Universitat de Lleida

Name surnames[1]

Exploring the interplay of narrative and ethnography: A critical sociolinguistic approach to migrant stories of dis/emplacement

Abstract: In this article I explore the benefits of interplaying narrative and ethnography for conducting a context-grounded, sociolinguistic analysis of the representational and interactional functions of migrant storytelling events concerning dis/relocation. I focus on a series of narratives of socioeconomic and geographic im/mobility told by three Ghanaians who, unsheltered, lived on a bench of a Catalan urban town. These were gathered via "go-along" narrative interviews and multi-site ethnography during six months of fieldwork. I show that the imbrications of a social-practice and social-action approach to narrative with network ethnography allow to: (1) investigate how representation and interaction in place-centered stories and storytelling acts reveal the narrators' positionings with respect to host-society dis/emplacement, in their alternative spaces of socialization; (2) capture what gets silenced in dis/orientation narratives, like discrepancies between stories told and lived concerning identity management across migrant groups; and (3) expose the researchers' impact on shaping the form and content of these stories by ingraining self-reflexivity activities into all analytical accounts. This offers an informant-integrative, critical view of how migrants enact transnational survival in contexts of precariousness and exclusion, which contributes to understanding how they place themselves with regard to their non-citizenship statuses, from a socially-sensitive, non-essentializing perspective.

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[1] **Corresponding author: Name and Surnames**: University X. E-mail: x. ORCID: x.

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1 Introduction: Narrative-in-action and critical ethnography in transnational migration studies

From a critical perspective on language and social life (see Duchêne et al. 2013), in this article I understand narratives as social practice and as social action; that is, as historicized, contextualizing interactions which are constitutive of our daily life (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008a, 2008b; Gubrium 2010). Following this approach, I conceive of stories as venues into the multiple ways in which we act out and make sense of who, where, and with whom we are, at a given time and space (Cohen 2012; Linde 1993; Schiffrin 1996). Similarly, I align with views of storytelling acts as offering a privileged lens on how we apprehend, ratify and shape our place in society – that is, on how we position ourselves with respect to our "here-and-now" (Bamberg et al. 2007; Gregg 2011; Schiffrin et al. 2010). In this sense, I approach stories of personal life and autobiographical narrative moments as accomplishing interrelated representational and interactional functions (Wortham 2001), as, for example, when informants inhabit a "migrant" identity or position themselves as "cooperative narrators". This happens in dialogical communicative acts that get negotiated and co-constructed among all participants, like narrative interviews (De Fina and Perrino 2011).

This approach demands a "sensitive ethnographic study" (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 61) of the contexts upon which stories and storytelling acts are grounded. This is necessary in order to provide a concise account of by whom, how, when, where and why particular stories get mobilized in the ways they do in situated interactions. The

context-embeddedness of narratives and of narrative moments also requires detailed fieldwork-based observational data concerning the life trajectories of researchers and informants, here understood as both storying and storied Selves; i.e., as active speaking and listening subjects who bring their own social realities and interests into the field (Creese 2012). Narrative practitioners who follow this critical approach integrate their continued self-reflexivity activities into their analytical accounts, in order to unfold their impact on, and responsibility in, shaping the research story (including the choice and the use of the languages in which these get told), following the research ethics of socially-sensitive research (De Fina 2011; Helsig 2010).

At the turn of the 21st century, with the increased circulation and intensified contacts of people across the world, the imbrications of narrative-in-action and critical ethnography proved fruitful among linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists and discourse analysts working within the field of transnational migration studies (Spector-Mersel 2010), since they provided a solid body of research on how migrants narrate (non)-incorporation into their host societies. These studies mainly focused on (1) diasporic life experiences and turning-point-in-life episodes, including socioeconomic and geographic im/mobility (see, e.g., Baynham 2003; De Fina 2003a; De Fina and King 2011; Relaño Pastor and De Fina 2005), and (2) migrants' social categorizations, with particular emphasis on how transnational identities get inhabited or resisted among diverse groups (see, e.g., Baynham 2005; De Fina 2003b; Lanza 2012; Relaño-Pastor 2010).

1.1 Aims of the study

In this article, I contribute to this field of research by exploring the benefits that interplaying narrative and ethnography may have for conducting a sociolinguistic analysis of representation and interaction in migrant stories and storytelling events concerning host-society dis/emplacement. I do so by analyzing a series of narratives broadly dealing with socioeconomic stagnation and geographic dislocation, and by analyzing how, when, where, and with what aims they were told by three Ghanaian men who, unsheltered, lived on a bench of an urban town called Igualada, in Catalonia. This is a bilingual community of about 7.5 million inhabitants in Spain (Idescat 2014) where a global majority nation-state language, Spanish, complexly coexists with a minority national language, Catalan.[2] These stories, gathered via audio-recorded narrative interviews and multi-site co-ethnographic walks, were categorized as small stories (see Section 1.1).

Throughout the analysis, I show that the imbrications of a social-practice and social-action view of storytelling with mobile network ethnography allow to:

(1) investigate how representation and interaction in dis/emplacement stories and storytelling acts reveal positioning concerning host-society (non)-incorporation; and to discover, too, the alternative socialization spaces whereby these positionings are unfolded and mediated on the ground (Section 2.1);

(2) capture what gets misunderstood or hidden in dis/orientation narratives; particularly discrepancies between stories told and lived regarding identity (non)-affiliations and (non)-inclusionary social categorization practices within and across

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[2] Catalan is considered a minority language in the sense that it is a linguistic code which has been historically, socioeconomically and politically "minorized" (see Bastardas 1996) – today, for instance, it is not official in the European Union (see, also, Pujolar 2001).

migrant networks, frequently revealed in unexpected ethnographic moments (Section 2.2); and, finally,

(3) expose the researchers' roles and responsibilities in shaping place-centered storytelling, in form and content, particularly the language choices and uses in which both the dis/emplacement stories and the narrated localities which emanate from them get framed, by ingraining self-reflexivity activities into all research accounts (Section 2.3).

In the concluding thoughts, I argue that an understanding of narrative and ethnography as mutually shaping each other provides a comprehensive picture of how migrants narratively embody their transnational survival experiences and of how they position themselves and the others with respect to the ways in which they endure host-society dis/emplacement on the ground, from a participant-oriented, socially-sensitive perspective. I also suggest that this allows to problematize essentializing conceptions of migrant populations, such as for example the idea that they propel the "dangerous ghettoization" of the public urban floor. All in all, this contributes to broaden our understandings of how migrants voice how they endure non-citizenship statuses in their host societies.

1.2 Context, participants, methods and data

Igualada is the capital of a county called Anoia, located at a 67-kilometer distance from Barcelona, which, by contrast to what happened in Catalonia as a whole, experienced scarce incoming mass migration movements during the 21st century. At the time of the fieldwork, this town had registered about 39 thousand inhabitants. 69.72% of these were

born in Catalonia; 15.62% were born in other parts of Spain, and 14.66%, abroad (Idescat 2012). The first largest group of foreign residents consisted of people born in the African continent (6.49% of Igualada's population), the Ghanaians, with112 people in total (mostly single men aged 35-44), being the second largest sub-group after the Moroccans (Ajuntament d'Igualada 2012).

The economy of the Anoia region was sustained by the industrial tissue of the capital, since Igualada was a pioneering leather center in Europe. At the turn of the 21st century, though, it experienced the highest percentage of employment loss in Catalonia as a whole because of the demise of the tanning and textile industries, and because of the collapse of the construction sector (Galí Izard and Vallès 2010). This was propelled by the Spanish debt crisis, linked to an economic recession of global reach. The unemployment rate among foreign residents in Igualada reached 37.1% for the first time in 2011, the most affected by it being the migrant labor force that had moved there to do the variety of manual jobs that were now no longer available, as the life trajectories of the informants who participated in this project show.

Alfred, Benedito and Paul (pseudonyms), were, respectively, an English teacher, an accountant and a cocoa farmer who were born in an urban town and two rural villages near Sunyani, the capital of the Akan region of Brong Ahafo, the second largest province in Ghana. They used the Ashanti variant of the Akan language among themselves as a lingua franca, and commanded other Ghanaian languages and other Akan variants such as Akyem. They also spoke English (which is official in Ghana) and Spanish, and had some command of Arabic and Catalan.

Trying to access Europe, they moved to Spain between 2000 and 2001, and started working in the agriculture sector, in Murcia and Almería (South). During this period, they travelled to Ghana regularly, and they also visited their relatives in Italy

and in the Netherlands. Later on, they moved to Catalonia in search of socioeconomic improvement, following some Ghanaian acquaintances. Benedito and Paul settled in Barcelona City, and Alfred moved to Lleida (Western-Central Catalonia) to pick fruit. They all reported having had a difficult time in these places, for which, between 2004 and 2007, they decided to move to a smaller yet still well-connected town, Igualada. This was the locality where they met for the first time and where they obtained a temporary residence permit. There, Alfred started working in a tannery; Benedito, in a foundry; and Paul, in the construction sector.

In 2008, their situation changed drastically. Because of the demise of the local industries, the three became unemployed and engaged in informal economic activities, collecting scrap from garbage containers and begging in a car park of a hypermarket. This was located right in front of an open-air peripheral public transport area where there was an old bench which soon became their "public in private" networking place – their space of "meetingness" (Urry 2007: 68).

They had already used the unemployment benefit payments that corresponded to the contributions that they had paid to the Spanish Social Security, and were no longer eligible for any other subsidy, so none of them had a regular source of income when we first met, and they only received some social aid (clothes and washroom facilities) from the confederation of charities of the Spanish Catholic Church, Cáritas. The mobility opportunities of these informants had become very limited, too (none had visited Ghana since 2008), because with their temporary residence permit they were no longer allowed to travel freely in the European Union.

For these reasons, they could no longer pay for a room in the flats that they used to share with other Ghanaians and, in the end, became unsheltered and started living under precarious life conditions. They experienced states of anxiety and developed

serious stomach, lung and heart problems (one of them required hospitalization in 2013).

I had been observing these informants for a year, on my way to the bus station, and we had also had short conversations at the entrance of the hypermarket located in front of their bench. As a way to establish rapport, I introduced myself as an English teacher wanting to investigate the life trajectories of the African populations in town. I did so in Catalan, which was indexical of some sort of self-ascribed Catalan identity (see Section 2.3). I also told them about my involvement in a well-known anti-racist social movement in the area. After many conversations, I was allowed to take a sit on the bench and to observe and follow them at least three times a week during different times of the day (in bits of three to four hours), including weekends (from July 2012 to January 2013, and then, more intermittently, until November 2014). I always told them what I wanted to study, how, and why, and I negotiated each fieldwork activity with them, in English, Spanish and Catalan. Fruitful cooperation was only achieved after I laid myself open to some personal scrutiny (concerning where I was living, and with whom; where I was working, and for how much, etc.) and after we agreed that I would stay away from their grey-market activities. Verbal informed consent to record was not given to me until they were convinced that I did not work for the town hall or for any NGO (they distrusted both).

The data was gathered via a "network ethnography" (Howard 2002) of these three Ghanaians and included largely unplanned multi-site ethnographic "walk-alongs" (Carpiano 2009: 263) around the town with them. These consisted of "co-ethnographic visits" (Convey and O'Brien 2012: 339) or spatialized journeys to the particular places that informants mobilized in narrative at different stages of the project, which turned out

to be the alternative sites of social networking that were most meaningful and relevant for them (e.g., the Mosque) – though we always finished the day on the bench.

During the participant observation period I focused on (1) their mundane spatial movements in town, (2) their experiences of socioeconomic im/mobility, (3) the social relationships that they established among themselves and with other migrants, and, finally, (4) their routinized communicative practices, among themselves and with other foreigners.

Secondly, the data included a series of audio-recorded narrative interviews in which I inquired about different aspects of their transnational lives (concerning work experiences, educational backgrounds, geographic movements and family configurations), conducted in the informants' preferred language options, which consisted of English and Spanish, with extensive code-switching (I had no command of any of their African languages, and they claimed not to speak Catalan "well enough"; see Section 2.3). These interviews were highly informal, particularly when they were collected "on the move" by means of "go-along interviews" (Kusenbach 2003: 455). This was so because, on being interested in the researcher/researched co-construction of dis/emplacement stories, I tried to get the informants to mention and topicalize on particular spaces in town first, before I mentioned them. In this sense, they were asked to start and lead the storytelling events, though this did not deter me from questioning what I perceived as inconsistencies, ambivalences or clashes in their stories, as shown throughout Section 2.

Finally, I also recorded some naturally-occurring interactions (salutations and short conversations about mundane activities) between the informants and other migrant

men from Senegal, Morocco and Kashmir, which took place in Spanish, English, Arabic and/or Ashanti (all recordings lasted for about 145 minutes).[3]

The particular narratives that I gathered were classified as "small stories"; that is, as "truncated" stories that were not fully developed and were presented in a disorganized, unclear manner (see Georgakopoulou 2007). While in academia they have frequently been dismissed as "instances of incoherent tellings" (Georgakopoulou 2006: 124) due to their vagueness and unorthodoxy in terms of form and content, these complex narratives have proved to be a rich lens into the types of stories that have traditionally been left under-studied within narrative inquiry (see Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012), such as for example those mobilized by multilingual migrant narrators.

These small stories dealt with the following interplaying narrative themes (quotation marks enclose the wording employed by informants to mobilize such themes): (1) geographic immobility (e.g. "we always here"), (2) socioeconomic stagnation (e.g. "no work"), (3) non-legality statuses (e.g. "no papers"), (4) social relationships with other migrants (e.g. "the Nigerians") and (5) delegitimized multilingual resources (e.g. "I speak no English"). For the purposes of this paper, I chose to analyze four excerpts. These were selected on the basis of their use for the aims of this paper, which consisted of: (a) exploring representation and interaction in storytelling acts broadly concerning these five themes – all ultimately linked, though, to dis/emplacement, and (b) illustrating the researcher's influence on the shaping of the form and content of these narrative moments (I analyze the other themes in much more detail and with many other examples in [citation] and [citation]).

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[3] The confidentiality of the data and the protection of the informants' identities were ensured by the Ethics Committee at the Universitat X (registration file X, 2012).

2 Analysis: The interplaying nature of narrative and ethnography in stories of dis/emplacement

2.1 The context-embeddedness: Analyzing storytelling in the narrators' spaces of socialization

The first stories of dis/emplacement that were mobilized by Alfred, Benedito and Paul topicalized on their socioeconomic stagnation and spatial immobility in town. Basically, they anchored their emplacement in Igualada as if being limited to the daily habitation of their bench, systematically presented, in narrative interviews, as a defensive "safe mooring space" (Hannam et al. 2006: 2). This is illustrated in Excerpt 1, taken from [citation], where I framed a storytelling act concerning localness by asking narrators to describe their "favorite place" (see transcription conventions in the Appendix).

(1) Co-constructing immobility stories on the bench.

@Location:		20 July 2012. Bench.
@Bck:		The researcher (RES) asks Benedito (BEN) about his favorite place in town. He anchors his immobility on the bench, interactionally co-constructed, with Alfred (ALF), as a space of transnational survival.
1	*RES:	what's your favorite place in Igualada?
→ 2	*BEN:	ok-, for me-, because I'm not working <I don't have> [//] I don't want any
→ 3		problems.
4	*RES:	ok.
→ 5	*BEN:	<I don't have> [//] <I don't want> any problem from any other person so I always
→ 6		come and sit down here.
	%com:	Puts hands on the bench.

	7	*RES:	aha.
→	8	*BEN:	when I stay hungry I go to the house have my meals late:r I come back here
→	9		around ten o'clock in the night I'll go back sometimes Adom used to come here
→	10		with me -, I have my papers every documents so I don't have problems with the
→	11		police.
	12	*RES:	good.
→	13	*BEN:	I don't fight with any other person I always here.
	14	*RES:	aha.
	15	*BEN:	if I feel to go and sleep I go back to the house and that's it.
	16	*RES:	that's it.
	17	*BEN:	that is all.
((Follows narrative))			
→	18	*ALF:	there you see a lot of foreigners.
		%com:	"There" refers to the central market.
	19	*RES:	they help you if you go there?
→	20	*BEN:	<no:> [!] they don't help them they just go and sit down there just discuss matters
→	21		as<we are sitting there> [//] as we are sitting here now.
	22	*RES:	ok-<but you don't> [//] <you go there frequently> [?].
→	23	*BEN:	no: I eh we always +…
		%com:	Puts hands on the bench.
	24	*RES:	sit here.
→	25	*BEN:	sit here.

In Excerpt 1, Benedito grounds his sociospatial orientations in town on the bench by using: (1) deictically anchored (durative or iterative) proximal verbs like "sit down" (line 6) and "come back" (line 8); (2) canonical proximal locative adverbs like "here" (in lines 6, 8, 13, 21 and 25); and (3) temporal frequency adverbs that mean "every time"/"all the time", like "always" (lines 5, 13 and 23), mobilized repeatedly for emphatic purposes, as a way to give coherence to, and to strengthen, his story of relocation in Igualada (at that time, he could still pay for a room).

The representational functions achieved by Benedito in this part of the interview concern the presentation of the Self as a passive, victimized narrator and as a "law-abiding", unproblematic migrant who interactionally seeks some sympathy from the

researcher. Benedito chooses to thematically link his enacted immobility to three narrative "focuses of concern" (De Fina 2003a: 372) which were also repeatedly taken up by the other informants – no "favorite place" is mentioned, in the end. First, he presents this piece of urban furniture as the place where to overcome precariousness after long-term unemployment (line 2) and where to secure individual transnational survival under the protective umbrella of the group (line 9), who provided resources such as food or information about job vacancies, during fieldwork. Secondly, he focuses on his temporarily "legal" citizenship status, and presents the bench as a place where to avoid "problems" with registration authorities like the police (in lines 3, 5, 10, and 11). Finally, he narrates how he avoids dangerous relationships and mishaps (again, "problems") with some other nameless migrants, too (lines 5 and 13).[4]

This appropriation of the bench as a way to skirt particular problematic migrant groups is mentioned again, later on, when Alfred starts participating in the storytelling activity to support Benedito's story. Alfred acts out the role of an experienced persona with corroborative "insider" knowledge of the sociospatial movements of other migrants in Igualada. He had already told me about a central market (at a 20-minute walk) where, he believed, I could find these other foreign residents (this part of the narrative after line 17 is not reproduced for space constraints). This market is presented with the deictic distal locative adverb "there" (in lines 18 and 20) and, therefore, it emerges in narrative in opposition to the "here" of the bench. Alfred categorizes these other populations as "foreigners" (line 18), interactionally distancing himself from them

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[4] On another occasion informants more specifically reported having trouble with other Latin American and Eastern European migrants, categorized as "Latino racists" and "Romanian thieves and drug dealers" in such a generalizing way that, ironically, they ended up enacting a form of racism (see [citation]; Wortham et al. 2011).

with an emphatic negative "no!" (line 20), issued after I ask him whether they help each other. Later, with a deictic pronominal shift from an individual "I" to an inclusive "we" (in line 23), Benedito changes his positioning and he now adopts an active, assertive role in the interview by legitimizing his immobility on the bench and by denying any visit to the town center with an elongated vowel sound (in "no"; line 23) and with body language (i.e. by putting his hands on the bench). He presents, once again, their meetingness space as a collective strategy to skirt migrant rivals, whom this time are more explicitly talked about as the inhabitants of local spaces of "mismeeting" (Larsen and Hviid Jacobsen 2009: 83). This reinforces the informants' presentations of the Self as "properly behaving", trustful migrants who have attained control over adversity by remaining "quiet" in a corner of the town. Ethnographic observations also allowed me to see that the grounding of their daily routines in the material space of the bench was solidified through "artifactual accompaniment" (Agha 2007: 22), since they demarked it as "their" space by leaving the plastic bags with their belongings under it when they visited the hypermarket across the street.

The immersion into these dis/emplacement stories set the basis for gaining a deeper understanding of the im/mobility strategies and urban zoning practices whereby informants managed transnational living on the ground. I explored such salient points of meetingness/mismeeting further by following them around Igualada in the selected urban corners that kept emerging in their small stories. This multi-site ethnographic practice was revealing of some of their spaces of socialization, here understood as *practiced places* (see Scollon and Scollon 2003), which, on falling outside what is considered the town centre, tend to pass unnoticed or to be considered irrelevant by society at large. In other words, the walk-alongs to the localities that the informants

mapped upon Igualada during our interviews provided a nuanced picture of their unexpected sociospatial movements in their host society.

[Figure 1]

Fig. 1: The emergence of an alternative map of mundane localness. Source: Ajuntament d'Igualada (2013).

Igualada's town center, according to the town hall map, is located inside the black square, in Figure 1. By visiting the geographically peripheral areas that became central in the informants' stories, I witnessed totally new ways of drawing center/periphery territorial lines in town. During our journeys, I realized that informants oriented towards the practice of immobility on (1) their bench, the car park and the two flats which they had shared in the past (these are indicated with black dots, in Figure 1). They also took me to (1) the only call shop that they visited, ran by a Kashmiri man (marked as a relocating space with a dot, too); (2) the four temporary work agencies which they contacted regularly to inquiry about job vacancies (indicated with rhombuses); (3) the charity Cáritas (marked with a triangle); and (4) two religious temples: a Mosque in a former tannery (South) and a Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall in an industrial unit on the outskirts (North) (these temples are indicated with a star). Only one such place falls inside the town center (Cáritas); the rest speak of interconnected spaces of social networking which do not coincide with, and, in fact, challenge, the town hall's urban planning rationalities. These diverse localities uniquely allowed me, therefore, to embed the referential and interactional functions of the narrators' stories and storytelling events into the immediacy of their context; i.e. into their observable "here-and-now".

2.2 Untold stories: Understanding identity management in place-centered stories

In this subsection, I argue that the interplaying nature of narrative and ethnography may help to reveal many of the aspects concerning place-centered stories that are misinterpreted or not fully understood by the researcher; particularly those linked to individual/collective identity management. I show that by embedding these storytelling acts into the context in which these take place we can better observe how the narration of space is linked to the ways in which informants present and position themselves with respect to others (see, also, Williams and McIntyre 2012). In order to do so, I provide evidence that the participants' (non)-allocations of the Self/the Other in given spaces of the town are a venue into the identity (non)-affiliations established within and across migrant groups that tend to be silenced or minimized in situated narrative interviews, as shown below.

The first example concerns Alfred, who once mentioned, in passing, that a local man working in a kiosk in the nearby had allowed him to sleep in his shop, after he had spent several nights in the open air. This was explained when we were alone, so it remained uncaptured in the collective narrative interviews conducted on the bench, where we all employed only dichotomous "sheltered"/"unsheltered" social categories. I realized that the kiosk, which was so relevant for one of the informants, remained unmarked in the town map that they had jointly redrawn. I interpret this absence as a way for Alfred to present himself as being as disadvantaged as Benedito and Paul (see how he stated that he "was always on the bench", in Excerpt 1), perhaps anticipating that, had he not downplayed this, he would have been criticized for having been "more

favored" than them: once again, the three presented themselves as a homogenous group of disempowered "*ghaneses*" ('Ghanaians', in Spanish) providing support to each other in the transnational survival spaces presented in Figure 1.

The second example concerns the demarcation of the "Ghanaian" bench as a welcoming meeting point for whom informants called, in storytelling, "the blacks". This was a macro social category which, I learnt, included Senegalese and Nigerian men in need of resources like food. These other "blacks" acknowledged that that bench was "the Ghanaians' place" by greeting the informants with the Ashanti salutation that they had learnt for that matter, "*bone nnim*" ('no problem'). This greeting was recorded in spontaneous interactions conducted mostly in English, which showed the participants' linguistic dominion over that piece of urban furniture.

During fieldwork, though, I realized that, beyond these harmonic representations projected in narrative, many of the informants' relationships established with other African migrants, particularly with other Ghanaians, were actually based on some degree of mistrust, disaffection and even rivalry, despite claims to the opposite. I illustrate this in Excerpt 2, where Joseph, a Ghanaian man in his forties, entitled himself to act as the spokesperson of this small network, on a day when he came by the bench just to ask about the presence of the researcher there. Joseph invited himself to participate in the storytelling activity concerning socioeconomic stagnation that was going on at that time, interactionally positioning himself as having no affinity towards the informants, and as not wanting to be associated with a peripheral space like the bench. Later on, by "being there", I also saw that the three informants were not willing to share anything with him either, and that they considered him as not belonging to their place of meetingness.

(2) Place-based identity management on the bench.

@Location:	18 July 2012. Bench.
@Bck:	The researcher (RES) asks Paul (PAU) about his plans for the future, when Joseph (JOS) intervenes and provides his (unrequested) personal views by acting as the spokesperson of the group, finally answering the question the researcher had first posited to Paul, and dispossessing him of his narrative agency.

→	1	*RES:	and so what are your plans for the future?
		%add:	to Paul.
→	2	*PAU:	my future?
		%com:	Researcher nods.
→	3	*PAU:	I try but you know I don't have work in here.
	4	*RES:	yeah.
→	5	*PAU:	if you don't have work <what do you plan> [?].
→	6	*JOS:	+^ what he means is that there is no: # <how can you plan> [?].
→	7	*PAU:	no no no planning nothing no future.
	8	*RES:	the future.
→	9	*JOS:	but I mean unless you are working then you you plan or something you have to
	10		do.
→	11	*PAU:	yeah.
→	12	*JOS:	I think there is no anything no hope.

In Excerpt 2, Paul considers the question posed by the researcher (in line 1), concerning his plans for the future (line 2). He first states that he is trying to overcome unemployment (line 3), which is presented as a hindrance for his professional future projects (lines 3 and 5). Joseph, in an overlap, decidedly takes the floor and entitles himself to reframing Paul's words, conducting a paraphrasing act ("what he means is"; line 6), and presenting himself as "knowing better" about the job market. Paul seems to acknowledge Joseph's take-over by repeating (in line 7) that he is experiencing a feeling of instability concomitant to the costs of being displaced in Igualada. Joseph then strategically uses a deictic pronominal shift from "I" to "he" and puts himself at the center of the narrative ("I mean"; line 9), interactionally presenting Paul as a

"disempowered" narrator, with Paul's apparent consent ("yeah"; line 11). Joseph ends up answering the researcher's question himself ("I think"; line 12), finally displacing Paul from the storytelling act, dispossessing him of his previously attributed narrative agency.

Joseph hardly came back to the bench again and, when he did, he always refused to sit down with the informants. Their socioeconomic asymmetries were evident. Well-dressed, and with his smart phone in hand, Joseph presented himself as an educated, prosperous migrant who had attained some socioeconomic upward mobility, and he crafted a strong neoliberal-minded persona for himself in front of the researcher (though he refused to tell us about his job and to participate in the study any further). On the second (and last) time that we met, he engaged in a chat about some "inappropriate" market rationalities, displaying his knowledge on present-day "bad" financial practices in Spain and in Europe (for example, he criticized that banks handled mortgages that are higher than the established minimum salary), while informants pretended to be listening to him by nodding silently. He did so with statements like "But if the government see to it that the *hipoteca* [mortgage] should not exceed more than the minimum salary, you see?, you see?, and this is what Europeans they cannot even understand!"

I suggest that part of this Self-presentation as a successful migrant was based on the pursuit of distinctiveness from the three unsheltered migrants wearing donated clothes. While Benedito, Alfred and Paul talked about him as a "*paisano*" ('compatriot', in Spanish), and while they never criticized him in public, they treated Joseph as an out-group member. They never shook hands with him, and they never shared resources like cigarettes either. At the same time, by refusing to be associated with that space and with their inhabitants, Joseph reproduced the common belief that the bench was occupied by estranged, uprooted migrants who had not achieved "integration". I believe that without

close observation I would not have been able to capture the existence of the "internal" identity dynamics (related to social class statuses, in this case) that emanate from, and materialize in, situated spaces, for, at first sight, these Ghanaian usually passed for a group of allied "fellowmen".

2.3 Researcher reflexivity: Exposing the grounds of the research project

As outlined in Section 1, this project set out from the premise that researchers have a direct impact on the form and content of the stories that get told during research, for they bring their professional and personal interests and experiences into the knowledge that they generate, and are ultimately responsible for whose stories are being told, and why (De Fina 2008). Narrative practitioners who follow this premise integrate their continued self-reflexivity activities concerning how they affected the entire research project in all analytical accounts, adhering to the ethics of socially-committed research. This ultimately helps to display the negotiated, dialogical nature of narrative, for which an understanding of narrative-in-action and critical ethnography as mutually shaping each other is essential.

In this sub-section, I explain how I made my impact on the stories told and lived transparent by including a selection of autoethnographic "personal narrative accounts" (Pennycook 2012: 147) into the analysis. These accounts concern my shaping of both the form and content of stories and storytelling events (including the multilingual language practices in which these were mediated), and they also disclose un/common ground with the participants, with regard to the interpretation and co-construction of particular stories (see, also, Jaffe 2012).

The example I have selected to illustrate this is a self-reflexive episode in which I became aware of the unexpectedly decisive impact that I had on the Ghanaians' place-centered stories and storytelling moments when they mentioned localities where Catalan (and Catalan/Spanish bilingualism) was used, as seen in Excerpt 3. I kept presenting myself as a "Catalan" researcher and routinely employed Catalan (and not Spanish) to name not only spaces in the town but also localities in Catalonia. I chose Catalan following the idea that not addressing migrants in the local language was an exclusionary Othering practice that prevented them from accessing the linguistic code which opened the doors to powerful networks, particularly in the local economy, and which indexed membership of, and belonging to, their host society.[5]

(3) The researcher's shaping of the form and content of place-centered stories.

@Location:			29 August 2012. Bench.
@Bck:			After having talked about the informants' employment in the fruit-picking market in Lleida, the researcher (RES) comments on the use of Catalan in that region, with Alfred (ALF) and Benedito (BEN).
→	1	*RES:	in Lleida they speak Catalan.
→	2	*ALF:	<yes> [!] *catalán hablan catalán*.
		%tra:	Catalan, [they] speak Catalan.
→	3	*BEN:	*catalán*.
		%tra:	Catalan.
→	4	*ALF:	yes -, *castellano también*.
		%tra:	Castilian too.
		%com:	Spanish is called Castilian in Catalonia, in reference to the region of the Spain where it comes from.

[5] The ethnolinguistic "Catalan" versus "non-Catalan" boundary-making tendency of locals to switch from Catalan to Spanish automatically when addressing "foreigners", as well as the migrants' expectations that they will be addressed in Spanish first, have been widely attested (see, e.g., Pujolar 2001).

	5	*RES:	*castellano y catalán.*
		%tra:	Castilian and Catalan.
→	6	*ALF:	yes.
	7	*RES:	and your *patrón*?
		%tra:	employer?
→	8	*ALF:	they are they are in <u>Catalunya</u> # <u>Catalunya</u>: <u>Catalunya</u>: +...
→	9	*BEN:	a province.
→	10	*ALF:	<u>Catalunya</u> **Barcelona** *Lérida* four provinces.

During our walk-alongs, the informants apparently avoided giving their own views on the status of the Catalan language, and, when they did so, they normally borrowed lexicon from Spanish, not Catalan. For example, in Excerpt 3, they named Catalan regions (like cities and provinces) in Spanish (as attested in line 10, when Alfred uses "*Lérida*" instead of "*Lleida*", in Catalan). Intrigued by this, I took the chance to ask them questions about Catalan, in that narrative interview. Thus, after having talked about their jobs picking fruit in Lleida, I commented on my perceptions that Catalan tends to be present in that province (line 1), taking it for granted that its public use there is more evident than in other urban areas near Barcelona, where Catalan/Spanish bilingualism predominates. Alfred reacted to this by agreeing that Catalan is indeed used in Lleida, interestingly switching from English to Spanish (in line 2), the language which the three informants repeatedly claimed that locals employed when addressing them, and the language which they most frequently used in storytelling, when they were not interviewed in English (see below).

Alfred is backed up by Benedito, who also states that in that region they speak Catalan, in Spanish, too (line 3). Later on, with some hesitation which perhaps denotes conscious monitoring of talk, Alfred presents Lleida as a Catalan/Spanish bilingual region (in lines 4 and 6), arguably trying not to use politically-charged labels to define Catalonia, though acknowledging some unspecified sort of autonomy or self-

government for the area, this time, repeatedly, in Catalan, with elongated vowels (line 8). Benedito resorts to calling it a "province" (line 9), which is less controversial than terms such as "nation" or "region". Then, by way of conclusion, Alfred recalls that Catalonia has four provinces (perhaps following a nation-state building project view that presents it as a bounded territorial unit with four administrative divisions), naming the capitals of two of them (Barcelona and Lleida; line 10) bilingually, displaying his knowledge about these territories – and interactionally presenting himself as a well-informed migrant respectful of the researcher's (self- and other-ascribed) Catalan ethnolinguistic identity. For this reason, I argue that Alfred's and Benedito's jointly constructed stories concerning the status of Catalan and of Catalonia as a political entity were directly modulated by the fact that I explicitly and repeatedly used the social category "Catalan" during the entire project, in narrative interviews and in naturally-occurring interactions, as shown in Excerpt 4.

(4) The researcher's Self -presentation in ethnolinguistic terms.

@Location:			18 July 2012. Bench.
@Bck:			After having greeted Alfred and Benedito, Zubair (ZUB) from Kashmir asks about the researcher (RES), who presents herself as a "Catalan".
→	1	*ZUB:	*una chica <qué país>* [?].
		%tra:	a girl <what country> [?].
		%add:	Looking at both Paul and the researcher.
→	2	*RES:	I'm Catalan -, Maria.
→	3	*ZUB:	+^ Maria Maria <how are you> [?] I'm Kashmir *provincia de Pakistán*.
		%tra:	province of Pakistan.

In Excerpt 4, Zubair from Kashmir approaches the bench to greet the informants (they used the Muslim salutation in Arabic "*As-salam alaikum*"; 'peace be with you'), and then asks them and me who I am and where I am from (in line 1). He does so by

switching to Spanish, the language which he also employed with other locals, out of routine. I introduce myself as a "Catalan" (line 2), while he presents himself as "*Kashmir*", from a "province" in Pakistan, in Spanish (line 3). I claim that Zubair's answer was modulated by my use – in English – of the identity label "Catalan" (note that this was triggered by a question concerning place, when Zubair asked "what country?" in line 1). In that spontaneous interaction, the two of us realized that we both belonged to a national minority language group (Punjabi is a minority language with respect to Urdu, in Kashmir). This was a reflexivity process in which we carefully engaged, since I later saw that he would normally just simply say "Pakistan" in front of other compatriots with whom he could not draw on minority-language alliances. As a result of this, we started sharing information about Kashmir and Catalonia, on the bench. This obviously also became evident to Benedito (with whom I had used the same personal identity label), who then started sharing information about the mass social movement in favor of asking the Catalan civil society about whether they would support Catalonia's political self-determination, projecting, like Zubair, a relationship of complicity with the researcher. During one of the biggest events in this respect, on the day of the non-binding Catalan independence referendum (held in November 9, 2014), I met Benedito by surprise at the entrance of the public high-school where we both voted (a space in the town center that remained unmarked in Figure 1). We queued together, and he kept telling us, in English, that that was the first time that he could exercise his right to vote in Catalonia.[6]

These examples allow me to unfold, too, how, apart from the content, I also shaped the form of the dis/emplacement stories. Throughout the analysis, I have shown

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[6] On that occasion, the Catalan government allowed non-EU citizens with a valid passport and a temporary residence visa to vote.

that I started framing narratives in English, as a way to "prove" my English teacher status. Informants usually followed suit (see, e.g., Excerpt 1), perhaps feeling empowered to use their "outer-circle" English, which is delegitimized as "bad English" in Catalonia. On other occasions, they could also switch to Ashanti for intra-group matters and as a way to demark the Ghanaianness of their space (i.e. the bench), as well as to Arabic, the language for greeting Muslim acquaintances. Besides, they employed Catalan, unsystematically, mainly to establish rapport with the researcher. These language choices were ultimately mapped upon Spanish, which they understood and actually took up as *the* unmarked language option for "proper" relocation, for it generally indexes "integration" or "willingness to integrate" (in the administration, etc.), in Spain (Sabaté i Dalmau 2014). All in all, the various multilingual practices that they displayed in narrative interviews, despite being generally grounded upon an "integration-through-dominant-nation-state-language" ideology, can be seen as a powerful representational identity resource for the informants. In this sense, they may be understood as an empowering tool for migrants to de-silence and legitimize a transnational way of being and interacting compatible with the command of the local languages – a vindication of their linguistic incorporation into their host society via their hybridity (see, also, De Fina and Perrino 2013).

I suggest that the self-reflexivity activities in which I engaged with informants concerning what was being said, and how, allowed me to become extremely conscious of, and to continuously explicitly present, my impact on the unfolding of the entire research project. This, in turn, set the basis to generate more data concerning the extent to which informants were willing to voice their thoughts about, and, indeed, to participate in, the debates and events of their host society, in extensive unconventional

multilingual interactions, contravening the conception that migrant populations have "knowledge deficits" regarding the intricacies of their new spaces of socialization.

3   Concluding remarks: Understanding transnational survival through the lens of dis/emplacement stories

By analyzing a series of stories of geographic and socioeconomic dis/emplacement told by three unsheltered Ghanaians, I have explored the contributions that understanding narrative-in-action and multi-site ethnography as mutually constitutive can make to the field of transnational migration studies, particularly to critical investigations concerning how migrants tell and live various host-society "integration" phenomena.

More specifically, I have argued that this context-grounded, historicized approach allows us to unveil the complexities of the various representational and interactional functions that migrants mobilize in situated stories and storytelling acts concerning transnational survival experiences, mostly linked to geographic immobility, socioeconomic stagnation and precarious legality. These are challenging small stories told via a series of rich unorthodox multilingual practices which still remain largely underexplored within the discipline of narrative inquiry.

I have shown that the engraining of observational and narrative data offers an informant-oriented picture of the re-production, circulation and negotiation of the particular storyworlds that are actually meaningful and relevant for migrants themselves. This is in turn a venue into the subversive socialization spaces and the alternative urban zoning practices with which migrants de-center the peripheries of post-industrial urban towns. In particular, it is a way to get closer to the spaces of

meetingness/mismeeting whereby they manage "internal" transnational identity ascriptions that tend to be non-accessible outside migrant-regulated realms.

I have claimed that the dialogical, co-constructed nature of narratives that this perspective entails also helps us to ground the research stories that we present upon the self-reflexivity activities of all participants (understood as storying and storied Selves), particularly of researchers, who address the ethics of voice representation as a constituent, pivotal part of their analytical accounts. They do so by unfolding and permanently questioning their own impact upon the framing of the form and content of all narrative moments, in order to problematize their own personal assumptions and conclusions throughout the entire research project.

Overall, I have tried to contribute to broaden our knowledge of how migrants, as empowered narrators, make sense of, and manage, citizenship control and "illegality" statuses under the restrictive governmentality regimes established by the host societies of the 21st century, in contexts of extreme precariousness where transnational survival is about enduring social difference, inequality and exclusion.

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Appendix: Transcription system

Following the critical approach presented in Section 1, I understand the transcription choices presented below as an integral part of the researcher's goals and positioning in this particular research project (see Bucholtz 2000).

Language coding

Plain: English

Italics: *Spanish*

<u>Underlined: Catalan</u>

Bold: Undecidable

Transcription conventions

@Bck: [Background]: Information of the participants, context and topic

@com: [Comment]: Contextual information about the previous utterance

@add: [Addressee]: Addressee of the previous turn

%tra: [Translation]: Free translation of the turn for languages other than

             English

+^   quick uptake or latching

+"/.   quotation in the next line

+"   quotation follows

pause

[>]   overlap follows

[<]	overlap precedes
[/]	repetition
[//]	reformulation
< >	scope
:	lengthened vowel
::	longer lengthening of vowel
xxx	unintelligible material

((Follows narrative)): turns omitted due to space constraints

Intonation contours

.	end-of-turn falling contour
?	end-of-turn rising contour
!	end-of-turn exclamation contour
-,.	end-of-turn fall–rise contour
-.	intra-turn falling contour
-,	intra-turn fall–rise contour
,,	tag question

Fig. 1
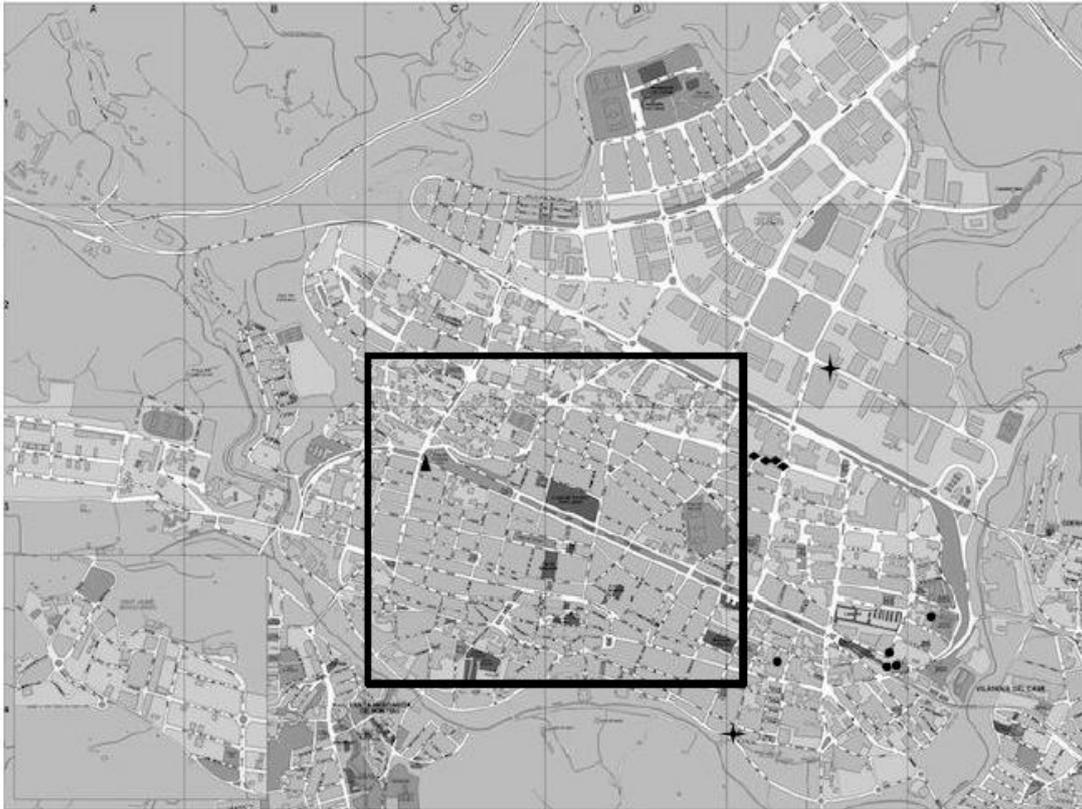
●	Orientation spaces (bench, car park, supermarket, previously shared flats, and call shop)
✛	Minority religious temples
◆	Temp work agencies
▲	Local Catholic charity