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How and why does it matter to understand
diverse urban engagements from the migrants'
perspective?*



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Abstract

The configurations of smaller cities increasingly diversify due to global migration flows. As local residents, migrants have tactics and views of engaging with the diversification of such places. They draw from experiences with multiple diversities in the 'sending context', transit spaces, and the 'receiving society'. I ask how various 'old' and 'new' conceptions of diversity and difference combine in migrants' everyday lived experience. I take recurrent examples of simple everyday encounters such as greeting and dwelling in urban spaces into account to disentangle the various levels of reflections, habitual expectations and tactical actions. I draw from 18 months of multi-sited fieldwork in neighbourhoods of regional capitals in Casamance, Senegal, and Catalonia, Spain. A matched sample of Casamançais migrants in Catalonia and their family and friends in Casamance links the two sites. My interlocutors of various cultural, religious, socio-economic and legal backgrounds shared the reference to Casamance as an early place of socialisation. Additionally, they had the national, sub-regional and global references of differentiation and integration at their disposal, both drawing from dominant discourses and the experiences gathered throughout the migration process. Engaging with this ethnographic case, I will show that, firstly, a regional focus prevents simple 'groupist' explanations. Secondly, assuming the migrants' perspective on urban everyday sociality shows a distinct way of engaging multiple and overlapping 'old' and 'new' ways of differentiating and homogenising practices. Finally, my ethnography raises awareness for the multiple transformations of minimal sociality during transnational migration as well as in the respective local urban contexts.

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Introduction

The configurations of smaller cities increasingly diversify due to global migration flows. In Catalonia, the north-Eastern region of Spain, the numbers of international migrants rapidly increased since the early 2000s and resulted in increasingly diversified towns.¹ This combined with the massive arrival of labour migrants from the South of Spain in the 1950s and 1960s.² As a result, there are neighbourhoods in which every other person is born outside the Catalonia region, and one in four inhabitants claims foreign nationality (e.g. Ajuntament de Mataró 2012). All local residents, the people that actually dwell in the neighbourhood, have to deal with this diversification. The focus of this paper is the migrants' tactics and views of engaging with the diversification of such places and the differences encountered.³ How do migrants compare between multiple urban diversities, especially in the sending and receiving contexts? What are the tactics and views used to engage with diversified social situations? And, how do various 'old' and 'new' conceptions of diversity and difference combine in migrants' everyday lived experience? To answer these questions I briefly introduce my methodology before turning to the multi-layered comparative framework, which emerges by taking the migrants' perspective seriously, and the case of everyday encounters with people who remain different.

Firstly, to prevent the ethnic or national lens (Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003, 2002), I conducted fieldwork with migrants of various cultural, religious, socio-economic and legal backgrounds who only shared the reference

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1 In the early years of the 2000s, the number of foreigners recorded in Spanish municipal registers more than doubled in one year, from 923,879 in 2001 to 1,977,946 in 2002 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2002, 2003). These numbers are taken from the municipal register (padrón) and include foreign born with and without formal legal residence and/or work permit as long as they registered with the local town authorities. Over 1.3 million of the foreign born in Spain hold Spanish nationality, and over 240,000 in Catalonia (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2012).

2 These internal migration movements have been widely analysed (cf. Alvarez and Antolín 1973; Ávila 1993; Bentolila and Dolado 1991; Bentolila 2001; Bover and Velilla 2005; Ródenas Calatayud 1994; Silvestre Rodríguez 2002; Solé Puig 2000).

3 I use 'tactical' and 'tactics' with reference to de Certeau (1988). In opposition to 'strategies' of institutions and powerful actors, he defines ordinary people's 'tactics' as their creative ways to engage with institutionally prescribed cultural productions (1988: xvii-xviii).

to Casamance in Senegal as an early place of socialisation. I draw from 18 months of multi-sited fieldwork in neighbourhoods of regional capitals in Casamance, Senegal, and Catalonia, Spain. A matched sample of Casamançais migrants in Catalonia and their family and friends in Casamance links the two sites (cf. Heil 2013). Casamançais sociality, which builds upon the diversity of residents in Casamance, is both a backdrop and recurrent reference point of Casamançais in Catalonia. It is, however, only one among many.

Secondly, the migrant perspective does not mean to simply construct the perspective of a homogenous other. Rather, to understand the significance of exploring the perspectives of migrants, I emphasise that Casamançais draw from experiences with multiple diversities in the 'sending context', transit spaces, and the 'receiving society'. They do so while being also influenced by their various backgrounds. This will become apparent in the first section of this paper in which I shall engage with the multi-layered comparative framework of the diversity among migrants themselves and the routes they have taken. I see this framework as a repertoire from which migrants pick selectively to make sense of the new situations they encounter.

Thirdly, and finally, I shall argue that studying urban diversities by starting from the migrants' perspectives raises awareness for a minimal sociality, which emerges from the basic social practices of interaction, negotiation and translation. I have termed this process *conviviality* (Heil 2013). In the second part of this paper, I shall engage with greeting practices and the dwelling in public spaces to give examples of how we can become aware of *conviviality* by taking the migrants' practices of comparison as a starting point. Let me first engage with the process of comparison in which migrants were involved and which reflects their individual migration trajectories.

Understanding a multi-layered comparative framework

Migrants from the Casamance, as most migrants and especially those who cannot use a direct route, drew from multiple experiences with diversities in the 'sending context', transit spaces, and the 'receiving society'. Frequently, I was told that it was most normal to be ready to adjust to new places since they were bound to be different from the previous ones. Recurrent examples given by Casamançais were their travels to Dakar into the Wolof milieu, or other forms of rural-urban migration (cf. Snyder

1981; Linares 2003; Lambert 2002; Foucher 2002; van der Klei 1985). Short-distance, yet cross-border migration to Guinea Bissau or Gambia provoked the same perceived need of adjustment. The most straightforward dimension of it was language learning. Migrants expected the localities they arrived in to be different from previous ones; they were aware of social change through space and over time. The following trajectory emerges from various ethnographic vignettes and characterises some of the most pertinent steps that lie between Casamance and Europe.

One of my informants in Spain, Alain, was born in Casamance in a mixed village of various ethnic and religious affiliations. This village represented well the case of Casamance, a region diverse in ethnic groups and religious affiliations (cf. de Jong 2007; ANSD 2005, 2009; Barbier-Wiesser 1994; Pélissier 2008 [1966]). Already as a child, Alain went to live with his parents in the regional capital of Middle Casamance, Sédhiou, which had a majority of Muslims and a linguistic dominance of Mandinka that was not his mother tongue. As most Casamançais, and certainly his fellow Jola, Alain adjusted readily to changing linguistic contexts, although tensions were often latently present. As a Christian, he was additionally aware of the fragile balance between Muslims and Christians, which the neighbourly disputes over pigs exemplify. Most of the time free roaming pigs owned by Christians were part and parcel of neighbourhood life, as were goats and sheep. Alain, however, repeatedly referred to situations in which stones were tossed at pigs, or they were beaten and sometimes poisoned. Others said this was in response to them destroying vegetable gardens and they claimed that only the same measures were taken as with goats and sheep. This state of affairs frequently led to open confrontations, yet attacking pigs additionally caused feelings of disrespect on the side of Christians (Heil 2014: 11).

Despite such everyday tensions caused by either religious or other dimensions of difference, on a visit of his home neighbourhood of Sédhiou, Alain continuously engaged in multilingual greeting, which at times turned into proper visits when he was asked to remain for some time. It resulted in respectful relations between neighbours, people of various ethnic backgrounds and adhering to different beliefs. This concern with good neighbourly relations was a central one of Casamançais, and it remained a standard throughout their migration experience (Heil 2014).

As a late teenager, Alain had lived with his brother in a *quartier populaire* in Dakar where he relied on Wolof in the everyday, also not his mother tongue. He also got accustomed to an urban life style, which differed from the Casamançais one since in his view neighbourly solidarity largely went missing. In contrast, other people represented the peripheral neighbourhoods of Dakar as sites of quasi village social life.

Solidary relations, greetings and taking an interest in the other were crucial. Alain's different portrayal can be related to his personal aspirations and urban outlook. Struggling in crisis-ridden Spain, Dakar remained the closest reference to his preferred lifestyle of which individual economic success was a crucial aspect. The experiences and the various representations of life in Dakar played into how Alain and some of his fellow migrants, who had passed through Dakar, lived and interpreted their everyday encounters in the urban diversity of Catalonia.

For a Muslim interlocutor of mine, Ansou, who migrated stepwise and spent considerable periods in both Libya and Morocco, life there turned out to be formative. Some Casamançais felt strongly about their experiences of racism in North Africa (cf. Pliez 2004; Hamood 2006). Ansou had worked for several months in Libya to save the money for his onward migration. He gave numerous instances of how he, as a sub-Saharan black Muslim, had been exposed to racism and had lived in permanent fear. Libyans, in particular, randomly exerted their power over black immigrants, stopping them on their way to work, blaming them for raping, seducing or simply looking at Libyan women, and on occasion beating them. Furthermore, many North Africans were blamed for neither accepting sub-Saharans as Muslim brothers, nor acknowledging them to be Muslims at all. This led to narratives of a marginalised and cautious life-style of many Casamançais in transit in North Africa.

In a very different way, Ansou's migration experience crossing over to the Canary Islands mattered since he became friends with a fellow Senegalese through whom he accessed strong family networks in Spain. Being the first one of his family and village to migrate, this was crucial for Ansou's social incorporation. Having met a fellow Jola from the same region of origin who shared his own personal networks enforced the differences between a good person and the hardship he encountered in Northern Africa and the risk and marginality when crossing over to the Canary Islands.

For most of my interlocutors, the crossings of the Mediterranean or the Atlantic left altogether different imprints. Abuse, isolation, persecution, detention, uncertainty, hostility and domination played into the often traumatic experience of arriving in Europe (cf. Carling 2007; Willems 2008). Casamançais assumed that the reasons behind these experiences always had to do with belonging to the wrong groups of people. Both the discrimination on the basis of one's origin and the traumatic experiences of crossing the sea often mattered for living in European neighbourhoods.

Once in Spain and settling in the Catalonia region, the various experiences during migration composed the repertoire of my informants from which they drew to understand and act upon in everyday encounters. For example, learning a new lan-

guage, Catalan, was equated with learning Wolof in Dakar, Creole in Guinea Bissau, or Arabic in North Africa. This polylinguaging (Jørgensen et al. 2011) rarely consisted of an advanced command of the standard varieties, but, truncated as the language practice could be, it was successful in securing everyday communication (cf. Blommaert et al. 2005: 199-200). Such language practice facilitated conviviality but also always took the possibility of onward migration into account.

In addition, the cultural distinctiveness of Catalonia was compared to the cultural uniqueness of Casamance. Catalonia was read through the categories that had been established in the various places of socialisation. In many respects, Casamance was a good match. The obvious equation between the regions was their struggles for autonomy and/or independence within a nation state that was felt to work against the regions' development and prosperity. The same people also mentioned the independence movements in both regions as a common denominator. Leaving national politics behind, Casamançais also compared the fact that, in both regions languages were spoken and cultures practised that were different from the national ones (i.e. Wolof in Senegal and Castilian in Spain). This shared experience resulted in sympathy on the part of the Casamançais for the Catalan authorities who required immigrants to familiarise with Catalan as a culture and language. Apart from having the additional effect of Casamançais actually exposing of some fragmented knowledge of Catalan, this more importantly inspired a positive identification of Casamançais with Catalonia. This was reciprocated by some Catalans with an awareness of the impressive language skills of sub-Saharan African immigrants.

On the other hand, their rich migration experience did not prevent several Casamançais of accusing 'the Spanish' (oftentimes an umbrella term including the Catalans) or 'the Catalans' of being backward and not 'international'. They felt this was exemplified by the limited spread of Spanish in the world, the small number of local Spanish and Catalans who had travelled extensively, and the vulgar and insulting language repertoire of their Spanish work colleagues in the low-pay sector. From this perspective, countries like France, Canada and to a lesser degree the United States always remained important idealised reference points. As hopes for onward migration to these places remained omnipresent, they constituted another level of comparison which was additionally nurtured by the stories of friends and families who had made it there.

Each of these contexts provided important reference points to the various ways of comparison and identification of Casamançais. Apart from relating to Casamance as the common region of origin, Casamançais had national, sub-regional and global

references of differentiation and integration at their disposal, drawing from both dominant discourses and the experiences they gathered throughout migration. As in the case of religion, their self-identification mediated some of the experiences made. In Catalonia, the local, national and transnational references and experiences similarly became influential in everyday life. Furthermore, the local dynamics of a neighbourhood or town as well as the political climate in Europe were relevant factors influencing the ways migrants read and engaged with everyday social relations.

I now turn to the question of how various 'old' and 'new' conceptions of diversity and difference combine in the migrants' everyday lived experience. Apart from trying to understand how these various conceptions interact and how migrants' directly or indirectly compare between their various experiences, I hold that migrants passing through and living in local social fields during their transnational migrations are prone to develop tactics and views of how living in diversity and with difference can be achieved peacefully.

Everyday encounters

Greeting and dwelling in urban spaces are two examples of recurrent, simple everyday encounters that offer insights into the Casamançais' various levels of reflections, habitual expectations and tactical actions. The following ethnographic vignettes raise awareness for the multiple transformations of minimal sociality – or conviviality – during transnational migration as well as in the respective local urban contexts.

Greeting

Apart from the complex linguistic choices that were made in diverse urban spaces (cf. Heil 2012; Dreyfus and Juillard 2005), Casamançais described variations of street scenes ranging from not directly interacting with people in the space they passed through to situations in which they inhabited open spaces in prolonged encounters. The main common reasons for greeting among most of my interlocutors were to show respect and to maintain cooperative relationships within the neighbourhood (cf. Heil 2013). However, many Casamançais were aware that this could be achieved in various ways depending on the spaces and people. Thus, greeting practices inevitably resulted from conceptual translation and on-going negotiation processes during which the various stages of the migration remained important reference points.

Most clearly, the changes in greeting practices appeared in apartment blocks. Idrissa had grown up in Casamance but had also passed considerable amounts of time in Dakar. He had studied at the university, was politically active and well aware of social and cultural dynamics around him. In Catalonia, he lived in a typical neighbourhood, which was built at the time of southern European immigration and had a relatively high proportion of international migrants. He conveyed that ‘with the neighbours – we will not visit. But anyway, if we meet on the stairs, we greet each other, we chat, sometimes we take two minutes to chat and all that.’⁴ (Granollers, 11/2010). The main difference was, that in Casamance people were expected to take more time to greet. The cooperative and accommodating aspects, however, remained similar even if the greeting practices were massively reduced, shortened and sometimes abandoned.

Creating a link between his bad experiences in Northern Africa and a conflict with a Moroccan neighbour in Catalonia, Ansou, in contrast, never greeted his Moroccan neighbours. Discussing with him about his relations with the various inhabitants of the neighbourhood, he clearly stated that he did not like to rub shoulders with North Africans since he perceived strong differences between their approaches to living together concerning mutual appreciation, reception and personal integrity:

I don't like to mix with Moroccans. There are plenty of differences between us: how to appreciate each other, how to behave and how to receive the other. It's different. We are different. ... *I have already been to the Arab countries: Mauritania, Algeria, Libya, Morocco. And we meet here. Almost wherever we work, we work together. ... Integrity, for me, they lack it a lot. But I see this is something we cannot change in them. Either you accept it or [not]. ... It is not all of them. There are very good ones, very good ones ... In our block there are very good ones. ... [but] I tell you, most people I've known are not reliable.*⁵ (Ansou Diédhiou, 11/2010, emphasis added)

4 French: ‘avec les voisins – on ne va pas se rendre visite. Mais quand même, si on se rencontre dans les escaliers, on se salue, on cause, des fois on prend deux minutes pour causer et tout ça.’

5 French: ‘Les Marocains je n'aime pas les côtoyer. Il y a plein de différences entre nous : la façon de s'estimer, la façon de se comporter et la façon de recevoir l'autre. C'est différent. On est différent. ... Moi, j'ai fait les pays arabes déjà : Mauritanie, Algérie, Libye, Maroc. Et on se croise ici. Presque partout où nous travaillons, on travaille ensemble. ... Honnêteté, pour moi, ça leur manque beaucoup. Mais je vois que c'est une chose qu'on ne peut pas changer chez eux. Ou tu acceptes ça ou [non]. ... Ils ne sont pas tous comme ça. Il y a de très bons, de très bons ... Dans notre bloc-là il y a des très bons. ... [Mais] je te le dis, la plupart des gens que j'ai connus ne sont pas des gens fiables.’

Ansou clearly referred to the experiences he made during migration. He inferred in Catalonia that the *moros*, a pejorative term for North Africans, could not be trusted and minimal respect was missing. Others confirmed that negotiating shared understandings frequently failed due to the missing efforts of translating or generously equating differing social practices. Ansou's various observations during migration conflated into a multi-layered comparative framework. It was evoked when he and others met people in Spain with whom they had previous experiences elsewhere. I argue that an awareness of this framework facilitates a differentiated understanding of how migrants evaluate and qualify the various categories of people as well as their practices and underlying values.

Ansou judging North African co-residents was just one example of many neighbourly interactions that Fode Sadio Faty also made an effort to perceive distinctly in Europe:

You cannot force this [the relationship between residents]. Maybe I can force it with my compatriot; I can come to see him without notifying him, ... like in Africa. But the one who is next to me, the European, I cannot do it the way I did it there. I observed. There is a bit of reticence, a bit of individualism here. ... Because first of all, he has not opened the door for it to be possible to approach him. ... I got used to that. If we meet in the stairs: 'Salut' – 'Salut', 'Hola' – 'Hola'. This is all. Sometimes there is not even a 'Hola'.⁶ (Granollers, 11/2010).

No spontaneous visits, individualism, reticence, superficial relations, minimal greeting and keeping problems to themselves were the essence of Fode Sadio's observation of his relations with his neighbours in Catalonia. He did not judge these differences of neighbourliness; instead, he described the process of translation that he engaged in when he arrived in Catalonia. His aiming for good neighbourly relations remained the same; the meaning of these good relations had changed. Translation went beyond the literal sense requiring the re-interpretation of concepts and adjusting oneself in the new local context. It, however, also meant that something was maintained, i.e. Fode Sadio's case in aiming for neighbourliness.

6 French: 'Ça [les relations entre les habitants du bloc] ne peut pas se forcer. Peut-être, moi je peux forcer avec mon compatriote, je peux lui rendre visite sans l'aviser, ... comme en Afrique. Mais celui qui est à côté, un Européen, je ne peux pas faire comme je faisais avec le gars. ... J'ai observé. ... Il y a un peu de réticence, un peu d'individualisme de ce côté-là. ... Premièrement, il ne m'a pas ouvert la porte pour pouvoir l'approcher, ... Je me suis adapté à ça. Quand je sors on se rencontre dans l'escalier: "Salut" – "Salut", "Hola" – "Hola". C'est tout. Des fois, il y a même pas "Hola".'

Many Casamançais said they tried to greet inhabitants of their neighbourhood but stopped doing so after they never got a reply. Many attributed such (non-)encounters to European individualism (cf. Riccio 2005: 110f; Cruise O'Brien 1972: 260-4), yet some perceived it to be the norm in the specific local context since they were not sure where the people were from with whom they interacted. Still, many remained who thought that people who did not greet were poorly educated since they showed no respect for those they encountered. Thus, whether to interact with direct neighbours or not was not always categorically blamed on poorly educated European individualists, but depended on the specific local contexts and the track record of actual interactions, and the perception of people and categories involved.

As a result, Casamançais greeted at least someone along the way, but not everyone alike. Greeting ranged on a spectrum from a simple statement on the occasion of a random, unintentional fleeting encounter, to an active engagement with a newly arrived neighbour. Common to all was that respect was shown to the ones encountered mainly through taking the right amount of time to attend to the other. The ability to observe and increasingly pre-empt situational prerequisites, such as the appropriate allocation of time, showed the readiness of Casamançais to translate between various previously experienced practices and ruling local forms of conviviality. Adjusting to various situations and people was something they had been accustomed to in Casamance and had actively experienced in various transit spaces.

Dwelling in public

In addition to fleeting encounters such as greeting, Casamançais also dwelled in public spaces. In Casamance, as well as in Senegal in general (cf. Ralph 2008), groups drinking tea at street corners in front of a shop or the entrance to a house was a recurrent scene. If available, people provided sufficient stools and benches to accommodate whoever wanted to join in, either permanently or for a short while. In Catalonia, no chairs were taken into the public tea was not prepared outdoors, but local residents – including Casamançais – still gathered in pedestrian zones, in front of kiosks and internet cafes, on public squares and in parks. Given the observable parallels between Casamance and Catalonia, can the practices in public spaces be linked by a comparative perspective that starts from the migrants' point of view and, if so, how?

I argue that when local residents dwelled in open spaces, the resulting social situations produced a sense of locality. This was a common denominator. In both Casa-

mance and Catalonia, rather than being a process of colonisation of space, which Appadurai (2005 [1995]: 183-4) suggests is inherent in any production of locality, the sustained presence of groups of local residents in open spaces was part of an ongoing negotiation process including moments of disagreement and tension. Inhabiting public spaces embodied the negotiation of a locally specific, acceptable way of living with difference. This became apparent and vocalised in the practice of contrasting and comparing the practices of inhabiting public spaces and its negotiation in Catalonia and Casamance (and in transit spaces).

In Carrer Rosselló in Mataró, people regularly gathered at a crossroads in front of a Moroccan-run *locutori*, a cyber café with several phone cabins for cheap international calls. Many Casamançais were among them. News was exchanged along with colloquial joking. In comparison with Casamance, gatherings in Catalonia were equally repetitive, spontaneous and diverse. Although in Carrer Rosselló the situation was dominated by black migrants, people of different immigration statuses, education backgrounds, rural and urban origins, and ethnic and religious backgrounds generally took part. Various languages prevailed in interactions of both men and women from various origins and religions. Not all the Casamançais involved in the scene knew each other. Some definitely knew their fellow Mandinka or Jola better than people speaking other languages. On the other hand, the Casamançais also interacted with the employees in the shops, and despite negative prejudices against North Africans, the Moroccan owner of the *locutori*. Furthermore, all kinds of people passed by the Casamançais' early evening gatherings and greeted those with whom they were acquainted, i.e. their work colleagues and neighbours.

Recreating a scene that resembled gatherings in urban spaces in Casamance, Casamançais and other local residents temporarily produced locality, which emerged as a convivial space incorporating a great number of different people. Although preparing tea or hanging out together in Casamance often happened in fixed constellations and remained gender and age differentiated, these activities were also very inclusive. At times people of various religious and ethnic groups were involved, at others women and men would sit together, or people of different ages, although this occurred less frequently. Serving tea to someone working close by, or joining in for only one round of tea were looser forms of weaving the social fabric. People dealt with differences by switching languages, offering stools to elders and guests, and quietly acknowledging diverse origins and religions. During gatherings, convivial space emerged from the practices of local residents. Most situations conveyed a seamless fluidity evident in both communication and movement.

This was part of the normality of living in urban diversity that many Casamançais in Catalonia referred to – sometimes nostalgically. Many assumed that such socialising was habitual to them, or at least to their co-migrants. Some made an effort of distinguishing themselves from the others whom they blamed to either regard such gatherings as a waste of time or not take them seriously enough. Independent of whether my interlocutors portrayed the socialising in streets positively or negatively, the comparison was on-going. People like Ansou with partially long interim stays in several transit countries, also referenced their additional experiences. In Casamance, Catalonia and transit spaces, convivial gatherings had to be negotiated. To acknowledge the limits of negotiation takes the fragility and uncertainty of convivial situations into consideration (cf. Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 7).

The limits of negotiation could be experienced in multiple ways. In the past, Carrer Rosselló had seen moments of conflict arising from differing interests in open spaces. A couple of large seats were one of the few permanent installations inviting social gatherings to Carrer Rosselló, yet by 2011, one of the seats was gone. Souleymane, who continued to sit there, explained that the seat had been taken away by the town authorities to appease a woman living in the house next to it who had frequently complained about the noisy gatherings of people. Even other Casamançais, like Alain who had lived in Dakar, felt that the space was overcrowded. For Souleymane, it was normal that open spaces like Carrer Rosselló were used in many ways and that this would lead to differences in opinion and conflicts at times. What was acceptable and what was conflictual, however, was locality specific. From Souleymane's perspective, the contestations and negotiations of the case of Carrer Rosselló had seemingly resulted in a new local consensus around maintaining it as an open space, respecting more the comfort zone of certain neighbours while still allowing social gatherings of various people.

Spontaneous but sustained gatherings in Carrer Rosselló on the one hand expressed a continuity of Casamançais practices in Catalonia, which in part matched the practices of other local residents. On the other hand, such gatherings were constantly negotiated and contested both among Casamançais and within the given local context. The experiences of interactions in public spaces which Casamançais had collected during the migration process also played in. Both in Catalonia and Casamance, the fact that everyday sociality would happen in generally shared spaces remained unquestioned. More than anything else, *how* open spaces could be inhabited was at stake. Casamançais took it for granted that perspectives on the use of open spaces differed between various local residents and thus needed to be negoti-

ated. Many showed a willingness while others had tactical reasons, to translate their own practices into an emerging local consensus. Both were part of their understanding of conviviality. Living together was necessarily an on-going process dependent on the changing social configurations of the neighbourhood. It was fragile as well, but Casamançais worked towards maintaining it. One seat remained in Carrer Rosselló, symbolically reinforcing this interpretation. As with practices of greeting, gatherings in open spaces were possible, although in a somewhat altered form that depended on the locally valid consensus of conviviality.

Conclusion

Taking migration as a background for granted and enquiring a post-migration situation, my comparative study of conviviality has offered new empirical input for theoretical discussions of the (minimal) sociality in diversifying human agglomerations. Engaging with the ethnographic case of Casamançais in Catalonia and Casamance, I have firstly implemented a regional focus, which prevented me from offering simple 'groupist' explanations. I studied with people who identified in multiple ways and drew from a range of categories to situate and name their own practices and those of others.

Secondly, assuming the migrants' perspective has come with an awareness for the migrants' socialisation in the places of origin and transit and for multiple and overlapping 'old' and 'new' ways of differentiating and homogenising practices. I have shown how complex the migration trajectories of some of my interlocutors were and how rich and multidimensional their experiences were. Although I did not manage to systematically explore all of the possible comparative dimensions raised in the first part of the paper in the discussion of greeting and dwelling practices, I have pointed in the direction of acknowledging the rich repertoire of migrants' perspectives for living in 'new' urban diversities.

As a result of engaging with these perspectives, I was thirdly able to offer a reading of urban engagements as conviviality. This describes a process in which maintained differences are negotiated and translated in fleeting encounters and everyday interactions. Both translation and negotiation were central tactics of the Casamançais in encountering difference. The views linked to them were manifold: a felt need to show respect, to dedicate time, to engage with the differences encountered and to

accommodate various conflicting perspectives. They were crucial in understanding the Casamançais engagement with diverse social situations. In diversified contexts, taking account of the variety of migrants' perspectives has thus invited a discussion of conviviality as an alternative form of sociality that is minimal, malleable and constantly changing, yet forms enough of a basis for living together.

Finally, my ethnography has raised awareness for the multiple transformations of minimal sociality during transnational migration as well as in the respective local urban contexts. We have seen that 'old' and 'new' conceptions of diversity and difference were not identical and did not remain the same. They differed between places and changed over time. This calls for a conceptualisation of urban engagements that takes conviviality seriously as a process that is ongoing, hard to generalise and evasive, but meaningful among those who have a lot of experiences of living with maintained difference.

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