



It is not only about access: Transnational Bolivian families in Barcelona and their meanings of social protection

No se trata sólo del acceso: Las familias transnacionales bolivianas en Barcelona y sus significados para la protección social

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Recibido: 01/07/2016

Aceptado: 06/09/2017

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Abstract

The ambition of this exploratory article is to contribute to the analyses of transnational social protection, highlighting the relevance of migrants' agency. Specifically, I argue that the strategies of transnational social protection are manifested in the interface between informal (interpersonal networks) and formal social protection (provided by national states and organisations), not only through their objective elements (multi-sited resources and services), but also by their subjective aspects (actors' meanings and institutional normative concepts). The understanding of the actors' subjective meanings has the potential to articulate the interpretation of transnational ways to access resources of social protection, with the comprehension of the meanings that motivate different modes of use of these resources, by mobile and non-mobile actors. In this paper, a survey and semi-structured interviews from the "Return from Transnationalism" project (RETTRANS, 2011-2013) and life story interviews from the ongoing doctoral project "Transnational social protection: Bolivian transnational families in Barcelona and São Paulo" are analysed.

Keywords: Bolivian migration, immigrants in Spain, subjective meanings of social protection, transnational social protection, transnational families.

Resumen

La ambición de este artículo exploratorio es contribuir a los análisis de la protección social transnacional, destacando la relevancia de la agencia de los migrantes. En concreto, argumento que las estrategias de protección social transnacional expresan las interfaces entre la protección social informal (redes interpersonales) y formal (proporcionada por los estados y organizaciones nacionales), no sólo a través de sus elementos objetivos (recursos y servicios multisituados) sino también por sus aspectos subjetivos (los significados de los actores y los conceptos normativos institucionales). La comprensión de los significados subjetivos de los actores tiene el potencial de articular la interpretación de las vías transnacionales de acceso a los recursos de protección social con la comprensión de los significados que motivan diferentes modos de uso de estos recursos por parte de actores móviles y no móviles. En este trabajo se analizan una encuesta y entrevistas semi-estructuradas del proyecto Retorno del Transnacionalismo (RETTRANS, 2011-2013) y entrevistas de historias de vida del proyecto doctoral “Protección social transnacional: familias transnacionales bolivianas en Barcelona y Sao Paulo”.

Palabras Clave: Migración boliviana, inmigrantes en España, significados subjetivos de protección social, protección social transnacional, familias transnacionales.

1. Introduction

The new features and dynamics of the international flow of goods, capital, and people demand a reconsideration of classic and substantial sociological problematics and the frameworks we use to approach them. It is no longer feasible to consider an image of rectilinear maps of a Keynesian-Westphalian world, where society is synonymous to the nation state and its territory, sovereignty, and culture (Beck, 2005). The multiplication of social life scales, produces a complexification of problems of social justice (Fraser, 2008) and social inequality (Faist, 2014). In this scenario, is it possible to address the social question in a satisfactory manner without referring to transnational levels? (Faist, 2009; 2014).

We live in an age of migration (Castles & Miller, 2009), not only because people are moving more and more, but also due to new relations of space and time, marked by the possibility of simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) and time-space compression (Harvey, 1990). Migrants and non-migrants are in routine connection with more than one country through the transnationalisation of people, social networks, organisations and institutions. Not only the greater capacity of movement, the easier connection between people through dispersed places, and the portability of care¹ and rights², but also the intersection of multiscale inequalities, stimulates the development of transnational mobilities.

The emergence of transnational lives has an impact on how we think about social protection, as it transforms the ways individuals and groups face social risks that emerge in capitalist economies in the spheres of employment, education, health, and care (Faist, Bilecen, Barglowski & Sienkiewicz, 2015). Consequently, a research agenda on transnational social protection has been emerging in recent years (Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015; Boccagni, 2017; Faist et al., 2015; Levitt, Viterna, Mueller & Lloyd, 2017). The ambition of this article is to contribute to this agenda, highlighting the individuals' and families' agency in the development of strategies of transnational social protection. Specifically, this paper argues that the strategies of transnational social protection express the interface between informal (interpersonal networks) and

¹ The portability of care is the capacity to exchange care without physical proximity. "This said, we are not suggesting that virtual forms of care are equivalent to embodied forms, but instead that it is the quality of relationships, rather than the form or mode of caregiving, that is important" (Baldassar & Merla, 2014: 12).

² "Portability [of social security rights] is the ability to preserve, maintain, and transfer vested social security rights or rights in the process of being vested, independent of nationality and country of residence" (Avato, Koettl, & Sabates-Wheeler, 2010: 455).

formal social protection (provided by national states and organisations) (Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015), not only through their objective elements (multi-sited resources and services), but also by their subjective aspects (actors' meanings and policies' normative concepts).

The understanding of the actors' subjective meanings has the potential to articulate the interpretation of transnational *ways to access* resources of social protection, with the comprehension of the meanings that motivate different *modes of use* of these resources by mobile and non-mobile actors. This two-dimensional approach also allows an understanding of how different kinds of inequalities (such as gender and generational) are produced, justified/explained, transformed, and reproduced within transnational family networks. In which school (and country) will my daughter study? And my son? In which hospitals will my sick relative be treated? Where, when, and how will I retire? To answer these questions, the subjective meanings of social protection are crucial.

In this exploratory article, I present some of the meanings about social protection of Bolivian transnational families in Barcelona. For this purpose, I analyse a survey and semi-structured interviews³ from the "Return from Transnationalism" project (RETTRANS, 2011-2013)⁴ and life story interviews from my ongoing doctoral project "Transnational social protection: Bolivian transnational families in Barcelona and São Paulo"⁵. This paper is organised in three parts. First, I introduce the transnational family and transnational social protection concepts and research agendas. After, I describe the key current characteristics of the Bolivian migration to Spain and Barcelona. In the last part, I present some initial evidence of how subjective meanings of family transnationalisation, care and gender relations, remittances and labour, healthcare, education, and retirement permeate transnational strategies of social protection.

2. Transnational Families and Transnational Social Protection

The transnational perspective offers a counterpoint to the assimilationist and multiculturalist paradigms. It denies, on the one hand, epistemological and

³ 14 semi-structured interviews with Bolivian migrants in Barcelona or with people returned to Bolivia; and a survey with a representative sample of 400 questionnaires in Barcelona and Madrid applied between 2011 and 2013.

⁴ RETTRANS. (2012). "Retorno desde el Transnacionalismo". Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación de España (CSO2010-15924). Research group: Sònia Parella (main researcher), Alisa Petroff, Olga Serradell, Leonardo de la Torre, Sarai Samper, Clara Piqueras and Leonardo Cavalcanti. 2011-2013.

⁵ 25 life story interviews with Bolivian migrants living in Barcelona and 5 interviews with their relatives residing in Bolivia.

methodological nationalism and ethnic essentialism, and on the other hand, it conceives migration as a multidirectional process and the migrant as an active subject (not limited to the notion of *homo economicus*). The transnational analytic angle considers that spaces of flows (people, ideas, and goods) are embedded in spaces of places. In other words, this means that more intense flows across borders do not necessarily translate into a world without frontiers (Faist, 2010).

The focus of transnational lenses is how migrants constitute and transform their experiences simultaneously in more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999), through multiple and simultaneous social bonds that approximate places of origin and destination (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton-Blanc, 1994). Therefore, from this perspective, there is no contradiction between transnational practices and the integration of the immigrant in the country of destination (Faist, 2010; Solé & Cachón, 2006).

The transnational perspective proposes an approach centred on the transnational social fields, which designate the processes of development and maintenance of social relations across borders as part of the daily life of the members of these networks (Basch et al., 1994; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). In transnational social fields, understood as egocentric “networks of networks” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), migrants, non-migrants, organisations, and institutions interact in the places of origin and destination. These interactions can be of several types: economic, political, affective, and sociocultural (Levitt, 1998). Thus, transnational fields can be apprehended from the individual life cycles and the transformations of the national and global contexts. The transnational perspective has made it possible to draw attention to phenomena treated in a dispersed manner (Solé & Cachón, 2006: 38), which gradually allowed the creation of numerous subfields of investigation (Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010). In the following pages, two of these research agendas, which have various interfaces and possible dialogues, will be presented.

2.1 Transnational Families and Care Circulation

The ways of “doing family” (Morgan, 1996) were transformed and diversified, and transnational families are one of their most important expressions. Transnational families are defined by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) as those in which members live either partly, or for most of the time, apart but nonetheless create a feeling of well-being and a collective unit that goes beyond national borders. Transnational families create

and recreate economic, social, political, and affective ties in everyday life, linking places of origin and destination and establishing transnational social spaces (Basch et al., 1994). These families have complex lives, marked by the use of international mobility as a resource for social protection, to “make a living” and to promote the care of particularly those most vulnerable, such as children, the elderly, and the sick (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002).

The transnational families are distinguished by care ties that sustain a feeling of belonging to something in common, even considering the distance. The exchange of care in any kind of family, whether separated by migration or not, solidifies the ties among its members through intergenerational networks of reciprocity, love, and trust, which are also affected by tensions, challenges, and unequal power relations (Baldassar & Merla, 2014). The care circulation approach conceives that the exchange of care in families is reciprocal, asymmetrical, and oriented by a norm of generalised reciprocity. Care circulates in transnational family networks when it is offered, and returns at different times and with different intensities in distinct life cycles (Baldassar & Merla, 2014). Baldassar and Merla’s perspective mobilises Finch’s typology which defines five main types of care that can be exchanged in a family network: economic, housing, personal (“hands on”), practical/child, and emotional/moral care (Finch, 1989). Such forms of care can be exchanged at a distance, except for personal care which requires physical presence (Baldassar & Merla, 2014).

The transnational families are not homogenous and naturally cohesive, as its members are positioned in specific but dynamic places (social and geographic) and times (life cycles / national contexts) (Baldassar, 2008: 270-271). As pointed out by various empirical studies (Herrera, 2013; Parella, 2012; Parreñas, 2005; Pedone, 2006, to cite some), the transnational families are spaces of negotiation and conflict, where gender and generation inequalities are crucial aspects. In this sense, the care exchange tends to be asymmetrical, since typically women offer more care than they receive and the engagement in the roles of caregiver and care receiver tend to vary in different life cycles.

Transnational family networks are not restricted to members of the nuclear family but include all individuals with or without kinship ties participating in the reciprocal, multi-directional, and asymmetric exchange of care (Baldassar & Merla, 2014). These networks are not limited to a private dimension; in a different way, they are subject to political, economic, cultural, and social contexts of both the places of

origin and destination (Baldassar & Merla, 2014). Kilkey and Merla (2014) highlight the need to place the care circulation modes in institutional settings since the circulation of care does not develop without structural contingencies. The national states are central actors in this process, since they legitimise normative models of family, gender, and care through public policies (especially migratory and social policies) and discourses (Gil Araujo & Pedone, 2014; Herrera, 2013; 2011; Pedone, Agrela Romero & Gil Araujo, 2012; Pedone & Gil Araujo, 2008).

The literature highlighting the family as one of the central cores of the construction, maintenance, and management of migration projects emphasises international mobility as a social protection strategy (Avato, Koettl & Sabates-Wheeler, 2010; Baldassar & Merla, 2014; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Faist et al., 2015; Sabates-Wheeler & Feldman, 2011). In this sense, the circulation of care within transnational families' networks can be considered a way to create, maintain, and transform strategies of transnational social protection. This understanding contrasts with an economic approach that conceives international migration and social protection, as a transaction between individuals and states, permeated by a notion of men as producers and women as reproducers (Kofman, 2004).

2.2 Transnational Social Protection: Ways of Access and Ways of Use

The research agenda on transnational social protection emerges from the convergence between the research on transnational families' still unexplored possibilities, as well as from the deep transformations of national and global systems of social protections and their impacts on the studies of welfare states, global social policy, and development. Levitt, Viterna, Mueller and Lloyd summarise the questions that guide this perspective:

“When and how are people on the move protected and provided for outside the traditional framework of the nation-state? How is the social welfare of the young and the elderly in societies of origin guaranteed when people who would normally provide and fund such services migrate? And what new institutional arrangements – or forms of transnational social protection (TSP) – are emerging in response to these changing dynamics?” (Levitt et al., 2017: 3).

According to Levitt et al. (2017, but also to Faist, 2017), states, markets, third sector organisations, and family and social networks are the sources of social protection. With diverse degrees of formality (Faist, 2017), these sources provide and offer different kinds of social protection: protection for old age, survivors, and incapacities

(pensions, cash benefits, residential care, funeral services, paid sick leave etc.); health care; services and rights for families (family allowances, maternity and parental leave, early childhood education and care, cash benefits); active labour market policies and unemployment assistance; housing assistance; and education (Levitt et al., 2017, adapted from OECD, 2007). The progressive transnationalisation of these types of social protection has important effects on existing inequalities, as well as on the creation of new ones (Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015; Faist, 2009; 2014).

The transnational social protection perspective focuses on the absence and weakness of protection systems, which require that migrants (and their families) negotiate and combine multiscale informal (provided by interpersonal networks) and formal social protection (provided by state and organisations) (Levitt et al., 2017). These strategies of social protection happen not only “to fill the holes” of formal social protection but also to create forms of social protection perceived as more viable (Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015) and valuable. Therefore, these studies have the potential to identify possible institutional gaps and to propose more efficient public policies (Levitt et al., 2017), as well as, to comprehend the emergence of new forms and arrangements of social protection “from below”. The two objectives could be approached in an integrated fashion.

The strategies of social protection refer to the ways in which actors face the social risks that emerge in capitalist economies in the spheres of employment, education, health, and care (Faist, 2013). To understand those strategies, as well as their relations with institutional configurations, Levitt et al. (2017: 5-12) propose the concept of “resource environment” as the “(...) combination of all the possible protections available to them from our four potential sources (states, markets, third sector, and social networks)” (Levitt et al., 2017). The availability of protection resources depends on the configuration of these sources (capacity of the receiving and sending states; the third sector presence; the nature of the market), as well as, on the characteristics of individuals and their families (nation of origin, place of residence, and the breadth and depth of his or her social networks, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, wealth, income, and education) (Levitt et al., 2017).

The “resource environment” model has a high heuristic capacity and a wide spectrum of applicability. To contribute to the analysis of strategies of transnational social protection, this paper would like to draw attention to the importance of subjective meanings that tie together ways of access and ways of use of social protection services

and resources. The assumption here is that the possession (or the possibility) of a resource do not determine its use (something that symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and other social constructivist perspectives have already highlighted). In this sense, this paper proposes a two-dimensional approach to the strategies of transnational social protection:

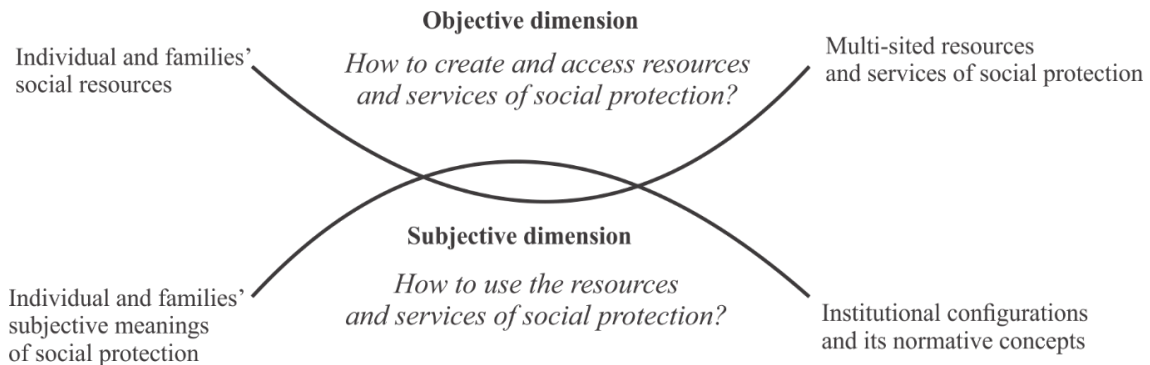


Figure 1. Strategies of transnational social protection: objective and subjective dimensions

Source: Elaborated by the author

The objective dimension is marked by a transaction⁶ between social resources (economic capital, social capital, etc.) and resources or services of social protection; and the subjective dimension is characterised by transaction between individuals and families' meanings of social protection and the normative concepts that underlie public policies and discourses. Evidently, both dimensions intersect, and it is in that interface where the strategies of transnational social protection are found.

The development of ways to access social resources and ways of mobilising these resources for access to social protection in a transnational scale, as well as the creation of justifications for the legitimacy of such strategies, requires individual and familial efforts, in which normative conceptions (of institutional and cultural origin) are present. In this sense, the two transactions are manifested both in negotiations and disputes within the family and in individual reflexive processes.

The theoretical postulate underlying this approach is that the meaning given to social protection is crucial to appreciate the different possible uses (and non-uses) of such. How do people mobilise social resources to access social protection transnationally? What subjective meanings of social protection are at the base of this

⁶ We use "transaction" as a conversion process of mutual influence: "a communicative action or activity involving two parties or things that reciprocally affect or influence each other" (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

mobilisation and what are the interfaces between those notions and the normative concepts that form the foundation of the institutional configurations?

This model highlights three important aspects for the analysis of transnational social protection dynamics. First is the aspect that strategies of access are closely linked to forms and expectations of use. Furthermore, both are in interaction with the normative conceptions that underlie the different sources of social protection. Second, there is not, essentially, a tendency towards a progressive diminution of the importance of the place of origin and an increase in the relevance of destination, in relation to the social protection. This is due to the importance of subjective meanings of social protection, which may explain the desire for the maintenance of a transnational position that justifies (not only economically, but morally and culturally) simultaneous access to social protection “here” and “there”. Third, there is no hierarchy between formal and informal social protection, as highlighted by Bilecen & Barglowski (2015). This occurs due to the possible absence of formal protection, adequate to the actors’ life scales and subjective meanings. In addition, it is possible that, depending on the cultural conceptions, certain types of protection can only be offered through interpersonal relations.

Aiming to highlight the importance of this two-dimensional approach, this paper outlines, in the second part, the panorama of Bolivian migration to Spain, and in the final part, presents an exploratory analysis of some of the subjective meanings about social protection of Bolivian transnational families in Barcelona. The empirical analysis will present some initial evidence showing that the strategies of transnational social protection are directly linked to the actors’ subjective meanings. These notions form a complex interweaving between moral and normative conceptions of what is considered “correct” or “good”, and considerations of the multi-sited forms of its possible realisation.

3. Bolivian Migration to Spain: Main Dynamics and Characteristics

An estimated 800,000 Bolivians are living in other countries. Of these, 52 % live in Argentina, 19 % in Spain, 10 % in the United States, and 6 % in Brazil (UN, 2015). The Bolivian population in Spain had an astonishing growth between 2001 and 2008. Nevertheless, in the period after 2008, it is possible to identify a reduction in the Bolivian population in Spain due to the decrease of incoming flows, because of the visa

requirements for Bolivians since 2007, and due to the return flows stimulated by the Spanish economic crisis (Parella & Petroff, 2014).

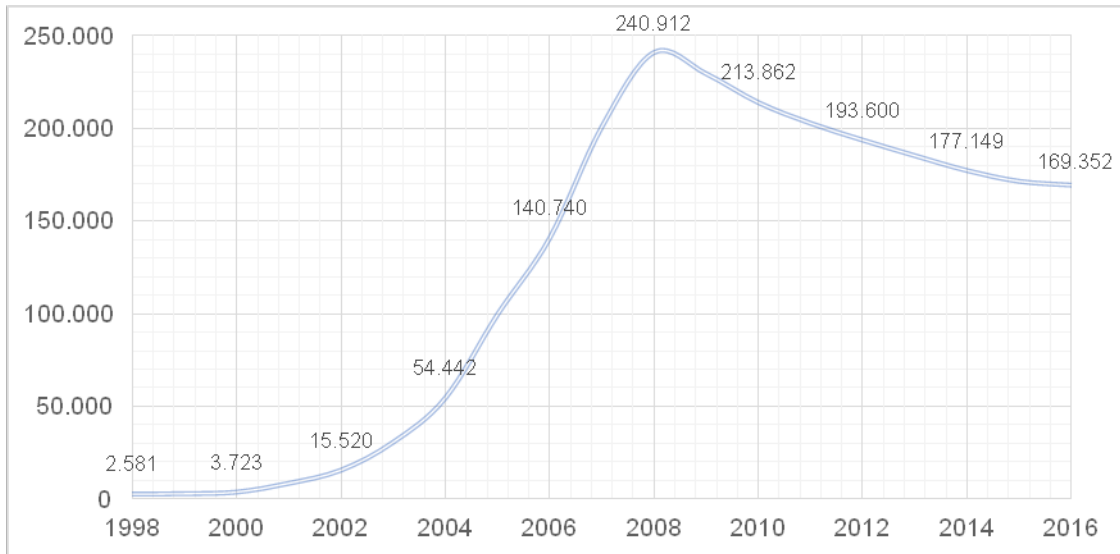


Figure 2. Population born in Bolivia and living in Spain by year (1998-2016)

Source: INE (Spanish Statistic Institute), Continuous Register of Population.

It is indispensable to consider the Bolivian migratory culture, which Hinojosa (2009) termed as the *Andean migratory habitus*, a feature that allows one to understand not only the magnitude of migration flows and stocks, but also their social meanings and dynamics. Hinojosa (2009) and Cortes (2004) point out that the study of Bolivian mobility should consider the circuit and the deep bond that is established between internal migration from rural areas to the cities, and the emergence of Bolivians in transnational migration processes.

In January of 2017 the total population born in Bolivia and living in Spain was 168,528, of which 44.1 % had Spanish citizenship. Concerning gender, 39.6 % were men and 60.3 % were women (INE, 2017). The cities of Madrid and Barcelona are the main destinations since they had, respectively, 21.6 % and 23.4 % of the total Bolivian population (INE, 2017). In Barcelona (and its metropolitan area, in particular, the city of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat) Bolivians are concentrated in four neighborhoods: Nou Barris, Sants, La Florida, and Collblanc; and in Madrid they are in the southern districts as Usera, Carabanchel, and Puente Vallecas (RETTRANS, 2013). In the map below, it is possible to visualise the distribution of the Bolivian population in Spain.

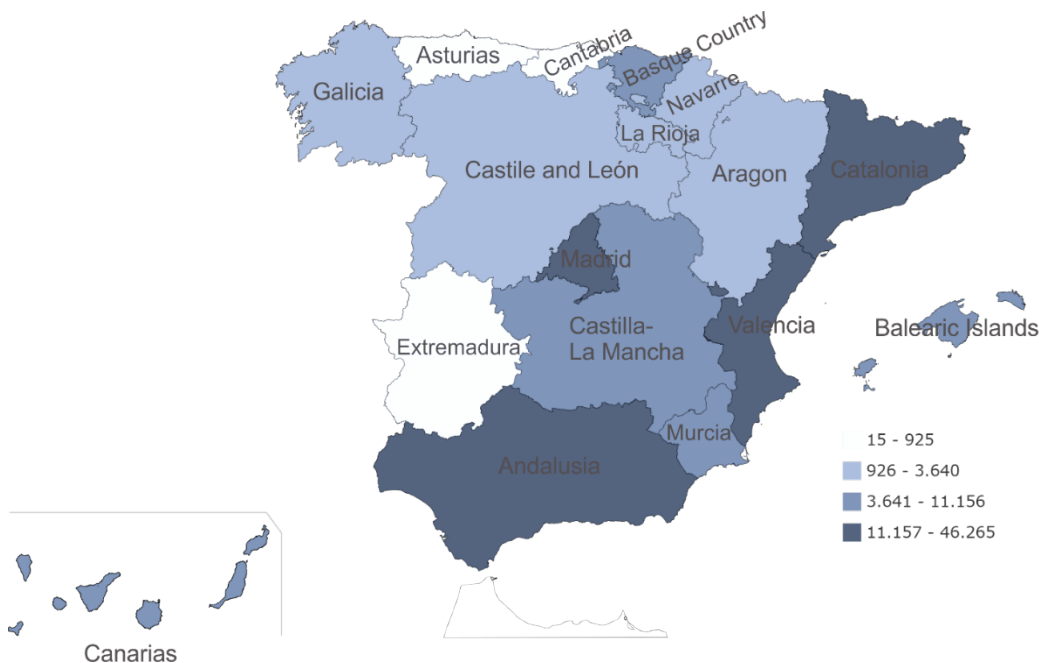


Figure 3. Population born in Bolivia and living in Spain by autonomous communities and autonomous cities, both sex, January, 2017

Source: INE (Spanish Statistic Institute), Continuous Register of Population.

The Bolivian migration to Barcelona occurs through an intersection between labour demand (in particular for women), transnational family networks, and a culture of mobility. Monica explains how she decided to immigrate to Barcelona: “Why I do not go, if everyone is leaving? Many people from Punata have gone to the United States. (...) They are leaving without speaking or understanding English! And I'm still here? (...) I have a niece in Spain (...) He called me and said: ‘Why do not you come?’ (Monica⁷)”.

The Bolivian migration to Spain has a female face. This feature is not an exclusivity of the Bolivian migration to Spain, but is something shared with other flows from Latin-America (Pedone, 2011). The feminisation of the Bolivian migration means that women are: the majority (more than 60 %, as previously mentioned), were the first link of the migratory chains, are the main people responsible to provide economic resources to transnational families, and are leaders of family reunifications (Ledo García, 2014; Pedone, 2011). Contradictorily, the central role of women has, on the one

⁷ In order to preserve anonymity, the interviewees' names are fictitious.

hand, led to the visibility of migratory projects as essentially familiar (Pedone, 2011), and on the other hand, triggered numerous stigmas around the stereotype of “migrant women who abandon their children and family” (Pedone et al., 2012; Pedone & Gil Araujo, 2008). “I have worked all I could. Why? For my children. So many people are talking... It hurts me what they say. 'She has gone to Spain', and they already look at me with different eyes. They think that you are a disloyal woman” (Valeria).

The feminisation of the Bolivian migration is directly linked to the care work in Spain. The data from RETTRANS (2013) show that 49.7 % of Bolivians are working in care services (usually women), 15.2 % in construction (usually men), and 10.6 % in hostelry. The familialistic welfare regime of the Iberian country attributes to families, particularly women, the primary responsibility for care⁸. However, in the last decades the de-familisation of Spanish women has promoted an increase in the demand for care work of immigrant women, especially from Latin America. This dynamic demanded family strategies to account for the absence of migrant women in their places of origin. In this way, the Bolivian migration to Spain has led to the establishment of global chains of care, understood as “(...) personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring” (Hochschild, 2000).

The invisibility, precarity, and low salaries of care work are a fundamental feature of the Bolivian migration in Spain, as well as the difficulty of access to residence permits. Thus, it is frequent that the very existence of an employment contract (which allows the immigrant to access residence documents) is seen as a non-monetary form of payment for work: “They arranged the documents [“los papeles”] and then they say to me: ‘Monica, we're going to reduce your salary because we have to pay your social security.’ And I thought: ‘They did not have paid [the social security] for four years and now that I have the documents, I will have my salary decreased?’” (Monica).

A survey conducted by the Association of Cooperation between Bolivia and Spain (ACOBES) indicated that of 600 interviews with Bolivian immigrants in Spain, 62.5 % were in an irregular situation, 30.7 % were regularised, and 6.8 % were in the process of document regularisation (Acobe, 2007). The RETTRANS (2013) data

⁸ “A familialistic welfare regime is therefore one that assigns a maximum of welfare obligations to the household. And I shall use 'de-familialisation', yet another admittedly awkward word, to capture policies that lessen individuals' reliance on the family; that maximise individuals' command of economic resources independently of familial or conjugal reciprocities. It is, like the concept of de-commodification, empirically more a matter of degree than of an 'either-or'. Given that women's (or at least mothers') family responsibilities easily restrict their ability to gain full economic independence solely via work, their de-familialisation, as many studies have shown, depends uniquely on the welfare state” (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 45).

showed that 13.3 % did not have a residence permit, 48.9 % of Bolivians in Barcelona and Madrid had a temporary residence permit, 6 % were applying for a residence permit, 16.3 % had a permanent residence permit, 10 % had Spanish citizenship, 3.8 % had a European community residence card, and 1.5 % had a student residence card. The differences between the results of the two researches may indicate a transformation in the Bolivians' legal situation during the period between studies. However, the number of Bolivians without the residency permission remains significant. In addition to the quantitative aspect, "los papeles" is a symbolic landmark for migrants and have a vital impact on the mobility dynamics and strategies: "I have been hungry, I have been cold, I have been arrested! All this would have been useless if I do not get the documents. This is why I stay here" (Isabela).

The difficulties to the residence regularisation and the many legal and economic obstacles to a "formal" family reunification, generated informal strategies of family reunification (without residence documents, something that became more difficult after the visa requirement for Bolivians in 2007), as well as forced an extension of the family division (Pedone, 2011; Pedone & Gil Araujo, 2008). The access to Spanish nationality has a profound impact on migratory and family dynamics, promoting circular mobility and re-migration, as well as facilitating family life and allowing a better usufruct of the contexts of origin and destination (Pedone et al., 2012).

This section has attempted to provide a summary of six key aspects of the Bolivian migration to Spain: the dynamics of migratory flows; the Andean culture of mobility; metropolisation; feminisation; labour segmentation; and undocumentation. The scenario outlined above sets the stage for the next part of this article.

4. Subjective Meanings of Transnational Social Protection

The last part of this paper will examine the subjective meanings of social protection of Bolivian transnational families in Barcelona. The specific objective here is to present the subjective notions as a first step to demonstrate the importance of analyses on strategies of transnational social protection that includes subjective transactions (between subjective meanings and normative concepts) and objective transactions (between social resources and resources or services of social protection). Each of the six following sections will present some of the ways that the studied families think and develop strategies about key elements of social protection: family transnationalisation, care and gender, labour and remittances, healthcare,

education, and retirement. Evidently, this study is unable to encompass the entire range of possible meanings of social protection. This was not the objective here. Our intention is to understand the general notions that serve as a reference for the transnational families to think about and decide on how to access, create, and use multi-sited social protection services and resources.

4.1 Family Transnationalisation

The family occupies a central place in the maintenance, transformation, and, if it is the case, the migration project's conclusion. The main motivations to migrate, but also to maintain the migratory project, identified in the interviews are linked to this pre-eminence of the family and to its needs for social protection: home ownership, debt payment, child rearing, and elderly care, etc. To that end, obviously, the access to, in origin and/or destination, work, healthcare, education, and social security is essential. In this sense, Mariana explains: "I have chosen to go away from my children to perhaps give them a better future" (Mariana).

In relation to the migration project, 37.1 % of the survey's Bolivian participants (RETTRANS, 2013) stated that they intended to return to Bolivia within two years; 29.8 % said they would return between two and seven years; 12.3 % said they would return in an undetermined time; 3.8 % said they would like to go back and forth; and 5.3 % expressed their intention to live permanently in Spain. Nonetheless, during the interviews it was clear that the migration projects undergo many transformations during the migrant's trajectory.

The research of Cerruti and Maguid (2010) identifies a higher incidence of family division by migration among Bolivians than among Argentinians, Colombians, and Ecuadorians in Spain. According to the RETTRANS (2013), 63.4 % of Bolivian migrants living in Barcelona and Madrid had at least one child living in Bolivia (or in a country other than Spain). The analysis of the interviews exposed the existence of several reasons for the family transnationalisation:

- The emigration took place in an unplanned way, either because of an emergency, such as domestic violence, or a crisis, such as health problems or family debts, etc.
- Legal and/or economic impossibility of family reunification: "Because when I came, soon they took away the free pass for Bolivians and I could not bring

any of my children. To bring them with a visa you have to have a lot of money to pay and to have in the bank” (Camila).

- The work routine and housing conditions in Spain, that make difficult the maintenance of certain standards for family life (time for children care, space for children to play, the socialisation with the extended family, and the sharing of meals, etc.), as well as the high costs of care services in Barcelona.
- The decision to maintain the children in Bolivia to have an informal (especially with the grandparents) and formal education (public and private) with “Bolivian values” (particularly discipline and respect for the elderly). Another reason is the fear to have them so integrated in Spain, that it could be difficult to implement return migration plans: “If I am going to bring them, what am I going to do? I want to come back. I have my things there ... and if they do not want to leave, what will I do without my children?” (Diego).
- The decision to have a relative (son, cousin, brother, etc.) in a university in Bolivia (public or private), which would be more difficult in Spain due to the economic costs of Spanish universities;
- The redistribution of in-person care obligations. For example, the migrant's daughter takes care of her grandmother in substitution for her mother who has migrated.

The narratives of family separation are very intense, and demonstrate the sacrifice and suffering it means, especially for women:

“I was crying, with my heart very sad because I was very sorry. (...) I said to my children: ‘You have to behave well’ and then they left. I saw them from the playground going away, turning around (...) because they knew that they would not see me anymore. They were crying too (...) Only after 6 years have I returned” (Valentina).

In many cases, the reasons mentioned are combined, which hinders the family reunification. In addition, many families tried informal (without documents) and formal strategies of family reunification. Among those who succeeded, many decided to separate again. This happened in some cases due to the adaptation difficulty, mainly of children (to school and new family routines, etc.) and husband (new gender relations, difficulties to find a job, etc.). In any case, it is important to not think of the family transnationalisation as something static.

4.2 Care and Gender Relations

To establish a care arrangement, and a routine of care, one of the first practical and moral problems is how to organise care for the most vulnerable. According to RETTRANS (2013) data, the children of the interviewees were in Bolivia with: their grandfather or grandmother (maternal or paternal) in 40.3 % of cases; with the husband or wife in 13.7 %; with the ex-spouse in 25.8 %; with an uncle in 8.1 %; with a brother in 3.2 %; and in 8.9 % with another person (for example, hiring someone, usually a female).

At critical moments, there is the need for a rapid care arrangement reorganisation. This is the case with an illness in the family, a birth of a child, a death of a family member, or a divorce, etc. In other moments and for different reasons, the care arrangement should be reviewed and adapted to new economic, affective, or generational situations. The circumstance in which a distant family member dies represents a care crisis. The son of Samantha once called her on the phone and said: “Grandma is not well and I think she is just waiting for you. We have already called a priest”. This had a great impact on Samantha, who immediately went to Bolivia and rethought her entire migration experience: “What am I doing here? Was this not the right thing? There is no point. My mother died and then my children will be left alone. (...) I have to go now' (Samantha)”.

The routine of care arrangements entails difficulties, and maintaining the contact with relatives and caregivers is crucial. The contact with the person responsible for their children's care is regular: 81.2 % of Bolivian migrants speak at least once a week with the caregiver (RETTRANS, 2013). The main mean of communication with the family in Bolivia is by phone (97.6 %). The second most used medium is video conferencing (39 %) (RETTRANS, 2013). Despite the potential of the means of communication, long-distance caregiving can lead to anxiety. “Are they eating or how they are? Or when they are sick... I do not know what to do...” (Isabella). The difficulty of having reliable information may be another trigger for this sensation: “They might tell me they are fine but it's not true! They lie to me! For example, my youngest girl broke her leg and they lied to me. (...) When I knew that she was already healing” (Lucia).

The other ways of conceiving care, and gender relations in Barcelona affected many of the interviewees. Both men and women, stressed that gender relations in Barcelona are more egalitarian and that women have more freedoms: “Here [Barcelona] the man knows how to cook better than the woman, for example. There [Bolivia] they

do not want to do it because: ‘Ah, he is a maricon’ [faggot] (...) Here, it is something normal and natural ... for the woman to not ask for the permission of the husband” (María Fernanda); “The Bolivian woman feels more liberal here [in Barcelona]. Why? For the fact that they work, they have their money and they make their living as they want, right? The woman here is the one who has the voice, more than the man” (Nicolás).

Many women interviewed narrated the discovery of new possibilities about gender relations and how that experience influenced the ways they view gender relations in their family, as well as how they educate their children. Another aspect present in the interviews is the estrangement with the professionalisation of care work in Barcelona. Having a stranger taking care of a relative, they say, is not something that is very frequent or well-seen in Bolivia: “In Spain, the only thing the sons do for their parents is to put them in residences, so that they rot there. There is no love, it is lost” (Ximena). They emphasise a contrast about care obligations. “We, the Bolivians, think (...) just that ‘I have to take care of my mother, I have to take care, I have to do it’. No, Bolivians do not easily hire people to take care of them” (Valeria).

The sense of obligation of care (especially to women) is a guiding thread for many narratives. On the one hand, it might motivate the decision to return to Bolivia. “I have realised that it is difficult for my mother to be with my brothers and my sisters-in-law to have my mother (...) Yes, I always had in my mind that I will have to end up taking care of my mother ... because I am her daughter and I am a woman.” (Daniela). On the other hand, it creates a feeling of guilt for the migrants to see the impossibility of offering face-to-face care. This feeling is reinforced by the stigma of “migrant women who abandoned their children”, which can be felt, for example, in school visits in Bolivia:

“I arrived in Bolivia and my boy was about to lose the school year. So, I tried to talk to the teacher (...) and she said: ‘You... why are you complaining to a teacher!?!’. (...) ‘You... who have gone to earn money and have left your children!?!’. And I thought: Who is she to judge me? (...) I will not come to the school to have them say this to me... saying that I have failed, when I know where I have failed” (Claudia).

Another aspect that reinforces the feeling of guilt is the resentment of the children: “Although we had been homeless, although we were living under a bridge, you should not have gone away’, says my daughter to me, right?” (Mia).

4.3 Remittances and (Re)productive labour

The receiving/sending remittances is a fundamental dynamic of transnational families and their strategies for social protection, and represents one of the most important ways to combine geographic distance and social proximity. According to the RETTRANS survey (2013), 65.7 % of Bolivian migrants in Madrid and Barcelona sent remittances in the last year; 1.1 % said they sent weekly, 56 % monthly, 20.1 % every three months, 2.6 % every six months, 1.5 % annually, and 17.9 % occasionally. Most of these remittances (67.7 %) were sent to two or more people in Bolivia (RETTRANS, 2013) and were managed by the sons and daughters living there in 69.1 % of the cases. Remittances were used to meet basic needs and expressed the transnational character of the families' strategies for social protection: "For food, for the house, for the doctor, for everything. If someone gets sick they call me: 'We need money for father's doctor', and that is it" (Gabriel). In some cases, remittances are not monetary, but could be the sending of goods that have a lower cost in Spain. These objects, especially clothes and electronics, may have, as a purpose, the family's use or resale.

Remittances could be a way to compensate the absence of face-to-face care: "As a mother you have to take care of everything, because all you earn you have to send. If I work there in Bolivia I have to work for them, if I work here I also have to work for them" (Martha). The need to have a job—both for their own survival and for the family's social reproduction in the place of origin— which makes immigrants more open to accept working conditions and wages they consider unfair. "I did not come here to find a husband, or to look for bars or anything. I came to work and work as a Chinese. Work, in no matter what" (Martha).

The problematic working conditions of migrants, especially those that are undocumented, were aggravated after the onset of the economic crisis in Spain (after 2008): 79.5 % of Bolivian immigrants said that the economic crisis meant a reduction in their income; 79.8 % that working conditions had worsened; 59 % that they lost their main job; and 57.6 % that they had to work at least in two jobs (RETTRANS, 2013). The decrease in income was aggravated by the devaluation of the euro, which reduced purchasing power in Bolivia. During the crisis, 76.2 % of immigrants said they had to reduce the amount of money they sent to their families. Some of the immigrants began to receive remittances from Bolivia, occasionally to fill the absence of labour protection: "My husband sent money to us from Bolivia (...) I quit the job because my knees were very swollen and I could not walk. And the lady I was working for did not

want to dismiss me (...) she told me to decide between the work and my health. So, I quit” (Roxana).

The Bolivian women work mostly in care work, as mentioned earlier. They take care of people from other families while they cannot be close to their own family members; it is a delicate situation in which women face a triple responsibility: in Bolivia, as *absent and distant caregivers*; and in Spain, as *care workers* (who must perform tasks based on conceptions of care that could be very different), and as *caregivers without a kin relationship*, but with emotional and affective bonds: “I love children, you know? And I make no difference between a child of another person or one of mine, it's the same. I give to them the same affection. (...) I know it is difficult and it is a lot of responsibility to work with a child of others. What if I drop one of them?” (Lucia).

4.4 *In-between Two Worlds of Health Care*

The interviewees highlighted the profound contrasts between Bolivian and Spanish health systems. However, this does not mean an absence of criticism of the healthcare in Barcelona. By having to accompany elderly people or children, immigrants are surprised by the free and public care in Barcelona. “In Bolivia, if one does not have money, one dies. Here, even if you do not have money, you can go to the doctor and have care. The medical attention is free. They have everything easy here. Why do you think people live so long?” (Gabriel).

These two healthcare worlds are connected by international migration, which has encouraged the development of institutional and transnational social protection initiatives. This is the case with the Institute of Global Health (ISGLOBAL), which has diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up care for Chagas's disease in Barcelona; this is also connected to the Platform Chagas Bolivia – Barcelona, formed by ISGLOBAL, CEADES, Universidad Mayor de San Simón de Cochabamba, Hospital Viedma and the Bolivian Ministry of Health. Through the Platform Chagas there is an interchange between the different entities that allows transnational institutional strategies to combat the disease. In interviews with ISGLOBAL patients in Barcelona, it is possible to notice how their conceptions about healthcare have changed:

“(...) the AIDS tests, for example, they are for few in Bolivia, right? You had to request to a doctor and you have to pay! Here they do a complete exam for free. In Bolivia, nobody does that type of exams. Not even the Chagas exam! I knew

that there is this disease there, but it was just here that I learn that it is dangerous. I did not know that Chagas consequences are fatal” (Samuel).

It is interesting to note that the establishment of the transnational space between Bolivia and Barcelona, generates interinstitutional collaborations, but also interfaces and interactions between conceptions of what is considered as health, treatment, illness, symptom, etc. There are anthropological meanings that impact both the modes of use of health resources and services, and ways of caring for oneself and others.

The establishment of a transnational circuit between these two worlds of healthcare also occurs through the temporary mobility of migrants and non-migrants. Several interviewees reported cases of relatives who came from Bolivia to be treated in the public health system in Barcelona. These strategies are more frequent for those who are in a more difficult or complex health condition. In a different path, the sociologist Olivia Román had identified some evidence that the Bolivian immigrants in Spain are visiting Bolivia to do plastic surgeries⁹. Another frequent way that the efforts to access healthcare lead to international mobility is the cases of people who immigrated to Barcelona to pay health debts in Bolivia.

The contrasts and institutional and cultural interfaces conform to the ways the families manage their health between Bolivia and Barcelona. In Bolivia, the fragility of preventive health, as well as the costs of medical care (public and private), means that family health management has, as its first procedure, the use of natural and/or traditional medicine, either with the support of community healers or of the elderly members of the family. Teas, herbs and other healing resources and procedures are mobilised. In other cases, particularly with families of urban regions, self-medication is common, including the recurrent use of broad-spectrum antibiotics. This kind of family protocol on health makes the search for specialised medical attention only happen in more serious cases. Among other factors, this health culture is based on the costs (economic and time) that imply private and public medical care. One of the consequences of this protocol is that, with the postponement of medical attention, families create greater expectations about medical consultations. Two things are expected: the doctor’s touch and some immediate intervention (either by a drug prescription or a medical procedure).

⁹ Interview with Olivia Roman (Sociologist of Ciudadanía NGO) on December 13, 2016 in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

In Barcelona, even though the visits to the doctors are more frequent, many of these expectations remain. On the one hand, during the consultation they expect a “hands-on diagnosis”, where the doctor’s touch and careful (and unhurried) attention are important. In this sense, the interviewees highlighted the impersonality of the doctor-patient relationship in Spain: “Here there are some doctors who, for my taste, are not very human. They do not care much for the patient, do you know?” (Lidia). On the other hand, they expect the doctor to intervene immediately on the problem, indicating examinations, but especially medicines that have efficacy on the symptoms and on the illness. Thus, the frustration when the doctors prescribe an ibuprofen or paracetamol is frequent. “In Bolivia when my daughter is with a cough (...) I go to the pharmacy, buy any medication that doctors recommended... I have to pay but they heal quickly. But here is paracetamol, some mucolytic syrup and that's it” (Carmen). This frustration often means that interviewees do not seek medical attention in Barcelona, even if it is free: “I do not trust the doctors here. If I am not feeling well, I go to the pharmacy and I buy a box of ibuprofen” (Rosmery). The recurrent use of ibuprofen by Latino immigrants in Barcelona is something that has already been identified by Roura, Bisoffi, Navaza & Pool (2015) and corroborates with the evidence described here.

4.5 Educational Quality and Moral Discipline

To have a son/daughter with a college degree seems to be at the forefront of the interviewees' discourse, in a way to transform the sacrifice into something tangible, and into an achievement that materialises the positive results of the migratory project. In this way, education is a key transversal point of the narratives and appears as one of the priorities to the subjects. Francisco recounts a conversation with his eldest son, at the moment of departure to Barcelona: “I told him, ‘You have money, I left it in the bank. With this money, you must study. Whatever happens, you have to study and you will guide your young brother.’ (...) Inside of me it was very painful but I transmitted outside in another way” (Francisco).

The discourse on education, between Barcelona and Bolivia, has two narrative axes, often in tension. On the one hand, the interviewees recognise the quality of primary and secondary education in Bolivia, especially the teachers and the moral discipline in schools. The positive view of the disciplined education in Bolivia is narrated in contrast to the liberalism that, according to the interviewees, marks the education of young people and children in Catalonia. This perception is more intense in

older interviewees who tend to emphasise the importance of the discipline and, in some cases, defend the teacher's right to apply “physical corrections”. Some of the interviewees expressed the fear that their children had an education distant from the “Bolivian values”. This concern can serve as a justification for maintaining the children studying in Bolivia. On the other hand, the interviewees identify that the schools in Barcelona have more infrastructure and an education according to “European standards”.

In relation to university education, there is a certain consensus that a foreign diploma, especially from Spain, tends to be highly valued in Bolivia. However, the high costs for education in Spain, particularly in Catalonia, makes the strategy of studying or having children study at a Spanish university, not accessible to most of the interviewees. On the other hand, respondents reported difficulties (economic and bureaucratic) to validate their Bolivian educational credentials in Spain. “I have a profession for what?” (Carlos).

In this context, study at a Bolivian university is the most frequent strategy in the interviews. This is expressed in the desired to return to Bolivia or in the efforts to send remittances that can fund the university studies of some relative. Having a family member in the university is seen as an investment, something that may have positive consequences for the family network in the future. In this manner, the university studies of a relative are one of the most frequent reasons to extend the stay in Barcelona: “To study, they need money (...) That is what is important to me, nothing more. I do not care about money or anything. The only thing that matters to me is that they can be professionals, that they can defend themselves and that they do not have to go to other places to suffer as I had ” (Rosmery).

4.6 Retirement Strategies

The idea of retirement appeared with very specific meanings in the interviewees' narratives. In a general way, there is no expectation of receiving a pension from the Bolivian/Spanish state that meets all the needs of the family. It is not something that is on the horizon and within the aspirations of the majority. This is due to objective obstacles, such as the short time of contribution to Spanish social security (due to the years without a contract of work) and the limitations of the Bolivian social security system.

Therefore, retirement appears more as a possible effect of an individual and family economic strategy than as a guaranteed right, the result of a long labour trajectory. The intergenerational reciprocity is one of the mechanisms of these strategies: “When I become an old woman, from what am I to live? (...) You have to be sure that one of the children is going to support you, take care of you. We must have an ace in hand!” (Daniela). Another “ace in hand” is the family's economic strategies. Projects that combine the return to Bolivia and the development of a small commerce are very frequent. Thus, the presence of a strong ethic of work is in the base of a notion of retirement that does not necessarily have the meaning of “not working” but rather as a reduction of the workload and the pace of life.

Aging in Spain is not a frequent desire or expectation in the interviews. This is a consequence of the distance from the family and the nostalgia of “mi tierra” (“my land”), but also of the experience of care work of the elderly in Barcelona, that generates a negative idea of aging in the Iberic country. “Here? I do not think. I believe that in my country because here the old age ... I see in my work how it is ... Here if you are older you are isolated. They erase you. (...) It's not the same as being with your family, is it?” (Silvia).

5. Conclusion

This article aimed to highlight the importance of subjective meanings of transnational social protection to understand the dynamics and interfaces between what we call objective and subjective transactions of transnational social protection. In the narratives of the interviewees it was clear that these strategies occur in the loose soil of a world of plural scales, streams, connections, and networks, where people have plural aspirations around the social protection and the realisation of these conceptions tends to be uncertain, depending on the individual and family action.

Considering that this is a work-in-progress, these data must be interpreted with caution. In any case, to conclude, it is important to highlight a relevant and transversal aspect: the very strong tendency towards a family and individual responsabilisation for transnational social protection. Families feel as they are the only ones responsible for their own protection, potentially being blamed for possible gaps and absences. Little is expected from the nation-states, whether in Bolivia or in Barcelona. In many cases, this responsabilisation is turned into a guilt feeling, especially in the case of women who end up receiving a greater burden. What does it mean for the understanding of the

relationship between individual and society when social life becomes transnational and the social protection is a multi-sited family's quest? Is the transnationalisation of the social question mentioned by Faist (2009; 2014) also an individualisation and a new way of familisation of the social protection?

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