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Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to a conjunction of socio-economical factors at local and global level, over the last decades a growing interest has been given to "cultural diversity" in political discourses and practices. A prove of that is the introduction of terms as multi and inter – culturalism, transculturalism, super-diversity and so on. Attempts to manage cultural diversity are visible in many European and non European countries in formal and informal contexts.

Governments, city councils, international apparatus, schools and other institutions participate in the game of managing of cultural diversity contributing to right concession and restriction, promotion of discourses and socio cultural constructions. Most of the time as a result, they end up building new differences, inequalities and discriminations.

The aim of this paper is to explore discourses and practices on "cultural diversity" in school. We will focus on Ecuadorian pupils in Spanish schools using data of an ethnography held in the research project "Convivial cultures and super-diversity"[1].
Although there are no quantitative datas on the sociocultural construction of the image of migrants pupils, we will argue that the image of "good children/bad students" referred to Ecuadorian students is the result of the constant process of building of differences based on the relation identity/otherness and in this process some category used in super-diverse contexts such as gender, language, nationality, social class, are more relevant than others.

The paper will be structured in three parts. First of all we will show a theoretical framework particularly describing the concept of super-diversity. In the confusion of terms and

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[1] 'Convivial cultures and super-diversity' (ptdc/cs-soc/101693/2008) funded by Fundaçã para a Ciência e a Tecnologia del Ministério da Ciência, Tecologia e Enssino Superior de Portugal, and directed by Beatriz Padilla (CIES-ISCTE Lisbon).

meanings when talking on managing of cultural diversity, we propose the version of Stefen Vertovec in his attempts to overcome multiculturalist and interculturalist questions.

In the second part of the paper we will explain how the Spanish education system works and the way it treats diversity. In the third part we will contextualize our fieldwork, explaining the process of data collection applied. In a fourth section we present the point of the paper, what does the dichotomy "good children, bad students" means in Spanish school system?

1. SUPER-DIVERSITY AND CONSTRUCTION OF IMMIGRANT IDENTITIES

After observing, thinking and talking about questions related to multiculturalist discourses we founded that Vertovec theory could offer a new way to look at diversity and complexity in postmodern cities. We will briefly explain why.

When talking about multiculturalism and management of cultural differences, Vertovec seems aware of the multiples meanings that are usually given to multiculturalism:

> "*Multiculturalism may refer to a demographic description, a broad political ideology, a set of specific public policies, a goal of institutional restructuring, a mode of resourcing cultural expression, a general moral challenge, a set of new political struggles, and as a kind of feature of postmodernism*" (Vertovec 2003:3)

Above all the problem with multiculturalism is the variety and excess of uses and contexts. Vertovec suggests the importance to reconsider cultural difference empirically and theoretically, proposing the juxtaposition of new factors to be considered. The author introduces the term super diversity to define a new moment of social complexity related to the recent migrant flows and to the heterogeneity that characterized such flows. For that reason, to ensure a fluid integration of migrant population, Vertovec highlight the need to revitalize multicultural politics in order to reflect new patterns of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007). These patterns represent a step behind culture and ethnicity and a useful tool to re-think multiculturalism as condition and circumstance.

Looking at the case of Great Britain, Vertovec presents the super-diversity produced by the development of new network migrations of early 90s. The difference between these network and the previous ones is that they are not related to the ancient British Empire

and the colonial past. The start point of his ideas is the diversification of diversity; in this way a new processes dissolve or turn more complex categories established ten or twenty years ago (*Ibídem*).

Considering the data of migration in Great Britain in the 90s, Vertovec found that patterns of migrations and categories to refer to the "other" changed, being doubled if compared with previous years (Vertovec 2007). It is clear that from now on make sense to talk about new origins (new migrants have no relation historical- colonial with Great Britain); new languages (in London more that 300 languages are spoken (Baker and Mohieldeen 2000, quoted in Vertovec 2007: 1032); diversification of religion, migration channel and immigrant status (students, workers, refugees and asylum seekers, spouses and family members, students that turn immigrants); variation in gender distribution, new age distribution, changeable space and place distribution (Is not possible to talk about migrant groups living in a specific area), an important increase of transnational practices helped by the development of communication and cheapest transports (Vertovec 2007). All these categories and the conjunction of them is what Vertovec calls super-diversity. Appreciate the configuration of these variables and relation between them allows a better understanding of the highly differenced composition, social position and trajectories of different migrant groups at the moment. From now is not possible to relate diversity just to ethnicity.

That's why a context considered as multicultural needs to be seen as super-diverse and that leads to search for new ways of relate these diversity at political and academicals level, as well as the level of everyday relations. For us, social scientists, the invitation is to overcome ethno focal understanding of diversity, betting for a multi-dimensional focus that includes all the variables.

2. SCHOOL IN SPAIN AND THE WAY TO TREAT THE DIVERSITY

Education is recognized as a right in Spanish Constitution since 1978. Article 27 establishes that everyone, regardless of their nationality, has the right to education and, among other provisions, states that basic education is compulsory and free.

Since the beginning of democracy there have been four major changes at the legislative level and nowadays education in Spain is regulated by the "Ley Orgánica de Educación"

(Organic law of Education – 2006). Education is compulsory between ages 6 to 15 and it is structured as we see in Table 1:

Table 1: Spanish educational system organization

	Stage-Age
Primary Education	1:6-7 years old 2: 8-9 years old 3: 10-11 years old
Secondary Education	1: 12-13 years old 2: 14-15 years old

Due to the inclusion of immigrant students in the Spanish education system, since the mid-90's of last century aroused a growing concern of teachers on how to manage this "new diversity". First plans and actions revolved on how to teach the national school language: Spanish. The idea on these plans and actions are built is that if the foreign students are able to learn the school language they will have no problem at school[2].

Obviously this simplistic conception of the phenomenon left out doesn't involve in the specific measures a high part of foreign population, such as Latin-Americans, whose first language is Spanish.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education for the 2009-10 academic year, were enrolled in primary and secondary almost four and a half million pupils and the 11.41% of them were of foreign origin. But there are a number of issues to keep in mind when interpreting this data. On one hand Spanish government is organized in autonomous communities, and differences in the distribution of foreign students in these regions are quite large.

Therefore we will focus on our research context, Andalusia, the southern region of the country. On the other hand we should clarify that data are referred to foreign students, whose nationality is not Spanish. In our fieldwork, we have found that having Spanish nationality does not exempt from being considered a foreigner (the case of students from Ecuador that we are considering here). Based on these warnings will show some statistics.

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[2] To correct this situation the regional administration devised the ATAL (Linguistic Adaptation Temporary Classrooms) in Andalusia. From the academic / scientific devices have been addressed by several researchers, notably those of Ortiz Cobo (2005), Perez and Pomares (2002), Cara Rodriguez (2003), Cabrera (2003), Soriano (2003) and Martin Rodriguez (2005).

In Andalusia, for the school year 2009-10 had enrolled, for primary and secondary education, a total of 912,908 pupils and the 8.84% of them were foreign citizens. If we look at secondary school, in which we worked for the same school year, we found that 9.6% of the students are foreign, and taking into account the data on the origin from continents that offers the autonomic government, the 40.12% of foreign students coming from Central and South America.

We would like to use all this information to demonstrate the main importance that this population have for the educational system in Andalusia; and the quantitative importance is complemented by the widespread idea in the speech teacher: these students have the "same language", "same culture", "same religion", but they fail in school.

3. OUR FIELD WORK

From the Institute of migration we have been working on Research projects on the situation of the foreign population in the Spanish educational system. The multidisciplinarity of our research team (anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, etc.) allowed the better understanding of phenomena, having in mind that although the research has been crossed beyond the disciplines it always presents fully attention to the social processes of construction of difference.

Thus ethnography is the methodology we have been developing in all our research projects as we consider that it is the best way to understand the gap between what is said and what is done, between the discourse and practice and between rhetoric and reality. (Silva, 2007).

In this article we have selected information from fieldwork from the project "Convivial culture and super-diversity", focused on the management of diversity and the dynamics of conviviality in the city of Granada and in the city of Lisbon. For this project the field-work has been done in both institutional and non institutional spaces. We also used information from our doctoral research[3]

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[3] P. Contini's doctoral research is about 'super-diversity in Granada and Lisbon' (in progress) M. Rubio's doctoral research is about 'Ecuadorian students in Andalusia educational system' (in progress). A. Olmos' doctoral research is about 'Immigration and the building of the difference in Andalusia' (Olmos 2009).

Our methodological tools are participant observation (in school settings, neighborhoods, etc.) and interviews (with teachers, foreign students, families, students Spanish, etc.) That's how we picked up the speeches that we analyze in this paper.

Our main goal here is to highlight the paradoxical situation in which the students from Ecuador are in Andalusia schools are considered "good children" and at the same time "bad students". How we can explain that?

4. GOOD CHILDREN AND BAD STUDENTS, WHAT'S GOING ON?

And this is the image that the school has of Latin-American students in Spain: girls and boys without conduct or adaptation problems at school, but however with academic failure. Doesn't exist statistic about it, but our fieldwork says that this image is a socio-cultural construction made by school and teachers: not all of them are good children and not all of them are bad students. This social representation is the result of a process of building the difference (relations of identity/otherness). And in this process –how we will show below lines- some social categories as nationality, *culture*, gender, *race*/ethnicity, social class…, and others more, play an important role.

These categories are used to define the students, together with the classic classifications that school always has made of 'good-bad/child-student', affecting undoubtedly the interactions and relations between different groups in and out school. In the next lines we show these questions thoroughly. When we are talking about the 'classic classifications' in school context we are referring to the old ideas –still in full force- of girls are better students than boys, as is asserted below:

> *If we choose an Ecuadorian student (boy) who comes today from Ecuador and other student (girl), although is true that girls are much smarter than boys, it is true, a student from Bulgaria or Romania, we choose both of them, the Ecuadorian boy knows Spanish, the Romanian girl doesn´t know Spanish, we put them in the same class and three month later the Romanian girl knows Spanish, knows mathematics, she knows all, and the Ecuadorian boy is like as if just arrived (School headmaster, 07/11/2007)[4]*

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[4] We tried to translate the speeches collected through interviews, should be warned that this translation may distort the original speech, so we added the original version in Spanish:

And the idea that social class –in purely economic terms- is also a determining factor in how will be the experience of students in school:

I think that South American immigrants ... I think they have a lower socioeconomic status than other immigrants, because here you see the guys or girls who come from the eastern Europe and ... I don´t know, is supposed that they have a better economic status than the South Americans. I think that all influence, but I think the economy is also the base for many things, and I suppose that is all a bit related to the level of integration (School headmaster, 07/11/2007).[5]

Because is considered a motivation to study and have a good behaviour at school (if you have a good economic situation), or a cause to not study and have a bad behaviour (if you haven't a good economic level). These old classifications (reductionist and stereotypical, needless to say) are articulated and co-exist with more recent ones, at least in the Spanish context and when we study about Latin-American students.

In this sense, the first that emerge in the discourse and practices analysed is that the provenance and the national-ethnic origin of the students seems to be very important reason to be a 'good or bad students':

I think that South American immigrants…I think that their socio-cultural level is lower than other those immigrants (School headmaster, 07/11/2007)[6].

The implicit prejudices in these discourses are relative to the 'cultures' of each one of the groups present at schools. Link 'cultures' to origins (national or ethnic) has as consequence reifying, essentializing and reducing -without doubt- the reality that it refers. We can see how 'cultural levels' are established, from an evolutionist perspective, and that

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Si cogemos un alumno ecuatoriano que viene hoy de Ecuador y una alumna, aunque las niñas también es verdad son mucho más listas que los niños, es verdad; una alumna de Bulgaria o de Rumania, los cogemos, el ecuatoriano sabe español, la rumana no sabe español, los metemos en la misma clase y a los 3 meses la rumana sabe español, sabe matemáticas, sabe de todo y el ecuatoriano está como si llevara 5 o 6 días. (Director de un centro público, 07/11/2007)
[5] *Es que yo creo que los inmigrantes sudamericanos… yo creo que son de nivel socioeconómico más bajo que los de otro tipo de inmigrantes, porque tú ves aquí a los chicos o a las chicas que vienen del Este y… no lo sé se supone que tienen un nivel económico bastante superior que los sudamericanos. Yo creo que influye todo, pero creo que la economía es la base también para muchas cosas, y eso supongo que va todo un poco relacionado con el nivel de integración (Director de un centro público, 07/11/2007).[5]*
[6] *Es que yo creo que los inmigrantes sudamericanos… yo creo que son de nivel sociocultural más bajo que los de otro tipo de inmigrantes (Director de un centro público, 07/11/2007)*

are used to explain scholar failure and success. Latin-American studénts are identified with a 'backward culture' or 'not working culture' in comparison to autochthonous students and other foreign students (mainly European, but not only) in Spain:

Moreover, each student has a way of working, which influences a lot, I've noticed, is the country you come, children from eastern Europe are generally more workers than children from Brazil, this child that I have from Brazil has samba rhythm (laughs)... the country influences the way in which they are enrolled in school (ATAL teacher, 24/03/2008)[7]

And this stereotyping process is different regard to boys and girls. In this sense is remarkable that the 'good behaviour' and the 'bad academic results' of Latin-American girls are explained by the 'way they live their femininity':

Latin American girls, particularly Ecuador, Peru or Colombia are not with their head in the studies, they think more about ... well, the boyfriend, go out and get pregnant as soon as possible and work on anything, very few of them continue studying, is the true (Mathematics Professor, 04/06/2009).[8]

Understood it as incompatible with the values that school tries to teach –are said- in Spanish society. These stereotyped ideas are useful for a lot of teachers to explain the situation of Latin-American girls at school. We consider, however that the problem lies in the educational system, not in the students (at least mainly or exclusively). In fact, we reaffirm our ideas when we notice that, just in the discourses of the teachers, there are fissures and contradictions that avoid to explain the whole of school failure, and / or good behaviour of Latin-American students with questions related to their 'culture' in the above sense. And we could notice that when we ask about the 'language' in ours interviews. Teaching Spanish –and the other co-officials languages, as in some regions like Cataluña,

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[7] *Además cada uno tiene su forma de trabajar, que influye mucho, yo me he dado cuenta, del país que vengas, los niños de las zonas del Este son generalmente más trabajadores que los niños de Brasil, este niño que tengo de Brasil el pobre lleva su ritmo de samba (risas) es una cosa…influye el país, la manera en la que se escolaricen (Profesora de ATAL de varios centros públicos, 24/03/2008).*
[8] *Las niñas latinoamericanas, sobre todo ecuatorianas, peruanas o colombianas no están con la cabeza en los estudios, ellas están más…pues al novio, a salir, y cuanto antes se queden embarazadas pues mejor y a trabajar de cualquier cosa, muy pocas siguen estudiando la verdad (Profesor de Matemáticas de un centro público, 04/06/2009).*

País Vasco and so on- are the cornerstone of integration policies concerning immigration in Spain, but ironically Latin-American population speak Spanish:

We know that in the South American population is taking a high failure rate ... (...) and however they have the language (...). I understand that there other factors (...) (education administrator, 9/11/2004)[9].

Reality itself questions and dismantles one of the major principles that guide the whole policy of providing education to immigrant students in the Spanish state: the need to teach the language of the school and the 'Spanish culture' to immigrant students to achieve integration and academic success. But, what happened when students speak Spanish? How could be explained the failure at school? And the answer more listened is, again, 'CULTURE'; however –we insist- the best answer would be 'the education system'. Furthermore, we should even question the alleged school failure of foreign students, especially in the Latin-American students, from a comparative perspective. And that because the autochthonous students itself -according to the latest PISA- is experiencing high levels of school failure in the last years.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Stereotypes related to language, nationality, religion, gender, social class ... and much more elements that form the super-diverse urban contexts studied, determine and influence how the students will be perceived: as good or bad students and as good or bad boys/girls.

The different groups of immigrant students are very often classified by nationality; different languages are attributed to these nationalities; and different religions too; and are places in a particular social class (defined in classic Marxist sense: in terms purely economic). All of this has as a result a process of building the difference to whole groups, ignoring the particularities individuals that the people present.

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[9] *Sabemos que en la población sudamericana se está dando un alto índice de fracaso… (…) y sin embargo tienen el idioma (…). Entiendo que hay otros factores (…) (Técnico de la administración educativa, 09/11/2004).*

With this paper we wanted to show a small sample of our work which unfolds a series of questions about the construction of the other inside institutional contexts, which today continue to maintain a homogenous vision of society. For our part we are still investigating and trying to understand how the "super-diversity" in schools is treated and understood as inequalities and differences that are difficult to break.

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