

# A non-profit residential project for homeless migrants in a Catalan town

Maria Rosa Garrido Sardà



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## 1. Introduction

This case study is based on my first-hand experience of a residential project for homeless migrants as a volunteer teacher and, later on, as a postgraduate researcher between 2006 and 2009. The descriptions, analyses and data presented here primarily come from my two-year sociolinguistic ethnography of the **Haven** residential project (2007-2009). In particular, it is an institutional ethnography of a non-profit project that is implemented by different nongovernmental organisations (NGOs henceforth) and mainly funded by the local administration. In fact, this initiative presents a very complex institutional structure that brings together organisations and people with contrasting ideologies. This residential project is simultaneously embedded in a transnational religiously inspired movement, an emerging Catalan network of residential projects for homeless migrants and, last but not least, a local migrant-support umbrella body that provides publically funded services on behalf of the socialist town council.

My account of the Haven residential project is organised as follows. To begin, I will provide a comprehensive description of the project. Second, I will present the ideological tensions in the actual implementation of this project, with a brief consideration of the inner contradictions of the NGO sector so as to cast light on this particular case. Third, I will explore the institutional construction of multilingualism, which I conceptualise as both linguistic practices and ideologies that have consequences on the lives of migrant participants. Finally, I will sketch some future perspectives on the residential project considering the present socioeconomic context.

## 2. An overview of the Haven Residential Project

This non-profit project was created in 2003 as a response to an emerging social reality of homeless migrants in a post-industrial town located in the metropolitan area of Barcelona that I will call **Sarrona** for the sake of confidentiality<sup>1</sup>. In 2009, the town had a total population of around 200,000 inhabitants with 12% of foreign nationals. The prototypical migrant in the town is an adult person between 20 and 39 years old from South America or the Maghreb who migrated for economic motives. In fact, over 50% of the town's migrants come from South and Central America, while Africans from all over the continent represent 25% of the foreign population, with 15% of Maghrebian migrants (mainly from Morocco) and 9% of sub-Saharan migrants (mainly from Senegambia). Thanks to regular train and bus services connecting Sarrona to Barcelona, migrant newcomers travel to the town in order to find social support within the transnational communities settled in the *barri(o)s*, especially Bolivians, Moroccan Berbers, Gambian Fulas and Ivorian Djolas. Unfortunately, some of them do not succeed in their endeavour.

<sup>(1)</sup>In order to preserve the anonymity of the organisations and the individuals that participate in the study, the names of all the organisations, places and people involved in the residential project are fictitious in accordance with the procedure 754H approved by the Ethics Committee at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Among those, many participants in the residential project arrived by sea and were later flown from the Canary Islands to the Peninsula by Cruz Roja Española on behalf of the Spanish central state. Once in Barcelona, they were left to their own devices in the streets and did not find any social support. Besides, a smaller group of participants came from other European countries in search of better conditions but eventually became homeless as well. This project specialises in sub-Saharan and Maghrebian young men who have migrated for either socioeconomic motives, the so-called "European dream", or exile, that is to say, some of them are humanitarian entrants who do not have refugee status. Despite this particular profile, the project is open to any non-EU migrant over 18 years old who has been in the territory for less than a year, who does not have access to any type of accommodation and lacks economic resources. The one-year restriction in practice implies that all participants are undocumented in Spain.

Before the creation of this residential project, there were not specialised welfare services for homeless undocumented migrants in the town. Therefore, the local umbrella body Migrant Support Organisation (MSO henceforth), which brings together six NGOs that offer services for migrants, used to refer these people to migrant-support organisations that ran specialised residential projects in the city of Barcelona and to publically run shelters for the

homeless. With regard to the latter, Sarrona only has an "emergency centre", where people can stay for one or two nights by referral only. This centre is located in the municipal police headquarters, so its location deters many undocumented migrants from accessing this service. Alternatively, Barcelona has three shelters for homeless people, where users can stay longer (up to a month), but these are generally overcrowded and as far as I know, many do not offer specialised services for migrants such as legal orientation or local language classes.

Back in 2003, the Haven residential project was created to fill in the gap in public welfare provision outlined above out of the initiative of a faith-based transnational association that I call Saume with the collaboration of a socialist trade union, both under the auspices of the local umbrella organisation MSO. This initiative was initially funded by a Catalan private foundation. In 2005, the Sarrona town hall took over as the main funding body in 2005, since local administrations are legally bound to provide social services (law 7/1985, BOE nº 80). This project has two stated goals: an assistentialist goal to cover the migrants' basic needs for three months and a social-insertion goal to facilitate their incorporation into Catalan society. As regards the former goal, Saume provides lodging, clothing and medical care for participants out of the funding grant. Concerning the latter, the NGOs voluntarily offer local language classes, labour orientation sessions and individual social advice to help migrants become autonomous in the host society.

As I have already mentioned, the local Saume branch ideologically informed the creation of this initiative. This international association was created by a working priest and its founding principle is to assist those who suffer most. Nowadays, the Saume International Association targets migrants as the most marginalised social group in Western democracies. Locally, this association is organised into self-sufficient communities of people who share a life project and who earn a living through recycling. Each community is formed by socially excluded individuals (usually homeless people) and people who want to lead a more altruistic lifestyle. Ever since moving to a bigger house, the Sarrona community has offered the vacant rooms to homeless migrants, which in turn fulfils Saume's founding mission. As the ideological founder, the Saume community coordinates the different NGOs and people involved in the project. The project's management is highly personalised in the Saume leader, a middle-aged local woman, as she personally coordinates the project and oversees the shelter's daily functioning, especially regarding migrants' compliance with rules and obligations.

Outside the shelter, Saume counts on a professional social worker to provide technical support for the project thanks to a collaboration agreement between a socialist trade union's social office and the umbrella body MSO. The social office is part of a larger network of offices in Catalonia that informs citizens about social benefits in Spain and that offers social support for specific groups such as migrants. This particular service is completely integrated under MSO,

since the trade union is not advertised anywhere either in the physical space of MSO, where the office is located, or in the documents migrants are given. The social worker's main task is to conduct access and follow-up interviews with the migrants at MSO. Throughout my fieldwork, I realised that he acts as a mediator between the participants and the Saume management. By and large, he enforces Saume's rules and decisions on the migrants and I have sometimes observed the social worker mediate between the parts in cases of conflict.

In relation to the social insertion goal, the trade union's social worker is also in charge of the elaboration and supervision of individualised work plans that revolve around three areas: (1) local language learning, (2) training and (further) education, and (3) legal advice and work orientation. Owing to limited funding, the NGOs resort to volunteers to organise activities that are included in the participants' work plan: MSO recruits a handful of volunteers for optional Spanish language classes and work orientation sessions, whereas Saume has over 40 volunteers for obligatory Catalan classes, conversation partnerships (*Voluntaris lingüístics*), vocational training and one-to-one reading practice. The social worker also refers migrants to external activities organised by the town hall and other NGOs such as IT courses and seminars on health. Last but not least, the social worker sends participants to sister projects that are part of an emerging local network of residential projects for migrants at the end of their participation.

Throughout the week, the project's management expects migrant participants to engage in a number of obligatory activities. Every week, migrants must attend a follow-up interview with the social worker at MSO. Another of the migrants' obligations is to have a medical check-up at the Tropical Medicine Unit in Barcelona, which might involve weekly appointments for several weeks. In the shelter, the Saume community also asks participants to clean their rooms every Saturday morning and to attend a group meeting at the shelter on Sunday evening. As optional activities, most migrants choose to participate in a linguistic partnership and to attend Spanish lessons as well as external courses. On weekdays, participants must follow a strict routine. In the morning, they must leave the shelter before 9 a.m. and attend a Catalan lesson at MSO. At 1.45 p.m., they can re-enter the shelter for lunch. Afterwards, they must leave until dinnertime. These activities take up relatively little of their time, so migrants spend long hours with other Africans in the streets as well as in the local library.

From a legal perspective, the Haven residential project is embedded within the umbrella body MSO, which was created in 1994 to provide comprehensive reception services for migrants in Sarrona out of the coordination among six local NGOs. In fact, MSO is mainly funded by the town hall and it distributes resources among the migrant-support services offered by the component organisations, which includes Saume's residential project. Therefore, this umbrella organisation acts as Haven's legal representative since the local administration holds MSO accountable for the grant through annual reports



and budgets. As a matter of fact, the public funding body calls this project the **MSO-Saume residential project**, emphasising the role of MSO over that of Saume, the project's executor. Despite MSO's more detached role in the project, Haven is central to its definition as the project takes up a lot of space in their premises and it is usually fore-grounded in their public projections.

The town hall holds MSO accountable for the number of people lodged and the administration of public funds, but it does not set any specific indicators to measure the project's success. MSO, and indirectly the residential project, was nominally assigned the funding grant every year without any public tender contest until 2009. This implied that the socialist town council automatically renewed MSO's grant on the basis of annual budgets and a description of their activities. Therefore, the town hall did not apply any indicator system to evaluate the outcomes of offloaded services. The political opposition parties questioned the legality of such a procedure and the annual grant might be open for public contest this year. This poses a threat to the continuity of MSO and the residential project at present. As the town hall only funds basic assistance for migrants, it allocates the definition and the voluntary implementation of "incorporation" to the NGOs. This means that it is not the council, but the NGOs, who are left to define how "incorporation into Catalan society" is understood and achieved, as well as the procedure through which they evaluate whether the Haven project effectively achieves this goal. Thus, MSO is not accountable for the insertion outcomes since it falls outside of the public grant. Interestingly, this is the area in which tensions arise among the NGOs.

### 3. Ideological tensions in the implementation of the project

The institutional makeup of this non-profit project is unique since it is managed by a faith-based association vested in the transnational ideology of Progressive Catholicism with the collaboration of a socialist trade union, both under the auspices of a state-subsidiary umbrella NGO that is vested in discourses within the neoliberal nation-state. As a result of the contrasting ideologies between Saume and its collaborators, there are numerous tensions over the joint implementation of the project. In my ethnography, it took me a while to grasp the complex structure, power relations and ideological tensions in this project since it involves many different actors from three distinct organisations as well as covert hierarchies under the seemingly horizontal NGO decision-making processes. To understand this project better, it greatly helped me to learn about the inner contradictions of the NGO landscape in Spain.

On the one hand, the Saume movement is based on the transnational ideology of *Progressive Catholicism*, epitomised in religious charities/NGOs and altruistic discourses. The temporary basic provision for homeless migrants fulfils Saume's assistentialist mission to serve those people who suffer most, which is in turn derived from the paradigm of Christian charity. The community regards the project as a social space born out of a collective religious (or civic) duty towards others that offers a "haven" from neoliberal individualism thanks to "human warmth". This faith-based **therapeutic intervention** on migrants is embedded in the provision of social services on the part of volunteers and institutional agents (see below). In fact, faith-based NGOs take advantage of the direct contact with migrant users to provide a moral education mediated by local languages.

On the other hand, MSO and the trade union's office institutionally adhere to neoliberal, individualist discourses that place the onus on the migrant to become autonomous. Autonomy in the context of irregular migration is understood as the making of "good citizens" who will assimilate to local values, knowledge systems and behaviour codes mediated by local languages in order to gain access to the labour market and to other valuable resources in the host society. This largely corresponds to "social integration" specialist discourses that statedly target equal opportunities for migrants but *de facto* subject them to regimentation processes, which the state to a large extent relegates to NGOs since the latter are intermediary institutions whose benevolent image allows them to get closer to people and which are then more effective in making "good citizens".

In the actual implementation of the project, the complex institutional structure brings about ideological tensions between faith-based volunteerism that relies on the transmission of values and professionalised work plans based on market-based individual skills. Despite the existing tensions, language is key to both paradigms and language classes are a central activity in the project. Saume defines social incorporation as "educating migrants to become full rights citizens in our land, with a lifestyle that rewards people and is in harmony with nature" (Saume branch webpage 2009), which translates into a re-socialisation process into Christian moral values and local cultural practices mediated by linguistic interaction. For Saume, language is a vehicle for collective moral education and social control. In turn, MSO and the trade union focus on the migrants' access to the (secondary) labour market through the acquisition of individual skills, especially Spanish and Catalan competences (see the example below). They regard languages as learnable skills for labour market incorporation and as instruments for the institutional evaluation of users' progress through follow-up interviews.

**Example 1: Extract from the 2006 MSO Annual Report (my translation from Catalan)**

The programme tries to re-situate users within some future perspective and to help them form a personal project, with at least the guarantee that the user has comprehensive information about their legal situation and their future possibilities of insertion, about the functioning of the labour market and about educational achievements that are very valuable in the new framework in which they are embedded.

Saume's weight in the project sways the balance towards the religious paradigm to the detriment of the market-oriented one. Owing to the religious inspiration and limited public funding, Haven is basically assistentialist, moralistic and voluntary. The Saume community is responsible for providing migrants with lodging and food out of the public grant, but it also draws on their resources to supply clothing and medicines as well. As part of Saume's mission, the community seeks to provide spiritual comfort and moral guidance so it takes on the role of a "surrogate family" for the "suffering" migrants. In the shelter, participants must comply with a set of rules and obligations that are unilaterally defined by the community and set in a contract form. The Saume leader counts on two non-professional "social workers" that ensure the migrants' compliance with Saume's moral standards and the shelter rules.

As for the voluntary nature of the project, Saume (and MSO to a lesser extent) recruit volunteers in order to carry out their insertion goal due to limited funding. In fact, there is only one professional social worker thanks to the collaboration agreement with the trade union. To a great extent, the implementation relies on autochthonous Saume members and unpaid volunteers who do not generally have any specialised training. Haven's primary voluntary character conditions the outcomes of the project in several ways. Service provision strongly depends on volunteer availability (alongside funding grants) and this instability results in short-term initiatives and service provision gaps. In point of fact, volunteerism might even endanger the

project's continuity as it is today. Besides, volunteers are normally recruited for their willingness and moral disposition rather than their expertise in the task at hand and their competences in foreign languages. This is due to the shortage of "expert" volunteers and to the ideological function of volunteers as value transmitters who embody moral values such as solidarity as well as the "national self".

As an outcome of the dominant ideological complexes, the project presents a top-down decision making structure that excludes migrant participants. In other words, NGO representatives make decisions for the adult migrant participants, ideologically constructed as dependent beneficiaries unaware of their own needs on the part of the institution. For MSO and the trade union, the stated goal is to make these migrants autonomous people by way of institutionally defined activities. Within Saume's paternalism, adult migrants are seen as childlike, innocent people in need of affect, social control and moral guidance on the part of their self-designated surrogate family, the Saume community and the autochthonous volunteers. These infantilisation processes are most apparent in the language classroom, where migrants are stripped of their cultural and linguistic capitals and they are re-socialised into local cultural practices and values through the local languages, Catalan and Spanish. As we shall see, this will have consequences on the construction of multilingualism in the project.

In the following example, we have an illustration of the social categorisations of adult migrants through the choice of pedagogic materials to teach Spanish to project participants. The children's story book *Alí Babá y los cuarenta ladrones*<sup>2</sup> (The Story of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves) used in class has pictures, an easy vocabulary written in roman cursive handwriting style and a stereotypical theme and illustration of an Arab in a turban and traditional dress. Further stereotyping is demonstrated in the settings depicted where the two men are presented as greedy beings that look for a hidden treasure (except for the main character), whereas women are subordinate to men. Arab values are presented as negative in contraposition to those of the main character, which actually reinforces the naturalised negative image of Arabo-Muslim Moroccans in the project. Therefore, we might conclude that the language classroom is a space where migrant students are overtly categorised according to postcolonial images and the nation-state ideology through the choice of class materials and activities.

<sup>(2)</sup>I haven't been able to find the reference for this children's storybook. If you have the reference to it, please write to [mariarosa.garrido@uab.cat](mailto:mariarosa.garrido@uab.cat).

## Example 2



Page from the *Ali Babá y los cuarenta ladrones* storybook used in the Spanish classroom (January 2008)

In order to shed more light on the complex institutional structure, internal ideological tensions and the social processes that I have just presented, we need to have a general picture of the current NGO landscape in Spain. The Haven residential project exemplifies the contradictions that arise between the public projections and mission statements of social welfare NGOs and the actual functions that they have in the Spanish neoliberalised state. It is generally believed that NGOs are benevolent organisations that are independent from states and lobby for human rights violated by neoliberal policies. However, this social construction of NGOs hides the hegemony of the Catholic inspiration among publically funded organisations, the substantial contribution of the solidarity sector to the neoliberal market and the quasi governmental status of most NGOs in Spain.

The public image of NGOs largely hides the predominance of the Catholic inspiration in the sector behind the discourse of solidarity. The Spanish state apparatus promotes a model of *associacionisme benèvol* that defines associations as strictly non-profit organisations that rely on the work of disinterested volunteer members. Nevertheless, this idealised vision obscures the fact that volunteerism is a form of cheap labour given that most welfare NGOs participate in the neoliberal economy as state subsidiaries that provide assistentialist relief. In actual fact, the long tradition of Catholic charities has evolved into a landscape of assistentialist, depoliticised organisations favoured by the nation-state. In the social context of homeless migrants, Cruz Roja Española is responsible for emergency aid for migrants on the coast, but they do not question state migration policies and the fact that around 40% of migrants who arrive by *patera* become homeless.

This delegation of services to the third sector contributes to the neoliberal offloading of the nation-state and commodifies altruistic voluntary work in the global capitalist market. Catalan welfare NGOs participate in the neoliberal *mixed economy of welfare*, which involves public institutions, nonprofit organisations and some capitalist companies as partners in the provision of social services. From an economic perspective, voluntary organisations are more competitive than capitalist companies, so public administrations relegate social services to NGOs so as to reduce their social expenditures. Ideologically, this financial dependence on the state threatens the independence of NGOs and conditions their agendas. The fact that MSO is mainly funded, and to a large extent ideologically controlled, by the socialist town hall makes it a quasi-governmental organisation whose public lobbying agenda for migrants' social rights stands in unresolved tension with their actual function as public service providers.

Despite the pressing reality of homeless migrants, the neoliberalised nation-state apparatus offloads economically and ideologically peripheral social services, such as those for homeless migrants, to the non-profit initiative in order not only to reduce welfare expenditure but also not to be seen as catering to the needs of migrants in the eyes of the autochthonous population. In Sarroca, the town hall justifies the lack of direct public provision for homeless migrants on the grounds that they are not registered in the town census (*padró municipal*) and therefore, the public sector cannot provide any healthcare, education and social services for them without this prior legal requirement (LO 8/2000, BOE nº 307). Besides, it does not want to set up professionalised, publically run services specifically for homeless migrants in order not to create a "magnet effect", since most neighbouring towns do not offer such services either.

## 4. The top-down construction of multilingualism in the project

Verbal interaction and, to a lesser extent, written documents are crucial in the implementation of the Haven residential project since situated key social events, such as work orientation sessions, are based on linguistic practices. NGO agents are essentially *language workers* in the new service-based economy since language and communication skills are a crucial resource to carry out their everyday tasks adequately. Most importantly, linguistic practices mediate the institutional regimentation processes and have consequences on the migrants' access to welfare resources. Thus, participants engage in regimentation processes in order for them to produce legitimate linguistic and behaviour performances before NGO gatekeepers. The institutional actors evaluate migrants' degree of "integration" from these performances and (dis)allow access to welfare resources, which range from access to IT courses to entering a sister residential project. Migrants' failure to meet institutional expectations, notably learning official languages and complying with rules, might have consequences on their lives.

As a consequence of the institutional structure, management style and circulating ideologies, the NGOs that manage the residential project (re)produce the local sociolinguistic order in a top-down fashion without any input from their users. Haven is deeply embedded in the local language economy since it is managed by the bilingual Catalan-Spanish middle classes and funded by the town hall. The project presents a *non-unified institutional front* that draws on the Catalan administration's discourses of integration as well as dominant linguistic ideologies brought in bottom-up by the workers. This institutional front (re)produces the contradictions between the *commonsensical sociolinguistic comportment* to address "non Catalans" in Spanish and the Generalitat's integration-through-Catalan discourses in interesting ways. Besides this, official integration discourses nominally recognise linguistic diversity, but, in actual facts, multilingualism is not effectively incorporated into migrant-support NGOs, especially with regard to African languages.

The Haven residential project presents a *non-unified front*, that is to say, incoherent front stage practices with their migrant users, which largely responds to the contradictions between situated oral practices and written documents produced by the institutional actors. On the one hand, the oral mode is characterised by the centrality of Spanish and the exceptionality of multilingual practices. Front stage verbal interactions, which form the core of the project, are less public than written documents since they are ephemeral in time and they only target participants as their audience. Thus, oral practices do not commit the project to public scrutiny and can contradict

In general, the leaflets produced by the umbrella body MSO place Catalan first in the ordering of languages with a bigger font size. This responds to MSO's dependence on the Catalan administration that funds the Haven project and to the Catalan nationalist tradition in the NGO sector. Institutional leaflets are highly multilingual but a closer look reveals that the varieties chosen are standard languages corresponding to postcolonial/geopolitical blocks, such as French and English, and/or a nation-state, as in the case of Standard Arabic and Mandarin Chinese. As we have seen, this written front does not match the practical hegemony of Spanish in oral practices. For instance, the welcome sessions for newcomers that are organised by the town hall and MSO illustrate the *non-unified institutional front* as the poster below presents a symbolic Catalan front, as well as a multilingual front, which contrasts with the dominance of Spanish in the actual welcome sessions.

[illegible]

Multilingual poster produced by MSO about welcome sessions in neighbourhoods for newcomers to the town (2007)



This publically funded project is part of the local reception services for newcomers (*Pla municipal d'acollida*) in which Catalan as the *llengua pròpia* must be the vehicular language in service provision in accordance with official discourses and recent legislation on reception services (*Projecte de llei d'acollida de les persones immigrades i les retornades a Catalunya*). The Catalan project of integration promotes Catalan as the public language for everyone. That's why MSO institutional documents foreground Catalan over other languages. As we shall see in more detail, Haven participants must attend obligatory Catalan lessons despite being generally spoken to in Spanish. We can observe that these official linguistic guidelines stand in contradiction with the naturalised practice to address migrants in Spanish in most socio-communicative spaces in the project. In fact, Catalan functions as an intra-language in backstage spaces of decision-making among NGO agents and as a taught language for migrants to symbolically index their "willingness to integrate" rather than an actual language of inter-group communication.

The evolution of language classes for participants illustrates the diffusion of official integration discourses in the project. Language classes are compulsory for all participants as they invariably are part of the work planning that I described above. Early on in the project, a group of volunteers decided to organise language classes for the participants and the unquestioned choice was Spanish-only. When I asked the MSO coordinator and a volunteer teacher about this decision in 2007, they referred to the usefulness of Spanish for geographical mobility, for entry-level jobs and for social interaction as locals address migrants in Spanish. The shift to Catalan-only classes was mainly motivated by official discourses. According to the Saume leader,

"el fet que un immigrant parli català per mi canvia totalment perquè hi ha com una voluntat gran d'integració"

Source: interview, 27/02/2008.

By contrast to the bottom-up decision to teach Spanish, the shift from Spanish to Catalan involved a top-down institutional decision in 2008. The rationale given was that migrants would "pick up" Spanish as locals normally address them in Spanish, but that they needed to learn Catalan in a classroom.

In keeping with integration discourses and in particular the recent *Projecte de llei d'acollida*, NGO agents now generally believe that it is better to learn one language at a time and that learning Catalan first will allow migrants to learn Spanish more easily afterwards. This positioning clearly responds to the ideology of bilingualism as two separate monolingualisms. At MSO, Catalan and Spanish are always kept in separate monolingual classrooms with different teachers and syllabuses. Until recently, attending Spanish classes was an optional activity for project participants (alongside compulsory Catalan classes). However, the majority of NGO agents concur that it is more effective for migrants to learn one language at a time in order to produce standard monolingual performances, which are taken as evidence of language learning.

Consequently, participants are strongly discouraged to "mix languages" in spite of the hybrid linguistic practices that they are exposed to in the shelter. In the following example, the social worker Alex consistently recasts John's hybrid productions into institutionally-sanctioned monolingual Spanish.

#### Example 4

Extract from a follow-up interview, social office (01-04-2009)

1	*ALE: %tra:	cuántos días estuviste en Plaza Catalunya? # más o menos. how many days were you in Plaza Catalunya? # more or less.
2	*JOH: %tra:	+^ yo: # <u>cuase</u> : # <u>cuase tre</u> : # <u>tre settimane</u> . +^ I: # <u>almost</u> # <u>almost three</u> : # <u>three weeks</u> .
3	*ALE: %tra:	tres semanas. three weeks.
4	*JOH: %tra:	tres <u>tre</u> : casi semana. three <u>three</u> : almost week.
5	*ALE: %tra:	+^ casi tres semanas. +^ almost three weeks.
6	*JOH: %tra:	<u>yeah yeah</u> # <u>cose: qua</u> # <u>io eh venito qua</u> # <u>veinti:&lt;cinco&gt;</u> [<] <u>yeah yeah</u> # <u>thing here</u> # <u>I eh come here</u> # <u>twenty-&lt;fifth&gt;</u> [<]
7	*ALE: %tra:	<venir> [>] aquí. <come> [>] here.
8	*JOH: %tra:	xxx <u>from the</u> <u>veinti:sette</u> o <u>ventisette</u> <u>venito qua</u> eh dormir <u>a fora</u> . xxx <u>from the</u> <u>twenty seventh</u> or <u>twenty seventh</u> <u>come here</u> eh sleep <u>outside</u> .

This interaction also exemplifies the dominance of Spanish in the available social services within the project, which contradicts the official discourses of integration-through-Catalan that justify the compulsory Catalan classes. A more specific example of this contradiction would be the fact that the trade union's social worker typically asks participants about Catalan lessons in Spanish: "bueno Mamadou ¿las clases de catalán qué tal? ¿bien?" (follow-up interview 4, 17/04/2009).

The present Catalan project of integration holds that migrants' "reception and integration processes" are best accomplished through Catalan as the *llengua pròpia* and implicitly assumes that this integration process has to be in one of the two official languages in Catalonia, rather than including both or other non-official languages. Hence the institutional decision to teach just one language, be it Catalan or Spanish, in a multilingual urban context with two majority languages and many other languages like Wolof, Tamazight and Mandinka. In my view, teaching just one standard language reflects a nation-state ideology and corresponds to a willingness to construct a linguistically homogeneous appearing imagined community. This political decision does not enable participants to become fully fledged members of their multilingual communities, characterised by hybrid practices and

language crossing. Besides, it does not incorporate the migrants' languages and identities into the institutional front as a consequence of the nation-state ideology as well as the top-down management that excludes migrants.

These organisations unilaterally implement a specific type of multilingualism that solely incorporates the foreign languages that are most prestigious in the local and the global sociolinguistic markets: English and French. This restrictive construction of multilingualism places an expectation for migrants to at least speak French or English and to be literate in the Roman alphabet. Throughout my two-year fieldwork, most participants were English-speaking, French-speaking or both, which suggests that speaking these languages might be an advantage to enter the project through gate-keeping interviews. The participants that speak global languages are constructed as better equipped to "integrate" because they are more "linguistically manageable" for the NGOs. In the project implementation, English and French are legitimate facilitating devices in the language classroom and *linguae francae* in the institutionalised regimentation processes such as follow-up interviews. Nevertheless, participants can only use these two languages with a few institutional actors<sup>3</sup> who are not always available. In addition, these *linguae francae* are considered to be transitional languages to Catalan and Spanish and by extension legitimate vehicles for "integration".

<sup>(3)</sup>At present, these include the two MSO social workers who have a basic understanding of English, a new volunteer Spanish teacher who used to be a secondary school English teacher, a member of Saume who speaks fluent English as well as the weekend social worker who speaks standard English, Cameroonian pidgin English and standard French.

The Haven management justifies the choice of major European languages over African languages spoken by participants with organisational constraints such as funding and limited staff. Nevertheless, there is an ideological component behind such a decision, which relates back the postcolonial inheritance and geopolitical belonging. Across spaces, the NGO agents categorise participants basically as Anglophones and Francophones. Those who do not speak any international languages are problematised as uneducated, rural people who experience difficulties during their project participation. Haven's regimentation processes foreground Western languages and types of knowledge as the road to "integration", whereas African languages and knowledge are not considered as potential vehicles for integration and are even seen as impediments to it. As a result, institutional multilingualism does not incorporate the participants' multilingual repertoires and silences indigenous African languages, which are relegated to migrants' backstage practices within Haven and to other socio-communicative spaces outside the project.

My conclusion is that the top-down management approach limits the agency of migrant participants in the construction of institutional multilingualism. As a result, transnational migrants who are highly multilingual have limited access to the institutionally sanctioned languages, cultural practices and types of knowledge. This might have material consequences on their lives as the Haven residential project unintentionally accomplishes social selection primarily based on local linguistic and cultural capitals and also on the compliance with institutional regulations. Note that speaking Catalan and/or

Spanish is not sufficient to be categorised as a good participant. In addition to appropriate language performances, this positive categorisation also involves a bundle of personal comportments and submission to social control. If a participant fulfils the management's expectations by actively participating in his own "integration process" (say, by attending all language classes and engaging in legitimate behaviours), he will probably continue in the project until the NGO agents find another suitable accommodation option for him.

## 5. Some Thoughts on Haven's Future Perspectives

It is worth recalling that this project constitutes the only available social service that serves the "invisible" population of homeless migrants in this town. As we have seen, Saume and its collaborators occupy a marginal space of social intervention that the nation-state does not want to attend to. In the current economic crisis, the residential project receives many entry applications that it cannot grant and besides, it can no longer refer participants to other residential projects since they are all congested. In short, the reality of homeless migrants is more urgent than ever but the state apparatus still refuses to directly tackle this social problem. In Sarrona, the continuity of MSO is seriously endangered and so is the project. Even though the project's implementation mainly relies on volunteers, the funding grant is essential to cover the migrants' basic rights (essentially lodging, food and medicines). In the present circumstances, the project should diversify their funding sources and become more independent from the town hall in order to persist. However, I don't think that this small project can ever do the job of the administration and absorb all the homeless migrants in the town.

In spite of the NGOs' genuine commitment to social justice, this residential project does not take into account the migrant participants' perspectives in the design and the implementation of the project. The top-down approach takes agency away from the migrants and this has important consequences on the linguistic provision, hence limiting migrants' access to valuable resources. In order to meet the actual social needs of these migrants, I believe that the project would benefit from recruiting more migrant workers, especially people from the Amazigh and Senegambian transnational communities. Another complementary measure to improve the service provision would be to provide linguistic training for the existing workers, who are in many cases amateur volunteers. To effectively empower participants, it is key to include them in decision-making processes for them to have a more agentive role in the project. The collaboration between the NGOs and the migrant participants would ensure that migrants' perspectives, identities and languages are adequately represented.

On the basis of my research findings, we have recently started a collaborative project between researchers/teachers and former participants, with the participation of transnational communities and MSO, to create Catalan language communicative teaching materials. The aim behind this project is twofold: to give agency to the migrants and to improve the project's Catalan language classes. As regards the former aim, the experience allows migrants to have a say about a central aspect of the project's implementation, language tuition. Concerning the latter goal, it seems that we are moving from the traditional pedagogic model based on written, standard Catalan language

materials to a new approach that orients more towards multimodal and multilingual materials that focus on the migrants' everyday communication needs. As for social representations, the materials consciously try to represent the different ethnic groups in the town through the choice of models, drawings and topics. Language is key to social representation too. Part of the materials is translated into Wolof, Mandinka, Tamazight, Standard Arabic, French, English and Spanish.

In a nutshell, the continuity of the project is financially endangered and the actual provision of services should undergo important changes to address migrants' actual needs. Despite these structural constraints, this residential project is doing an important humanitarian task that the nation-state should take on with very limited resources. The project is currently incorporating some small changes, such as a collaborative project to create Catalan language materials and a new Mandinka volunteer, which might have positive outcomes in the future. Most importantly, the NGOs need to address the top-down management structure and the dependence on the town hall in order for the project to become more effective and independent. However, the ideological complexes at play, Progressive Catholicism and Social Democracy, might prevent drastic changes with respect to making the project more plural and diverse. In my view, the evolution of the project towards these goals will probably be rather slow and ideologically charged for all the actors involved, including myself.