Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

MOBILITY, INFORMALITY AND NETWORKS IN TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS

Ignacio Fradejas-García

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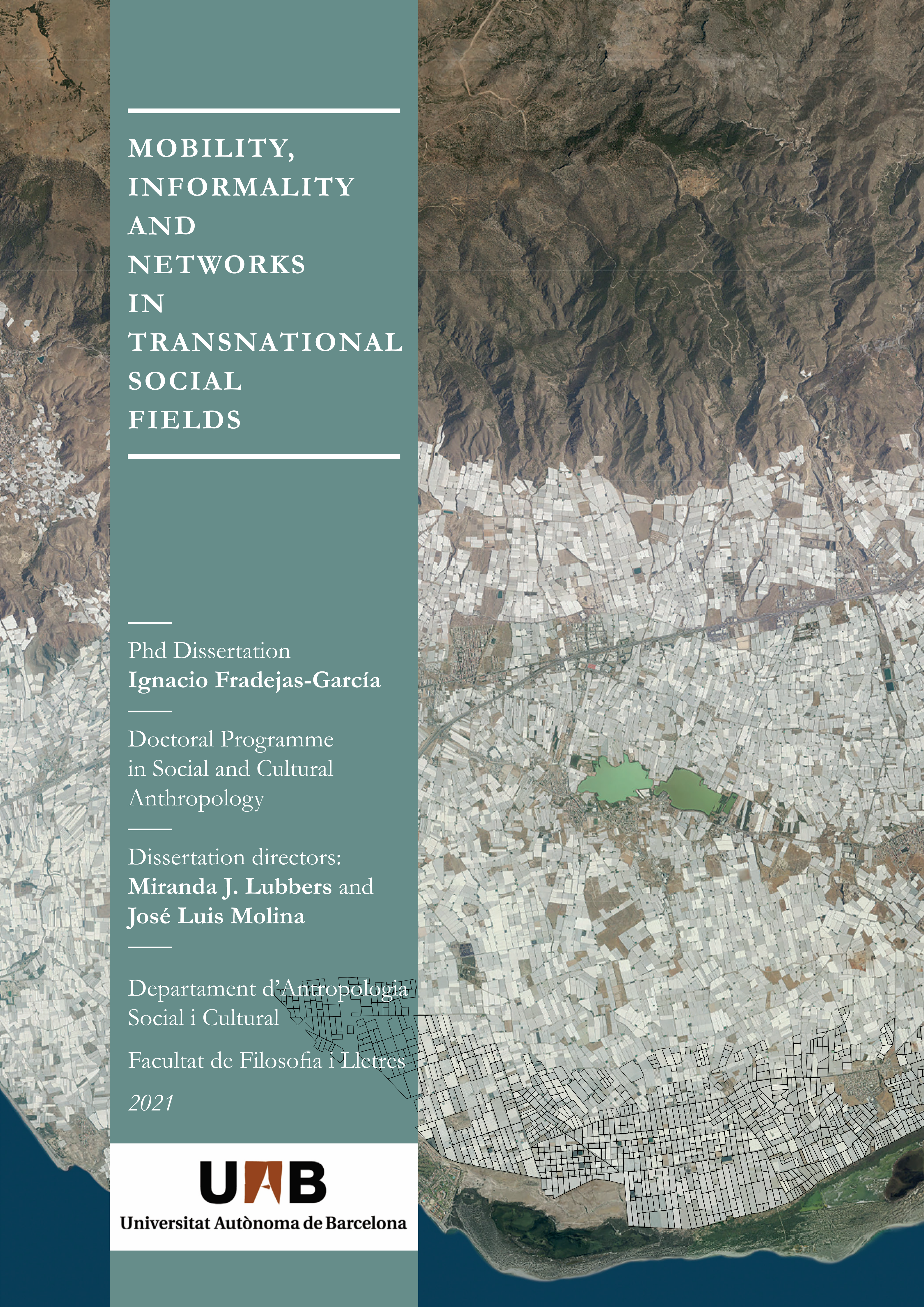

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Dissertation directors:
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A mi madre, quien insistía:
“Con los demás vas a vivir un tiempo,
pero contigo vas a vivir toda la vida”.

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the processes and practices that lead to the formation of transnational social fields (TSFs) and the related emergence of immigrant enclaves within the EU. Specifically, the thesis investigates the (im)mobilities and informal practices that Romanian migrants in Spain use to cope with the constraints of changing mobility regimes and the struggles of their day-to-day lives.

Based on long-term multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork and social network analysis, the research focuses on two demographic enclaves of Romanians in Spain, located respectively in Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar, both of which are connected socially with the main regions of the immigrants' origins in Romania, respectively Dâmboviţa and Bistriţa-Năsăud. Supported by their networks, and attracted by the formal and informal labour markets, Romanian migrants in Spain grew from a few thousands in 1998 to nearly 900,000 in 2012. They are concentrated in specific geographical locations, creating demographic enclaves – i.e., concentrations of migrants from a given origin in a particular destination – connected with their areas of origin through TSFs, which facilitate the retention of transnational connections with Romania while enabling their settlement in this new social, cultural, economic, and political context. In this case, migrants' arrivals were smoothed by labour markets in flourishing industrial districts, such as the ceramic industry in Castelló de la Plana and agribusiness in Roquetas de Mar, which provided employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as formal and informal forms of work.

The findings reported in this thesis show how migrants in these transnational contexts used informal practices and (im)mobilities to bypass and contest the unequal situations that exclude them from formal access to services, work, and opportunities. Their adaptation to their new living situations happens through two parallel processes: informalisation and formalisation. On the one hand, the informalisation process entails learning the unwritten rules, and selecting, preserving, and adjusting known informal practices to the new context, while abandoning others – mostly harmful, illicit, or illegal practices. On the other hand, the formalisation process involves learning the formal rules and adapting practices to legal pluralism, e.g., customary laws or religious laws; bureaucratic regularisation e.g., residence and work permits; and the Romanian institutions that support transnational ways of life, e.g., churches, consulates, associations, or businesses.

Going beyond the understanding of migration as an aggregate of individual decisions, this thesis advances our knowledge of the livelihood strategies that low-wage EU-internal migrants adopt in order to make a living. Understanding how informal practices and (im) mobilities are deployed by migrants at various transnational scales facilitates examining the social, economic, and political effects of the principles of free circulation and European integration that are producing social changes that will last for generations to come.

Resumen

Esta tesis analiza los procesos y prácticas que conducen a la formación de campos sociales transnacionales (CSTs) y su relación con el surgimiento de enclaves de migrantes dentro de la UE. Específicamente, esta tesis investiga las (in)movilidades y las prácticas informales que los migrantes rumanos en España utilizan para superar las limitaciones de los cambiantes regímenes de movilidad y las luchas de la vida cotidiana.

Basada en un trabajo de campo etnográfico de larga duración y en análisis de redes sociales, la investigación se centra en dos enclaves demográficos de rumanos en España, Castelló de la Plana y Roquetas de Mar, ambos socialmente conectados con las principales regiones de origen de los inmigrantes en Rumanía, Dâmbovița y Bistrița-Năsăud respectivamente. Apoyados por sus redes y atraídos por el mercado de trabajo formal e informal, los migrantes rumanos en España pasaron de ser unos pocos miles en 1998 a casi 900.000 en 2012.

Se concentran en ubicaciones geográficas específicas creando enclaves demográficos, es decir, concentraciones de migrantes de un origen determinado en un destino particular, conectados con sus áreas de origen a través de CSTs, que facilitan el mantenimiento de sus vínculos transnacionales con Rumania mientras posibilitan su asentamiento en este nuevo contexto social, cultural, económico y político. En este caso, su llegada fue allanada por los mercados laborales asociados a dos robustos distritos industriales, como son la industria cerámica en Castelló de la Plana y la agroindustria en Roquetas de Mar, que proporcionaron oportunidades laborales y de emprendimiento, así como diversas formas de trabajo formal e informal.

Los hallazgos de esta tesis muestran cómo los migrantes en estos contextos transnacionales usan las prácticas informales y las (in)movilidades para sortear y combatir situaciones de desigualdad que los excluyen del acceso formal a servicios, trabajo y oportunidades. La adaptación a estas nuevas situaciones vitales ocurre a través de dos procesos paralelos: informalización y formalización. Por un lado, el proceso de informalización implica aprender las reglas no escritas y seleccionar, preservar y ajustar sus prácticas informales al nuevo contexto, abandonando aquellas que son nocivas, ilícitas o ilegales. Por otro lado, el proceso de formalización implica aprender las reglas formales y adaptar las prácticas al pluralismo legal, como (p. ej., las leyes consuetudinarias o las leyes religiosas), a la regularización burocrática (p. ej., conseguir permisos

de residencia y trabajo) y al establecimiento de instituciones rumanas que facilitan las formas de vida transnacionales (p. ej., iglesias, consulados, asociaciones o empresas).

Más allá de la comprensión de la migración como un agregado de decisiones individuales, esta tesis avanza en el conocimiento sobre las estrategias de subsistencia que adoptan los trabajadores migrantes internos de la UE para ganarse la vida. Entender cómo las practicas informales y la (in)movilidad son utilizadas a diferentes escalas transnacionales, facilita el examen de los efectos sociales, culturales, económicos y políticos de los principios de la libre circulación y de la integración europea, que están produciendo cambios sociales que perdurarán durante generaciones.

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Introduction 1
1.1. Aims and questions 1
1.2. Theoretical premises 5
1.3. Context of the research 11
1.3.1. Romanian enclaves and industrial districts: two corridors between Spain and Romania 14
1.4. Thesis outline 18
1.5. References 21

Chapter 2. Methodology 31
2.1. The ORBITS project 31
2.2. The methods of the dissertation research 34
2.2.1. Participant observation 36
2.2.2. Informal interviews 36
2.2.3. Ethnographic fieldnotes from interviewees 37
2.2.4. Mobile methods 37
2.2.5. Focus groups 38
2.2.6. Semi-structured interviews 40
2.3. Data-processing and analysis 41
2.4. Ethics and positionality 44
2.5. References 46

Chapter 3. (Im)mobilities and Informality as Livelihood Strategies in Transnational Social Fields 49
3.1. Introduction 49
3.2. Informality and (im)mobilities as livelihood strategies in transnational social fields 52
3.3. Overview of Romanian migration to Spain: The Romanian enclaves of Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar 54
3.4. Informality adaptation: a schema of informal practices and transnational migration 56
3.5. Informal (im)mobilities of Romanian migrants in Spain 61

3.6. Navigating processes of formalisation and informalisation: regularisation, immobility, and institutionalisation 63
3.7. (Im)mobilities and informality of non-migrants and returnees 67
3.8. Conclusion. 70
3.9. References 71

Chapter 4. Informality on Wheels: Informal Automobilities Beyond National Boundaries 81
4.1. Introduction 81
4.2. Assembling theoretical pieces: automobility, informality and transnationalism. . . 83
4.3. Methods. 86
4.4. Ethnographic encounters with informal automobilities 87
  4.4.1. Transnational cultures and second-hand luxury cars 87
  4.4.2. Quasi-private and "public" mobilities: local and transnational informalities on the move 90
  4.4.3. The "national" car and the informalisation of labour. 92
4.5. Conclusion. 94
4.6. References 95

Chapter 5. Etnografías multisituadas en los campos transnacionales: el caso de Rumanía-España 103
5.1. Introducción 103
5.2. El concepto de campo social transnacional. 104
5.3. La metodología del proyecto ORBITS 105
5.4. El concepto de etnografía multisituada 108
5.5. La movilidad en los campos transnacionales. 109
5.6. Hacia una "etnografía orientada por redes": de seguir a la gente a seguir sus relaciones. 116
5.7. Epílogo: ¿el fin de una era para las ciencias sociales y las humanidades?. 117
5.8. Bibliografía 118

Chapter 6. Migrant Entrepreneurs in the "Farm of Europe": The Role of Transnational Structures 123

6.1. Introduction 124

6.2. Transnational migrant entrepreneurs: globalization from below in an agro-industrial district 126

6.3. Methods 127

6.4. The agribusiness district and the TSF feeding the agribusiness from below 129

6.4.1. The development of the agro-industrial district 129

6.4.2. Romanian immigration: the TSF between Roquetas de Mar and Bistriţa-Năsăud 132

6.5. Greenhouse renewal: Romanian entrepreneurs and labourers 134

6.6. Migrant transnational entrepreneurs: informal labour and networks in the greenhouse construction business 137

6.7. Conclusions 143

6.8. References 145

Chapter 7. Conclusions 151

7.1. Main empirical contributions 152

7.2. Reflecting on the theoretical premises 155

7.3. Limitations 159

7.4. Future research 161

7.5. References 163

Annexes

Annex 1 165

List of figures

Figure 1. Overview of theoretical concepts 11

Figure 2. Foreign population from Romania and Morocco living in Spain. 12

Figure 3. Selection of foreign nationalities with more than 100,000 people registered with valid residency in Spain in 2016, by group age. 14

Figure 4. Distribution of residents of Romanian nationality in Spain at the end of the three phases of migration. 15

Figure 5. Population of Romanian nationality living in the Spanish cities of Castelló de la Plana (capital of Castelló province), and Roquetas de Mar (in the province of Almería). 17

Figure 6. Map of the two corridors. In red, Dâmbovița-Castelló de la Plana; in orange, Bistrița-Năsăud-Roquetas de Mar. 18

Figure 7. Network of the references of the 303 people interviewed in the TSF Castelló de la Plana - Dâmbovița. 33

Figure 8. The personal network of a crew foreman and entrepreneur of greenhouse construction. 43

Figure 9. The researcher cooking traditional Romanian food while participating as a volunteer in Romania's 100th anniversary in 2019 in Roquetas de Mar. . 45

Figure 10. Population with Romanian nationality in Spain. 55

Figure 11. Schema of adaptation: informalisaton and formalisation in a TSF between post-socialism and southwest EU. 60

Figura 12. El CST (Castelló - Dâmboviţa) a partir de las nominaciones realizadas (el color blanco indica personas fuera del CST). 107

Figura 13. Escenario (izquierda) y público (derecha) en la celebración de la ceremonia de hermanamiento. 111

Figura 14. Mapa de Bistriţa-Năsăud. 113

Figura 15. Una misa en una nave industrial acondicionada. 115

Figure 16. Orthophotographs of 1956 (Spanish Air Force and US Air Force) and 2019 (PNOA flight) show the development of intensive agriculture in Almería. 130

Figure 17. The largest foreign populations by nationality and region living in Almería (province). 131

Figure 18. Role of Romanian migrants in the greenhouse production ‘wheel’. 136

List of tables

Table 1. Schematic overview of the four empirical chapeters: two book chapters and two journal articles (Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 in this thesis). . . . 19

Table 2. Summary of the dissertation methods, participants, sampling, and date/places of fieldwork. 35

Table 3. The four sections of the semi-structured interview. 40

Tabla 4. Movilidades observadas en los CSTs. 110

Acronyms

ASA – Association of Social Anthropologists.
CAQDAS – Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis.
CEEAH – Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Experimentation.
CNAE – National Classification of Economic Activities.
CST – Campo Social Transnacional.
EPA – Encuesta de Población Activa
EU – European Union
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation.
GDP – Gross Domestic Product.
GIS – Geographic Information Systems
ILO – Internalitonal Labor Organisation
INE – Instituto Nacional de Estadística (España)
INS – Institutul Național de Statistică (Romania)
IOM – Internationa Organisation for Migration
ORBITS – Research project name
RAE – Real Academia de la Lengua
RDS – Respondent-driven sampling
RGDP – Reglamento Europeo de Protección de Datos
SABI – Sistema de Análisis de Balances Ibéricos
SNA – Social Network Analysis
TSF – Transnational Social Field
VAT – Value Added Tax

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and questions

“Romania–Spain. Daily departures: Monday to Saturday. Miles of comfort, safety and efficiency”. This quote is taken from a colorful leaflet issued by one of the numerous bus transportation companies that make the three thousand-kilometer journey between these two countries in three days, stopping to let passengers out at predetermined points on the last part of the trip. The cost of a one-way ticket is around €80 for the seat and up to 50 kilos of luggage. It is also common to send money and things from hand to hand with the buses and their drivers, such as homemade food, liquor, and other “typical” products as social remittances that reinforce social ties at a distance. When I asked a Romanian friend from a small rural town in Transylvania why he came to Roquetas de Mar, a small city in the south-east of Spain where the number of Romanians has grown spectacularly in 25 years from just a few dozen to one in ten inhabitants, he answered, “it was the last bus stop.” The service of these bus companies, which offer daily trips between remote towns such as Roquetas de Mar in Spain and Bistriţa in Romania, represent the intra-European migration corridors. In some cases, “migrant” or “demographic” enclaves emerge in the destinations – i.e., the concentration of migrants from a given origin in a particular destination –, which are fed by a continuous flow of people, things, and knowledge that work as feedback loops connecting these corridors’ end-points. This thesis attempts to go beyond the understanding of migration as an aggregate of individual decisions to comprehend the relational processes and practices that lead to the bottom-up formation of immigrant enclaves in the EU and to the emergence of transnational social fields.

Migration is a common strategy for improving families’ and individuals’ livelihoods, coping with uncertainty and seeking a better future. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2019), there were 272 million international migrants in 2019, representing 3.5% of the world’s population. In the European Union (EU), 21.8 million inhabitants do not have EU27 citizenship, representing 4.9% of the population, and 13.3 million persons live in a member state different from that of their citizenship (Eurostat, 2020a). Intra-European migration is distributed unevenly, but east-west migration has been most common since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Romania and Poland are currently the largest sending countries in the

EU, with more than three and two million intra-EU emigrants respectively (Eurostat, 2018). In Spain, Romanian migration boomed in the 2000s, going from a few thousand to nearly 900,000 in ten years (INE, 2020). Romanian migrants have settled all over the country and created specific demographic enclaves in which little Romanian 'galaxies' emerged. The size of these enclaves and the transnational relations that their residents maintain are relevant because they produce social changes that will last for generations at various scales, from local to global. Understanding how these transnational relationships are built in practice and their social, economic, and political effects is important in grasping the complex transformations of European integration and evaluating the much-celebrated free circulation within the EU, despite it being restricted in practice.

The principal aim of this dissertation is to advance our understanding of the livelihood strategies that low-wage Romanian migrants adopt in making a living in intra-EU transnational structures. Specifically, the thesis aims to understand how migrants rely on mobilities and informal practices as resources[1] to navigate the local and transnational social formations in which they live. On the one hand, the "range of types of mobility that are available to and necessary for individuals and families to be able to sustain their livelihoods" (Thieme, 2008: 7) are studied as forms of the contestation of different regimes of mobility within the EU. Mobility regimes[2], defined as uneven social, economic, and political power structures that shape individuals' mobility and stasis (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013), are composed of norms, policies, regulations, and forms of infrastructure that govern movement (Jensen, 2013; Kesselring, 2014; Koslowski, 2011). On the other hand, informal practices, defined as "regular strategies to manipulate or exploit formal rules by enforcing informal norms and personal obligations in formal contexts" (Ledeneva 2008: 119), are used by migrants to bypass and contest unequal situations that exclude them from formal access to services, work, and opportunities.

To analyse the strategies and practices required to navigate intra-European mobility regimes, I investigate the development of two demographic enclaves of Romanians in Spain, Castellò de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar, both of which are connected socially with their main regions of origin in Romania, respectively Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud. These conglomerates of individuals and their dynamic local and transnational relationships can be conceptualized as forming a transnational social field (hereafter TSF), defined as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). In a nutshell, I argue that migrants confront EU regimes of mobility by combining mobility and immobility and using informal practices. These practices in their turn are performed and transmitted through the personal relations of migrants both locally and transnationally, which reproduces demographic enclaves and the associated TSFs that permit people to make ends meet.

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[1] The intersections between mobility and informality are approached empirically in the thesis, although the fourth guiding point in the next section develops some of these junctures.

[2] Glick Schiller and Salazar have identified six domains of analysis: (1) the relation mobility-inmobility, (2) the unequal relations of power, (3) the distribution of social, cultural, political and economic capital, (4) the role of state, among other actors, (5) the notion of class, and (6) history shaping time and space (2013).

Two overarching questions have guided the dissertation research:

R.Q. 1. How do Romanian migrants in Spain rely on informal practices and mobility to make a living, and how do these practices evolve in transnational contexts?

This question is first motivated by a gap in the existing literature on the intersection between mobility and informality. Informality coexists with and penetrates every formal system, and it is not limited to economic activities, but is inherently attached to daily living and political regimes of governance (Ledeneva, 2018; Lomnitz, 1988; Polese, Williams, Horodnic, & Bejakovic, 2017). Informality represents an aggregate of practices that circumvent the formal regulations of institutions and states (Polese, 2021; Routh, 2011). People worldwide are compelled to find informal ways of getting things done, limiting, reversing, and bypassing the formal constraints and unequal situations in which they happen to live. Despite the significance and the vast literature devoted to understanding their social and economic implications, the decisive[3] role of informal practices in the daily lives of migrants and others on the move has been under-researched.

Scholarship on informality has paid attention to informal border-crossing practices, such as smuggling and trafficking (Bruns, Miggelbrink, & Müller, 2011; Kalir & Sur, 2012; Schendel & Abraham, 2005) and the shadow economies of migrant workers in post-socialist contexts (Cieslewska, 2014; Urinboyev, 2016; Urinboyev & Polese, 2016; Yalcin-Heckmann, 2014). In a similar vein, migration research has focused on informal labour and economies. For instance, migration scholars have analysed the relations between undocumented migrants and employment in the informal sector (Baldwin-Edwards & Arango, 1999; Berggren, Likić-Brborić, Toksöz, & Trimiklinotis, 2007; Likic-Brboric, Slavnic, & Woolfson, 2013), the competitive advantages of informal economies and networks of transnational entrepreneurs (Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Turaeva, 2014), and the transnational practices of resistance to state control (Garapich, 2016). From a mobilities perspective, informality is addressed by transport studies, which reduce it to the market forces that produce unlicensed or uncontrolled transportation (e.g., Cervero & Golub, 2007). However, recent post-structural approaches have demonstrated that informal transportation practices are socially embedded, as they consist of market and non-market exchanges (Rekhviashvili & Sgibnev, 2018, 2019).

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[3] Chapters 3 and 4 provide theoretical reviews. For extended and interdisciplinary reviews of the history and conceptualisation of informality see: "Introduction: the informal view of the world – key challenges and main findings of the Global Informality Project" (Ledeneva, 2018); and "What Is Informality? About 'the Art of Bypassing the State' and Its Theorizations in Post-Socialist Spaces (and Beyond)" (Polese, 2021).

Nonetheless, migration and mobility researchers rarely engage with the vast array of informal practices migrants use and perform. This gap in research on mobility and informality is also identified by the global informality project and the Global Encyclopaedia of Informality (Ledeneva, 2018), the most significant interdisciplinary attempt to summarize and frame informal practices worldwide. In a brainstorming workshop in 2018, the project leaders formulated the following questions for future research:[4]

> "What kinds of movements are informal practices involved in? How do they transform in diasporas? Do diasporas transform their contexts of arrival and departure? What are the implications of international and transnational institutions and their formalizing as well as informalizing practices?".

My specific research question reflects previous research and conceptualizations to some extent, but it has two different characteristics. The first is my attempt to study informal practices in a post-socialist context and a West-European context in the same case. To my knowledge, this has not been done before. My answers to this question are set out in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 describes various informal practices in Spain and Romania before presenting a schema of adaptation in two parallel processes: formalisation and informalisation. This schema could easily be applied to other research contexts. Chapter 4 analyses an emergent sub-case of transnational informal practices related to the automobility system. It describes the implications of these activities for day-to-day life among low-wage Romanian migrants.

Second, I do not approach migrant communities as diasporas, a disperse term that risks essentializing the nation state and the homeland (Brubaker, 2005). Instead, I focus on the TSF in which relations and practices evolve across borders. The study of these TSFs is the interest of my second question of research:

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[4] https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Ideas_for_Future_Research

R.Q. 2. What roles do transnational social fields play in the livelihood strategies of specific groups of Romanian migrants in Spain?

This question is both theoretical and empirical, and it raises some key methodological questions about how transnational processes that simultaneously happen in various interconnected locations can be studied. Chapter 5 tackles the methodological difficulties involved in proposing a mixed-methods approach in which social network analysis and multisited ethnography complement each other, using the case of Romanians in Spain as example. From a theoretical point of view, this question seeks to understand the relevance of global processes from below in the emergence and maintenance of demographic enclaves and TSFs. Globalization from below is addressed in Chapter 6, being broadly defined as migrants' livelihood strategies enabling them to access the benefits of globalization from which they have traditionally been excluded (Tarrius, 2002) and to follow emergent informal networks (Portes, 1997) and informal flows of goods that involve little investment (Mathews, Lins Ribeiro, & Alba Vega, 2012). Indeed, Chapter 6 addresses this second research question directly. It analyses the role that the TSF and the Romanian migrant entrepreneurs of greenhouse construction have acquired in developing the demographic enclave and the agro-industrial district.

Both research questions have been answered in the thesis chapters and are interdependent. Nevertheless, each chapter has been developed as a stand-alone unit exploring different empirical cases with similar but not equal theoretical frames. The next section describes the theoretical pillars of the thesis and some of the guiding points that oriented the research.

1.2. Theoretical premises

This research is based on theories of migration, mobility and transnationalism, livelihood strategies, and informality. As each empirical chapter will discuss the theoretical framework it uses, here I summarize the five theoretical principles that have guided the thesis as a whole.

The first premise is that migration research must go beyond the methodological nationalism that has long characterized the social sciences, analysing social phenomena only in so far they occur within the boundaries of a particular nation state (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, 2003). For instance, an analysis of how migrants make a living is typically limited to their activities in their current countries of residence, ignoring potential sources of income or support in their countries of origin or in other countries. While nation states' sovereign right to rule over their socio-economic spheres is in decline, in respect of migration, their "institutions and (…) inherent logic remain strong, impacting and co-shaping transnational fields in multiple ways" (Dahinden, 2017: 1481). Indeed, states continue to monopolize the legitimate means of movement within and across their borders through citizenship and identity (Torpey, 1998), and migration studies are still biased toward the nation state (e.g. Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014). Nonetheless, the life worlds of migrants, and probably to a lesser degree those of non-migrants, are typically not limited by country borders. To overcome methodological nationalism, this thesis uses the transnational paradigm (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Transnationalism is described as "a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (Vertovec, 2009: 3). While bearing in mind the continued importance of states in regulating migration and mobilities, adopting a transnational approach helps researchers focus on how individuals employ activities that take place in multiple nation states and how their life-worlds span a larger transnational space.

The dissertation's second guiding point is that it considers intra-European migration as only one form of international mobility among others, such as[5] tourism, family visits, cross-border commuting, and tertiary education mobilities. The International Organisation of Migration[6] (IOM) defines migration as "[t]he movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State." This common definition of internal and international migration focuses on a single, relatively permanent move. However, migration can be temporary and followed by return or onward migration, or it can even be seasonal, showing that the boundaries between migration and mobility are more fluid. This fluidity stresses the need to analyse migration together with the vast array of mobilities that migrants, non-migrants, and other people on the move perform on a more regular basis. This observation does not imply that the role of migration is not significant; on the contrary, international migration is critical to triggering and maintaining social transformations in the origin or settlement communities. Indeed, migration and other mobilities generate social and cultural change (King & Skeldon, 2010) and enhance transnational activities, connections, and belongings across borders (Dahinden, 2017). Yet, to understand the impact of migration on both migrants and non-migrants, scholars also need to pay attention to other forms of travel behavior motivated by migration.

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[5] For instance, a report of human mobilities within the EU (Eurostat, 2020b) shows that in 2018, two million workers lived in one member state and worked in another; 1.3 million tertiary education students came from another country; 240 million people, corresponding to 64% of the EU population, went at least on one private trip, of which 29% were to another country.

[6] https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#Migration

As King and Sheldon argued, “mobilities create an integrated system, which can be observed at a range of scales: family/household, community, national, and the constellation of countries linked by migration flows” (King & Skeldon, 2010: 1640; cf. Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Prominent social theorists, such as Giddens, Appadurai, Beck, Castells, Latour, and Bauman, have privileged analysis of the increasing and fluid movements in capitalism and globalization (Salazar, 2020). Similarly, the “new mobilities paradigm” or “mobility turn” proposed to see social processes through the lens of movement (ibid.) and underlined that not only are people on the move, but that things, knowledge, and emotions are also exchanged transnationally (Cresswell, 2006; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006). In this dissertation, I contemplate the mobilities of migrants, non-migrants, and returnees in order to understand the TSFs and the regimes of mobility within the EU. I focus on the size and type of mobilities, as well as on “how the formation, regulation, and distribution of these mobilities are shaped and patterned by existing social, political, and economic structures” (Salazar, 2014: 60).

The mobilities paradigm also implies that mobility and immobility should be investigated together. Planes need airports to operate. This widespread metaphor of mobility studies is valuable here. To be mobile, transnational migrants need local anchors because ties are embedded in specific localities (Dahinden, 2010). Thus, mobility and immobility are not dichotomous entities, but need each other to function.[7] This relational view also avoids predefining one of the entities as passive or negative or favoring one over the other (Franquesa, 2011). For instance, the ideology that promotes mobility as a positive indicator of social status privileging global citizens’ mobilities, transformative travel, and international experience neglects the structural and legal constraints of other movers (Salazar, 2020) and naturalizes the racial stigmatization and exclusion of economic migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and other people the move, documented or not (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Loftsdóttir, 2018).

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[7] In this thesis, the term (im)mobility is used to refer to both mobility and immobility.

Likewise, formality and informality are dialectically related and also need to be studied jointly. This is my third theoretical premise. Informality is usually negatively portrayed, using synonyms such as 'underground,' 'unregulated,' 'hidden,' and 'undeclared.' These negative and stigmatizing connotations consider informality to be a problem to be eradicated, not a social expression of benefit to people by, for example, providing bottom-up and creative solutions to social issues (Polese, 2015). Thus, studying formality and informality together goes beyond the opposing view that takes informality to be just the result of formal constraints. For instance, Hart (2009) describes this formal/informal entanglement by drawing on the indispensability of informal processes to bureaucracies if they are to operate, on the difficulties of distinguishing illegal from non-legal informal activities, and on the moral economies behind the artificial capitalist separation of the spheres of domestic activities and employment. Indeed, an empirical analysis of the spectrum of livelihood practices shows both paid and unpaid activities that overlap and are entwined in daily life, clearly revealing this formal-informal continuum (Williams & Onoshenko, 2014). In sum, research needs to fully understand how both pairs – formality-informality and mobility-immobility – operate in practice in social fields. Dialectical and relational approaches to studying formality-informality and mobility-immobility within the same framework act to correct biases in the form of negative connotations or predefined asymmetries.

This brings me to my final consideration. Informality and mobilities are both inherent in any formal system and can be used by individuals to circumvent the restrictions imposed by national legislative and regulatory frameworks. Both are broad topics of research that permit interdisciplinary dialogue but are challenging to define and measure. And both are objects of policymaking and regulation, but are able to escape from the control and rules of formal systems. Furthermore, the two often intersect. The pervasiveness of this intersection is well exemplified by the thousands of people who risk their lives to circumvent cross-border deterrence measures and rely on informal practices to move and survive. The illegalization of geographical movement does not stop mobility: on the contrary, it forces people to take more risks crossing borders (Andersson, 2014; De León, 2015), relying on informal practices such as smuggling or fake documents. Moreover, people threatened by deportation (De Genova, 2002) are forced to rely on informal labour and accommodation to survive. The lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic have also revealed this dialectical relationship between informality and mobility: informal workers faced the dilemma of risking contagion by working outside, or staying safely at home and losing their livelihoods (ILO, 2020).

Precarious formal workers may face a similar dilemma, but they have some social protection (insurance, assistance) recognized by their contracts, as well as bank accounts into which to receive assistance and fiscal exemptions from the state. Even more importantly in this case, formal workers might be recognized as "essential", as such being allowed to move during the lockdowns and confinement, something that informal workers cannot do without risking being penalized. Informal labour is not a minor issue: 60% of total employment worldwide is informal, ranging from 5% in high-income countries to 90% in several low-income countries (ILO, 2020).

The fourth and final guiding point is therefore that a framework should be developed to study mobility and informality under the umbrella of the livelihood strategies approach. The livelihood concept, defined in anthropology as "a set of activities – mainly economic – through which people make a living" (De Haan 2012: 348), refers to a large range of subsistence practices and strategies, including formal and informal employment, migration, home production, swapping, and reliance on social support or remittances. The livelihood approach seems appropriate for looking at informal practices and mobilities as related strategies for making a living in TSFs. Moreover, this approach permits the inclusion not only of local personal networks, but also of informal transnational networks of support (Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015).

Although conceptualizations of the word *livelihood* have their roots in anthropology, they are now almost exclusively adopted in development programs in the Global South (De Haan, 2012; Martinez Veiga, 2005). Nonetheless, the concept is equally useful in the Global North. Halperin describes the multiple livelihood strategies rooted in relationships of kinship and friendship that people employ to "make ends meet" (Halperin, 1990). This colloquial expression means "to meet one's day-to-day needs"[8] and has been used in sociology to measure the household income needed to reach the next payday in contexts of poverty or vulnerability in welfare states (Danziger, van der Gaag, Taussig, & Smolensky, 1984; Edin & Lein, 1997; Saunders, Halleröd, & Matheson, 1994). However, the literal meaning of "making ends meet" is to connect the two extremes of a bond. I use the term "making ends meet" in both senses, as multiple livelihood strategies – not only in poverty, but for any low-wage or precarious worker – and as tying the ends. While transnationalism implies a connection between at least two locations, informality can be conceived as the unregulated activities that occur in the space between two formal rules (Polese, 2021), while transnationality mobility is displacement between two locations (A→B) with different formal rules, in which the content of the line sometimes remains unexplored (Cresswell, 2006). The content of the line, the content between the rules, and the content between transnational relations are what I called interstices: gaps, spaces, intervals, and distances between two or more bodies, times or places.

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[8] https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/make%20ends%20meet. In French, the expression and translation are similar: *joindre les deux bouts*. In Spanish, however, the direct translation is misleading because it might be interpreted as tie up loose ends. The approximate expression in Spanish is *llegar a final de mes*, which means to have the means for reaching the next salary payment at the end of the month.

The interstitial metaphor has been widely used: Victor Turner's notion of *communitas* emerges in the interstices of social structure (Turner, 2017), while Tim Ingold proposes to reconcile the universal and the particular through a process of interstitial differentiation that explores emergent differentiation − rather than diversity − in the world of the worlds human inhabit (Ingold, 2018). The use of interstices in the literature on informality is also a common way to express how the "[i]nformal modes of exchange grow in the interstices of the formal system" (Lomnitz, 1988: 43; Gershuny, 1979), to describe the "interstitial informal economy" as economic activities that avoid or directly violate state regulations (Harriss-White, 2010), to illustrate the place where the public–private divide gives way to corruption (Moreno Zacarés, 2020), to represent the areas between the existence and absence of the law (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008), or to stress the inseparable formal/informal labour that happens both on the margins and in the interstices of the capitalist market system (Narotzky, 2018). In mobilities, the interstitial represents the power differentials when two circulation systems are in contact, for example, at a border, (Sager, 2006) or in the spaces where migrants and refugees desperately seek security out of the "mobility systems that seem increasingly designed to deny hospitality to those who need it most" (Gill, Caletrío, & Mason, 2011: 313). Finally, in transnational research, Thomas Faist used the *interstice* as a concept to emphasize the transactions, networks, and organizations that arise in transnational social *space*s and *fields* (Faist, 2000), which, in his own words, "are characterized by a high density of interstitial ties on informal or formal, that is to say, institutional levels" (ibid.: 190).

To conclude this section, the four key premises of this thesis can be summarized as follows: (1) both migrants and non-migrants are embedded in transnational social fields that present possibilities and restrictions beyond those of the formal system of the nation state in which they reside; (2) to fully understand intra-European migration, it should be studied along with other forms of the mobility and immobility of migrants and the non-migrants with whom they have social relationships; (3) like mobility and immobility, formality and informality are dialectically related such that one cannot be understood without the other; and (4) through transnational mobility and social networks, low-wage workers can access a wider range of formal and informal employment options and exploit the interstices between formal systems in order to make ends meet in TSFs. The main concepts and their relationships are visualized in Figure 1.

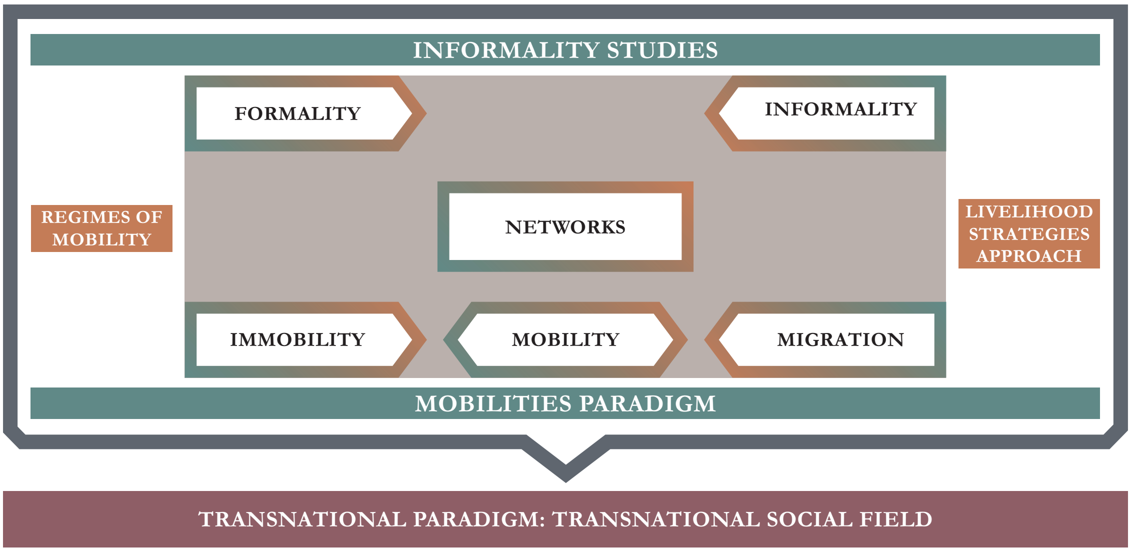
INFORMALITY STUDIES
FORMALITY
INFORMALITY
REGIMES OF MOBILITY
NETWORKS
LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES APPROACH
IMMOBILITY
MOBILITY
MIGRATION
MOBILITIES PARADIGM
TRANSNATIONAL PARADIGM: TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD

Figure 1. Overview of theoretical concepts.

1.3. Context of the research

To contextualize the research presented in this thesis, I will now describe the main trends in Romanian migration to Spain. The number of Romanian migrants in Spain grew from almost none in 1998 to nearly 900,000 in 2012, surpassing the Moroccans and making them the largest foreign population between 2008 and 2014 (see Figure 2; INE, 2020). Although the economic crisis of 2008-2014 drove many Romanians to relocate back to Romania or to other countries, they continue to be the second largest foreign population in Spain, with 671,985 Romanian nationals living there in 2019 (INE, 2020). Behind these suggestive numbers, three main phases of migration can be distinguished. First were the initial arrivals in the 1990s until the Schengen visa requirements for Romanians were lifted in 2002. The second phase ran from 2002 until 2012, when the Romanian population reached its peak in the most challenging time of the economic crisis in Spain. Finally, the third phase is characterized by a slow decline in numbers since 2012. In what follows, each of these phases will be described in order to explain the evolution of Romanian migration to Spain.

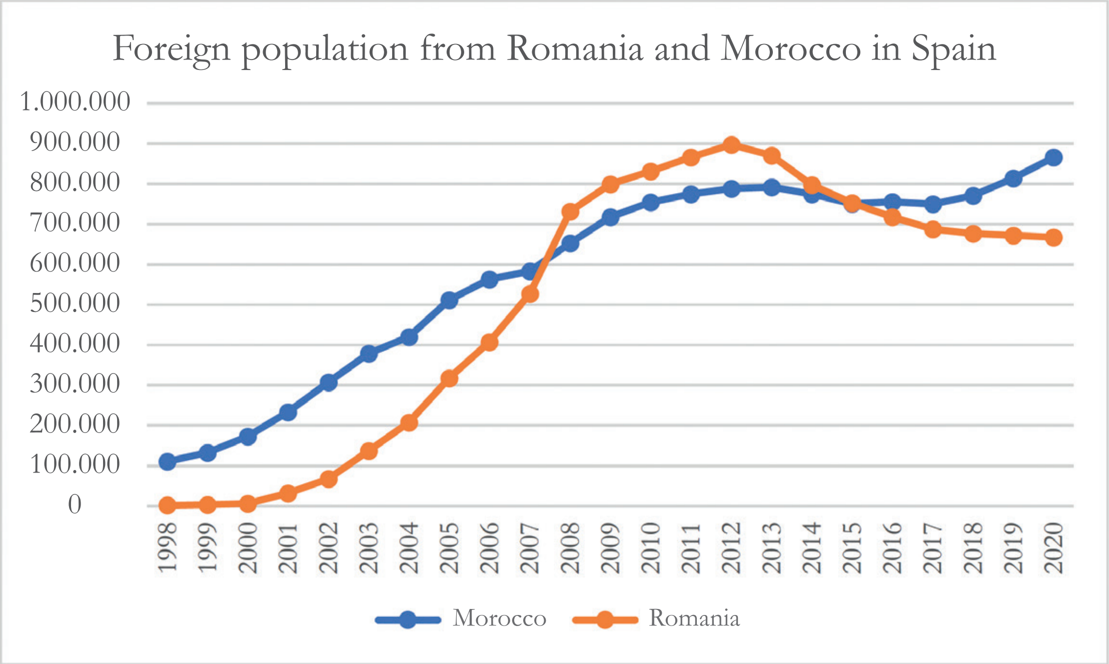

Figure 2. Foreign population from Romania and Morocco living in Spain. Own elaboration based on the Padrón Continuo. www.ine.es

The first phase of Romanian migration to Spain covered the period between the first arrivals at the beginning of the 1990s and the lifting of visa requirements in 2002, which smoothed movement within the Schengen area. The Romanian transition to the market economy deepened the "subalternisation" and fragmentation of labour (Kideckel, 2008; Verdery, 2009), produced a decline in rural-urban commuting (Sandu, 2005) and increased poverty and unemployment, consequently reinforcing informal activities as survival strategies (Ciupagea, 2002; Neef, 2002) and pushing people to move abroad (Marcu, 2009; Sandu, 2005). In this context, migration to Italy and Spain, where Romance languages are also spoken and which have relatively low costs of living, were the main internal European destinations for Romanians, in contrast to migrants from other east European countries who moved to central and north European countries. The first period of this early migration to Spain was marked by pioneers who started migration chains and temporary mobilities that could lead to settlement (Sandu, 2005). Low language barriers and the many employment opportunities in agriculture and the construction and service sectors, mostly irregular (Pajares, 2007), were vital in attracting low-wage Romanian migrants, who overstayed their visas and were then forced to rely on informal forms of travelling, accommodation, and labour (Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009).

The second phase was one of steep growth in the number of Romanians in Spain, from less than 70,000 in 2002 to nearly 900,000 in 2012 (INE, 2020). The rapidly increasing number of Romanian residents in Spain was due to the expansion of formal and informal labour markets in the country and the support the migrants received from their social and religious migration networks (Bernat & Viruela, 2011; Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009; Marcu, 2009; Molina, Martínez-Cháfer, Molina-Morales, & Lubbers, 2018; Paniagua, 2007). This phase started in 2002, when visa restrictions were lifted and the costs of migrating fell. It includes a period of transition and regularisations between 2002 and 2007, the year of Romania's entry into the EU that gave Romanians the right to live legally in other EU countries, but still without the legal right to work (Marcu, 2009).

Also, it is important to note the growing institutionalisation resulting from these networks (De Haas, 2010). Institutional and financial support to Romanians abroad has increased significantly since 2016 (Nica & Moraru, 2020). The Romanian diaspora comes high on the political agenda in Romania. The Romanian Ministry of Romanian Citizens Living Abroad (Ministerului pentru Romănii de Pretutindeni) has drawn up a strategic document[9] which estimates the Romanian diaspora at ten million people. It distinguishes between the historical diaspora of six million people – 4.5 million in Republic Moldova, 500,000 in Ukraine, 300,000 in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, and 300,000 in the rest of the Balkans and other regions – and the emergent diaspora of between 3.5 and 4 million people, including 2.8 million in the EU. This policy document promotes the Romanian language, culture, and spiritual values, supports associations abroad, promotes integration or return, and adapts its legislation. Thus, the creation of consulates, bilateral agreements, and the support of religious organizations, associations and other non-governmental actors have contributed to consolidating Romanian demographic enclaves in Spain such as Castelló de la Plana (Molina et al., 2018).

The third phase started with the decline of the Romanian migrant population in Spain after 2012 and continues until now. It is too soon to know the reasons behind this decline in the Romanian population, although the economic crisis is likely to be one of the main push factors. What is certain is that most migrants are of working age and that a second generation of Romanians is growing up in Spain. In comparison with other foreign nationals with valid residency permits in 2016 (see Figure 3), most Romanians are of working age, with 100,000 significantly being under sixteen years old (59,257 men and 55,582 women).

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[9] Strategia Naţională pentru Românii de Pretutindeni pentru perioada 2017 - 2020: http://www.mprp.gov.ro/web/strategia-privind-relatia-cu-romanii-de-pretutindeni-2/

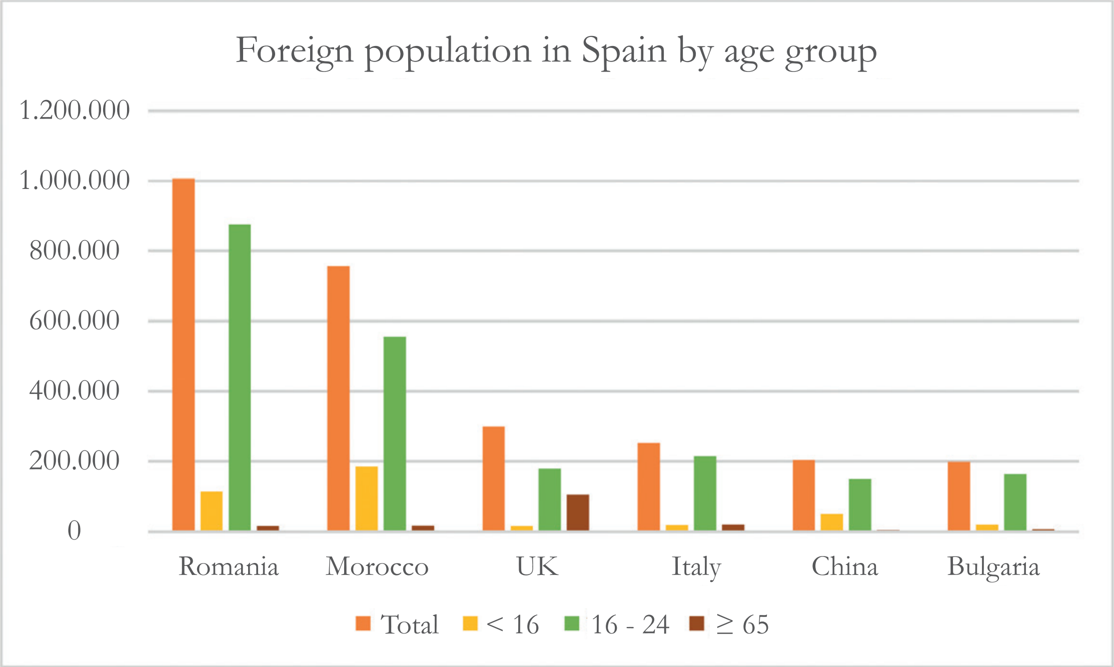

Figure 3. Selection of foreign nationalities with more than 100,000 people registered with valid residency in Spain in 2016, by group age (Own elaboration). Source: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Annual statistical report). http://www.empleo.gob.es/es/estadisticas/anuarios/2016/index.htm

Family has played an important role in the settlement process of Romanians in Spain (Bradatan, 2014), as the social support and reunification mobilities of children and the elderly have shown (Marcu, 2018). Moreover, a young generation of highly skilled Romanians (Petroff, 2016) are opening up new mobility paths as mobile European citizens (Marcu, 2015), while other entangled mobilities are also occurring, such as multiple migrations (Ciobanu, 2015), circular mobilities, re-emigration, or the family or some members of it returning to Romania.

3.3.1. Romanian enclaves and industrial districts: two corridors between Spain and Romania

The Romanian population in Spain is not evenly distributed, but rather forms demographic enclaves wherever the percentages of Romanians are exceptionally high (Bucur, 2012). Figure 4 shows the distribution of residents with Romanian nationality in Spain at the end of each of the three phases of migration. Apart from its concentration in the capital and adjacent provinces, we can observe that Romanian migration has tended to flow toward the Mediterranean coast.

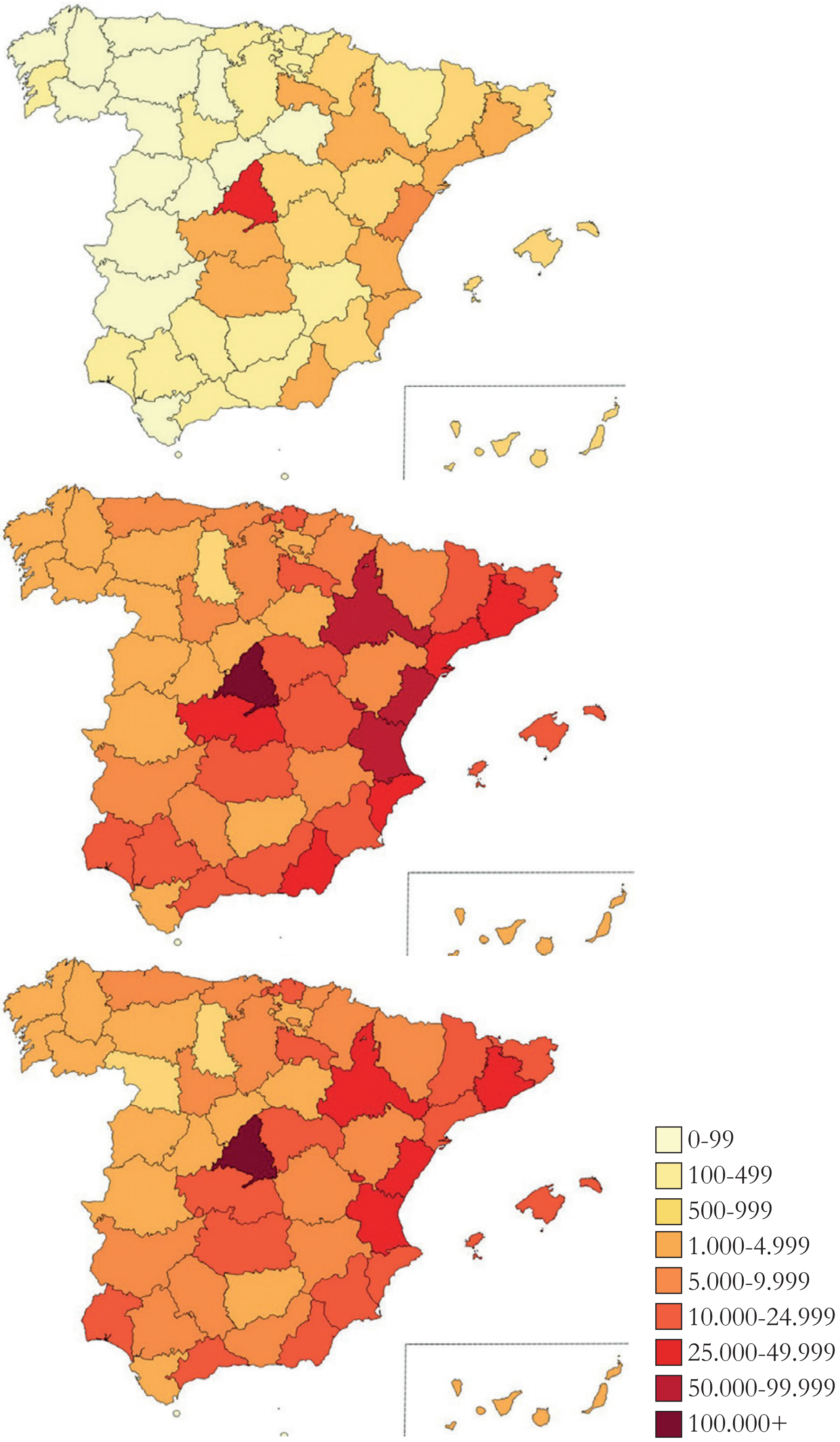
0-99
100-499
500-999
1.000-4.999
5.000-9.999
10.000-24.999
25.000-49.999
50.000-99.999
100.000+

Figure 4. Distribution of residents of Romanian nationality in Spain at the end of the three phases of migration. Own elaboration based on the Padrón Continuo www.ine.es, and created with mapchart.net.

In the provinces, however, Romanians have also concentrated in specific demographic enclaves following migration chains and networks. In this thesis, I focus on two of these enclaves on Spain's Mediterranean coast: Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar.[10] In both cities, the Romanian population is the main foreign population, now accounting for approximately 10% of their total populations, which are connected via TSFs with their regions of origin in Romania, respectively Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud. These migration corridors are rooted in transnational networks of kinship, friendship, and acquaintanceship, as well as in the permanent and temporary mobilities and regular channels of communication through which people move, and goods, services, and information are exchanged.

The Mediterranean cities of Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar are paradigmatic Romanian enclaves. At the start of my fieldwork in Castelló de la Plana in 2017, the number of inhabitants of Romanian nationality was 15,748 out of a total population of 169,498, or roughly 10% of the total population of the city (INE, 2020). The development of this migrant enclave, due to an industrial district devoted to ceramics, is described elsewhere (Molina et al., 2018), and the number of Romanians grew especially strongly in 2004 (see Figure 5). Many of them came from a bounded geographical area in Romania: Dâmbovița, a county northwest of Bucharest (see Figure 6). In 2016, the county had a total population of 527,842, 32% in urban areas and 68% in rural areas, of whom 93,136 live in its capital, Târgoviște (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2018). Registered unemployment is 7%, and the main sectors of employment are agriculture (27%), industry (29%) and services (40%) (ibid.). Being close to the capital city (80km) gives access to jobs and training, but transnational migration for economic reasons to Western Europe has been reported since the 1990s (Potot, 2003).

In the case of Roquetas de Mar, a city in the southern province of Almería, in 2017 the total population was 93,363, of whom 24,948 (27.3%) were of foreign nationality, including 8,939 Romanians. The foreign population in Almería grew sharply from 13,260 in 1998 to nearly 150,000 in 2019 (see Figure 5), approximately 20% of the total population, associated with the increasing demand for labour in the agroindustry. Romanians are by far the largest population of foreign nationality − 35.8% of all foreigners − and make up roughly 10% of the total population (INE, 2020). Most of them migrated to Spain following others in their social networks who migrated before them, but some were directly hired in Romania by agricultural organizations to work in Spain, although the latter practice was rare and was abandoned in the mid-2000s[11] (Reigada, Delgado, Pérez, & Soler, 2017).

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[10] An overview of the Romanian migration to Spain and descriptions of these two Romanian enclaves is given in more detail in Chapter 3, '(Im)mobilities and Informality as Livelihood Strategies in Transnational Social Fields'. The enclave of Roquetas de Mar and the region of Romania from which most Romanians come, Bistrița-Năsăud, is also described in Chapter 6.

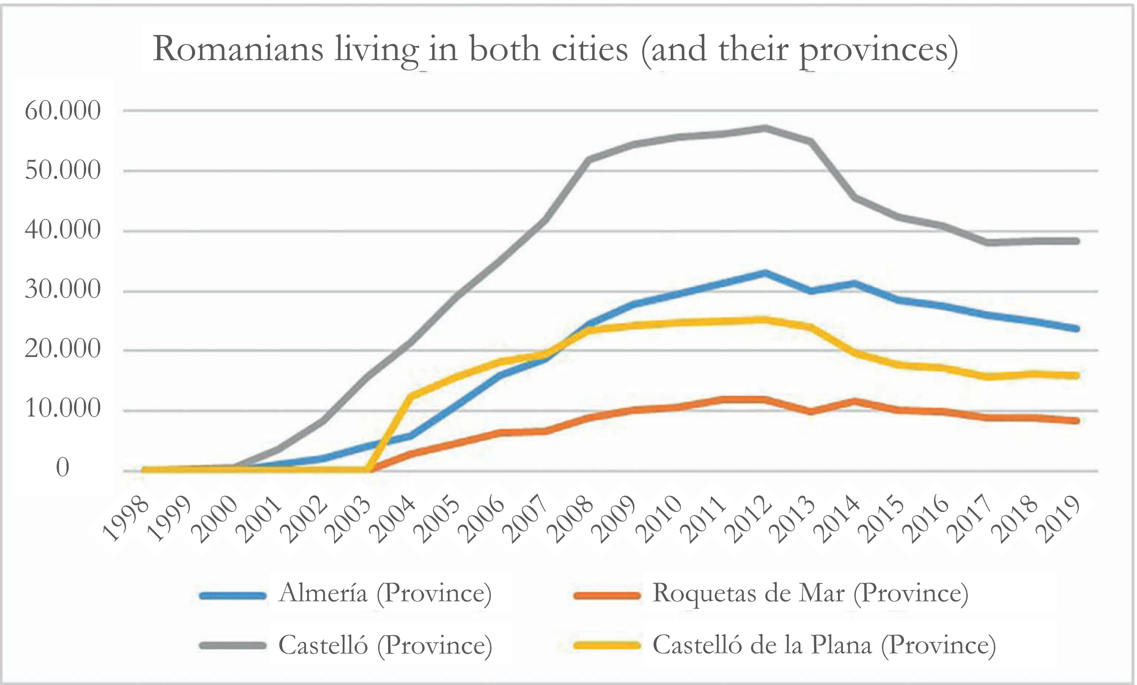

Figure 5. Population of Romanian nationality living in the Spanish cities of Castelló de la Plana (capital of Castelló province), and Roquetas de Mar (in the province of Almería). Own elaboration based on the Padrón Continuo www.ine.es

According to my data, almost two-thirds of the Romanian migrants in Roquetas de Mar come from Bistrița-Năsăud, a county in the northern Romanian region of Transylvania (see Figure 6). The county has a population of 327,708, of whom 60% live in rural areas (INS, 2019). Its capital city, Bistrița, is an industrial town of 94,303 inhabitants, and the county has three smaller cities, Beclean, Năsăud, and Sângeorz-Băiof, of approximately 10,000 inhabitants each (ibid.). However, most inhabitants reside in small rural towns of 1,000 to 5,000 inhabitants located in the valleys in the mountain areas in the north of the county. In this county, the main sectors of employment are agriculture (34%) and industry (22%). Unemployment is less than 4%, but the average gross monthly salary was only €420 in 2018 (ibid.). According to our research participants, low wages and rising living costs are the main reasons for migration. The rural backgrounds of most migrants were advantageous for their quick and successful adaptation to the agricultural labour in Roquetas de Mar, research participants stated.

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[11] This practice has continued in other agricultural areas such as Huelva and Lleida. For a recent analysis of Romanian workers following temporary migration programs in these areas see: Molinero-Gerbeau, López-Sala, & Șerban (2021).

In sum, these migration corridors connect Dâmbovița with Castelló de la Plana and Bistrița-Năsăud with Roquetas de Mar (see Figure 6) via TSFs in which people's permanent migrations and temporal mobilities are facilitated by transnational networks of kinship, friendship, and acquaintanceship, as well as regular channels of communication, through which people move, and goods, services, and information are exchanged.

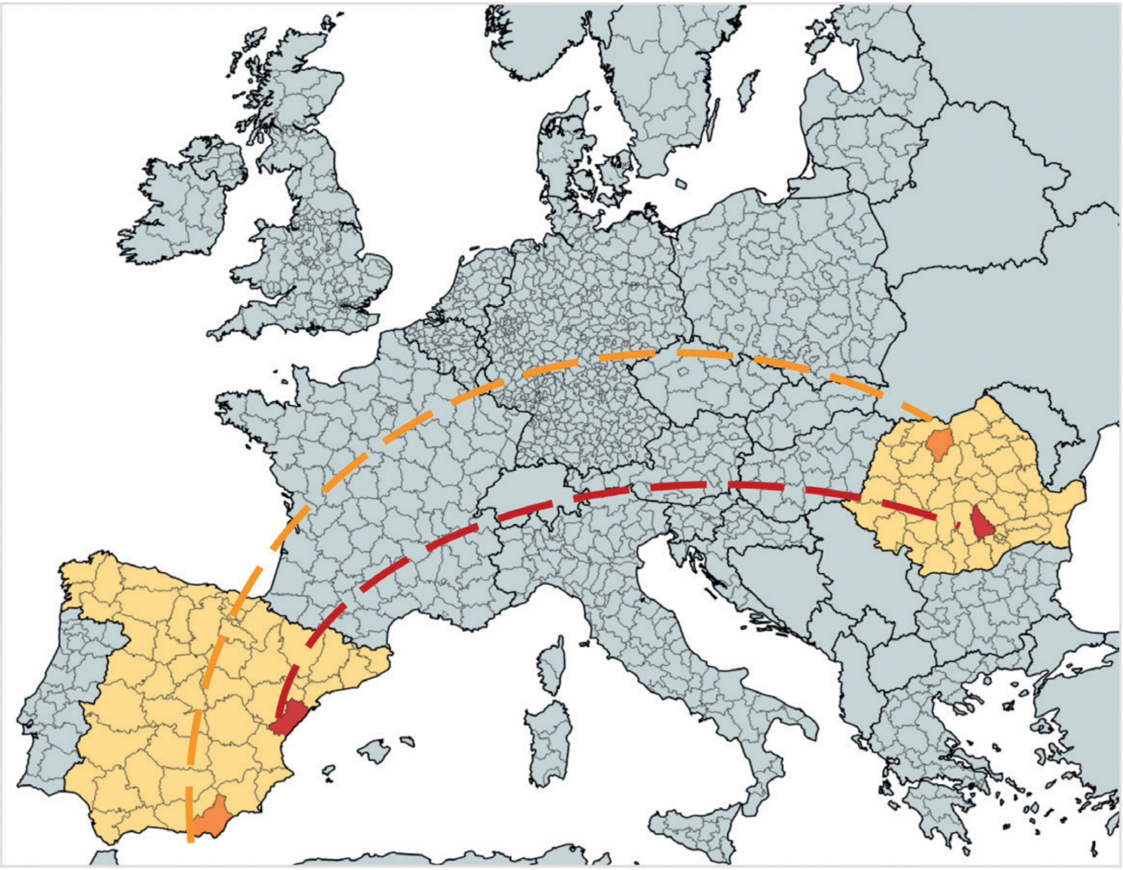

Figure 6. Map of the two corridors. In red, Dâmbovița-Castelló de la Plana; in orange, Bistrița-Năsăud-Roquetas de Mar. Own elaboration, and created with mapchart.net.

The next section gives an outline of the thesis and presents a summary of the dissertation chapters and their contributions.

1.4. Thesis outline

This thesis has the format of a compendium of two articles and two book chapters. In total it consists of six chapters: apart from the introduction (the current chapter), Chapter 2 explains the methodology, Chapters 3 and 5 are book chapters accepted for publication, Chapter 4 is an accepted peer-reviewed article, and Chapter 6 is an article under peer review. Chapter 7 summarises the thesis and draws conclusions for policy and future research. Table 1 gives a schematic overview of the four empirical chapters.

Title and publisher	Research Question	Theory	Results and Contributions
Chapter 3. **(Im)mobilities and Informality as Livelihood Strategies in Transnational Social Fields.** Book chapter accepted in *Polese, Abel (ed.) (2021) Migration, Labour Mobility and Precariousness. Why informality ends up replacing and supplementing the state for the invisible and the vulnerable. Palgrave.*	How do the informal practices of Romanians evolve in the process of their migration to Spain, whether individually or collectively?	· Livelihood strategies. · Informal practices. · Transnational social fields. · Mobilities. · Regimes of mobility.	Transnational migrants learn how to navigate and exploit formal rules to get things done by adapting their informal practices to their new context of living. Extends previous accounts of "transnational informality". Enhances the understanding of informality and mobility as livelihood strategies.
Chapter 4. **Informality on Wheels: Informal Automobilities Beyond National Boundaries.** Article accepted in *Migration Letters.*	· What kind of informal practices are linked with the automobility system? · How does the automobility system generate informality in this context of transnational mobilities?	· Poststructural informality. · Automobility system. · Livelihood strategies. · Infrapolitics · Regimes of mobility.	Conceptualizes 'informal automobilities' as a set of livelihood strategies and infrapolitical activities that use the elusive potential of cars to confront the inequalities and limitations of formal and informal mobility regimes.
Chapter 5. **Etnografías multisituadas en los campos transnacionales: el caso de Rumanía-España.** Book chapter accepted in: *Marcu, Silvia (ed.) (2021) "Transformaciones y retos de la movilidad de los europeos del este en España, treinta años después de la caída del muro de berlín: 1989-2019." Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch*	How multi-sited ethnography and social network analysis can be complemented to better research transnational social structures?	· Multi-sited ethnography. · Transnatio-nalism and transnational social fields. · Mixed methods.	Overcomes the constraints of transnational research using mixed methods approaches that combine multi-sited fieldwork and social network analysis. Proposes a "network-oriented ethnography" that focuses on interdependent relational structures rather than places.
Chapter 6. **Migrant Entrepreneurs in the "Farm of Europe": The Role of Transnational Structures.** Article under review in *Globalizations.*	What are the global processes from below that explain the occupation of specific economic niches by Romanian transnational migrant entrepreneurs in the agro-industrial district?	· Transnational entrepreneurs. · Transnational social fields. · Globalisation from below. · Industrial districts.	Entrepreneurs provide Romanian labour which (1) maintains the enclave; (2) enhances competitiveness; (3) serves as a springboard for transnational ventures. It provides evidence for the reinforcing relations between TSFs, entrepreneurship, enclaves and industrial districts.

Table 1. Schematic overview of the four empirical chapters: two book chapters and two journal articles (Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 in this thesis).

Chapter 2 discusses the general methodology adopted in this thesis. While each empirical chapter briefly describes the techniques that generated the data it presents, this chapter provides an overview of the complete mixed-methods, multi-sited fieldwork approach adopted in this thesis, combining participant observation, informal and semi-structured interviewing, focus groups, mobile methods, and a binational survey.

Chapter 3 seeks to understand how informal practices evolve in the process of migration. First, the text presents a theoretical framework relating informality to mobility as livelihood strategies and provides an overview of Romanian migration to Spain, specifically to and in two Romanian enclaves in Spain, Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar. Second, the chapter proposes a schema of informal practices adapted to the new transnational context in which migrants make a living. Third, the chapter examines the parallel processes of formalisation and informalisation that involve administrative regularisation, transnational institutionalisation, adaptation to formal and informal practices and economies, and informal labour. The chapter enhances understanding of the relationship between informality and mobility and extends previous accounts of *transnational informality*.

Chapter 4 focuses on the car, the archetypal mobility machine, to explore the relationship between informality and mobility. The article analyses the automobility system and considers the car's elusive potential to deal informally with the EU's mobility regimes. Drawing on various ethnographic encounters, I propose 'informal automobilities' as a concept delimiting a set of imbricated informal practices – principally livelihood strategies and *infrapolitical* activities – that use, exploit or manipulate cars to navigate between the formal and informal constraints of unequal mobility regimes. The chapter contributes to understanding how the car industry provides autonomy, flexibility and agency enabling low-wage migrants to make a living. It does not advocate maintaining a car-centred world, but considers the possible consequences of a post-car era for those who rely on them to make a living or confront mobility inequalities.

Chapter 5, written in Spanish, introduces the concept of transnational social fields and explores how multi-sited ethnographic methodologies combined with social network analysis might be suitable approaches to understanding these transnational structures and the mobilities that operate within them. The chapter draws upon the case of the TSF that connects the Romanians living in Castelló de la Plana (Spain) with their region of origin in Romania, Dâmbovița. The main contribution is the proposition of a "network-oriented ethnography" that shifts the focus from following the people to following their interdependent and significant social relationships (both kin and non-kin), including other field actors such as institutions and businesses.

Chapter 6 takes the agro-industrial district of Almería as its centre of analysis in order to understand the role that transnational migrant entrepreneurs of greenhouse construction play in the emergence of the TSF connecting Bistrița-Năsăud (Romania) and Roquetas de Mar (Spain). The article shows how these entrepreneurs provide a vast and skilled workforce through transnational social structures that (1) nurture the Romanian demographic enclave, (2) offer competitive advantages to the agro-industrial district, and (3) serve as a springboard for other transnational ventures.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the dissertation based on the four empirical chapters. First, I synthesise the findings and results before going on to discuss the most significant theoretical and empirical contributions and to explore the limitations to the research. Finally, I provide orientations for future research.

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Chapter 2. Methodology

This chapter describes the specific methods used in conducting the research for this dissertation beyond the larger ORBITS[1] research project of which this thesis forms a part. Before explaining my methodological approach and describing this more extensive project methodology and my participation as a team member, I present the overall research process. The overall theoretical, methodological, and analytical strategy used in this dissertation followed a classical cycle of research. It started with a conceptual framework resulting from the literature and theoretical review. Then, general questions about my research and theoretical premises were formulated to guide empirical observations during the fieldwork. This provided room for inductive processes in which emergent events and propositions were then reflected on and developed during the data analysis and conclusions. After the conclusions, which end in the form of a publishable chapter or journal article with its own internal coherence as a stand-alone unit, the cycle started again based on the previous findings in order to reformulate and develop more specific research questions to be answered in the thesis. This cycle is not rigid but constitutes a continuous form of enquiry in which the research process is both flexible and rigorous. The following sections describe in detail how this strategy was put into practice.

2.1. The ORBITS project

The thesis is embedded within a larger project, entitled "The role of transnational social fields in the emergence, maintenance and decay of ethnic and demographic enclaves," (acronym ORBITS), which was developed between 2016 and 2020 (Hâncean, Lubbers, & Molina, 2020; Molina, Martínez-Cháfer, Molina-Morales, & Lubbers, 2018). Its main objective is to understand the transnational social structures that connect two Romanian enclaves on the Spanish Mediterranean coast, Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar, and their places origin in Romania, respectively Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud. The project's specific research questions are:

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[1] Project ORBITS title: "The Role of Social Transnational Fields in the Emergence, Maintenance and Decay of Ethnic and Demographic Enclaves", funded by the Spanish government (MINECO-FEDER-CSO2015-68687-P). http://pagines.uab.cat/orbits/en

1. How can we conceptualise and measure the dimensions of transnational social fields?
2. How can we identify the possible existence of specialised roles in these structures, and what are their functions?
3. What is the role that organisational entities play in transnational social structures?
4. What is the relation between these transnational structures and the emergence, maintenance, and possible decay of enclaves?
5. What effects do individual positions in these structures have on insertion in the labour market, the sense of belonging with Spain, Romania, and Europe, and in general, with the social integration of Romanian immigrants?

The project uses a mixed-methods approach that combines social network analysis with ethnographic fieldwork. A binational research team composed of investigators from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the University of Bucharest worked simultaneously in Spain and Romania. The research team conducted 495 surveys with Romanians – migrants, non-migrant, and returnees – in two different transnational social fields. First, 303 interviews were performed between November 2017 and July 2018 in the TSF that connects Castelló de la Plana with Dâmbovița. Second, between December 2018 and February 2020, 192 surveys were performed in the TSF connecting the Roquetas de Mar enclave with Bistrița-Năsăud.

The project uses a specific form of network-oriented respondent-driven sampling (RDS), a method designed to reach hidden or unknown populations (Heckathorn, 1997, 2002; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004) that has been adapted to measure transnational social fields in a process called 'binational link tracing' (Mouw et al., 2014). This method starts with ethnographic fieldwork among the investigated social group – in this case Romanian migrants in one of the two settlement locations in Spain – to select a small group of initial participants (seeds) with heterogeneous positions in the social structure who are willing to participate. Each of these seeds is interviewed, and at the end of the survey, we ask them to nominate between three and six other Romanians, ideally three residing in Spain and three in Romania, who may be willing to participate in the survey. Then, the research team calls these referrals, inviting them to take part in the survey. After conducting the survey, these second-wave participants are again asked to nominate the same number of contacts – up to six referrals – to continue the chains or waves of references until the desired sample size is reached. The interviews were simultaneously conducted in Spain and Romania.

The survey enquired about respondents' sociodemographic information, migration trajectories, and daily life in Romania and Spain, and delineated the social networks in which respondents were embedded, of up to forty family members, friends, and acquaintances living in Spain, Romania, and in third countries, to measure, among other characteristics, the type of relation, and the duration and frequency of contact. Using the first three letters of the name and surname of each respondent, network member and referees, and the first four digits of their mobile phone numbers, the team brought all the personal networks into an extensive network of thousands of individuals that represented the transnational social field (see the network based only on the link-tracing references for the TSF Castelló de la Plana - Dâmboviţa in Figure 7. The figure 12, in page 107, represents this TSF with the 4,855 people nominated and the 5,477 relations).

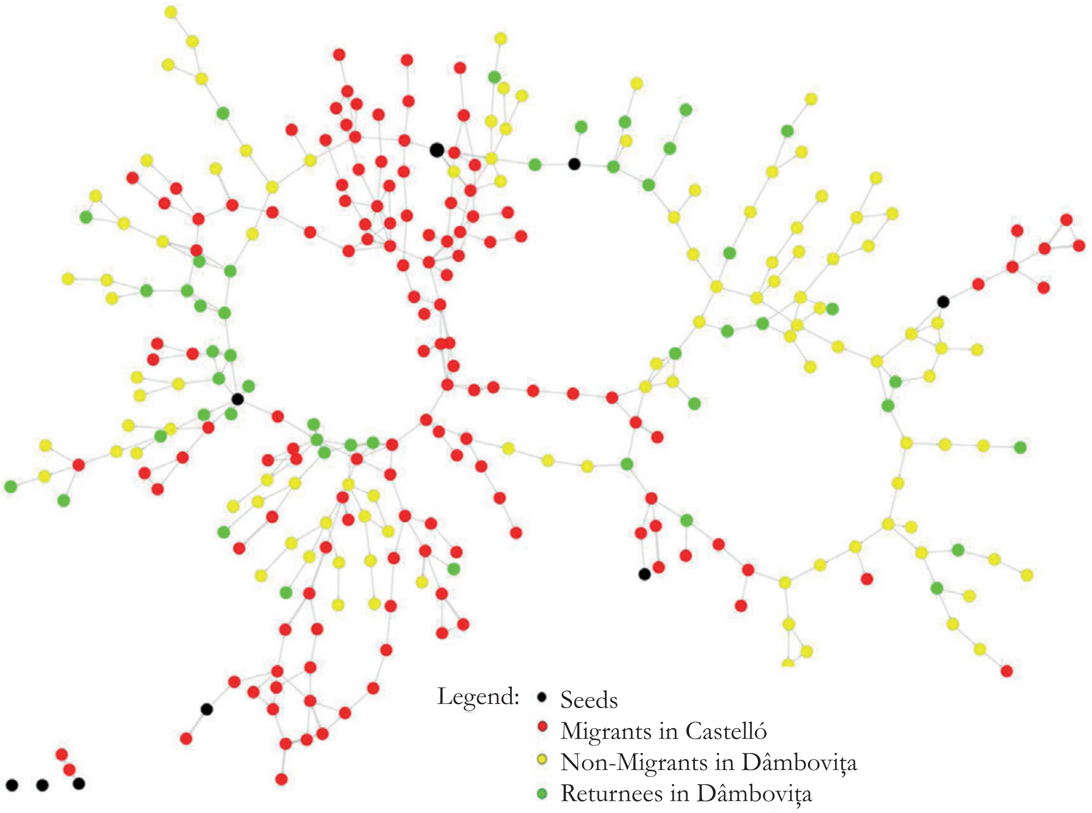

Figure 7. Network of the references of the 303 people interviewed in the TSF Castelló de la Plana - Dâmboviţa. Source: ORBITS project.

As a team member, I supported the questionnaire design, ran pilot interviews, coordinated the team of interviewers in Spain who were working simultaneously in Romania, assisted in the development of the database, and carried out 79 interviews for this investigation: seventy in Roquetas de Mar, four in Castelló de la Plana, and five in Bistriţa-Năsăud.

In parallel, some team members, including myself, carried out multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995) that provided essential knowledge about the local communities, enabled selection of the seeds, and fostered the trust of Romanian community members and related institutions in the project. The fieldwork also benefited from the knowledge we gained from the network data and analysis, thus facilitating new contacts and orienting some inquiries about specific networks, such as the greenhouse construction workers and entrepreneurs analysed in Chapter 6. We have called this mixed-methods approach, which is explained in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, "network-oriented ethnography".[2]

2.2. The methods of the dissertation research

The methodological approach I used in this thesis has been synchronised with the overall methodology of the ORBITS research project and its objectives. I have used the data collected for the project to develop and triangulate some of my arguments: (1) the profile and network characteristics of our interviewees and their networks; (2) the brief field notes written down by each interviewer after administering the questionnaires; and (3) the ethnographic reports made by the team. However, this dissertation is mainly based on the specific methods developed for it (for a summary of the methods used in this thesis, the research participants they involved, and the dates and places when they were performed, see Table 2). I conducted multi-sited fieldwork between April 2017 and March 2020. The lockdown and mobility limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from completing the last semi-structured interviews, a few of which were then performed at a distance – e.g., via Skype and WhatsApp.

During these three years, I paid five visits to Romania, carrying out three non-consecutive months of fieldwork. For part of this time, I was affiliated with the University of Bucharest as a visiting scholar. I visited the Romanian migrants living in Spain during their vacation trips to Romania and people already interviewed in Spain in their various towns of origin in Romania. I paid six short visits to Castelló de la Plana in Spain to participate in Romanian events and perform interviews. Also, I conducted one year of fieldwork in Roquetas de Mar, where I lived and where most of my ethnographic data were collected. During the fieldwork in Roquetas de Mar, I was affiliated with Almeria University.

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[2] Also, a short article detailing how to put this mixed-methods approach into practice is being peer-reviewed in the journal *Field Methods* (Molina et al. 2021, under review). See Annex 1 for further information.

Method	Main settings and participants/sampling	Date and place
Participant observation	Visiting Romanian churches, associations, and companies, and volunteering in Romanian festivities. Meetings with key participants.	Twelve months in Roquetas de Mar (Spain) between 2018 and 2020. Three non-consecutive months in Romania between 2018 and 2019.
Informal interviews	Around fifty interviews with religious and community leaders; representatives of local institutions, political parties, and associations; police officers; Romanian business owners; owners of greenhouses and greenhouse construction companies; civil servants; social workers; and research experts.	Romania and Spain between 2017 and 2020.
Mobile methods: carpooling	I traveled by car with two Romanian families living in Spain who visited Romania for their holidays.	August 2017 traveling by car. 2018 and 2019 in Roquetas de Mar.
	Informal conversations during carpooling trips.	Romania and Spain.
Focus groups on informality	(1) Spaniards. Two women and two men between 35 and 45 years old.	August 2018
	(2) Spaniards. Two women (45 and 67) and one man (70).	December 2018
	(3) Romanians. A family composed of a father (50), a mother (48), and two sons (24 and 26).	May 2019
	(4) Spaniards. Four women and four men between thirty and fifty years old.	September 2019
Extended fieldnotes of the ORBITS project's interviewees	After each interviewee, I collected extensive notes about various aspects of the participant that were not included directly in the survey: informality, mobility, livelihood strategies, political corruption, work, religion, and transnational communications.	Seventy in Roquetas de Mar, 2018-2019 Five in Bistriţa-Năsăud, 2019 Four in Castelló de la Plana, 2018
Semi-structured interviews	Ten interviews with Romanian migrants in Roquetas de Mar focused on informal practices and mobilities.	February and March 2020
	Two interviews by phone (due to COVID-19 pandemic) with Romanian entrepreneurs focused on greenhouse construction.	October 2020

Table 2. Summary of the dissertation methods, participants, sampling, and date/places of fieldwork.

The next subsections define each of these methods, their goals, and their suitability for this research.

2.2.1. Participant observation

Participant observation helps link what people say with what people do and is the ideal method of ethnography, in which the researcher is immersed in a social group and repeatedly participates in their activities (Brkovic & Hodges, 2015). Long-term immersion in the field is needed to acquire rapport and talk frankly about controversial topics. It is a suitable tool for comprehending pervasive, hidden, or difficult to observe practices such as mobilities and informality because knowing about "open secrets" requires time and involvement (Ledeneva, 2011). I have performed different roles, from full participation to complete observer (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), which varied in the multiple sites where fieldwork was conducted: visits to Romanian churches, associations, and companies; meetings with friends and key participants in public spaces, and occasionally in their houses; and volunteering in Romanian associations. I explained my objectives and interests as a researcher in all locations when participating in small groups. My observations were annotated and audio-recorded in various diaries (see Section 2.3 for further explanation).

2.2.2. Informal interviews

During my fieldwork, I held many unrecorded, spontaneous interviews, although sometimes I took handwritten notes if my interlocutors agreed. In this research, informal interviews have been especially crucial to talking about informal practices that might be considered immoral, unethical, and illicit, although the participants were more willing to talk about these practices than had been expected. I held such interviews with the most relevant actors in social, public, and local political areas in the main sites of research: i.e., with religious and community leaders; representatives of local institutions, political parties, and associations; police officers; Romanian business owners; greenhouses and greenhouse construction owners; civil servants; social workers; and research experts. Interviews were spontaneous and casual, but in some cases in which the interview required to be planned, I prepared a thematic guide before the interview, oriented by the research objectives and adapted to interviewees' positions and situations. These can be considered semi-structured informal interviews.

2.2.3. Ethnographic fieldnotes from interviewees

The ORBITS survey was administered via personal interviewing. In many cases, the interviewees wanted to talk more about their own lives. Before and after the formal interview, these casual conversations can complement information on the TSF to draw in-depth profiles and guide the research with emergent aspects. In my case, I wrote 79 extended ethnographic field notes reflecting on these conversations about topics not included in the questionnaire, such as forms of mobility, informal practices, work problems, social support, type of remittances, and accommodation, among others.

2.2.4. Mobile methods

Following people, things or ideas has long been an anthropological method that takes us back to Malinowski following the *kula* circuits (Argudo-Portal & Martorell-Faus, 2019). Mobility studies have lately developed a notion of mobile ethnography: "[R]esearchers will benefit if they track in various ways – including physically traveling with their research subjects – the many and interdependent forms of intermittent movement of people, images, information and objects" (Büscher and Urry 2009: 103; cf. Sheller and Urry 2006). In my research, I developed this practice during my fieldwork in Romania and Spain. I used all the available means of transportation – taxis, buses, trains, planes, or hitchhiking – as a prospective, embodied, and emergent mode of research (Jirón, 2011) similar to shadowing techniques based on observation and encounters in public spaces (Czarniawska, 2007). Specifically, I developed a *carpooling method*[3] that consisted of sharing car trips with unknown people and openly asking my research questions to elicit people's opinions and experiences.

The carpooling platform BlaBlaCar[4] enabled me to share car transportation, both as a passenger and as a driver in my own vehicle. This method was developed in two ways. First, I traveled back and forth from Spain and Romania with two Romanian migrant families in their cars talking informally about their migration processes during the two-day trip. Second, I shared my car on six trips between Malaga and Almería – for personal reasons; the trip takes two hours one way – with Spaniards from the region. In both cases, I introduced myself as a social anthropologist studying the case of Romanian migration in Spain and asked them if they would agree to talk about my interests or research. All of them were willing to talk, and after the trip I took notes on their comments, or even during the trip if I was not driving. Both experiences were worthwhile because immigration was a difficult topic at this time. Public opinion had become polarised after the ascension of a far-right political party that entered for the first time in the local, regional, and national parliaments in 2019. However, people can also talk about controversial topics with someone far from their inner circle to avoid negative repercussions (Small, 2019). During some hours or days, sharing a car was an excellent opportunity to share opinions and experiences with a stranger like me.

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[3] This method is discussed further in Chapter 5.

[4] BlaBlaCar is a French company whose web platform allows intermediation so that people who travel to the same site can organise to share a vehicle and travel expenses.

Moreover, it was an embodied experience of mobility that informed my research about the transnational mobilities. For instance, a short vignette from my carpooling trip to Romania may illustrate the opportunities and challenges. The two days non-stop car trip was a tangible materialisation of the Spain-Romania corridors. Transnational Romanian families on holiday were in a rush to connect the very well-known two worlds they inhabit, and the highways cruising Europe operate as time-space pipelines. We did not get off the highway for two days, except in rest areas to eat and drink the things we were carrying. The men drove while drinking coffee and having energetic dreams to avoid sleeping, while the women took care of the children. After two days talking about their day-to-day lives without sleeping, one of the families invited me to their wedding in Romania the following year – though in the end I could not go. In sum, the data collected by this embedded and embodied mobile methodology has been useful in exploring mobility patterns, the social context, and the livelihood strategies of Romanian migrants.

2.2.5. Focus groups

A focus group is “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by a researcher” (Morgan 1996: 130). The inclusion of focus groups was motivated by understanding whether informal practices change as people migrate, adapting to the local contest. A focus group is a suitable tool for mapping out informal practices, identifying lists, and comparing informal practices in Romania and Spain. Empirical analysis showed that, using a focus-group guide with a homogeneous selection of participants, “a sample size of two to three focus groups will likely capture at least 80% of themes on a topic” (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017). I held four focus groups.

In the first step to prepare these focus groups, I made a list of potential informal practices in Spanish and Romanian, following a literature review and informal talks with key Romanian research participants and Romanian colleagues. The theoretical and methodological framework was based on Ledeneva's[5] method of the compilation of practices within the Global Informality Project, under the following headings: the local name and definition of the informal practice; how widely is it used and where; identification of analogous or related practices; the implications of the chosen practice for politics, the economy, or society; and selected examples of the practice. The second step was to organise the focus groups with people who know each other to arrive at better agreements about the meaning of each practice.

Three focus groups were held with the researcher's family and friends on informal practices in Spain. This selection was motivated by the difficulty of finding people to conduct the focus groups and the trust among the group's participants that was needed to discuss different informal practices and to find a common understanding. I guided the discussions, but all participants talked openly about their own experiences, which were mostly known to all. The fourth focus group was held with a Romanian family living in Roquetas de Mar about informal practices in Romania and Spain. I gained the trust of all the family members to talk openly after a year of fieldwork, during which we became friends. This focus group was organised slightly differently because we also talked about the differences between Romanian and Spanish practices.

The procedure of the focus group regarding informal practices was as follows. First, I presented an informal practice from a list – 25 practices organised alphabetically to avoid pre-categorisations – and ask the participants to define it in their own words, give examples, find similarities with other practices, and discuss its social implications. The discussions also left room for the appearance of synonyms, nuances, clusters, and new concepts. Second, when discussion of a concept had ended, we passed on to the next practice on the list.

The focus groups lasted around one hour and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed. The result was a list of informal practices in Spain and Romania with different definitions – around thirty practices from each country. The glossary was completed by fieldwork and informed the research, the list also being used in the semi-structured interviews. Indeed, focus groups are useful when they are combined with ethnographic fieldwork to make further interpretations of the topics of research (Agar & MacDonald, 1995). Some of the practices are included in the thesis chapters, particularly Chapter 4, and information on one of the informal practices in Spain, '*Gorroneo*,' has been published in the informality project,[6] to appear in the next volume of the *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality* (Fradejas-García, 2021).

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[5] https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Theoretical_Framing_of_the_Database

[6] https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gorroneo_(Spain_and_Hispanic_America)

2.2.6. Semi-structured interviews

During this research, I performed ten semi-structured interviews about informal practices in Roquetas de Mar. Six of these interviews were conducted with selected people who had previously been interviewed as part of the ORBITS project, and four interviews were with people who had not been interviewed earlier because they were not from Bistrița-Năsăud. The selection was difficult because the topic causes mistrust, and not many people wanted to participate. Informal practices are everywhere, but "they are often invisible, resist articulation and measurement, and hide behind paradoxes, unwritten rules and open secrets" (Ledeneva 2018: 7). To address these difficulties, Ledeneva (1998) suggests interviewing people as a 'misrecognition game' using life histories and asking about personal experiences retrospectively, inquiring about the other and not the self, and swapping experiences rather than following a question-and-answer scheme. Moreover, to differentiate socially acceptable from socially unacceptable questions that might provoke the interviewee's refusal to answer, thus jeopardizing the research, I performed two pilot interviews with some key participants where some questions were identified as 'sensitive.' Table 3 shows the four sections in the semi-structured interviews and the different topics asked.

Interview section	Topics
1. Life history and migratory trajectory	Family and work life history; migration and mobility; current and future situation.
2. Family, friends and other relationships	Changes in relationships; social support (local and transnational scale); perceptions of social support.
3. Informal practices (local and transnational)	Subsistence strategies and informal practices; informal economy; transnational livelihood practices; labour and work; religious; housing; transnational spatial mobility (people, objects, and documents); corruption in Romania and Spain.
4. Informal practices comparison	Asking one by one about the definition, use, and translation of informal practices listed on the basis of the focus groups and the literature review.

Table 3. The four sections of the semi-structured interview.

In Sections 3 and 4, the questions were asked only after taking precautions. First, I read the interviewee a prepared script:

> "In this section, I am interested in the activities people informally perform to make a living. In many cases, I will ask if you know someone who has made some of these activities (it does not matter if they are Romanian, Spanish, or of another nationality). If you don't know anyone, I'll ask you what you think about the subject. As I said to you before, you don't have to answer if you don't want to, is that okay?".

Some people were more willing to talk openly about informal practices than others. With each question, I asked retrospectively or by increasing social distance. For instance, one of the questions was:

> Do you know someone who has had to pay to get a job?
>
> [If yes] I do not want to know who this person is. But can you tell me how it was?
>
> [If not] What do you think about it?

In many cases, I swapped experiences to balance the mutually shared secrets. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, but, once the voice recorder had been turned off, many interviewees talked about issues they had previously avoided or had not already spoken about. In some cases, and with their consent, I made notes about these issues as part of the interview, whereas in other cases these conversations remained off the record for ethical reasons. Given all the data available – fieldnotes, focus groups, interviews –, saturation was achieved regarding the informal practices of inquiry.

Finally, I performed two focused interviews with greenhouse construction entrepreneurs. These interviews were conducted at a distance in late 2020 to obtain specific information about their activities for Chapter 6. In this regard, an additional method used was to consult business databases to find out how many greenhouse companies were led or owned by Romanians. Some calls were made to selected companies to ask about Romanian entrepreneurial activities, but without conclusive results.

2.3. Data-processing and analysis

The types of qualitative data I collected can be grouped into two categories: data audio-recorded directly from the research participants, and data reflected on in my notes and audio-notes to myself. The recorded data were transcribed and stored in a safe file on the university's intranet. The non-audio-recorded materials are registered as three types of diary: (1) a "fieldwork diary" on the computer-processing of daily participant observation; (2) an "audio diary" using the smartphone voice recorder for emergent ideas and comments that, in some cases, were later transcribed and/or elaborated in the "fieldwork diary"; and (3) handwriting an "academic diary" to annotate informal interviews, ideas, and references in the field, as well as for use in academic settings, such as mentoring meetings, conferences, and congresses. Moreover, pictures and videos taken with my smartphone and a digital single-lens reflex camera were of help in documenting events and recalling stories and situations during the analysis.

Ethnography and prospective fieldwork left room for emergent events and knowledge, as happened regarding the importance of the automobility system or the role of the greenhouse entrepreneurs. I used the CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis) Atlas.ti initially to analyse the diaries and field notes to find patterns following emergent coding. The analysis generated 300 codes organised in 24 general non-pre-defined categories that then guided the research (by alphabetical order): care and social support; cultural capital; cultural practices; daily life; economy; gender; health; (im)mobilities; informality; institutionalisation; jobs; languages; livelihood strategies; migration; emotions; places; politics; racism; religion; tourism; transnational practices; transportation; welfare state; and working conditions.

In the last phase of the research, I did not use Atlas.ti for content analysis but instead listened to the interviews and focus groups and transcribed[7] their most relevant parts in light of the questions and the previous codes and categories. Also, I made Microsoft Excel spreadsheets with: (1) the participants in the ORBITS projects whom I interviewed as with my field notes; (2) the definitions of informal practices from Spain and Romania from the different focus groups; (3) analysis from our database in Dynamic Tables; (4) analysis of other statistical sources such as the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), and some information from the database of the *Sistema de Análisis de Balances Ibérico*s (SABI).[8] Moreover, some data from the ORBITS project has been analysed by team members[9] to develop the networks and the migrant profiles in SPSS, Egonet, and Ucinet software. I specifically used Vennmaker software to analyse some of the personal networks of migrant entrepreneurs for Chapter 6, and although the figures are not included in the chapter, an example of a personal network and a short explanation are provided in Figure 8.

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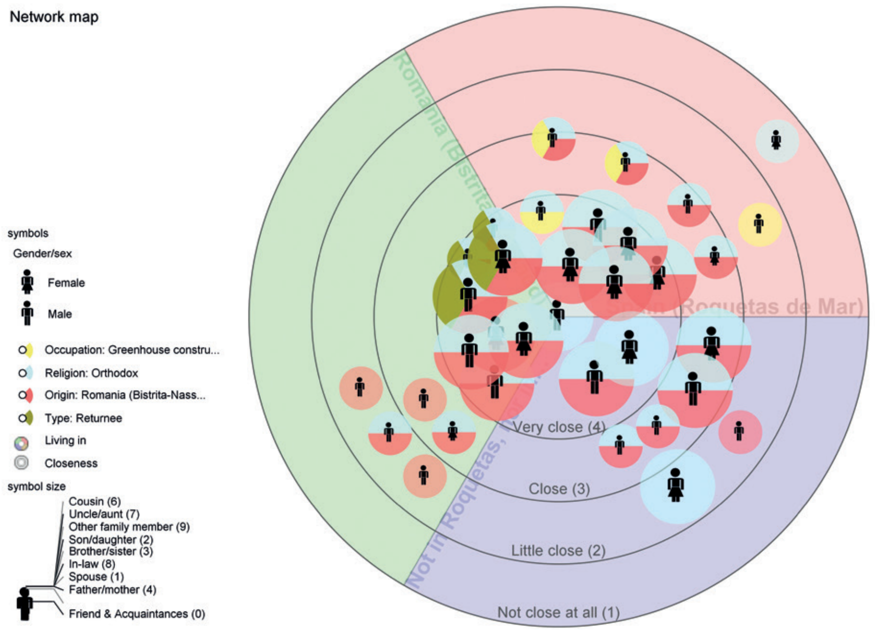
[7] All transcriptions in this research have been *ad verbatim*.

[8] I thank Luis Martínez Chafer for his advice with this statistical source.

[9] I acknowledge their specific contributions in each chapter.


Network map
symbols
Gender/sex
Female
Male
Occupation: Greenhouse constru...
Religion: Orthodox
Origin: Romania (Bistrita-Nass...
Type: Returnee
Living in
Closeness
symbol size
Cousin (6)
Uncle/aunt (7)
Other family member (9)
Son/daughter (2)
Brother/sister (3)
In-law (8)
Spouse (1)
Father/mother (4)
Friend & Acquaintances (0)
Romania (Bistrita
in Roquetas de Mar)
Not in Roquetas,
Very close (4)
Close (3)
Little close (2)
Not close at all (1)

The personal network of a Romanian entrepreneur of greenhouse construction in Roquetas de Mar.

The interviewee is 36 years old and came to Spain in 2002 following his brother. Most of his family is in Roquetas de Mar, and he has a Romanian spouse who works harvesting in the greenhouses, with whom he has two children. As shown in the network, he has a transnational personal network of 33 alters (we asked for a maximum of 40), of whom 17 are friends and acquaintances, and 16 family members. Most of his contacts (alters) are Romanians (32) from Bistrița-Năsăud who profess the Orthodox religion (28), and only one person is from Spain. He has 13 contacts living in Bistrița-Năsăud, 12 in Roquetas de Mar (all have spent more than ten years in the city), and eight contacts in other places. Regarding the emotional closeness of relationships, for him 16 alters are very close, ten are close, six are quite close, and one is not close at all. Moreover, four of his alters are working in greenhouse construction (they are part of his crew), and many others are working in the agroindustry as truck-drivers (12), farmworkers (4), or vegetable packagers (1).

Figure 8. The personal network of a crew foreman and entrepreneur of greenhouse construction. Own elaboration with the software Vennmaker based on ORBITS data.

The chapters in this dissertation have been written ethnographically, each one taking a different analytical approach in which field notes, the network characteristics of the survey, and interviews were triangulated. All the methods, data, and analytical tools available were used at some point in the development of Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the content analysis of field notes in Atlas.ti was valuable in clustering the codes following five of the six components of the automobile system described by John Urry (2004), which served as an analytical frame. Chapter 5 explains the methodological approach and presents ethnographic vignettes from the field notes. Finally, Chapter 6 is based on a content analysis of all the interviews and field notes about greenhouse construction, but, as in Chapter 3, the ethnographic writing had to use all the data available.

2.4. Ethics and positionality

This research follows the "UAB's code of good practices on research" and the specific guidelines developed by the ORBITS project for the whole of its research cycle, from design to dissemination. Ethical approval for the project's data collection was obtained from the University's Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Experimentation (CEEAH) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (document ID 3733). Moreover, I also followed the ethical guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA).[10] For all interviews, focus groups and situations in which I conducted participant observation, I first explained the ORBITS project of research and my own thesis research in plain language, allowed the respondents an opportunity to ask any questions they might have, and explained their right not to answer any question that made them uncomfortable, or even to leave the interview without any consequences. Research participants in semi-structured interviews have signed informed consent forms, and in the case of focus groups, oral consent was recorded. In carpooling and informal interviews, all participants gave me permission to take notes.

Confidentiality was guaranteed. The data are stored in a safe place on the university's intranet, the files all being password-protected. Pseudonyms have replaced personal names, and the level of personal detail in the thesis has been reduced to ensure anonymity. All fieldwork and interviews were carried out in Spanish, in which most Romanian immigrants and returnees were fluent, although English and basic Romanian were used during fieldwork as well, particularly with non-migrants in Romania.

Regarding my positionality as a researcher, I usually passed unnoticed because my phenotypical characteristics are like those of Romanian men. This was valuable when it came to participating in day-to-day life and activities in Romania and Spain (see Figure 9). My position as a middle-aged Spanish man doing fieldwork and living for nearly a year in Roquetas de Mar – not my region of origin – with my little daughter, a baby of a few months, and my partner was vital to achieve a rapport in some settings and to some extent to be able to participate in the community as a father.

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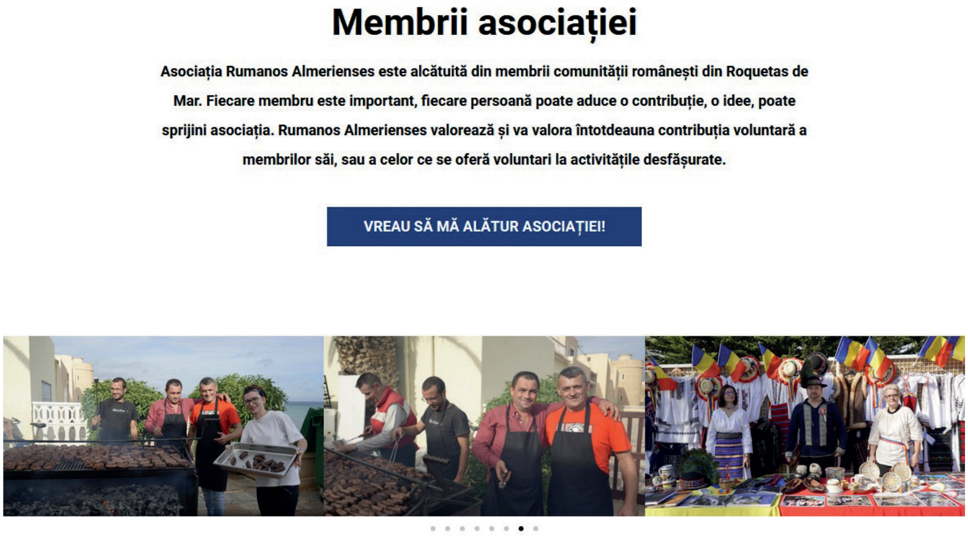
[10] https://www.theasa.org/ethics/



Membrii asociației

Asociația Rumanos Almerienses este alcătuită din membrii comunității românești din Roquetas de Mar. Fiecare membru este important, fiecare persoană poate aduce o contribuție, o idee, poate sprijini asociația. Rumanos Almerienses valorează și va valora întotdeauna contribuția voluntară a membrilor săi, sau a celor ce se oferă voluntari la activitățile desfășurate.

Figure 9. The researcher (in a black T-Shirt, in the left and central photos) cooking traditional Romanian food while participating as a volunteer in Romania's 100th anniversary in 2019 in Roquetas de Mar. Source: Website of the Asociación Socio-Cultural Rumanos Almerienses (ASCRA) https://rumanosalmerienses.com/

Moreover, my position as a man did not made it harder for me to find Romanian women to participate, and sex and gender were balanced in the research[11]. For instance, in the semi-structured interviews I interviewed four women and eight men, and in the 79 interviews I performed for the ORBITS project, 37 interviews were with men and 42 with women. Moreover, my own experience as a transnational migrant in previous years, my basic knowledge of Romanian, and my fieldwork in Romania – in some cases visiting participants' home towns in Transylvania – was helpful in gaining their trust allowing me to participate in their daily lives. Regarding research, swapping experiences with the participants about my informal practices and mobilities was essential to build trust and tackle controversial issues.

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[11] The dissertation research has been guided by the 'Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research' (European Commission, 2011) to include the gender dimension and being gender-sensitive in the research process.

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Chapter 3. (Im)mobilities and Informality as Livelihood Strategies in Transnational Social Fields[1]

3.1. Introduction

Mobility and informality have become popular concepts in the social sciences as a way of attempting to grasp the complexity of cultural practices in everyday life. First, the "mobility turn" (Sheller & Urry, 2006) put the movement of people, things, and knowledge at the core of the social research agenda, encompassing the mobilities associated with migration and transnationalism (Salazar, 2019). Second, "informality", understood broadly as the aggregate of practices that bypass the regulations of states and their institutions (Polese, 2021; Routh, 2011), is a global phenomenon that inherently co-exists with any formal system to "get things done" (Ledeneva, 2018; Polese, Williams, Horodnic, & Bejakovic, 2017). However, as the precise practices are culture-specific (Ledeneva, 2018; Lomnitz, 1988), we can expect the informal practices that individuals employ to evolve when they migrate to a different cultural context. Despite this, the connection between transnational mobility and informality has hardly been explored in the literature on informality. Therefore, in this chapter we explore the relationship between informality and the mobilities of Romanian migrants in Spain, analysing how their informal practices evolve when people migrate from one cultural context to another.

The connection between informality and migration was first established by Keith Hart, who investigated the informal activities of illiterate, unskilled migrants from rural areas of northern Ghana in Accra (Hart, 1973). Hart is frequently credited for having pioneered the first typologies of informal economic activities (Ledeneva, 2018) and for coining the term 'informal economy' as the ensemble of productive activities outside the 'organised labour force' (Morris & Polese, 2014). Hart's work also shows that both formal and informal activities were part of migrants' mobility and immobility patterns – hereafter (im)mobilities – which were facilitated by their social networks, based on kin ties and ethnic membership.

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[1] Fradejas-García, I., Molina, J.L., Lubbers, M.J. Book chapter accepted in Polese, A. (ed.) *Migration, Labour Mobility and Precariousness. Why informality ends up replacing and supplementing the state for the invisible and the vulnerable.* Palgrave.

Since then, migration scholars have focused on the relations between undocumented migrants and their employment in the informal sector (Baldwin-Edwards & Arango, 1999; Berggren, Likić-Brborić, Toksöz, & Trimiklinotis, 2007; Likic-Brboric, Slavnic, & Woolfson, 2013), on transnational entrepreneurs able to obtain a competitive advantage by relying on informal economies and networks (Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Turaeva, 2014), and on transnational practices of resistance to state control (Garapich, 2016). Furthermore, scholarship on informality has paid attention to informal border-crossing practices such as smuggling and trafficking (Bruns, Miggelbrink, & Müller, 2011; Kalir & Sur, 2012; Schendel & Abraham, 2005) and the shadow economies of migrant workers in post-socialist contexts (Cieslewska, 2014; Urinboyev & Polese, 2016; Yalcin-Heckmann, 2014).

However, academic contributions exploring whether and how individuals' informal practices evolve when people migrate from one cultural context to another are scarce. The 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki, 1992) that identifies the relationship between peoples and places usually through migrants' countries of origin and destiny or that focus on informal exchanges *within* physical borders has been dominant so far (Bruns & Miggelbrink, 2012; Spyer, 1988). When people move between cultural contexts, the informal practices that they learned may not work or become superfluous in the new context, while new needs, opportunities, or limitations may arise. Besides, transnational migrants are not confined to a single nation state (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), but live at the crossroads of two or more nation states, influenced by multiple sets of laws and institutions (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), which implies they navigate different "mobility regimes" (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013), as well as different administrative, legislative and cultural systems. Consequently, their informal practices to "get things done" may also respond to or exploit more than one formal system.

In this chapter we adopt a livelihood perspective, which sees both transnational migration and informal practices as strategies that households employ to make a living. This perspective suggests that, for households, the two complementary activities have the common goal of reproduction. Moreover, we assume that migrants contribute to the creation of a transnational social field – hereafter TSF –, i.e., the networks of personal relationships that extend across national borders "through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). TSFs may start as nothing more than networks of personal relationships, but the migrant enclaves at the destination may gradually attain an "institutional completeness" (Breton, 1968) reproducing the institutions of society at large. In this case, the emergence of Romanian welfare organizations, political organizations, cultural associations, churches, schools, language classes, newspapers and transport companies in Spain catering specifically to the needs of the migrants (Molina et al., 2018). Thus, the TSF perspective helps us identify three types of interdependent actors – migrants, return migrants, and Romanians living in Romania – and allows us to explore the agency of household members in the context of collective and institutional processes.

In sum, this chapter poses the research question of how do the informal practices of Romanians evolve in the process of their migration to Spain, whether individually or collectively? This approach focuses on westward migration and mobilities from Romania to Spain, extending previous accounts of "transnational informality" in post-socialist spaces (e.g. Urinboyev 2016), and enhances our understanding of the relationship between informality and mobility.

The data presented in this chapter are based on a research project[2] that analyses the TSFs created by Romanian immigrants in Spain. To investigate their livelihood strategies, we used a mixed-methods approach combining a binational survey[3] (N=303 for the field connecting Dâmbovița to Castelló de la Plana) with ethnographic fieldwork. The survey inquired about migration and mobility trajectories, family situations, formal and informal economic activities – e.g., remittances, flows of goods, work contracts – homeownership, and social networks. It was conducted between November 2017 and July 2018 in Spain (Castelló de la Plana) and Romania (Dâmbovița), using a novel sampling methodology called 'binational link tracing' (Mouw et al., 2014), a technique closely related to respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn, 1997, 2002). Also, after administering the survey to respondents, the interviewers wrote brief field notes highlighting ethnographic information on people's livelihood strategies that have complemented the survey data. In addition, between 2017 and 2020 we conducted multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995) in Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud (Romania) and Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar (Spain). The ethnographic fieldwork consisted of a combination of four methods: (1) participant observation in the daily activities of churches, associations, and companies, as well as carpooling trips with Romanian migrants to and from Romania; (2) dozens of informal interviews with migrants, politicians, and religious and community leaders; (3) four focus groups on informal practices (three with Spaniards on informal practices in Spain, and one with a Romanian family living in Spain to identify and list informal practices in both countries); and (4) ten semi-structured interviews with Romanian migrants about informal practices. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed and all the participants in this research have signed informed consent forms. The results presented in this chapter are based on these data.

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[2] In this chapter we present data from the first phase of the ongoing ORBITS project, "The Role of Social Transnational Fields in the Emergence, Maintenance and Decay of Ethnic and Demographic Enclaves", funded by the Spanish government (MINECO-FEDER-CSO2015-68687-P). In the second phase of the project, we are studying a second TSF field between Roquetas de Mar (Spain) and Bistrița-Năsăud (Romania). Quantitative data from this second phase it is not included in this chapter. More information: https://pagines.uab.cat/orbits/en

[3] The sample includes three types of respondent: Romanian citizens currently residing in Spain (N = 147), Romanian return migrants living in Romania (N = 19), and non-migrants living in Romania (N = 138). In Castelló, 73% of the respondents were female, while gender was more equally distributed in Dâmbovița (with 47% females). Respondents' ages varied from 19 to 72 in Castelló, with an average of 43 years, and between 18 and 75 years in Dâmbovița, with an average of 36 years. In both places, about a quarter of the respondents had post-high school and higher education.

The chapter is structured as follows. The following two sections discuss the theoretical intersections of informality, transnational mobilities, and livelihood strategies, as well as providing a brief overview of Romanian migration to Spain in general and to Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar in particular. Thereafter, in Section 3.4, we propose a schema of the adaptation of informal practices by TSFs based on our findings and state our expectations. In Sections 3.5 to 3.7, we present our results on how informal practices change during different phases of migration. Finally, we conclude with some findings on the adaptation of informal practices as an overture to our future research on the topic.

3.2. Informality and (im)mobilities as livelihood strategies in transnational social fields

Livelihood strategies are the repertoire of economic and non-economic strategies through which people strive to make a living (De Haan, 2012), a notion that extends to both informal practices and mobilities. Informal practices, defined as "regular strategies to manipulate or exploit formal rules by enforcing informal norms and personal obligations in formal contexts" (Ledeneva 2008:119), penetrate all aspects of public life globally, including economic, social, and political practices (Polese, Morris, & Kovács, 2016). They are embedded in market exchanges, but also in non-economic dimensions such as non-profit activities and in exchanges within personal relationships (Ledeneva, 1998). Their pervasiveness suggests that they are adopted irrespective of the economic circumstances of citizens or countries (Morris and Polese 2014: 14). Ledeneva stresses the importance of unwritten rules, or "the know-how needed to 'navigate' between formal and informal sets of constraints" (2011: 722). Informal practices vary across time and space, responding to cultural, political, and economic transformations (Ledeneva, 2018; Yalcin-Heckmann, 2014). They are also embedded in grey zones "associated with in-betweenness, liminality, marginality and ambiguity" (Ledeneva 2018: 2), as they are "neither hidden nor fully articulated" (ibid.: 11).

In this chapter, we study informal practices within the TSFs through the personal relationships that migrants maintained with one another and with non-migrants in Romania. The TSF concept allows empirical research not only on individual responses and migrant processes, but also on the collective and institutional responses to mobility regimes (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) that are constituted by existing regulations, institutions, and infrastructure (Baker, 2016) and that either limit or facilitate (im)mobilities, depending on the power relationships within a social field (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). From our perspective, mobility within a TSF is not just an individual but a household decision that is also driven by ties beyond the household that follow the chain of migration (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964), as the costs of migration fall with each new wave. Network externalities start to emerge once a certain lower threshold of migrants is reached, which includes a growing institutionalisation in the TSF. Moreover, specialized roles can emerge of immobile people who coordinate and optimize mobility across the field (Bashi, 2007; Dahinden, 2010; Molina, Petermann, & Herz, 2015).

Although the vast body of literature on informality acknowledges its ubiquity, it is mostly based on evidence from post-socialist countries, the Global South, and developing countries. In Western Europe informality has been studied less often than in post-socialist countries because it is embedded in formality in more complex ways there (Morris & Polese, 2014). Thus, the focus on livelihood strategies and TSFs allows us to analyse the complex processes of both formalisation and informalisation (Boudreau & Davis, 2017) along with the phases of Romanian migration in Spain. The purpose is twofold. On the one hand, it allows formal and informal labor practices to be re-examined as an overlapping continuum that goes from formal employment to self-provisioning (Williams & Onoshenko, 2014), performed as forms of either resistance or exploitation (Round, Williams, & Rodgers, 2008). This phenomenon can be explained by the decline in formal employment and the process of informalisation of previous formal relations (Likic-Brboric et al., 2013; Williams & Onoshenko, 2014). Trying to find comparative dimensions of informal economies in the UK, Pahl suggested the expression 'forms of informal work' (1990) to describe productive activities that are embedded in social relations, using the household as a unit of analysis to include the domestic economy as the locus on both formal and informal sources of income (Martinez Veiga, 2005; Molina & Valenzuela, 2007; Pahl, 1984).

On the other hand, as developed in section 3.4, informal practices are culturally dependent and migrants might learn how to get things done at a migrant destination and along TSFs. Thus, migrant adaptation to informality is a process of learning the strategies, mastering the practices, and developing the relationships required to manipulate or exploit the formal rules and context of a given destination.

3.3. Overview of Romanian migration to Spain: The Romanian enclaves of Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar

One consequence of European integration is the growing number of European Union (EU) citizens who live permanently in a different country than where they were born. In 2017, 19.3 million (Eurostat, 2018b) of the approximately 500 million inhabitants of the EU were living in another EU country, of whom roughly nine million are EU citizens of working age who are active in the labour market (Fries-Tersch, Tugran, Ludovica, & Harriet, 2018). The post-socialist states are particularly active as sending countries: Romania and Poland are the largest sending countries in the EU, with more than three and two million intra-EU emigrants respectively (Eurostat, 2018b).

In Romania, the transition to the market economy has deepened the subalternization and fragmentation of labour (Kideckel, 2008; Verdery, 2009), which has increased poverty and unemployment, reinforced informal activities as survival strategies (Ciupagea, 2002; Neef, 2002), and pushed people to move abroad (Marcu, 2009; Sandu, 2005). In contrast to migrants from other east European countries, the main internal European destinations for Romanians are Italy[4] and Spain, which also speak Romance languages and have a relatively low cost of living.

The first phase of Romanian migration to Spain comprises the period between the first arrivals at the beginning of the 1990s and the lifting of visa requirements in 2002, which smoothed movement within the Schengen area. The second phase was a transitory period between 2002 and the entry of Romania in the EU in 2007, when Romanians could live legally in other EU countries, but still without the legal right to work (Marcu, 2009). The third phase stretches from 2007 to today and consists of circular migrations, with a young generation of highly skilled Romanians who are willing to work abroad within the EU and are considered 'mobile European citizens' (Marcu, 2015).

Over these years, the Romanian population in Spain increased sharply, from a few thousand in 1998 to almost 900,000 in 2012 (see Figure 10, National Statistics Institute 2020), when it became the largest foreign population in Spain. Although the economic crisis of 2008-2014 drove many Romanians back out of Spain, they continue to be the second-largest foreign population, with 671,985 Romanian nationals living in Spain in 2019 (INE, 2020).

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[4] For a description of the formation of the transnational social spaces of Romanians in Italy, see Remus (2008).

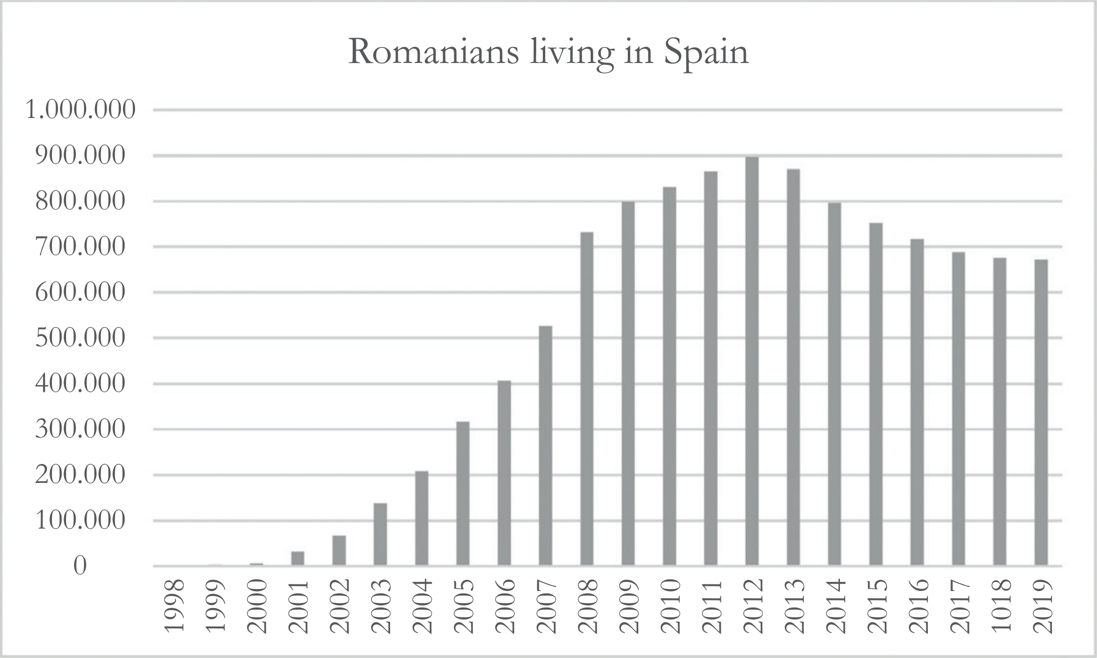

Figure 10. Population with Romanian nationality in Spain.
Own elaboration based on the Padrón Continuo. www.ine.es

Romanians were attracted by the expanding labour markets, both formal and informal, and were supported by social and religious migration networks (Bernat & Viruela, 2011; Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009; Marcu, 2009; Molina et al., 2018; Paniagua, 2007), as well as by the growing institutionalisation resulting from these networks (De Haas, 2010). Geographically, the Romanian population is not homogeneously distributed, but rather forms demographic enclaves within Spain where the percentage of Romanians is particularly high. The Mediterranean cities of Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar are paradigmatic Romanian enclaves.

At the start of fieldwork in Castelló de la Plana in 2017, the number of inhabitants of Romanian nationality accounted for 15,748 out of the total population of 169,498, or roughly 10% of the total population of the city (INE, 2020). Many of them came from a bounded geographical area in Romania: Dâmbovița, a county northwest of Bucharest. The development of this migrant enclave is described elsewhere (Molina et al., 2018). In the case of the city of Roquetas de Mar, in 2017 the total population accounted for 93,363 inhabitants, of whom 24,948 (27.3%) were of foreign nationality, including 8,939 Romanians. This means that Romanians are by far the largest population of foreign nationality (35.8%

of all foreigners) and 9.5% of the total population (INE, 2020), many of whom come from Bistrița-Năsăud, a county in Transylvania, Romania.

These migration corridors, from Dâmbovița to Castelló de la Plana and from Bistrița-Năsăud to Roquetas de Mar, constitute TSFs where people's permanent and temporal mobilities are facilitated by transnational networks of kinship, friendship, and acquaintanceship, as well as regular channels of communication, through which people move, and goods, services, and information are exchanged.

3.4. Informality adaptation: a schema of informal practices and transnational migration

During the socialist period in Romania, instrumental social relations were necessary to overcome scarcities, obtain access to good quality services, or resolve legal issues. Despite the fall of socialism, informal networks and practices are still fundamental to obtaining access to education, health, business, and the labour market (Stoica, 2012). In this context, neo-liberal reforms amplified the competition for scarce resources, increasing the inequalities of power in patron–client relations in basic sectors such as the health-care system (Stan, 2012). In Romania, the "widespread networks of personal exchange and favors [similar to Russian *blat*] have been '*relatii*' (relations), '*cunostinte*' (acquaintances), and '*pile*'" (Stoica 2012: 173), where *pile* – or '*A avea o pilă*' – refers to connections that can smooth things out.[5] As Ledeneva shows (2018), the instrumentality of sociability exists with similar patterns under different names all over the world.

In Spain, the informal practice of using social networks to get things done is called *enchufismo*,[6] translated directly as "to plug in" (*enchufar*), a figurative way of denoting the practice of "pulling strings". The verb *enchufar* means "to give a position or appointment to someone who does not merit it, through friendship or political influence" (RAE, 2019), while *enchufismo* has been defined as "political and social corruption" (ibid). It is nonetheless common practice within the endogenous Spanish labour market and in Spanish politics, providing opportunities for corrupt practices. No fewer than 40% of the Spanish population finds work through informal channels of relatives, friends, and acquaintances, a much higher percentage than in northern European countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, or

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[5] "Romanians joked that the acronym for the Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Comunist Român, PCR) stood for 'Props [or Files], Acquaintances, and Relations' (or '*Pile, Cunostinte si Relatii*' in Romanian)" (Stoica 2012: 172).

[6] Also, *amiguismo*, which "indicate(s) a specifically instrumental use of friendship ties" (Giordano, n.d.: in Ledeneva 2018, 102).

Finland (e.g., Pellizari 2010, cited in Vacchiano et al. 2018). Thus, as our participants noted, the Romanian term "*avea o pilă*" translates directly, both in theory and everyday practice, as to have "*enchufe*".

Other informal practices taken from Romania have been adapted to the destination context in Spain, a country with a large tradition of informality already. For instance, Pitt-Rivers' ethnographic investigation in the 1950s showed how people from a Spanish village made a living relying on undeclared crops and illegal trade (Pitt Rivers, 1971). Benton demonstrated the relevance of off-the-books workers in industrial development in Spain after the dictatorship (1990), a practice that has lasted until today (European Commission, 2014). Informal economies in Spain have been reported in mining (García, 1996), industry (Narotzky, 1988), agriculture (Du Bry, 2015; Martinez Veiga, 2005), and of course domestic service (Viruela, 2013), among other sectors. Indeed, the pervasiveness of the hidden economy in Spain is estimated at 23% of national income or 6% of GDP lost to the exchequer (Lago, 2018; Serrano & Gadea, 2005).

A good practical example of informal work practices in Spain is making *chapuza*s, meaning minor repairs, especially if done shoddily, for which undeclared workers are often hired. Romanians are well known in Spain as *manitas* (handymen) who perform good work cheaply. The worker does not declare the work and the client does not pay 21% VAT, a practice called "to pay in B or *en negro*" ("in black" or *la negru* in Romanian). In many cases, the line between informal and corrupt practices is blurred, and the importance of corruption as a subcase of informality (Baez-Camargo & Ledeneva, 2017; Polese, 2021) should not be underestimated. Indeed, any casual conversation with Romanian migrants in Spain easily includes strong criticism of "Romanian institutions and politicians because of corruption" (Paniagua 2007: 167), which is sometimes pointed out as one of the reasons for leaving – and/or not returning – to Romania. When people are asked about specific cases of corruption, the replies are unclear but sometimes distinguish daily informal practices in making a living – e.g., informal bribery of civil servants, known as *mită* or *şpaga*, that is, to have to pay a bribe to obtain access to health services (Stan, 2012) and the diversion of public resources by rent-seeking political and economic elites. For example, one research participant stated that "we have the most expensive cost per kilometer of the highway in Europe because of corruption",[7] a view confirmed in a report[8].

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[7] A middle-aged man who has lived for more than twenty years in Spain. Unrecorded informal interview, 19.08.2017.

[8] http://www.consiliulconcurentei.ro/uploads/docs/items/bucket8/id8693/raport.pdf

According to Zerilli (2005), there is a naturalized and stereotypical view of corruption associated with Romanian-ness that is grounded in the rhetorical devices of history – the Ottoman legacy, the influence of communism, and/or folklore − which is used as "passive resistance" to the unwritten rules of the system, spoken about with irony and jokes, as a form of resistance by the powerless (Scott, 1985). Similarly, the stereotyped vision of corruption in Spain is commonly associated with the term *picaresca*,[9] which refers to taking advantage of others – or exploiting the formal system – for one's own benefit. This is also an (uncritically) naturalized cultural characteristic of Spaniards that includes several informal practices such as *gorroneo* (Fradejas-García, 2021a), *chanchullo*, or *triquiñuela*, among others.

Both countries' populations also have in common higher perceptions of corruption than other EU countries. The 2017 Eurobarometer report indicates that Romania (68%) and Spain (58%) are at or near the top – first and third respectively – in the EU whose respondents say that they have been personally affected by corruption (European Commission, 2017). For our research participants, the main difference is that practices of informal governance are being prosecuted in Spain,[10] even forcing some politicians to resign, while in Romania this is still unusual. As one interviewee stated, the Romanian population "do this precisely because politicians do it, they already grow up in a culture of robbery. Well, if the president of the government does it, why shouldn't I make a living[11] as well?"[12]. This top-to-bottom continuum of corruption was also described as a survival strategy by another participant:

> "People have to do whatever it takes to eat. And if you have a measly salary you have no alternative: people are not going to rob a neighbor, put their hand in his pocket. But someone who can use his/her job to complete his salary is going to do it, and I see that as legit. (...) They have to survive: if you limit them to a miserable salary, obviously corruption will continue to exist at all levels."[13]

Indeed, some exchanges that political sciences and economics would see as corruption are interpreted by participants as legitimate (Polese, Kovács, & Jancsics, 2016). Romanian migrants learn very quickly which practices are not welcome, less explicit, or less accepted in Spain.[14] For instance, overall informal practices like attempts to bribe police officers or making informal economic exchanges to obtain access to public resources are not just illegal but are deemed unacceptable by the local population, which may limit its use to dealing with Romanian compatriots or institutions transnationally. Moreover, the experience of learning how informal governance and informal practices of corruption among public servants, politics, and economic elites[15] function in another country produces a reconsideration of the harmful consequences of diverting public resources. Young migrants who came to Spain as children are very clear about this, as in this example:

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[9] In the sixteenth century, so-called picaresque novels depicted a rogue and or anti-hero overcoming the daily life struggles of poor people, wheeling and dealing by creative tricks. Nowadays, this old literature genre coexists in Spain with the Spanish picaresque as a cultural set of deceiving practices.

[10] In 2018, a case of political corruption forced a change of government in Spain after a motion of censure (El País, 2018).

[11] In Spanish, 'buscarse la vida' means to do whatever is necessary to survive in a limited situation.

[12] A 24-year-old man who migrated to Spain with his family when he was seven. Recorded focus group, 19.06.2019.

[13] A middle-aged woman who has lived in Spain for more than twenty years and is very well-connected transnationally. Recorded interview, 03.03.2020.

> "In the end, you enter a dynamic as a whole loop. Because you are paying that money to the police and not the state (…) you cannot improve the service. So, you think that the service is crap and to be better served you pay. But then we enter the same thing again. And if you don't get out of the loop, you never end. (…) [T]hat's it, [when visiting Romania] I'm not going to pay a policeman, or a doctor or anything."[16]

In this framework of how migrant adapt to a new context at both the individual and community levels, we contend that selected informal practices that exist in the (post-socialist) sending country are preserved and adapted during the process of migration, while other, mostly illegal, illicit, and harmful practices are abandoned. Indeed, transnational migrants also learn to deal with almost two-state legal systems in a co-existence of laws defined as "legal pluralism" that may include others such as customary laws or religious laws (von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2016). Thus, some of the practices that are maintained may be used without changes between individuals of the same nationality across the TSF, whereas others may be adapted to the local context of the destination (see Figure 11).

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[14] This comparison entails ambiguity, since informal practices are more primitive in post-socialism (I pay to get access to a service) and more subtle in neoliberalism (I buy private insurance to get access to a service). We thank Abel Polese for suggesting this insightful distinction.

[15] Poenaru argues that mass mobilizations against corruption in Romania at the beginning of 2017 (e.g. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/01/romanians-protests-emergency-law-prisoner-pardons-corruption) have made politicians synonymous with corruption while business practices have been exonerated.

[16] A 24-year-old man who migrated to Spain with his family when he was seven. Recorded focus group, 19.06.2019.

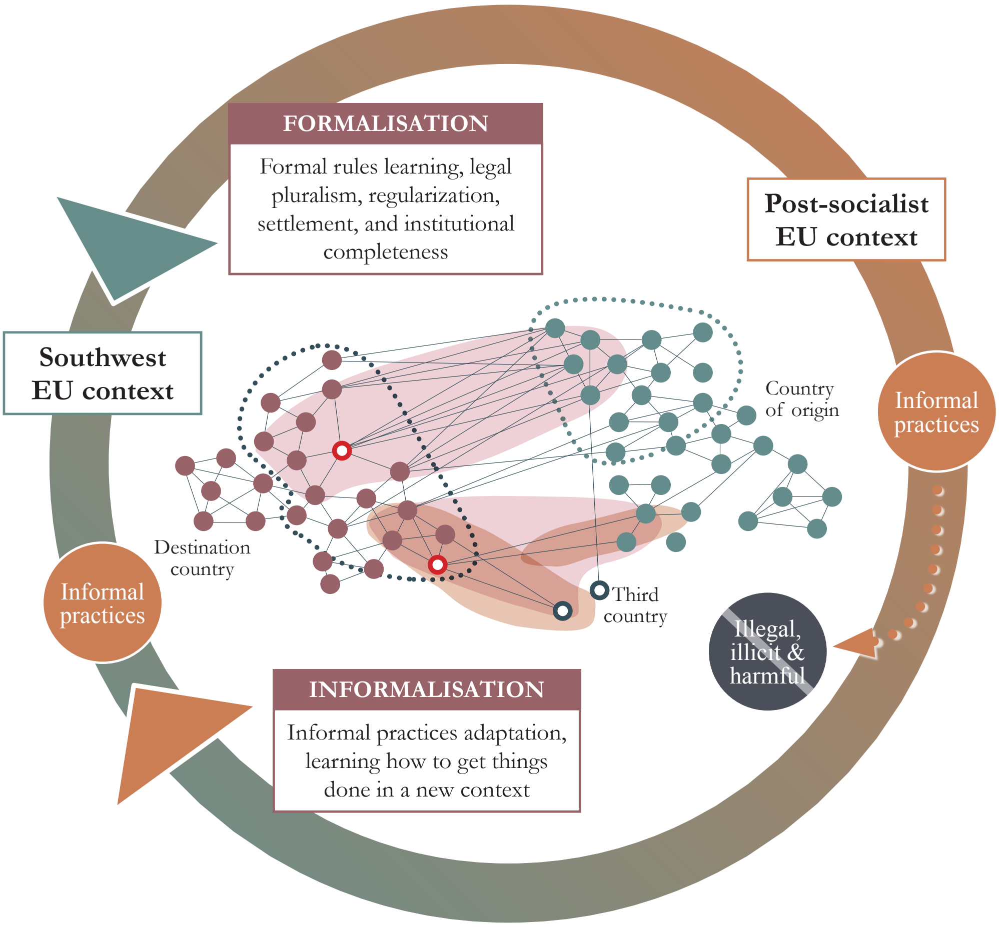
FORMALISATION
Formal rules learning, legal pluralism, regularization, settlement, and institutional completeness
Post-socialist EU context
Southwest EU context
Country of origin
Informal practices
Destination country
Informal practices
Third country
Illegal, illicit & harmful
INFORMALISATION
Informal practices adaptation, learning how to get things done in a new context

Figure 11. Schema of adaptation: informalisaton and formalisation in a TSF between post-socialist and southwest EU contexts. Own elaboration.

A constitutive aspect of migrants' socio-cultural adaptations and livelihood strategies is learning the local formal rules that are part of the formalisation process, as well as the unwritten rules and informal practices that provide contacts and facilitate access to employment, work and training opportunities, schooling, health-care, economic investments, or housing, among others. Indeed, the actor's strategic actions and behavior are guided by a toolkit composed of a repertoire of habits, skills, and styles (Swidler, 1986), but that also needs adaptation to the new cultural milieu in which the old and the new contexts coexist in a TSF. As Ledeneva puts it, following Wittgenstein, "certain mastery and expertise can only be achieved by dealing with constraints in practice" (Ledeneva 2011: 722).

Thus, from a livelihood perspective, we would expect that migrant households adopt informality when their access to legal residence, employment, and housing through formal channels is restricted. We would further expect them to rely on compatriots in the first phase after migration, when the migrants lack contacts with the indigenous population at the destination, but they can gradually incorporate Spanish contacts that can prove to be instrumental as well if they simultaneously learn the unwritten Spanish rules of informality. From the TSF perspective, we would expect that the informal practices adopted by migrants are diffused socially through networks and that migrants can mobilize local contacts, as well as people in the country of origin – e.g., for the construction of a house in Romania, for entrepreneurship –, to get things done. Higher institutional completeness in the TSF can compensate for restricted access to formal channels in Spain and thus reduce informality, but it can also introduce more informality into how migrants deal with these institutions. In this latter case, as the institutions come from the same cultural context, we would expect certain practices to be imported from the country of origin without major adaptations, though some settled migrants are critical of such naturalized informal practices.

The next three sections present the results from our fieldwork, showing how formal and informal activities and transnational mobilities intersect as livelihood strategies easing the settlement process of low-income migrant workers and shaping the demographic enclaves and the TSFs that connect specific regions of Spain and Romania.

3.5. Informal (im)mobilities of Romanian migrants in Spain

The vast majority of the first Romanian migrants who arrived in Spain before 2002 used mafia-like networks to facilitate cross-border travel and documents, paying around $1,000 for a tourist visa, as our respondents stated, and in line with previous research (Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009; Paniagua, 2007). The majority of the 147 Romanian migrants we interviewed in Castelló de la Plana indicated that they knew someone in the city before they came to the town, but only 3% had an informal labour contract in Spain before they arrived. After arriving in Spain, they overstayed their visas and remained in the country undocumented. The penalty for overstaying a visa was an entry ban of five years for the whole Schengen area. Consequently, some became stuck in their destinations because of the costs and risks of returning to Romania, while others developed various travel strategies, such as paying bribes at border controls or changing their travel routes, to avoid the ban (Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009)

During this phase of migration, as happens in many cases of migration (Mahler, 1995; Menjívar, 2000), some were supported by informal networks of other Romanians who had settled before them, but many others were left on their own by their contacts. Some were forced to scavenge and to live in abandoned houses, train stations, or squares. After the difficulties with travel and arrival, many respondents indicated that they started to work irregularly[17] without a residence permit until 2002, when the visa requirements changed and the costs of migration fell, opening the door to migration by people without the capital and/or social networks previously required (Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009).

The entry of Romania into the EU in 2007 eased access to formal labour markets within the Schengen area and facilitated transnational mobilities. It also increased Romanians' mobility capital or "motility", a term defined as the capacity and potential to be mobile within a social field (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004). Cheap flights started to replace the two-day bus trips between Romania and Spain, although the fares for the latter are still very low – most affordable one-way ticket cost €69 in 2020. The appearance of numerous formal and informal Romanian road transport companies since the end of the 1990s in Spain favored the arrival of more Romanians, as well as an informal influx of products from Romania to Spain and vice versa – in the beginning costing merely €2 a kilo – some of which are handmade, as well as unlabeled food and alcohol (Petrescu & Rodriquez, 2006). This flow of products for trading, gifts, or self-consumption continues and is now even cheaper at €1 a kilo in 2020, facilitating social remittances that reinforce transnational relations (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011) and transnational networks of trust (Tilly, 2007). In many cases, things, documents, and money, normally small amounts of cash, are sent via the international passenger buses that ply in both directions between Spain and Romania. This service is widely used, being faster, safer, and cheaper than the regular post, and offering hand delivery. In fact, it can be suggested that the informal Romanian practice of sending small packages via local and regional passenger bus drivers for hand delivery has become transnational. These practices are combined with travel from Spain to Romania by air, bus, or private cars back and forth for holidays, social events such as weddings, and arranging birth and marriage certificates and other bureaucratic necessities (Fradejas-García, 2021b). Consequently, 77% of our respondents had traveled to Romania at least once in the last two years, and they spent on average more than five weeks in their home country over those two years.

Thus, to navigate the TSF, mobility and informal activities intersect as strategies to "manipulate or exploit the formal rules" (Ledeneva 2008: 119). For example, some of our respondents complained that fellow citizens received unemployment payments from Spain while they were living in Romania, it being possible to draw these benefits via the internet. A second example is that a few respondents who had acquired Spanish nationality maintained both nationalities and passports – Romanian and Spanish – even though dual citizenship is not allowed in either country. A third example is civil registration strategies in the places of both destination and origin. As a livelihood strategy, international mobility can be combined with certain strategies for obtaining documents and meeting the requirements of the various administrative systems. Indeed, as one interviewee told us, "there is a lot of *trapicheo* (scheming) because people ask for €300 or €400 to register you at their houses [in the Padrón]".[18] Though they do not live there, being registered in the Padrón, a census of inhabitants conducted by local governments, is needed to start the process of obtaining a residence permit in Spain, among other local and regional social and economic benefits.

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[17] As some of our research participants stated, the informal economic practices of using the permits and working papers of another person, lent to a friend or family member, or rented for approximately €150 per month, were common at that time.

Summing up, migrants' (im)mobilities and informal practices are intertwined as livelihood strategies for those who live or participate in the TSF. The ability to move due to the regularisation of intra-EU mobility by workers, good infrastructure, cheap travel, smooth transnational connections, and social support enables various mobilities – settled, circular, temporal, open-ended, etc.[19] – that permit people to exploit the formal rules of various states and their institutions.

3.6. Navigating processes of formalisation and informalisation: regularisation, immobility, and institutionalisation

The parallel processes of formalisation and informalisation examined here involve administrative regularisation, transnational institutionalisation, adaptation to formal and informal practices and economies, and moving from undeclared work to the informalisation of formal labour, defined by precarity, exploitation, and flexibilization (Likic-Brboric et al., 2013). Our interviewees reported an average of 13.4 years of residence in Spain at the time of the interview, ranging from nine months to 25 years, and around 14% had lived in countries other than Romania and Spain. Their main motivations for migration were seeking better economic conditions or family reunification or both. What is striking is that only 10% had been unemployed in Romania, where 55% were in formal – employment, 45% with a full-time fixed contract, before they migrated to Spain. Consequently, they moved from a formal context of labour in Romania to a situation in Spain of higher salaries but often undeclared jobs. A survey conducted at the end of 2007, a year after the entry of Romania into the EU, estimated that 45% of Romanians of working age living in Spain were working irregularly, 15% were combining regular and irregular work, and 28% working regularly; the other 12% did not respond to the survey (Marcu 2009: 176-177). These data suggest that migration was a subsistence strategy because work formalisation was not a motivation for migration.

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[18] Middle-aged female who has lived in Spain for more than twenty years and is very well-connected transnationally. Recorded interview, 03.03.2020.

[19] Within the TSFs, we have analysed various types of international migration mobility: permanent (A→B); circular (A ←→ B); returnees (A → B →A); re-emigration (A → B → C); returnees to the previous enclave (A → B → C → B); and immobile (A - B).

For some respondents, their arrival was the starting point of a long parallel process of formalisation, with access to formal jobs and administrative regularisation, and informalisation, that is, adapting to new informal practices and learning the new rules of 'informality'. Formalisation went hand in hand with the bilateral and EU policy agreements of 2002 to 2007, which smoothed the path towards residence regularisation, work permits, and family reunifications, as well as in learning local informal practices and developing local informal relations.[20]

The steps from undeclared work to formal job contracts are paradigmatic of these two processes. These usually started with an informal agreement to do an undeclared job. It was seen as a test period and could last several years. Then the employer had the option of formalizing the contract and thus facilitating the regularisation. We take an example of this process from our field notes:

> Ironim (a pseudonym) says he was very lucky when he arrived in Castelló in 2000. After six days waiting in Plaza Maria Agustina, the immigrant location for informal work-seekers, someone asked them who wanted to work in a bakery. Nobody was interested, but Ironim boldly accepted, and he is still working in this bakery. In the first two years, he worked without a contract, but the firm supported him in regularizing the situation with a temporary contract in 2002. Since 2006, he has had a full-time contract and has become a pastry chef expert in local sweets.[21]

It is interesting to note that many Romanian employees were sponsored by their Spanish employers in obtaining documents and regularizing their employment situation, although some informal features might remain. For example, employees worked for the formal minimum wage but informally received the money in B – "in black" – to complete the salary. In some cases, the relation between employee and employer became blurred, as they became friends, mostly among those who had daily close contact, as in the case of waitresses and domestic workers, in line with Kovács' research among informal child-care workers in Romania (2014).

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[20] As some research participants stressed, bars and restaurants in Spain played an important role as informal social spaces where Romanians could develop their (local) personal networks. This relational work has been instrumentalized to access jobs, accommodation, and other basic needs by word of mouth. Also, in comparison with Spaniards, Romanians tip better tips (*baksheesh* in Romanian, *propina* in Spanish), an informal practice which has been proudly maintained in Spain by Romanian migrants.

[21] A male participant from Romania. Brief fieldnotes, CAS032, February 2018.

Permanent contracts provide stability and encourage the formation of a long-term life project. As a result, 32% of our respondents now have a full-time permanent contract, 12% a part-time one. In Castelló de la Plana, the ceramics industry also gives formal contracts that provide an anchor for permanent settlement (Molina et al., 2018), the same role that agribusiness has played in Roquetas de Mar (Fradejas-García, Molina, & Lubbers, 2022). This process has an immobility effect because formal labour is a precious asset, and even with low salaries, hard work, and unpaid extra hours, people tend to maintain their formal jobs in Spain. Indeed, 54% of employed respondents felt that what they earned in Spain was much better than they could in Romania, with a further 29% indicating that it was a little better.

In addition, job stability means meeting new informal contacts at the workplace who can mitigate future uncertainties over employment. One research participant told us that he was not worried about jobs in the future because he already has the contacts, both Romanians and Spaniards, to *enchufarme* in something, that is, to pull strings to find employment if needed, as explained in Section 3.4. In this regard, 71% of our working respondents reported that they had relied on family, friends, and acquaintances to find their current jobs. This percentage is higher than among Spain's general population (see Section 3.4), and it suggests that Romanian migrants in Spain are using their informal networks more than Spaniards for seeking employment. Finally, when asked whether they had to pay brokers or middlemen to find a job, some participants knew of cases in Romania as well as in Spain. Asked whether she knew anyone who had paid an intermediary to get a job, one interviewee pointed out that "Everyone who goes to a temporary employment agency has to make it [pay to get a job]"[22], showing how the informalisation of labour works in the current formal labour market as well.

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[22] A middle-age female living in Spain for more than 20 years and very connected transnationally. Recorded interview, 03.03.2020.

Along with the process of job regularisation and stabilization described earlier, our ethnographic data reveal a parallel process in which household income and reproduction are made up with undeclared jobs and informal economic activities such as house cleaning or temporary or one-off jobs in agriculture, construction, and services, as well as child-care, baking cakes and sweets for parties, renting out rooms in their homes, working as a DJ at social events, and even collaborating in transnational enterprises that import and export cars (Fradejas-García, 2021b). The strategy of combining declared and undeclared jobs avoids dependence on a single source of income and can be a buffer against unemployment (Hart 1973). This finding recalls that of Pahl, that families and households with some protected wage labour are better placed to have a surplus in informal forms of work (1984).

It is also important to note that many Romanians have settled in Spain to provide their children with stability. More than 100,000 Romanians with formal residence in Spain in 2016 were under sixteen years old (Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social de España, 2016), meaning that a young generation of Romanians is growing up in Spain. Indeed, some respondents lived in Romania until their parents regularized their residence in Spain and brought them to Spain after the large-scale family reunifications of 2007 (Marcu, 2015). Family reunification is part of a process of settlement that is also accompanied by the institutionalisation of Romanian diasporic formations and demographic enclaves and that ends with institutional completeness (Molina et al., 2018) in the form of more favorable Romanian legislation for citizens abroad, bilateral agreements, church construction, the foundation of ethnic associations, and the opening of consulates and cultural centers, such as the Ministry of Romanian Citizens Living Abroad (*Ministerului Pentru Românii de Pretut Indeni*), set up at the end of the 1990s.[23] Locally, institutions like the city council also played a role in supporting migrants with intercultural, social, and health services, and even subsidies to rent houses. In this regard, the twinning agreement[24] signed between Castelló de la Plana and Târgoviște, the capital of Dâmbovița County, in 2017 facilitates the relations between local institutions that are rarely connected politically at the translocal level.

Along with these institutions, other non-governmental, charity organizations also played an important role by providing informal support, such as paying bills, providing food, clothes, books, and language courses, backing up registration processes and even helping Romanian migrants find jobs. Some respondents highlighted the support of local charitable organizations like Caritas, the Red Cross, and the Orthodox and Adventist churches, whose respective clergy were key community actors, as well as some Romanian associations. One respondent, however, believed that formal and informal Romanian institutions in Spain "have set up their *chiringuitos* in Spain to receive public funding to line their own pockets".[25] In Spain, *chiringuito* means kiosk or beach bar in the street or on the beach, but colloquially it refers to a shady company organized to obtain informal economic benefits. Romanian communities abroad express their horizontal solidarity in other ways. For example, when a migrant passes away and has no repatriation insurance, nor the money to send the body back to be buried in Romania, money boxes are placed in Romanian bars, restaurants, associations, and churches to raise the money and help the family with the costs.

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[23] Strategia Națională pentru Românii de Pretut indeni pentru perioada 2017 – 2020 http://www.mprp.gov.ro/web/strategia-privind-relatia-cu-romanii-de-pretutindeni-2/

[24] In the same vein, a twinning agreement between Almería (the capital of Almeria province, in which Roquetas de Mar is located), and Bistrița (the capital of Bistrița-Năsăud) was suggested by politicians from both cities during the commemoration of the Great Union Day of Romania in Spain.

However, as discussed in Section 3.4, the discourses about corruption are somehow naturalized and accepted uncritically. We do not have evidence about informal forms of governance, but our ethnographic work does confirm that these 'conspiracy' theories are widespread and limit the participation of Romanians in some of their institutions, such as associations, churches, consulates, cultural centers, etc., while some practices of disruption, such as the failed organization of a referendum for Romanians living out of the country in 2019,[26] create little trust in Romanian institutions.

The process of regularisation, adaptation, and institutionalisation of migrants in TSFs analysed in this section would be incomplete without analysing its consequences for non-migrants and returnees. In the following section, we analyse the "stuckness" (Cresswell, 2012) or immobility effects that are associated with transnational mobilities and informality.

3.7. (Im)mobilities and informality of non-migrants and returnees

During the hardest times of the economic crisis and its aftermath, approximately from 2008 to 2014, some migrants have returned to Romania or have moved to other EU countries (Viruela & Marcu, 2015). Although some have returned to Spain afterward, the decline of the Romanian population in Spain continuous (see Figure 10). To be attuned to various types of mobilities we asked the Romanian respondents who resided in Spain to refer us to people who had returned to Romania after living in Spain. After interviewing 19 of those returnees in Romania, we identified three types: (1) highly mobile people who had experienced circular migration or moved to third countries, (2) people who tried migration unsuccessfully and went back, (3) people who have returned for work, care for the family or retirement. Some had been living for nearly 20 years in Spain and they arrived at the age of retirement. Others had saved money and have returned as entrepreneurs, opening small businesses like bakeries, restaurants, or pensions, sometimes supported by formal programs from the EU and the Romanian government to promote the return of migrants, granting them €40.000 to fund a start-up[27].

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[25] Man of 39 years old living more than 20 years in Spain. Recorded interview, 18.01.2019.

[26] As example, in 2019, many Romanian citizens in Spain were left without depositing their ballot in a referendum to reform the judicial system due to the lack of facilities https://www.lasprovincias.es/politica/ocho-horas-votar-20190531003845-ntvo.html

However, returning to Romania is not necessarily easy. Many migrants have children, mortgages,[28] and properties in Spain – 15% of our respondents own a house in Spain. Their networks of support in Romania are generally small after they have spent years abroad, as returned migrants indicated in the interviews and as was confirmed by our survey, which revealed an average of 3.2 family members and friends in the country of origin. Some migrants were also aware that in Romania *informality* may jeopardize their entrepreneurial projects, hampering their return through bribery generally and the lack of contacts, but also blackmail. Still, 58% of our respondents in Spain declared they own a house in Romania, keeping alive the prospect of return after their retirement (Werbner, 2013), fed by constructing and maintaining houses in Romania, saving money, and working hard to get a pension from Spain in euros instead of the Romanian official currency, the leu, which is less stable. Along with those who are planning to go back when they retire, many others feel stranded in Spain, living what Sayad (2010) called a *double absence*, not being fully satisfied in either their country of destination or origin.

Returnees and non-migrants both reflected on the difficulties of living in Romania because the cost of living has risen, while salaries and wages are low. When asked about life satisfaction, one non-migrant who was a medical nurse told us that:

> “If you want to buy something you like, you should weigh very well the situation and hierarchize the priorities you have. Here in Romania, you can always think about tomorrow and about the fact that you have nothing to eat.”[29]

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[27] E.g. ‘Romania din Spania’ http://romania.startupeuropeaccelerator.eu/main_21/ or ‘Acasa Entrepreneur’

[28] Spanish legislation does not facilitate returning a property to the bank as compensation for the mortgage. However, some Romanians have negotiated with the banks, giving back their properties in payment.

[29] A middle-aged female living in Romania. Brief fieldnote, February 2018.

This is consistent with statistics: in 2014, 25.9% of Romanians were living with severe material deprivation, and 25% were at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2018a). Furthermore, the price level for consumer goods and services in Romania is 45% below the average of EU member states in 2019 – in Spain the figure is 3.4% below – (Eurostat, 2020), but that is not enough to guarantee one's daily maintenance because Romania has also the second-lowest median gross hourly earnings in the EU (€2), when in Spain the figure is €9,80, and the median gross hourly pay in the EU is €13,20 (Eurostat, 2014).

The difficulties in making ends meet is a push factor for the poorest segments of the population, who are still thinking of leaving the country. In theory, nowadays it would be easier to migrate within the EU because many have family, friends, and acquaintances living abroad, and therefore transnational connections. Yet international mobility is the exception. Most people connected with TSFs who are struggling to live in Romania prefer to stay and wait for better times, managing to compensate for the low wages through the informal economy and remittances − 15% of our respondents in Spain send money regularly to Romania.[30] Here, age is an important factor in mobility. A new generation of young non-migrants born after socialism has other forms of cultural capital and take a different approach to migration and mobility (Marcu, 2018). Some have been living in the EU Schengen area for most of their lives, have gone on holidays to other countries, speak foreign languages, and want to move to look for a better quality of life, open values, and more high-skilled career opportunities through mobility within the EU. However, their motivations and imaginaries are focused on northern European countries instead of the informalized and precarious labour markets in Italy or Spain.

In short, most non-migrants and returnees in Romania who are connected to TSFs are experiencing economic difficulties. However, the effects can be mitigated by informal remittances, receiving savings and pensions from their period of residence in Spain, and using their potential to be internationally mobile − e.g., seasonal work, studying abroad, etc. −, thus instrumentalizing their transnational social relations abroad. How informal practices from Spain are used by return migrants in Romania or in other, third countries connected with the TSF has yet to be investigated.

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[30] Although the economic crisis had a deep negative impact, workers' remittances from Spain to Romania remain one of the major financial corridors in the EU, amounting to €430 million in 2019 according to Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/39326.pdf

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the relationship between mobility and informality by analysing how informal practices evolve when people migrate and move within TSFs. The livelihood perspective allows us to analyse informality and (im)mobility as strategies that individuals and households perform to make a living, including the role played by institutions transnationally. The chapter shows that transnational migrants learn how to navigate and exploit formal rules to get things done by adapting their informal practices to their new context of living.

In the migratory process described in this chapter, we developed two parallel processes. On the one hand, the process of adapting informality entails learning the unwritten rules and selecting, preserving, and adjusting the informal practices that exist in the (post-socialist) sending country to the new context, while other practices are abandoned, mostly illegal, illicit, and harmful ones. On the other hand, the formalisation process involves learning the formal rules, the regularisation of residence and working permits, and institutional completeness. Thus, transnational networks and geographical mobilities allowed migrants to exploit the grey areas of various formal systems and their institutions in making a living.

As we expected, informality was adopted to cope with formal restrictions on legal residence, employment, and housing in the first phase of migration. At the time, the instrumental use of personal networks was very necessary, relying on those who had also come from their home cities and towns in Romania. This instrumental sociability contributed to the creation of transnational social fields in certain demographic enclaves and facilitated the diffusion of informal practices through social networks in order to obtain access to resources and get things done. The formalisation process was eased by the entry of Romania into the EU, which permitted regularisation (residence permits) and geographical mobility within the Schengen area, as well as the more institutional support of local and Romanian organizations. Moreover, the creation of demographic enclaves was smoothed by the formal labour markets associated with robust industrial districts, such as the ceramic industry in Castelló de la Plana and agribusiness in Roquetas de Mar, which also provided several formal and informal forms of work and employment opportunities in agriculture, construction, and services. Immobility at the destination (settlement) is thus a livelihood strategy for Romanian migrants, who thereby strengthened their informal networks and learned how to master both local and transnational informal practices. This practical knowledge of informal practices provided livelihood resources to their transnational families and friends, allowing the latter to move internationally if they wished and helping them to mitigate economic uncertainties by providing other forms of work, new jobs, and advantages in order to get things done when needed.

Finally, the existence of a TSF does not just open up new avenues for the migration and adaptation of informal practices, it might also contribute to the development of new ones, especially those that take advantage of the bridges and grey areas between different formal systems, thus creating new values and allowing people to get ahead.

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Chapter 4. Informality on Wheels: Informal Automobilities Beyond National Boundaries[1]

Abstract

This article unpacks informal practices related to modernity’s quintessential mobility machine: the car. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among low-wage Romanian immigrants in Spain who maintain transnational connections with their regions of origin in Romania, this paper addresses the role of the automobile system and of informal practices in migrants’ daily work and life mobilities. I contend that *informal automobilities* are a set of livelihood strategies and infrapolitical activities that use cars to confront the constraints of geographical and social mobility regimes. The result is a heavily controlled car system that also provides the flexibility to move informally between formal rules in order to make a living. The transnational approach allows us to go beyond earlier accounts of informality that focus on the local and/or national scale by treating the car as a translocal object embedded socially and economically in transnational relationships. These conclusions contribute to increasing our knowledge of post-structural informality and mobility, but they are also relevant to understanding how a future carless or post-car world would impact on the populations that need, or exploit, the automobile system to survive and would oppose unequal mobility regimes.

Keywords: informality; mobilities; automobility system; informal automobilities; regimes of mobility; transnationalism

4.1. Introduction

I arrived late at night at Bucharest airport. Advised by a colleague, I went to the machines and ordered a taxi following the steps outlined on the screen. The machine gave me a piece of paper with the taxi’s number. Outside the arrivals hall, a dozen taxis were waiting, and some people approached me saying “taxi.” I easily avoided these “pirate taxis,”, called *rechin*, literally “shark,” that might be either legal – but have high rates – or illegal, and found my taxi. On the way, the taxi-driver told me he was a subcontract labourer for a big transportation company. He was not the car’s owner, but he was proud of driving the “national car brand,” the cheap, rugged design and fuel-efficient Dacia Logan, an example of Edensor’s dictum that “cars continue to be loaded with national significance throughout popular culture” (2004: 104). At the end of my journey, I encountered a driver working for Uber in precarious conditions using a rented Dacia Logan. Then one of my interviewees told me that he had spent the money he had saved working informally in Spain and Italy to return to Romania and buy a Dacia Logan and a taxi license.

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These banal autoethnographic encounters not only provide glimpses of the informalisation of labour, they also position the car, the archetypal mobility machine, as an entry point in order to explore the relationship between informality and mobility. The car system is of crucial importance in modern societies because of the car’s central role in contemporary mobilities. While the car is one of the most highly controlled and regulated objects in the world, it also offers the flexibility and freedom to move beyond its own coercive constraints (Sager, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2000; Urry, 2004). Informality is a similarly global and complex phenomenon that happens outside the institutional presence or control and penetrates economic, social and political practices (Ledeneva, 2018; Polese, Williams, Horodnic, & Bejakovic, 2017) as an intrinsic element of formality, “regardless of the economic status of a citizen or country” (Morris & Polese, 2014: 14). Bringing together informality and automobility, this article analyses the elusive potential of the car to deal informally with mobility regimes that operate on a transnational scale within the European Union (EU). Thus, this paper contributes to our understanding of informality beyond state, local, urban or regional viewpoints and situates informal practices in relation to the car as the quintessential object of modern mobility.

The *system of automobility*, defined as “a self-organizing autopoietic, non-linear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs” (Urry, 2004: 27), was not initially my central interest. Nevertheless, repeated encounters with automobility during my ethnographic fieldwork observing informality among low-wage Romanian immigrants in Spain prompted me to reconsider it as a productive arena of informal practices. These are regular strategies people follow to manipulate or exploit formal rules, social obligations, and the knowledge to navigate between formal and informal constraints (Ledeneva, 2008).

Car governance produces regimes of automobility (Ananchev, 2016; Böhm, Jones, Land, & Paterson, 2006; Lutz, 2014) managed by institutions that are dependent on local and regional authorities, states, and supranational organizations, such as the EU in conjunction with the car industry, including the automotive industry and the maintenance sector. These institutionalized actors define the policies, surveillance technologies, and coercive measures that govern and police car mobilities. Moreover, I argue that the car also operates in broader and more unequal regimes of mobility that control not only the car but the mobility of people, capital, knowledge, resources, and things. Regimes of mobility are uneven social, economic, and political power structures that shape the mobility and stasis of individuals (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) and are composed of norms, policies, regulations, and forms of infrastructure that govern movement (Jensen, 2013; Kesselring, 2014; Koslowski, 2011).

This paper treats *informal automobilitie*s as a concept delimiting a set of imbricated informal practices that use, exploit or manipulate cars in order to navigate between the formal and informal constraints of unequal mobility regimes. These informal practices are mainly of two types: livelihood strategies that facilitate the production, trade, and consumption of cars through informal labour and social networks; and infrapolitical actions that indirectly defy the mobility control and governance of things, knowledge, and people. In order to develop these arguments, the article is organized as follows. Section 4.2 assembles the main theoretical conceptualizations of automobility, informality, and transnational mobilities, while section 4.3 explains the methodology followed in the paper. Section 4.4 shows ethnographically the empirical evidence supporting the arguments and is followed by the conclusions in section 4.5.

4.2. Assembling theoretical pieces: automobility, informality and transnationalism

Dissatisfied with theories put forward by transport studies, the concept of automobility started to attract the attention of the social sciences at the beginning of the 2000s. Sociologists of mobilities conceptualized the car as a central mode of modern mobilities and urbanities (Featherstone, 2004; Sheller & Urry, 2000; Urry, 2004), anthropologists focused on people's daily and intimate relationships with cars (Miller, 2001), and cultural studies explored car consumption and imaginations (Carrabine & Longhurst, 2002). The automobility system was found to be contradictory, as it increases both individual freedom and ecological destruction (Böhm et al., 2006), so a transition to a similar sociotechnical regime with greener vehicles was anticipated (Geels, Kemp, Dudley, & Lyons, 2011). Recent research previews the forthcoming transition to a carless and *autono-mobility* future that is resulting from the environmental crisis (Hildebrand & Sheller, 2018; Manderscheid, 2018). Nevertheless, as greener or carless futures have not yet arrived, the current system remains vital in the daily working lives of large parts of the human population. Indeed, in the EU, the number of personal cars has increased in the last five years, though cars powered by alternative fuels accounted for only 2% of new registrations in 2017 (Eurostat, 2020).

The automobility system and its social, economic, and political consequences are rarely the focus of research on informality, although some aspects are commonly used as ethnographic examples of informality, such as self-appointed parking attendants (Chelcea & Iancu, 2015; Rekhviashvili, 2018), traffic police (Urinboyev, Polese, Svensson, Adams, & Kerikmae, 2018), taxi-drivers (Karjanen, 2015; Kovács, Morris, Polese, & Imami, 2017) or car modifications (Živkovic, 2018). An exception is the post-structural approach to informal public transportation of Rekhviashvili and Sgibnev (2018, 2019), which opposes the dominant literature that analyses informal transportation as just a market gap-filler (e.g. Cervero & Golub, 2007). Rekhviashvili and Sgibnev demonstrate that informal economic practices of transportation "can be and often are comprised of both, market-like and non-market-like, socially embedded economic exchanges" (Rekhviashvili & Sgibnev, 2019: 2). Following their theoretical framework, which distinguishes between vertical (state-enforced) and horizontal (informal) embedding (Rekhviashvili & Sgibnev, 2019), this article moves beyond informal transportation economies to elaborate on the co-existence of informal, socially embedded public and private automobilities.

In the case presented in this article, the role of the automobile system has emerged as crucial for studying the informal practices that facilitate or hinder geographical and social mobilities and immobilities – hereafter (im)mobilities – at the transnational scale. Informality and automobility both operate beyond national borders, and the transnational perspective decenters the analysis from the realm of the nation state (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), even though state institutions remain important in regulating migration and consequently transnational social fields (Dahinden, 2017). Moreover, in this case the focus on westward migration and mobilities – from Romania to Spain – goes beyond previous accounts of "transnational informality" that are bounded into post-socialist spaces (e.g. Urinboyev, 2016). Drawing on a multiscalar approach that distinguishes multiple institutionalized structures and networks of unequal power (Cağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018), this paper distinguishes transnationalism *from above*, which refers to actions managed by powerful actors such as states or multinational companies, and transnationalism *from below,* a broad range of activities conducted by grassroot initiatives connecting migrants' places of residence with their countries of origin (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). In relation to the case at hand, the paper analyses two imbricated forms of transnational activities from

On the one hand, there is a set of livelihood practices and household strategies that confront the economic and mobility regulations of cars, people, and things. The dichotomy between the formal and the informal is transcended by analysing a borderless continuum of labour practices that range from paid to unpaid, and from formal to informal (Williams & Onoshenko, 2014). Moreover, in some cases these livelihood practices are not individual but household strategies (Pahl, 1984; Wallace, 2002), in which cars are relevant for materializing transnational links (Thieme, 2008) and performing economic activities and labour practices.

On the other hand, there are activities around cars that might produce unintended policies and social change, a sort of *infrapolitics* (Scott, 1990) of transnationalism. The term infrapolitics refers to the aggregate of thousands of minor acts of resistance of individuals reacting to institutional pressures (Scott, 1985, 1990, 2012) that might not be political in their forms or contents (Marche, 2012) but are currently performed by global underclasses (Moreno-Tejada, 2019). The car plays various infrapolitical roles in acts of resistance. First, it allows everyday practices of control, threat, and suspicion by security practitioners (Boyce, 2018), though the immobilization and criminalization of immigrants is opposed by creative *altermobilities*, "strategies people use to regain their individual and family mobility" (Stuesse & Coleman, 2014: 61). Second, the car permits social remittances, informal trade, and travel beyond the state, being a productive arena for fake documents, scams, and informal trade. Third, the car is a social object with cultural meanings, such as freedom or status, that oppose or promote social change. Thus, the focus on the infrapolitics of mobilities instead of the infrapolitics of mobilization does not de-politicize the concept but expands its uses in relation to individual actions confronting unequal regimes of mobility that limit or facilitate (im)mobilities (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

In order to investigate these informal practices of automobility, the article ethnographically discusses informality in relation to five out of six[2] components of automobile systems (Urry, 2004: 25-26): (1) the quintessential manufactured object of twentieth-century capitalism produced by industrial sectors and the iconic firms that engendered theories such as Fordism and post-Fordism; (2) individual consumption, which provides status and values; (3) a complex constituted through technical and social interlinkages with other industries; (4) a quasi-private mobility that subordinates other "public" mobilities; (5) the dominant culture that defines what is a good life and citizenship mobility through art and symbols; and

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[2] Dimension 6 – environmental resource-use – it is not included due to a lack of space. Likewise, the automobility system is gendered and racialized in particular ways (Hildebrand & Sheller, 2018), but it is not problematized in this paper. These limitations open the floor for further investigations.

(6) environmental resource-use (Urry 2004: 26). Subsection 4.4.1 explores dimensions (2) individual consumption and (5) dominant culture to demonstrate the importance of the well-oiled informal second-hand car market that feeds Romanian car cultures. Subsection 4.4.2 analyses dimension (4) on quasi-private mobility that subordinates other "public" mobilities, in order to sketch out how transnational household strategies and infrapolitical actions work in this context. Finally, subsection 4.4.3 links dimensions (1) on the car as a quintessential manufactured object and dimension (3), which is focused on the system as a complex network of industries, explaining how current post- and peripheral Fordism is producing immigration and the informalisation of labour.

4.3. Methods

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2017 and 2020 in Spain, Romania, and on the routes between the two countries. In this multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995), I participated in the activities of Romanian churches volunteered in Romanian associations, and joined in cultural events. I undertook twelve months of fieldwork in Roquetas de Mar (Spain) between 2018 and 2020, where I carried out participant observation and conducted twelve in-depth interviews, four focus-group discussion, and dozens of informal interviews with: religious and community leaders; representatives of local institutions, political parties, and associations; police officers; Romanian business owners; owners of greenhouses and greenhouse construction companies; civil servants; social workers; and research experts. Moreover, I completed three non-consecutive months of fieldwork in Romania between 2018 and 2019. I visited people whom I had already interviewed in Spain in their various towns of origin. I also *followed the people* on the move (Marcus, 1995), travelling by carpooling between Spain and Romania with Romanian families in the summer of 2017, which gave me access to additional information about their transnational mobilities and the role of cars in them.

Furthermore, my study is embedded in the research project ORBITS, which aims to understand the social structures that facilitate the transnational connections between two Romanian enclaves on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (Castelló & Roquetas de Mar) and their main places of origin in Romania (Dâmbovița & Bistrița-Năsăud, respectively). This ongoing project has already interviewed five hundred Romanians in these four places using a novel methodology of social network analysis (SNA) called 'binational link tracing' (Mouw et al., 2014) to empirically measure transnational social fields; that is, a set of interlocking transnational social networks “through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004: 1009).

As a team member, I carried out 79 interviews for this investigation – 70 in Roquetas de Mar, 5 in Bistrița-Năsăud and 4 in Castelló de la Plana – and collected extensive fieldnotes from every interviewee, together with relevant information that was not gathered in this survey. Finally, all the data collected from interviews and fieldnotes were analysed using a CAQDAS program through content analysis, resulting in various categories of findings related to automobility: labour, networks, transport, repairs, trade, criminality, travel, documents, survival strategies, and control by police and institutions. Interviews were carried out in Spanish in which most Romanian immigrants were fluent, although basic Romanian and English were used during fieldwork as well. All the participants signed informed consent forms, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. In this paper, all personal names have been replaced by pseudonyms.

4.4. Ethnographic encounters with informal automobilities

4.4.1. Transnational cultures and second-hand luxury cars

Romania is the country within EU27 with the fewest private cars per person – 261 cars per thousand inhabitants – although the number of people who cannot afford a car decreased from 56% in 2007 to 21% in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). In the same period, the figure for EU27 fell from 10% to 7%, and for Spain from 5% to 4% (Eurostat, 2020). In 2018, only one out of every four cars registered in Romania was a national brand, despite the efforts of the Romanian state to protect the Dacia, the national brand (Pardi, 2018). In this context, my ethnographic data confirmed the desire of Romanians to own luxury cars, usually big second-hand German cars instead of new Asian cars or Dacias (Gabor, 2016).

The car provides freedom, mobility, and status. These material and social desires are an integral part of the qualitative desire to “look for a better life” that many of the interviewees expressed and that was one of their motivations for migrating. In more detail, cars are one of the most important objects of consumption in daily life, with high maintenance costs, and are essential for commuting. Some people spend most of their salaries on luxury cars, giving them the potential to signal their higher social class publicly. Indeed, migration success and legitimization are often measured by car size and brand. Here, the economic value of the object circulates in different regimes of value with its own specific cultural, historical, and local situations (Appadurai, 1986). Cars are social objects with varying meanings for people living in different places, but some car brands, such as Mercedes, BMW, and Volkswagen, have a constant, intercultural symbolic value of automobile quality (Koshar, 2004). Within the EU, the closeness of countries enables transnational car mobilities. For transnational migrants going to Romania on holiday by car, the luxury car embodies their success as the perfect transnational object, a fetish that produces novel values when crossing borders (Spyer, 1988).

The desire to own luxury cars and the trading process and its informalities has deep social and economic roots. The following ethnographic vignettes describe how small repair businesses and secondhand traders produce automobile informalities. Mihai is a Romanian agricultural entrepreneur in Roquetas de Mar (see next section). He does not need to buy and sell second-hand cars to make a living, but he enjoys searching the internet to buy cars for less than €10,000, mainly Audi and BMW sports cars and commercial vans. He takes a hard line in negotiations to reduce the price. Then he goes to one of the numerous garages managed by Romanians and spends a little money to fix it or to give it a coat of paint if necessary. Afterwards, he sells it for more money, or uses the vehicle for a year or two before selling it at the same price. Many other Romanians mentioned buying and selling cars, sometimes imported from Germany, as an activity to make some money while having a formal job or to cope with unemployment.

The important point here is that this widespread economic practice produces transnational informality. On the one hand, the second-hand car business sets in motion informal work and networks. Sometimes the car is imported, involving its transport, the mobilization of *win-win* networks, and exchanges of resources. Romanians are well known as *manitas* – handymen – who have experience and a good technical education. Thus, the car passes from hand to hand through networks of trust to be repaired, painted, cleaned, and sold on.

Serbu is a Romanian man in his early thirties living in Spain. He has two jobs, being formally employed in a second-hand car-parts shop, but also running a stable but undeclared informal garage with the permission and support of his boss in the shop. These activities are compatible, and transfers of clients, contacts, car parts, and sharing knowledge about repairing, buying, selling, and exchanging cars occur daily. Indeed, he imports car parts from Romania that friends send him by bus between Romania and Spain.

Cars are easily tampered, providing opportunities for illicit practices. The best example is winding back the kilometers on second-hand cars to sell them at a higher price. In Spain, this practice is usually called *afeitado* – shaving – and has been controlled and penalized more since the late 2000s, though new cases still occur.[3] In other countries, such as Romania, it is still easy to wind back the kilometers without fear of negative consequences. In all stages of this *maquillad*o or made-up practice, informal and formal work might be undertaken to improve the final price and increase the profit.

These cases illustrate the mobility of people (clients and friends), things (cars and spare parts), and skilled knowledge (about repairing, painting, buying, and selling) through a wide transnational social network of family, friends, and acquaintances. This allows the mobilization of both strong (Tilly, 2007) and weak ties (Granovetter, 1983) in order to undertake economic and non-economic informal activities both locally and transnationally. These activities are socially embedded in more complex ways than a simple dichotomy between formal and informal economies (Morris & Polese, 2014; Routh, 2011) or "the assumption that informal work is only precarious, exploitative and/or casual or short-term" would suggest (Morris, 2019:16).

Furthermore, luxury cars are linked with illicit practices. This imaginary is here reflected in an unsolicited story that participants repeatedly told me about a Romanian mafia boss called Iacob, who used to terrorize his fellow citizens in Roquetas de Mar (Spain) in the late 1990s. In their memories, he passed by the city with his big luxury car looking for compatriots to force them to work and live in slave-like conditions. He is said to have died in a car accident in 1999, which was a relief to the then still modest Romanian community. Iacob's mafia-like performance was defined by some as *şmecher*, a slang word for a cool, clever, astute man who can trick, dodge, and swindle, an archetypical image which also includes a luxury car playing loud *manele* or Romanian folk-pop music. Although most of my interviewees showed an ideological rejection of the *şmecher* cliché, the persistence of some of its cultural features, such as the luxury car, in tension with new ways of doing things in transnational fields (Garapich, 2016) might be interpreted as an infrapolitics of resistance to social change.

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[3] "More than 100 people arrested in an operation against fraud in the manipulation of mileage of second-hand vehicles" https://www.guardiacivil.es/es/prensa/noticias/6778.html [accessed: 21-4-2020].

4.4.2. Quasi-private and “public” mobilities: local and transnational informalities on the move

Roquetas de Mar is situated in the so-called “sea of plastic,” a 450 km^2 area in Almeria, Spain, which is devoted to highly intensive farming under plastic. It is also often called “Europe’s farm” because of its capacity to provide out-of-season vegetables to the rest of Europe. Every day before dawn, most of the hundred thousand workers in this agro-industry walk, cycle or drive in their owners’ old vans to the greenhouses. When there is a lack of labourers, foremen and farmers drive by a workers’ pick-up place or *parada* to hire irregularly one of the oversupply of undocumented immigrants – mostly Africans – eager for a one-day work-for-cash deal (Du Bry, 2015). Romanians too used these exploitative systems of daily-paid labour (Hartman, 2008) but gradually obtained work and residence permits following bilateral agreements between Spain and Romania until Romania entered in the EU in 2007, which facilitated transnational mobility as a support strategy (Marcu, 2015, 2018).

In Roquetas public transportation is nearly non-existent. It limits immigrants’ access to formal employment or health care, and having a car opposes mobility governances (Lutz, 2014). Having a car increases immigrants potential to be mobile – termed *motility* (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004) –, avoid labour exploitation, and enhance their mobility strategies (Stuesse & Coleman, 2014). One example of these infrapolitical practices was the use of fake driving licenses in the early 2000s, until more modern driving licenses were introduced. Nowadays transnational mobilities are also increased because many immigrants travel to their countries of origin to pass driving tests in their mother tongue and at a lower cost, as other examples show (cf. Salih, 2003).

To provide information about transnational informalities on wheels, I present the case of Marius and his family. He is a Romanian immigrant in his fifties whom I interviewed in Spain. He works as truck-driver in Spain, and seven of his 25 family members and friends are also truck-drivers. We also met in Romania, where he was spending his holidays with his wife and daughter. He picked me up in his sister’s car, a fifteen-year-old Volkswagen Golf that he uses whenever it is available. He used to come every year to Romania by car, but it is exhausting and expensive – Roquetas de Mar (Spain) and Bistrița-Năsăud (Romania) are not well connected by plane. The one-way trip takes two days by car – roughly €400, half petrol, half tolls – or three to four days by bus, at €69 the cheapest one-way ticket. They only go off the motorways that connect both ends of the transnational corridors to rest at petrol stations and parking areas, which have social and cultural significance (Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012) as transit zones full of real or perceived danger. The EU projects create safer parking areas, yet cases in which drivers and passengers have been attacked, robbed or even killed are very much on the drivers' minds.

The travel strategies and the option to use cars translocally are varied – travel by car, fly and borrow, or rent a car upon arrival, own cars in both places, etc. – and all migrants with whom I talked needed one. Although the house is usually mentioned as an important feature of transnationalism (e.g., Vertovec, 2009), owning or having access to use a car in both the place of origin and the destination bolsters transnational relationships. The logic of hyperindividualism makes car ownership an important feature of personal independence (Lutz, 2015). However, here the car is also a social object that entails social obligations and can be used by family members when they need it as part of the household (Pahl, 1984; Wallace, 2002) and moral economies (Palomera & Vetta, 2016). Moreover, Marius emphasized the importance of cars in family relationships when he showed me a rotten Dacia 1300 that had not been moved since his father died in 2003: "I have to take it to the junkyard and also take down the garage roof, but my mother does not want me to," he told me. Also, Marius used to make a living as a truck driver and showed me some parts of his old truck scattered around the garage: "I had my job with the truck, but I also had room to do other things, load and deliver…now everything is already controlled, and you cannot make a living as before," he told me, with nostalgia for the informal times he had left behind.

Here, the brokerage role of transnational drivers deserves attention because they can move across various social fields, such as the transnational field of truck-drivers (Alvarez, 2005). In the first phase of Romanian migration to Spain, in the late 1990s to 2004, before Romania's entry into the EU, some early migrants created informal transportation businesses, while others later became bus companies, facilitating the arrival of hundreds of their compatriots. Transnational bus drivers supported the newcomers but also benefitted from them, lending them money to pass the EU's borders, bribing border officials or taking alternative routes to avoid border controls (Elrick & Ciobanu, 2009), although as Spanish police officers told me Romanians quickly learned that trying to bribe police officers in Spain might worsen their situation. Unlike the examples of the informal transportation of small vans and buses that operate in urban settings (De Soto, 1989; Rekhviashvili & Sgibnev, 2018), in this case transnational informal transportation preceded informal accommodation and trade.

Nowadays, transnational drivers between Spain and Romania are facilitators of economic and social remittances. An extended practice among Romanian migrants in Spain is to send money through bus drivers, who carry the cash in both directions and give it personally to the destined recipient. These transnational buses and courier companies also transport boxes in both directions for €1 a kilo in 2019. Homemade food and liquor – *tuică* or *palinka* – are the most common goods to be transported by bus or car, although Hungarian border officials "were looking at these products to confiscate and keep them," as a Romanian carpooling participant told me.

An extreme example of how these informal remittances worked occurred during a recent Christmas. At that time, the east of Romania was suffering from an outbreak of swine influenza, and my Romanian research participants in Spain were very worried that they would not receive the typical national pork products hand-made by their relatives for the celebrations from northwest Romania, which was not affected by the outbreak. Ultimately, some managed to receive pork products through informal transnational entrepreneurs who avoided the border controls. These findings are in line with the literature on smuggling and small-scale cross-border trade across the eastern borders of the EU (Bruns, Miggelbrink, & Müller, 2011), but they also extend it to the soft, internal borders within the Schengen area. National borders have not disappeared but have been transformed, producing informal and contested (infrapolitical) practices in which car and bus drivers challenge EU regimes of mobility. In sum, here, informal automobilities practice a licit but illegal trade and symbolic exchange across borders, although the sending and receiving of social remittances is performed as an essential exercise that maintains and renews transnational social ties (cf. Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992).

4.4.3. The "national" car and the informalisation of labour

The history of the car-maker Dacia and its low-cost car the Logan illustrates how peripherality and post-Fordism in car industries produces cheap and/or informal labour. Dacia, named after the ancient land of the Dacians, commonly cited as the origin of the Romanian nation, was founded in the 1960s to develop the national automobile industry. After suffering difficulties during the post-socialist transition, in 1999 Dacia was bought by the French manufacturer Renault, which led to the diluting of its nationalist roots and a reduction in its workforce from 27,000 to 13,000 employees. Now Dacia-Renault is one of the biggest companies in Romania, with more than 15,000 employees (Automobile Dacia, 2018), due to its success in selling low-cost cars to the rich countries in EU27 (Pardi, 2018). Thus, Dacia is a paradigmatic example of peripheral Fordism: control, skilled labour, and consumers remain in the central country (France), while the peripheral country lost its institutional control, and the manufactured object is not easily accessible to ordinary workers (Delteil & Dieuaide, 2008; Pardi, 2018). As Walks (2015) demonstrates, *automobile Fordism* is at the roots of neoliberalism, flexible accumulation, and post-Fordist economies.

Dacia is a clear example of the decline of industrial labour in the 1990s that led to labour informalisation. The privatization of large-scale manufacturing resulted in a fragmentation of labor (Kideckel, 2008; Verdery, 2009) that reinforced the informal economy and informal activities as economic survival strategies (Ciupagea, 2002, and pushed millions of Romanians into international migration (Marcu, 2009). The Romanian population living in Spain grew from a few thousand to 900,000 people in the year with the highest numbers over the last two decades (INE, 2019). They were attracted by formal and informal labour markets,[4] and their migration was supported by social and institutional networks. Nowadays in Spain, the continuum between formal and informal labour (Williams & Onoshenko, 2014) is defined by the precarity, exploitation, flexibilization, and informalisation of formal labour (Likic-Brboric, Slavnic, & Woolfson, 2013). Moreover, low-wage Romanian migrants have access to a limited spectrum of jobs in sectors such as construction, domestic service, agriculture, and transportation (Martinez Veiga, 1999). Iona's family is an excellent example of this process.

Iona is a Romanian woman in her forties who arrived in Roquetas de Mar in 2001 with her husband. She has been employed – sometimes formally but mostly informally – as a cleaner, childcare worker, waitress, greenhouse worker, vegetable packer, and sales assistant, and her husband works as a formal driver. They send money through informal channels to her mother in Romania, where retirement pensions are too low to survive on. Also, they supported Iona's brother in his coming to Spain, but he was not able to learn Spanish, nor could he withstand the hard work, Iona told me. He returned to Romania and is working in Bistrița, their city of origin, in a car components factory owned by the German international company Leoni. With 9,000 employees from the city and commuters from nearby towns, this is the biggest plant in the industrial zone, producing components for the European automobile industry.

Our project data reveal that Romanians living in Roquetas de Mar have friends or relatives working in car factories, as well as some in textile plants. In 2019, the Romanian monthly average wage was 5,465 lei (INS, 2020), and the salary in Leoni and similar factories is approximately 2,200 lei per month – around €460, which, according to my research participants, only permits a hand-to-mouth existence. These examples show how peripheral and post-Fordist industries – here, car and passenger transportation businesses – create low-wage labour contexts in which precarity and the informalisation of labour prevail, as the initial vignette of this article about taxis shows, opening the floor to immigration and temporal mobilities. In sum, these are individual and/or household strategies to diversify livelihood practices among transnational social fields, as they earn twice as much in their jobs in Spain than they can in Romania.

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[4] The formal-informal labour continuum has a long tradition in Spain, illustrated by off-the-books workers in industrial development (Benton, 1990).

4.5. Conclusion

Taken together the set of informal practices that revolve around the automobility system, this paper has shown the elusive potential of cars in moving beyond the inequalities and limitations of formal and informal mobility regimes at multiple scales. Defined here as "informal automobilities", these practices use, exploit, and/or manipulate cars in order to circumnavigate, confront, and reverse unequal situations, and they are of two interconnected kinds: livelihood activities that face economic constraints producing, trading, and consuming cars through informal labour and social networks; and infrapolitical actions that indirectly challenge the mobility governance of things – cars, remittances, infrastructures, etc. –, knowledge – licenses, expertise, values, etc. –, and people – drivers, passengers or workers.

This article has drawn on the case of low-wage Romanian immigrants in Spain who maintain their transnational connections with their regions of origin in Romania. The focus on transnational processes allows us to unpack the social strategies, inequalities, and boundaries that are not only attached to national or local contexts but are also related with processes and regulations at various scales within the EU from the local to the transnational. Indeed, the automobility system smooths transnational connections because it allows physical presence, enacts the motives and success of migration, facilitates informal economies, and reinforces informal networks at a distance. Thus, the paper offers new insights about informal practices that respond to intra-EU mobilities governances, adding to post-structural research on informal transportation and expanding our understanding of the interdependent relationship between mobility and informality.

Low-wage migrants' access to automobility provides the autonomy and flexibility that increases their agency, both individual and family, to make a living. This paper does not advocate maintaining a central role over the automobility system in the current overheated world, observing only that "the road to any imaginable future is paved with unintended consequences" (Eriksen, 2016: 481). Thus, it is necessary to consider the possible impacts of a carless or post-car world on these informal practices and the consequences for those who rely on them to make a living or to confront mobility inequalities on the local and transnational scales. Bearing this in mind, it is important to continue analysing informal automobilities in order to determine how they shape the daily work and lives of millions of people.

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Chapter 5. Etnografías multisituadas en los campos transnacionales: el caso de Rumanía-España[1]

5.1. Introducción

Treinta años después de la caída del Muro de Berlín podemos apreciar con perspectiva las formidables transformaciones que han tenido lugar en Europa. Entre estas transformaciones cabe destacar el flujo migratorio iniciado desde los países del Este de Europa a los países occidentales a partir de los años 90 (Marcu, 2009), la puesta en marcha en el 2002 del espacio *Schengen* y la ampliación de la Unión Europea (UE) en los años 2004 y 2007 (Engbersen, Leerkes, Scholten & Snel, 2017). En este nuevo contexto de libre circulación (aunque con restricciones prácticas), ya en 2011 alrededor de 5 millones de personas procedentes de los países recién ingresados en la UE, especialmente de Polonia y Rumanía, residían de forma permanente en países de la Europa Occidental (Reino Unido en el primer caso e Italia y España, en el segundo, ver Fassmann, Kohlbacher & Reeger, 2014). La crisis financiera del 2008-9 no hizo sino añadir complejidad a esta situación (Marcu, 2013), incrementando el número de retornados a países del Este de Europa (Martin & Radu, 2012), la búsqueda nuevos de destinos (en ocasiones temporales) y, en general la migración dentro de la UE, que actualmente cuenta con más de 13 millones de ciudadanos residentes procedentes de otros países europeos (Eurostat 2019).

El agregado de decisiones individuales de quienes se mueven en busca de mejores oportunidades en otro país explica solo una parte de estos complejos flujos migratorios. En ocasiones, emergen “campos transnacionales” que conectan lugares en diversos países a través de un complejo entramado de relaciones sociales, en cuyo seno se producen fenómenos económicos y culturales que en estos momentos únicamente podemos intuir. Estos “campos transnacionales” han sido teorizados por la literatura transnacional (e.g. Glick Schiller, 2004; ver Lubbers, Verdery, & Molina, 2018 para una revisión), pero hasta el momento los intentos de medición han sido escasos (Mazzucato, 2007; Mouw et al., 2014), entre otras cosas por la enorme complejidad técnica y logística asociadas a esta tarea. Con esta ambición y en el marco del proyecto de investigación ORBITS[2] hemos tenido la oportunidad de investigar dos campos transnacionales que unen varias localidades de Rumanía y España. Para ello hemos utilizado una metodología mixta (Hollstein, 2008) que combina la investigación etnográfica con el seguimiento de una selección de los contactos activos de las personas entrevistadas en uno y otro país (*binational link-tracing*), gracias a dos equipos que han trabajado de forma coordinada en ambos extremos de los campos transnacionales.

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[1] Fradejas-García, I.; Molina, J.L.; Lubbers, J.L.; Hosnedlová, R. (2021) Etnografías multisituadas en los campos transnacionales: el caso de Rumanía-España. Book chapter accepted in: Marcu, Silvia (ed.) (2020) “*Transformaciones y retos de la movilidad de los europeos del este en España, treinta años después de la caída del muro de berlín: 1989-2019.*” Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch. ISBN: 978-84-18656-06-4

Es en este contexto en el que nos interrogamos sobre el papel de la investigación etnográfica en el estudio de los campos transnacionales, sus dificultades prácticas y su eventual contribución a la mejora del conocimiento existente sobre estos fenómenos. Para ello en este capítulo revisaremos en primer lugar el concepto de "campo transnacional" y la metodología utilizada en el proyecto de investigación en curso para pasar a continuación a presentar la literatura sobre "etnografías multisituadas". Así, a partir de una conceptualización de las movilidades existentes dentro de campo transnacional, valoraremos las posibilidades de aplicación de una etnografía multisituada (Marcus, 1995) junto con sus eventuales contribuciones. Por último, presentamos una propuesta que reformula el concepto de etnografía multisituada para vincularlo más que a lugares o *loci* específicos a estructuras sociales interdependientes, en lo que hemos llamado provisionalmente *etnografías orientadas por redes*, a saber, la selección del conjunto de meso-estructuras sociales interdependientes que afectan la cognición y la conducta de los colectivos de interés como unidad significativa de análisis.

5.2. El concepto de campo social transnacional

En los años 90 diversos especialistas en el campo de las migraciones internacionales, muchos de ellos procedentes de la antropología, estaban insatisfechos con los estudios centrados mayoritariamente en los países de destino y en los procesos de eventual "asimilación" o modos de "integración" de los emigrantes. En su lugar, propusieron un conjunto de ideas dirigidas a superar las limitaciones de los paradigmas dominantes utilizando la teoría transnacional (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Después de una primera década de encendido debate en la que se puso de manifiesto la necesidad de reformular el alcance y la novedad de la teoría transnacional (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004), algunas de sus propuestas se han mostrado especialmente útiles para entender mejor los fenómenos migratorios. Entre estas propuestas cabe destacar la necesidad de superar el llamado “nacionalismo metodológico” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), i.e., asumir que los fenómenos sociales tienen lugar de forma natural en los límites del estado-nación, para incorporar en el análisis las relaciones que de forma sostenida los emigrantes mantienen tanto con los países de origen como con terceros países. En ocasiones, el conjunto de estas relaciones es “un terreno sin límites de redes egocéntricas entrelazadas”[3] (Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2001:544) que da lugar a la emergencia de “campos sociales transnacionales” (CST) conectando e influyendo a las personas vinculadas en ambos países. A diferencia de los fenómenos internacionales y multinacionales (i.e. entre estados o empresas respectivamente), los CSTs se originan “desde abajo”, a partir de las relaciones sociales de los emigrantes (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Vertovec, 2009). Estos entramados de relaciones incluyen a migrantes y no migrantes, a personas móviles y no móviles (Dahinden, 2010) y en conjunto facilitan la creación de nuevos valores como los cuidados trasnacionales, las remesas económicas y sociales (Levitt, 1998), o los negocios transnacionales (Valenzuela-Garcia, Güell, Parella, Molina, & Lubbers, 2018), entre otros. Otra contribución clave de esta aproximación es el concepto de “simultaneidad” o la constatación de la interdependencia de las acciones y decisiones dentro del CST, como, por ejemplo, la organización de funerales, las decisiones sobre la educación de los niños separados de sus padres o el inicio de nuevas movilidades (Mazzucato, 2008; Mazzucato, Dankyi, & Poeze, 2017), la cuales dan lugar tanto a continuidades como a rupturas de los emigrantes con sus lugares de origen.

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[2] "El papel de los campos sociales trasnacionales en la emergencia, mantenimiento y decadencia de enclaves étnicos y demográficos", MINECO (CSO2015-68687-P; 2016-2020). PIs: Miranda J. Lubbers & José Luis Molina. http://pagines.uab.cat/orbits/es.

5.3. La metodología del proyecto ORBITS

Aunque como hemos visto el concepto de “redes” forma parte consustancial de la propuesta original de “campo transnacional”, solo recientemente se han realizado propuestas de medición de estos campos transnacionales utilizando el equipamiento técnico y conceptual que proporciona el análisis de redes sociales (para una revisión véase Lubbers et al., 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). En el proyecto ORBITS nos propusimos aplicar una versión adaptada de la propuesta metodológica de Mouw et al. (2014) para estudiar las redes transnacionales de emigrantes mexicanos procedentes de Guanajuato (México) en North Carolina y Houston, Estados Unidos (Verdery, Mouw, Edelblute, & Chavez, 2018). Esta metodología es a su vez una versión del muestreo dirigido por los propios encuestados (Respondent Driven Sampling), utilizado para obtener muestras cuasi-representativas de poblaciones ocultas o mal conocidas mediante la selección de los participantes en el estudio a partir de las referencias o nominaciones realizadas por otros participantes (Heckathorn, 1997; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Según Heckathorn, si las personas de las que parte el estudio (denominadas "semillas") son suficientemente diversas y se encadenan entrevistas un número suficiente de veces (un mínimo de cuatro oleadas) es posible acercarse a una muestra representativa de la población de interés y su estructura de relaciones, el CST en este caso. Para el estudio de México se partió de 12 semillas en North Carolina y de 5 en Houston, hasta alcanzar un total de 197 entrevistas. A partir de ahí se seleccionaron al azar 20 semillas residentes en Guanajuato del total de personas nominadas y se realizaron 3 oleadas adicionales, hasta un total de 410 entrevistas.

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[3] “(…) an unbounded terrain of interlocking egocentric networks” (Traducción propia).

En el caso de proyecto ORBITS estudiamos dos CSTs diferenciados, el primero conectando la ciudad de Castelló (Comunidad Valenciana, España) con la zona del norte de Bucarest (Dâmbovița, especialmente su capital, la ciudad de Târgoviște) y el segundo conectando Roquetas de Mar (Almería, España) con Bistrița-Năsăud, (en el norte de Transilvania, Rumanía). La razón de seleccionar estas dos áreas de destino en España se debe a que en ambos casos la población rumana alcanzaba entre el 11 y el 14% de la población total, que existía un distrito industrial y/o agropecuario de importancia (la industria cerámica en el caso de Castelló y la agroindustria del llamado "mar de plástico" de Roquetas de Mar), así como la presencia de lo que se ha dado en llamar una "plenitud institucional" (*institutional completeness*) (Breton, 1968), esto es, la existencia de una alta densidad de instituciones relacionadas con la zona de origen como iglesias, asociaciones, empresas, consulados, etc. (para una descripción del caso de Castelló véase José Luis Molina, Martínez-Cháfer, Molina-Morales, & Lubbers, 2018). Por último, en ambos casos, la población rumana emigrada procedía de forma mayoritaria de las respectivas zonas de origen seleccionadas (Viruela, 2002).

Una vez escogidos los casos de estudio y revisados los estudios previos (Martínez-Veiga, 2004; Viruela, 2004) se realizó una prospección etnográfica para conocer la diversidad interna de la población rumana emigrada, lo cual permitió seleccionar 9 semillas en Castelló y 6 en Roquetas de Mar. Tras entrevistar a estas 15 personas y a partir de la cadena de referencias se entrevistaron en total 303 personas en el CST entre Castelló y Dâmbovița (147 y 156 respectivamente) y 192 en el CST entre Roquetas de Mar y Bistrița-Năsăud (150 y 42, respectivamente[4]). Las entrevistas recogieron contactos activos tanto de rumanos residiendo en España como de contactos "nativos" o de cualquier otro origen, así como de las relaciones transnacionales en los lugares seleccionados como en otras zonas de Rumanía o en otros países. En cada extremo de CST se pedía a los participantes tres personas con las que se pudiese repetir la entrevista en su mismo lugar de residencia y otras 3 en el otro extremo. Así, cada equipo obtenía nuevas referencias para continuar las entrevistas en su zona, así como proveía de nuevas referencias de personas que podían ser entrevistadas por el otro equipo[5]. Solamente para el primer CST (Castelló - Dâmbovița) obtuvimos 4.855 personas nominadas y 5.477 relaciones, lo cual muestra la enorme complejidad del CST estudiado. En la Figura 12 se presenta el conjunto del CST también para el caso de Castelló - Dâmbovița.

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[4] Las entrevistas en Castelló - Dâmbovița se desarrollaron entre noviembre de 2017 y julio de 2018. Las entrevistas en Roquetas de Mar - Bistrița-Năsăud comenzaron en diciembre de 2019 y se vieron bruscamente interrumpidas por la pandemia del Covid-19 en el invierno de 2021.

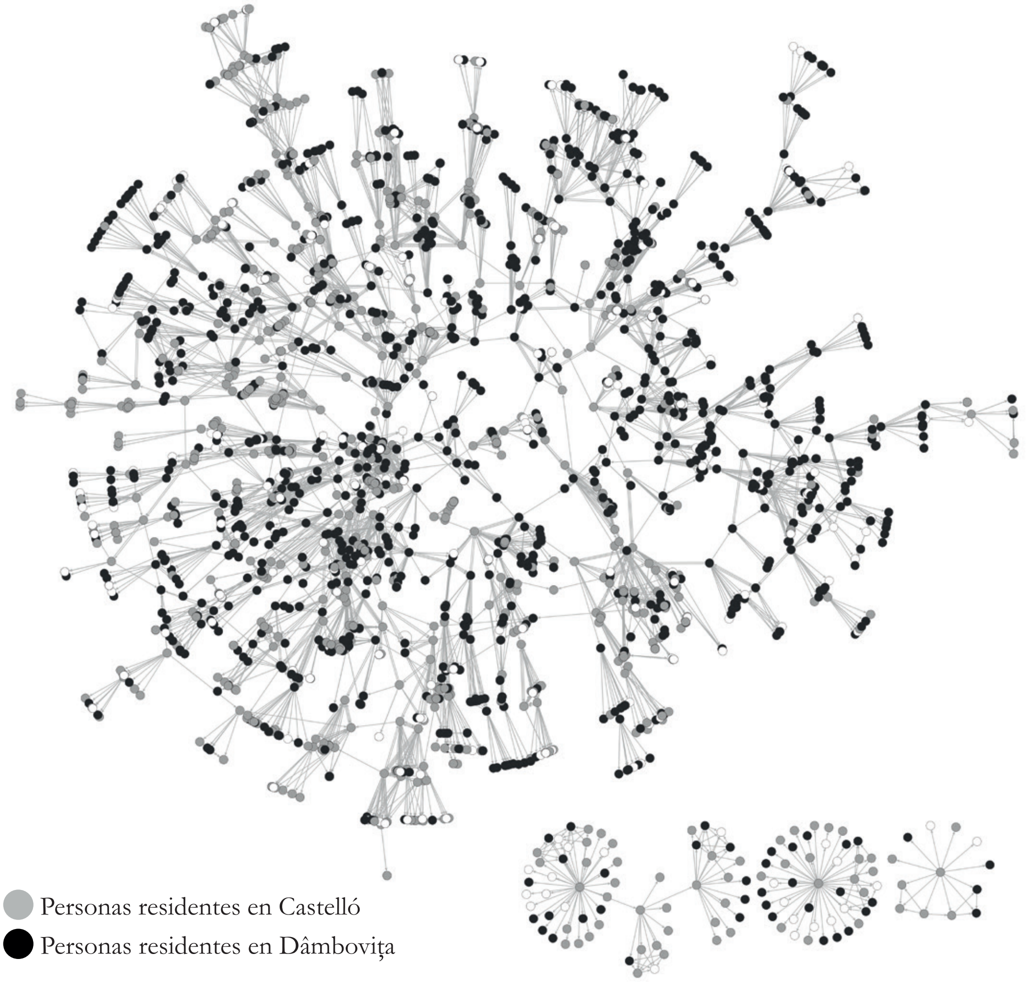
● Personas residentes en Castelló
● Personas residentes en Dâmbovița

Figura 12. El CST (Castelló - Dâmbovița) a partir de las nominaciones realizadas (el color blanco indica personas fuera del CST). Elaboración propia proyecto ORBITS.

Las entrevistas se centraron en aspectos de la historia de vida, de la trayectoria migratoria y de las movilidades de las diferentes personas que encontramos en los CSTs, así como en los diferentes intercambios que conectan a estas personas (comunicación, remesas, viajes, etc.). Antes y durante la realización de estas entrevistas, se llevó a cabo trabajo de campo etnográfico para: (1) identificar las semillas y conseguir la confianza de las personas entrevistadas, (2) explorar en profundidad las conexiones y las prácticas transnacionales y, (3) entender el funcionamiento de los CSTs. Este trabajo de campo se basó en la estructura del CST a medida que se iba explorando de forma cuantitativa y "siguiendo las relaciones" entre los diferentes emplazamientos del CST. Una vez establecida la estructura del CST la pregunta que nos hacemos es qué puede añadir una investigación etnográfica multisituada al conocimiento de su naturaleza, dinámica y singularidad. Para ello revisaremos antes el concepto de "etnografía multisituada".

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[5] En la Figura 7 (página 33) se representa la cadena de nominaciones de las personas entrevistadas, incluyendo las semillas, retornados y no-emigrantes en Dâmbovița.

5.4. El concepto de etnografía multisituada

En un influyente artículo en el *Annual Review of Anthropology*, George Marcus (1995) planteó la necesidad de superar la concepción de la etnografía como descripción holista de un lugar o un pueblo para aspirar a estudiar fenómenos que recogiesen de forma más realista la interdependencia propia de un mundo globalizado. Así, si en la época colonial una contextualización de la comunidad subalterna objeto de estudio en relación con el sistema capitalista global podía ser suficiente, la realidad interconectada que imprimía la creciente globalización (de finales del siglo XX) aconsejaba la renovación del método etnográfico para incorporar unas interconexiones que superaban la distinción local/global (Marcus, 2001, 2009, 2012). Para ello Marcus sugiere una aproximación interdisciplinar y diversas estrategias heurísticas como *seguir a las personas, seguir a las cosas, seguir a las metáforas, seguir a los mitos o las historias, seguir las biografías y seguir a los conflictos*. Estas estrategias han probado ser fructíferas y han dado lugar a "etnografías multisituadas" de enorme interés, como *Lives in Transit* de Vogt (2018) que describe el tránsito de sufrimiento y violencia de emigrantes centroameriacanos en su camino a Estados Unidos, o el trabajo de Knowles (2014) sobre la producción y distribución de sandalias ("flip-flops") que muestra insólitas conexiones internacionales de grandes corporaciones asiáticas y pequeños contrabandistas africanos, por ejemplo. Sin embargo, en la práctica, la posibilidad de realizar una etnografía multisituada se ha puesto en duda por diferentes autores, que señalan la imposibilidad de estudiar con la misma profundidad enclaves geográfica y culturalmente diversos (Hage, 2005), o bien las dificultades metodológicas, logísticas y económicas asociadas a esta aproximación (ver Falzon, 2009 para una revisión). Además, la propuesta de Marcus, acertada en la necesidad de adaptar el método etnográfico a una nueva realidad y en el papel clave de las tecnologías de la comunicación, no llega sin embargo a anticipar en toda su dimensión la transformación que ha supuesto la digitalización de la vida. Así, la vida cotidiana actual constituye un continuo inseparable de presencialidad y digitalización vigilada (Zuboff, 2019), continuo que también supera al mismo concepto de "etnografía digital" (Murthy, 2008). A pesar de estas limitaciones, lo cierto es que es necesaria una propuesta metodológica que permita abordar el estudio de los CSTs, los cuales conectan lugares diversos a través de diversas movilidades. Ciertamente, estas movilidades de personas, información y objetos (Sheller & Urry, 2006) están asistidas por tecnologías digitales como la telefonía móvil, Facebook o WhatsApp, por citar los medios más populares en nuestro caso de estudio, pero son en sí mismas irreductibles y constitutivas de las estructuras transnacionales objeto de análisis.

Desde el propio campo de la teoría transnacional, Glick-Schiller y Çağlar (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018; 2016; 2010) han propuesto más recientemente una conceptualización de las movilidades migratorias como procesos de emplazamiento-desplazamiento que tienen lugar en el seno de las dinámicas provocadas por las estructuras globales de poder, en las que las grandes metrópolis juegan un papel fundamental (Castells, 2010; Sassen, 2008). En su propuesta "multiescalar", la diversidad de lugares no es en sí misma suficiente para dar cuenta de la realidad estudiada (los procesos de "emplazamiento" de personas previamente "desplazadas", los emigrantes), sino que es necesario desvelar la interconexión profunda de procesos aparentemente diversos, como el desplazamiento forzado de refugiados sirios a una pequeña ciudad alemana como consecuencia de un conflicto aprovisionado por las armas producidas en otra pequeña ciudad norteamericana. Las autoras proponen centrarse en pequeñas ciudades en lugar de en grandes metrópolis pues en las primeras es más fácilmente observable la contribución de las poblaciones desplazadas que en los grandes centros de decisión política y económica. Así, a través de la adecuada selección de ciudades subalternas sería teóricamente posible abordar la ambición inicial de Marcus de reflejar las interconexiones de un mundo globalizado en la propia descripción etnográfica. Volveremos más tarde sobre esta cuestión.

5.5. La movilidad en los campos transnacionales

En los dos campos transnacionales estudiados hemos podido observar diferentes tipos de movilidades, los más importantes de los cuales están representado en la Tabla 4. Estas movilidades se observan a nivel individual aunque no son independientes sino que están vinculadas a personas que pueden actuar como focos o centros de actividad ("hubs") (Bashi, 2007), ya sea por razones familiares o profesionales, como negocios basados en la circulación de trabajadores (Valenzuela-García et al., 2014), o incluso a instituciones como las iglesias "protestantes" que están asentadas en diferentes países. Es aquí donde la etnografía puede hacer una contribución distintiva, al estar orientada por el conocimiento previo de la estructura transnacional, lo cual permite seleccionar los *loci* relevantes en cada momento para revelar interconexiones y dependencias significativas.

N	Movilidades	Descripción
1	A →B	Migración de tipo permanente (e.g., establecimiento permanente en Castelló)
2	A ↔ B	Migración circular (e.g., temporeros, turnos para cuidados transnacionales) Movilidades (e.g., vacaciones, cuidados puntuales, empleos móviles)
3	A →B→A	Retornados
4	A → B → C	"Re-emigración" (e.g., nuevo destino en Noruega a causa de la pérdida del empleo en España por la crisis económica)
5	A → B → C → A	Retorno al enclave (e.g., retorno a Castelló después de haber trabajado en Noruega un tiempo)
6	A	Inmóviles (e.g., no migrantes que viven en el lugar de origen)

Tabla 4. Movilidades observadas en los CSTs.

El primer caso sería el estudiado de forma más generalizada: *la migración en destino*. Aquí se trata de aplicar el esquema clásico del trabajo de campo etnográfico que consiste en lograr una entrada al campo consentida por los diferentes actores institucionales (ayuntamientos, universidades, consulados, asociaciones, iglesias…) y participar de la vida cotidiana de los informantes, ya sea en celebraciones, oficios religiosos, encuentros informales, etc. Esta observación participante puede realizarse de forma prospectiva pero también *ex post*, seleccionando personas y eventos de interés a partir del análisis previo del CST.

En este sentido, una oportunidad única que nos brindó el trabajo de campo fue participar en los actos del hermanamiento realizado en Castelló entre esta ciudad y la de Târgovişte en Rumanía, que tuvieron lugar en 2017 (Figura 13), lo cual motivó entre otras iniciativas la realización de un video conmemorativo que puso de manifiesto a través de los testimonios de diversos participantes de origen rumano que éstos consideraban Castelló su "casa", aunque seguían considerándose rumanos.

> Por la tarde se celebró en la plaza del ayuntamiento un espectáculo público para celebrar el *hermanamiento*. Las aproximadamente 300 personas presentes disfrutaron de los coros y los grupos folclóricos de ambas ciudades que pasaron por el escenario, acompañados por discursos emocionales (en valenciano y rumano) repletos de mensajes identitarios en sintonía con los discursos políticos: *no perdamos nuestros orígenes, convivamos como hermanos, Castelló es nuestra/vuestra casa*. (Notas de campo, 7/10/2017, Castellò, observación y escritura de notas grupal)

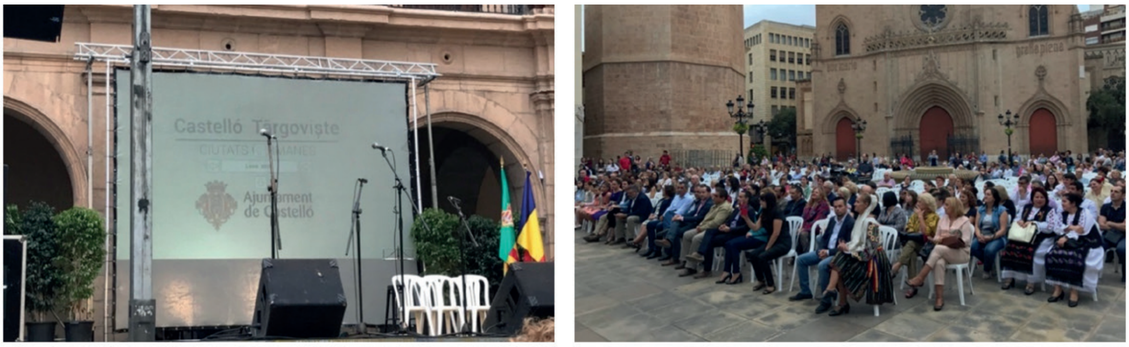

Figura 13. Escenario (izquierda) y público (derecha) en la celebración de la ceremonia de hermanamiento. Fuente: informes etnográficos del proyecto ORBITS.

Así, la identificación de la existencia de un *desplazamiento* de la identidad local en relación con la identidad nacional (de forma que las identidades locales y las nacionales no tienen por qué ser congruentes en un CST) sería una contribución genuina de la observación participante.

El segundo caso hace referencia a la *migración circular* o al menos a traslados periódicos dentro del CST. La migración circular está presente de forma intensa en los CSTs estudiados, ya sea como trabajadores temporeros de la agricultura intensiva, equipos de trabajo para la realización de obras menores, trabajos estacionales encargados por empresarios rumanos, o bien mediante turnos entre mujeres para cuidar de personas mayores en España alternativamente y así poder cotizar a la Seguridad Social, entre otros casos. A ello se suman las movilidades temporales, por ejemplo, por vacaciones, para cuidar de alguien temporalmente, o en empleos móviles como los camioneros. Para investigar las visitas periódicas o puntuales se puede aplicar literalmente la propuesta de Marcus de *seguir a las personas* (Marcus, 1995), en sintonía con las propuestas metodológicas realizadas desde el paradigma de las movilidades (Büscher, Urry, & Witchger, 2011). En este sentido, el primer autor de este texto utilizó la web de *BlaBlaCar*[6] para viajar a Rumanía en 2017[7].

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[6] BlaBlaCar es una empresa cuya plataforma web permite la intermediación para que personas que viajan al mismo sitio puedan organizarse para compartir vehículo y gastos de viaje.

[7] El investigador pagó 145€ (más 24,50€ de gastos de gestión) por el trayecto. El viaje de ida del coche entre España y Rumanía costó, incluyendo peajes, viñetas y gasolina, 417€ por la ruta de la costa azul, cruzando Italia, Eslovenia y Hungría.

> Florin[8] llegó puntual a las 10 de la noche al lugar acordado en Barcelona en su potente pero ya añejo BMW5, acompañado de Oana, su novia embarazada de cuatro meses. Un punto azul sobre la pantalla negra del móvil marcaba la ruta a Florin, quién condujo sin descanso entre España y Rumanía a base de bebidas energéticas para no dormirse. (…) El motivo de este viaje era ir de vacaciones, pero también casarse por lo civil para facilitar la futura inscripción en el registro civil del bebé en camino, una gestión muy complicada aparentemente si el matrimonio solo se celebra en España. Florin y Oana no viajaban solos, sino que les seguía el coche del tío de Oana, con su mujer y un hijo. Nos vemos únicamente cuando paran en las estaciones de servicio donde sacan la comida que llevan preparada. Aunque no salimos de las autopistas nos perdimos en Croacia. "Antes no había móviles y también viajábamos en coche entre Rumanía y España", me dice con sorna. (…)
>
> Florin llegó con 18 años a España y han pasado 15 años desde entonces. Se había sacado todos los carnés para ser camionero, pero su hermano le metió a trabajar con él como guardia de seguridad en un banco. Hacen turnos alternos de 12 horas por lo que nunca se ven. Oana trabaja de camarera, pero no está dada de alta. Dejará el trabajo para cuidar del bebé y trabajar solo los fines de semana, cuando su madre cuide del bebé. Viven de alquiler, él tuvo una hipoteca hasta que no pudo pagar y devolvió el piso al banco. Ahora se están haciendo una casa en el pueblo de él, poco a poco. (…) A las dos semanas, volví a España en BlaBlaCar con otra familia, confirmando muchas de las experiencias compartidas por estos migrantes transnacionales. (Adaptación de las notas de campo, primer autor, 8/8/2017-9/8/2017).

De nuevo vemos que esta estrategia de investigación proporciona información sobre estrategias de movilidad (vacaciones para realizar burocracias, la madre de Oana viene a España para cuidar al bebé), nichos ocupacionales (conductores de camión, guardias de seguridad), prácticas informales (trabajo irregular) y nuevas preguntas que probablemente no pueden ser obtenidas fácilmente en otros contextos debido a la conversación extensa e informal que hace posible el viaje compartido. Además, se identificó la enorme importancia que tienen los coches en estos CST para facilitar la movilidad a varias escalas, mostrar un (alto) estatus del emigrado y permitir un extra económico mediante la compra-venta-reparación de automóviles utilizando redes informales (Fradejas-García, 2021).

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[8] Utilizamos seudónimos para todos los nombres.

El tercer caso, el de las *personas retornadas*, exige o bien una *etnografía en origen* (e.g. Kyle, 2000), o bien visitas prolongadas desde origen a destino. En nuestro caso, al contar con un equipo de campo rumano, el acceso a estas personas fue facilitado en el marco del proyecto de investigación. Ahora bien, mientras que el acceso a Dâmbovița podía hacerse en algo más de una hora desde Bucarest, el acceso a la zona rural de Bistrița-Năsăud implicaba largos viajes y una vez en la zona, prolongados desplazamientos internos hasta alcanzar pequeñas localidades desperdigadas en la región. A este enorme esfuerzo logístico y humano hay que sumar los rigores del invierno transilvano, que hacen inviable en muchos casos la movilidad.

> *El problema de la movilidad interna.* Según Stefan [representante del gobierno local], en Bistrița-Năsăud hay algunas aldeas específicas conectadas a Roquetas: Telciu, Rebra, Salva, Cosbuc, Beclean y Parva (ver las flechas en el mapa de Bistrița-Năsăud, Figura 14).

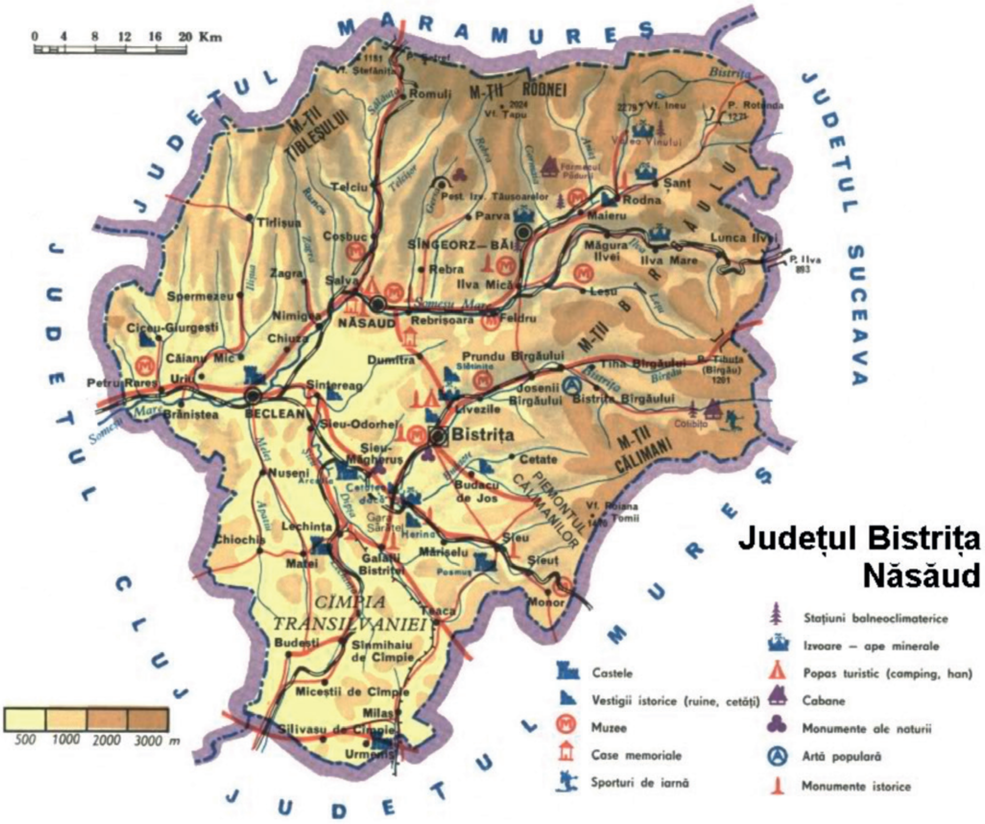
0 4 8 12 16 20 Km
MARAMURES
JUDETUL SUCEAVA
JUDETUL MURES
JUDETUL CLUJ
M-TII RODNEI
M-TII TIBLEŞULUI
M-TII BIRGAULUI
M-TII CALIMANI
PIEMONTUL CALIMANILOR
CIMPIA TRANSILVANIEI
Romuli
Telciu
Tirlişua
Coşbuc
Zagra
Salva
Parva
SINGEORZ-BĂI
Rebra
Ilva Mică
Rodna
Maieru
Sant
Măgura Ilvei
Ilva Mare
Lunca Ilvei
Leşu
Spermezeu
Ciceu-Giurgeşti
Nimigea
NĂSAUD
Rebrişoara
Feldru
Chiuza
Căianu Mic
Dumitra
Prundu Birgăului
Tiha Birgăului
Josenii Birgăului
Bistrița Birgăului
Petru Rareş
Uriu
Brănistea
BECLEAN
Şintereag
Şieu-Odorhei
Livezile
Bistrița
Cetate
Şieu-Măgheruş
Nuşeni
Budacu de Jos
Lechința
Chiochiş
Matei
Galații Bistriței
Mărişelu
Şieu
Şieuț
Monor
Teaca
Budeşti
Sînmihaiu de Cîmpie
Miceştii de Cîmpie
Milaş
Silivaşu de Cîmpie
Urmeniş
Judeţul Bistriţa Năsăud
500 1000 2000 3000 m
Castele
Vestigii istorice (ruine, cetăți)
Muzee
Case memoriale
Sporturi de iarnă
Stațiuni balneoclimaterice
Izvoare – ape minerale
Popas turistic (camping, han)
Cabane
Monumente ale naturii
Artă populară
Monumente istorice

Figura 14. Mapa de Bistrița-Năsăud. Fuente: informes etnográficos del proyecto ORBITS.

> Cada uno de los seis pueblos se encuentra a una distancia promedio de 80 a 90 minutos [en coche] de la ciudad de Bistrița. Salva, Cosbuc y Telciu están agrupados en la misma área geográfica (grupo 1). Rebra y Parva, también (grupo 2). Beclean parece estar lejos del resto de las aldeas (grupo 3). En términos de gestión del tiempo, cada

> día de trabajo de campo debe centrarse en las entrevistas programadas en un grupo específico (por ejemplo, 1). Para que eso suceda, las referencias de Roquetas deben acumularse en función de su ubicación geográfica en Bistrița-Năsăud. (Informe de campo de Gabriel Hâncean[9])

La información recogida con tanto esfuerzo es, de nuevo, de enorme interés. En Rebra, por ejemplo, pudimos hacer entrevistas en castellano con retornados que habían puesto un negocio o campesinos que habían trabajado durante unos años en los invernaderos de Roquetas de Mar, entre otras personas. La visita a pequeñas localidades con hasta tres confesiones religiosas y en las que no solamente existía un CST hacia España sino también hacia el sur de Alemania, abría nuevas avenidas a la investigación de estas dinámicas intraeuropeas.

En este sentido, el cuarto caso, la *re-emigración a otros paíse*s es de especial interés, pero fuera del alcance de nuestros medios. Aquí es oportuno utilizar de forma intensiva los medios digitales para informarse de la realidad existente en cada localidad (Şuiu, 2017), dadas las dificultades de abarcar un campo de investigación tan amplio. En estas emigraciones a otros países motivada por la crisis financiera del 2008 hemos observado casos en los que las mujeres y los hijos han permanecido en los lugares de destino, mientras los hombres han emigrado de forma más o menos temporal a otras regiones de España (Viruela, 2016), a otros países europeos o han recuperado los trabajos que habían abandonado inicialmente.

El quinto caso el *retorno de terceros países* a la nueva "base", constituye en realidad una versión ampliada del primer caso, la etnografía en destino. Veamos un ejemplo:

> Localizamos la iglesia pentecostal y nos presentamos en el polígono industrial después de dar bastantes vueltas a causa del GPS. Entramos por una puerta metálica y allí preguntamos por el pastor… que no vendrá hoy. Hablamos con diversos asistentes y nos invitan a entrar y si necesito traducción. Un hombre nos ofrece una biblia para la lectura. Al franquear la puerta me quedo impresionado por las gigantescas dimensiones del espacio… ¿un aforo de mil personas? Quizás.

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[9] Responsable del equipo rumano.

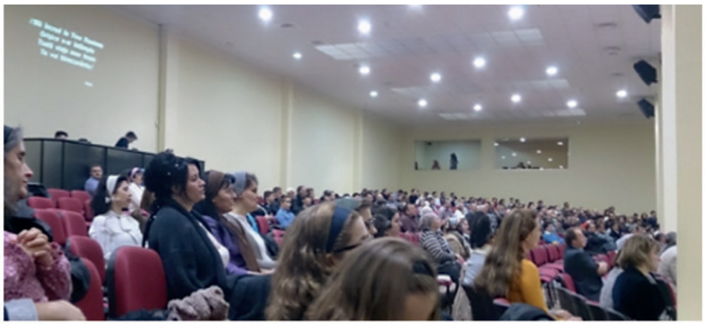

Figura 15. Una misa en una nave industrial acondicionada.
Fuente: informes etnográficos del proyecto ORBITS.

> Hay muchos jóvenes y niños. La misa dura más de 2 horas, con el mismo formato que en la misa baptista, pero con una diferencia, los rezos son individuales y en muchos casos más que sentidos, cercanos a la posesión, en un anárquico coro. Uno de los que participan es un rumano que ha salido corriendo de Noruega porque los servicios sociales se han quedado con los 5 hijos de una familia pentecostal, lo que ha provocado una gran polémica en Rumanía (…) El coro es muy profesional …con cantantes seniors, director de orquesta, piano de cola … quizás éramos 400 … en el pasillo, las sillas de ruedas. Cuentan que el cepillo ha sido de 849€. Al salir el hombre con gafas nos regala una biblia que agradezco y Martina intenta conseguir el teléfono del hombre que había vuelto de Noruega pero su mujer rompe el papel con el número que había escrito… (Notas de campo, 28/02/2016, segundo autor, Castellò)

El sexto y último caso corresponde a las *personas inmóviles, que no han migrado nunca*, aunque tienen relaciones cercanas con emigrantes o retornados. Estas personas pueden ejercer roles específicos como el ya comentado de "hubs" (personas que sirven de centro, pivote o anclaje), las cuales permiten y motivan el movimiento recíproco dentro del CST, por ejemplo, recibiendo remesas económicas y sociales, cuidando de las personas y las propiedades, realizando gestiones burocráticas, o enviando comida y bebida elaborada a mano (Fradejas-García, Molina, & Lubbers, 2021). Este tipo de prácticas transnacionales son de enorme importancia simbólica y moral para mantener las relaciones a distancia (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011) y una vez más han requerido del trabajo de campo etnográfico para poder ser identificadas.

En resumen, la investigación etnográfica contribuye sin duda a conocer realidades de los CSTs que de otra manera permanecerían ocultas. La cuestión que permanece es cómo afrontar la enorme complejidad que representa una aproximación etnográfica a la realidad transnacional.

5.6. Hacia una “etnografía orientada por redes”: de seguir a la gente a seguir sus relaciones

En este trabajo proponemos superar el concepto de “etnografía multisituada” como supuesto avance ante las limitaciones impuestas por una definición clásica centrada en un pueblo o una localidad. De hecho, la etnografía clásica no hace sino reproducir en otras culturas la definición fundacional de *Gemeinschaft* o comunidad local de las ciencias sociales de Tönnies (1887), un tipo ideal, en realidad. Relajar la definición de comunidad ampliándola a múltiples *loci* o espacios no-geográficos como las “comunidades virtuales” (Wellman & Gulia, 1999) tiene sus ventajas prácticas pero también sus límites. Pensamos que la misma definición de *lo social* no es inmutable, sino que se ve alterada por diversos factores, entre ellos los tecnológicos. Así, si bien en un momento de ausencia del telégrafo o el teléfono la centralidad de las estructuras locales era innegable, en un mundo de intensa socialización digitalizada estas estructuras locales si bien siguen siendo importantes, se ven afectadas por acciones que tienen lugar simultáneamente[10] en otros lugares. En este sentido pensamos que más que una etnografía “multisituada” *per se*, el elemento director tiene que ser la hipótesis de la existencia de *interdependencia* de los fenómenos estudiados. De esta manera, la actividad etnográfica no indicaría simplemente la existencia de una realidad relacional (Desmond, 2014) sino que asumiría que la unidad de análisis es el conjunto de estructuras relacionales interdependientes y significativas, siendo el punto de partida las conexiones directas e indirectas entre actores diversos de los campos transnacionales como instituciones, negocios, trabajadores, familiares, etc. Así, podemos estudiar trabajadores reclutados temporalmente por empresarios a través de contactos personales para la realización de una tarea determinada, o movilidades de feligreses de una red de iglesias en Europa, porque podemos *observarlos*, dar cuenta de ellos a través del registro de relaciones, intercambios, testimonios o declaraciones. No es posible, sin embargo, en nuestra opinión, abordar un análisis “multiescalar” a través del estudio multisituado de lugares concretos en esta propuesta por la sencilla razón de que sin negar la existencia de factores macro que tienen incidencia en los fenómenos estudiados, no es posible observarlos de la misma manera que se descubren las interdependencias a las que nos estamos refiriendo al combinar el análisis de redes y la etnografía. Estos fenómenos macro constituirían el *contexto* global en el que se desarrollaría nuestro análisis y no el *objeto* de la etnografía.

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[10] La “simultaneidad” transnacional no ha de entenderse de forma literal desde un punto de vista temporal. En algunos casos, la distancia permite posponer temporalmente los efectos de actividades y prácticas, aunque debido a la interdependencia de los diferentes actores estas acciones tengan un efecto en el futuro.

En definitiva, nuestra propuesta propone mejorar la etnografía centrada en los *loci* para abordar la complejidad teórica y metodológica las interdependencias, sean estas sociales, físicas o digitales, locales, transnacionales o internacionales, que se producen en estructuras intermedias de relaciones, las que ocurren entre personas y entre éstas y las instituciones, interacciones que son observables y significativas. Somos plenamente conscientes que esta propuesta probablemente excede los límites de una sola persona y demanda una aproximación mixta al análisis de los campos transnacionales, pero como hemos mostrado, la complejidad de la realidad estudiada precisa de metodologías, recursos y enfoques teóricos capaces de abordarla con garantías.

5.7. Epílogo: ¿el fin de una era para las ciencias sociales y las humanidades?

Este capítulo está escrito en plena pandemia del Covid19, un fenómeno global que ha puesto de manifiesto tanto la digitalización acelerada de la vida como la dificultad de realizar el trabajo de campo como estaba concebido hasta ahora. En nuestra investigación, a pesar de haber aplicado con cuidado todas las buenas prácticas de la investigación social, ya tuvimos que superar sospechas por parte de personas que cada vez son más conscientes de cómo los datos personales son objeto de negocio y de poder. La interrupción de la movilidad y las reglas de distanciamiento social debido a la pandemia probablemente dificultarán durante mucho tiempo el tipo de trabajo de campo que estábamos desarrollando. De forma paralela, en las mismas universidades y centros de investigación la tendencia es a autorizar fácilmente encuestas anónimas, como consecuencia de la aplicación del Reglamento Europeo de Protección de Datos (RGDP, 2018)[11] y a poner dificultades a otro tipo de investigación, a pesar de las continuas salvedades que el mismo Reglamento autoriza a la investigación que crea un bien público. El trabajo cualitativo y las relaciones personales intensas que caracterizan la etnografía han pasado de ser un bien público a una actividad bajo sospecha que representa un riesgo institucional a menudo imaginado (Molina & Borgatti, 2019). En estas condiciones ¿qué etnografía será posible? ¿cómo vamos a poder desvelar la complejidad de la vida social que no es accesible mediante encuestas online? Tendremos que pensar nuevas estrategias para estudiar complejos fenómenos sociales cuya misma naturaleza está cambiando radicalmente delante de nuestros ojos.

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[11] Aprobado en 2016 y en vigor desde 2018 [último acceso: 21.06.2020]: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679

5.8. Bibliografía

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Chapter 6. Migrant Entrepreneurs in the "Farm of Europe": The Role of Transnational Structures[1]

Abstract

The Romanian enclave in Roquetas de Mar, Spain, is situated in the so-called 'sea of plastic,' a 450-km^2 area devoted to highly intensive greenhouse farming managed by 10,000 farmers (mostly Spaniards) who employ a seasonal labour force of about 80,000 workers, mostly immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe. Romanians who arrived at the beginning of this century have occupied several niches within this agro-industrial district, such as harvesting, greenhouse maintenance, vegetable selection and packing, and transportation. Many of them started their own businesses, replacing the greenhouse plastic during the summer and employing fellow Romanians informally on a seasonal basis. These Romanian entrepreneurs soon seized the market, extending their businesses to related niches in the area − construction and commercialization −, and providing more stable jobs as a consequence. Moreover, some of them have expanded their businesses internationally, from Kazakhstan to Mexico. This paper analyses the global processes "from below" that explain the occupation of specific economic niches by transnational migrant entrepreneurs from Romania. Based on a combination of ethnographic fieldwork and social network analysis, the paper shows how the seasonal mobilization of a skilled workforce through transnational social structures connecting Bistrița-Năsăud (Romania) and Roquetas de Mar (Spain) provided a competitive advantage to these entrepreneurs that allowed them to start capitalizing their ventures and extend their reach to new markets.

Keywords: Transnational entrepreneurship; migration; enclaves; Romania; Spain; intensive agriculture; agrobusiness; informal labour; greenhouses.

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6.1. Introduction

Given the challenges posed by the climate crisis, human over-population, and food-insecurity, the future of agri-food production relies on indoor, vertical, smart, and high-tech automation in hitherto unimaginable scenarios. The endless greenhouses in the first scene of the dystopian movie *Blade Runner 2049* were shot in the so-called 'sea of plastic',[2] a 450 km^2 semi-desert area in Almeria, Spain, devoted to highly intensive farming under plastic. This agro-industrial area, which provides fresh, out-of-season vegetables to millions of Europeans, is widely called 'Europe's farm' and is closely connected with the global food regime controlled by agribusiness capital and multinational corporations (e.g., McMichael 2009). However, the production is managed by more than 10,000 small farmers (mostly Spaniards) who have developed the materials, methods, and practices to optimize production in such conditions, organized in cooperatives and auction centres (Herranz de Rafael & Fernandez-Prados, 2018), and benefiting from a value chain consisting of a strong network of local auxiliary companies (de Pablo Valenciano, Uribe-Toril, Milán-García, Ruiz-Real, & Arriaza, 2019). Moreover, far from automation and technological fetishism, a vast cheap labour force of 80,000 workers[3] is employed to run this agro-industrial district, mostly immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe, some of whom work on a seasonal basis in exploitative, informal, and precarious conditions (Pumares & Jolivet, 2014; Reigada, Delgado, Pérez, & Soler, 2017).

In the early 2000s, after some racist clashes between farmers and migrants of African origin, researchers predicted the progressive replacement of Africans by East European labourers (Checa, 2001; Martinez Veiga, 2001). Actually, migrant labour from both origins has increased in Almeria province, attracted by the agribusiness that has flourished in recent years. The foreign population in the area grew from 19,000 in 2000 to 145,000 in 2020 (INE 2020; see Figure 19 for detailed information). This growth was fed by a process of glocalization in which local farmers and auxiliary industries retained some control over local production and marketing while increasing exports (Entrena-Durán & Jiménez-Díaz, 2014; Jimenez, 2008, 2011).

In the case presented here, we focus on Romanian migrants who worked alongside African workers but also quickly entered more technical, regular, and better-paid occupations, such as constructing and maintaining greenhouses, transportation, selecting and packing vegetables, and even launching auxiliary enterprises of their own in the agro-industrial district. Many Romanians started to run their own businesses to replace the greenhouse plastic during the heat of summer, which does not allow greenhouse production. They informally employed local compatriots (Hartman, 2008) and circular migrants coming every summer to earn good money compared with Romanian wages. At the end of the 1990s, the renovation and modernization of greenhouse structures were also needed (Valera, Belmonte, Molina, & López, 2014). These plastic replacement entrepreneurs reduced prices, gained market share, and started constructing greenhouses from scratch, providing more stable jobs in parallel to the seasonal replacement of plastic during the summer. Based on our ethnographic research, we estimate that almost two thirds of the workers and many of the companies in plastic replacement, greenhouse construction, and maintenance are led and/or owned by Romanian migrant entrepreneurs. Moreover, some of these entrepreneurs have expanded their companies, sometimes impelled by the economic crisis, to other provinces of Spain and internationally, from Kazakhstan to Mexico.

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[2] Down the years the 'sea of plastic' has attracted lots of scholarship, media and public interest, for example, being chosen as the setting for a homonymous Spanish crime drama series on TV.

[3] According to the Labour Force Survey (EPA – Encuesta de Población Activa) in 2020 for agriculture sector. The agro-industrial district also provide job in other sectors as construction and industry, which might increase the number of workers working directly for this district.

This article asks the following question: What are the global processes from below that explain the occupation of these economic niches by transnational migrant entrepreneurs from Romania? Our contribution is both empirical and theoretical. The paper is based on new mixed methods and data. The findings reveal that transnational migrant entrepreneurs benefit from the transnational social structures in which they are embedded, in this case, the Romanian demographic enclave in the agro-industrial district. In particular, we show the essential role played by informal local and transnational practices, including the (im)mobility practices that permit experience and contacts to be acquired in Spain while providing young (formal and informal) labour from Romania to the greenhouse business. These networks and practices sustain the Romanian demographic enclave in Spain, provide competitive advantages to the agro-industrial district, and serve as a springboard for other transnational ventures.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we situate the phenomenon we have been observing in current scholarly debates concerning the theoretical intersections between globalization from below, transnational social fields, and transnational migrant entrepreneurship in industrial districts. Next, we present our mixed-methods approach and the context of this agribusiness. Finally, we present our empirical findings by following various individual examples of Romanian workers, foremen and entrepreneurs before offering some conclusions.

6.2. Transnational migrant entrepreneurs: globalization from below in an agro-industrial district

The phrase 'globalisation from below' is broadly defined as referring to migrants' livelihood strategies and mobilities alongside circulatory territories that are supported by social relationships among ethnic compatriots and ethnic bonds in order to access the benefits of globalization from which they have been excluded by global actors (Tarrius, 2002, 2017). This concept allows us to grasp "the everyday networks and patterns of social relationships that emerge in and around [world system] structures" (Portes 1997:3) and helps us follow the semi-legal or illegal transactions and transnational flows of goods and people that involve little capital investment to operate (Mathews, Ribeiro, and Alba Vega 2012:1). Giving continuity to these operationalizations, we provide a grounded analysis using transnationalism as a mid-range paradigm that connects low-wage migrants' relationships and livelihood strategies (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994) with mobilities of people, things, and information (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006) in a multiscalar perspective (Glick Schiller, 2018; Cağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). The analysis adopts the concept of 'transnational social fields' (hereafter TSFs), defined as unbounded terrains of interlocking personal networks (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999) across one or more borders "through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009).

Migrant transnational entrepreneurs range from informal and petty entrepreneurs to high-tech professionals who use several adaptive economic strategies that are not limited to domestic markets (Portes & Martinez, 2020). The positions of transnational entrepreneurs in these social structures are shaped by the relations between the social, cultural and economic characteristics of the actors and institutions involved, and the bounded contexts in which the said relations evolve (Drori, Honig, & Wright, 2009). However, some authors have stressed the need to measure empirically the social and personal networks in which they are embedded (Chen & Tan, 2009; Valenzuela-Garcia, Güell, Parella, Molina, & Lubbers, 2018). In this article, we analyse a type of transnational migrant entrepreneurship – the replacement and construction of greenhouses – with the ability to provide flexible labour relying upon their position as brokers within the TSFs and their local social relations within the context of the agro-industrial district of Almería.

This district is connected to global chains and networks of food production controlled by agribusiness capital and corporations (McMichael 2009). However, the development of intensive agriculture under plastic and of the agro-industrial district more generally in Almería has been described as an exceptional success story due mainly to internal factors such as natural resources, internal migration, local business organisation, and the creation and diffusion of innovative products and technologies benefitting from some external factors, such as the favourable conditions of international markets and open trade within the EU (Aznar-Sánchez, Belmonte-Ureña, & Tapia-León, 2014; Aznar-Sánchez, Galdeano-Gómez, & Pérez-Mesa, 2011; Galdeano-Gómez, Aznar-Sánchez, & Pérez-Mesa, 2011). Thus, the development of this food production district has been promoted by neither the state nor global corporations but created from below by local farmers coordinated in auction centers (*alhondigas*) and cooperatives. They retain some control over marketing and heavily rely upon family labour to begin with and immigrant labour thereafter.

This analysis of the so-called "Almería miracle" usually underrepresents the massive immigrant labour force required to run this agribusiness, which has increased its development, expansion, and competitiveness since the 1980s (Entrena-Durán & Jiménez-Díaz, 2014; Martínez-Veiga, 2014; Martinez Veiga, 2001; Moraes, Gadea, Pedreño, & De Castro, 2012; Pumares & Jolivet, 2014; Reigada et al., 2017; Saverio Caruso, 2017; Silva, 2004). This analysis is in line with the neoliberal globalization policies and practices that have promoted the flexibilization and deregulation of labour in the food industry (Bonanno & Cavalcanti, 2014) and the informalisation of work within the EU, especially of immigrants in southern Europe (Baldwin-Edwards & Arango, 1999; Likic-Brboric, Slavnic, & Woolfson, 2013). While agreeing with these interpretations, we aim to go beyond explanations invoking solely the 'low skilled and/or exploited immigrant labour force' to explore also the values and effects that migrant entrepreneurship has engendered, in developing not only Romanian (ethnic) oriented businesses, but also the agri-food district's growth in general in what can be called *globalization from below*.

6.3. Methods

This paper adopts a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data were gathered in Spain and Romania between 2017 and 2020. The first author undertook twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in Roquetas de Mar (Spain) between 2018 and 2020, where he conducted participant observation, ten in-depth interviews, one focus-group discussion, and dozens of informal interviews with Romanian religious and community leaders; representatives of local institutions, political parties, and associations; police officers; Romanian business owners;

owners of greenhouses and greenhouse construction companies; civil servants; social workers; and research experts. Moreover, he completed three non-consecutive months of fieldwork in Romania between 2018 and 2019, following the people (Marcus, 1995) already interviewed in Spain in their various towns of origin. In this multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Falzon, 2009; Marcus, 1995), he participated in Romanian church activities – mainly Orthodox and Pentecostal – volunteered in Romanian associations, joined in cultural events, and visited businesses owned by Romanians.

In addition, this paper is also embedded in the ORBITS research project,[4] which aims to understand the transnational social structures that link two Romanian enclaves on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar) with specific places of origin in Romania (Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud). This project has interviewed 496 Romanians in these four locations using a novel methodology in social network analysis (SNA) called 'binational link tracing' (Mouw et al., 2014) to empirically measure transnational social fields. In this paper, we focus on the 150 interviews conducted in Roquetas de Mar, Spain, and the 43 conducted in Bistrița-Năsăud, Romania. The first author carried out 79 of these interviews – seventy in Roquetas de Mar, five in Bistrița-Năsăud and four in Castelló de la Plana – and collected extensive field notes from every interviewee, including relevant information not gathered in the survey, thus connecting the quantitative and qualitative data.

In this article, we focus on three types of migrant associated with greenhouse construction in a prospective analysis of our 150 interviews in Roquetas de Mar: (1) nine labourers; (2) five crew foremen who have some control in the company; and (3) two entrepreneurs. We performed a dozen informal, face-to-face, unrecorded interviews with farmers, greenhouse construction workers, crew leaders, and entrepreneurs. We also completed two recorded interviews at a distance via Skype and Whatsapp with two entrepreneurs who had been interviewed previously but now focused just on their businesses. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, in which most Romanian immigrants were fluent, although basic Romanian and English were also used during fieldwork. In this paper, we have replaced personal names with pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, and all the participants signed informed consent forms.

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[4] ORBITS project: "The Role of Social Transnational Fields in the Emergence, Maintenance and Decay of Ethnic and Demographic Enclaves", funded by the Spanish government (MINECO-FEDER-CSO2015-68687-P). http://pagines.uab.cat/orbits/en

6.4. The agribusiness district and the TSF feeding it from below

6.4.1. The development of the agro-industrial district

The so-called ‘sea of plastic’ is an agro-industrial district located in the province of Almería, in southeast Spain. Its development followed three stages. First, in the 1950s poor and illiterate internal Spanish migrants occupied a deserted area under the program of Franco’s Minister of Colonization to populate and irrigate the zone (Martinez Veiga, 2001; Tout, 1990). The population multiplied fourfold between 1950 and 1980, favoured by the intensive agriculture supported by ecological factors like high insulation and aquifers easily accessed by wells, combined with cheap plots of land, easy access to bank loans, and the local innovations in cultivation performed by these internal migrants. The first greenhouses were constructed in the 1960s and by 1975 occupied 3,440 hectares, growing to 12,141 hectares by 1985 (Cajamar, 2019).

In 1984, the government prohibited the construction of new greenhouses due to the overexploitation of aquifers. A phase of informal expansion of the local greenhouse sector followed (see Figure 16), which soon became uncontrolled, reaching 24,170 in 1995 (Cajamar, 2019). This expansion even occurred in nature conservation areas, and half of the exploitations are illegal (Delgado, 2006). This expansion and the improvements to farmers’ quality of life created a need for cheap labour from outside the family. In 1986, 90% of labour was provided by family members in a flexible and self-exploitative form in order to reproduce the household and giving smaller enterprises economic viability (Delgado & Moreno, 2002). However, the situation eventually changed, and labour started to be contracted from outside the family. The area attracted international workers, mostly migrants from north Africa without residence or work permits, working under challenging and exploitative conditions.

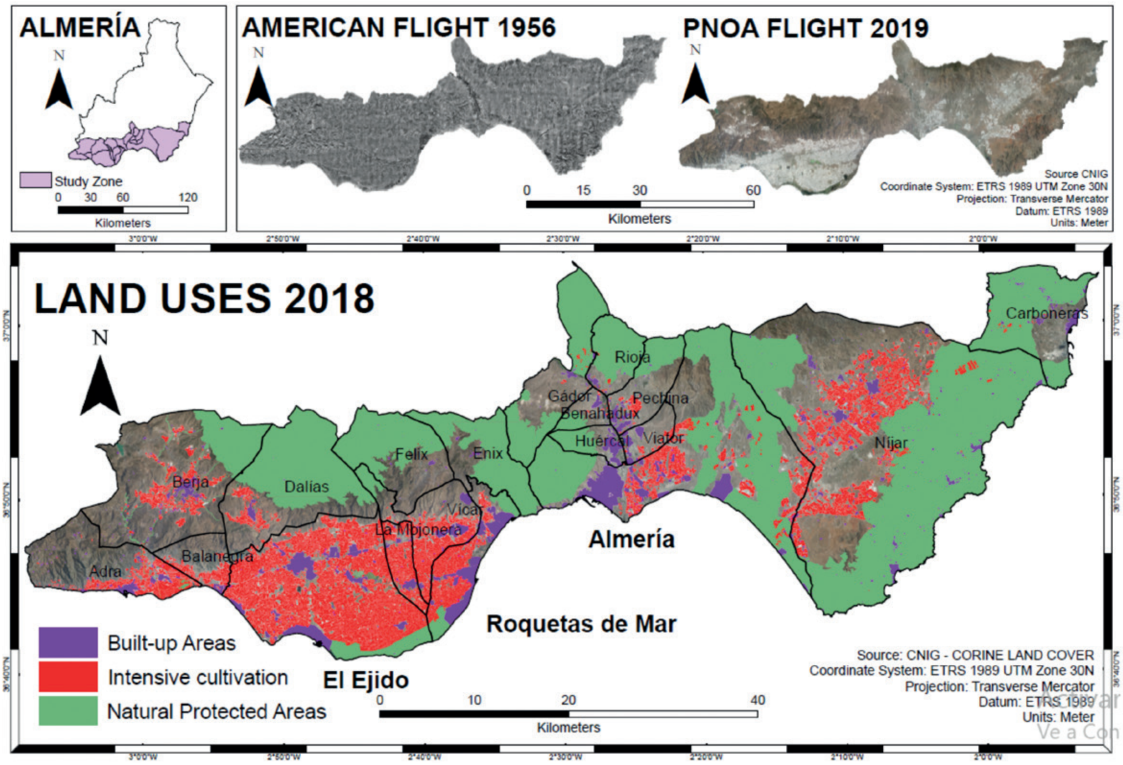
ALMERÍA
N
Study Zone
0 30 60 120
Kilometers
AMERICAN FLIGHT 1956
N
0 15 30 60
Kilometers
PNOA FLIGHT 2019
N
Source CNIG
Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 UTM Zone 30N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: ETRS 1989
Units: Meter
LAND USES 2018
N
Carboneras
Rioja
Gádor
Pechina
Benahadux
Huércal
Viator
Níjar
Félix
Enix
Berja
Dalías
Vícar
La Mojonera
Almería
Balanegra
Adra
Roquetas de Mar
El Ejido
Built-up Areas
Intensive cultivation
Natural Protected Areas
0 10 20 40
Kilometers
Source: CNIG - CORINE LAND COVER
Coordinate System: ETRS 1989 UTM Zone 30N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: ETRS 1989
Units: Meter

Figure 16. Orthophotographs of 1956 (Spanish Air Force and US Air Force) and 2019 (PNOA flight) show the development of intensive agriculture concentrated in two areas: (1) the Campo de Dalías in the west (Enix and the locations to its west) has 60.8% of the greenhouses in the province, while (2) Níjar and municipalities in the Bajo Andarax region (between Níjar and Enix) have undergone expansion more recently now represent 24.9% (Cajamar 2019). Own elaboration. Data: CNIG.

The third phase is one of a decline in competitiveness due to the global market's penetration in the 1990s, which led to the modernization of many greenhouses, greater intensification of resource use, further internationalization, and a reduction of labour costs with the arrival of cheaper immigrant labour (see Figure 17). Although labour accounts for 40% of production costs, and although the sector has benefited from high levels of informality, as it still does (Pumares & Jolivet, 2014), some analyses ignore the surplus and advantage of employing irregular migrants in precarious conditions (Silva, 2004). Moreover, the hidden work of women on family farms and of immigrants are essential to sustaining this intensive agricultural enclave (Reigada et al., 2017).

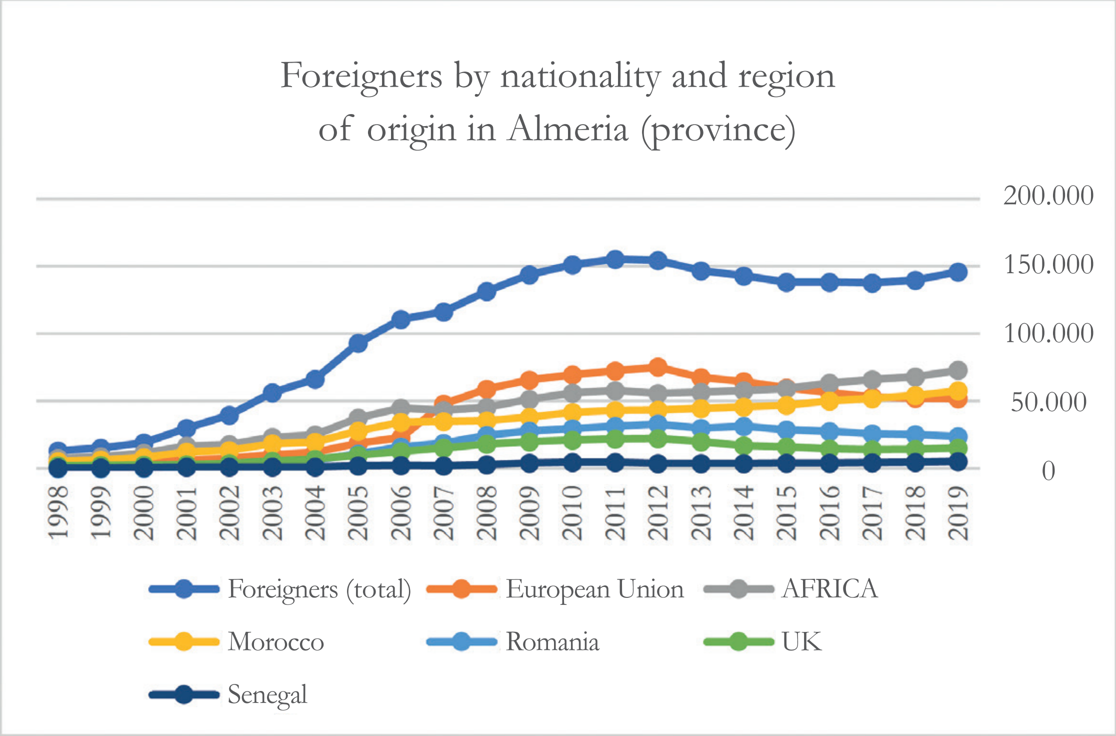

Figure 17. The largest foreign populations by nationality and region living in Almería (province). Own elaboration based on Padrón Continuo. www.ine.es

In the third period, greenhouse construction continued but slowed down, reaching 32,048 hectares in 2019 (Cajamar, 2019). Exports grew from less than 30% in 1990 to 50% between 1993 and 2006, before finally increasing during the economic crisis to reach 80% in 2018-2019[5] (ibid.). This expansion also facilitated a strong auxiliary industry that provides local solutions and high competitiveness (de Pablo Valenciano et al., 2019). The approximately 10,000 farms[6] are now managed by second- and third-generation migrants, who own more than 80% of the greenhouses (Cajamar, 2019). Although they still run production systems combining cooperation and competition, with strong loyalty to their auction-based and cooperative marketing strategies (Herranz de Rafael & Fernandez-Prados, 2018), the trend is currently moving towards price control by large customers and property concentration (Entrena-Durán & Jiménez-Díaz, 2014). Production per hectare has doubled since the beginning of the 1990s. However, the return per hectare is lower due to falling product prices and rising production costs (Cajamar, 2019; Valera et al., 2014), reflecting the harnessing of local production by global markets (Delgado, 2006). A fifty-year-old third-generation farmer who said, “I manufacture food” (*fabrico alimentos*), complained that all market events, from transgenics to electricity prices, have strong impacts on her three-hectare greenhouse.

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[5] The most important destinations (in Euros) are Germany (30.2%), France (15.5%), the UK (11.6%) and The Netherlands (10.5%). Only 3.1% is exported outside the EU (Cajamar, 2019).

[6] There is no agreement about the number of farmers among different authors, with estimates ranging between 9,000 and 14,000. According to the surveys of the Junta de Andalucía (2015a, 2015b) most farmers are men (85% in Campo de Dalías, and 71% in Níjar and Bajo Andarax) with an average age of 44, who own around 80% of the exploitations. 74% of the exploitations in Campo de Dalías and 45% in Níjar and Bajo Andarax are between one and four hectares.

Following this development, we can distinguish two types of entrepreneur who have globalized this industrial district from below. On the one hand, there are the small producers who have creatively developed intensive agriculture in family farms since the 1950s. They first relied upon family labour and later on migrant labour, and were decisive in the success in developing this district, along with the entrepreneurs of auxiliary companies, in a “glocalization” process that connects the local district with global markets (Jimenez, 2008). The prevalence of these petty capitalist actors (Smart & Smart, 2005) is the main characteristic differenting this agro-industrial district from others that are also based on migrant labour, like the huge ones in California run by large owners and corporations (Du Bry, 2015; Martinez Veiga, 2001). In Almería, the heirs of these agricultural entrepreneurs now operate globally and retain some of the original features, such as the loyalty to auction centres and cooperatives, but global markets have had profound impacts on their practices and revenues.

The second type of entrepreneur is the migrant entrepreneur. These locally embedded entrepreneurs rely on transnational social networks to recruit labour, providing hard but well-paid jobs to their compatriots in the demographic enclave. Here we focus on these migrant entrepreneurs.

6.4.2. Romanian immigration: the TSF between Roquetas de Mar and Bistrița-Năsăud

The foreign population in Almería province grew sharply from 13,260 in 1998 to nearly 150,000 in 2019 (approximately 20% of the total population; see Figure 19), responding to the increasing demand for labour in the local agroindustry. Between 2003 and 2013, the number of contracts for agricultural labourers almost doubled to 55,000, six out of ten of them being foreigners (SEPE, 2014). During the 2018-2019 season, the province of Almería registered a monthly average of 75,825 workers in the agriculture sector, of whom 19,285 were *autónomo* or self-employed (Cajamar, 2019).

In the southwest production area of Campo de Dalías, the main cities are El Ejido and Roquetas de Mar, from which any place in the district is reachable by car in less than an hour, thus facilitating face-to-face contact among the sector actors. The economic expansion of agriculture sharply increased the area's GDP. However, data from 2014 show that Roquetas de Mar is the ninth municipality[7] with the highest income inequality in Spain, El Ejido the second municipality with the lowest average income (Hortas-Rico & Onrubia, 2020). Our fieldwork was conducted in Roquetas de Mar, which had 93,363 inhabitants in 2017, of whom 24,948 (27.3%) had foreign nationality, including 8,939 of Romanian nationality (INE, 2020). In fact, Romanians are by far the largest foreign population in the city (35.8% of all foreigners) and make up 9.6% of the total population (ibid.). Most of them arrived by following migration chains rooted in their social networks (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964), and some were originally hired by agricultural organizations, although this practice was rare and was abandoned in the mid-2000s[8] (Reigada et al., 2017).

According to our data, almost two-thirds of the Romanian migrants in Roquetas de Mar come from Bistrița-Năsăud, a county in the northern Romanian region of Transylvania. The county has a population of 327,708, of whom 60% live in rural areas (INS, 2019). Its capital city, Bistrița, is an industrial town of 94,303 inhabitants, and the county also has three smaller cities, Beclean, Năsăud, and Sângeorz-Băiof (INS, 2019). However, most inhabitants reside in small rural towns of 1,000 to 5,000 inhabitants located in the valleys in the mountain areas in the north of the county. In this county, the main employment sectors are agriculture (34%) and industry (22%). Unemployment is less than 4%, but the average gross monthly salary was only €420 in 2018 (INS, 2019). According to our research participants, low wages and rising living costs are the main reasons for migration. Participants stated that their rural backgrounds were advantageous for their quick and successful adaptation to agricultural labour in Roquetas de Mar.

Summing up, according to our research migrants from Romania have contributed to the development of the agro-industrial district in Almería since the end of the 1990s, providing not only labour but also the entrepreneurial investment required to renovate greenhouses at a critical moment of professionalization, technological improvement and internationalization, due to the district's decreasing competitiveness. The next sections describe this process and develop the argument further.

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[7] The analysis is limited to localities with more than 50,000 inhabitants.

[8] This practice has continued in other agricultural areas, such as strawberry picking in Huelva and Lleida (Molinero-Gerbeau, López-Sala, & Șerban, 2021).

6.5. Greenhouse renewal: Romanian entrepreneurs and labourers

The greenhouse infrastructure sector "is made up of all those companies that provide plans, designs, and construction of metal and plastic structures for the construction of greenhouses and industrial buildings" (de Pablo Valenciano et al. 2019: 6). This sector provides a high level of productivity, high-quality products, and direct communication that quickly solves problems in this agro-industrial district. In 2004 thirty greenhouse companies were registered in Almería, employing 377 people and earning a turnover of €118 million, four times more than in 1998. Their moving into the national (11.2% of sales) and international markets (7.5%) in Mexico and Morocco had begun (Ferraro & Aznar-Sánchez, 2008).

It is not easy to determine how many companies are active and operating in this sector, nor to what extent they are owned or managed by Romanians. In Spain, business owners' censuses do not collect national origins, and the number of companies operating is uncertain because many types of company could legally perform activities related to greenhouse construction or maintenance.[9] In 2020, a business directory listed 250 "greenhouse" companies in Almería[10] and 81 in Roquetas de Mar. The city's Chamber of Commerce census of companies listed eighteen companies registered as supplying "greenhouses". However, an overview of the companies in these directories shows that many Romanian names and surnames, and their origin towns in Romania, have been used to give the companies a name. Moreover, ethnographic fieldwork revealed other companies without ethnic identifications in their company names, but which are also led by Romanians. Suggesting a percentage would be risky, but we have confirmed the operations of 21 Romanian registered companies.

Our ethnographic and survey data on migrant daily life also back this finding: Romanians work as labourers, brokers, and/or entrepreneurs in replacing the plastic used in greenhouses and constructing new ones. The 150 interviewees in Roquetas de Mar reported approximately 3,000 contacts (alters), half of them in Romania and other countries, the other half in Roquetas de Mar, of whom 150 work directly in this sector. Moreover, sixteen of the 150 interviewees work in this specific sector: two are company owners, five are foremen, and nine are workers – one office clerk and eight labourers. Thus, it can be suggested that around 10% of Romanians in Roquetas de Mar work in greenhouse construction and maintenance.[11]

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[9] In the SEBI database (Sistema de Análisis de Balances Ibéricos) 400 active companies are registered in Almería with the following CNAEs (National Classification of Economic Activities): 2511- Manufacture of metal structures and their components; 4121- Construction of residential buildings; 4299- Construction of other civil engineering projects n.c.o.p.; 4329- Other facilities in construction works; 4339- Other finishing of buildings; 4391- Roof construction; 4399- Other specialized construction activities n.c.o.p. CNAE "4122- Construction of non-residential buildings" was not included because it raises to 1,000 the number of potential companies.

[10] https://empresite.eleconomista.es/Actividad/INVERNADEROS/provincia/ALMERIA/

The arrival of Romanians at the end of the 1990s coincided with a moment of expanding production, which increased the cultivated area, and renovating of old greenhouse structures by adding climatization and other technological benefits, all of which require significant investment (Valera et al., 2014). A practical example is a six-hectare greenhouse constructed in 2019 at €7 per square meter,[12] which means the construction costs half a million euros. Adding the costs of six hectares of land costing 1.2 million euros, i.e. €20 per square meter, and other technologies, the greenhouse's total cost would be around 2.5 million euros. In 2004, nearly 40% of greenhouses in Almería were *planos* – the simplest and least stable greenhouse structure – that had exceeded the average lifespan of fourteen years, after which obsolescence increases and productivity falls (Fernandez & Pérez, 2004). The trend was now to construct larger, taller, and technologically better equipped greenhouses (Fernandez and Pérez 2004), substituting the *plano* for the *raspa y amagado*,[13] which increases the height of the structure, thus enhancing production (Körner, 2000), or for *multi-tunnel* greenhouses, which are higher and more expensive but with a higher profit margin for constructors and producers.

These structural opportunities in the market (Kloosterman, 2010) were seized on by Romanian migrant entrepreneurs, who informally started to provide various services: whitewashing greenhouse plastic to control light penetration in the summer months; replacing greenhouses every two to five years, depending on their quality; and constructing the metal structures and greenhouses from scratch. Romanians started to organize their work crews by replicating Spanish crews of five to fifteen people called *cuadrillas* or *collas*. They were led by those who had arrived before, now had more experience and better language skills, and also became labour intermediaries or *brokers*, as has happened in other agricultural enclaves (Sánchez Saldaña, 2012). Some of them started to pull the prices and increased the working hours from eight to more than ten hours per day at the beginning of the 2000s, with weekend working if needed, and doing the work faster than other companies. When the Romanians arrived, installing a square meter of plastic earned the worker 25 pesetas (€0.15, i.e., €1.500

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[11] Although some labour remains informal, 45% of 533 contracts signed in 2013 as 'Assemblers/carpenters of metal structures' in Almería province were with foreigners (SEPE, 2014).

[12] Materials are the main costs. The labour per square meter of greenhouse construction costs around €0.85 to €0.90, or €1.80 with social security costs. Some entrepreneurs might offer €1.50.

[13] These are different evolutions of the initial Parral or plano type, now defined as the 'Almería model', that have been exported to other warm climates because of their good quality-price balance, light structure and versatility.

per hectare). The migrants offered to work at 21 pesetas (€0.12) and later at 19 (€0.11). They controlled this niche, although the economic crisis of 2008-14 forced these entrepreneurs and workers to move beyond the local level and operate nationally and internationally. Those are nowadays small and medium-size professionalized companies of around forty specialized employees, although one Romanian company has a few hundred workers who can construct approximately a hectare a day.

These crew leaders and entrepreneurs have played a significant role in developing this food production district. As the Food and Agricultural Organization stated, "[a]s in other parts of the Mediterranean, the cost of materials obtained locally and the availability of installation expertise have been fundamental for greenhouse expansion" (FAO 2013: 36). One entrepreneur and *cuadrilla* leader defined their importance as follows:

> "If we do not maintain the greenhouses, the transport companies do not move, and tomatoes and cucumbers cannot be grown – we must maintain it. But we know everything. It's like a wheel: we make one part, the farmers grow vegetables, then the trucks, the products go up, and the money goes down, so they pay us, and we start again." (interview date 23.10.2020, Mihai).

The wheel metaphor describes the essential production cycle better than any other image (see Figure 18).

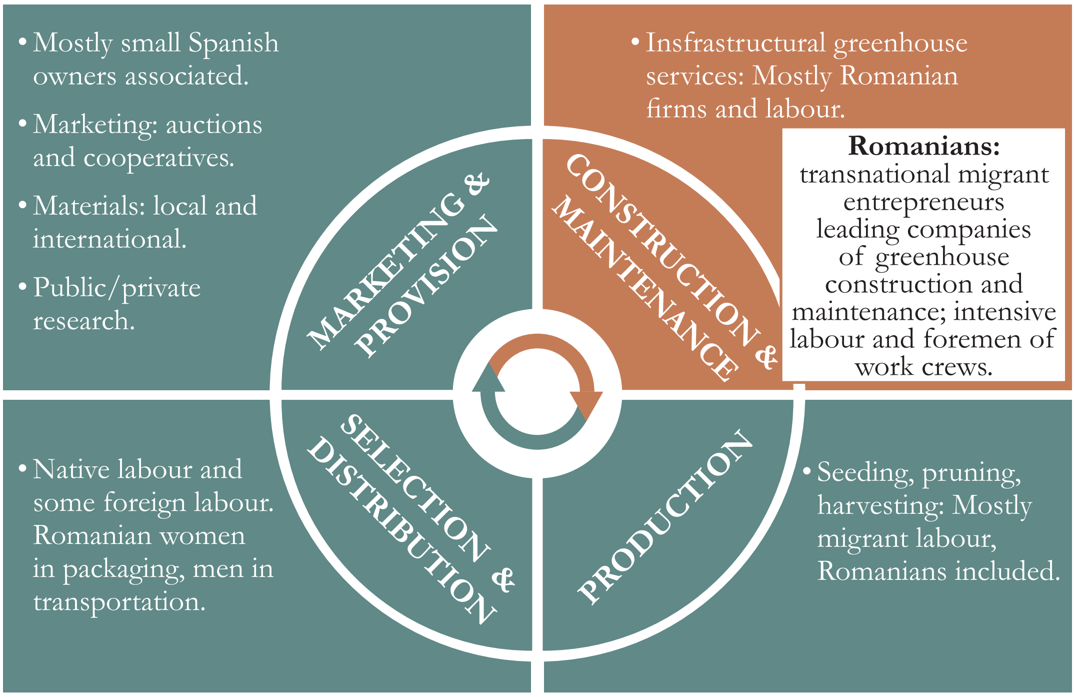
• Mostly small Spanish owners associated.
• Marketing: auctions and cooperatives.
• Materials: local and international.
• Public/private research.
• Insfrastructural greenhouse services: Mostly Romanian firms and labour.
Romanians: transnational migrant entrepreneurs leading companies of greenhouse construction and maintenance; intensive labour and foremen of work crews.
MARKETING & PROVISION
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE
SELECTION & DISTRIBUTION
PRODUCTION
• Native labour and some foreign labour. Romanian women in packaging, men in transportation.
• Seeding, pruning, harvesting: Mostly migrant labour, Romanians included.

Figure 18. Role of Romanian migrants in the greenhouse production 'wheel'. Own elaboration based on ethnographic fieldwork.

Finally, the cycle is fed by the continuous demand for fresh food, an essential activity not even interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, this industrial district has long been threatened by water scarcities locally and competitiveness globally. Nonetheless, greenhouse production revenues have increased continuously, reaching €2,228 billion in 2019 (Cajamar, 2019). In the long run, the farmers and other agroindustry actors are aware of the need for indoor food production due to climate change, growing populations, and the need to govern global food security. As one financial investor clearly expressed it, "there is money to be made in indoor agriculture".[14] The next section describes the different types of entrepreneur, their practices, and how they take advantage of transnational social structures to compensate for the lack of investment capital.

6.6. Migrant transnational entrepreneurs: informal labour and networks in the greenhouse construction business

It was a hot Saturday in July 2003 when Ovidiu, a carpenter in his mid-twenties, arrived in Roquetas de Mar, having been invited by a neighbour and friend from Bistrița, who paid for his bus ticket and promised him work and a good income. His friend picked him up after three long days traveling on a bus from Romania, and they immediately went to work replacing the plastic in a greenhouse. Ovidiu remembers the conversation with his friend:

> "Get on top", "Where?", "There [the roof of the greenhouse]", "I don't get up there, eh?", "Where do you think you're going to work? Up there", "I don't ... the bus is going back tomorrow to Romania, I'm going to Romania", "Yes, yes, we'll talk later ... ", and I started to get up…bam bam, with flip-flops as I came from a three-day trip, I went to the top, and he said, "Step on the crosses", I took four or five steps, and he said, "Come on, turn around, you're going to learn fast." On the second day, Sunday, we went to work. They have a plastic roll that measured 12 meters and weighed 200 kilograms. They had lifted it with the rope and, when trying to insert the roll in the metal roof structure, three workers fell down with the roll. Oof, I was horrified ... I said to my friend, "When you get off, you will talk to me, I'm going home ...". "Don't be scared, that happens…" [replied his friend].

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[14] Christopher Flavelle (2018) Bloomberg Businessweek: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-08/climate-change-will-get-worse-these-investors-are-betting-on-it

Luckily, the workers were not injured, but Ovidiu was expecting "another kind of work, not walking over the wires like monkeys." However, seventeen years later, he has settled in Spain with his wife and two daughters and leads a *cuadrilla* of plastic replacement greenhouse construction. Ovidiu's case is typical of Roquetas de Mar: numerous men arrived in Spain through family, friends, and acquaintances to work seasonally *en el plástico* or "on the plastic," which means replacing the plastic covers of greenhouses, among other related activities of greenhouse construction and repair. Some migrants just worked seasonally or until they had saved money to return to Romania, but others settled in Roquetas de Mar, either having families there or bringing their relatives from Romania through family reunification. After settlement, *cuadrilla* leaders emerged among those who had acquired experience in the sector, made contacts within local agriculture, and were willing to mobilize transnational ties to bring in more labourers. Relatively low amounts of capital are required to start the enterprise, and the entrepreneur can quickly compete with or replace those who had left the business because, as everyone insists, this is a hard job.

Every day before sunrise, dozens of workers pass by one of the many cafes owned by Romanians in Roquetas de Mar to drink coffee and prepare themselves for the sector's long journeys. Among them, those who work in plastic and greenhouse construction are legion. They work *de sol a sol* – from dawn to dusk – on greenhouse roofs, in high levels of heat and stress (Pérez-Alonso, Callejón-Ferre, et al. 2011: 1733). The sector is as hazardous as Spain's construction sector, having the highest incidence of accidents at work in EU-15 during 1999-2007 (Pérez-Alonso et al. 2012). The main risks are "overexertion, falls from height, lacerating blows, and punctures from wire, tools, and other objects. The falls from height caused the most serious accidents" (Pérez-Alonso et al. 2011: 356).

The lack of adequate security is due to the tight budgets, tight deadlines, and the high labour turnover in small *cuadrillas* (Carreño-Ortega 2005). Indeed, the work's difficulties can be linked to rapid generational change and turnover; men over fifty do not want such work or cannot do it. Thus, new cohorts of workers from Bistrița-Năsăud arrive to fill the empty spaces of those who have lost their working strengths due to accidents or old age or who have moved to better, less physically demanding jobs. Our data confirm that most workers in this sector are young men between eighteen and forty from the rural areas of Bistrița-Năsăud who come in seasonal flows, attracted by the €80 to €100 daily wage, and work around nine hours a day on weekdays and half that on Saturdays, although the weekend also used to be working days. Some companies and workers may work at the weekends if the rain or the wind have spoilt the greenhouse, something precious to local farmers. Local Romanians are preferred to Spaniards or workers from other nationalities because they are harder (*duros*), faster, and work for lower wages.

Furthermore, some of these young men are their family's only providers. Typically, women and children came to Roquetas after the men had acquired some stability. For women, jobs in greenhouses, packaging and warehouse centers, or even in the tourism or service sectors, are also challenging but less well paid. The daily salary for harvesting in the greenhouses is between €35 and €40, much lower than in plastic replacement and greenhouse construction. Consequently, many women work seasonally, temporarily, or they care for the home and children.

Channels of recruitment are informal and based on social networks. In the beginning it was necessary to know someone directly, and entrepreneurs actively sought out workers to bring in. Now is easier because Romanians have the right to work, and they can do all the paperwork and be legally contracted in a few hours. Thus, although knowing someone is not a prerequisite, networks smooth the path to the migrant rapidly joining a *cuadrilla* without needing experience or speaking Spanish, as he will be living and working in a mainly Romanian context. Also, Romanian churches play an essential role in connecting employers and potential labourers. And the numerous Romanian enterprises – cafes, restaurants, shops, etc. – that have emerged in the enclave have an active role in transnationalism and community building, financing churches and association activities while providing jobs and information about work opportunities. Somehow these Romanian hubs play the old role of the *plaza* (square), in which migrants waited for an employer to offer them work (Hartman, 2008), while making it more attractive for others to come and facilitate one's arrival and the ability to live a Romanian way of life.

Moreover, informality seems prevalent in the sector. The first Romanian entrepreneurs who started to replace plastic greenhouses around the turn of the century quickly became the market leaders. At this time, most businesses were run informally, and many workers and activities were not declared. Government control was loose, and no inspection protocols existed for many years. Both farmers and greenhouse entrepreneurs benefitted from the situation. Estimates of the size of the shadow economy in Andalucía, the autonomous community in which Almería is located, between 1987 and 2010 indicate it reached 30% of regional GDP, one of the highest levels in Spain, where the average is 21% (González-Fernández & González-Velasco, 2015). A Spanish civil servant in Roquetas de Mar defended this informal situation during an interview in 2018. He argued that workers will end up spending the money they earn purchasing products and services that will be returned to the state as VAT, that in case of an accident workers will always be treated in hospital,[15] that the employer will be able to invest the surplus, and that the migrants will therefore end up paying taxes, even if the work is not legalized. However, as some Romanians stated, workers do not contribute to the social security and pension scheme, and in case of accidents, they are not entitled to take medical leave or receive unemployment benefit.

An officer from the Guardia Civil – the Spanish gendarmerie – told the first author informally that the underground economy is vast because everyone has an interest in it. They were investigating companies that receive public aid to hire workers if they do not exceed a certain quantity of vegetables produced. However, it is alleged that some farmers declare up to the production limit and sell the rest undeclared. He indicated the thousands of greenhouses and asked me, "How are we going to control this?". From above, the plastic sheeting covers the land, concealing the activities inside it.

According to our research participants, the district's laissez-faire attitude started to change in the mid-2010s, when the bureaucracy increased, and using informal labor started to be prosecuted. Some companies were fined €6,000 per worker lacking a formal contract. As one entrepreneur and *cuadrill*a leader expressed it:

> "[Now] there are many controls, but all our workers are registered, we have no problems. (…) I have friends who, oof, have been fined 30, 40, 20 thousand euros. Sometimes I had one or two people without a contract, but we take it out if the issue of papers is not resolved" (23.10.2020, Mihai).

All actors pointed to the high social security costs, up to €600-700 per month per worker in both general and greenhouse construction, as the main problem in tackling the problem of informal labour. Informal contracts are a win-win agreement between workers and employers, and in some cases workers are forced to pay their social security contributions if they want to get a job. The worker might benefit from earning extra income compatible with other sources of income such as unemployment or social benefits. The company saves money and can compete better by offering a reduced price to the farmer. Nowadays, although there is more control, and working regularly is administratively more straightforward than before, few are willing to accept these working conditions.

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[15] Foreigners registered in Spain have the right to health services provided by the Spanish National Health System.

Following this trend towards formalisation, profit margins fell, and many initial *cuadrilla* leaders and entrepreneurs left the business. Some preferred to take one step back and work in other sectors or as waged employees. Others started their self-employed entrepreneurship working on their own or for a big company as outsourced labour. Here emerges the distinction between being a *cuadrilla* leader and entrepreneur: *cuadrilla* leaders working as waged employees or *cuadrilla* leaders in their own companies. For example, Mihai started his own business in 2015 with an associate who does the paperwork, while he is the *cuadrill*a leader of ten workers. He came to Spain in 2002, and most of his extended family is in Roquetas de Mar. Their initial capital consisted of personal contacts after eighteen years' experience working as waged employees and a few thousand euros to buy a small second-hand van and tools. In other cases, entrepreneurs reduced their operations, like Constantin, a 52-year-old businessman in greenhouse construction who arrived in 1998 with his wife seeking a better life. In 2005 he had nearly 200 workers. This rapid process is due to there being no significant investments in equipment, and the labour-intensive work is performed by flexible aggregations of Romanian labourers through personal networks. The economic crisis and stress-related health problems at work forced him to reduce the number of his employees drastically to one *cuadrilla* of twelve.

Some other entrepreneurs took a step forward and regularized their companies by diversifying their activities. For instance, Razvan started replacing plastic and then led a *cuadrilla* before creating his own company. He is approximately forty years old and arrived in Roquetas de Mar in 2002. He now has a company of around 65 employees, mostly Romanians. He has an agreement with a cooperative to construct and repair its members' greenhouses, and the deal specifies that all workers must be formally contracted. He only operates in Almería because he can come home every day to have lunch with his wife and young child. The great importance of family support for married male entrepreneurs is similar to previous research (Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002). At the time of the interview, forty of his workers were harvesting watermelons, one cuadrilla of eight was making a greenhouse from scratch, and seventeen were replacing plastic, with just two workers without a contract. He pays €100 a day, plus coffee, beer, and transportation, yet he struggles to find labourers. The lack of workers is a constant complaint by everyone during the summer.

The example of Razvan is also relevant because he works hard and is earning extra money – for example, €100,000 during the summer of 2019 – to return to Romania. That is nothing new. He has already made investments there, owning a house and two flats that he rents out, and for a long time, he has had the ambition to go back to enjoying a simple, stress-free life working as a truck driver. Asked about the greenhouse company, he said he could transfer the business, essentially consisting of the client portfolio, to one of his employees, a usual practice. But he thinks that no one is *good* enough to run it; they lack reliability (*seriedad*). This was a widespread comment based on the crucial role of keeping your word in order to create relations of trust with farmers and recruiting and managing the work crews responsibly. As with Razvan, trying to make money fast to be able to leave the business with some investments in housing or savings to start a less intensive venture in Romania or some other place is practically universal. This predicament shows the fierce competition in this market, mostly between Romanians themselves. However, there is also solidarity: when a job requires forces to be joined, firms call on other *cuadrillas* to lend a hand. Indeed, some *cuadrillas* specialize in different tasks, such as welding, assembling, or plastic installation.

The internationalization of these companies started by exporting the Almería type of greenhouse, first to other provinces of Spain, and then abroad in the mid- 2000s, a process that increased during the economic crisis, which slowed down the construction sector. There are few big Romanian companies, and small entrepreneurs predominate. The example of Catalin is telling. He came to Roquetas in 1999 because his older brother paid for his holidays in Spain as a gift when he finished his studies. After the vacation, he did not go back to Bistrița-Năsăud but started to work in greenhouse construction. He settled down and married a Romanian woman, with whom he had two children who are growing up in Spain. During this time, he worked as a *cuadrilla* leader, but in 2013 he created his own greenhouse construction company and moved for periods of work lasting three months to fifteen countries, such as Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Mexico, Morocco, and Chile. These countries and locations are very dependent on the specific climate – windy, semi-desert, high insolation – in which the Almería type of greenhouse works efficiently and most cheaply. Thus, internationalization is more a matter of the lack of infrastructure and knowledge in these countries than of deliberate internationalization by these companies. The procedures vary: sometimes one person teaches the workers at the destination, while others send the materials in containers, and the workers, mostly Romanians who live in Spain, go by plane to work for a period.

Finally, the example of Matei is exceptional. He is the co-founder of a major greenhouse construction company in Almería. Originally from Bistrița, he arrived at Roquetas in 1998, after living in Germany for eight years. He had lots of experience working with metal structures and decided to settle in Roquetas de Mar to run businesses. He started with little economic capital and worked with credit banks, but now has interests in seven companies that cover most of the production cycle, from sourcing raw materials to construction and vegetable production. His family and wealth are in Spain, and he sold his properties in Romania, planning to leave this business and retire comfortably in Spain, working only as a farmer.

This major company develops turnkey greenhouse projects and has expanded globally. In 2017 it had 240 hectares under construction in Almería and in countries like Morocco, Russia, Kazakhstan, Chile, Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Outside projects facilitate work when the seasonal labour in Almería disappears. Although internationalization has slowed in the last two years, there is still plenty of work in Almería and the Canary Islands, and as result, projects in other countries are rejected. Now the company has 200 stable employees, but it used to have double that amount. At the beginning of the 2010s, the company suggested that its employees create their own companies as labour-providers, *cuadrillas* doing the actual the construction, paid by the piece (*a destajo*). To get rid of labour inspections and lawsuits with injured personnel, therefore, the company outsources its labour. These *cuadrillas* do not work exclusively for the company, but they give it a priority if work for it overlaps with other contracts. They have developed relations of trust after many years of working together: "we learned from one another, from *cuadrill*a to *cuadrill*a", he says, while emphasizing that the company can provide a whole *cuadrilla* of a hundred labourers who are able to construct two hectares of greenhouses a day. However, like other entrepreneurs, he is concerned about the lack of labour. Many people leave this job after working in it for some years, and during the summer the company brings workers from Bistrița-Năsăud, but it is not enough, he says. In sum, although it is often responsible for just a small fragment of business revenues, the movement of transnational Romanian migrant entrepreneurs into global markets to construct the 'Almería model' greenhouse illustrates what is meant by globalization from below.

6.7. Conclusions

This article has described the role that transnational Romanian entrepreneurs have played in creating an agro-industrial district of intensive production under plastic in the south of Spain, often called 'Europe's farm' because of its magnitude and its capacity to provide out-of-season vegetables. These migrants started to work informally in greenhouse maintenance and construction at the end of the 1990s and soon established their entrepreneurial activities, pulling prices by providing cheap Romanian labour via their transnational networks. These activities had two effects. First, they contributed to the emergence of a large Romanian demographic enclave in Roquetas de Mar connected with their principal place of origin, Bistrița-Năsăud county in Romania, requiring hard, intensive work, but also paying very well in comparison with Romania, thus allowing savings, settlements, and investments. The second impact was the contribution of this labour migration to the agro-industrial district's expansion and competitiveness in operating both nationally and internationally.

Our findings highlight the often underestimated function that the migrant labour force has played in this agro-industrial district and the role of transnational migrant entrepreneurs who have found alternatives to operate successfully in a local context that is heavily dependent on global food production markets. Their lack of capital was compensated by a personal commitment to keep up face-to-face local ties while maintaining social relations in Romania – mixed embeddedness – able to provide a mobile workforce via the transnational networks connecting the Spanish enclave with their towns of origin.

Globalization from below not only comprises informal (mobile) traders moving products along illegal circuits beyond states and corporations, it also includes processes such as the use of social networks on a transnational scale to provide labour. From a critical perspective, this labour provision may also entail exploitation and precarity from below, sometimes backed by their auto-exploitation as self-employed, as with the family farmers who exploit migrants or the transnational entrepreneurs who exploit their compatriots. Nevertheless, the possibility of using TSFs to provide labour mobility without the intervention of states, supranational institutions or international companies opens up avenues for informal and socially embedded solutions to the task of making a living.

The future of greenhouse agriculture is not only represented by the image from above that financial investors, global food corporations, technological advancement promoters, and dystopian films show us. When we analyse these opaque and weak plastic structures from the inside and from below, we discover a vast array of formal and informal labour relationships, small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives, and bottom-up social and economic practices that operate in the agribusiness from the local to the global scales.

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Chapter 7. Conclusions

This thesis seeks to understand the relational processes and practices that lead to the bottom-up formation of transnational social fields and the related emergence of immigrant enclaves within the EU. Going beyond the understanding of migration as an aggregate of individual decisions, the main aim of this dissertation is to advance our knowledge of the livelihood strategies that low-wage EU internal migrants adopt in order to make a living in these transnational structures. More specifically, the thesis seeks to comprehend how Romanian migrants in Spain rely on mobilities and informal practices as resources to navigate the local and transnational social formations in which they live. To that end, the thesis focuses on two demographic enclaves of Romanians in Spain, Castelló de la Plana, and Roquetas de Mar, both socially connected with the main regions of the immigrants' origins in Romania, respectively Dâmboviţa and Bistriţa-Năsăud.

In the foregoing chapters, I have answered two central research questions: *How do Romanian migrants in Spain rely on informal practices and mobility to make a living, and how do these practices evolve in transnational contexts?* Chapters 3 and 4 addressed these questions. Chapter 3 identifies informal practices and outlines the context of informality in Spain and Romania. It then proposes a schema in which informal practices evolve in the course of two parallel processes that occur during migration settlement and adaptation: formalisation and informalisation. Chapter 4 focuses on informal practices related to the automobility system Romanian migrants exploit to access economic resources and status by relying upon transnational networks. The second question is: *What roles do transnational social fields play in the livelihood strategies of specific groups of Romanian migrants in Spain?* This question is addressed in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 shows how ethnographic fieldwork and social network analysis may be combined in order to understand the interdependencies of transnational migration. This methodology provides the data with which to identify specific niches of migrant labour and different types of mobility within the TSFs. Chapter 6 demonstrates how some Romanian entrepreneurs benefit from their contacts within the TSF to hire cheap Romanian labour for their greenhouse construction and renovation enterprises.

This concluding chapter is devoted to tying up loose ends and integrating the contributions, implications, limitations, and questions for further research resulting from the empirical findings of the previous chapters. In the first section, the main empirical contributions are explained chapter by chapter, and then as a whole. The second section reflects on the main theoretical premises that guided the thesis research in light of the empirical findings and sketches the theoretical contributions made by the thesis. The third section clarifies the limitations of the research, and the fourth and final section proposes some lines of inquiry for future research.

7.1. Main empirical contributions

This section first reviews the empirical contributions made by the preceding empirical chapters (3, 4, 5, and 6) and then integrates them. Chapter 3 posed the research question, *How do the informal practices of Romanians evolve in the process of their migration to Spain, whether individually or collectively?* This chapter demonstrates that informal practices evolve when Romanian migrants navigate and exploit formal rules to get things done during the process of their migration to Spain. The adaptation of informal practices to their new living situations happens through two parallel processes: informalisation and formalisation. On the one hand, the informalisation process entails learning the unwritten rules of the new country, and selecting, preserving, and adjusting known informal practices from the origin to the new context, and abandoning others – mostly harmful, illicit, or illegal practices. Adopting informality is a way of coping with formal restrictions on legal residence, employment, and housing, especially in the first phase of migration, when the instrumental use of personal networks is vital, relying on previous migrants from their same regions of origin in Romania. On the other hand, the formalisation process involves learning the formal rules and adapting practices to legal pluralism – e.g., customary laws or religious laws –, bureaucratic regularisation – e.g., residence and work permits –, and the Romanian institutions that support transnational ways of life – e.g., churches, consulates, associations, businesses, etc.. This formalisation process was eased by Romania's entry into the EU, which allowed the geographical mobility within the Schengen area.

These two entangled processes are supported by the presence of TSFs, which provide opportunities, information, and support via transnational networks of kinship, friendship, and acquaintanceship, and offer regular channels of communication through which people move and goods, services, and information are exchanged. The TSF allows mobility and informal support within specific demographic enclaves connected with the migrants' regions of origin. In this case, access by low-waged Romanian migrants to formal and informal labour markets is often associated with industrial districts. In the two robust industrial districts analysed here, the ceramic industry in Castelló de la Plana and the agribusiness in Roquetas de Mar, settlement – a form of immobility – is thus a livelihood strategy for Romanian migrants, who thereby strengthen their informal networks and learn how to master informal practices both locally and transnationally. This practical knowledge provides the resources to mitigate economic uncertainties and allow international mobilities in the TSFs. One valuable result of this chapter is a schema of the adaptation of informal practices to transnational contexts. It represents a dynamic model of informality on the move that could be further developed to analyse how other transnational practices evolve in response to unfamiliar regulatory systems.

Relying on previous findings, Chapter 4 posed the following questions: *What kinds of informal practices are connected with the automobility system? And how does the automobility system generate informality in this context of transnational mobilities?* The results of this chapter illuminate how the automobility system smooths transnational connections, allowing physical copresence, enacting the migration's motives and success, facilitating informal economies, and reinforcing informal networks at a distance. These emergent findings are based on the elusive potential of cars for moving beyond the inequalities and limitations of formal and informal mobility regimes within the EU. The empirical results are articulated around the concept of "informal automobilities", which I have defined as the practices that use, exploit, or manipulate cars to circumnavigate, confront, and reverse unequal situations. These practices are of two interconnected kinds. The first are livelihood activities that face economic constraints in producing, trading, and consuming cars through informal labour and social networks. The second are infrapolitical actions – e.g., fake driving licenses, vehicle tampering, transportation by car of illegal commodities – that indirectly challenge the mobility governance of things – cars, remittances, infrastructure, etc. –, knowledge – licenses, expertise, values, etc. –, and people –drivers, passengers or workers.

This definition allows analysis of how low-wage migrants' access to automobility provides the autonomy and flexibility that increase their agency, both individual and family, to make a living. This argument and concept might help us understand how global underclasses critically depend on specific mobility systems, such as cars, motorbikes, or public transportation, to make ends meet. I do not advocate maintaining a central role for cars in the current environmental crisis. I merely suggest that the formal and informal impacts, social and economic, that a carless or post-car world would have on large parts of the human population without other alternatives allowing them to move or survive should be analysed critically.

Chapter 5 posed the research question: *How can multi-sited ethnography and social network analysis be combined to improve the investigation of transnational social structures?* The findings of Chapter 5 are related to the methodological flaws of multi-sited research on transnationalism and how such research can be improved. Based on empirical findings made using mixed methodologies during the investigation, Chapter 5 elaborates the concept of "network-oriented ethnography" to overcome the methodological and logistical difficulties of researching geographically and culturally diverse settings in depth. This concept proposes a mixed-methods approach that combines multi-sited fieldwork with social network analysis to investigate social fields, i.e., interdependent relational structures, rather than the places in which transnational migrants live. The main finding of this chapter is that multi-sited research on transnationalism can be improved by analysing the interdependent structures and relations of multiple actors – institutions, families, businesses, etc. – in transnational networks, instead of focusing only on individuals or places.

Finally, Chapter 6 posed the research question: *What global processes from below explain the occupation of specific economic niches by Romanian transnational migrant entrepreneurs in the agro-industrial district?* The findings of Chapter 6 reveal the role that transnational entrepreneurs play in the emergence of demographic enclaves associated with industrial districts, in which they take advantage of the TSF. Transnational Romanian migrant entrepreneurs have found a niche in constructing and repairing greenhouses in the agro-industrial district of Almería. These migrants started to work informally in greenhouse maintenance and construction at the end of the 1990s and soon established their entrepreneurial activities by reducing the prices for providing cheap Romanian labour. Their lack of financial capital was compensated by mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010), that is, a personal commitment to develop networks of trust with local farmers while maintaining their social relations in Romania. This position helps these entrepreneurs to bring in a mobile workforce through transnational networks, providing work that is intensive, hard, and exploitative, but also very well paid compared to Romanian wages, thus allowing savings, settlements, and investments to be made. These entrepreneurs contributed to the emergence and maintenance of a large Romanian demographic enclave in Roquetas de Mar connected with their principal place of origin, Bistrița-Năsăud county in Romania, giving this agro-industrial district a competitive advantage in expanding internationally. This process of globalisation from below is driven by the bottom-up alternatives that transnational migrant entrepreneurs have developed to operate in a local context connected with global food markets, but it is also heavily dependent on local farmers and migrant labour.

To summarise, this dissertation has provided empirical evidence that permits the following assertions. Internal EU migration can help migrants cope with the constraints of changing mobility regimes and the struggles of day-to-day life by relying on a vast array of livelihood strategies, among which are informal practices and (im)mobilities. In this case, what started as temporary mobility by migrants simply trying their luck in Spain has become a migratory way of life for hundreds of thousands of low-wage Romanian migrants who have settled in Spain. They arrived in the country by following specific informal trails blazed by previous compatriots who had concentrated in specific geographical locations, creating demographic enclaves connected with their areas of origin through TSFs. The emergence of these networked structures and the institutions that were established in particular localities allowed ways of living that facilitated their settlement in a new cultural, legal, social, economic, and political context. This entailed two parallel and entangled processes of the informalisation and informalisation of migrant adaptation for learning the strategies, mastering the practices, and developing the relationships required to manipulate or exploit the formal rules in TSFs to make a living.

In sum, the empirical contributions of this thesis show that migration is a complex process driven not only by individual decisions, but also by intricate relations and collective and institutional responses. Although internal EU migration is facilitated by free circulation, it is constrained in practice by unequal labour markets and mobility regimes on various scales. The emergence of TSFs supports migration processes in which migrants need to rely on their networks and multiple strategies, such as informal practices and (im)mobilities, to get ahead. Understanding how informal resources are deployed by migrants simultaneously on various scales is essential to examining the social, economic, and political effects of the principles of free circulation and European integration, which are producing social changes that will last for generations to come.

7.2. Reflecting on the theoretical premises

Four overarching theoretical premises have guided the research from the beginning of the thesis. I will now reflect on these theoretical premises in light of the empirical findings to explain their significance and theoretical implications.

The first premise is that migration research must go beyond the methodological nationalism that has long dominated the social sciences, in which nation states are treated as homogeneous entities and unproblematic units of analysis. The dissertation has adopted the perspectives of the mobilities paradigm and the concept of the transnational social field (TSF). The focus on transnational processes and structures allows us to unpack the relations, inequalities, regulations, and social strategies elaborated from below in local contexts, while being imposed from above by national, supranational such as the EU, or global actors such as multinational companies.

Two concepts that draw on the horizontal differentiation "from above"/ "from below" have proved useful. On the one hand, *transnationalism from below* comprises a broad range of grassroots activities connecting migrants' places of residence with their regions of origin (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). In Chapter 4, migrants' livelihood strategies and the infrapolitical actions that indirectly defy the control over their mobility are interpreted as transnationalism from below. On the other hand, *globalization from below* includes bottom-up practices and networks that go beyond the national or transnational contexts in which they are embedded in order to exploit the benefits of globalization (Mathews, Lins Ribeiro, & Alba Vega, 2012; Portes, 1997; Tarrius, 2002). Chapter 6, for instance, shows how migrant entrepreneurs produce globalization from below when they exploit their positions in TSFs in order to provide labourers, while they internationalize their small businesses beyond transnational relations. From my point of view, transnationalism and globalization *from below* are not equivalent but compatible concepts that describe similar phenomena in ways that are useful in avoiding methodological nationalism.

Moreover, the dissertation has focused on transnational mobility systems, including migration mobilities and transportation, or automobility across borders. It shifts the perspective to discover new phenomena that are vital to these transnational migrants, such as their visits to Romania by car or the social remittances they exchange continuously with their contacts in Romania through bus drivers who also operate as brokers across various social fields. Thus, the informal practices embedded in public and private transportation expand our understanding of the interdependent relationship between mobility and informality, while allowing the inclusion of multiple mobilities. This theme is developed in the next premise.

The dissertation's second insight is to consider migration as only one form of international mobility. Researchers have stressed that transnational social relationships are maintained at a distance after migration, thus creating transnational networks (Lubbers, Verdery, & Molina, 2018). These cross-border networks of relations are sustained through face-to-face meetings and mediated communication, and they provide the infrastructure for exchanging social and economic remittances and social support, among other things (Bilecen & Sienkiewicz, 2015). However, during this research, I found that less is known about how these dimensions of transnationality are developed in practice. Most of them require particular systems and infrastructures of mobilities between the corresponding social fields across borders, similar to what Tarrius (Tarrius, 2000) called *circulatory territories*. Transnationality is sustained by specific people, companies, and institutions that facilitate distinctive mobilities between specific regions. Thus, I argue that what sustains a TSF after its initial emergence based on migration and settlement is the set of (im)mobilities that occur in these circulatory territories. This argument is twofold.

On the one hand, the immobility of some people, companies, and institutions that is anchored in specific places in the countries of both origin and destination allows others to move (Bashi, 2007; Dahinden, 2010). People who migrate need others to stay where they are, for example, to care for younger or older family members or for properties, while for some immobile people in origin, remittances and punctual support might be decisive in allowing them to cope with incertitude, especially in a context of economic hardship. On the other hand, as well as return and circular migration, there is a constant flow of people connected to the TSF who move for various reasons: punctual working, taking care of a family member, study, tourism, holidays, or paperwork. These multiple mobilities strengthen demographic enclaves and reproduce the relationships that form the basis of the TSFs. Moreover, I found that staying connected or embedded in a TSF reinforces people's agency to move or stay, which can be considered a social and economic privilege (Ohnmacht, Maksim, & Bergman, 2009).

The third and fourth premises - *formality and informality are dialectically related and need to be studied jointly, and both informality and mobilities are inherent to any formal system* - will be discussed together. This dissertation shows that informal practices are prevalent in any formal system. Drawing on a livelihood perspective allowed me to analyse informality and (im)mobility as strategies that individuals and households pursue to make a living, including their use of institutions in both places. Using this perspective, this research confirms the hypothesis that informality is adopted to circumvent the restrictions imposed by local (municipality), regional (county, province), national (state), and supranational (EU) regulatory frameworks. Besides, my research suggests that informality is not harmful per se, and that low-income migrants use it widely to make a living, taking advantage of the interstices between EU and national regulatory frameworks, and benefiting from their interstitial position in transnational social fields to move and obtain access to social support and economic resources. Concerning the multiple mobilities described earlier, I found that informal practices are social tools that facilitate the navigation and enable mobility paths that are affected by mobility regimes (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

Finally, I set out some of the theoretical contributions of this thesis in developing conceptual linkages that facilitate research on informality in the Global North and on the interplay between mobility and informality. First, this dissertation focuses on informality in Western Europe, which entails analysing practices considered exceptions that are nonetheless part of the system's functioning, whereas similar practices in other regions are seen as dysfunctional (Polese, 2015). For instance, recent empirical research reveals how the 'formality myth' – the belief that informality only happens in corrupt and clientelist countries – allows activities branded as clientelism or corruption in the Global South to be treated as indicators of the need for policy 'innovation' in Western Europe and North America (Jaffe & Koster, 2019).

Following this line of inquiry, this dissertation goes beyond the analysis of informality in the West to bring together the practices performed by migrants who simultaneously connect Eastern and Western Europe. The concept of *transnational informality*, previously developed in post-socialist transnational spaces (Cieslewska, 2014; Urinboyev, 2016), has been adopted here to study the change and evolution of informal practices in transnational spaces that connect post-socialist and western countries through east-west migrant mobilities and structures. In my analysis, the contrast created when informal practices are studied in both places at the same time has revealed how informality changes. It improves our understanding of how informality is adapted to the local and transnational formal contexts in which it operates, overcoming the methodological nationalism of informality research and the myth of informality in the Global North.

Second, I have developed the concept of *informal automobilities* to examine informal strategies and resistances related to the car. As shown in Chapter 4, the automobility system smooths transnational connections, allows physical presence, enacts migration success, facilitates informal economies, and reinforces informal networks at a distance. This concept goes beyond previous analyses of informal transportation embedded in local scales (e.g., informal buses) and operates as a bridging concept that: (1) elaborates the co-existence of public and private automobilities that are socially embedded; and (2) facilitates research on informal practices that respond to various regimes governing intra-EU mobilities and connect the two ends of the TSFs socially. Moreover, this concept could be theoretically useful for analysing how racialized populations (Clarsen, 2017), women, or global underclasses access or use the car system to survive or to give them autonomy of mobility beyond the formal structures and policies that limit driving or moving.

7.3. Limitations

This thesis has various limitations. The first set of constraints concerns the methodological limitations of investigating the boundaries of transnational social fields. My research has focused on bifocal corridors between Spain and Romania, but the local consequences of TSFs go beyond their own members and central locations. Observing or interviewing people living in other localities or third countries, that is, in the diffuse borders of the TSFs, would provide more insights and de-centre the dichotomy between Romania and Spain in analysis. This concern is to some extent covered by the ORBITS project's data, in which we have collected information about interviewees' networks in other places, which showed that migrants and non-migrants frequently had social relationships in other places than the sending and receiving community.

Similarly, although a strength of this research is its analysis of simultaneous phenomena in distant locations, it only provides a snapshot of these networks and realities, thereby lacking a longitudinal approach. Longitudinal research would be valuable for understanding how livelihood strategies change when formal systems do. Also, analysing the networks of relationships on multiple occasions would reveal how TSFs expand or concentrate, becoming denser or more modular over time. Overcoming these general limitations might open up new routes of inquiry for the future.

The second set of difficulties relates to studying sensitive topics such as informality and informal practices. On the one hand, people are sometimes reluctant to talk or share reliable information about practices that could be considered unethical, immoral, or even illicit. Also, observing informal practices is difficult, and there is always the possibility that the researcher encounters or discovers people and networks performing illegal activities, which would jeopardize the research and/or raise ethical issues. On the other hand, informal practices are culture-specific (Ledeneva, 2018; Lomnitz, 1988), and local variations and specificities are immeasurable. Each local informal practice ideally requires detailed research, as the *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality* (Ledeneva, 2018) is doing both nationally and regionally. In this research, I performed a systematic approach to map out the most common informal practices in Romania and Spain to improve the definition of the domain and compare it with others.

Thus, my thesis represents just a starting point in the task of developing a dynamic model in which these practices change, hybridize, and emerge. The specific patterns and differences between them need more empirical research.

The third set of limitations relates to the lack of statistical information on essential aspects of economic participation and the labour involvement of migrants. Censuses and databases in Spain lack information regarding ethnic enterprises in Spain, and employee data is not desegregated by nationality. Similarly, detailed data on migration is scarce both regionally and locally in Romania.

Moreover, research is necessarily selective in its focus, thus missing other aspects that may require further investigation. Among other topics, more attention needs to be paid to gender dynamics in respect of informality and mobility in TSFs. This research, conversely, is gender-sensitive[1] and includes the specific problematics of women and men in accessing various forms of work, including domestic work, as a unit of analysis, thereby revealing a gender division of labour and differential access to economic resources by each gender. However, the focuses on the car system (Chapter 4) and on labour and entrepreneurship in relation to greenhouse construction (Chapter 6), both activities carried out and controlled by men, limit this research somewhat in analysing specific cases concerned with women. In the context of the study, I consider that more work can be done to focus on work activities in which women are the majority in this case, such as transnational and family care, or employment activities, such as cleaning services or packing vegetables as a job in Almería.

Fourth and last, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the last phase of the project and limited its results. Specifically, the fieldwork was interrupted at the beginning of March 2020, when I fell sick, presumably from COVID-19. As a consequence, some of the semi-structured interviews were conducted at a distance, and short trips planned to gather extra information were cancelled. However, most of the fieldwork was done at this time, with just minor consequences for the thesis results. Of course, the pandemic may offer new opportunities to study the role of (im)mobility for intra-EU migrants.

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[1] This research has been guided from the start by the 'Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research' (European Commission, 2011), which aids the researcher in including the gender dimension in the research process.

7.4. Future research

This last section proposes avenues for further research. In transnational studies, further empirical research is needed on the boundaries of TSFs so as to analyse the interconnected realities of those living at the edges of these structures, or even in various overlapping TSFs. The effects of TSFs on the local population in the destination countries also remain under-investigated. One question might guide this research: how does the impact of these transnational structures on individuals vary according to the position these individuals occupy in the TSF? And do they also influence people who are not directly related to migrants?

This thesis has pointed out a number of ways in which future research on TSFs might be improved: teamwork, ethnographic fieldwork, social network analysis, and the inclusion of institutional actors. This area of research also creates a need to explore other innovative ways of studying transnationalism. This can be done by using new mobile methods to follow the people or investigate mobilities, including new technologies to map out transnational connections, or having a research presence in the virtual worlds we all inhabit, for example, through digital ethnographies, especially in the current situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interplay between informality and mobility in respect of the entangled realities of migrants and other people on the move is a fertile ground for further research. Among the key questions are: How do people informally navigate mobility rules in practice, and how rules change in consequence? Also, while the perspective on changes to informal practices has been fruitful in this research, another interesting point of departure is to explore how much the second and following generations use informal strategies imported from their ancestors' places of origin. Chapter 3 suggested that second generations tend to abandon the practices of their parents, but further investigation into how these processes unfold would be of value. Interestingly, too, I uncovered informal practices of migrants that exploit the bureaucratic advantages of being registered being registered in municipalities in different countries – e.g., being registered in the local census to have access to a residence permit while not actually living there –. More research is needed into these practices, the social and bureaucratic problems they reveal, and how they affect the reliability of municipal registration data.

The thesis has also raised interesting questions about how informal practices concerning the country of origin hybridise with local practices: do these practices disappear among migrants, do they change, or do they hybridise with local practices? Do return migrants or people on the move import or export foreign practices? Are these practices then adopted by the local population? Migration may also contribute to developing new informal practices, especially those that take advantage of the interstices that emerge between different formal systems and that allow these migrants to get ahead: Are new informal practices being created by migrants or other people on the move? What kinds of informal practices have emerged? These questions assume humans' capacity to develop innovative ways of creating coping strategies when they encounter new constraints within formal systems.

The policy implications of this research are relevant from a theoretical perspective. Informality has long been considered a harmful activity when it comes to improving economic growth, good governance, and development. Policies, governments, and international institutions have tried to eradicate informality unsuccessfully, and more regulation has not led to less informality, but the opposite, especially when there is no trust in institutions or their enforcement capacity is lacking (Polese, 2015, 2021). Thus, instead of battling to formalise these activities, I argue that it is better to understand these practices properly in their social context and analyse how this can orient social change (ibid.).

Considering informality as a reality in which any person might be involved decentres the focus from eradicating it to understanding its implications. Moreover, distinguishing the activities that low-wage migrants – and global underclasses, or specific groups – perform to make ends meet or get things done is critical to developing frames of action in which policies strengthen the lives of those who are formally excluded from or constrained in obtaining the benefits of the current mobility regimes. Thus, which informal practices propose better solutions than the policies or regulations that these practices bypass or exploit? An example from this study might be useful in furthering research: what are the differences between labour mobility programs organized by states (Marques, Veloso, & Oliveira, 2021; Molinero-Gerbeau, López-Sala, & Șerban, 2021) and the labour mobility provided from below via TSFs, as in the case analysed in Chapter 6? The contrast between them might reveal which practices that are categorized as informal would be most likely to resolve social issues that are now primarily controlled by states and supranational institutions. In sum, more research is needed to compare formal and informal practices that tackle similar social problems, such as the provision of labour in a world of precarity and unequal mobilities at work.

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Annexes

Annex 1

This section includes six references to other publications related with this research dissertation: one encyclopaedia entry; one book review; two co-authored articles (one submitted to peer-review journal, and other in preparation); one introduction to an special issue (accepted and forthcoming); and one special issue introduction already published.

Fradejas-García, I. (2021). "Gorroneo." In *The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality. Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity*. Volume III, edited by Alena Ledeneva. UCL Press. Already published online: https://www.in-formality.com/wiki/index.php?title=Gorroneo_(Spain_and_Hispanic_America)

Abstract

In Spanish, *gorroneo* refers to the informal practice of eating, drinking and living at the expenses of others. The noun *gorrón* describes a person who 'has the habit of eating, living, giving oneself treats or having fun at someone else's cost,' and the related verb gorronear refers to eating or living that way (Real Academia Española 2019). While it might be possible to translate *gorronear* as to scrounge, mooch or sponge, this practice of free riding has its specific Spanish cultural connotations and roots. Asking for a cigarette and never buying any is one of the most common examples of gorroneo in Spain, but similar practices are observable in every culture. Other examples include consuming food and drink that others bring to office or school; eating and drinking without invitation at a party or celebration ceremony; or at a bar, where a friend works a shift without control by the bar owner, taking for granted to be invited and helping oneself. Gorroneo can equally apply to siphoning out resources, such as removing or stealing supplies, little by little, usually at work, with the authorities turning a blind eye or being complicit in it.

Fradejas-García, I. (2018). Review in Spanish: "The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality: Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity" de Alena Ledeneva (Ed.). *Perifèria, Revista de Recerca i Formació en Antropologia*, 23(2): 202-214. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/periferia.658

Abstract

Publicar una enciclopedia en los tiempos de Wikipedia es cuando menos valiente, sobre todo para tratar un tema tan impreciso y complejo como la informalidad. Sin embargo, debido a la necesidad académica de organizar las prácticas informales y poder consultarlas de forma accesible, los dos tomos de 500 páginas de Ledeneva pueden colocarse en un sitio importante de nuestras librerías, ya sea en la de casa o en la del disco duro. Más allá de la utilidad comparativa y la monumentalidad tipológica de esta enciclopedia global de la informalidad, su editora, Alena Ledeneva, publicó en 1998 una espléndida y referenciada etnografía sobre informalidad, *Russia's Economy of Flavours. Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Ledeneva, 1998). En ella analiza el *blat*, un concepto intraducible que ella misma define como una práctica de intercambio de 'favores de acceso' en situaciones de escasez y cotidianeidad que invierte los privilegios estatales utilizando redes personales informales (Ledeneva 1998, p.37). Ledeneva agradece en el libro el apoyo y los comentarios de Anthony Giddens, Zygtmun Bauman o Marylin Strathern, lo que puede ayudar a situar la importancia (y el sostén) de su propuesta. Además de esa primera etnografía sobre redes informales en Rusia, la autora ha completado una trilogía estudiando las redes profesionales que han reemplazado al blat a nivel político e institucional (Ledeneva, 2006), así como el sistema de gobernanza informal mediante redes de poder organizado por Putin (Ledeneva, 2013), explorando fenómenos informales hasta ahora inasibles en los estudios post-socialistas.

La obra reseñada aquí es de otra naturaleza pues se trata de un intento aglutinante para crear una base de datos global de prácticas informales. Los revisores de la etnografía sobre el blat ya animaban a la autora a realizar una comparación global y transcultural de prácticas informales. Esto se concretó en el proyecto *The Global Informality Project* (GIP), que organiza las prácticas por palabras clave en más de 60 países. Durante la recopilación alfabética de estas prácticas, aparecieron patrones y similitudes que favorecieron la operacionalización de una enciclopedia ordenada según cuatro modos interacción social: redistribución (ambivalencia substantiva), solidaridad (ambivalencia normativa), mercado (ambivalencia funcional) y dominación (ambivalencia motivacional). Estos modos facilitan la organización de las 200 entradas de diferentes autores en dos volúmenes, con cuatro partes y ocho capítulos, todos con textos de introducción y de conclusión.

Palabras clave: informalidad; practicas informales; Alena Ledeneva; enciclopedia; economía informal.

Fradejas-García, I., Polese, A. and Bhimji, F. (2021). (Special Issue introduction) "Transnational (Im)Mobilities and Informality in Europe." *Migration Letters*. Forthcoming.

Abstract

People around the globe rely on informal practices to resist, survive, care and relate to each other beyond the control and coercive presence of institutions and states. In the EU, regimes of mobility at multiple scales affect various people on the move who are pushed into informality in order to acquire social mobility while having to combat border regimes, racialization, inequalities, and state bureaucracies. This text explores how mobilities and informality are entangled with one another when it comes to responding to the social, political, and economic inequalities that are produced by border and mobility regimes. Within this frame, the ethnographic articles in this special issue go beyond national borders to connect the production of mobility and informality at multiple interconnected scales, from refugees adapting to settlement bureaucracies locally to transit migrants coping with the selective external borders of the EU, or from transnational entrepreneurs' ability to move between formal and informal norms to the multiple ways in which transnational mobility informally confronts economic, social and political constraints. In sum, this volume brings together articles on informality and mobility that take account of the elusive practices that deal with the inequalities of mobility and immobility.

Keywords: informality; (im)mobility; transnationalism; Europe; mobility regimes; informal practices

Hosnedlová, R.; **Fradejas-García, I.**; Lubbers, M. J., and Molina, J.L. (2021). "Social Inclusion in Transnational Social Fields: Personal Networks, International (Im) Mobilities and Migratory Capital Paradox." In preparation for *Social Inclusion*. Special Issue edited by Miranda J. Lubbers entitled "*In Good Company? Personal Relationships, Network Embeddedness and Social Inclusion*".

Abstract

This study analyses the relational dimension of social inclusion of individuals in a transnational social field (TSF) and how it relates to international mobility patterns. Taking a case of Romanians in the TSF connecting a community of origin (Dâmbovița in Romania) with a community of destination (Castelló de la Plana in Spain), we are asking in what way the amount of migratory capital in personal networks and the degree of embeddedness of these in the TSF that spans the two locations relate to individuals' mobility trajectories. Based on survey data of 303 migrants, non-migrants and returnees, sampled through an RDS-like binational link-tracing design, on one side we conceptualize and create an international mobility scale, and on the other side, we develop a personal network typology. Not only do we examine the relationship between these two constructs, but also we frame them into a broader context by exploring their interdependencies with the degree of structural inclusion in the TSF. Our results reveal that not all conveyors of migratory capital have a positive effect on international mobility patterns. An assessment of the overall composition of TSF and the degree of social structural inclusion in it is necessary for a better understanding of international mobility and immobility.

Keywords: im/mobility patterns; relational migratory capital; personal network typology; social structural inclusion; transnational social field between Romania and Spain

Molina, J.L.; Lubbers, M. J.; Hâncean, M-G.; & **Fradejas-García, I.** (2021). Short Take: Sampling from Transnational Social Fields. *Field Methods*. Under Review.

Abstract

Thanks to the latest developments in network-oriented sampling, it is now possible to measure "transnational social fields", or emergent social structures that connect places or regions in different countries of origin and destination. These structures are instrumental in explaining a variety of socio-cultural phenomena like the emergence of ethnic or demographic enclaves, social and economic remittances, and ethnic identifications. Nevertheless, these structures have been referred just metaphorically so far.

Fradejas-García, Ignacio; Lubbers, Miranda J.; García-Santesmases, Andrea; Molina, José Luis. L.; Rubio, Clara. 2020. Ethnographies of the coronavirus pandemic: Empirical emergency and social resignification. *Perifèria, revista de recerca i formació en antropologia*, 25(2): 4-21, https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/periferia.803

Abstract

This text introduces a special issue dedicated to compiling ethnographic accounts of the first months of the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the consequent isolation and social distancing measures. Based on empirical materials collected between March and May of 2020, the ethnographic texts vividly show the uniqueness of this period. It has been portrayed as a hiatus or a pause in the flow of normal society given the threat to the collapsed public healthcare system and the multiple side effects of the lockdown. However, this issue proposes an alternative view of this supposed lull entailing physical and geographic immobility by analysing the events from the standpoint of the major social resignification of daily life that took place. Therefore, we contend that social life has not stopped; on the contrary, it has accelerated, moving in unforeseen directions and resignifying spaces, times and relationships that may have changed forever.

Keywords: COVID-19; pandemic; ethnography; anthropology; resignification.

This thesis analyses the processes and practices that lead to the formation of transnational social fields (TSFs) and the related emergence of immigrant enclaves within the EU. Specifically, the thesis investigates the (im)mobilities and informal practices that Romanian migrants in Spain use to cope with the constraints of changing mobility regimes and the struggles of their day-to-day lives.

Based on long-term multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork and social network analysis, the research focuses on two demographic enclaves of Romanians in Spain, located respectively in Castelló de la Plana and Roquetas de Mar, both of which are connected socially with the main regions of the immigrants' origins in Romania, respectively Dâmbovița and Bistrița-Năsăud. Supported by their networks, and attracted by the formal and informal labour markets, Romanian migrants in Spain grew from a few thousands in 1998 to nearly 900,000 in 2012. They are concentrated in specific geographical locations, creating demographic enclaves – i.e., concentrations of migrants from a given origin in a particular destination – connected with their areas of origin through TSFs, which facilitate the retention of transnational connections with Romania while enabling their settlement in this new social, cultural, economic, and political context. In this case, migrants' arrivals were smoothed by labour markets in flourishing industrial districts, such as the ceramic industry in Castelló de la Plana and agribusiness in Roquetas de Mar, which provided employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as formal and informal forms of work.

The findings reported in this thesis show how migrants in these transnational contexts used informal practices and (im)mobilities to bypass and contest the unequal situations that exclude them from formal access to services, work, and opportunities. Their adaptation to their new living situations happens through two parallel processes: informalisation and formalisation. On the one hand, the informalisation process entails learning the unwritten rules, and selecting, preserving, and adjusting known informal practices to the new context, while abandoning others – mostly harmful, illicit, or illegal practices. On the other hand, the formalisation process involves learning the formal rules and adapting practices to legal pluralism, e.g., customary laws or religious laws; bureaucratic regularisation e.g., residence and work permits; and the Romanian institutions that support transnational ways of life, e.g., churches, consulates, associations, or businesses.

Going beyond the understanding of migration as an aggregate of individual decisions, this thesis advances our knowledge of the livelihood strategies that low-wage EU-internal migrants adopt in order to make a living. Understanding how informal practices and (im)mobilities are deployed by migrants at various transnational scales facilitates examining the social, economic, and political effects of the principles of free circulation and European integration that are producing social changes that will last for generations to come.

Phd Dissertation
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