Spanish language on a daily basis. People can be assigned to the five refugee centres that belong to CCAR, but also to any other refugee centre in Spain with availability. The same way people get to refugee centres in Barcelona when there is no availability in other parts of Spain. The

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ccar.cat/?lang=es>



first phase is characterized by a very close assistance by social workers of the centre and refugees live in a highly endogamic refugee environment (few contacts with the local population). At the same time, refugees focus on their language acquisition, in order to facilitate their integration within society. In the second and third phase asylum seekers live in an independent apartment (normally they share a flat with other people) and get social, psychological and socio-labour support from the CCAR office, located in the neighbourhood Raval. The office provides support for the access to housing, labour opportunities and professional training. The final goal of the program is an asylum seeker, who is autonomous in every aspect, has realized a professional training/course and had a first contact with the job market. Apart from this program several other sociocultural projects and workshops are offered to enhance refugees' interaction with other people and their sociocultural integration. Depending on the individual needs of every participant, social workers focus also on the improvement of key skills, such as self-esteem, communication or team working, in these workshops.

In CCAR we conducted semi-structured interviews with a social worker, a socio-labour counsellor and two young men seeking international protection, one from Syria and the other from Ukraine.

### **3. Association AEI Raval**

AEI Raval<sup>3</sup> is an Association for the Education and Integration of children and young people in the Barcelonese neighbourhood of Raval. This neighbourhood is located at the city centre of Barcelona and historically is one of the arrival points for new migrants in Barcelona. It was and is a melting pot for immigrants, tourists, locals and organized crime, presenting a high population density. It presents a high percentage of first-generation migrants and low-income households. Nevertheless, it has undergone profound changes and is still transforming continuously, with local authorities and civic organizations trying to improve infrastructure, public spaces, intercultural cohabitation and safety issues. It has an especially vivid atmosphere and these days the Arabic community is very present (shops, organizations, services etc.).

AEI Raval attends children and young people at risk of social exclusion and those with performance problems in the education system. It provides two kinds of spaces: The 'Centre Oberta' offers a ludic space for children and youth between 3 and 16 years, organised in groups according to their age (3-4 years old, 4-5 years old go together, and so on). The same group meets

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aeiraval.org/en/l-entitat/>

three afternoons a week and contains approximately 12 people. The children and young people have an afternoon snack, do their homework or study for school and then have time to play together, do projects, go on excursions etc. Most of these children and young people are second generation migrants, with a high percentage of those coming from Moroccan families. They are normally well integrated in the neighbourhood and civil society. The other space, 'Aula Oberta', is an 'open classroom' dedicated to support young people (16 years and older) in their studies. Some of them are about to finish secondary school; others attend high school or a professional training. They receive support and advice from volunteers (which are mostly adults, many of them pensioners). Until now it is a merely academic space, but AEI Raval wants to expand it and incorporate more ludic aspects. Here, most of the participants are first generation migrants, who have been living in Barcelona between three and seven years. A significant number are girls from Pakistan families, who struggle within the formal education system due to strong linguistic and cultural barriers.

In AEI Raval we conducted a semi-structured interview with a social educator from the academic program and a semi-structured interview with two girls from Pakistan. In the context of the last interview we could realize some non-participant observation in the 'Aula oberta'.

#### **4. Foundation Itaca Els Vents**

Itaca<sup>4</sup> is a foundation in Hospitalet de Llobregat, a city in the Southern borders of Barcelona. The city has a large history on migration and was an arrival point for the massive migrant population of Southern Spain in the 1960s and 1970s. These days Hospitalet presents a high percentage of foreign population from diverse countries of origin. The Latin American community constitutes one of the most important ones and is very present in everyday life. Apart from that, Hospitalet is characterized by working class and lower income households.

The Foundation is dedicated to children and young people between 1 and 30 years old. It offers a space for participation and second opportunities for children and young people, who lack resources due to economic or sociocultural difficulties. It provides a variety of projects, addressing different populations. During the week it offers a leisure/academic space for children and young people, where they can have a snack, do homework and play with their friends. On Saturdays afternoons plays, excursions and group dynamics are developed. In the program 'In-serjove' young people between 16-30 years old have the opportunity to cultivate their social

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fundacionitaca.com/>

and labour skills and get information on education programs, professional trainings etc. Furthermore, the improvement of personal abilities such as self-esteem, team working, social relations and empathy are high in the agenda of this organization.

In 'Inserjove' we conducted a semi-structured interview with a social educator, as well as a semi-structured group interview with a young man from Bolivia and a young woman from the Dominican Republic.

#### **4.5 Ethnography**

As we already mentioned above, the analysis includes different categories of young people, like refugees, migrants of first and second generation as well as local precarious youth. Apart from these distinctions, the age group from 13-17 years presents considerable differences compared to the one from 18-24 years.

The data analysis includes quotes from the interviews conducted. Each participant has a symbol with its number. If it is a young person there is (Y), a professional such as a social worker, psychologist or social educator has a (P), and the researcher a (R). Some informants have shown to be key informants and are quoted with a pseudonym, as they are cited more frequently.

##### ***4.5.1 Young people with strong ties in the neighbourhood, searching for spaces of expression, self-determination and empowerment***

This category includes, on the one hand, local teenagers (13-17 years old) and young people (18-24 years old) and, on the other one, young people of the same age from migrant families but who have spent almost all their lives in Barcelona.

As we described before in chapter 4.1., these young people grow up in a working class and lower income neighbourhood in the northern outskirts of Barcelona. Apart from many Southern Spanish families, the origins of population are very varied, coming from all continents. These days the neighbourhood is seeking a way out of its marginalisation and prejudices originated historically. Partly due to its location (distanced from the city centre), young people show a strong sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and vital bonds in the wider territory. They

express overall satisfaction to live there, although depending on their degree of social connect-  
edness within the territory:

R: *What do you think of your neighbourhood, do you feel comfortable?*

Y1: *I like the neighbours. Maybe one day, there is a strange smell of food that I do not like because it smells funny...*

Y2: *I am normal with my neighbours and that's, because I do not do anything in my neighbourhood, I only live there.*

Y1: *The library is also very good. It is tiny but has many books and is very interesting.*

R to J. and N: *How do you feel about the neighbourhood?*

Y3: *Well, the neighbours like me and for now no problem.*

Y4: *Well, it's fine. I like it.*

Many of the young people (18-24 years old) that participate in the Assembly of the Youth Centre are politically active and share a left-wing ideology. They have strong ties with the neighbourhood, related to the neighbourhood's identity of political struggle and social claims.

These young people present dense networks and a high degree of local mobilisation and associationism: they tend to participate in civic organizations and associations that pursue common public interests by the means of collective actions (Marín Gómez, 2007, 46; Merino Pareja, 2006). Alba is a member of the Assembly of the Youth Centre in Roquetes. This young woman, daughter of Andalusian parents, explains to us:

*Y5: The people of Andalusia set out to build the streets and made the sewage themselves. Here, for example, the bus wouldn't get up, because of the hills. And so, they hijacked a bus and made the driver get up here. So, the entire story of the neighbourhood is pretty much of struggle and fight. (...) Right now, in the neighbourhood there are young people, but it is difficult to make these young people visible because we mobilize in very reserved spaces for us, like the Youth Centres... And we move between all the neighbourhoods (of Nou Barris). We all know each other as if it was a village.*

The neighbourhood evokes strong senses of belonging and connect young people to the territory, shaping their identities. These identities imply social class awareness and a kind of 'protest identity' that shape young people's future projects. Alba states:

Y5: *I want to stay in the neighbourhood. (very secure)*

R: *Why?*

*Y5: For the life it has. Here both young and old people can militate anywhere. And it's not frowned upon. (...) I want to stay here, because it gives me life. I believe that other neighbourhoods (she named a few high income-neighbourhoods), I would die. I would die of disgust. I do not want to be there, next to those people. No. I'm staying here.*

These local identities within a multicultural neighbourhood have a strong influence on processes of sociocultural integration and young people's attitude towards interculturalism (Meer and Modood, 2012). For these young people it is perfectly normal to live in a multicultural environment. They consider it an asset for their lives and a chance to learn from people with different languages, traditions and cultural habits.

*R: And how does it seem to you to live here and have many friends from many different countries?*

*Y2: Good, because that's how you learn more cultures that you did not know.*

*Y1: Good. (...) Because if you go to the rich area there will not be so much diversity as here, maybe a few from America and from developed countries in Europe, Germany, France, Italy ...*

*Y4: It's good to have friends and to know other cultures, the other hobbies...*

*Y3: Most friends who come from other places I get along very well, we understand each other...*

Migration is often seen as a natural event in people's life and something that is experienced as proper and familiar (and that can happen to anyone).

*R: There is a lot of diversity here, a lot of people from different countries. How do you feel about that?*

*Y5: I think that is how it has to be. As Heraclitus said 'you cannot bathe in the same river twice.' There will always be affluence. Like the affluence of people. Migration is a reality and this is how it has to be. People move, live, come and go. And it is also a characteristic feature of the neighbourhood, which is its wealth as well, multiculturalism. If I were locked in the neighbourhood and did not know anyone else, I would be ignorant and a racist. And I'm thankful that I'm not. I also get rich from other cultures and they are also from ours... I see it as a positive fact.*

This doesn't mean that there aren't any conflicts between different groups of people in the neighbourhood, disputing over cultural or religious habits. Young people do experience racism and discrimination, especially those bearing distinctive foreign features such as a dark skin (see also Giliberti, 2012, 2013; Martínez Sanmartí, 2002; Queirolo Palmas, 2003). In general, young people are highly sensitive about the issue.

R: *You mentioned before some problems here of racism and discrimination. What do you think could be done to improve this?*

Y4: *This also depends on the person, because there are people who feel discrimination but do not react to it...*

Y1: *Basically, you should penalize people, so they would have to pay a fine. And try to solve this problem with education...*

Y4: *People simply shouldn't be such assholes ... sorry!*

Y1: *You could give a reward at the end of the year to anyone who didn't discriminate anyone. People should be more civilized, more respectful in general, not only with the issue of racism. They should try to understand each other more.*

Carlos is a young man of 23 years old and also member of the Assembly of the Youth Centre. He was born in Ecuador but grew up in the neighbourhood. He thinks that the multicultural atmosphere of the neighbourhood trains oneself to be more sensitive about hidden discriminations and to be more tolerant and respectful:

Y6: *For me, respect is important because when it comes to addressing a person, this rule is basic. Treat them as you would like to be treated by them. (...) There are always certain gestures that help to perpetuate the class and racist issue... For example, in the subway, a 'mantero' (African men who sells things on the streets of Barcelona, without permission) sits next to a lady and she stands up and takes another seat. It is no necessary. Or for example, you enter the subway and see four people who are gypsies and you hide your bags... Maybe you don't do that with intention, but, man! Why?! I believe that we must accept our reality. And now the extreme right is on the rise, so we must be careful with these things.*

In this respect, the neighbourhood and the Youth Centre enables a continuous informal 'training' for an open and curious mind. According to Carlos this attitude is the best 'medicine' to counteract xenophobia and discrimination:

R: *Do you have any ideas to counteract this tendency?*

Y6: *You have to be a little restless ass, you have to be curious about things. (...) It is important that you want to learn, that you have an open mind and that you are not hermetic. (...) Above all being a nonconformist. Nonconformity is the decision that helps you to rethink things. (...) You have to ask yourself what is right and what is wrong. It is also a very titanic effort, you are always in continuous doubts and it's like fucking... I need a break.*

The young people and teenagers of this group dedicate their lives mainly to studies, friends and leisure (the younger ones), and work, friendships, hobbies and the active participation in diverse associations (the older ones) (see also Feixa, 1998; Hopkins, 2010; Martínez Sanmartí, 2002; Skelton and Valentine, 1998). All of their activities are pretty much located in the neighbourhood. The younger ones express a desire for more leisure activities such as dancing, theatre or sports. In some cases, they long for a more active social life, more friendships and a wider network. The Youth Centre is one of the few places in the neighbourhood, where they can satisfy these needs and realize their preferred activities without any costs. It is also a space where to find companionship and social life.

*Y2: My teachers in school had informed that there are extracurricular activities in the Centre, such as makeup, kitchen, theatre... I was interested in theatre because I like to act. A friend of mine recommended me the Centre, to go and act.... So now Monday afternoons I have theatre and homework. Tuesdays cooking and homework. Wednesdays and Thursdays the same, and Fridays, but I have not started yet, circus.*

*R: And you said that you are not satisfied with your life?*

*Y2: Because I do not have much social life, after school I stay at home and I start to see a TV series. I do not have a social life.*

*R: Would you like to have more social life?*

*Y2: Yes. The problem is that my friends are all very busy... well... I do not ask them either...*

*R: And you, are you satisfied with your life in general?*

*Y3: Yes. In school this trimester has gone well for me, but we have a lot of homework and it's tiring me. But I do them.*

To these young people it is essential to spend time with a group of friends, often just in order to 'hang around' and socialize. It is a time-off from education driven pressure and worries, central elements of young people's lives (Alegre i Canosa, 2007; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Hopkins, 2010). The desire for sociality, leisure and sports activities coincides with a claim for adequate places where to satisfy them. Both young people and social worker of the neighbourhood demand more space and better equipped installations for young people:

*R: Is there something you would like to have in the neighbourhood, some possibility of doing something that does not exist...?*

*Y1: Well, our theatre is fine, but I think we could modernize it a bit so it's more beautiful and suitable for the theatre.*

*Y2: Not only the theatre room, but all the Youth Centre. It would be nice if all the Youth Centre could expand.*

The social workers of the Youth Centre agree that the Centre is not able to offer specific activities due to the lack of adequate installations and space:

*P2: The principal need for young people here is a new home, they need new equipment. Many times, people come with specific needs or demands, whether concerning space or infrastructure that we cannot offer... I think that a well-equipped Centre is super-important. (...) For music, for corporal expression, a room with crystals so that people can do dancing, or theatre or some corporal expression, hygienic showers... A kind of space where you can come to and feel comfortable...*

Apart from that, the needs of young people of this profile are closely related to the socio-economic situation of their families: They are very aware about the socioeconomic lacks of their family. They desire a less worried situation at home and more resources so that they could have access to consumer goods, travels, training/courses, better housings and living standards. For the same reason, young people are very sensitive about consumer and capitalist behaviours, but long at the same time for the opportunity to work, in order to unburden their parents' economy:

*Y4: Everything would be better if people were not so greedy.*

*Y1: They should let us work, for a start. So, we could earn some money and we could go to the movies with our own money and thus not spend our parents' money.*

*Y2: How do you think you can be paid?*

*Y4: Well, working.*

*Y1: Well, you go to a bakery and you ask him to put bread or something like that.*

*R: Would you like to work?*

*Y2: I already have enough with school.*

Carlos explains his worries about the consumer culture, an especially sensitive issue for families with low income and poor education:

*Y6: Lately society is very consumerist. I work with people at risk of social exclusion. This profile of people they have been taught that consumerism is the maximum. Especially mothers and fathers say 'my son is happier because he has more things'. Well, no. You have to work things, enable things yourself.*



Youth Centres such as the Kasal Roquetes and other associations try to counteract some of these deficiencies by offering classes and courses for free. They also provide young people with a space where they can gather, get to know each other and expand their network. There they can have a good and relaxed time, in a proper space of their own, away from their parents' home (see also Sibley, 1995). Many of the young people are looking for a place to find companionship, a kind of family and an escape from boredom and loneliness. A 24-year-old woman, who participated in the Youth Centre since she was a teenager, comments:

*Y7: The Youth Centre is very good for young people. And I am young. The social workers, who are now in the Youth Centre, I like them a lot. I come to the Centre because I like to hang out and chat with them.*

In terms of learning, the participation in the Youth Assembly is a crucial informal learning tool for the young people of this group. The Assembly summons every week and where its members take decisions about every action is going to take place within the Centre, i.e. to buy a new ping pong table or which social worker to hire. This implies a great deal of responsibility and capacity of community management. Young people develop key soft skills through a process of 'trial and error'. As Carlos comments:

*Y6: These spaces, such as this Youth Centre, they open your mind, which is what happened to me. Self-managed Youth Centres, managed by young people, are an incredible tool for social transformation. Not only on a social level, also on a personal level, you are evolving along with your decisions, the self-management...I've learned a lot. (...) I will be eternally grateful to the Centre, because it has helped me to know myself. Because you get to know your limits, at the time of communicating, of relating, when making decisions from the most banal to the most important, then you know your limitations, you explore and then little by little you grow. The fact of meeting and saying things out loud is a way of knowing yourself. Dealing with different people you learn about your limitations and that means that from there on you grow.*

As Carlos puts it, the involvement in the Assembly implies a learning process on how to communicate, speak up for oneself and take positions. Also, it helps someone to be able to relate to others from different social and cultural backgrounds and to find a compromise.

*R: In all the spaces in which you participate what do you think you have learned?*

*Y5: Public speaking. To listen and to explain. You have to be aware of a cause in order to act*

*on the matter. It's a good idea to comment on something with knowledge about the subject. And understanding people's ways of working, the way of thinking, respecting them. The consensus. When you decide, we do not vote. We do it by listening and considering what each person wants. Many times, you have to make concessions and leave behind your own interest. That has been taught to me a lot by the Assembly. And help others when they need it, even if it may cost you... And to sort your priorities.*

In this process young people convert from passive receptors (formal education system and other adult-centred spaces) to active protagonists of their actions, shaping their environment (Urteaga, 2011; Valentine, Skelton and Chambers, 1998; Wyn and White, 1997). It is a process of maturation and development, as Alba explains:

*Y5: Here I learned a lot. I learned to adapt to different situations. Decision making. Political maturation. Personal maturation. I could address issues that I observed before, but now I can act from the inside. If I am from the neighbourhood and I have the opportunity to take charge in the matter, I will do it. And I wish many people would. Because, hell, your opinion counts. And it's cool that we are being taken into account and that there is so much coordination between the Youth Centres. (...)*

Young people like Alba and Carlos are looking for spaces of self-determination and proper spaces of influence for a youth that is often stigmatized by adults, especially when it comes to specific groups of young people that do not fit into mainstream and hegemonic society (Feixa, 1998; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). These young people demand approximation between young and adult actors, in order to reduce prejudices against specific youth groups and the spaces/places they have made their own, such as the Autonomous Youth Centres. It still needs a lot of communication and 'getting to know each other', as Alba elaborates:

*Y5: I think that alternative youth is criminalized a lot. Like 'these hippies, these punks... who do not do anything with their lives, who smoke dogs and drink alcohol...' But they do not realize that it is also a way to militate. I have known people in a party but then it all materializes in an assembly. If our way of getting to know each other is the party, then we have to accept it and not criminalize it. It is also necessary to open ourselves more, that people get to know us more. We are open. But people do not know how an Autonomous Youth Centre works. Because this is not taught in the classrooms. It is not taught anywhere. That's why my mother said, when I started to go the Centre, 'oh, you're going there, you're going to be smoking joints all afternoon and you're not going to do anything with your life'. But now she's learned that here, fuck, that*

I even I'm going somewhere else to play (with my band), like an exchange. And now she is 'how cool the Centre, it pays us things and she learns things...'

The learning processes that we could observe in spaces such as the Youth Centre and within this youth category are of especial value to the research. They are worth considered as possible example for other projects that aim at empowering young people through their participation in self-managed and –financed youth projects.

#### **4.5.2 Young migrants struggling for opportunities in the labour market and education system**

Compared to the former group, we trace different situations and needs for a group of young migrants of the first and second generation that have faced more difficult integration situations and perform identities that are more closely linked to their countries of origin than Catalonia. Still, this is a generalisation and there are, of course, young migrants of the first generation with strong local identities and important ties within the host country and local people, as many studies observed (Alarcón, 2010; Casas, 2003; Kibria, 2000; Levitt, 2009; Portes, Vickstrom and Aparicio, 2011). Nevertheless, this specific group consists of young people facing various difficulties within the formal education system and barriers to access (higher) education and the labour market. This category was especially overt in the organisations AEI Raval and Itaca.

Some of these difficulties are located in the adverse situations in the families, the cultural background and conditions of the neighbourhood/residence, but also by linguistic barriers that migrant youth often faces (see also Loewen, 2003). In the academic support group offered by AEI Raval we encountered many young people, most of all girls coming from Pakistan, that are not able to meet the basic linguistic skills demanded by the higher education system. The social educator explains how their lack of Spanish and Catalan is obstructing all subsequent academic tasks:

*P4: Many of them do not dominate Catalan and Spanish. Many speak better English, because they are from the Pakistani population. But apart from the low level of Catalan and Spanish, they have a hard time understanding, in order to pass the Secondary School, because their pace is very low. And it is not the same to understand concepts of the Secondary School than philosophy concepts of High School. Missing spelling, grammatical errors, basic things ... (...) In High School they are asked to write texts in the exams and they do not know. Their level is very low. And now the notes of the first trimester have been a catastrophe.*

This situation clashes with the aspirations of young Pakistan girls, culturally determined, to study a career at university and get married (see also REF). A Pakistan girl, for example, tells us: ‘I want to finish my studies, then look for a job and then get married.’ They pursue the university degree even though many of them assume that they might never work. The social educator resumes the situation as following:

*M4: Many girls are already very focused that at 24 years they are going to get married, with which they have 6 years, from 16 to 22. This means they have to finish High School in two years and in four years university career. And that is their goal. So they go to High School even when they do not have the level of the Secondary School... So we have to work hard on their projections for the future. But they also receive a lot of pressure from their families. So they do just this: study, study, study.*

According to experiences in AEI Raval, these girls and other young people enter in a vicious circle, from where it is difficult to escape. In the case of Pakistan girls, their freedom is usually much more limited than that of the boys, since many of the girls are not allowed to leave the house without companionship of parents or brothers. This reduces their life experiences pretty much to academic spaces (see also Arrasate Hierro-Olavarría, 2018). In the end, the pressure and experiences of ‘failures’ and ‘closed doors’ is so pertinent, that mental and physical health is at risk:

*M4: They have so much trouble in the head and so much stress, that the level of concentration is very low. They also have family stories at home, they have to take care of the brothers, clean up, etc... So they go to school 6 hours, then they come here 3 hours and then I go to my house and I have to study 5 hours more, I go to sleep very late... Many of them have told us that their period has disappeared, due to stress, food... It is like a fish that bites its tail: I have a low level, I have to dedicate many hours, but I do not know how to dedicate hours, then the result is low, with which the level is still low, with which I have to devote even more hours. If I have studied 7, now I will study 10 hours! But it is not a matter of quantity; it is a matter of quality. That is the change we want to give them.*

Apart from giving support to these girls and other young people in order to improve learning habits and focus on ‘quality learning’, the social educator highlights two crucial aspects to bear in mind: First, social workers and educators are in the need of understanding the perspectives of Youth with different cultural background. This means to understand their needs and start

from there and ‘not to program something *for* them, but *with* them’. This implies also the rising need for professionals to receive intercultural training:

*M4: An intercultural training would be very good for us. Of course, from an Europeanist and adultist vision you could say: it would be great for these girls to go out, have some fun... But this clashes with their culture. We have to understand them and see what their perspective is, their needs... The first quarter on Fridays came a small group of girls to do research work. In what did this convert? In a social club. They came to do the research work, yes, but like an hour we spent talking. They started showing you videos of Pakistan, of weddings ... Like they have that need to explain, to talk, about their culture and life.*

On the other hand, social workers highlight the need of these young people to dedicate more time to leisure, relax and social relations. This implies that academic programs such as ‘Aula Oberta’ should enable and promote more leisure spaces, even if it’s difficult to motivate young people to participate:

*M4: It is vital to have some leisure. The fact of making visible that leisure is healthy. Either to come here and watch a movie, interact with someone and take a walk ... Within the possibilities that their families let them have. For many people, going around is not so easy. Because many are not allowed to leave the house. That’s why it was our idea to offer Fridays a space, a space that they already know, which is safe... Even many kids tell us ‘I’m not going to say at home that on Fridays we do not do homework. That’s how they let me come.’ (...) They have a hard time coming. Because it is not an academic reinforcement, so it is not contemplated. Because in this time I could be studying, I could be in the library... It is a concept of time at the level of utility. Relaxation and leisure... how could this be useful for me?*

Definitely, we have to consider how we could integrate leisure and ‘having a good time’ into our concepts of learning, knowledge and ‘usefulness’ (see also Cobo and Moravec, 2011). But not only for these reasons some young people might struggle in the formal education system and suffer a lack of perspectives. Most often it is due to a mix of family responsibilities, economic problems at home, experiences of discrimination or racism and adverse conditions at school (see also Garcia Castaño and Carrasco Pons, 2011). A young woman, 18 years old and from a Dominican family, explains her situation:

Y10: *I could not finish Secondary School due to family problems at home. When I left I started a veterinary course, but I could not finish it, I had three months to finish it, but my mother couldn't pay it and so I had to leave. Then I worked for two or three months and from then on I haven't worked again.*

A young man from a Bolivian family, who lived practically all his life in Spain, explains his hardship in High School:

Y11: *Luckily I could finish Secondary School. And I finished also High School, but badly (...) For the High School Diploma I had to work very hard, because I had suspended many subjects. But in the end I made it. (...) But I ended up very exhausted, and I did not feel strong, it had cost me so much and I knew that the exams for university entry are supposed to be more complicated... I was exhausted, I got depressed; my passion went away, I only felt motivation for playing soccer. The week of the university exams arrived and I, without having studied anything, I flagged. But I want to present myself now in the next call, it's my dream to go to university.*

All these young people are in risk to 'fall out of the system' and to stay behind in society, because they are not able to meet the requirements for superior education and the labour market. The situation is even worse for young people that don't dispose of legal residence and work permissions. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that we should not assume a correlation between 'recently arrived migrants' and 'failures in the formal education system'. The social educator from the program 'Inserjove', offered by Itaca, explains:

P5: *I have young people who have been in Spain for 12 years and are now 19 or 20, they arrived during school age, enrolled in formal education and did the whole itinerary... But at the end of the 4th year of Secondary School they stopped attending and did not have a compulsory secondary education. And these kids are positioned in the territory; they grew up in the neighbourhood...! There is no cause-consequence.*

The social educator expresses her worries and the demand for action in order to prevent Youth falling out of the system, whatever the reason:

M5: *These kids remain out of the system. They remain out of the regulated education system, of the informal system because they cannot access courses of professionalism if they do not have documentation... they stay out of the labour market because they do not have mechanisms. Why do we leave them as floating entities in society...?! They don't have legal documents? But*

*meanwhile, while they are waiting for their permissions, we will provide them with the maximum possible information so that at the moment you have documents, you have the door half open. Because if not, these kids always encounter closed doors. And here they come to look for a better future because they cannot have it in their countries of origin. Or the one that comes from an unstructured family also wants a better future. In the end we all want the same.*

For many young people they need a support that provides information on how things work, where to access what and where to get resources. It is vital to address the important lack of knowledge concerning the education system and labour market; the lack of perspectives towards the future and to help them consider 'what is possible and what not'. The social educator explains the principal lines of action of the program 'Inserjove':

*M5: On the one hand, we want to provide viable, fast and reliable information on how the labour market is and what tools are necessary to enter the labour market. Apart from this we provide all the personal and emotional support that many of these young people need... Because they come with problems and difficulties both personal and social; they come from other countries and find the situation here a bit jarring. Many come to us because they have experienced a failure in compulsory education, or have a fragile compulsory education... Or they have completed compulsory studies but do not have enough resources to continue. Then they need this support and accompaniment to continue, encouraging their motivation to keep on studying.*

Generally, young people need to 'swim with the system' and be successful in the educational system, in order to improve their opportunities in the labour market: education is the necessary access to the labour market (see also Jallade, 1987). So one of the important tasks of educators and social workers is to explain this to young people and help them getting a realistic perspective on it.

*P5: We want them to touch the feet on the ground. And that they are conscious. (...) Here it is super important to have an education. Because in the labour market there are increasingly more demands. And it's not enough to count with Secondary School. You will need something more. We motivate, we try that all can realize a training or education, if they do not already possess it. To be at the same level as the rest of the population. Because the education level of the population rises continuously. We want them to be aware of the demands and that they have to accomplish them. And these demands are for everyone: for you, who just arrived, as for the people from here.*

Inserjove also addresses general needs of these young people. They are related with the development of crucial soft skills that help them to make their way in society. One of the most important issues is young people's need to improve their network: to expand their horizon and references and to interact with actors that are different from their 'comfort zone' or familiar circle:

*P5: The greatest need is the network. The network with which they arrive. Because they arrive with a very small network or a network that is only family. Many of them come alone or because there was someone of reference here, but they have no family, network, friends. Then in the end they end up focusing only on what they know, in their comfort zone. And if they find a job or are at some point that already covers their personal and basic needs and do not aspire to know something else. In the end, everything falls into ignorance. In having a vision or knowing. (...) And we say: Try! Try the range of possibilities! Because you are in a totally intercultural country, so try to see what else it has to offer you!*

According to the social educator this is more relevant for young men than women, given the circumstances that the young women dispose of wider networks of family and friends, covering basic substantial needs such as housing and food.

The need for networks and social relations beyond the comfort zone can be related to a specific dynamic that occurs in some neighbourhoods, such as in Hospitalet: many young people from Latin American families create their 'comfort zone' within the important Latin American community in Hospitalet. It provides them identification, confidence and trust, a break from discrimination and racism experienced in other parts of Barcelona and a place 'to feel at home' (see also Feixa and Porzio, 2006; Giliberti, 2012; Massey and Sánchez R., 2010; Queirolo Palmas, 2003). A young man from Bolivia and a young woman from the Dominican Republic explain:

*R: How do you feel here in Hospitalet?*

*Y10: Here it is better than in Barcelona because there are more Latinos. In Barcelona there are not as many Latinos, so here I found my culture and I feel accompanied. And in the school here there were many Latinos, the teachers treated us all the same and I felt very good from the first day on. (...) The neighbourhood is smaller, more welcoming. There are people like me and I know how to express myself in front of them.*

*Y11: I feel similar about it, during the day is all very welcoming, because people are all from the same continent, you say something, a Latin American expression, and everybody understands you. (...)*



Y10: *We have a public square where only Latinos join, the 'Spanish square', my people call it the 'Latin square', because there are more Latinos than Spaniards, so there is a place where all kinds of Latinos come together and there we talk and meet many people.*

This situation is a double-edged sword, it presents advantages and disadvantages: On the one hand it allows young people to feel at home, accompanied and identified and enables them to have vivid networks within the Latin American community. It diminishes young people's sense of discrimination and racism, because they are not the 'only ones of their kind'. It gives young people the feeling of belonging to a majority, with which they share the same cultural and linguistic codes (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). On the other hand it creates a cultural ghetto that hinders intercultural contagion and the contact with the 'other' (see also Pascual i Saüc, 2000). It makes young people's relation to the 'local world' and the contact to Catalan and Spanish population much more difficult (although, what is local? We should never ignore the constant processes of mixture in any place...). Further projects are advised to counteract processes of ghettoization, by connecting Youth of different backgrounds. As young people explain, getting to know people of other sociocultural group is a strong asset:

Y11: *There are two young men in our group, who are from Nigeria and Mali from Africa, there is one who can't speak English or Spanish, only his native language...*

Fernanda: *He did not know how to say hello and now he learned a little, and the other does not speak English...*

Y11: *I speak a little in English. One day I went to play soccer and he came to play. And I said to him 'the next' and he understood me and we laughed. Somehow there is a communication. It's fine because it's people that surely if you cross it on the street you would not say hello or 'how you are doing?'*

Y10: *You would not join him.*

Apart from the need for networking, social workers and educators highlight the need for young people in risk of social exclusion to improve basic skills and abilities such as empathy, social relations, 'real listening', self-awareness and self-confidence, but also teamwork and communication.

M5: *As necessary skills for these young people I would highlight communication. They fear to communicate or to be prejudged or that there is an awareness of them. So they think: 'To avoid that I shut up, I keep it'. I would also emphasize self-esteem. Most of the kids share that they have low self-esteem. They never felt that their voice is important to the group. Another important competence: Active listening. I can hear you but I cannot listen to you. If I listen to you,*

*I'm paying attention. I look at you. I understand. I'm here. I believe that many of them do not have this conception of hearing and listening. And empathy. I feel one way but I have to understand that others may feel different to me. Sometimes you think that empathy is feeling the same as the other. No. With respecting his space and leaving it like that, it's fine.*

The two young people from Hospitalet agree on these aspects. They elaborated on their desire to improve certain skills and ways of being, in order to improve social relations and general wellbeing:

*Y10: The most important tool for me would be the possibility of communicating with everyone and not to be afraid of asking someone for help. I do not have that possibility because I am very closed and I'm scared to talk to people I do not know. (...) I would like to work on self-esteem because sometimes I break down with a word and then it's hard for me to get out of this moment. And I don't talk about this to people.*

*Y11: I agree. And I think it's important be socially opener and to have a mental balance because no matter how open you are, maybe a person could respond badly, and then you have to have a strong mental balance and know how to use it. Apart from that, be constant in what you want, which is something that costs a lot and is very easy to say.*

*Y10: yes, I agree. And do not be so hard on yourself. I'm very hard with myself but I would like to understand me more and accept me.*

Future projects should enhance this abilities and soft skills in order to smoothen young people's way through life and to prepare them for nowadays demands and dynamics of society.

#### **4.5.3 Between a new life and uncertainty: refugee youth in Barcelona**

Life situation and experiences differ significantly for young refugees that have arrived to Barcelona. Their situation is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty how and where life will go on and where they will be in the next two years (see also Correa-Velez, Gifford and Barnett, 2010). Their future life depends on whether their application for international protection will be successful or not. In Spain two out of every three people are denied the right for international protection (CEA(R), 2018). This has severe consequences on how young people can plan and project their future and clashes with the severe effort they realise in the host country, such as learning the language, getting familiar with society and the system, study a professional career, relate with other people, etc. During the first phase of arrival young people need to be quick learners on how to communicate (language), how to get around and where to get information. A social worker of CCAR explains their needs in the first months:

*M6: When they arrive, they need a constant companionship in how to take the subway, it's super important that they know how to get to the sites, how it works by train, the tram, the train, the Metro... They need to know how to get the health card, the census, and how to do paperwork, because we live in a society that if you do not know how to do paperwork, you are lost. So, at this level, they need a lot of support, these important tools, that they know how to move, that know how to go to the town hall, to Civic Centre...*

Young people applying for international protection in Barcelona have to be real 'survivors' due to the dramatic conditions in the public administration: Often they have to wait longer than six months to even get the first official appointment for the program. A social worker from CCAR explains:

*M6: First they need to go the institution SAIER and they take even six months to make an appointment to enter the social program, which is a very dramatic issue. And later, you're going to do the interview, and this can take three months, and then they assign you the place. Imagine the process through which they have to pass.... And this for a person who flees from their country of origin, because they have no other choice, they come here and have to go through months of ordeal. And if they do not have some social network, they have a very hard time (...) It is awful. And that situation is leaving many people, who are already vulnerable, in a situation of more vulnerability. There are even people in street situation ultimately, which is quite dramatic.*

As this social worker makes clear, the ordeal is aggravated by the already traumatic experiences Young people have had in their countries of origin and on their journey to Spain. A young man from Ukraine explains the situation he experienced in Ukraine before he left:

*Y13: I lived in a city called Vinnitsa. And in this place there are a lot of weapons and many explosions. And I live near this territory. Many explosions... This is why many people go to live in other cities or have left the country because there are many weapons in this place, a lot, a lot of weapons, 'bam, bam, bam, bam'. In the city there is no war, no, but very close, you always hear this 'bam, bam', sometimes there was no electricity too. Markets did not work well...*

Another young man from Syria tells us his odyssey to get from Syria to Morocco and from there to Spain:

*Y10: It was running a lot. It was not easy. I had to leave without being seen by the police or the people who are on the border. From Lebanon I went to Lebanon and then I travelled to Egypt. From Egypt to Libya. From Libya to Algeria. From Algeria to Morocco. Then I arrived*

*in Morocco and waited between six and ten months and worked there as well. But I saw that it was impossible for me to get legal work or residence permissions there and so I went to Spain, via Melilla.*

Many of the young people need an important psychological and emotional support in order to overcome highly traumatic and stressful situations (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). CCAR offers this kind of support to them. But the stressful situation continues in their lives in Barcelona: they are far away from home, have no possibilities to travel and see their family and they bear important responsibilities towards their families at home. But the State Program also implies a high level of pressure, as a social worker explains:

*M6: They receive a lot of pressure. We demand that they learn the language, that they seek training, that they do the training, in addition to approving it, that they obtain a certificate... All the time is like a requirement, and we are obviously there to support them, but the program is short and in the end there has to be evaluation. Also the pressure of the situation in the country of origin, their family, which also needs help... This pressure of 'I have to hurry', 'I have to get a job because my family needs me', so, it's all the time a context of pressure, pressure...*

Social workers and educators agree that these young people need some spaces and moments where they can counteract this pressure: a leisure time. A moment, where to relax and have a break from constant worries; a time for realising favourite activities or sports; a moment for getting together with other people. The social worker of CCAR stresses:

*P6: I think leisure is unloading. It's this moment to disconnect from everything I have on top of me. It's fundamental to find a moment of 'okay, now I do not have to get autonomy, I do not have to be there and there' and I can just dance, sing, or do yoga or whatever, or go to see a museum. And it's also super important to avoid social isolation that is something that personally concerns me a lot... Leisure, along with other people, is super important to encourage integration, but sometimes in CCAR we can't provide this element.*

The socio-labour councillor also agrees on the positive outcomes of sports and how this could imply fruitful learning processes:

*P7: Sports is fundamentally a game. And playing is a process through which many people learn... people that learn through experience, not like other people who prefer to read a book at home calmly but people who will never learn like this. (...) Why don't we bring interests and learning together? Take something I like and do it with the language I need to learn. Many young men like to watch soccer, so we could create a workshop to see football but where you*

*can comment in Spanish. To combine leisure that they like or interests with what they need because without realizing they will learn it and it is good and all very practical.*

Another basic tool to counteract the risk of loneliness and social isolation is the need for networking and social relations, as we have already observed in the other group. The social worker highlights the importance of a certain predisposition, which implies that people are open, want to learn the language and meet new people and are willing to participate actively in courses, activities, meetings or Civic Centres of the neighbourhood. According to her experience an open, curious and optimistic attitude is one of the most important factors in integration ‘failures’ or ‘success’, determining all life relevant processes. Here she tells us the process of a ‘success’-story:

*P6: This person has learned Spanish, despite the difficulties on the way, really easily. There are people who have a resilience that makes you think: I do not know where they take it, but it is admirable. And because of that he has been able to concentrate on the language, he has learned it, he has done training courses, he has managed to work, a few hours but it is already a first insertion in the labour market and this is always the hardest part. And it's a person who has a predisposition to participate in everything, in everything (...) Even if you feel lonely and alone, you want to overcome it, and he would tell you: I want to come, tell me, I want to participate in all the projects. This is a really good symptom.*

The willingness to learn and adapt to new situations and a kind of resilience seem to be key elements in integration processes of young refugees (Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012). Resilience is an important factor, if we bear in mind that these young people experience many situations of discrimination and racism, especially in the housing and labour market. The labour councillor of CCAR tells us, that many companies are reluctant to accept Collaboration agreement with CCAR and show severe prejudices against refugees:

*M7: Part of my work consists of raising awareness with companies. I am fed up explaining to companies what a red card is and that this is a valid document and that it is renewed and that they can work. It is true, we have illiterate people from different areas rural and it is very difficult to insert them in the regular market, but then we have engineers, architects, people who speak a lot of languages... They should not think that refugees are just the people we see on TV, because it is a very variable profile.*

The situation in the housing market is even worse, because Barcelona is undergoing (again!) a severe speculation boom. Prices for housing are disproportionately high and refugees have to

compete with local people in a very competitive and abusive market. This makes independence and autonomy for refugee Youth in Barcelona so much harder; they are extremely vulnerable to be cheated on, due to their lack of linguistic knowledge and their pressure to find a place to live since they have to leave the refugee centre after six months. They are also obliged to register in the census with a valid address, authorized by a person with an apartment contract, in order to get access to basic services, such as the public health system. The young man from Ukraine describes his experience:

*Y13: There are many scams in Barcelona. As I finished the first phase, after half a year I had to leave and look for a flat for me, to live alone. And I found a flat together with a friend of mine from Palestine. When we first looked at the house it was nice, with a large terrace, with everything, and but there was nothing in this house, beds or anything... And we told the lady we need to register in the census registration with this address and she said 'yes, no problem'. But she just wanted money and after three months there was no furniture, we had to bring a table and everything from the street, and she wouldn't do the registration for us. These people look for refugees to make money.*

Considering their legal situation and their consistent need to learn something new and 'improve their situation', it is vital for youth to have moments where they are empowered to be the protagonists of the situation and even experts on knowledge and skills. CCAR collaborated with a local museum in Barcelona and offered in its project 'ALAS' different artistic workshops that were led by refugees, according to their skills. The social worker evaluates the project as very positive:

*P4: With the project we wanted to promote leisure through art. But converting users into protagonists... And with that enhance their self-esteem, their empowerment. Because in the interviews we always ask 'how was your day', 'what difficulties...' Sometimes we put the emphasis on the difficulty and in this project it was like the other way around: we are going to look for your potentiality. And that you can teach it to others. The guy you've interviewed before made a song, he's a musician, he taught some music and they also made a song ... then a man from Afghanistan did a workshop on henna, a user offered us a belly dance, as each one tried to contribute. It was really wonderful.*

The young man from Syria, as the social worker explained, offered a workshop on music. He valued this as a very positive experience of sharing knowledge and expressing his own passions:

*Y12: It was great. (...) There were almost 10 to 15 people, and we worked together, when we took pictures we went to the mountain to take the pictures. And when we had the painting, we've all drawn something. On the day of music I taught them a song and we sang it. And I love the song. And I think one day, when I have time, I'm going make a good video (...)*

*R: And, what do these kinds of workshops give to you?*

*Y12: They make me have different experiences. I get to know the people better. And they get to know me better. I live my life. I do what I know to do. And this I can teach to other people, I can offer it to them. If I know something and nobody knows it, I can teach them, I will not save it only to myself. It's sharing. With a smile we can share joy with another person.*

Future projects with youth refugees should reflect on these needs and enforce the potential and autonomy of young people in the way these projects do. The aim is to convert 'receptors of support and help' into protagonists and active members in society, who interact with other people and shape their environment.

## 5. Conclusions

Through the ethnographic research conducted in two European Southern countries, Greece and Spain, hit wildly by the economic and refugee crisis, several elements of the lives of vulnerable and precarious youngsters on the move are brought into light, which show their aspirations, values, desires and goals.

The ethnographic research design was common for both case studies, albeit the particularities of each country. The axis of the observation, the core questions of the interviews, the research goals, as well as, the identity of the participants of the studies were pretty much the same for both case studies. Our main goal was to understand how the vulnerable young people are experiencing the current precarious situation and their position in it.

Comparing the two case studies, there are significant similarities and also differences among the participants in each country. Particularly, in the Greek case young immigrants and refugees mostly come from the 'Arab world' (Syria, Morocco, Libya etc.), from non-Arab parts of Africa, from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. In the Spanish case study participants come from a variety of countries, being Venezuela, Syria, Colombia and Ukraine the most important origins (CEA(R)), 2018).

Considering the needs of the mobile youth of both studies, it turns out from the research findings that there are many similarities among them. It is very important for them to have access to basic provisions provided by specific private or state organizations or by their own family, such as food, clothing, house and protection. Especially, the seeking of protection seems to lead many young people to incessant mobility.

Furthermore, personal relationships are an essential aspect of young people's culture. Particularly, in both studies, youngsters emphasize their desire for leisure activities with their friends, communication, friendship and a sense of belonging.

Young people usually imagine their future and talk about it. However, they have difficulty making realistic plans because they experience the absence of stability in their lives in the present. This finding is related to the priority of basic and psychological needs, largely confirming Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Maslow, 1943). This theory is organized into a



hierarchy (pyramid) in which lower / basic needs must first be met before the higher needs. When a person meets basic needs, then he or she can deal with self-development without any further worries. Young people felt they needed better guidance and information about their choices. Thus, ensuring a better economic situation is essential for young people as a precondition for meeting basic needs. For this reason, it is important to have specialized staff who can advise and guide young people in their professional and educational careers.

Sometimes it has been observed that the two case studies use different words with the same meaning. Characteristically, in the Spanish case study, the term 'uncertainty' is used to describe the vulnerability of young people, while in the Greek case study the terms 'insecurity' and 'precarity' are used. Any word of these two, if used, in this research suggests the difficulty and the future potential of the deadlock that young people have to manage. On the one hand, unaccompanied young people, although more independent, seem to be in an even more precarious position because they have no (emotional, financial) support from parents and / or other relatives. The need for contact with their own people, who are far away, was evident in the words of unaccompanied young people. On the other hand, accompanying young people are aware of the financial difficulties faced by their family and material deprivation, but they are less concerned about them because their family usually regulates the various issues for them.

Apart from the fact that mobile young people have some basic needs, they also have various requirements. They want to express themselves, to feel that they have a strong voice that should be heard but also involved in decisions that concern them. This idea comes mostly from the Spanish case study, 'not to plan something for them, but with them'. Moving young people contribute to local communities as 'active protagonists of their actions, shaping their environment'. This idea is also underlined in the Greek case study, where young people are 'active-albeit temporary-members of society'.

As far as education is concerned, young people feel that they need a more inclusive education system that will give them opportunities to learn the national language and thus to integrate more easily into the local community. However, because the state is unable to do so, a large part of its education has been largely taken over by NGOs and other organizations through non-formal education activities. Finally, an interesting feature of the two case studies was that young refugees and migrants, who are quite often faced with racist and xenophobic attitudes by

the locals, show socially empowered and conscientious to deal with. This may be due to the strengthening of their cultural identity that youth organizations in both countries are aiming for.

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## Appendix

### **ANNEX I: Semi-structured questionnaire for young people participating in a workshop/youth group**

1. Since when do you attend the workshop/group?
2. How did you get to know about it?
4. What do you do in the workshop/group?
5. Why do you like to participate in the workshop/group? What does it give to you?
6. What do you think is positive and where do you see problems / challenges or what would you like to have here that is missing for you?
8. Do you know the Manager? How do you think the way to work? Are you interested? Why? Why not?
9. Explain a little about yourself: How old are you? Where you live? Are you going to school?
10. What do you do? (education and leisure) What are your hobbies?
11. Do you receive some education/training outside of the institute? What does it give to you?
12. What languages do you want to learn?
13. What other things would you like to learn?
14. Are you satisfied with your lives? Why? Why not?
15. What are your plans for the future? How and where do you see yourself in some years?
16. What dreams do you have? What dreams do you want to fulfil?

## **ANNEX I: Semi-structured questionnaire for young people participating in a workshop/youth group**

1. (Sketching the informant's profile, such as name, age, education, years of work, etc.)
2. What exactly does the organization you work for? What are its main functions and objectives?
3. What are your experiences with new migrants and / or refugees (please explain further)?
4. How do you relate to young people?
5. Where do you see positive results, challenges and possible improvements for the future?
6. What are your remarks? What basic needs do these young people have?
7. What can these young people learn and experience in your organization (and compared to formal education or school)?
8. Would you like to have 'more tools' to work with these young people? What kind of tools?
9. What, in your opinion, is the useful knowledge and skills that young people need to learn to cope with their lives and their future?
10. Ideas for the future: What kind of intervention would you advise to offer to these young people? What do you want to do in the future?