MIGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES*

MIGRACIÓN Y ESTRATEGIAS INTERGENERACIONALES DE MOVILIDAD SOCIAL: RETOS TEÓRICOS Y METODOLÓGICOS

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Abstract: *The aim of this article is to propose a theoretical framework and methodological proposal based on an intergenerational perspective for the study of geographic and social mobility strategies of migrants. We analyse the way transnational families negotiate their social mobility strategies in accordance with the*

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*family unit (fathers, mothers, elder children, younger children…),
as well as their position in the migration process (migrating as pio-
neers, staying behind, etc.), assessing the actions transnational fa-
milies undertake over time and space in order to climb the social
ladder. The methodology strategy is based on a qualitative study
(biographical narrative), multi-situated ethnography (carried out
in Spain and in Ecuador), and longitudinal fieldwork. The article
aims to highlight the role not only of migrants, but also that of the
family members that are left behind, as agents of social mobility
strategies within the transnational space.*

Key words: *Migration; Social Mobility; Transnational Families;
Inter-generational Perspective: Ecuadorian Migration: Longitudi-
nal methodology.*

Resumen: *Este artículo propone un esquema teórico y
metodológico basado en una perspectiva intergeneracional para el
estudio de las estrategias de movilidad geográfica y social de los mi-
grantes. Se analizan las maneras en que las familias transnaciona-
les negocian sus estrategias de movilidad social de acuerdo con la
posición que cada individuo mantiene en la unidad familiar (padres,
madres, hijos mayores, hijos menores, etc.) así como su posición
en el proceso migratorio (migración pionera, permanecer en el país
de origen, etc.), y se evalúan las acciones que las familias transna-
cionales realizan a través del tiempo y del espacio para ascender
en la escala social. La estrategia metodológica se basa en un estu-
dio cualitativo (narración biográfica), una etnografía multisituada
(llevada a cabo en España y Ecuador) y un trabajo de campo lon-
gitudinal. El artículo busca sacar a la luz no sólo el papel de los
propios migrantes, sino también de los diferentes miembros de la fa-
milia que permanecen en el país de origen, como agentes que desar-
rollan estrategias de movilidad social en el espacio transnacional.*

Palabras clave: *migración; movilidad social; familias trans-
nacionales; perspectiva intergeneracional; migración ecuatoriana;
metodología longitudinal.*

1. TACKLING THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL MOBILITY: AN INTER-GENERATIONAL APPROACH

> *"Can people now move out of their own country in order to mo-
> ve up socially in relation to where they come from?"*

Adrian Favell and Ettore Recchi (2011:51) used this question
to explain how significant migratory processes undertaken in the

international context have transformed the conceptualisation of social mobility that was predominant in classic scientific production until the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The sociology of social mobility came to the fore essentially in the USA after the Second World War. The principal line of research was based on measuring social mobility using sophisticated statistical techniques such as social mobility tables, path analysis and log-lineal analysis. Within this framework, social mobility addresses both the individual's capacity to ascend within the social structure and society's degree of openness (Cuin, 1993). The work of Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993) is of particular importance in this sense. The 1960s saw the emergence of a qualitative trend in research into social mobility, based on family or community case studies, which frequently adopted an intergenerational approach, applying a methodology based on life histories (Bertaux and Thompson, 1997).

Early 20th century studies such as '*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*' (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918) provided an initial insight into social mobility routes linked to geographic movements, drawing attention to the need to include this aspect in migration studies. In this line of research, also worthy of note are the contributions of Portes and Manning (1986), who were pioneers in their field, along with those of Borjas (1993) and Chiswick (Chiswick et al, 2005). These authors centred their analysis on the social and labour situation experienced by the second generation of migrants in the host country, in terms of their educational trajectory and the level of skills and qualifications attained. The vast majority of these research projects were based on a quantitative approach, focusing their analysis on the patterns of change that emerged in the behaviour of first and second generation migrants (Papademetriou et al 2009; Meurs and Pailhé, 2010; TIES project), in comparison with the mobility processes of the autochthonous population (Yaish and Andersen, 2012)[1]. The main limitation of these studies is that they approach the analysis of the educational and occupational trajectories of immigrant children within the context of the host country, without taking into account a transnational approach. However, there are a number of exceptions, such as the work carried

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[1]   For the extensive literature on second generations or descendants of immigrants, see the bibliographical review carried out by Thomson and Crul (2007) on the transatlantic debate.

out by Nieswand (2011). This author compares the social scale changes of the migrant population, both in their countries of origin and in the host community. Nevertheless, the study fails to take into account the intergenerational perspective.

On the other hand, in recent years, a debate has emerged surrounding the construction of transnational practices by the descendants of migrants, shedding light on issues such as the type of relations these second generations maintain with their ancestors' country of origin (Levitt, 2009; Levitt and Waters 2002) or the way they construct their identities in the transnational space (Mas-Giralt, 2011; Telles and Ortiz, 2011; Platt, 2014). Furthermore, scientific production on gender, family and transnationalism has developed considerably over the last decade, although this literature has focussed mainly on the study of the reproductive dynamics of transnational families, with special attention being placed on care-giving issues (children left behind, etc.)[2]. However, despite major advances in scientific production, fewer studies have analysed the social mobility dynamics of transnational families, adopting an inter-generational approach and considering the interrelation between social mobility practices, strategies and trajectories of the various household members (Oso, 2011; Oso, 2011-2014).

Spanish scientific production that has analysed the link between social and geographical mobility has essentially addressed immigrant integration into the labour market (Cachón, 1997; Izquierdo, 2004; Pajares. 2009), along with the analysis of the social rise and promotion of Spanish migrants (Miguel, Moral and Izquierdo, 1986; Alaminos, Albert and Santacreu, 2010). Various studies have revealed the existence of an intergenerational social mobility pattern strongly characterised by the occupational segmentation of the labour market (González Ferrer, 2002; Veira, Stanek and Cachón; 2011; Aysa-Lastra and Cachón, 2013), which has led to significant differences in social incorporation processes among second generation migrant populations (Aparicio and Portes, 2014, among others). Furthermore, numerous studies have been carried out on the mobility processes of the second generations with regard to their parents' social status, analysing elements such as their level of education (García-Castaño et al, 2014; Montero-Sieburth, 2014),

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[2]   For more insight into the extensive bibliography on this subject, see the bibliographical review carried out by Oso and Parella, 2012.

degree of linguistic adaptation (Alarcón and Parella, 2013) and even the role played by religious practices (Eguren, 2011). In more recent years, research has turned its attention to the importance of including new variables, such as the area of origin, into the study of upward transnational social trajectories (Caparrós and Navarro, 2010).

In summary, while Spanish and international scientific production has expressed a growing interest in analysing the link between geographic and social mobility, the majority of studies take as their starting point the consideration of social mobility as a closed system of static classes, built on a foundation of national borders, without taking into account the effects and implications of population movements on the social structure of the different countries (Favell and Recchi, 2009).

The main objective of this text is to present a theoretical framework and a methodological strategy that aims to study the interrelation between geographic and social mobility within the transnational space, looking beyond the classic analytical categories limited to the boundaries of the Nation State. We aim to operationalise this phenomenon as a complex and dynamic process that is subject to change. Furthermore, our proposal seeks to (re)position migrant actors and the family at the centre of studies into geographic and social mobility, by applying an inter-generational perspective that considers the projects, strategies and itineraries of all members of the family. How do transnational households construct their projects for upward social mobility? To what extent is social mobility for the various members of the family influenced by the inter-generational strategies put in place by transnational households?

The article first presents our theoretical framework for the study of social mobility in transnational households. Secondly, it addresses our methodological strategy, which uses the biographical narrative as a tool for the dynamic longitudinal analysis of the itineraries of social change followed by migrant population. Thirdly, it seeks to illustrate this theoretical and methodological proposal by presenting the spatial and social mobility dynamics of two transnational families, who were interviewed in the framework of an empirical multi-situated fieldwork carried out in Spain and Ecuador. The article ends with a series of reflections on the challenges and complexities involved in the study of transnational social mobility strategies of Ecuadorian families in Spain.

2. TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY IN TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

As conceptualised in earlier studies (Oso, 2004), and returning to Sorokin's metaphor, social mobility can be defined as the process whereby individuals move within the social space (Sorokin, 1964). Nevertheless, moving beyond methodological and epistemological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002), we consider that the relationship between spatial and social mobility requires a diachronic and dynamic analysis of the itineraries of social change followed by individuals and their families throughout the transnational space and their migratory journey. Socially, transnational migrants do not merely situate themselves within the social hierarchy of the host country, but also within the social structure of their country of origin. Indeed, the study of international migration and social mobility should always refer to at least two social spaces: that which situates the migrant in the community of origin, as well as the receiving social space. In addition, it should contemplate a third, transnational social space, made up of the community created within the framework of transnational boundaries. All three spaces will be governed by differing social hierarchies and the position of the migrants and their families may vary in each. In this sense, migration may cause an individual to rank lower on the social scale in the host country, yet this same condition may boost their position and status in the country of origin (Oso, 2004).

Secondly, our theoretical approach distinguishes between the concepts of social mobility strategies, projects and trajectories. Indeed, we understand social mobility strategies to be the action-inducing decisions individuals make in order to climb the social ladder, differentiated from the social mobility projects, which are considered as future dreams or expectations. In turn, we define the social mobility trajectory as the group of personal or collective itineraries that individuals develop throughout the social mobility hierarchy in relation to one or various social spaces (origin/destination), or within the transnational space[3]. Lastly, what is generally referred to as the 'migratory project' often consists of a social

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[3]   For the theoretical approach to the social mobility strategies and trajectories of migrants, see Oso (2004).

mobility project for the individual or the transnational family which frames the goals or dreams to be realised in the quest for upward social mobility through migration. In short, individuals use the migratory project or other social mobility projects to adopt strategic decisions and will attempt to programme the mechanisms whereby they can achieve the migratory and social mobility goals they have set (Oso, 2004). The distinction made between strategies, projects and trajectories allows us to approach the study of social mobility from a broader perspective that considers not only the itineraries that have emerged from the movements of individuals on the social ladder, but also from the dreams, intentions and aspirations of the migrants and their families as a whole. Thus, in keeping with the approach of authors such as Nieswand (2011) and Singh and Cabraal (2013), we propose to articulate the study of the changes to migrants' social position, in addition to a more subjective level of analysis that considers migrants' reflections on their attempts to climb the social ladder and achieve better opportunities for the future.

Moreover, this link between the various levels of analysis of social mobility makes possible to go beyond the individual level, shifting the attention from the themselves to the transnational family as a whole. We believe that in addition to their individual nature, upward social mobility strategies may also extend to family projects. The concept of the key role played by households in the configuration of social mobility was first posited by Daniel Bertaux and Thompson. These authors questioned previous ideas, extended in literature, that considered the individual as the principal and sole social actor in social mobility processes (Bertaux and Thompson, 1997; Oso, 2004).

Following this line of research, our theoretical framework considers an intergenerational approach that takes into account all the members of the family for the study of social mobility strategies. Nevertheless, beyond this, our theoretical proposal also includes a transnational approach, as it considers not only the different members of the household in the country of destination, but also the family that remain in the country of origin (immobiles).

In order to articulate the transnational and intergenerational approaches, generation is defined not merely as the demographic cohort each individual belongs to, but also the role played by the different social actors within the transnational household and their position in terms of the family migratory project. Indeed, the social mobility strategies set up within the transnational space will vary

in accordance with the family member that initiates the migratory chain.

Lastly, we believe that the interrelation between individual interests and family expectations explain the articulation of the social mobility strategies of different members of the transnational households[4].

Having presented the theoretical analysis framework, we will now go on to offer a methodological proposal, highlighting the importance of applying qualitative methodology and a biographical approach as a means for the longitudinal and integrated analysis of the social mobility strategies of the migrant population.

3. THE BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE AS A TOOL FOR A DYNAMIC AND LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

In order to apply our theoretical framework to the study of social and geographical mobility we have carried out a qualitative methodological design developed over the course of three research projects: "The impact of migration on development: gender and transnationalism"[5] (Oso, dir., 2007), "Gender, Transnationalism and inter-generational strategies of social mobility" (Oso, dir., 2011) and "Gender, crossed mobilities and transnational dynamics" (Oso, dir., 2015)[6]. Within the framework of these research projects we have worked with several Latin-American migrant populations in Spain (Ecuadorians, Brazilians, Argentinians). Nevertheless, we decided to illustrate the methodological reflexions presented in this paper, with the fieldwork carried out with Ecuadorian transnational families in Spain. A total of 44 persons were contacted during the course of this fieldwork[7].

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[4]   The link between individual and family strategies of social mobility is very well assessed by Sofia Laíz (2015), in the PHD thesis that she developed in the framework of our research project FEM2011-26110 (Oso, dir., 2011)

[5]   Financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation: SEJ2007/63179.

[6]   Financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness: FEM2011-26110 and FEM2015-67164-R.

[7]   This fieldwork with Ecuadorian migrants was carried out by Laura Oso.

Our methodological strategy was based on the implementation of semi-structured interviews with the use of biographical narratives[8], in an attemtp to capture the vital experiences of the informants which embody rising or declining social mobility trajectories, and relating their itineraries of social change to their paths in life.

However, in addition to identifying social mobility trajectories, biographical narratives also shed light on those social mobility strategies and projects which, as discussed in our theoretical framework, comprise the other two key aspects identified for the study of geographic and social mobility, both of which contain a clearly subjective component. As Pujadas states, "the biographical material contributes to dispelling the muth of the typification of subjects as representing or characterising a specific socio-cultural order through the inclusion of subjective slants that bring to the fore differing individual experiences, sensitivities and stances" (Pujadas, 2000). Furthermore, the use of biographical narratives also allows for the inclusion of collective dimensions in the study of geographic and social mobility, another of the key elements to our theoretical approach, based on the construction and reconstruction of family biographical histories, articulated by constrasting the individual experience of each transnational household member.

Since the 70s, authors such as Bertaux and Thompson (1997) have been using the biographical method as a key tool for the analysis of intergenerational social mobility from a qualitative perspective. Indeed, various contributions have continued this line of analysis in order to shed light on the trajectories of the migrant population within the social hierarchy (Dalle, 2013). Taking this methodological approach as a basis, our work uses family biographical narratives as a tool to analyse the geographic and social mobility strategies of the migrant population, allowing for the consideration of time and generation as crucial dimensions in the study of social mobility. Nevertheless our methodological proposal is intended to include another dimension which is crucial to the analysis of geographic and social mobility and which has received considerably less attention from more traditional scientific literature on social mobility, namely the transnational space.

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[8]　Biographical narrative or history refers to the verbatim recording of the interviews held with the subjects (Pujadas, 2000), within the framework of a biographical approach.

We will now consider in greater detail the way the three dimensions of ***time, generation and space*** have been included in our methodological proposal for the study of geographic and social mobility.

Firstly, in addition to the time dimension biographical narratives naturally contribute, our methodology also includes a longitudinal perspective that allows for the more detailed time analysis of the study of social change associated with social mobility. In this sense, we have carried out fieldwork at two different points in time, between 2007-2009 (just before and during the onset of the financial crisis) and in 2013-2015. This allowed us to monitor the biographical narratives of four migrant families over time (who were interviewed on different occasions during the two periods under consideration) with the aim of identifying family and transnational strategies of resilience to the financial crisis. In addition to tracking these families, we conducted supplementary interviews with other migrants and families that were interviewed only once, in one of the two temporary cuts.

Monitoring these families constitute a cornerstone for the methodology strategy proposed, introducing time, associated with the study of social change, into the analytical framework. By identifying the evolution of the upward mobility trajectories, strategies and projects of a family over the various periods, it is possible to apply a diachronic approach to the study of social mobility. This provides an insight into the evolution and changes that exist in both the social trajectories and the more subjective discourses of the different members of the household.

Likewise, this longitudinal approach allows us to examine the family or individual situation at a particular point on the life cycle. Thus, for example, some migrants were first interviewed as single children and then became fathers and mothers. This made it possible to analyse the changes in their individual and family projects of social ascent. Moreover, it has enabled us to structure this analysis in accordance with the economic and social changes that take place at every context in time (in both the country of origin and destination), and study the impact they have had on the migrants trajectories, strategies and projects.

This longitudinal approach also allows for the subjective analysis of the way social mobility projects and strategies are constructed and change, parallel to social mobility trajectories. In what way

do our informants' migratory projects alter in accordance with the changes they experience during the course of their trajectory? How are family social mobility strategies restructured over time?

Secondly, and in relation to the intergenerational dimension, it is important to note that the interviews were carried out with several households and recorded from various sessions held with the members of each family. Wherever possible the respondents were interviewed separately. The subjects included fathers and mothers, as well as descendants aged 15 and over, thereby guaranteeing an intergenerational vision. In some cases, we were also able to interview the grandparents. Fieldwork was carried out on both men and women.

The use of biographical narratives with different members of the transnational households has provided an intergenerational dimension whereby we attempt to operationalise the importance of taking into consideration the expectations and strategies of the various members of the transnational household in order to fully understand family social mobility trajectories. This tool also allows for a methodological approach in terms of the crossed histories[9], whereby interaction between the discourses of the various family members allows for the construction of crossed family biographical narratives. This allows for an awareness of the negotiations, agreements and tensions concealed behind the resulting mobility strategies and projects.

Finally, we have included the transnational dimension in the analysis and interpretation of the various changes in position that migrants experience in the social hierarchy, through a multi-situated fieldwork in various geographic contexts. This included a number of interviews conducted with Ecuadorians living in Madrid and their relatives that stayed behind in Ecuador (specifically in the district of Turubamba Bajo in southern Quito). The interviews held within the context of the country of origin and destination shed light on the interconnections, interactions and exchanges that take place in the transnational space and configure migrants' social mobility strategies and trajectories. This methodological approach allows us to reconstruct migrant's social itineraries through their movements in the different social spaces.

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[9]   Pujadas distinguishes between the biographical narratives of crossed histories and parallel histories when there is a sense of community between the narrators (Pujadas, 2000).

In conclusion, the articulation of these three dimensions (time, generation and space) constitutes the structuring of our methodological proposal, based on the application of a diachronic and dynamic analysis. This approach is essential in order to understand the transformations that define transnational social mobility strategies and trajectories. Likewise, the use of biographical narratives allows us to construct social mobility strategies and trajectories through the voices of the various members of each transnational household, converting all the actors (the family members) involved in the migratory project (including those remaining in the country of origin), into protagonists.

This methodological strategy can be summed up in the following diagram:

Graph 1

THE BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE
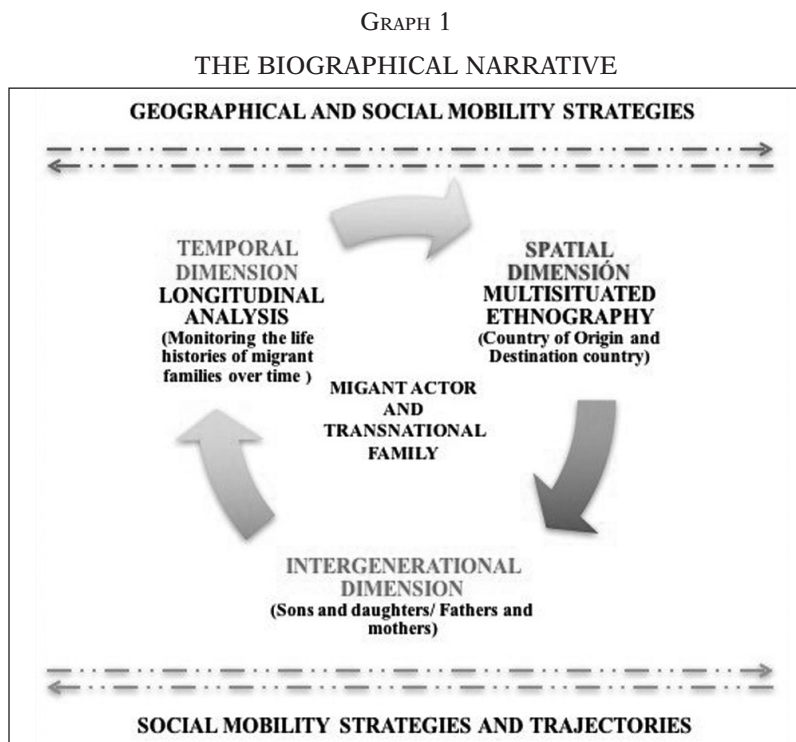
Source: compilation by the authors.

To illustrate the discussion of the theoretical framework and the methodological strategy of our research, we will now use an analysis of empirical data to briefly present some examples of how the geographic and social mobility dynamics of transnational households are generated.

Since this article aims first and foremost to present a theoretical and methodological reflection on the study of geographic and social mobility, due to limited space we have opt to present the case of just two transnational Ecuadorian families. These families were selected for their potential to reflect the dynamics of transnational households in the development of social mobility trajectories and strategies. These cases are not intended to be defined as statistically representative of the Ecuadorian migration (which is not the goal of a qualitative research analysis such as that carried out here), although they are characteristic from the perspective of the *typological representativity*[10] of the transnational social trajectories identified over the course of this research. The intergenerational approach was also taken into account when selecting the family cases, considering the migrants' generation and their position within the migratory project. They are defined as follow: 1) **Sons and daughters** acting as pioneers in the family migratory processes; 2) **Fathers and mothers** that initiate the migratory process.

4. THE TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY STRATEGIES OF ECUADORIAN FAMILIES: TWO CASE STUDIES

Sons and daughters acting as pioneers in the family migratory processes: individual projects within family strategies

When Karla left Turubamba she was not in severe financial straits; her parents had an ironmonger's shop in the district on the ground floor of the family home. The protagonist of this migratory story was interviewed in Madrid and her mother in Quito, just before the outbreak of the economic crisis (2008). Karla's mother

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[10]   Unlike statistical representativeness, typological representativeness is based on identifying population trends and uniformity through the identification and analysis of representative cases.

recalled how she had encouraged her daughter to travel to Spain, in order to separate her from a suitor who was far older than her. However, Karla's migratory project eventually fell within the framework of a family social mobility strategy. At the start of her migratory venture, our informant would send half her salary back home (initially she worked in domestic service and later moved into the catering industry). Her mother administered the money, which was spent on extending the home and the family business (telephones and computers, etc. were installed). However, this family's social mobility strategy came to a halt when Karla met a fellow Ecuadorian in Madrid and they decided to get married. As a result of this marriage, the flow of remittances ceased, as Karla and her husband bought a flat in Madrid and invested their earnings in paying off a mortgage. Some time later, the couple decided to separate, and our informant once again started sending remittances to her family in Ecuador, returning to the family social mobility strategy. Karla used the money sent back to Ecuador to buy business premises for herself, this time in response to her own individual strategy (aimed at forging a professional future for herself, should she decide to return), although she continued to support her family. She decided to grant her brother and sister-in-law, who had recently had a baby, rent-free use of the premises so that they could set up a business that would provide them with a livelihood. In time, Spain would be affected by the economic crisis and Karla's mother would fall ill, as our informant's father told us during the interview held in Quito seven years later.

Karla decided to return to Ecuador, taking some savings with her that she deposited in a bank account; this time for her personal expenses. She looked after her mother until her death. However, she was unable to settle in her country of origin and decided to emigrate again, after two more years working in Madrid. On this occasion she travelled to Buenos Aires with an Argentinean girlfriend she met in Spain and who urged her to settle there, giving birth to a daugther

Karla's family history reveals how her social mobility strategy, articulated through migration, is embedded in a wider family strategy that extends to the other members (parents, brothers and sisters), even though she migrated as an unmarried daughter, without an initial migratory project aimed at supporting the transnational household. The benefits our informant obtained from her migratory venture were invested mainly in real estate and business ventures,

in an attempt to boost the social mobility of family members that remained in Ecuador (extension of the home and the family business). Her venture was also articulated around individual goals, such as securing her own professional future through the acquisition of business premises in Quito. Yet this latter investment also benefited the social mobility of our informant's brother and sister-in-law. As a result, the family members are often beneficiaries of the investments made in Latin America and the remittances, enabling them to embark on an upward social mobility trajectory, even though at the beginning of the migratory process Karla's social mobility project was apparently of an individual nature.

In contrast, our protagonist may experience the stagnation of her social mobility trajectory in Spain, particularly in terms of her career, as Karla failed to achieve her dream of being able to study. The decision to make different types of investments in Ecuador was geared towards attaining a better economic situation for the family in the social space of origin. Nevertheless, this, in turn, had a negative impact on Karla' educational and professional trajectories (saving was possible through work in mainly unskilled areas such as domestic service and later the catering sector). Furthermore, our case study reveals how marriage in Spain can curb the family's transnational social mobility strategy, as migrants tend to channel their investment efforts into a new social mobility project with their partners.

This informant's account also highlights the importance of the intergenerational perspective and how it interacts with the position of individuals in the family's migratory project when explaining individual social mobility strategies. While Karla changed the direction and nature of her upward mobility strategies after her marriage, when it ended, the focus of her efforts and investments shifted to the construction of a social mobility project in Ecuador and towards supporting her household in the country of origin. Her position as a pioneer migrant is associated with a number of family social mobility strategies as the provider of remittances to the transnational household. As has been shown, these strategies may contradict migrants' individual expectations, leading them to become part of broader family mobility projects.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that Karla's family life history reflects the dynamic, transnational dimension of migrant social mobility strategies. It shows how these strategies undergo changes and evolve over the course of life, related to both the economic

context (in this case marked by the onset and evolution of the economic crisis) and to factors involving personal and family situations. Thus, to understand Karla's geographical and social mobility trajectories, it is necessary to contextualize each change in the social position she experiences and relate them to the various goals and expectations that she has defined, in both the host country (Spain) and the community of origin (Ecuador).

Fathers and mothers that initiate the migratory process: tensions between family social mobility strategies

Monica had five children when her husband decided to migrate to Spain. The debts that had accumulated following the economic crisis in Ecuador forced him to travel to Madrid, with the idea of returning after two or three years. The eldest daughter also decided to migrate and settle in Madrid, where she found employment in domestic service. At the time of the first interviews in Quito (held in 2008 with Monica and two of her sons) and in Madrid (with Fernando), the regular remittances ($700 a month) that Fernando sent were the principal source of income for Monica and the children that remained behind in Ecuador. Monica managed the money she received from her husband, which provided her with some independence and power through the possession and management of financial capital. However, during the interview she repeatedly stressed the negative consequences of having to take full responsibility for raising her children alone.

With regard to social mobility strategies, initially the family had invested the remittances mainly in improving the house and, above all, in human capital (educating the children privately). As other studies have shown, taking children out of state education and placing them in private schools is one of the main social mobility strategies that migrant families have followed, not only in Ecuador (Egüez and Acosta, 2009), but also in other geographic contexts (Ribas, 2004). Lastly, thanks to Fernando's remittances, Monica was able to open a small grocery business in her own home that gave her a supplementary income without having to abandon her family-related reproductive tasks.

Monica and Fernando were a very close couple, but the husband kept on prolonging his stay in Spain, which resulted in their separation

after nine years of marriage. Fernando met an Ecuadorian women in Spain and had another child with his new partner that was born in Madrid. However, the relationship with his children back in Ecuador did not break down. He continued to cultivate it from a distance, mainly via regular telephone conversations and he also made several trips to Ecuador. Remittances were maintained, but the financial management of this transnational household became very complex, with the emergence of Fernando's 'second family' in Spain.

We held a second interview with Fernando in Madrid in 2014. Time and the onset of the economic crisis in Spain had altered the family's transnational geographic and social mobility strategies. Fernando's purchasing power had been reduced following a cut in his salary, so he was forced to lower the remittances he sent to Ecuador, which dropped to 500 dollars a month. One of the children, Ángel, decided to travel to Madrid, where he spent four years studying for a diploma in computing. During this time, he lived with his father, his father's partner and his half-sister. However, once he finished his studies, he was unable to find a satisfactory job in Madrid so he returned to Ecuador. We interviewed Ángel, his mother and younger sister for a second time in Quito in 2015. Monica informed us that she had lost the home the couple had owned before her husband migrated. Poor financial management had led to debts and the property was eventually seized. The family in Ecuador still depend on the remittances Fernando sends, and a small grocery business run by the mother provides an additional source of income. And although the couple are no longer together, Monica is reluctant to agree to a divorce, perhaps because she is afraid of breaking the ties that are likely serve as a reminder to Fernando of the commitment he made to provide for his family when he decided to migrate to Spain.

The example of this family reveals that when either the mother or the father assumes the role of pioneer in the migratory project, the aim is normally to provide for the family: in the case of Fernando the objective was to pay the household expenses and provide his children with an education. Nevertheless, changes in relationships brought about by distance may also transform the dynamics of transnational household social mobility strategies, which may require complex investment patterns that cause tensions in order to meet the social mobility expectations of the various members within the transnational space. In addition to providing for his family in Ecuador and giving his children an education, Fernando acquired

new commitments (a new companion and daughter in Madrid). He bought a flat in Spain, probably to secure an investment which he and his new family in Spain could benefit from in the future, including his new partner, who also contributes to the expenses, in the project. This new relationship in Madrid also affected his future. In the event that he should choose to return to Ecuador, he would settle on the coast, rather than in Quito, as this is the area where his new partner is from. Indeed, during the second interview we held with him in Madrid in 2014, he informed us that he was looking for a plot of land where he could build a small house so that he would have somewhere "to land" on his return to Ecuador.

Similarly the case of Fernando and Monica's family is also representative of the role space and the transnational perspective play in defining the social mobility trajectories of these migrants. Thus, Fernando's discourse clearly shows how the upward mobility strategies and projects target different social and geographic contexts (in this case Madrid and Ecuador). Consequently, a specific investment in either of the two scenarios would bring about different results in the two social spaces. The social mobility strategy of our informant as the main provider of two households varies and changes depending on the demands and needs of each of the members. Therefore, the main objective is to guarantee an upward mobility strategy for the children (in both Spain and Ecuador) and, at the same time to maintain part of their individual mobility project. On many occasions this project was cut short owing to the economic crisis that hit Spain in 2008 and which eventually obliged him to redirect his efforts towards building a social mobility trajectory in Ecuador as part of a return strategy.

5. CONCLUSIONS: CHALLENGES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY

Looking beyond the classic analytical categories limited to the boundaries of the Nation State, the analysis of the biographical itineraries of Ecuadorian migration has revealed the importance of including family dynamics in the study of transnational social mobility strategies. It has shown that social mobility is not a lineal phenomenon, but rather a highly complex and dynamic process that

involves all members of the household (including those that remain in the country of origin), regardless of whether or not they play an active role in migration.

The article has intended to show how interaction between individual and family strategies can explain the way social mobility trajectories are transformed and reconfigured during the course of the migratory project, attempting to highlight the dynamic, procedural and longitudinal nature of social change trajectories. It reveals how the decision to adopt a specific intergenerational strategy for upward social mobility is determined by the type of migrant household studied, defined in turn by the generation to which each individual belongs, their role in the family as well as geographical mobility, which, in this case, is seen from the perspective of pioneer migrants. We have attempted to integrate a two-fold articulation between generational categories and mobility/immobility categories that could provide us with an insight into the transnational family, considering their inter-generational transnational social mobility strategies from a spatial dimension.

The article also highlights how social mobility projects, strategies and trajectories vary depending on both the family member and the social space under consideration (country of origin and host country). Transnational households are able to adopt social mobility strategy decisions that fail to lead to a positive outcome in all senses. Similarly, the strategies adopted by migrant households do not carry identical social mobility trajectories for all members of the family: some may rise on the social hierarchy ladder (e.g. family members left behind), whilst others may stagnate or experience a downward trend in their status (e.g. the stagnation of pioneer migrants' careers).

Lastly, the accounts of the life histories presented in this article reflect the need to interrelate three dimensions, namely time (longitudinal perspective) generation and space, when analysing the social mobility trajectories of transnational households. The intersection of these analysis categories harbours the greatest complexity in terms of examining the social mobility itineraries of the migrant population. For this reason, it is essential to develop theoretical and methodological approaches that will allow us to move beyond the nationalism associated with classic research into social mobility, whilst at the same time overcoming the individual perspective in the analysis of social change. Thus, the approach

that we propose in this article supports the study of social mobility trajectories within the framework of the transnational projects of social mobility of transnational households which combine individual, family and collective strategies.

In conclusion, the methodological and analytical approach discussed in this article is intended to represent a research perspective designed to meet the challenges and complexities involved in the study of the transnational social mobility of the migrant population and their families. The main results obtained reflect the importance of adopting a diachronic and longitudinal intergenerational approach in order to analyse the transformations and variations associated with geographic and social mobility strategies and trajectories within the different social spaces (origin, destination and transnational space) at various stages of the migratory process and individuals' life cycle. Finally, this article has attempted to contribute to the many existing scientific studies into transnational families using an analysis of the issue of social mobility based on an intergenerational perspective, an approach that has been less commonly used in literature.

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