Internal migration:
Unaccompanied minors from Morocco, migrating from the rural areas to tangier to try to reach the European Shores

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Abstract:
The phenomenon of unaccompanied minors that cross the border to Spain without the company of any responsible adult) most of them hiding under the trucks and buses that enters the Ferry's from Tangier to Spain, started around the 90's. But, the migration process for some of these boys started before; from the rural areas of Beni Mellal and Kaala Das Sarana to Tangier, were some of them live without the care of any adult for months and even years trying to migrate to Europe. Based in six month of fieldwork in Morocco, and six years of fieldwork between Morocco and Spain, the aim of the paper is analyze for one side what's happening in the rural areas, who are this boys and their families and to explain their situation in Tangier.

"There is no way back, cross or die" (A., young boy from the rural area living in Tangier meanwhile trying to cross to Spain).

Introduction

One of the most riveting sets of images in the international press in the last decade has been the arrival of young North African boys who cross the Straits of Gibraltar trying to reach the shores of southern Spain. Most have been Moroccans, coming by hiding under trucks or buses on ferries from

Tangier, in northern Morocco, or in overloaded *"pateras,"* small, precarious speed boats run by professional smugglers.

But for some of this boys the migration process doesn't beguine in Tangier, it beguines some months or even some years before, when they leave the rural area places in the center and south of Morocco where they come from and they move to Tangier with the aim to cross to Spain.

They made the street their place and way of living, they organize themselves from places of origin and we could say that they become the most vulnerable of the migrating boys.

Seeing these boys appearing under such dire circumstances, the world press reacted in shock and disbelief: How could this happen in a civil European society in this day and age? Since the time when these boys first began appearing in the 1990s, their plight has commanded international attention from policy makers and humanitarian rights groups as well as scholars[1] and journalists. Children are not only legal minors, but by any measure of international law, they are the most vulnerable of persons. In the present case, they are also unaccompanied. International humanitarian conventions view children lacking the care and supervision of an adult as "neglected," a status that, irrespective of their nationality or circumstances, should accord them immediate protection in whatever state they arrive. Concern for the welfare of children, particularly neglected ones, is one of the strongest values in contemporary Europe as well as in UN and humanitarian law. No other group draws as much worry. Why, then, do Moroccan boys arrive like this, and why do so many of them end up in such perilous circumstances, either in Spain or back in Morocco?

Hidden from the sensational headlines have been two things: the pressures back home that have moved these boys to come, and reports of how they have fared in Spain.

The pattern of sending Moroccan children away from their parents to live elsewhere for training or schooling, or simply to live with other family members, is nothing new. While migration close to home has long been a way of promoting children and transnational migration has in some ways simply become an extension of these former practices, North African children have been coming to Spain for decades. Thousands have come under family reunification programs, educational programs, and

[1] Most of the literature and findings on unaccompanied minors – Capdevila (2003), Con Red (2005), Empez (2005), Jimenez (2004), UNICEF (2005) – is about boys, though there also exist social networks for girls who come to be fostered by families in Europe and who quickly become invisible subjects in the unaccompanied minors migratory phenomenon.

work. What is new, only within the 1990's, is the rise of those who migrate alone: "unaccompanied minors," as they have come to be called, without any relative or responsible adult. These children migrate to a different continent, far away from close family assistance.

In this paper we will focus in this internal migration, and show where they come from, how they organize etc.

Background of the present study

Núria Empez examined the lives of unaccompanied minors in Catalonia, Spain, where many Moroccan children come (Empez: 2003). This work was based on my experiences in her job as a social worker in Catalonia specializing in immigrant cases and in dealing with Spanish policies on the handling of unaccompanied children who migrate to Spain. Beginning participant observation in Barcelona in 2001. Did the master thesis (Empez: 2003) on unaccompanied minors included four years of fieldwork, in Barcelona, including visits to Tangier, Morocco, with some of the families of children that met in Spain. The most recent fieldwork, in Morocco, was on family migration dynamics, funded by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research and forming part of her PhD dissertation for the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona. During fieldwork in Tangier, from April to October 2006, studied socialization practices and reproductive strategies among families who send child migrants to Spain, and the process of decision making in child migration. The findings then took her back to Catalonia, where I interviewed professionals in the minors' protection system dealing with unaccompanied minors.

Alex Muñoz, is a freelance documentalist, he made severals documentaries in Spanish south border. He moved and lived in Morroc, were he shared some of the field work with Núria.

During the fieldwork in Morocco, we relied most heavily on qualitative methods: participant observation, open-ended interviews, discussion groups, informal conversation, analyses of media, and so on. we had contact with many boys who were trying to cross to Spain from the port: those in the street, those from rural areas, those in temporary street situations, and the ones coming from the city of Tangier. Our subjects included people from Tangier and rural people from the district of Beni Mellal; families of children (and children themselves) who were returned as "minors" in family reunification by Spain; adults who wanted to migrate; families with children in Spain; ex-unaccompanied minors who were repatriated from Spain as adults; families with adult members living in Europe; young workers; students; older women; people living or working in the port; school teachers; NGO (non-governmental organization) workers; and members of Moroccan authorities. The

research included as well secondary analyses of survey data (CERED,[2] the Spanish Municipal Register, the Spanish Census of 2001,[3] etc.).

The numbers rural area kids living in Tangier as unaccompanied minors

Is difficult to quantify the number of children coming from the rural area to Tangier trying to migrate. It doesn't exist any register of census of this boys, and we can have just a qualitative approximation of the phenomena. Is difficult to recognize the rural area boys from the others in Tangier Harbor, there is a dynamic movement with the kids, if the police chough them they are send back wit buses to the rural area, the children return to Tangier.

We can made an approximation of the rural area migrants for the number of buses departing in tangier with the aim of sending them back.

History of migration between Morocco and Spain

Even if we are going to center in the rural area minors, is important to briefly understand why they want to migrate to Spain, what is the relation between Spain and their country. The migration of unaccompanied children from Morocco to Spain represents a statistical anomaly – a relatively small number – though there would be many more such children if all who wanted to come were allowed to do so. It is also a number that is decreasing, with intensified efforts by Europe to stop the pattern. To set a context for the rise of the unaccompanied Moroccan minor phenomenon, this section reviews the historical relations between Spain and Morocco, looking especially at laws that have affected the migration of unaccompanied minors from Morocco to Spain.

Morocco and Spain have had a longstanding history of ambivalent relations. One of the most significant events in history occurred during the period of Al-Andalus (VIIIth through XVth centuries), when Arabic Muslims who had co-existed with Spanish Christians in Spanish territory eventually were defeated by the Christians and forced to leave Spain. In 1912 Spain claimed several places in Morocco that it designated as "Spanish protectorate" (in Arabic, *Islam yat Isb niy bi-l-Magrib*): some in the north of the country and some areas in the Sahara desert. The Spanish protectorate lasted until 1956 but there still exist echoes of these times in Northern Morocco: the use of Spanish words

[2] Centre d'Edtudes et de Recherces Demographiques; http://www.cered.hcp.ma/
[3] http://www.ine.es/

mixed with Arabic; Spanish-style buildings like theaters, houses or factories; etc. In the Spanish civil war Moroccans played an important role, supporting the dictator Francisco Franco; what became known as *"La guardia mora"*[4] (1936-1939) promoted fear and negative stereotypes of Moroccans, many of which still exist.

Migration between Morocco and Spain has been a pivotal part of this shared history. What has changed have been the characteristics of that migration. Before 1985, a visa was not required to enter to Spain; there were temporary agricultural and industrial workers coming to Spain for temporary work, without the intention of staying long in Spain. Such migrants were largely young men. Other Moroccans came for education or as tourists. Despite the difficulties they encountered, Moroccans found it relatively easy to come and go from Spain.

In 1985, Spain created the first foreigners law (*La Ley de Extranjeria).*[5] This highly restrictive law, coinciding with, and as a requirement for, the entry of Spain in the EU, was created mainly for police control over migration, punishing people in irregular administrative situations. Not reflected in this law was the question of permanent residence permits for temporary migrants. The second foreigners law, created in 2000 (Law 4/2000), was intended, nominally, to integrate migrants, and hence differed in many ways from the previous law. It facilitated family reunification and the acquisition of a permanent residence permit, and it created forms of regularization for irregular migrants. However, the government decided that these measures were creating a "calling effect": making it easy to stay would encourage other would-be immigrants to try to come. Soon thereafter, the government initiated a reform of the law 4/2000 that became effective in the law 8/2000. This law curtailed considerably the political, employment and social rights of irregular immigrants, and made irregular migration an infraction punishable by expulsion. This law also tightened family reunification requirements, making it more difficult for migrant families to obtain a permanent permit.

Presently we have the law (*Ley Organica*) 14/2003, and its legal coding "*Real decreto 2393/2004*", which is even more restrictive than the previous ones. Under this law, migrants can lose their residence if the conditions under which they obtained their permit change within the first five years, or until they get an individual permanent residence permit. For example, if a woman who came with her husband as part of family reunification is divorced after three years, she will lose her residence, because the

[4] Moroccan Guard.
[5] Ley Orgánica 7/1985, de 1 de Julio, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España)

reason for which she was able to obtain the permit is no longer in effect. Another example is that if someone with temporary residence and work permits loses his job, he can lose his papers, making him vulnerable to exploitive work conditions to try to keep the permit. Another notable legal change was that which appeared in the law 4/2000. Previously if a person stayed for five continuous years in Spanish territory in an irregular administrative situation, he could apply for a residence permit for extraordinary circumstances. Now, irregular migrants can get a permanent residence permit by marrying a Spanish national. Another way of regularizing one's status is through what Spanish law calls "*arraigo*" meaning "root." This consists of proof of having stayed in the county for three continuous years, having no police record, having a job contract lasting at least one year, and being closely related to a legal resident (parent, child, or spouse; not qualifying are siblings, cousins, or other relatives) -- or by possessing a report expedited by the social workers of the local City Hall concluding positively that the migrant had developed social and cultural "roots" in the country. In short, it has become extremely difficult to gain legal status if one enters in an irregular way.

The current foreigners law (RD 2393/2004) contains several other provisions for legal entry and stay in the country. Among them are family reunification, a student visa, or a job contract obtained in the country of origin. Most Moroccans in Spain, however, are not in a situation that would allow them to apply for any of these permits. Concerning work, for example, Spain has what it calls a "*contingente*" – an allocation for a specified number of foreign workers who can come to Spain to work in specific jobs which the Spanish employment market cannot cover.[6] This contingent changes every year, and only certain companies are allowed to requisition workers. The contingent can be nominal or general. In the case of *General Contingent*, just some companies can apply for it. Most of this labor is designated for agriculture, construction and "third sector;" that is, services. Participating companies can apply for workers, but they cannot, in theory, choose special persons; the selection is made in the origin countries, sometimes by private selection companies, sometimes by the local Spanish consulates or embassies. In the case of the *Nominal Contingent,* the employer can apply for one specific person, but just in jobs not covered by the general contingent or applied for by any Spanish or foreigner with a working permit in Spain. Even with these allowances, the system has been inefficient and inequitable, forcing individuals to rely on established economic and patronage networks.

The social context of child migration in Morocco

[6] Articles 77 to 80 of the current foreigners law (*Real Decreto* 2393/2004).

In Spain, the children who have made these trips appear to be neglected. But few are neglected in their families before the migration attempts begin. To understand this paradox, we need to examine the context from which these boys are sent.

Many factors push these boys to migrate, whether directly or indirectly. Everything in Moroccan popular culture publicizes migration to Spain: TV, newspapers, Moroccans living in Europe who come in summer to show off their success, peers, etc. Nonetheless, families are the primary forces. Families want the best for their sons, but they also see a boy's successful migration as a way to guarantee security or help in their collective future. Boys who do not make it to Spain or who are sent back by immigration authorities are commonly met with disdain by their families who cast them as failures and refuse to accept them back as full members. Unless a boy has managed to reach Europe, and preferably also got papers, even when getting to Spain only to be sent back again, he is not seen as being serious about crossing, as wasting his time in the streets, and as not supporting his family.

Data from CERED in 2004 show that Morocco's population has nearly tripled in the last four decades. In 1960 Morocco had a total population of 11,635,000. In 2003 it was 29,520.000. Morocco has a young population. In 2003 the age group between 0 and 14 represented 30% of the total. If we relate these data to the high rates of unemployment and high school dropout and also the history of internal migration, we can get a better grasp of the meaning of the large number of boys and young men without a secure future who seek to come to Spain.

Most of the unaccompanied Moroccan minors in Spain come from Tangier and its surrounding region. Tangier is the capital of its province. It has a population of about 500,000, and the province formed by Tanger-Tetouan-Larache has a population of 2.3 million. Tangier is the principal Moroccan cosmopolitan city, and it contains an extremely varied mix of people. During the period of 1945 to 1956 it was an international enclave, populated by Muslims, Christians and Jews.

In the last 30 years, Morocco has experienced enormous migration movements from the rural areas to the cities. In many cases, families came from rural areas further south to urban areas in the north driven away by the droughts in the 1980's. This exodus is still ongoing. In rural areas there remains much illiteracy and high unemployment; rural jobs are limited and badly paid. Like other cities, Tangier has received most migrants from internal rural to urban migration. It is also absorbing people

coming from other parts of Morocco or even other countries of Sub-Saharan Africa who want to migrate to Europe. The distance to Europe -- Algeciras-Tangier -- is just 14 kilometers, and the city is well known for its industry in smuggling people and goods. It is also a place from which the "irregular migration boats" (*pateras*) leave. There used to be a considerable illicit migration from Tangier, but after the implementation of Spain's "*Sistema Integral de Vigilancia del Estrecho" (SIVE*)[7] in 2002, just a few boats now leave from this area, and people are being forced to take more risky routes such as via Mauritania and now even The Gambia (Pérez; 2005).

The accounts of authors such as Jimenez (2003) and Konrad (2005) give us an idea of the migratory context: Twenty-five percent of Tangier's families do not have electricity at home, and the city is still growing, expanding particularly in the suburbs. There is a significant difference between the peripheral areas, with houses of the poor, and the coastal area, with its modern apartments and big houses. The population of the towns around Tangier migrates to the city, but the suburbs receive most immigrants, so Tangier grows outward, creating ever-greater inequalities among the different neighborhoods, some of the houses being of quite unstable construction, and lacking good transportation and communication with the center of Tangier.

In Morocco anyone who is trying to migrate in an irregular way calls himself "*harraq*." Coming from the classical Arabic word, *harq*, this means "to burn," as in "to burn ties." It does not literally mean this, however. It has become the expression that describes the people who are attempting to migrate in an irregular way. Not all the "harrag" try to migrate from the port area, but the term "*harraq,*" when used to describe children, implies that these children are in the street as a temporary position in time and space. They are seen as in a temporary street situation -- as having a purpose or "calling" -- and from whom much good might come in the future. Possibly hoping to capitalize in the future on the success of some of the children who succeed in reaching and staying in Spain, even the Moroccan port police, who are supposed to take these boys into custody or evict them from the port, often turn a blind eye to their presence. No one identifies a boy who is serious about his migration as a "street child", in the sense of leading an undisciplined, idle life of petty crime. His goal is not to live in the street but to leave the country. For those boys who have not yet succeeded, however, life in the street may be necessary to survive.

[7] Integral Vigilance of the Straits System

Many boys trying to leave Morocco live in the port area of Tangier. The first impression upon arriving in Tangier port area was the perception of the border and all the organization (formal, non-formal and informal) around it. Even back then, the port was a graphic representation of the rest of society. In it was an enormous variety of people all interacting in the same space: fishermen, tourists; port workers, police, street children, truck drivers, *harraqs*. All occupied the same space but for different purposes. Often one group was invisible to the others.

For would-be child migrants conditions of life in the port are extremely hard. They form informal support groups of individuals, and they divide the port into different areas inhabited by groups of boys from the same neighborhoods or towns. They also need certain skills to survive: knowing how to obtain water and food, how to find a safe place to sleep and, most important, how to integrate themselves with a group of other would-be migrants so they can gain group protection. They are not allowed to enter the port, so they have difficulties getting in and out of the place. They must contest not just security police but one another for the occupation of spaces to live and from which to try to migrate: especially for a place under a truck. They are exposed to the weather; they must avoid the police and security services; and every day they must struggle to obtain food and shelter, and to try to get into a ferry to reach Europe. Many of these boys suffer abuse from adults or other boys, including sexual abuse. They also suffer from maladies associated with their living conditions: skin diseases, malnutrition, high fevers, and sunburn. They also suffer from accidents, being beaten by the police and security guards, getting bitten by guard dogs, getting fractures from falling from the walls around the port, drowning, getting run over by vehicles, or getting hit by boat motors. According to my records from discussions with the children and port workers, fourteen deaths occurred from such causes during my fieldwork in Tangier Port between May and October of 2006. None were reported in the local press. Since March 2006, there has been a bus that deports rural children suspected of trying to migrate irregularly from Tangier and deposit them in the rural areas, sometimes irrespective of where their families live. Although those who are sent away usually return the next day, this is a way of discouraging them from their migratory intentions. Despite these conditions, some of these boys refer to the effort to migrate as a job where you must check in every day. Most of these boys keep intermittent relations with their families; some even undertake short visits between migration attempts, though they almost inevitably come back to the port to avoid the shame of having failed to reach Spain – and because this is their job.

Unaccompanied rural area children coming to Tangier

As we said before, lots of children begine the migration processes before to reach Europe. The ones that don't have economical support from their parents (to pay a visa, smuggler, etc.) begin their particular "Odisey" back in Morocco.

The majority of they boys that we meet during the field work, explained us that they started their migratory processes in schooling age, arround 14 and 15 years old. The migratory idea started some days and even months ago, when they start thinking on that with the group of peers. Usually the first time the parents don't know about their sons adventure. With some money they save, they start the journey to Tangier, that depending on the money can last some days. Once in Tangier, they go to Tangier port, we some of the most experienced boys explained them the ways of surviving (how to hide from the police, we to get food, were to sleep, how to try to get into a truck that will go to Spain, etc.) The conditions are really hard, and some of the boys return and change their idea of trying to migrate. For the ones they decide to stay they will face lot's of difficulties and just a few of them will reach their dream to cross to Europe.

Some, of the rural area children, organize their life's with periods in Tangier port trying to cross, and some periods back home, visiting the family and having some rest.

S o m e c a s e e x a m p l e s :

Exposure in the port in Tangier: Many boys staying in the port in Tangier while awaiting an opportunity to cross are exposed to physical danger: a period of time that could last for years.

B is a boy who has suffered from exposure and the harsh conditions of trying to live in the port and to migrate from it. B comes from a distant rural area, close to Beni Mellal. We met B in the surroundings of the port area in May 2006. An illiterate, thin and shy rural boy of 16 years, he has been trying to migrate intermittently for two years. He spend some time in his home in the rural area and some time in the Tangier port area trying to cross. So far he has never reached Spain. In June 2006 he broke his elbow when he fell from the top of the 6-meter-high wall that divides the beach from the port. He tried to live in the port in this condition, but the other boys made fun of his lack of luck. He decided to go back to his parents house (10 hours by bus to the rural area) until he recovered. Before he left Tangier, B told me that when he recovered he would try again. His family knows what he is doing, and makes comparisons to other boys who have obtained this goal. We asked him if he thought his family knows the conditions he lives in; he answered that boys never explain the real conditions of living in

the port to their families because they do not want to worry them, but he thinks they can imagine how that could be. B thus represented a case of a boy experiencing neglect in the port, but because he was far from his family's support, he was forced not just to try to migrate but to survive, looking for shelter, food, a place to wash himself, etc. Like the other boys in such circumstances, he easily gets exhausted without any external support; as well, his clothes get older and dirtier faster than those of the boys from Tangier, and it is easy to recognize him by his ragged looks. This has made him more vulnerable.

The risks of family reunification: A boy who manages to get to Spain may be sent back in so-called "family reunification." For children who arrive in the Spanish protection system, they know they are unwelcome and unsafe, but the possibility of being sent back to Morocco to their families is hardly a goal. Rather, it is a threat that hangs over them.

Failing in his plans and those of the family that invested in him, he will try again to migrate, eventually worsening the relation with his family. It is not the aim of this paper to focus on family reunification, but my observations in the field and in interviews with "reunified boys" and professionals persuaded me that all the so-called family reunifications that are been made do not fulfill the requirements under the law of family reunification that was made to guarantee the right of living with the family (see also Jimenez, 2003, 2004, 2006). As the main organ of child protection, it becomes a pathway to neglect because these boys will not be welcomed back in their families, who do not understand the reason why their child has been sent back, and will blame the boy. If other boys have made it, they reason, he must have done something wrong.

As an example, we met A in the Tangier port area at the end of April, 2006. He was 17 years old, and had just returned from his rural area to Tangier port to try to migrate again. He seemed to us a very shy boy. After seeing each other many times we developed a good relationship and he became one of my best informants and friends. We also visited his family in the rural area, which helped us to understand this entire phenomenon.

When he was 15 A managed to get to Spain. He lived first in Almeria, working in the fields. Then a compatriot told him that as a minor he could have benefits of the protection system so he moved to Madrid and was accepted in the childhood protection system where he lived 14 months. According to the Spanish foreigners law, he should have been given a residence permit after nine months in the

protection system**.** Instead, he was sent back in family reunification in March 2006. His repatriation was well known in the national newspapers for its spectacular execution. The police came to look for him at two o'clock in the morning. When he realized what was happening, he entrenched himself in his room, barricading it with furniture. The police tried to get in for more than four hours; he threatened to kill himself if they came. When the police finally broke down the door he was trying to escape with sheets from the window off the ninth floor. Another police officer, knowing what could happen, was on the eighth floor and rescued him from falling. In a state of shock, he was transferred to the airport, where a doctor saw him and put him on the plane. They brought him to Casablanca, where he saw a judge and was told to go home. His family, however, knew nothing of this "family reunification" until they saw him arriving. The family and the entire neighborhood could not understand why he was sent back. Ashamed, he spent just a week with his family in the rural area, and then went back to Tangier to try to migrate again. Ever since, he has been living in the street situation in the port. He had been beaten by port guards three times. In summer, with the annual arrival of the Moroccans living in Europe, an event in which the returnees display their wealth and look for brides -- and the city puts on an extravagant welcome -- his father told him: "The only thing you brought from Spain was your long hair." A. knows that is not easy to go back to Spain, but he argues: "there is no alternative." When we visited his family, he just agreed to go with us because of our request that we do so, and he returned to the port as quickly as possible. The situation with the father was tense; they love each other, but all the hopes they had in his migration were gone. In their expectations, he was supposed to be the first to go and then help his old brother to migrate too; then his father of forty five could retire. Now they do not to trust each other; both blame each other for A's current situation.

As this case suggests, the situation of the boys being sent back is worse than the ones who never reached Spain. They are victims on the one hand of the policies of family reunification, seeing their migratory hopes dashed after reaching Spain, and on the other hand receiving humiliation back in their own country, becoming a target for laughter of neighbors and relatives. They had the dream of Europe in their hands and they let it escape. The majority return to try to migrate again, often in worse conditions that they did the first time. Now they are older, they mistrust the protection system and they are morally lowered. Others become socially excluded, with problems of mental illness or drugs abuse. Because family reunification under such conditions is involuntary, few are welcomed back by their families.

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Conclusions

Unaccompanied child migration from Morocco to Spain is arguably a case of globalization and of migration laws gone awry. It has an impact on Europe, in how it organizes institutions to handle these children, and on Moroccan families, in which efforts to cope with poverty through the migration of children affect ideas about the meaning of children and migration. Changing Spanish and EU laws have made migration a very different phenomenon than it was just a decade or two ago. For Moroccans, it has placed increasing emphasis on children as the bearers of this burden, and it has made it increasingly difficult for them to return, even if "successful," for anything except short visits. They are separated from their families at young ages not just by spatial distance but also by emotional distance, in that they cannot reveal the extent of their struggles.

Some boys from rural areas must start they migratory processes before, leaving their places of origin and moving to Tangier. They become unaccompanied minors meanwhile in their countries of origin while waiting to cross the shores. This minors face the struggles of living in such this circumstances (living on the street and making the life street their way of life). There have been several studies from the unaccompanied minors from morocco to Spain, but we need to know more about this internal minor migration. We hope that this article will help to highlight these phenomena.

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