

Report document. Katerina Brunclikova. MALAIS.

Santander International Exchange Bursaries Scheme

The purpose of my research has been to understand the social and cultural position of the “illegal” immigrants in Majorca, Spain and the limits they experience when attempting to integrate into the ‘host’ society. I have aimed to explore and value the immigrants’ points of view and reflections of their daily social reality.

The investigation has been conducted through qualitative interviews, and visual documentation (photography) obtained by the interviewees.

The participants of my research project were Latin American immigrants living “illegally” in Majorca, Spain. The informants were originally from Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay. The reason for interviewing this group was to collect personal experiences and understanding of limits on social and cultural integration in their everyday life. Their perceptions were not taken as a representative voice of their country, but rather as individual account related to their socio-cultural circumstances.

The material collected during the interview process has served not as a reflection of wider society, but rather as personal narratives of current social issues, possibly portraying accounts of many immigrants occupying similar positions. The flexibility and interactivity of the qualitative interviews allowed me to approach delicate and unfortunate issues such as racism, prejudice and illegality. The open dialogue was suitable for accessing, in my opinion, ignored and suppressed points of views that have generated valuable material for further analysis and linkage with social theories significant for my research.

The anonymity of all interviewees with illegal status was assured and the informed consent to use the interviews for my research was verbally obtained in all of the cases.

The visual method produced very interesting results which reflected, in many symbolic ways, personal stories that, in conjunction with the narratives and extracts from the interviews, accentuated the complex socio-cultural positions the “illegal” Latin American immigrants live in. Through the photographs, they have challenged our perceptions about spaces and situations that on the first glance seems ordinary. The participants have created visuals of new socio-cultural associations, and different points of view of our shared reality.

The setting of our sessions took place in a small café. The familiar environment and friendly conversational approach generated a comfortable ambience to discuss issues covering sensitive material. All sessions covered crucial subjects valid for my research material. The selection of the analysed information generated meaningful material that contributed to the development of my dissertation argument and also served as an empirical example for emerging theories of my research. Thanks to the longer process of the qualitative interviews I could understand and comprehend the individual dilemmas of illegality and the limits on their integration. The goal to uncover the limits each person experiences on social and cultural integration was successfully reached.