

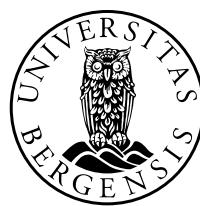
Becoming a returnee Cubarawi

Politics, Personhood and Memory in 'Africa's last colony'

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Abstract

For nearly 40 years, an estimated 165.000 Sahrawi have been living in refugee camps in the Algerian part of the Sahara desert, known as *hamada*¹. The refugee camps are under the government of the Polisario Front -the Sahrawi liberation movement- and are completely dependent on humanitarian aid. 30 years ago, Cuba decided to include the Sahrawi in their education aid program for developing countries.

My aim in this thesis is to present and analyze those young Sahrawi studying in Cuba, known as ‘Cubarawi’. My main argument is that long-term residence in Cuba has shaped the personhood, mind and actions of this youth, placing an important weight on Gramsci’s concept of ‘ideology’. In order to back my argument, I use different analytical concepts, each referring to and helping analyze various aspects of my ethnographic material, including personhood, cultural identity, memory and politics.

To understand why the Cubarawis keep their Cuban identity alive in the camps, I use Hall’s definition of identity as a continuous process of becoming, supported by Ortiz’s ‘transculturation’ and Turner’s perspective of being ‘betwixt and between’. Müller’s ‘memories of paradise’ helps explaining their time in the island and the fond memories from that period.

The reason they are sent to Cuba is to get a higher university degree. I argue that the students are a mere instrument, as it is upon the Polisario to choose the studies of the Cubarawis according to the ‘nation’s needs’. Education also helps them embody the Cuban ideology. Using Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’ I show how the social practices of Cuba are internalized and embodied by the Sahrawis.

Lastly, I expose how the disconnection between the Polisario and the youth brings along frustration and disenchantment because of what they understand as the Polisario do-nothing policy. Using Honwana’s concept of ‘waithood’, I present how the youth is channeling that frustration with active and creative alternatives. Scott’s ‘weapons of the weak’ helps presenting ideas of non-violent resistance, while Dudouet’s theories of armed resistance, gives voice to the youth who are ready to take up arms to get a solution for their conflict. At the same time, I show how this idea is gaining strength among the frustrated youth.

¹ *Hamada* refers to a desert landscape with barren, rocky plateaus and very little sand.

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Glossary

Daira: In the refugee camps, administrative division inside every *wilaya*.

Darraa: Traditional Sahrawi dress for men.

Haima: In the refugee camps, temporary tents where the Sahrawis lived at the beginning of the exile. Because of the length of the conflict, the Sahrawis started building adobe houses next to their *haimas*.

Hamada: Desert landscape with barren, rocky plateaus and very little sands. The Sahrawi refugee camps are situated in the Algerian *Hamada*.

Melhfa: Traditional Sahrawi dress for women.

Misiones: In Cuba, cooperation missions where newly-graduated doctors and teachers are sent abroad to work in remote communities around Latin America and Africa for an initial period of two years.

Pinareña: Female resident of Pinar del Río (Cuba). In the rest of Cuba, it is used as an insult, meaning dumb and unable to do things the right way.

Wilaya: In the refugee camps, a *wilaya* is each of the different five camps: Laayoune, Auserd, Smara, Boujdour and Dakhla.

Yuma: In Cuba, a tourist, but it is generally understood that all tourists have a lot of money, which makes of the concept of *Yuma* a pejorative one.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AU African Union

CDR Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Comitees for the Defense of the Revolution)

CEAMO Centro de Estudios sobre África y Medio Oriente (Center of African and Middle Eastern Studies)

CUC Peso Cubano Convertible (Cuban Convertible Peso)

EUCOCO European Conference of Coordination and Support to the Saharawi People

FEU Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (University Students Federation)

GDR German Democratic Republic

MINURSO Misión de las Naciones Unidas para la Organización de un Referéndum en el Sáhara Occidental (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)

NRC Norwegian Refugee Council

OAU Organization of African Unity

OXFAM Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

POLISARIO FRONT Frente Popular de Liberación de Sagüia el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Sagüia el-Hamra and Río de Oro)

ROAPE Review of African Political Economy

SADR Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

UESARIO Unión de Estudiantes de SAgua el Hamra y Río de Oro (Student Union of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro)

UJSARIO Unión de Jóvenes de SAgua el Hamra y Río de Oro (Youth Union of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro)

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNMS Unión Nacional de Mujeres Saharauis (National Union of Sahrawi Women)

INTRODUCTION

Sahrawis in Cuba. Cuba in the Sahara

*¡Al combate corred bayameses,
que la Patria os contempla orgullosa;
no temáis una muerte gloriosa,
que morir por la patria es vivir!*

*En cadenas vivir es vivir
en afrenta y oprobio sumidos.
Del clarín escuchad el sonido,
¡A las armas valientes corred!*

*Hasten to battle, men of Bayamo!
The motherland looks proudly to you;
Do not fear a glorious death,
Because to die for the motherland is to live.*

*To live in chains is to live
in dishonor and ignominy,
Hear the call of the bugle;
Hasten, brave ones, to arms!*

La Bayamesa (The Bayamo Song), Cuban National Anthem

1

The 1868 Battle of Bayamo the referred to in the Cuban anthem above was the first successful Cuban uprising against Spain. Immediately following the victory, a combatant and musician, Pedro Figueredo, composed these lyrics, only to be captured and executed by the Spaniards two years later. It is said that, before the firing squad executed him, he shouted ‘¡Morir por la Patria es vivir!’ (‘To die for the motherland is to live!’) (Cubadebate 2013).

Morir por la patria es vivir has become not only just part of the national anthem, but intrinsic to key discourses both for Cubans and, more interestingly, for the Sahrawi students living in Cuba. Abdul is a good example of the latter: as every other Sahrawi, he arrived to Cuba when he was still a child as part of Cuba’s educational program for Sahrawi refugees. Now, in his third year of university, studying to become a Spanish teacher, he insists on the importance of teaching Sahrawi children to be friends with Spanish children, once they are back in Tindouf, teaching at the schools of the different camps, “So the Spanish children are aware of our situation and can help us”. He believes Spain is the only responsible for the Sahrawi state of affairs, because of its failed decolonization process and its complicity toward Moroccan occupation. “They sold us as hens in the market” is his favorite sentence, and he repeats it constantly. He also likes to refer to any Western country as the ‘imperialist West’, and he is convinced that he will be ready for battle whenever he is asked to by the Sahrawi

government. Abdul thinks war is the only option in order to gain the long-awaited independence of Western Sahara, and he will gladly fight for his land, as he considers that *to die for the motherland is to live.*

Although Abdul's speech is usually quite incendiary and provocative, the reality is that he is not the only one thinking that violence, in the shape of an armed fight, may be the only real solution to the stalemate of the conflict in Western Sahara. The feeling of being a forgotten conflict evokes different justifications to finally put an end to their lives as refugees or as a discriminated minority in their own territory. As such, adopted Cuban revolutionary slogans are easily heard both from the Sahrawis studying on the island and from those who have already returned to the refugee camps in the Sahara desert.

The refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria, are under the government of the Polisario Front¹ -the Sahrawi liberation movement- and are completely dependent on humanitarian aid due to the almost non-existence of water and food in the desert. It is estimated that over 165.000 people are living in the camps which have been in existence for almost 40 years -- most of the population then having been born and raised there.

My main aim in this thesis is to present and analyze this generation born and raised in the camps: the youth. Young people, defined in this thesis from age 14 to over 30, who live a life of waiting. This youth are in a liminal state between childhood and adulthood in which they feel lost and with an uncertain future. This youth are in a state of what Alcinda Honwana called *waithood*:

Waithood, a portmanteau term of 'wait' and '-hood' meaning waiting for adulthood, which describes a period of suspension between childhood and adulthood. It represents a prolonged adolescence or an involuntary delay in reaching adulthood, in which young people are unable to attain the social markers of adulthood - getting a job or some form of livelihood; leaving their parents' house and building their own home; getting married; having children; and providing for their families" (Honwana 2012:4).

This is a youth whose only home has been the refugee camps, a youth that only knows about their land from stories they hear from their parents, from their grandparents, from the neighbors. This is a youth that live in temporary tents (*haimas*) and precarious adobe houses

¹ The Polisario Front is also usually called just 'Polisario'. I will therefore use this shorter name at times throughout my thesis.

that the scarce desert rain can tear down in a night. A youth whose education is shaped by the desert's harsh conditions and the lack of educational facilities and means. A youth that, thanks to external economic aid, will be able to see another world, to gain an education and to come back to the camps with a new perspective of the conflict, of their precarious existence in the camps and, ultimately also, on themselves. Partly thanks to this opportunity to live abroad in Cuba, I argue that this youth use their liminal stage, their 'waithood', once they are back in the camps, after their Cuban years, as a means to express their political views and their disenchantment with the current state of affairs. In this I follow Honwana's argument:

[Y]oung people in waithood are not inactively 'waiting' for their situation to change. Despite the challenges, youth in waithood are dynamic and using their creativity to invent new forms of being and interacting with society (Honwana 2012:5).

However, in addition to the main aim of analyzing waithood, with this thesis I also want to show how long-term residence in Cuba shapes the personhood, cultural identity and political ideas of those young Sahrawi refugees sent to the island to pursue higher education under a Cuban study-abroad program. In my thesis I argue that living in Cuba drastically affects the lives of the Sahrawis, how they see themselves and how they see the other Sahrawi in relation to themselves. I will also explain how their Cuban residency affects the way the other Sahrawi back in the Algerian refugee camps see them and how they relate to them. I will as well demonstrate how living on a Caribbean island impacts on their culture and group identity once they return 'home' to the refugee camps. Some aspects of Cuban culture clash with Muslim culture, creating difficult personal and cultural dilemmas for the returnee Cubarawis². And precisely the very term 'Cubarawi' illustrates exactly how they are seen to embody both Cuban and Sahrawi traits and culture -- their perceived liminality or inbetween-ness creating dilemmas about their identity and subjectivity. This is, as we will see, also expressed by the Cubarawis themselves who often express being in a transition stage where they feel part of a culture in between two cultures, of a common group identity only shared and understood by some, creating a specific Cuban sub-culture inside the camps. Victor Turner called this stage a liminal period where, in this case the Cubarawi, is 'betwixt and between', that is, neither here nor there, neither Cuban nor Sahrawi (Lessa and Vogt, 1979). Turner, of course, described the period of margin or 'liminality' in the rites of passage, the end point of which indicate a

² *Cubarawi* is the colloquial name by which Sahrawis returned from Cuba are known (San Martín 2009:249)

change or transition between states, for example, between being a child and an adult. This liminality works, according to Turner, as transformation, as forms of becoming. For instance, in certain small-scale societies, when a child reaches a specific age, the family may arrange a ritual to celebrate that he is no longer a child, and has to prepare for adulthood. In the case of the Cubarawis, their stay in Cuba could be understood as their rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, but also from being Sahrawi to being Cuban, to being Sahrawi again. They are betwixt and between in the sense of their own biological changes, but at the same time they are betwixt and between two cultures, neither fully Sahrawi nor fully Cuban. In this liminality, a new category is created: the 'Cubarawi'. I will explain this liminality state in my thesis by analyzing their time in Cuba -- an average being 12 years -- and their following return to the refugee camps in the Algerian dessert.

Lastly, I will reflect on how the revolutionary political ideology of the Castro's regime and the ideological similarity with the Polisario Front influence their views about the conflict, and how it may benefit the 'Sahrawi cause' (the collective cause of liberation, independence and nation building). In this respect I will use Gramsci's definition of 'hegemony', understood as ideological domination. The basic premise of Gramsci's theory is that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas (Bates 1975:351). When one ideology, or world view, dominates, it suppresses any other ways of explaining reality. According to Gramsci, ideology tightly confines a society by its use of language. The words we use to speak, write and transmit ideas have been constructed by social interactions through history and shaped by the dominant ideology of the times. Thus they are loaded with cultural meanings that condition us to think in particular ways, and to not be able to think very well in other ways (*ibid.*).

4

I will argue that the common political grounds of Cuba and the Polisario -- nationalism, socialism, patriotism -- make it easier for the Cubarawis to get involved in non-party-led or alternative political activities once they return to the camps -- often reflecting a frustration in relation to what they see as outdated policies of their political leaders. I will dedicate my last chapter to touch upon this subject.

The Polisario understands the necessity of having a population highly involved in its conflict, and the return of the youth to the camps seems crucial. Therefore, Polisario applies what Eriksen calls 'formal' and 'informal' nationalism, it includes all the nation-state organizations and ideology, "cultural uniformity and political consensus" together with "collective events" taking place in civil society -such as the celebration of the 40th anniversary

of the Polisario on 11th of May 2013 or the 38th anniversary of the Sahrawi Parliament on 28th of November the same year, while I was on fieldwork in the refugee camps- (Eriksen 1993).

I argue that by conjoining both formal and informal nationalism, a “sense of community and obligation” may appear (Scott 1985:178, 183) and this could lead to the moral duty the young Sahrawi studying abroad may feel of returning to the camps once they finish with their studies. But, because of what is understood by the youth as outdated policies from the Polisario Front, Eriksen’s nationalisms and Scott’s sense of community may not be enough anymore. The disenchantment they feel towards the Polisario Front policies makes these concepts insufficient for explaining the stances if the youth.

In this respect, Honwana’s concept of ‘waithood’ serves as a very good analytical tool to explain the situation of the youth once they are back in the camps. Understanding ‘waithood’ as an active and creative situation, I will show how the youth is channeling their frustration towards what they understand as a ‘do-nothing’ Polisario Front policy. Following Scott’s concept ‘weapons of the weak’ I will show how the youth is creating their own alternatives to the solution of the conflict, appealing to international solidarity by non-violent resistance techniques. Some of these techniques include mass actions, provocation, art, and the use of social media, as well as international media. I will exemplify these actions with the marches to the berm organized by the ‘Cries against the wall’ movement, as well as with the peaceful demonstrations in the occupied territories. Drawing on Dudouet’s theories on armed and unarmed resistance as alternative methods of popular mobilization (2013), I will also show how the idea of taking up arms is gaining strength among the frustrated and disenchanted youth.

Framing the conflict

For nearly 40 years, an estimated 165.000 Sahrawi have been living in refugee camps in the Algerian part of the Sahara desert, known as *hamada*³ (UNHCR statistical yearbooks of 2002, 2003 and 2004, in Chatty *et al.* 2010:41).

After the Spanish colonizers left Western Sahara by 1975 with a failed process of decolonization, Morocco began an illegal occupation of the country that has lasted to this day (Smith 2005:546). A large number of Sahrawi fled then from the occupiers, either to Mauritania or towards the only other possible direction: the desert. But the majority could not escape, staying in their territory, now illegally occupied by Morocco (Smith 2005:547). Algeria, a declared official 'enemy' of Morocco, offered refuge on a small desert part of their territory, in Tindouf, to those who could escape (Zoubir and Benabdallah-Gambier 2004:59).



7

Detail of the refugee camp of Boujdour. Photo by the author (2012)

Commonly called 'Africa's last colony', Western Sahara has been on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories⁴ since 1976 (The United Nations and

³ *Hamada* refers to a desert landscape with barren, rocky plateaus and very little sand.

⁴ As stated on the UN and Decolonization website: "On 26 February 1976, Spain informed the Secretary-General that as of that date it had terminated its presence in the Territory of the Sahara and deemed it necessary to place on record that Spain considered itself thenceforth exempt from any responsibility of any international nature in connection with the administration of the Territory, in view of the cessation of its participation in the temporary administration established for the Territory. In 1990, the General Assembly

Decolonitzation, n.d.). "in 1990, the General Assembly reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonization which remained to be completed by the people of Western Sahara" (ibid.).

Since 1976, Morocco has resettled Moroccan citizens into the occupied territories, in order to outnumber the Sahrawi. Currently, the Moroccan government seems to have achieved that goal, making the Sahrawi a discriminated minority in what they see as their own land (NRC 2008:4). The reasons for this occupation are not just territorial, but mainly geo-political and economic, considering that Western Sahara is a land rich in phosphates, fishery and perhaps oil, which Morocco exploits and exports to other countries, including the EU (NRC 2008:10, 14). Using Escobar's words about the Yurumanguí of Colombia, the Sahrawis inhabited a "forgotten territor[y] [...] now coveted by many; because of their riches [these lands] have fallen into the mire of national and international interests". They suffer "*la desgracia de la buena suerte*" (the curse of good luck) (Escobar 2008:311).

As briefly touched upon above, the Sahrawis that were able to escape live in refugee camps in Algerian territory, or very few as well in the so-called 'freed territories': areas won by the Sahrawi national liberation movement (Frente Polisario⁵) in a war against Morocco and Mauritania that would last until 1991. At the time of the cease-fire, the UN created a peacekeeping mission (MINURSO⁶) that was meant to conduct a referendum for the Sahrawi people to choose between being part of Morocco and being independent (MINURSO, n.d.).

reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonization which remained to be completed by the people of Western Sahara". A full list of Non-Self-Governing Territories is available on <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/nonselgovterritories.shtml#foot1> [Accessed 1 April 2014]

⁵ Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro. Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro were the two territories that formed the old province of the Spanish Sahara.

⁶ MINURSO is the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. It is the only UN peacekeeping mission to be operating without the capacity to monitor human rights, despite serious reports of numerous abuses by Morocco on the occupied territories (for a full report on Human Rights violations in the occupied Western Sahara, see C. Martín Beristain and E. González Hidalgo *El oasis de la memoria: memoria histórica y violaciones de Derechos Humanos en el Sáhara Occidental* (Hegoa Publicaciones, Bilbao, 2012), as well as several international Human Rights organizations like Amnesty International (see *Annual Report on Western Sahara*, 2007 through 2012), the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and Codesa (Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders). The MINURSO mandate has been extended every year since 1991, the next extension occurred on the 29th April 2014.

Leave to return

30 years ago, countries like Spain, Algeria, Libya, Syria and Cuba decided to include the Sahrawi in their aid programs focused on developing countries (Chatty *et al.* 2010:57). This aid was mainly addressed to children and young Sahrawi, in order to give them proper access to education. Thanks to these programs, many Sahrawi children get a higher education that afterwards, it is argued, helps their people to fight for their right to self-determination (Chatty *et al.* 2010:54). All of the diaspora feel the moral duty to go back to the desert. But not all of them do, and of those who do, some may stay for just a period of time. Ultimately, the moral duty proves not enough in a historical moment when money, as well as the need to succeed and to feel fulfilled, starts gaining importance. Therefore it becomes crucial for the Polisario to appeal to what Eriksen calls the ‘informal nationalism’.

As Eriksen argues, only the formal state nationalism does not prove enough in order to be fully acknowledged in civil society. It is therefore of paramount importance to appeal to values relevant and influential to society, in order for the symbolism of the ideology to be fully accepted as part of the society’s daily experiences. By appealing to the civil society’s values and sentiments, the nation ideology can create “a sense of community that can be transformed into effective political action” (Eriksen 1993:8), and only then can a state nationalism be efficient.

9

This idea of informal nationalism brings what Scott describes as the collectively created *remembered village* (Scott, 1985): they deplore their present by continually thinking about their past as a better time and something to long back for. In the Sahrawi society, their past as independent inhabitants of a coastal country, as nomads roaming around the vast Sahara desert, as ‘sons of the clouds’⁷ is present in every cultural account in the form of songs, poems or tales, as it can be seen in the poem *Tiris* by Cubarawi Ali Salem Iselmu (2008):

⁷ The Sahrawis call themselves “sons of the clouds” because of their nomadic past, when they had to go through the desert following the clouds, in hope for some rain. This is also the reason behind the name of the famous documentary by Álvaro Longoria and Javier Bardem about the situation in Western Sahara, documentary which made the conflict more known internationally.

<p><i>Si llegas alguna vez a una tierra lisa y blanca acompañada de inmensas estatuas negras y el andar pasivo de camellos y beduinos, recuerda que existe una tierra sin amo y sin dueño espejo y alma de todo ser inocente.</i></p>	<p><i>If you ever come to a wide, white land dotted with towering black statues crossed by the slow tracks of camels and Bedouin, remember there exists a land with no master and no owner, the mirror and the soul of all innocent people</i></p>
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This same vivid imagery of an idyllic past is reinforced by the state with, for example, projects for the recovery of the cultural memory of the Sahrawi. During fieldwork Jadiya Hamdi, at the time Minister of Culture, told me about this project on an informal gathering with a Mexican delegation in the camps. Her ministry had just given recorders to young volunteers so they could go to the different *wilayas* (camps) interviewing the elders about their memories of the past. Hamdi stressed that the Sahrawi is an oral culture, and therefore their historical memory is getting lost because there are no written records of their cultural past, a past only illiterate and usually nomadic elders could still remember, a past that is slowly disappearing with every old people dying without telling his story.

10

Regardless of these cultural politics of memory, the macro-level geopolitics of the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario has reached a stalemate as per 2013 and 2014. The promised referendum to allow the Sahrawis to vote for their future has never taken place, and the Sahrawi population has been living perpetually divided between the refugee camps and the territory under Moroccan occupation for already 40 years. Suffering severely harsh conditions in the desert and continuous threats against their lives in the occupied territories⁸, the Sahrawis and specially the youth have a profound feeling of being let down by the UN. They blame the UN for not doing anything to solve the conflict, and for not rewarding the Sahrawis for their patience and peaceful struggle since the ceasefire (Smith 2005:554). Having the opportunity of seeing the world and studying abroad, this well-educated youth realize about their international marginalization and this fills them with frustration. They are convinced that attention is only given to violent struggles, like the one between Israel and Palestine, to which they refer and compare continuously, and talking about a return to armed struggle is not rhetoric anymore (*ibid.*). The youth is frustrated and well-educated, they have

⁸ See footnote 6.

learned how to draw attention from the international community, and they are willing to take any steps necessary to end their condition as refugees of a forgotten conflict.

Education

The centrality given to education by the Polisario has made the Sahrawi a very well educated people and, it is often argued, better prepared for the reconstruction of their own country following independence (Chatty *et al.* 2010:54).

According to OXFAM Belgium, “at the time of the Moroccan invasion the illiteracy rate of the Sahrawis was 95%” while already in 1995 90% of the population could read and write (OXFAM Belgium and Comite belge de soutien au peuple sahraoui, 1995). This change was possible through investments by the Ministry of Education in nursery, primary and secondary schools (Chatty *et al.* 2010:54). However, there is no place, nor means in the refugee camps to create centers for tertiary schools, which has forced the Polisario to accept the aid packages offered from those countries mentioned above. This aid has enabled the majority of Sahrawi youth to now become highly educated in fields that are thought to be central in the reconstruction of Western Sahara as an independent country (San Martín 2009:255).

Of all the ‘friendly’ countries helping the Sahrawis with higher education, I decided to focus on Cuba, where the last generation receiving this aid was a group of Sahrawis that graduated in June 2012 (Sahara Press Service, 2012). In this thesis I will argue that, with an average of 12 years in the Caribbean island, the religious, social, cultural, linguistic and emotional differences between Cuba and Western Sahara have a major impact on the lives and worldviews of the Sahrawis once they are back in the camps. Being in Cuba drastically affects the lives of the Sahrawis, how they see themselves and how they see others in relation to themselves. It also affects the way others see them and how they approach them. The fact that there is a specific nickname for those Sahrawis who return from Cuba (*Cubarawis*) is a very visible and clear example of the division they face when returning. I propose that, while travelling to Cuba is seen as a positive factor for a better future, their long stay in the island, including their formative years, shapes their personhood profoundly, placing them in a limbo between being Sahrawi and being Cuban, experiencing “high levels of rejection upon their return ‘home’” (Fiddian-Qasmiyah, 2011: 440).

When in Cuba... do as Cubans do?

Isla de la Juventud⁹ was the chosen place to send all children receiving Cuban aid. On this small island, those children were receiving upper secondary school, before being sent to the mainland, to the different universities in Camagüey, Holguín, Guantánamo, Cienfuegos, Pinar del Río, Santiago or La Habana, where they would be in direct contact with Cuban students and Cuban lifestyle (San Martín 2009:254).

The youth were receiving economic aid not only from the Cuban state, but also from UNHCR from 1994, assisting with transportation to return to Tindouf after graduation (Chatty *et al.* 2010:58). According to UNHCR in 2005, "this provision of transportation is gradually decreasing, since it is provided exclusively to students enrolled in Cuban schools in or before 1996, and will end with the return of the last student among this group"¹⁰.

All in all, between secondary school and university, some Sahrawi have been away from the refugee camps for around 12 years. This means they have been away from their family, social and ideological everyday life, experiencing a *reverse culture shock* (San Martín 2009:255).

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Back to the roots. Back to the camps

The aid programs from countries like Cuba, Spain or Venezuela are aimed at giving a high level of education to the Sahrawis, so they can go back to the camps, where they can help improve the lives of their fellow countrymen in a variety of fields: education, communication, health...

The reality in the camps, though, is as culturally shocking as the first time they set foot in Cuba. Scarcity, dependence on humanitarian aid, lack of jobs, language barriers and social and religious values and taboos are some of the most repeated frustrations among the returnees (San Martín 2009:261). They are highly educated youth that see how all those years abroad cannot have a direct impact in their Sahrawi community and many decide to leave, on

⁹ 'Isle of Youth' is a small island 50 km south of the main island of Cuba, almost directly south of Havana.

¹⁰ Extract of an information note by the UNHCR, UN Refugee Agency, in relation to questions of the Moroccan delegation to the EXCOM (Executive Committee) session 2004, addressed to the 2005 session of the Executive Committee. [Source: F. POLISARIO Representation to Switzerland and UN Geneva].

the search of a brighter future. Not all of them leave, though, and those who decide to stay in the camps channel their frustration into organizing themselves in different activities that can lead the Sahrawi community to independence. It is in this context where we find the political youth willing to start an armed conflict, if that is the only way to get their country back (Smith 2005:554). Scott writes that "even a failed revolt may achieve something: [...] a memory of resistance and courage that may lie in wait for the future" (Scott 1985:29). If we understand this revolt as the war started by the Polisario against Morocco, the memory of resistance and courage from that period may be used by the youth these days to justify the return to the arms, as stated before.

It is this politically organized youth that I am writing about. This is a segment of youth that has travelled and gotten higher education, and they know the wealth in natural resources to be found in their country and are educated to help create a new and successful Western Sahara. They are also aware of the limitations of the Polisario towards the UN, EU and other countries, and they are constantly fighting to find alternatives to the official Polisario ones. Marching to the berm (a 2.700 km-long structure, acting as a barrier between the Moroccan-controlled areas and the Polisario-controlled section of the territory, with bunkers, fences and landmines throughout), having conferences and organizing activities in all the *wilayas* are just some of the actions taken by the youth.

But as mentioned above, some of them are now willing to take the fight to a new level, a violent one which, they believe, may be the only way the international community finally acknowledges their existence and the conflict (Smith 2005:554).

My fieldwork settings

Methodology

In order to complete my fieldwork among the Cubarawis, I carried out multi-sited ethnography, living three months in Cuba and two months in the refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria.

Even if multi-sited fieldwork is less common than single-sited, being in two different scenarios allowed me to examine the “cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus, 1995:96). As the hybridization of their nickname implies, the study of the real meaning of being a ‘Cubarawi’ cannot be accounted for by remaining on a single site, and therefore a ‘mobile ethnography’ is necessary. As Marcus explains:

In tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity [this mode of fieldwork] ethnographically constructs the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects [and] it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites (Marcus 1995:96).

This means that, even if my ethnography “may begin in the world system” (Marcus 1995:96), because of the way it unfolds my object of study, it comes “circumstantially to be of the world system as well” (*ibid.*). The ‘Cubarawis’ are mobile and multiply situated subjects (Marcus 1995:102) that means, they are travelling from the Sahara to Cuba and back to the Sahara therefore, empirically following the Cubarawi cultural process impels the move towards multi-sited fieldwork. As I map the movements of the Cubarawis, I intend to set logics of relationships and associations among both field sites, in relation to my research questions.

In order to gather all the information needed during fieldwork, I conducted some informal and formal interviews but I mainly carried out participant observation. By conducting formal interviews with government-related personnel like ministers, diplomats or ambassadors I got a better knowledge on the Sahrawi bureaucratic, political and international context. On the other side, informal interviews with individuals in charge of social centers, youth organizations or projects, granted me with a deeper understanding of the social arena where the youth is finding a common place for expression.

The use of informants and of interviews was therefore a time and money-saving method, which proved very useful when research resources were limited (Crane and Angrosino 1974:53). Oral histories allowed me to understand how the participants of the society see themselves and specific events, both present and past. It “elucidate[d] the perspectives of ordinary people” (Giles-Vernick 2006:86). Consequently, interviews definitely helped me getting specific facts from relevant individuals when information proved difficult to gather and/or understand during participant observation, both at the beginning of fieldwork, when getting knowledge of the circumstances of my fields; and at the end of fieldwork, when summarizing the data collected.

Although formal and informal interviews where used when in need, my main method for gathering information was participant observation. This method was coined by B. Malinowski, and the idea behind it is living with the community one is researching, and participating in it as much as possible, to grasp their true everyday lives. This method allows the researcher to be in contact with non-verbal communication, as many of the information from a society cannot be explained by words, but rather observed (Crane and Angrosino 1974:71).

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I am aware that my sole presence in Cuba and in the camps influenced the information received. Because of being an outsider, I influenced in the actions and reactions of the community, having a direct impact in the data collection (Crane and Angrosino 1974:72), I therefore acknowledged my own participation with my informants in order to gain a truthful image of the society (Jenkins 1994:443). Eriksen and Nielsen call this the ‘positioned’ fieldwork, where the ethnographer learns that her situation also affects both her fieldwork and the information collected and received (Eriksen and Nielsen 2001:123). Jenkins therefore states that it is important to adapt your data to your situation in the field and its context. In this way, “the knowledge achieved may lack ‘absolute’ status, but nevertheless it has an adequacy to its complex situation” (Jenkins 1994:453).

A Western non-Muslim woman in the field

“Hi, I am Bea, I am a Norwegian anthropologist, and I am from Barcelona”, this was usually the way I introduced myself to my informants. I would say this in Spanish, as all of them in Cuba, and I would say 80% in the refugee camps, spoke the language fluently. In this sense,

my mother tongue was a great advantage. And so was my nationality. Even if the Sahrawis are not too enthusiastic about the different Spanish governments since what may be described as a failed decolonization, they are very grateful for the solidarity of the Spanish society, which outnumbers by far any other nationality. This fact and the particular that I had previously been in the refugee camps (for a week, half a year earlier) allowed me into their circle and welcomed , both by the students in Cuba and in the society as a whole in the camps.

Of course, not being able to understand Arabic -- let alone their dialect, Hassania -- slightly hampered my participant observation settings, for example concerning internal jokes or official speeches. This would especially be a problem in the refugee camps, where not everyone speaks Spanish, and the everyday language is Hassania. Still, I always found myself surrounded by Cubarawis or other Sahrawis who knew Spanish and all of them were always willing to translate. During my stay in Cuba, Hassania rarely became a problem, as the Sahrawis themselves are used to speak Spanish, or a hybrid of Arabic and Spanish (in which case, I could also understand the context thanks to the Spanish words).

Living in Norway, a country they knew nothing about (other than it being very cold) and focusing my project on them was also an important factor towards my rapid acceptance. They always expressed their surprise by the fact that I travelled from so far away to be with them, and that I was willing to stay in Cuba and, afterwards, in the refugee camps, enduring the same harsh conditions as them (even if temporarily).

Another factor played in my advantage, that of being a non-Muslim Western woman. Not following any traditional 'woman role' (indeed, a non-religious woman dangerously approaching her 30s, not married and with no kids, travelling on her own) made some Sahrawi, women and men, feel more relaxed when talking about certain topics considered taboo in their Muslim society. The fact of being a Westerner allowed the Sahrawi men to discuss topics that would be considered inappropriate to talk about with a Sahrawi woman. For example flirtation or eschatological jokes, or conversations about girlfriends or about Muslim women were topics they would not dare to discuss with Sahrawi women.

The fact of being a woman made also some Sahrawi women feel more confident when touching upon more feminine and feminist topics. Feminine domestic products, non-marital relationships, division of domestic labor, violence against women or prostitution were some of the subjects Sahrawi women would like to know my opinion about when alone.

People in places

My 5-months fieldwork was filled with Sahrawis occupying various roles: students, diplomats, ministers, ambassadors, housewives, expatriates... All of them helped me directly or indirectly with my data collection, but as well with accommodation, transportation, bureaucracy, cultural understanding and a good dose of Sahrawi and Cubarawi humor.

I arrived to Cuba in July 2013. While in the island, and thanks to the Polisario Embassy in the country, I stayed at an international student residence of the university of Pinar del Río. The decision of staying in Pinar del Río was not preplanned, but completely practical. Three days after my arrival, the Sahrawi students of Medicine of the university of Pinar del Río were having their graduation party. The Embassy invited me to join them from Havana, in order to get in touch with some students. Even if I had planned to stay in Cienfuegos, because the Sahrawi community was also big in that city, the hospitality of the students of Pinar del Río convinced me to stay.

Afterwards, that decision would prove correct, as Pinar del Río was one of the least touristic cities of Cuba, which saved me the daily *yuma* (tourist with money) treatment on the streets, and it was generally assumed that I was an international (and poor) student as all international students in Pinar were from developing countries.

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Detail of one of the student residences in Pinar del Río. The sign says "and I became a teacher, thus becoming a creator", sentence by José Martí. Photo by the author (2013)

My room at the residence was that of a Sahrawi who had left to the camps for the summer. It was a stark room, with a bunk bed, a table and a chair. A narrow two-door closet was embedded in the wall, and cockroaches and mosquitos became my roommates. The building consisted of three floors, with a common bathroom at the end of each. Lacking running water except for a couple of hours in the morning, there were always two or three buckets full of water from the common tanks at every bathroom.

The residence, located on the premises of the Faculty of Education, had several buildings, one for the teachers, another one for Cuban students and another one for international students. In the same area there was a cafeteria full of stray dogs and a big empty swimming-pool. The entrance to the premises was controlled by a guarded gate, which could have been a problem for me, as I was not a student. Luckily, one of my informants got along very well with the guards and introduced me to them in order to avoid future inconveniences.

I was in daily contact with three students living in the same residence as me, but as well with a group of other students living in other residences in the city or in rent apartments who would come to visit or to whom I would visit. I would also be in continuous touch with the students' Cuban girlfriends, as well as with other international students at a lesser scale. Except for three occasional meetings with an Embassy representative, all my contact in the island was with students (Sahrawi, Cuban and international). My everyday consisted on waking up late (and still too early for Sahrawis) and visiting the students at their rooms or apartments, eventually, going to the city center for a walk before their waking time. I joined them to parties, clubs and dinners and spent all my day with them.

All my Sahrawi informants in the island were boys, as Sahrawi girls do not study in Cuba anymore. By the time of my research, there were only three women at the university, and all of them came from studying high school in Spain. They did not live in the student residences, but in a shared apartment. The situation was the same in all the other provinces. The explanation was given to me the first week in Cuba: there is a difference between how a man and a woman have to behave in a Muslim society. But both men and women in Cuba behave more or less in the same way. This means that a Sahrawi woman, after 15 years in Cuba, will go back to the camps completely '*cubanized*', and this is not acceptable for Sahrawis, this only brings shame to her family. A man, on the other side, has more room to maneuver and is given more freedom. I will touch upon this topic later on, but my point is that

my fieldwork was then completely masculine, as the three girls were on holidays to Spain by the time I arrived.

The majority of the Sahrawis studied Medicine and Health Sciences, but there were also some studying Education and Technological Sciences. The most of them had been in Isla de la Juventud for several years, before they were sent to the university.

After 3 months in Cuba and a lot of bureaucratic paperwork from Spain, I could finally travel to the refugee camps in the desert of Tindouf and stay for roughly two months. Thanks to the insistence of the student organization (UESARIO) I could live with a family in the *wilaya* 27th of February, instead of in Rabouni, the governmental area where all the international aid workers stay. The family was led by a strong, divorcee woman (Hadiya) who gave me three days to adapt to their way of life, after which, I would be considered another daughter and I would have to act as such. Hadiya had two daughters in the north of Spain, as well as a 31-year old son, Ismail, and a 19-year old daughter, Amani, who lived in the camps with her. Even if Hadiya did not speak Spanish, she understood it quite well, and her son and daughter were fluent in the language.

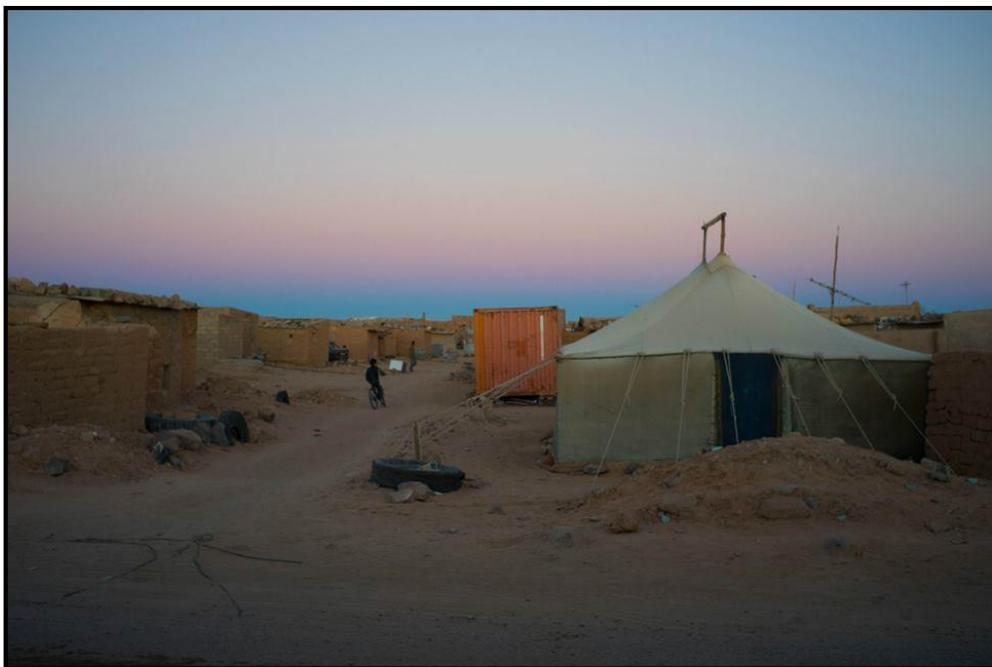
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Ismail stayed in Cuba 12 years, first in Isla de la Juventud, and afterwards in Camagüey, studying Spanish Literature. He was not working as a teacher because, he said, as a good Cuban, he did not like working. He was not sleeping in the house, but in the shop the family owned, which was situated at the entrance of the house. He would not sell a thing, but he was always there watching TV and drinking tea with his friends.

Amani was usually living in the city of Tindouf, with her aunt and her grandmother, but she had come to the camps after knowing I was going to stay at her mother's. She would become my guide and companion, and sometimes my translator, during my stay in the camps. She spoke fluent Spanish because she had spent several summers in the south of Spain, with a Spanish family, under the program 'Vacaciones en Paz' ('Holidays in Peace'). She considered herself a feminist and would constantly talk against men and about the emancipation of women. Her mother would have a similar speech, although a little bit more conservative about the role of Sahrawi women in the house.

Hadiya's adobe house comprised four rooms: the kitchen, a sleeping-room, a living-room and an extra room they had built the previous year to accommodate all the guests to the eldest of Hadiya's daughter's wedding. Most of the time, Hadiya, Amani and I would sleep in

sofas in the living-room, although sometimes the night temperature on that room would be too cold for Hadiya and she would then sleep on the floor in the sleeping-room. The bathroom was a small adobe room outside the main building. In this one there was a hole in the floor, a washing-machine that did not work but was used as a laundry basket, a small stove to warm the water up and a mirror. Hadiya's plot was also comprised by her sister's and her mother's houses, even if they were not living there anymore. That made the place look more spacious.



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Typical street in the *wilaya* 27th February (later Boujdour), where I stayed. On the right, one can see a *haima*; on the left, adobe houses. Photo by the author (2013)

During my stay in the camps I was in daily contact with my Sahrawi family and their neighbors, who were visiting every day. I was also in daily contact with the UESARIO students, who were driving me around and helping me with my agenda and with individual Cubarawis who wanted to help the girl who was writing about them. I visited also other *wilayas* and attended several festivals, conferences and official celebrations. I was also invited to meet other internationals, both 'humanitarian tourists' and aid workers, and eventually helped with translations from Spanish to English and vice versa when partaking on a 'tourist' visit for a group of English-speaking visitors.

Both Cuba and the refugee camps had harsh living conditions, and adapting to them was not easy. Used to a high standard of living, picking water from a deposit, not having a

good toilet, not being able to have a shower, and getting used to seeing cockroaches everywhere was challenging. In order to be able to go on with my fieldwork, I accepted that hygiene and comfort do not need to go hand in hand and that temporarily living like them was part of my experience.

I would encounter my main problem during fieldwork in Cuba. The food scarcity and the lack of alternatives for buying even at a higher price had a significant impact on my health. Buying anything else than sweets at any local, half-empty kiosk, or anything else than chicken (or, if lucky, pork) at any restaurant proved nearly impossible. The lack of nutritious food affected not only my weight, but also my mood, which I had to take into consideration when, out of Cuba and with a full stomach, I read my field notes before writing my thesis.

1

Let your conscience be your guide

"We returned extrovert, spontaneous, full of wittiness, and with the desire to do lots of things, the desire to work, to have the world for lunch. But we were not conscious of our ignorance about Sahrawi customs. It is as if we were born in Cuba and now we had to learn the language and customs of a people both foreign [and], at the same time, our own."

The Cubarawi poet Limam Boicha, in San Martín 2009:256

This quote emphasizes the identity dilemma many Cubarawis acutely experience once they go back to their native refugee camps, after part of their childhood as well as their teenage and young adulthood years in Cuba. In this way, the Cubarawis identity process conforms well to how Stuart Hall describes 'identity': As a discursive term in continuous change, a process, a construction, a transformation, always subjected to historicization. Hall stresses that this term needs to be understood within the "historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures, above all in relation to the processes of globalization" (1996:4). In this sense, Hall defines 'identity' as a process of 'becoming', not 'being':

Actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (1996:4).

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I assert that Hall's ongoing construction of identity is at the core of the Cubarawi identity, and it is in this sense that I will use this analytical term.

In this first chapter I intend to introduce what it means to be a Cubarawi in the refugee camps in Tindouf. By presenting several examples of returnee Cubarawis, I will show how the long exposure to Cuban culture and society determines the collective identity of this specific group. For this purpose, I will develop Hall's 'becoming, not being' concept, as well as using Victor Turner's 'betwixt and between' term (explained

in the Introduction), to show how these Sahrawis, by being such a long period in Cuba, feel they are not fully Sahrawi anymore, but neither fully Cuban. As the poet at the beginning of the chapter writes, they realize that they are foreign and at the same time part of the Sahrawi community.

Fernando Ortiz's concept of 'transculturation' will also be very useful in analyzing the hybridization of Sahrawi and Cuban cultures this youth experiences. The Cuban anthropologist coined the term 'transculturation' in order to describe the convergence of cultures, and he described the phenomenon as:

a set of ongoing transmutations; it is full of creativity and never ceases; it is irreversible. It is always a process in which we give something in exchange for what we receive: the two parts of the equation end up being modified. From this process springs out a new reality, which is not a patchwork of features, but a new phenomenon, original and independent (in Gira, Interdisciplinary Research Group on the Americas, n.d.).

Because of this convergence of cultures, because of being betwixt and between, the Cubarawis need to reinforce their collective identity, an identity only shared by others who have also been in Cuba, even if in previous generation. Tanja R. Müller exemplifies these feelings of collective identity in her article about state-led education exchange programmes between Mozambique and the former German Democratic Republic. As Mozambican children also received a socialist education in a highly politicized programme, her example is very useful in comparing what she calls the 'memories of paradise' of those Mozambican now adults with the Cubarawi. With 'memories of paradise' she refers to how Mozambicans perceive and remember their time in the GDR, as a 'paradise' where they "learned valuable skills and values that are at the core of how they subsequently lived their lives" (Müller 2010:453).

All of the Cubarawis I met at the refugee camps expressed how the majority of the Sahrawis coming back from Cuba 'got lost in their way to the camps', or stayed in the camps for a short period of time before heading to Spain in the search for a brighter future. The sentence that gives name to this chapter, 'Let the conscience be your guide' was the answer from those who stayed. They appealed to the moral duty of helping their society, as a way of paying back for the opportunity they had to study abroad. This moral duty, I argue, is a successful move from the Polisario government: they send children to study abroad with the idea that those children will be back in the camps afterwards and will help build the

infrastructures of the camps and, later on, if successful in getting independence, build the new state of Western Sahara. Thomas Eriksen's concepts of 'formal' and 'informal' nationalism as explained in the Introduction, will be useful in understanding this idea.

Home, sweet home?

At the National Hospital in Rabuni I happily met two friends from Cuba, Adel and Baraka. They both studied Medicine in Pinar del Río, and were just finished by the moment I got to the island. They seemed very happy to see me again in a completely different setting: a refugee camp. Their refugee camp. What they were supposed to call their home. But was it?

Before travelling back to the camps, to 'their home', they had been spending several years in Cuba. Between secondary school in Isla de la Juventud and university in Pinar del Río, Adel spent 9 years in Cuba, while Baraka, 12. Now, aged 25 and 28, they were reporting for duty, as they were supposed to from the beginning. After their studies, it is assumed that they will be sent back to the camps, where they can implement all they learned under their study period in the Caribbean island, but as Baraka admitted "we were ten people finishing university at the same time. We were the same ten people on the plane... but now we are only two back in the camps. The other eight disappeared on the way". Adel did so too for a while. The plane made a stop in Spain, where Adel decided to stay for a short period, before heading back to the camps. He arrived to the Canary Islands, where his father lives and he had been living before Cuba. Thanks to some contacts, he interned at a hospital for two weeks, followed by two weeks at an ambulance. This helped him to get to know the new medical technology that he did not have access to in Cuba. He was lucky; with his Spanish citizenship he could stay in Spain for as long as he wanted, but he did not. His mother and sisters, as well as his fellow countrymen were waiting for him in the camp of Boujdour, he said. The first days were good: seeing family and old friends, having celebrations on his behalf, wearing the uncomfortable *darraa*¹¹. But he wanted to start working as soon as possible. When he arrived, Baraka had already taken the apparently only free spot at the national hospital, so Adel was about to be sent to Dakhla, 150 kilometers away from Boujdour. Instead, he pulled some strings and managed to get a place at the national hospital to start a week after his arrival.

¹¹ The *darraa* is the traditional Sahrawi dress for men. The traditional dress for women is called *melhfa*

Baraka did go back to the camps right after Cuba, only to feel out of place, only to see how everything is unknown to him. He arrived to the camps 3 weeks before me. The first thing he did, as Adel, was going to his mother's, but after three days, he had to start working. As Adel, he needed to work; he needed to be surrounded by other Cubarawis and Cubans, and the big majority of doctors and nurses at the national hospital in Rabuni were all Saharawis who studied in Cuba and Cubans on mission. This saved him, he admitted. Everything was different, at the camps, and he was unsure as to how long it would take him to re-adapt.

His girlfriend was in Cuba, as she was Cuban and could not leave the country. He did not know when he would be able to see her again, but he hoped he would. Communications were anyway not easy, especially from the Cuban side. He was himself getting used to "these new technologies" of internet, and was amazed by Facebook. But Facebook was not helping in his relationship; no easily accessible internet on the island, and costly phone calls made communication with his girlfriend quite scarce.

Adel started noticing the same problems with his girlfriend, as well. After many years together, both Saharawis began to realize how far-reaching the consequences of their situation were. Everything was very different, everything seemed very difficult, they were not sure how they would manage to adapt, but at least they could be doctors, they could work at the hospital, and they worked daily with other Cubarawis. At the hospital they felt at home.

As it can be seen from Baraka and Adel's story, Cuba is a decisive influence in the personal lives of the returnees. Not only they feel alienated in a land they should feel as theirs, they also feel that their personal life has been interrupted, that a new chapter has begun, but they are not sure yet how to write the introduction. Both left to Cuba as Sahrawi children, but after 9 and 12 years in the country, with minimal communication with their families back in the camps and full contact with Cuban culture, they had 'cubanized'. In the words of Ortiz, they had been faced with "the problem of disadjustment and readjustment, of deculturation and acculturation –in a word, of transculturation" (1995:98). Now, back in the refugee camps, they both felt out of place. They did not feel fully Sahrawi, but they knew they were neither fully Cuban. They were in that transitional period Turner called 'betwixt and between', and that created discomfort. Most importantly, that discomfort was a result of their new hybrid identity, an identity that they had in common with other Saharawis who had previously studied in Cuba. A collective identity that differentiated them from the other Sahrawi and that was created as a process, because of their specific circumstances. Using Hall's terms, they 'were'

Sahrawi by origin, but due to their life in Cuba and their previous return to the camps, they were constantly in the process of becoming.

But the fact of being Cubarawi in a Sahrawi context made them feel out of place. In order to feel Cubarawi, they needed the support of the rest of the group. It is for this reason that Baraka insisted on 'feeling at home' at the hospital, when he was surrounded by other Cuban and Cubarawi. Müller asserts that the years of adolescence are perceived as central to the development and the constitution of identity, and an important part of the latter is cultural identity "arrived at through self-definition as a member of a group characterized by shared experiences or heritage" (2010:453). Baraka, Adel and the other Cubarawis do share experiences and constitute a specific self-defined cultural group they identify with. As in the case of Müller's Mozambican children, the Sahrawi spent those crucial years of identity formation in a setting focused on collective parameters (2010:459), which created among them a sense of family that has direct implications in their realities of today, as it can be seen by Baraka's statement.

These strong ties among Cubarawis made them feel as a family in Cuba, as I could state during my fieldwork. They would always say that they were all brothers, and they would even call me their 'sister', acting as protective brothers towards me. And once back in the camps, they would continue feeling like a big family, not only with those Sahrawis they studied with, but as well with those who were in Cuba before or after them. Müller describes how the most important unit of socialization for the Mozambican was the class they attended, and how to this day, class is still the identifying category when trying to place a former GDR student (2010:463). In the case of the Cubarawi, the identifying category was the year they arrived in Cuba, defined by them as 'generation' ("I am from the '93 generation" Ismail proudly told me the first day).

Lastly, Eriksen's concept of 'informal nationalism' can be helpful here to analyze the moral duty both Baraka and Adel felt for going back to the camps, instead of staying in Spain. By appealing to values and sentiments relevant and influential to society, the nation ideology created "a sense of community that can be transformed into effective political action" (1993:8). These values and sentiments, I argue, agree with the socialist values, patriotism and collective (as opposed to individual) way of thinking the Cubarawis learnt in Cuba. As in the case of the Mozambican children in the GDR, virtues like discipline, respect, comradeship

and patriotism are highly praised and reinforced in Cuba, and these values, I claim, are the ones the Polisario Front is appealing to, making the Cubarawis return.

In what follows I will present different life stories of returnee Cubarawis, aiming to show how their Cuban stay has paramount importance in the way they live their lives in the camps, who they relate to, how they work and what they expect from their government. Collective Cuban identity, being betwixt and between, experiencing transculturation, recalling 'memories of paradise Cuba' and feeling the moral duty to go back home (relating to Eriksen's 'informal nationalism') will be recurrent throughout the stories.

Returning home

Everyone is a Cubarawi at the National Hospital

Two hours after the agreed upon time, which I am quite used to at this point, after more than a month in the camps, Mâred picked me up. We were finally going to visit the national hospital. I had been waiting for this visit for a month now, as it was the place where I could find the majority of Cubarawis in the camps. Indeed, of all the Sahrawis sent to Cuba to study¹², it is calculated that by 2002, approximately 200 Sahrawis in Cuba were students of Medicine (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011:439). By the time of my fieldwork in Pinar del Río, practically 80% of the Sahrawis in that province were also studying Medicine.

Instead of entering the hospital installations, we went directly to the residence building. A small building by the hospital, with a narrow corridor and single rooms along this. We just knocked at a random room, as Mâred was sure there would be a Cubarawi in it. He was right. In a tiny room with one bed, a big fridge and a small table sat Kamâl, a Cubarawi doctor. He was very happy to have visitors, and even happier to know that I was writing about the Cubarawis, so while Mâred got comfortable and prepared his computer to use the Wi-Fi at the hospital (one of the few places in the camps where there is internet signal), the doctor went out in a rush to get some food to offer us. Cookies, juice, milk and coffee were ready, and the doctor smiled and told me how glad he was about my visit. We prepared tea while we chatted. He told me all about his arrival to the camps barely nine months ago. He was first sent to the camp of Dakhla, the furthest away, even if he was from Smara. But there was

¹² It is estimated that more than 4000 students have been in Cuba since the beginning of the cooperation program in the late 1970s (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011:439)

another doctor who wanted to stay in Dakhla, as his family was there, so Kamâl was then sent to the national hospital in Rabuni.

He told me there were then only six doctors at the hospital: a pediatrician, a gynecologist and a general surgeon from Cuba, and an urologist, a gastroenterologist and another pediatrician from the camps. To my surprised face, he reminded me that there was only one doctor when he arrived nine months ago, a doctor that had been there for one year. At this point Mâher arrived, another Sahrawi who studied Medicine in Cuba. But he did more than that. Mâher stayed 17 years in Spain, first in Cádiz, where he studied Oceanography and later in Madrid and Jaén. He also studied French philology in Morocco and finally, Medicine in Cuba. He went back to the camps in 2011. Even if he had a Spanish passport, which would allow him to work almost anywhere, he confessed he would not feel right living away, as there is a lot to do in the camps. He can really help here, while in Spain, he would just be another general practitioner, he said. Instead, he works at a local hospital in Jaén every summer, so he can make some money to bring back to the camps and get a better life for the rest of the year. But not everyone thinks like that. As they let me know, there were 284 Sahrawi doctors abroad, more than a hundred of them being specialists. 'Let your conscience be your guide' was their answer to this. Even if they did not get a salary, or this one was too poor, the help they gave in the camps was much greater, stated Kamâl. This comment, agreed by both of the doctors I was talking to, appeared to be recurrent during my two-month stay at the refugee camps. It seemed to create a tension between the moral duty of going back to the camps to help, and the individual aspirations related to well-being and future opportunities. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, this relates to the appeal to emotions and collective values made by the Polisario Front -- what I, following Eriksen, term informal nationalism -- and works in its favor thanks to the legacies of Cuban socialism.

Unemployment in the camps and jobs unrelated to their studies are the main reasons argued by those who left the camps or are planning to, as we shall see in the example of the doctor at the dispensary of the 27th February. But the case of the doctors is particularly special. Cuban medical training has always been praised and recognized internationally (Kirk 2009), which has led to Spain accepting Cuban medical degrees without major complications. This means that the Sahrawi holding a Cuban degree in Medicine are welcome in both private

and public Spanish hospitals, like the hospital in Jaén where Mâher works every summer (Fiddian-Qasmiyah 2011:441)¹³.

Baraka joined us then, only to confirm the scarcity of doctors and nurses they had at the national hospital and the dispensaries of the five camps. He did not blame this lack on the need of more money, but on the need of more recognition and professionalism. He grumbled about the nurses trained in the camps and accused them of not being professional. "They walk in flip-flops and without the uniform; they fall asleep when they are on a 24-hour duty, they do not go to work..." explained while comparing them to the professionalism of those trained in Cuba. Unfortunately, he pointed out, those from Cuba are only two out of 27, which made the doctors' work very complicated. To exemplify his words, he recalled one of the worst incidents he had to deal with, immediately after arriving to the camps: "last week, a woman died of a heart attack under my watch because of the lack of equipment", he cried. He was surprised to find out right at that moment that there was no way to find the instruments and the nurse on duty was nowhere to be found. He claimed that a heart attack would have been easy to control being the equipment ready to be used at any moment, and being the nurse at work. Lack of organization, infrastructures and professionalism, he repeated. Those were the reasons why doctors leave the camps. Even if, due to international aid, the camps had more means than the Cuban hospitals, Baraka insisted that everything worked worse in the camps because people were not motivated enough to do a good job and this led them to emigrate to Spain, where language barriers are not an issue, and their degree is accepted without too many bureaucratic complications. Indeed, thanks to the relations and connections with international NGOs and Spanish doctors arriving in commissions¹⁴, many refugees have the opportunity to get an invitation letter and financial sponsorship, enabling them to get a Spanish work visa, and therefore, leave the camps (Fiddian-Qasmiyah 2011:21).

Of course, those holding a Spanish passport, like Adel or Mâher, do not need any invitation letter or work visa, but most Sahrawis do not enjoy this advantage:

¹³ As I will show throughout the thesis, this lack of jobs in the camps is crucial, as it affects the development of the Sahrawi ideology and nation-building, and it frustrates the youth about the stalemate of the conflict and their perceived lack of opportunities. Because of its importance and impact on the current breach between the Sahrawi youth and the Polisario Front government, I will highlight and exemplify this tension throughout my paper, writing extensively and detailed about it in chapter four.

¹⁴ Medical commissions are groups of doctors and Medicine students mostly from Spain who travel to the camps for usually one week. These commissions travel with their own instruments in order to carry many surgical operations Sahrawi doctors cannot perform because of lack of means. These commissions spend their entire week operating, with the help of Sahrawi doctors. In the course of my fieldwork, three different Spanish medical commissions arrived to the camps.

Sahrawis, although coming from a former Spanish colony, are not included in the privileged system for naturalization and dual nationality which applies to citizens from countries with historical ties with Spain¹⁵ (Martín Pérez and Moreno Fuentes 2014:164).

This is due to the fact that the majority of the international community, including Spain, does not recognize Western Sahara as an independent state, making the Sahrawis, who were Spanish citizens until 1975, be in a legal limbo (*ibid.*). Nevertheless there are some Sahrawis who hold a Spanish passport because their parents or grandparents fell into one of three categories at the time of the Spanish withdrawal: either they resided in Spain and were in possession of Spanish documents, or they were outside Spain but had a Spanish passport, or were Spanish representatives in foreign countries¹⁶ (*ibid.*).

The dispensary of Boujdour

Amira

The general rule for the enjoyment of the good things of life, such as food, drink, and clothing, is that their use should be without extravagance or pride (Al-Qaradawi 1960:84)

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The director of the dispensary could not attend me just yet, so he sent me to talk to Amira, my first contact with a female Cubarawi, at last. Amira told me why. Learning to be a woman in liberal, secular Cuba crashes with the return to a Muslim society, no matter how open this society is. As a woman, she is expected to create a family as soon as possible, to have at least three kids, to take care of the house and to look after her mother, she told me. This was the reason why the majority of the female Cubarawis do not live in the camps anymore, according to her. Those who had the possibility, live now in Spain, the cultural and economic problems they face in the camps were too big to ignore. Young women returning from Cuba often face stigmatization from their community and their family, convinced that they were 'bad girls' while in Cuba. "Returning as a Cuban male is not good, but it is better accepted, returning as a Cuban girl... you know... you have been there..." Certainly, a Cuban woman could not be

¹⁵ Those countries are, according to the Spanish Ministry of Justice, all Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin American countries (this excludes Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, but includes Puerto Rico), Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea and people of Sephardim origin (Ministerio de Justicia - Gobierno de España, n.d) [in Spanish, my translation].

¹⁶ This was only the case for those Sahrawis falling into these categories who expressed their will to keep the Spanish nationality within the year after the passing of a Royal Decree about this issue (Royal Decree 2258/1976). The vast majority of the population did not follow this decree and therefore lost their Spanish nationality (Martín Pérez and Moreno Fuentes 2014:161).

more different from a Sahrawi woman, “do you imagine us girls dressing with those tight, short clothes here in the camps? Smoking and drinking!?” laughed Amira. Islam has a specific way of understanding what appropriate clothing is for women:

Islam makes it haram [prohibited] for women to wear clothes which fail to cover the body and which are transparent, revealing what is underneath. It is likewise haram to wear tightly fitting clothes which delineate the parts of the body, especially those parts which are sexually attractive (Al-Qaradawi 1960:82).

If tightly fitting, transparent or attractive clothes are not permitted in Islam, those Sahrawi women coming back from Cuba certainly experienced a wardrobe shock. Only a short stroll in any Cuban street is necessary to realize that Cuban girls do not share Islam believes about clothing in any way. Tight lycra tops and tiny shorts are the norm in every Cuban woman’s closet, as well as in every clothes shop. Covering the body is not a priority in Cuba, but it is for the Sahrawi women, who wear the traditional *melhfa* since the moment they wake up until they go to sleep. At the same time, seduction and attraction seem to be Cuban national sports and flirting and yelling dubious compliments to every girl in the street is a common hobby¹⁷. This would be unthinkable at the camps.

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I have been told before the bad image those women were bringing to their kin when they were back from Cuba, and this was apparently the reason why they stopped sending little girls to Cuba and send only a few directly to the university, instead (in the case of Pinar del Río at the time of my fieldwork, ‘a few’ meant only 3 girls out of around 35 Sahrawis in total). As Fiddian-Qasmiyah puts it, “without adult Sahrawi female role-models, the girls found it difficult to become ‘traditional Sahrawi women’, and rather became ‘Cubarawis’” (2009:344).

Even if the Sahrawi are Muslim, they practice a quite liberal and personal-oriented type of Islam. In relation to women, this translates into open gender roles, where women are more visible, both politically and socially, within the Polisario and the Sahrawi community as a whole. A key example of this is the UNMS (National Union of Sahrawi Women, for its initials in Spanish), created by the Polisario to promote “the role of women, their training, the development of their efforts and their participation in the struggle for national liberation”

¹⁷ As a woman myself, I could experience this first hand during my 3 months in Cuba. I could also see the surprise in the face of Cuban women when I was not dressing in lycra. My ‘Western’ clothes were topics of discussion and admiration among my Cuban girlfriends.

(Frente Polisario 2002:48, in Rossetti 2012:337). Still, the Muslim code of conduct is widely observed.

Following Nyhagen Predelli's (2004) typology of Islam, I claim that Sahrawis practice a 'society-oriented' Islam, this means, oriented towards participation both at home and in the society, but still with certain gender limitations:

They believe that Islam assigns women special rights and that individual women and men have equal value. They see gender roles as somewhat interchangeable, and their support for gender segregation is weak to medium. A man's duty is to generate family income. A woman's duty is first to take care of family and children and second to participate in generating family income. Women work in designated sectors, such as education and medicine. Education is equally important for women and men, but women are encouraged to specialize in certain fields (p.478).

Amira would agree with the equal opportunities for education brought by the Polisario, but after her years in Cuba, she struggle with what was expected of her as a Muslim woman in the camps. She studied Medical laboratory sciences in Pinar del Río, after being several years in Isla de la Juventud, like all the other kids in her generation. She had become a Cuban by the time she had to go back to the camps in the year 2000. By the time of my interview with her, she was 38, married for already 8 years and with two lovely kids. Still, it took her some time to adapt to her new role as a Sahrawi woman. "Women here do not do anything, they spend the whole day at home", she said. She could not do that, she learned to be out and working, to socialize, so every morning she did all the housework as fast as she could, she would tell me, and then she went out to work or to visit family and friends. She also tried to leave to Spain, but she was not able to because of her passport. She was the only girl from her generation that was still in the camps, she recognized with what I sensed as a hint of resignation. Once back in the camps she realized she could not work as a medical technologist, as she studied, because there were no laboratories in the camps, so she decided to take a course at the nursing school in Rabuni. She happily recalled how she had a room for her own, as she was far away from her camp, Dakhla, which gave her back some of the independence she knew from Cuba. After finishing school, she worked at the national hospital in Rabuni, still enjoying her independence and her own space. Independence and space seemed to be crucial for all the returnee Cubarawis, as they all pointed out at one time or another during my stay in the camps.

Amira got married after working at the national hospital for a while, and then she and her husband moved to the 27th of February camp (now Boujdour). She was now a married woman, so she could not spend her day working, as she had to take care of the house and the kids. Still, she could not say no to some hours a week at the Boujdour dispensary as, she admitted, working was necessary for her self-fulfillment.

The director came in and interrupted us. "You have to respect women!" yelled Amira at the director, offended by the sudden interference. "Pfff..." was the director's response.

The director

The director was a tall, calm man, in his late forties, I would presume, although age in the Saharawi community is hard to guess because of how the climate and the hard conditions in the camps affect the health of the people. He took me to his minute office, which he shared with the hospital secretary, and told me his story.

He studied Physiotherapy in Pinar del Río in 1985, finishing in 1991. As that was the time of the cease-fire, there was a lot of work to do, and he went back directly to the camps. Everyone in his generation came back to the camps, he assured. Once back in Laayoune, he was placed at the old national hospital (new at that time). He was studying Nursing in the nights, while working during the day, as they were in need of personnel. He then started working as a surgical scrub technician at the operating room of the hospital until 1996. After the national hospital, he worked as a nurse at the dispensary in Ausserd and in the seven *dairas* (administrative divisions) of the camp of Smara. From there, he became the clinical nurse manager and afterwards, the director of the dispensary in Smara for four years, before becoming the director of the new national hospital in Rabuni until 2013. In august last year, he became the director of the dispensary of Boujdour, where we were standing.

After describing his work career, he made some remarks about those Cubarawis who came in the previous generations and those who come now. According to him, and as he stated before, everyone in his generation came back from Cuba, as they were all needed at the time of the after-war. But afterwards, when things started normalizing, many of them decided to leave to Spain to get a better future. But none of those he knew in Spain was working with something related to their studies, he asserted. He admitted that there had been a shift on priorities. "Before there was no money awareness", he said. People cared about the cause, not about money, so there was no doubt about coming back to the camps after their studies

abroad, he stated. "People knew why they were abroad", to help their people back in the camps. "That's the key", he declared. But, according to him, everybody thinks about the money now, and that makes them leave the camps or not return to them from abroad. 'Let your conscience be your guide', he determined.

The young doctor

Before we could continue the conversation, a young doctor appeared, asking for some reports. The director smiled, told him who I was and invited him to talk to me. The young doctor sat at the director's desk, and, after a brief introduction to my research, he told me about his Cuban experience.

He stayed in the island from 1996 to 2010. He finished his studies of Medicine in 2009, but tried to get a specialization in order to stay longer. After six months of waiting, though, he realized it would not be possible, and got back to the camps. He had been working in this dispensary ever since, but he was always looking for ways to leave. At that moment he was looking at different scholarships he could apply for, but he was not being lucky.

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The first thing he remembered of his return was the two hours he spent searching for his family on the camp 27th February. When he left for Cuba, his family was living in Dakhla, but moved to the 27th February while he was studying in the island. Because of the lack of communication between the camps and Cuba, he could not know until he arrived at the airport of Tindouf and, just by chance, met an old friend.

He told me there were six Cubarawis in this dispensary, counting the director and the nurse I talked to earlier on. "Everything is so different here", he said. He specially had problems with the environment around the camps, and with the tea, "I drink coffee!" he confessed. Seeing him quite unhappy by the fact of not being able to leave, I asked him about it. He did not like Spain, he said, but he knew it would be easier for him to adapt to that country, so he was in contact with different ministries and commissions that could help him get a scholarship. He knew it will be easier to get an opportunity to go to Spain than to go back to Cuba, he said. In the meantime, he tried to meet with the other Cubarawis as often as possible. That helped him to adapt, he admitted. As with Adel and Baraka, this doctor felt he was not fully a Sahrawi, and his cultural identity was not so much defined by the culture he was born in, but by the collective, group identity that was formed and shared while in his forming years in Cuba. Certainly, Hall's 'becoming, rather than being' as well as the

liminality process of being betwixt and between cultures (Turner) seem appropriately pertinent here. This collective identity can be as well recognized by the doctor's next account.

Last time the doctor was in a big meeting with a group of Cubarawis was three weeks before our interview. There was a big dinner at one of the Cubarawis' *haima*: Cuban-like food, Cuban music and dances, Cuban games... Different generations of Cubarawis merged in one Cuban evening at the camps, remembering their 'golden years' in the island, as most of them would describe it. They did those meetings very often, according to the different statements I gathered during my stay. In fact, I was also in such a Cuban evening with other Cubarawis on my first week in the camps.

"Everything that means Cuban culture is done here, as well, only in secret", the doctor admitted. There was alcohol brought from Tindouf or from Europe, and parties, but in the desert or inside somebody's house without disturbing the neighbors. "As long as we do it secretly and without offending the Sahrawi culture, it is fine", the doctor told me convinced.

A female nurse entered to check something with the doctor. "Another Cubarawi", he told me when she left. Agreeing with Amira, the doctor said that women have it more difficult than men, when returning, and that was the reason why there were no women from Cuba anymore.

He admitted that the thing he cared about in the woman he marries was that she was a good woman. He preferred women to go out and see the world, to be able to do what they want. "The Sahrawi woman who has not left is very different, she only wants to get married and have children", he censured, agreeing without knowing it with Yusuff, my neighbor at the camps. He was still too young to marry, he said, as he was only 28. He was not ready to start a family yet, "people here marry after a very short time of being a couple, but I need more time to get to know each other before deciding to get married", he said. He needed to be convinced and in love, and he definitely did not want to marry a woman who only wanted a house and children, he affirmed. He had had some girlfriends since he came back, a Spanish girl and a couple of Sahrawis, but he was still not used to life here, so it never worked out. It did work out in Cuba, where he had a lot of Cuban girlfriends, including the girlfriend he had when he had to return to the camps, he admitted. He kept in touch with her, but he knew it would not be possible to stay together, and he felt really upset about it. He had to go back to the camps, so he had to lose her.

Conclusion: Cubanizing the camps

A Cuban dinner was the best event I attended during my stay in the camps in order to understand what it meant to be a Cubarawi in the camps, how they recalled their 'memories of paradise'. Ismail took me to a Cuban dinner where all the other men greeted me in a very Cuban-like way: happily and without any reserves, despite the fact that I was a woman. Tonight they were Cubans, and Cubans love having women around!

The room started getting filled with more and more Cubarawis, more and more Cuban food and more and more jokes about the Spanish girl being a *pinareña*. It did not matter anymore where I really was from, or where I lived. What mattered was that I had been in Cuba, and of all the provinces in the island, I decided to stay in Pinar del Río, the unfortunate province recipient of all the Cuban jokes. Everything stupid that happens in Cuba, comes from Pinar del Río, and every *pinareño* is dumb, according to popular culture. "Why is a *pinareño* staring intensely at the juice carton? Because it says 'concentrated'". Jokes like that filled the night, something similar to the jokes about Essex in the UK, or jokes of Lepe in Spain. Being a *pinareña* was indeed going to define me for the rest of my stay.

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The evening continued with more jokes about *pinareños*, but also about women and Americans. All their jokes were afterwards supported by a video of the famous Cuban comedian Robertico, revered by all Cubans and, of course, by Cubarawis. There was also place for some typically Cuban domino playing and of course, salsa and reggaeton dancing.



Detail on the wall of the Cubarawi host of the party. Photo by the author (2013)

This account of the Cuban party comes to show how the Cubarawis keep their Cuban identity alive even in the camps. As the examples in this chapters have presented, feeling Cuban when in the camps is considered necessary for the Cubarawis, as much as to 'feel at home' when they are surrounded by Cuban culture.

By the accounts of Adel and Baraka, who had just arrived to the camps; Kamal and Maher, who had been in the camps a little bit longer; Amira, the only woman; the director of the hospital, who was back in the camps by the cease-fire; and the young director who was looking for alternatives outside the camps, I hoped to show the importance of identity as defined by Hall. Understanding 'identity' as a process of 'becoming', not 'being' is fundamental when referring to the Cubarawis. Their collective circumstances sent them to Cuba many years ago. During that time, they experienced Ortiz's transculturation, as they adapted certain aspects of the Cuban culture that are now part of their own identity, always in construction. This transculturation happened to all of them, due to the lack of communication with their native refugee camps, which in turn created a collective identity they all bring up often in parties like previously described.

They do need these parties in part because of the feeling of being out of place, because of feeling that everything is unknown and they have to re-adapt. In Turner's words, they feel betwixt and between, they are in a transitional period where they are not Cuban nor Sahrawi, and that creates identity dilemmas.

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The fact of being in between cultures and of sharing a collective identity differentiates the Cubarawi from the other Sahrawi who have studied in other countries which culture may share more similarities with the Sahrawi culture (Algeria or Libya), or those who have more access to the camps even if abroad (for example, those who study in Spain). In this context, the Cubarawi feel the need to share their experiences with other Cubarawi, in order to feel part of a group. Once back in the camps, they organize Cuban dinners, Cuban parties or share Cuban jokes reproducing what they feel as fond memories of their common past that other Sahrawis cannot be part of. Being together with other Cubarawis helps to bring back the Cuban identity and recreate what they understand as their golden years, what Müller calls 'memories of paradise'.

Still, despite feeling out of place and not fully Cuban nor fully Sahrawi, they do feel the moral duty to go back to the camps, and they express this with the sentence that I used as the title of this chapter: ‘Let your conscience be your guide’. This moral duty is a direct result of the Polisario Front’s informal nationalism as described by Eriksen, which is also favored by the socialist, collective life in Cuba.

In the next chapter I will write about how the Cubarawis experienced their years in Cuba. During my fieldwork in the island I spent all my time with the Sahrawis of Pinar del Río, as well as with those visiting the city from other provinces. Chapter two is an account on those three months.

2

A lo cubano

<i>¡A lo cubano!</i> <i>Botella de ron,</i> <i>tabaco habano,</i> <i>chicas por doquier,</i> <i>ponche en Café Guano</i>	<i>Cuban style!</i> <i>Bottle of rum,</i> <i>Havana cigar,</i> <i>Girls everywhere,</i> <i>Punch at Café Guano</i>
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A lo cubano, Orishas (1999)¹⁸

Rum, cigars, girls and parties are the most exported images of Cuba, and certainly a big part of its social culture. But there is also another side of Cuba, a more political one that affects the Cubarawis directly. In this chapter I will explore this political side of the lives of the Sahrawis while in Cuba. While I have already touched upon identity formation in the previous chapter, this chapter will deal with the cultural and political process of becoming Cuban.

As stated above, the explicit purpose of travelling to Cuba for Sahrawis is to get a higher university degree impossible to get in the camps. But all the Sahrawis I met were studying health or education-related subjects which, according to my informants, were subjects chosen by the Polissario and on the choice of which the children had not much input on. Fiddian-Qasmiyah agrees with those children, as that education, she argues, becomes therefore a way to ensure the self-sufficiency of the nation, for which specific degrees are prioritized, according to the nation's needs (2010:149).

After describing their arrival in the island, I will disclose how their university studies work and the different privileges to be found among the Sahrawis. I will show how certain Sahrawis may have an advantage position in Cuba because of who they are related to back in the camps, relating this privileged position to the concept of patronage as described by Boissevain. Some of the Sahrawis would express disappointment with their non-chosen studies and would point out the differences between them and those who were studying other subjects considered of higher prestige, because of being sons of diplomats or would have government-related family.

¹⁸ Spanish for 'Cuban style'.

Afterwards I will expose how they become the hybridization of Sahrawi and Cuban culture: Cubarawis. For this purpose, I will use Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1993) to show how the social practices of Cuba are internalized and embodied by the Sahrawis. Using this analytical term will help understanding the transculturation they undergo during their time in the island, to which I referred in chapter 1 (Ortiz 2001). Bourdieu expressed 'habitus' as the internalization and adaptation of external social practices and at the same time, the externalization of these practices as your own, once internalized. I will illustrate this concept and its repercussion to the Cubarawis with three examples of Cuban celebrations fully adopted by the Sahrawis.

With this chapter I aim to argue that the Sahrawis are treated as Cubans, once in the islands and most importantly, they come to think of themselves as Cubans. Even if the Sahrawis are aware of their Muslim culture, which is encouraged in Isla de la Juventud, once in the main island, they have little or no access to their Muslim heritage, and they eventually absorb the Cuban culture as their own. Still, as I hope I am able to clearly show, there are certain aspects and decisions that will be made depending on who is who in relation to the camps, back in Tindouf.

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The beginning of the rest of their lives

"When we arrived to Isla de la Juventud, we were already teens, and we were coming from Spain, we did not know anything about the camps" said Mahfud and Sulaiman on a late night in the camps. Sons of Polisario leaders, they had been living in Spain with a Spanish family¹⁹ during all their schooling years. As soon as they started behaving as teenagers (skiving off school, partying...), they were given two options: either go back to the refugee camps and get ready for military service or go to Cuba and stay in the island to finish school and study at the university. None of them thought about it twice and they were sent to Cuba almost immediately.

Mahfud described their first impressions arriving to Isla de la Juventud like this:

¹⁹ Some Sahrawi children are sent to Spain with a foster family in order to pursue secondary (sometimes also primary) education there. These are usually kids who have been hosted by the same family during the 'Vacaciones en Paz' summer programme, and are therefore funded and supported by their Spanish host families (Chatty et al. 2010:59).

When we arrived on the bus [to Isla de la Juventud] there were children everywhere, yelling, running along the bus, happy to see new faces, asking us about their families, about the camps... But we could not give them an answer; the camps were as foreign for us as they were for them.

What Mahfud meant was that, after spending all their childhood and teenage years in Spain, they could not have much news about the camps, but they knew they would be asked about it by the children. This description depicts the isolation and lack of news representative of the first years of the Sahrawis in Cuba, talked about in the first chapter.

Almost all of the Sahrawi I met during my fieldwork in Cuba had spent all their schooling years in Isla de la Juventud. They all knew each other from that period and, as mentioned earlier, they were all considered family. By the time they arrived there, they were still young children, with an average age of 12, with no family to support them, only the other children and the Sahrawi teachers, working also as their guardians. Every summer, a new generation of kids was arriving to the little island from the camps, and that was the highlight of their stay: these new children would arrive with letters from their families, with presents, pictures, videos... These new children were their yearly connection to the camps, their only connection.

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Isla de la Juventud was the location of the SADR²⁰-Cuba Friendship School where all Sahrawi children studied secondary school, before being sent to the main island for their university studies. The first group of Sahrawi students arrived in Isla de la Juventud in 1977, and the last one, in 2012 (Chatty et al. 2010:57). In Isla de la Juventud the Sahrawis were living in a boarding school, where they were in contact only with other Sahrawi students and their teachers. This was the time for acclimatizing to Cuba, learning the language and get ready for a minimum of 4 years of university studies later on.

²⁰ SADR stands for Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, the official name for the Western Sahara state. The republic was proclaimed by the Polisario on the 27th February 1976 and as of April 2014 it has been recognized by 84 UN member states (the latest, South Sudan in 2011). Of these, 39 have 'suspended', 'frozen' or 'withdrawn' recognition (most recently Mauritius, in January 2014), because of political interests with Morocco. The countries that have recognized the SADR are predominately located in Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. In Europe, only Albania and the former Yugoslavia recognize the SADR, although the parliament of Sweden voted to recognize it in December 2012 (this has not yet been enacted by the Swedish government). In January 2014, a bill was submitted in the Danish parliament to recognize the SADR (it has not been voted on yet). The SADR was admitted to the Organization of African States (OAU), the predecessor to the current African Union, in 1982 (Western Sahara Human Rights Watch n.d.). For a complete list of countries recognizing the SADR: <http://www.wshrw.org/en/reconocimientos-de-la-rasd/> (in Spanish).

"Now that you have seen a bit around Cuba, what do you think about the buildings? And the cars?" was the first questions I got from a Technology Sciences student, talking about one of his first shocks when arriving to Cuba. He was comparing the island with Spain, where he had been every summer as a kid.



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Typical Cuban street. Havana. Photo taken by the author (2013)

"We had this teacher who was responsible for us; he was like our father, there. He was helping us with the language, with the customs, but also reminding us not to forget our culture, where we were coming from. We were kids, and we were missing our parents. It was not easy", admitted Abdul, a last year student of Spanish language and literature. He was expressing the anxiety of their process of disadjustment from their Sahrawi culture at the same time as they had to adjust to their new culture. But their guardians were there to avoid that they fully adopted the Cuban culture, replacing the Sahrawi one.

Do you see what a bad Spanish some of the Sahrawis have? That is because we were not motivated enough when we were children, in Isla de la Juventud. Our teachers there made us play sports, but they never encouraged us to have cultural activities. The same kids preferred to play football or sleep before going to the library to learn. I was able to call my father once, after four years in Cuba. In those years, I had not learned proper Spanish, and my father gave me an ultimatum: I had two years to learn good Spanish or I would go back to the camps and

forget about university. I then started to read more Spanish and to try to get to know Cubans outside the school. I still do that. (Hakim, 3rd year student of Spanish language and literature)

It is sad, but we were eating better when we were in the camps. In the camps there was always food, different food. In Cuba you always eat the same, and you are always hungry. In Isla [de la Juventud] our portions were too small, and our appetite was never satisfied. When I had just arrived, I ate my small portion very fast and stayed in line to get more food again. My teacher stopped me and said there was no more food. Then he told me something I will always remember: In Cuba, you eat to survive, not to stuff yourself with food. (Hani, last year of Medicine)

From these passages we can understand that getting used to Cuba was initially shocking; they not only were alone, with no family to support them, but they also found themselves in a culture they knew nothing about, with a language they only knew a little bit from their previous summer holidays²¹, and in a country suffering from a severe international blockade, which directly affected them in several ways, an important one being a lack of food they had never experienced before. But even if the origins at Isla de la Juventud did not seem too promising, all the Cubarawis would later acknowledge how much those days meant for them, individually and as a group, and how the island helped them to get accustomed to what would become an essential part of their lives. Certainly, it would be Isla de la Juventud which would start giving shape to their collective identity as Cubarawis (Hall 1996), and where their sense of family and brotherhood, as well as that of 'paradise' would start taking place (Müller 2010).

After finishing secondary school, and ready to start a university degree, these Sahrawis in the process of becoming Cubarawis would leave Isla de la Juventud for any of the 15 provinces in the main island, where they would be studying and mingling with other Cubans.

²¹ The project 'Vacaciones en Paz' ('Holidays in Peace') consists on the fostering of Sahrawi children of up to 12 years old by families in different countries of Europe, mostly Spain and Italy, during the summer months. In this period, the host families have to make sure their kids get medical check-ups and nutritional analysis, as well as participate in common activities and learn good Spanish (the second official language of the SADR) or the language of the country they are sent to. According to the Polisario Minister of Youth, only last summer (2013) they were able to send 5000 children on this program. But because of the financial crisis and how it affects mostly Spanish families, the number of kids able to travel is decreasing every year (Interview to the Minister of Youth at the refugee camps on the 27th November 2013).

¡Viva Cuba Libre!

The Cubarawis spent an average of six years in Isla de la Juventud before being sent to any province in the main island. It was university time, and the Sahrawis had to decide what they wanted to study and where. But did they really decide for themselves? According to the students, this is one of the most critical moments in their Cuban life, as it affects all their university years. Azim put into words what several other students had mentioned to me before:

Many of us cannot choose our studies. Cuba tells the SADR "We have so many places for these studies in this place", and then the SADR Embassy in Cuba places the Sahrawi accordingly.

This measure was quite unpopular, leaving some students unhappy as, as they saw it, Cuba and the SADR decided for them. However, they did have an initial say. According to Hakim's experience, once finished in Isla de la Juventud, they were allowed to make a list of three studies among the entire selection Cuba offers. This list was sent to the Embassy, where it was discussed with the Cuban authorities. According to the Embassy, they do all they can to give the students the studies of their choice, or at least something similar. According to several of my informants, this list is a mere formality, because it all depends on what Cuba offers the Sahrawi and who is who among the Sahrawi community. I could hear this last comment several times during my Cuban stay, and it seemed to be crucial to understand the lack of commitment certain students had with the studies they were placed in.

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There are therefore two points to reflect on, here; on the one hand, the lack of decision of the Sahrawis on their future studies, and on the other hand, the influence of their social status towards their studies. Fiddian-Qasmiyah analyzes the first point very well in several of her articles (2009, 2010 and 2011). The SADR has always emphasized the children's "responsibility of being the 'Sahrawi nation's' future and its route to self-sufficiency through education and training" (2009:336), as they will lead the now nation-in-exile to independence, if the referendum for self-determination were to take place (2010:436). The students' education therefore "tend[s] to be selected bearing in mind specific employment/existential priorities in their place of origin" (2010:149). Cuba, therefore, becomes the "transnational spac[e] which make[s] up the core of Sahrawi young people's lives" which remains "organized around the theme of education for the betterment of the nation" (Chatty et al. 2010:38).

On the second point, the realization of who can get to study certain degrees may be seen through the lens of the concept of 'patronage'. Boissevain understands patronage as "the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients. [A patron is] a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who then become his 'client', and in return provides certain services for his patron" (1966:18). In this sense, I claim that the Polisario Front would take the part of the patron, assisting those who work for the government (diplomats, ministers or the president) with influencing in their sons' education.

In what follows, I exemplify these two points: studying degrees that will follow the priorities of the 'Sahrawi nation', and being privileged among the rest of Cubarawis because of their fathers' positions.

Education for the betterment of the nation

Azim did not like his studies, so he was not motivated to start the course and barely went to class. He was not good with languages, neither too communicative, he did not even read books (unless the book was about the memoirs of Fidel), and he loved Sciences. Still, he was placed in Spanish language and literature. "Nobody knows my family" he stated as the reason for being given this particular field of study. As many others said to me before, he was convinced that he would have been able to study what he liked being his parents known to the Sahrawi authorities. He had tried to change his studies every year, with no luck. "You will not see any son of a diplomat studying Spanish language and literature, they all study Medicine or maybe Journalism" he assured.

"Those whose families are unknown, are always sent to Spanish language and literature, because nobody chooses this degree, but the Polisario needs teachers", Hakim would agree afterwards. He did not choose Spanish and literature, either. "I wanted to learn languages like English or French" he would tell me every time he saw me reading a book in English, asking me to translate certain sentences for him to learn. "[I would like] to write three or four books. To be able to become a translator! I would like to be able to read your thesis in English, and translate it into Spanish, so the others can understand it" he confessed. But even if Languages is a Cuban degree, and even if it was his first option, these studies are not among the ones the Cuban government offers to the Sahrawi. As Azim, he tried to change

his studies a couple of times, but he always found a closed door. "I am sure I could have studied what I wanted, being the son of a minister" he said, resigned.

Azim and Hakim are just two examples of what Fiddian-Qasmiyah noted about how the degrees are chosen. None of them wanted to study Spanish and literature, neither any other of the studies offered to the Sahrawis. As the anthropologist points out, the SADR decides which degrees are important for their nation, nullifying the students' agency. In this sense, the students are mere instruments for the collective nation, in order to achieve the common good, in its utilitarian sense.

The privileged situation of some of the students was the topic of a heated discussion between Said and Jawhar one warm evening at Adel and Cristina's.

Cristina prepared dinner in the tiny kitchen of the apartment she and her Sahrawi boyfriend had been renting for over a year. In the room where the guests were welcomed and the tea, served, following the Sahrawi tradition, Said and Jawhar discussed the inconveniences of not being privileged, while Adel prepared the tea and his cousin Daud, also student of Medicine but in another province, welcomed me to sit. I sat with my inseparable bottle of water between them and the fan, as I was still not used to such a heat, amused by the excitement of the spontaneous debate. "Those who arrive to Cuba directly from the camps assume that those who arrive from Spain have more money because they are the sons of diplomats", said Jawhar, a son of a diplomat himself, who came to Cuba from Spain, offended by previous accusations from Said. For what followed, I understood they also assumed the sons of diplomats were the first ones leaving the poorly equipped student residences, as they could afford 50CUC²² a month for the rent. Indeed, when Cuban salaries range from 12 to 25CUC a month (Havana Times 2013) and Sahrawi students do not receive any pocket money, questioning where those Sahrawis living outside the student residence got the money from seemed fair.

Said, the only one in that room who was not a son of a Polisario leader pointed exactly to the privileges of some students, which directs to Boissevain's idea of patronage. Adel, Daud and Jawhar not only could study what was considered the most prestigious degrees

²² CUC is the Cuban Convertible Peso, one of the two currencies in Cuba, the other one being the 'peso nacional'. Even if Cubans are paid in 'nacional' and they use this currency to get their staples (1CUC = 25 pesos), the majority of the businesses in Cuba accept only CUC as payment. Officially, 1CUC equals 1USD.

(health sciences), but they had all been spending their pre-Cuba years in Spain, not in the camps. Thanks to the position of their fathers into the Polisario Front, they received a benefit only available to others in their position.

But their Cuban stay, even if mainly educational, would influence the Sahrawi also at a cultural and social level. By adapting the Cuban social practices, the Sahrawis would almost become 'more Catholic than the Pope', nearly to the point of it being difficult, for someone not initiated in the Sahrawi culture, to understand they were not Cuban.

Internalizing externality

Bourdieu expressed 'habitus' as "The internalization of externality and the externalization of internality" (quoted in Navarro 2006:16). The French anthropologist referred to the internalization and adaptation of external social practices and at the same time, the externalization of these practices as your own, once internalized. Wacquant expressed it this way:

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The way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (Wacquant 2005:316, in Navarro 2006:16).

Habitus is developed as a result of the processes of socialization, and therefore "determines a wide range of dispositions that shape individuals in a given society. It is [...] a durable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and exert influence to mould forms of human behavior" (Navarro 2006:16).

With these descriptions of Bourdieu's 'habitus' I want to show how Cuban society influences the Sahrawis, depositing in them a characteristically Cuban way of thinking, feeling and acting. Habitus is a social facet; therefore it is acquired, which positions the Cubarawis not only as recipients of the Cuban educational system, but also of the Cuban socio-cultural and ideological framework.

In order to demonstrate how the Sahrawis adapt, acquire and internalize their Cuban context, I will give three ethnographic examples from my time in Cuba. Three big Cuban celebrations

that the Sahrawis would feel as their own: The five heroes, the Day of the National Rebellion and Fidel's birthday.

Give me five, Obama!

The Cuban Five (also known as the Miami five) are five Cuban intelligence officers convicted in Miami of conspiracy to commit espionage and other illegal activities in the United States. Even if Cuba admitted they were working for the Cuban government, they denied that they were spying on the US. Instead, according to the Cuban government, they were getting information about the Cubans exiled in Miami, suspected of terrorism against Cuba and Cuban interests (The Cuban 5, n.d.).

In Cuba, the Five are viewed by the government and the society as a whole as national heroes because, they say, they sacrificed their liberty in the defense of their country. For this reason, under the anthem 'Tie a yellow ribbon round the ole oak tree' (Tony Orlando, 1973)²³, referring to those missed loved ones coming back home, there was no one Cuban in the island who did not have a yellow ribbon on the 12th September 2013. Yellow ribbons around the wrists, on the hair, around the window bars; old people as well as kids; Cubans as well as Sahrawis... Yellow ribbons could be seen on television, on the radio and on posters in the street. On the 12th of September everybody was talking about the brave Five, those who the US were mistreating and incarcerating for no reason, those who should be back in Cuba with their families, and those who were national heroes. "I will get a yellow ribbon for you" an excited Hakim promised me a couple of days before the big day, after telling me all about it. "You cannot miss this day!" he told me, "we have to show the Five that they are not alone, that all of Cuba supports them". During the whole summer I had been seeing posters with the inscription 'Give me five, Obama!'; now that sentence was about to make sense.

²³ According to US folklore, the song was inspired by a real incident about a prisoner coming back home by bus. Before leaving prison, he wrote to his love asking her to tie a yellow ribbon around the "ole oak tree" in front of the house (which the bus would pass by) if she wanted him to return to her life; if there was not such a ribbon, he would understand he was not welcomed anymore, and he would remain on the bus. When the bus passed by the ole oak tree, this one was surrounded by a yellow ribbon (American family traditions, 2009).



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One of the posters of *Los Cinco* in the main street in Pinar del Río. The poster says “not even the bars of a cell can prevent justice being done”. Photo by the author (2013)

I'm comin' home, I've done my time

Now I've got to know what is and isn't mine

If you received my letter telling you I'd soon be free

Then you'll know just what to do

If you still want me

Whoa, tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

It's been three long years

Do ya still want me

If I don't see a ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

I'll stay on the bus

Forget about us

Put the blame on me

If I don't see a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

Bus driver, please look for me

'cause I couldn't bear to see what I might see

I'm really still in prison

And my love, she holds the key

A simple yellow ribbon's what I need to set me free

I wrote and told her please

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Whoa, tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ole oak tree

Now the whole damned bus is cheerin'

And I can't believe I see

A hundred yellow ribbons 'round the ole oak tree

I'm comin' home

Tie a yellow ribbon ('round the ole oak tree), Tony Orlando and Dawn

The day of the Five ('Los Cinco') was the last of the Cuban patriotic festivities I would be part of in the island. But it would not be long after my arrival that I would

participate on the first of such celebrations; barely a week after I arrived in Pinar del Río, when I was still getting acclimatized to my new city.

The Sahrawis could not talk about anything else, and their enthusiasm was contagious. Something big was about to happen, and I could be a witness! The Day of the National Rebellion was approaching, and it would be preceded and followed by another day of festivities.

The Day of the National Rebellion, on the 26th July commemorates the assault of the Montcada garrison, where Fidel Castro led a group of insurgents against the dictator Batista's soldiers. The assault failed, but it is still seen as the beginning of the Castro-led insurrection that expelled Fulgencio Batista.

Hani took it as his personal responsibility to show me around Pinar del Río during these celebrations: concerts at every park, street food and vendors of costume jewelry, music and alcohol everywhere... He was really excited, and he wanted me to be a part of it. We walked along the main streets in Pinar del Río, by the time still a very unknown city for me, meeting acquaintances here and there, going from one reggaeton song to the next, being offered different brands of rum from random people partying in the streets...

In one of our strolls we stopped in front of a disco, 'El Faraón' he told me. That was the name of the place, and I would later learn that name very well, as soon I knew that it was basically the only place to go out in the city, and you could find anyone you were looking for inside, any night of the week. Hani took my hand and dragged me to the main door, there were some friends of his he wanted me to say hello to. I noticed they had Arabic names, so I asked Hani about it when we left the disco. "Yes, they are Sahrawi, which is why I wanted you to meet them" he said. I arrived in the middle of Ramadan, and I could see that those friends in the disco were not only partying but also definitely drinking... With a knowing smile, Hani told me that almost nobody there was following Ramadan, "we grew up in Cuba" he said, "There is no Ramadan in Cuba". There was only a small group of Sahrawis following Ramadan in Pinar del Río (and all the other provinces, except for Cienfuegos, according to the Sahrawis), but as one of them put it "yes, we follow Ramadan, but before and after, we behave badly".

I would only have two weeks to prepare for the next festivity, a big one: Fidel's birthday. Every 13th of August, the national media and the Cuban society as a whole praise the

figure of the “historical leader of the Cuban Revolution” (EcuRed n.d.c). In 2013, one month after my arrival, Cuba displayed expositions, marathons, book presentations, concerts and several other activities around the country dedicated to Fidel. In the words of the TeleSUR correspondent Rosario Ojeda, these were activities dedicated to “the man who has been guide and light for Cuba, Latin America and the world” (TeleSUR 2013). To the words of the journalist, the Sahrawi and Cuban would add ‘father’, ‘philosopher’, ‘thinker’, ‘savior’, ‘hero’, ‘wise’, ‘humble’ and a long list of other positive adjectives to describe the ‘courage’, ‘bravery’, ‘leadership’, ‘humanism’ and ‘humility’ of Fidel Castro. On that 13th of August, the Sahrawi sang the Cuban anthem (which they already knew by heart, as it is mandatory to learn it and sing it every day at school and university), they told me stories they had heard about Fidel answering individual phone calls from Cubans congratulating him for his birthday, they read me passages of Fidel’s autobiography, and illustrated me on the story behind the famous ‘history will absolve me’²⁴. The 13th of August was all about Fidel, and as Hakim would tell me: “I have two gods: Fidel and Messi”. Some Sahrawis would change Messi for Maradona, but interestingly enough, only those celebrating Ramadan would mention Allah.

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Fidel and Messi, Hakim's gods, on the door of his closet. Photo by the author (2013)

²⁴ ‘La historia me absolverá’ was Fidel’s last defense statement under his trial for the attacks at the Montcada barracks in 1953. Castro defended himself with a four-hour speech, concluding with this remark. The speech became later the manifesto of the 26th of July movement with which, together with Che Guevara, Castro overthrew Fulgencio Batista’s dictatorship (Castro, 1953).

The five heroes, the Day of the National Rebellion and Fidel's birthday were just three of a long list of ritualized celebrations "lend[ing] support to the regime's ideology and increase[ing] its legitimacy" (Aguirre 2002:72). Other festivities in Cuba consist on the praise of the internationalism of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara²⁵, the national heroes José Martí²⁶ and Antonio Maceo²⁷, and the two wars of independence of Spain (1868 and 1895) among many other celebrations. The Sahrawis knew and celebrated all of them, because as many would tell me, they were also their festivities, they were also Cuban.

Conclusion: Cubarawi? I like that!

When I told the Sahrawis in Cuba that in the camps they were known as 'Cubarawis' they laughed. They had not heard the word yet, as in Cuba they were just known by Cubans as 'Arabs', but they thought it was a very descriptive term. "That's us!" one of them told me, followed by "but here we are more Cuban than Sahrawi".

In this chapter I have explored how these Sahrawis students become Cubarawis.

First I explored the relation between their studies and the Polisario Front. The purpose of travelling to Cuba is to get a higher university degree impossible, but this one is subjected to the 'nation's needs'. As Fiddian-Qasmiyah writes, education becomes a way to ensure the self-sufficiency of the nation for which specific degrees are prioritized (2010:149). I argued that the students are mere instruments for the collective nation, in order to achieve the common good, in its utilitarian sense. The Polisario strategy proves ineffective, as I showed with the examples of Azim and Hakim, two students who were not happy with the education the Polisario chose for them. Not only this strategy is making some students unhappy, but as I mentioned in the previous chapter, it is also proving inefficient in making all the Sahrawis come back to the camps and, as I will show in my last chapter, it is also creating tension

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²⁵ The image of 'El Che' (1928-1967) is very recurrent in Cuba and it can be found in any random corner, as well as in institutional buildings like the famous Ministry of Interior, where Guevara once worked. This building, found in Plaza de la Revolución (Revolution Square), has the face of Che outlined on steel along the 5-story structure, together with his famous sentence: 'Hasta la Victoria, siempre' ('Until Victory, forever'). Facing the Ministry of Interior, on the other side of the square, lays the big memorial to José Martí.

²⁶ Martí (1853-1895) was a Cuban poet and political activist. He wrote against the Spanish colonizers and the need of independence for Cuba, as well as about the fear of US expansionism. His works talk about freedom, democracy and liberty, and they made of Martí a symbol of Cuban independence. As the image of El Che, Martí can be easily found anywhere in Cuba, in the form of statues, street names or organizations.

²⁷ Maceo (1845-1896), known as 'The Bronze Titan', was a general officer of the Cuban Liberation Army. He was one of the most noteworthy independentist leaders of Cuba and Latin America, and he worked alongside José Martí on the preparation of the war of independence of 1895.

between the Polisario party line and the youth. Said is also an example of critic student. As Azim and Hakim, he blamed the choice of studies not only on the need of the nation, but mostly on certain privileges to be found among the Sahrawis. To explain these privileges I drew on patronage and showed how certain Sahrawis may have an advantage position in Cuba because of who they are related to back in the camps, which allows them to study other subjects considered of higher prestige, because of being sons of diplomats or have government-related family.

Afterwards I used Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1993) to show how the social practices of Cuba are internalized and embodied by the Sahrawis. I exemplified this habitus with three big Cuban celebrations that the Sahrawi recognize as their own as, as the Sahrawi mentioned at the beginning of the conclusion said: "but here we are more Cuban".

After knowing the social context of Cuba and how it is internalized by the Sahrawis, but most importantly, after drawing upon how their education is directed, the next chapter will delve more deeply into their studies within the Cuban south-south cooperation programme.

3

To educate is to liberate?

*"We light the oven so that everyone may bake bread in it"*²⁸

José Martí

"The Cuban education is worthless outside the island, so we are forced to go to Spain or Algeria to recognize [our degree]; maybe we even have to do some extra courses", opined Hani a warm afternoon in Viñales. And he added: "We study Medicine with the same books and even the same teachers as the ones who came twenty years ago". While Hani agreed that Cuba suffers from the long-standing international blockade, he was also certain that the country could have the means for improving its educational system at least, he said, by including some technological elements into their studies. "We know Medicine has advanced a lot in the last 20 years, but it seems like Cuba has not realized" he complained.

Hani's complains were not isolated. Even if they were all very grateful to Cuba's solidarity, and understood how lucky they had been in terms of getting the chance to study in the island, they were critical of the Cuban educational system. Adding to and drawing on the previous allegations of patronage and privileges, some Cubarawis also thought that the Cuban educational system was outdated; others, biased; and others, weak.

Through exploring these complaints and based on my fieldwork data, I am in this chapter presenting how Cuba assists the SADR with educational programs because of the former's views on anti-colonialism and its policy of solidarity with revolutionary liberation movements. Such aid when assisting developing countries is not motivated, I propose, by Cuba seeking economic advantages but must be seen as reflecting the Cuban state expecting political support in confronting the US embargo in return for educational aid. The latter element does not undermine the former, I argue, as Cuba's international cooperation is also based in the country's dominant politics of solidarity and cooperation among equals, on mutual assistance and learning. I will support my argument with an analysis on south-south development cooperation and with various accounts of Cuban internationalism, specifically

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²⁸ This is a fragment of the letter José Martí sent to the Puerto Rican independentist Sotero Figueroa in October 1893 (Carbonell Limonta and Morgan Scott, 2011).

Cuba-African relations, to show that this solidarity is shaping the Sahrawis’ education and general knowledge.

I will argue as well that the Cuban educational programs are embedded within the socialist, patriotic Cuban agenda and therefore socialized into its message, affecting the type of education the Sahrawi receive during their time in the island. I will support my arguments with Johnson’s exploration of the relationship between education and the state and how the latter uses the former as an instrument of social engineering (Johnson 1982). Durkheim’s educational sociology will also be useful in this respect. I will later exemplify this argument with the critiques of the system made by three Sahrawi in different settings and time during my fieldwork in Cuba.

Lastly, using the arguments of Benigno E. Aguirre about the formal and informal systems of social control implemented in Cuba (2002), and focusing on what he calls a “total command of formal education” (2002:69), I will describe how the University Students Federation (FEU)²⁹ gives educational, political and social advantages to those students who affiliate to their list, creating internal hierarchies and an effective social control. I will support this argument with Goffman’s dramaturgy of social interactions, showing how this social control forces people to have two stages of interaction and how those stages can be read differently from each other.

“Solidarity is to share what one has, not to give what’s left over”

This sentence is precisely the motto for Castro’s Cuba to help other developing countries, framing this help into what is called ‘south-south development cooperation’. South-south cooperation originated during the Cold War, within the so-called Non-Aligned Movement but it emerged stronger in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when countries like Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and India started to improve their economic position in the world. These countries had developed successful social programs and were ready to share them with other developing countries, creating a new alternative to the arguably ineffective North-South cooperation (Moráis de Sá e Silva 2009).

²⁹ FEU stands for Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios, in Spanish.

On her article on Cuba's involvement on Africa's health system, Margaret Blunden points out the criteria for successful south-south cooperation:

[The countries] respond to needs articulated on the basis of special national and local analysis; they have contexts or relate to issues that have some commonality or complementarity; they involve exchange of knowledge and expertise in both directions; they bring mutual benefits on a reasonably equitable basis; they build institutional capacity; and they provide good value for money compared with alternative modes of operation (Global Facility 2007, in Blunden 2008:35).

Hence, following Blunden, the emphasis on south-south cooperation is on mutuality, equality and exchange between the participant countries, and the development of social programs in other states. Certainly, this kind of cooperation is an alternative to the north-south donor-recipient relations, where the self-interest of the developed countries and the power imbalances of this relation are implicit (Blunden 2008:32).

According to the Cuban government, fighting this global power imbalance is at the core of Castro's cooperation with Africa, highlighting "the essential commonality of poor developing countries, sharing similar oppressive colonial legacies, with their development blocked by what Castro [...] called 'the unjust and obsolete international economic order prevailing in the world'" (*ibid.*). This is the reason why Cuba contributes with "selfless assistance without conditions, as opposed to a mentality of conditioned charity aid" (Díaz 2007, in Blunden 2008:34), and why solidarity is understood as sharing what one has, not giving what's left over.

Both inside and outside Cuba, the engagement of Castro government into the south-south cooperation is widely praised, as the island both educates and trains foreigners in Cuban soil, but it also sends Cuban nationals to foreign states to work and train other professionals³⁰. At a Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE) conference in Leeds (April 2000), the Deputy Director of the Center of African and Middle Eastern Studies in Havana (CEAMO), David Gonzales, outlined the characteristics of the Cuban-African policy of cooperation, from the Cuban point of view. According to Gonzales, the first characteristic is the "*altruistic* nature of Cuba's relationship with Africa" (2000:318), on the grounds that Cuba is not materially interested in Africa, and therefore its help is selflessly based on solidarity. He further mentioned Castro's 'duty of compensation' of Cubans towards Africans, "owing to the

³⁰ As this thesis is focusing on the Sahrawi community in Cuba, I will not touch upon the cooperation of Cuba with other Latin American countries, but only about Cuban-African relations.

role of African slaves and their descendants" in various eras of Cuban history: in fighting against Spain in the revolutionary wars, in the building of the Cuban nation; and in "the creation of the wealth that successive generations of Cubans of all races have enjoyed" (*ibid.*). Gonzales asserted that these facts together prove that Cuba's policy for Africa is based on moral and human principles, even if this could cost the country its political relations with certain European powers (like in the case of Spain in relation to Western Sahara).

Post-revolutionary Cuban politics have been oriented towards training Africans that have been sent by their countries, as in the case of the Sahrawi (and many other African nationalities like Angola, Namibia or Sierra Leone, to name a few); but it has also sent civilian professionals to work in hospitals, schools and infrastructures (building roads, airports, housing...) (2000:320). A key example are the so-called *misiones* (missions), when newly-graduated doctors and teachers are sent abroad to work in remote communities around Latin America and Africa for an initial period of two years. According to Gonzalez, all this cooperation comes to show that Cuban-African relations are solid, and that "a small poor country can do a lot with political will and creativeness" (2000:321).

Another important contribution to south-south solidarity is Cuban military cooperation. Despite the insistence on the depolitization of the Cuban help and the emphasis on ideological disengagement, Cuba prides itself on its "unflinching support for national liberation movements throughout the world" (Gonzales 2000:317). The idea of anti-colonialism and independence is embedded in these programs, and this same idea is at the core of the assistance to the Polisario Front liberation movement. Gonzales highlighted the moral principles of Cuban cooperation in supporting the 'Western Sahara freedom fighters' in the 1970s, but although Cuba's reasons for this solidarity is not focused on foreign policy, they certainly look ideological, transcending politics and placing this solidarity at a 'suprapolitical' level as Gonzales later asserted that "[...] cooperation was, of course, more intensive with countries whose governments had a closer identity of views with the Cuban leadership" (2000:319). Shared anti-colonial politics, the presence of a liberation movement with a will to independence and even a common former colonialist power, Spain, all seem to be powerful reasons motivating Cuban assistance to Polisario by means of education, professional and military training.

Perhaps the most salient and successful example of the Cuban solidarity is that of the doctors. According to Blunden, Cuba's contribution to international health workers "exceed[s] that of all members of the G8 group leading advanced countries combined" (2008:33). This is possible because of the Cuban understanding of medicine as social, preventive and holistic. For Cuba, medical care involves "adequate housing, nutrition, sanitation and education [...]. Individuals and communities participate in the development and functioning of the health care system" (2008:34). Certainly, Cuba's focus is on human capacity building and programs that meet the needs of the poorest and the marginalized, making medicine accessible to all.

But even if Gonzales insisted on the *altruistic* nature of the Cuban cooperation and solidarity agreements, Blunden exposes the political self-interest of the Castro government, as this international aid can directly help break down Cuba's isolation, generate support against the US embargo and work in favor of Cuba at the United Nations. Blunden calls this Havana's 'medical diplomacy' (2008:33). As I have attempted to indicate in the paragraphs above, Cuba's solidarity program is embedded in the government's politics of mutuality and cooperation among equals, but it is also motivated by the expected political support the country may get in confronting the US blockade. This solidarity aid comes in different shapes: by military training, by sending doctors in *misiones* and by welcoming and educating foreign nationals, as I will explain in the next section.

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Knowledge is the patrimony of humanity

Cuba's solidarity cooperation also extends to educational programs, as the ones allowing hundreds of Sahrawis to study in the island every year. The notion that knowledge is not to be privatized but is a common patrimony to share and transfer is at the core of the Cuban educational programs (Hickling Hudson 2009:55).

But even if Cuban solidarity, cooperation and mutual learning are highly praised by scholars and certain governments, the perception of the Sahrawi students about the level and quality of the education received may not reflect the same positivism. In this section I will exemplify the students' views on the education obtained during their years in Cuba, according to the data collected during my fieldwork in the island.

"Us 'Cubans' know a lot about what we studied, but the 'Algerians' know about everything" Baraka told me on a quiet afternoon at my room. We were waiting for Azim to come back from the shop with some sugar for the tea, and Baraka took the opportunity to give me his input on their situation as Sahrawis in Cuba. It was the first time I was meeting him, but he already knew who I was, "the Catalan girl who is here to write about us!" he said.

Baraka was very happy with the opportunity to study in Cuba, and he loved Medicine, he told me, but he was aware of the limitations at a social level. Sahrawi youth do not study Medicine only in Cuba, but also in Algeria, Libya and Spain, and Baraka was convinced that those in other countries did not study only Medicine, but also some other general knowledge, which made them better at social conversations. "You are there, in the camps, with some other Sahrawis coming back from other countries, and those ones coming from Spain or Algeria, even if they are very different countries, they can have a conversation together" he told me, putting into his own words what his cousin had told him about his experience back from Cuba. Baraka was certain that his wide medical knowledge was in detriment to a more general knowledge about other subjects, and that "they are better prepared for life, we are prepared for Medicine".

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The course starts at the Faculty of Education of Pinar del Río. Photo by the author (2013)

Hakim complained about the same limitations in the way they were learning, on my last month in the island. I was visiting him after a football match he had been playing with some other international students from Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea and El Salvador. By this point, Hakim and I had created a strong bond, and he liked to share his stories with me. He was telling me about his admiration for Samuel, the student from Sierra Leone who arrived to Cuba after the brutal civil war in his country. Samuel was a priest back in Sierra Leone, during the war. While my stay in Cuba, he never gave details of his past, he only repeated "I saw too many things I should not have seen" while drinking one bottle of rum after another. He was given the chance to come to Cuba to become a teacher, and even if he did not speak a word of Spanish, he felt he had to leave his country. Now, in his third year of studies, he spoke perfect Spanish and was ready to start his internship at a school. "He knows so much about life" Hakim told me, "He knows things you do not learn in the university".

Hakim was of the opinion that Samuel did a good thing by escaping his country, but not by coming to Cuba. "We are like robots", he said, "We know about one thing, and one thing only". He was the exception, I could tell, as he really liked learning and always found ways to get books or news from outside his area of expertise (Spanish and teaching). His examples touched upon the Medicine students, as well, which were the largest group among the Sahrawis, so the most visible. But he also gave me similar accounts of other students, Sahrawi, Cuban and other internationals, in other disciplines, such as teaching. As Baraka, Hakim was convinced that they were lacking a more general knowledge of other disciplines because, according to him, being an expert in something without knowing how to relate to other disciplines is not good enough. He told me that this method only created competition between studies, making the Medicine students believe they were more important than teachers, as kids could not have an education and survive, but without health, they would die. "Knowledge also saves you", he told me, "That is why I want to learn as much as I can". With this comment he hinted why Medicine was considered more important, hence why the sons of Polisario leaders were always studying that degree -- as reflected also by the politics of patronage that prevails among the students, as outlined in Chapter 2. Most of all, this comment emphasized the role of the Polisario into their choice of studies. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh agrees with Hakim in this matter:

Influenced by Cuba's and Polisario's political and ideological priorities, the Sahrawi-Cuban scholarship system has historically been developed through an active dialogue with Polisario representatives. With the Polisario playing a key role in developing the curriculum and

selecting the language, content and means of instruction for Sahrawi children and youth based in Cuba, this dialogue has illustrated the potential for refugee children to receive contextually relevant education both in their refugee camps and through transnational scholarship programs (Fiddian-Qasmiyah 2011:443).

I propose that precisely those political and ideological priorities Cuba and the Polisario have in common are those that the students are learning through their studies, focusing only on the subjects of their degrees, not on other events of everyday life, or on other knowledge related to other areas, as students from other countries may have. It is easy to recognize the adoption of Cuban socialist slogans by the Sahrawis at a social and political level, as it has been shown in previous chapters³¹. Still the Sahrawi acknowledged that Medicine as well as other subjects had been in continuous development but their studies had been stuck in a past time with a specific way of teaching. Even if good, this teaching was all embedded within the socialist, patriotic Cuban agenda shared, as Fiddian-Qasmiyah notes, with the ideological and political agenda of the Polisario. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, this educational program is carefully selected by the Polisario and seen by them to reflect the needs in the camps -- the wishes of the students.

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This domination over the curriculum, language, content and means of instruction results in a control of the knowledge the Sahrawi receive. And controlling the knowledge is the opposite of liberating through education. But this domination is not only achieved by the content of their studies, but as we shall see in the next section, also by certain formal and informal methods of social control in Cuba.

³¹ 'Patria o muerte' ('Motherland or death') or 'Socialismo o muerte' ('Socialism or death') were two of the most common slogans seen in Cuba and heard from the Cubarawis, as well.

FEU - 'Aquí estoy yo...!'³²

Nos interesa [...] una universidad que no sea una fábrica de profesionales [...]; la universidad que se orienta a las necesidades del país, y no en [sic.] los caprichos individuales; la Universidad que investigue cuántos médicos necesitamos, cuántos ingenieros [...], para que ajuste esa forja de profesionales a las necesidades del país.

We are interested [...] in a university that does not become a factory of professionals [...]; the university that orients itself towards the necessities of the country, and not towards individual impulses; the university that researches how many doctors we need, how many engineers [...], so they can adjust the number of professionals to the needs of the country.

Fragment of the speech given by Fidel Castro at a university stadium, 13th March 1959³³

(Diario Granma, 2014)

This speech was given barely two months after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on 1st of January 1959. It can clearly be compared with the Polisario's views on education, according to my informants: they study degrees that will be useful for the nation, not any degree chosen by 'individual impulses', using Castro's words.

The speech continues with the necessity of having education for all, not only for a privileged minority, leaving behind all the 'injustice', 'tyranny' and 'immoralities' and creating a 'revolutionary university'.

Paulo Freire's 'to educate is to liberate the oppressed'³⁴ seems to be at the core of Cuban educational policy, both national and foreign. But what the Cuban government seems to have failed in understanding Freire's message is the distinction between using education to have a dialogue with those you educate or as an instrument to impose your logic. Richard Shaull explains this distinction at the Foreword of Freire's influential book *Pedagogy of the oppressed*:

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³² FEU stands for University Students Federation, for its initials in Spanish. And 'Aquí estoy yo' is the FEU's slogan ('Here I am...!')

³³ Original in Spanish. My translation.

³⁴ Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who constructed a particular and highly praised educational viewpoint: critical pedagogy.

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Even if Freire's argument was about the use of education as an instrument to challenge the hegemony of the Right bourgeoisie (Freire was a Marxist and an anti-colonialist), sociologist Benigno E. Aguirre argues that the Cuban model is using education in the same way. According to Aguirre, one-party totalitarian states use varying methods to "direct the behavior of citizens and subjects of modern state polities", and Cuba is one of those states (2002:67). If Aguirre is right, this reflects a broader context within which education must be framed. As Johnson (1982: 214-215) notes, education transmits culture, values, norms, myths and ideology and it is for this reason that education can be a mechanism of social control. Exemplifying, Johnson describes the role of education during Apartheid. However, his general assertions on how education was used then as an instrument for social engineering can also be applied on the current Cuban context, which Aguirre does (2002). The sociologist insists on the "total command of formal education" by the Cuban state, and therefore the absence of independent professional associations for teachers and the complete control of the educational planning by the state (2002:69). In this sense, it is the government who controls the amount of knowledge and skills the Cuban and foreign community acquire, and education hence acts as "an agent of social control" (Johnson 1982:222). In social terms, the ideology imparted in school becomes the basis for the revolutionary attitudes of the youth.

Durkheim identified such dynamics early on and emphasized that educational systems are a construct built by society, which naturally seeks to reproduce its collectively held values, beliefs, norms, and conditions through its institutions: "The man which education is obliged to make of us is not man as nature made him, but as society wishes him to be" (Durkheim, quoted in Ottaway 1995:214). Education also classifies children in social groups, says Durkheim. Casin explains in which way this is achieved, according to Durkheim: "the image must be repeated with such persistence that it becomes, through the sole fact of repetition, an integrating element of himself, such that he can no longer do without it" (1972:203). In this perspective, education becomes a process of indoctrination of the self-image and self-identity inside a wider collectivity. In the case of Cuba, such indoctrination revolved around the perpetually repeated idea of being revolutionary, communist and patriotic, and of loving the motherland above all. This repetition makes the children

internalize those ideas and images, adapting them as their own. If children internalize ideas through education in a way that they become an integrating element of themselves, those ideas become afterwards part of their 'habitus', of the way they will think and act. Aguirre exposes that this 'habitus', the internalization of the dominant ideology, as well as the censorship of deviant social outcomes comes to shape the informal means of control by the Cuban government.

I propose that it is precisely in this context of education as social agent of control where we find the FEU –University Students Association. Even if the FEU is allegedly integrating and representing all the university students in Cuba, it did not seem to be doing so in many cases, according to my informants. Azim would be the most critical with the FEU; he was never too engaged in any activity from the university, neither he voted or went to the meetings by the FEU. His case contrasted with that of Hakim, who was the President of the FEU and the representative of the international students at his faculty, and had therefore many duties and certain advantages. Azim and Hakim's personalities were very different, being Azim a more inhibit, private person, while Hakim was always active and surrounded by people. These personality traits definitely help in relation to the FEU as, even if both believed in the Cuban messages of anti-colonialism and revolution, Azim preferred to stay in, reading Fidel's memoires, while Hakim took an active role on defending those messages and acting upon them, at the university. These actions would directly influence the advantages or disadvantages they would get by being part or not of the FEU, as I shall explain later on.

Blanca, Hakim's Cuban girlfriend at the time of my fieldwork, a sweet 19-year old in her first year as a student of Biology and Natural Sciences, was also part of the FEU. She had been part of the party's youth organizations all along, from secondary school, and she expected to continue in these organizations all through her university studies. "You have some boring chores to do, meetings to plan and attend to... but then you get to do some other things you would not otherwise, if you were not in these organizations" she would tell me. She would always emphasize how lucky she was to be part of the youth organizations, as thanks to that she could travel a couple of times to other provinces in Cuba. Those trips had been the only times in her life she was able to leave Pinar del Río, and she would show me the pictures of those tours once and again. For Blanca, being part of these organizations, helping prepare meetings, being in charge of some bureaucratic paperwork and such was a necessary evil. The reward was being able to travel around Cuba and certain study advantages at the faculty (choosing subjects, missing lectures, being in closer contacts with the professors...).

Those advantages were also given to Hakim. Because of being part of the FEU, he had to stay at the faculty certain evenings to prepare activities or speeches, attend meetings between students and professors and other community activities. But he did not think about those chores as something mandatory to do in order to get other advantages, instead he would gladly do anything he was asked to. He was always very enthusiastic about the FEU, about the Revolution and about the role of the students in shaping ‘the new Cuba’. This is precisely one of the core objectives of the FEU: “To forge the new society, the New Man ‘el Che’ aspired to be, the love for the motherland, for the Revolution and for our best values” (EcuRed, n.d.b). The last of these objectives points directly to the important role of the students into the Revolution, both while studying and once they graduate:

To integrate these objectives into the active participation of the university students in the life of the society, and their formation as ethically, professionally, culturally and politically better graduates, ready to serve the Revolution wherever the society needs them.

These two objectives are just a token of the thinking of the FEU, giving a hint of how this organization is part of the state apparatus of control the previous authors commented. Students are encouraged to defend the Revolution and be ready to serve the Cuban society anywhere.

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Façade of one of the student residences in Pinar del Río. The message by Fidel’s image says “Revolution means never lying”. Photo by the author (2013)

Announcing a new plan to improve the quality of teaching at the universities, the former Cuban Minister of Higher Education, Miguel Díaz-Canel said in 2009 that the priority of the university is “to achieve a greater political and ideological preparation and to perfect the educational teaching process”, in order to warrant universities “for the revolutionaries” (La Gente, Radio La Primerísima, 2009). Following those words, the former Minister added that they would achieve this by “shaking the classrooms with a deep and systematic political and ideological work”, being rigorous in the entry of new students into the university, as well as in the selection of faculty staff. “Academic criteria, revolutionary attitudes and social compromise will prevail”, he determined.



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One of the walls at the Faculty of Medicine in Pinar del Río. The message says “"Strengthening the party means strengthening the Revolution. Photo by the author (2013)

As I mentioned above, not every student is ready for this kind of offering to the Revolution. As a student, Azim does not feel the need to be part of the FEU, and this is understood as not sharing the same objectives, as not being revolutionary, I would argue. Therefore, those advantages both Blanca and Hakim enjoy cannot be experienced by Azim as long as he does not partake in the FEU’s activities and he decides to be a full member.

Moreover, as it happened to me while walking in front of any of the CDR (Comités for the Defense of the Revolution) members³⁵, one has to be careful with what one says in front of an active defender of the FEU. It was not unusual for me to listen to Hakim and Blanca criticizing someone for their actions or comments towards the FEU or the Revolution. I would also be advised to avoid talking about politics or mentioning key words (Fidel, Cuba, Revolution, Castro) when passing in front of the building of any faculty, ministry, the police or the guards of the different university buildings. "You never know who may be listening" many of my informants would tell me, "Walls have ears", Cristina would warn me. Even when talking at Adel and Cristina's, we had to be sure the neighbors could not listen to us, if we engaged in a conversation on politics. An acute sense of a separation of public and private spaces prevailed and was, therefore, crucial in defining the type and content of social interactions and communication in general. Using Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor to explain everyday social activities, Cuba becomes a stage, where everyone is a player, and people construct specific impressions to evoke desired responses in their audience (Cook, 2008). In this stage metaphor, a frontstage and a backstage are necessary, where the frontstage in this case would be the public arena, where people construct those impressions for certain responses; and the backstage, the private space, where people may or may not agree with the impression they gave publicly. Still, in the case of Cuba, the private sphere could become public if someone you did not trust much was at your place, or if anyone could hear you from outside. Put differently, while generally valid as an analytics of separating domains of interaction, Goffman's stages blend into each other in contexts such as the Cuban.

Such blending is also state-driven: As Aguirre points out, one of the main tasks for these organizations are monitoring and surveying people's interactions, and report on them when necessary (2002:70). This control at the university (or at a neighborhood level, with the CDR) results in a self-censorship (2002:76) both from the members of the FEU and specially the non-members, as showed in the 'walls have ears' example. But even if many of my informants were aware of the censorship they had to inflict on themselves, they had already absorbed the Cuban anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist ideology and the slogans this ideology brought along (as shown on Chapter 2). Indeed, "*fidelidad a la Patria, a la Revolución y a Fidel*" (fidelity to the homeland, the revolution and Fidel) was one of many mottos they

³⁵ The CDR are a surveillance network of neighborhood committees across Cuba. The organizations, described as the 'eyes and ears of the Revolution' exist to coordinate community activities and report on any subversive or 'counter-revolutionary' activity (EcuRed, n.d.a).

would repeat every day, together with the singing of the Cuban national anthem and the mythification of Castro as god -- as Hakim would tell me on Fidel's birthday.

Conclusion: Castro, World hero of solidarity

<i>Soy de un país que tiene tradición de lucha por su soberanía y se oponía a la desigualdad</i>	<i>I am from a country with tradition of fighting for its sovereignty and opposed to inequality</i>
<i>Soy de una sociedad temerosa que escucha a los que la amordazan con su falsa libertad Ésta es nuestra realidad, vivimos encerrados en la frase 'Todo es del pueblo' pero todo lo controla el Estado Estamos atados a sus métodos caducados Aquí todo es 'haz lo que yo digo y no lo que yo hago' Estoy cansado de seguir su plan 'Socialismo o muerte' no es un lema, son las opciones que te dan Si crees en ellos eres bueno, si discrepas, malo En otro lado fuertas opositor, aquí eres un gusano</i>	<i>I am from a society frightened to listen to those who gag them with their false freedom This is our reality, We live enclosed in the sentence 'Everything for the people' but everything is controlled by the State We are tied to their outdated methods Everything is 'do what I say, not what I do', here I am tired of following their plan 'Socialism or death' is not a slogan, They are the options they give you If you believe in them you are good, If you disagree, bad In another place you would be opposition, here you are a worm</i>

jViva Cuba Libre!, Los Aldeanos (2009)³⁶

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Rev. Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, president of the United Nations General Assembly (2008-2009) declared Fidel Castro 'World Hero of Solidarity' in September 2009 (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2009). According to D'Escoto, Castro was awarded because "he and all of Cuba have shown the world a laudable solidarity capacity which is sometimes not valued in all its magnitude" (El diario exterior 2009, my translation).

In this chapter I have shown how D'Escoto's idea of Cuban solidarity is extended beyond Cuban and Latin American borders. However, framing Cuban solidarity into the south-south development cooperation, I have argued that Castro's cooperation with the Polisario is not based only in mutuality and equality, but especially on ideology. Identifying them as 'freedom fighters' and as a liberation movement sharing the same anti-colonial politics, Cuba has been shaping the minds and the actions of those Sahrawis studying in the island. As Blunden points out, Cuban solidarity is not purely altruistic, on the contrary, it has

³⁶ In Spanish. My translation.

a political self-interest, as this cooperation can help Cuba breaking down its isolation and bring support to the Cuban government against the US embargo (2008:33).

Shaping the minds and actions of the Sahrawi is what I have been dealing with in the third section of the chapter. By presenting several testimonies of Sahrawi in the island, I have argued that the Cuban educational system is entirely biased and limited in general knowledge. The Cuban educational programs are embedded within the socialist, patriotic Cuban agenda and therefore socialized into its message, as I showed with the support of Johnson's exploration of the relationship between education and the state (1982) and Durkheim's educational sociology. But Cuba is not alone in shaping the minds of the Sahrawi. The Polisario has a key role in this as well. As Fiddian-Qasmiyah indicates, the SADR government is the one selecting the language and content of the curriculum the Sahrawi will study in Cuba, according to the needs of the nation (2011:443). The ideological and political agenda of both Cuba and the Polisario is therefore what shapes, limits and controls the education of the Sahrawi.

But the control of the education goes beyond the content of the curriculum. In the last section I describe the role of the FEU and what it means to be part of it or not. Using the arguments of Aguirre about the formal and informal systems of social control implemented in Cuba (2002) I described how the FEU gives educational, political and social advantages to those students who affiliate to their list, creating internal hierarchies and controlling the students. I supported this argument with Goffman's dramaturgy of social interactions, showing how this social control forces people to have two stages of interaction and how those stages can be read differently from each other.

In conclusion, the question mark on the title of the chapter ('To educate is to liberate?') is very appropriate. In order to free the minds of the students and to liberate them from the overwhelming analphabetism present in both the colonial Sahara and the colonial Cuba, both the Polisario and the Cuban government have been using education to 'imprison'³⁷ them into an anti-colonial, pro-socialist ideology. Using different means of social and educational control, as well as manipulation in the content of the subjects, the Sahrawi and the Cuban governments have tried to assure a one-way mentality among their students. But as we shall see in the next chapter, there is an increasing gap between what the Polisario desires, back in the camps, and how the youth is politically reacting.

³⁷ As opposed to 'liberate'.

4

"Morir por la patria es vivir"

"A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor.

At a point, one can only fight fire with fire"

Nelson Mandela (1995:194)

My flight from Barcelona to Algiers arrived earlier than expected. This resulted in me having some more time at the airport, allowing me to get to know some of the Sahrawis flying in the same flight as me to Tindouf. They were a big young group coming back from the EUCCOCO³⁸ conference in Rome. They very excited about the high international attendance to the convention and still agitated by the topics touched upon at the conference. The 2013 EUCCOCO was focused on the 'wall of shame', the sand berm dividing the Western Saharan occupied territories from the liberated areas, with land-mines and other explosives throughout (see Introduction). Under the motto 'Together to remove the wall', the attendants ended the summit appealing to the international organizations and the public opinion to put pressure on Morocco to "comply with the rules of international humanitarian law and neutralize the wall and the entire arsenal of destruction that it contains, which includes antipersonnel and anti-tank landmines and unexploded ordnance" (Saharawi Mission. Ethiopia-African Union, 2013).

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Even if the group of Sahrawis was quite large, I was not the only representative from Spain present; a group of archaeologists and historians would be spending 20 days in the liberated city of Tifariti, exhuming bodies from the war, and a couple of nurses would be helping at the National Hospital in Rabuni for a couple of weeks. They were all coming from different Spanish pro-Sahrawi organizations and most of them had been in the camps several times before.

I was expecting the serious faces of the Algerian police, with their rifles hanging over their hips, upon my arrival at the airport of Tindouf, as my previous experiences had showed

³⁸ European Conference of Coordination and Support to the Saharawi people (EUCOCO), which celebrated its 38th edition in Rome on the 15th and 16th November 2013

me. Instead I found complete indifference; police and other officials were even turning their backs at us! There was something on the TV which was much more important for them than the arrival of some Sahrawis and a few Spanish aid workers. Algeria was playing the last minutes of a decisive football match against Burkina Faso in a tournament that would decide which of those countries would partake in the World Cup in Brazil 2014. The Sahrawis from my plane joined them right away, feeling the same enthusiasm for the Algerian team as the nationals.

Right when I was leaving the airport to get into the car that would drive me to the camps, Algeria won the match. Men yelling at the top of their lungs echoed around the tiny military airport. My driver was equally happy, and so were all the drivers and all the other Sahrawi and Algerian. "The Algerian victory is our victory" Sidahmed told me, the Sahrawi sharing my ride to the camps. He was the first Sahrawi I met who did not speak Spanish, but his English was perfect. In his mid-twenties, Sidahmed was a fine artist, but he was also working as a translator for foreign aid workers. He had just seen off a German group for whom he had been a guide and a translator around the camps for two weeks. "We are like brothers, and the victory of Algeria will irritate Morocco" he told me with a smile. He asserted that Morocco had helped Burkina Faso with training logistics and equipment, and had even allowed the team to train in Moroccan fields, making me understand that this match was not only about sports but mainly about politics.

This glimpse from my arrival to Algeria on my way to the camps illustrates how the youth is finding their own alternatives to make their situation known internationally, both by travelling abroad organizing and attending conferences or by helping foreigners while in the camps by being their guides, translators. It also shows how they politicize great many aspects of their life, including a football match between their host country, Algeria, and what they understand as a puppet of Morocco, Burkina Faso. Indeed, contrary to what the Minister of Youth once told me about the importance of money for the youth, the many alternatives, associations, marches and conferences, that the Sahrawi youth are organizing both in the camps and abroad, suggest that for the majority of them, leaving their current refugee situation is more important than the money they could get working abroad. As I showed in previous chapters, undoubtedly an increasing number of youth is leaving the camps searching for a better future (if given the opportunity). However, with this chapter I want to argue that their reasons may be more politically driven than economic.

In the last chapter of my thesis I want to show how the youth at this stage is moving towards finding new alternatives for the conflict on their own and away from the official, long-standing Polisario alternatives. Focusing on the Cubarawi youth, I will argue that, even if the Polisario sends Sahrawis to Cuba because of their shared ideological orientation around patriotism, nationalism and socialism in the hope that those commonalities will create patriotic youth, these ideas are not bringing the results the Polisario expected. I will show how the informal nationalism employed by the Polisario has become cemented in the minds of the youth, as this one is definitely patriotic and nationalistic, and how the Cubarawis come back with ideas of revolution, of 'motherland or death'. But appealing to emotions and common values does not seem enough to get recognition. The youth feel disenchanted by what they see as the inflexibility and conservative stances of the Polisario government, and they experience inaccessibility to the power spheres. Both aspects, I will show, are seen as failures of the government that instill frustration among the youth. Again, while such frustration may make some people flee, I assert that the majority of the youth is engaging in their own political actions, both in the camps and outside, away from the Polisario principles.

With Honwana's concept of 'waithood' as an active and creative situation, I will show how the youth is channeling their frustration towards the Polisario Front policy. Following Scott's concept 'weapons of the weak' I will expose how the youth is creating their own alternatives to the solution of the conflict, appealing to international solidarity by non-violent resistance techniques. In this respect, Taulbee (1973) and Dann (2014)'s understandings of non-violent resistance will be very useful. I will exemplify this non-violent resistance with one of the most visible of the projects that are arising in the camps, the marches to the berm organized by the 'Cries against the wall' movement, led by two Cubarawis, as well as with the peaceful actions on the other side of the berm, the Occupied Territories. Lastly, drawing on Dudouet's theories on armed and unarmed resistance as alternative methods of popular mobilization (2013), I will show how the idea of taking up arms is gaining momentum among the frustrated and disenchanted youth, especially among those who study in countries with revolutionary ideas like Cuba and Algeria.

No! No! They do not represent us!

This catchy sentence from the Spanish *indignados*³⁹ can easily be attributed as well to the young Sahrawis in relation to their politicians. Both in Cuba and in the camps, I could hear clear and loud how the Sahrawis are frustrated by how comfortable their rulers are feeling in their positions, and how they do not feel they are actually working towards a solution, anymore.

As I described in the introduction, Alcinda Honwana's term 'waithood' can be easily applicable to the Sahrawi youth. A youth in constant wait for adulthood, an adulthood that is understood as having a job, leaving your parents' house and creating a family. In the case of the Cubarawis, this youth is highly qualified and ready to create their future in the camps, but they do not find the infrastructures or the possibilities to do so. Most importantly, they do not find the political support they were expecting. To the lack of jobs, of money and of mobility within the Polisario government, the youth add the absence of a solution to their conflict; all together brings frustration. These frustrations lead to creative ways to express their political views and their disenchantment with the current state of affairs. Honwana's argument captures these situations well: "[Y]oung people in waithood are not inactively 'waiting' for their situation to change. Despite the challenges, youth in waithood are dynamic and using their creativity to invent new forms of being and interacting with society" (Honwana 2012:5).

In this section, I will illustrate this context of creativity and frustration by using several examples from my informants both in Cuba and in the refugee camps.

³⁹ '¡Que no! ¡Que no! ¡Que no nos representan!' is one of the most known slogans of the '*Indignados*' movement in Spain. This movement was created in response to the Spanish politicians' management of the financial crisis in the country, strongly rejecting unemployment, welfare cuts, Spanish politicians, and the current two-party system. This also includes the rejection of the rescue to the banks and the striking political corruption. The movement started on the 15th May 2011 and it later inspired other protests around the world. (Blakeley, 2012).

Time for outrage!⁴⁰

Abdul and Azim started arguing right away after I asked them about their government, on a lazy afternoon in Pinar del Río. It was too warm to be outside, so Hakim, Abdul, Azim and I were discussing politics in my room. After criticizing every Spanish President since the arrival of democracy in 1975, I decided it was time to talk about the Polisario as their government. Right after asking, I knew I had touched a nerve. "Polisario Front", specified Hakim, and Azim explained "We are all Polisario. Polisario is the movement. But the Polisario Front are those in government, and we don't agree with them". "We all are Polisario! We have to be united! The Polisario Front is our true representative!" said an exasperated Abdul, starting a discussion between him and Azim that would, for me, indicate the widespread disconnection between the Polisario Front and the youth. Even if Abdul was defending the Polisario Front tooth and nail, my stay in both Cuba and the camps would confirm that the great majority of the youth were of the opinion of Azim and Hakim. "They have gotten comfortable in their position and don't want to listen to the ideas of the youth" Baraka told me in another warm afternoon in my stark room.

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Once again, it would be at Cristina and Adel's where my questions would create a long debate, sometimes, like this evening, finishing in the wee hours of the night. "There is a hierarchy the youth is not part of" Daud would tell me. "The Polisario Front needs to see what the vision of the youth is" he would continue while all the others nodded in silence. Daud was very engaged politically, and he was very loquacious. "The Polisario Front has to let the youth interact with them, participate, but they don't want to listen". Daud had the idea that the youth should join together, debate, and give new ideas, new alternatives; choose a leader or leaders to talk with the government but, in Cuba, Adel assured me, that was not possible, at least, not since the events of 2007. The cousins, together with Said and Jawhar would recount what happened that year: because of the division between the students and the Polisario representatives in Cuba (mostly the Ambassador), due to the lack of freedom in choosing their studies, and the privileges certain students had in comparison with the rest, the former decided to demonstrate in front of the SADR Embassy in Havana. Participating in the demonstration were 21 students from all the provinces in Cuba, but their complaints were ignored and they were all sent back to the camps, without the possibility to finish their degrees. "That's why we

⁴⁰ 'Time for outrage!' is the title of a best-selling book by French diplomat, member of the French Resistance and concentration camp survivor Stéphane Hessel. The book has been praised for tapping into popular rage, and it inspired the name of the Spanish *Indignados* movement.

don't demonstrate anymore, we have been too long in Cuba, now. We don't want to be kicked out in our last year of university" Jawhar would justify, "but that doesn't mean we agree with the Polisario".

As is clear also from the quotes, frustration arose from the fact that they could not express their opinion publically -- if this was critical of Polisario -- as they feared being sent back to the camps before finishing their studies. But among each other and with me they freely expressed their disenchantment, insisting on the detachment of the old Polisario rulers towards the new generations. As with the case of criticizing the Cuban revolution, the Sahrawis encountered a frontstage and a backstage when publicly and actively criticizing the Polisario.

"15 years" Daud would answer without a doubt when I asked the group when they thought the conflict could be finally resolved. "It's not going to be us who gets independence", he would tell me, "but we will be the bridge for the next generation to get it". "Think about it", he would say, "if we, the youth, start moving now, those who are now children will see us, and they will be inspired by us and will want to continue with the movement, with the fight". The problem, according to all of them, was that people wanted solutions right now, because they considered they had already been waiting long enough, "and they don't realize they are the ones with the power to change everything", Daud would declare. Indeed, they all would agree, the power was in the hands of the youth as, they insisted, the 'old Polisario' was not going to do anything anymore. With this term they did not only mean that the dominant politicians in Polisario were old, but also that they did not represent the new youth, youth like them, youth in active waithood.

Back in the camps, Hassan would be very critical against the Polisario Front, while talking about his studies on governance in Europe "The term 'democracy' is ignored, in the Islamic countries", he said after comparing different democracies around the world According to him, the problem in the Middle Eastern countries is that their rulers assume that, once in power, they have full authority to change the laws, so they can rule until they die. "They don't understand they have to be re-elected by their people" and, even if the Polisario was a secular, socialist, modernist state-to-be, he claims that its government was following the same pattern. Hassan would criticize Abdul's thinking, shared by Daud and many others, that what they need right now is a one-party government, with one president, as they cannot be divided. "We have the same president with the excuse of being in an exceptional situation. But if they really

want a democratic state, they have to start by having open elections so people can know and learn what it means to be able to choose your government".

Hassan was in charge of the international relations at the UESARIO, the Sahrawi Students Union⁴¹, and he was visiting from Europe where he was, at the time pursuing a Masters degree. He spoke both English and German, and he could also understand Spanish. Even if he was living in Europe, he was usually out travelling, representing the Sahrawi youth in different conferences around the world. While back in the camps, he would always be working with international student organizations and, together with Khaled, Mared and the other members of the UESARIO, he would prepare more conferences, workshops and seminars both in the camps and abroad.

Taking Hassan as an example, I found the often well-educated and well-travelled members of the UESARIO to be those among the youth who were the most critical against the Polisario government, and many of its members had been studying in pro-revolution countries like neighboring Algeria or Cuba. Created in 1975 under the umbrella of the Youth Union (UJSARIO), the UESARIO separated from that organization in 2010, due to the large number of students and their active role in the camps. "The organization works in different areas" Mared would say in an informal meeting with some Italian engineers, where I was invited to stay and listen. The UESARIO, he explained, is active on a social level, developing projects towards the Sahrawi society, "with specific and direct participation of our members". They also work, he would continue, at a cultural level, in collaboration with international organizations. Lastly, they work at a political level, he went on, "fighting for the right to self-determination through peaceful channels. But there has been a change, this year: the students are considering taking up arms, not for their own will, but because of the need to get an end". Hearing this, the Italians opened their eyes, in shock, in the same way I opened mine the first time I heard this last sentence, the previous year. It seemed like an infallible way to get international attention, which they considered necessary in order to gain support. Another day, while trying to start our van for the umpteenth time, Mared would admit that he was of the opinion there was no other solution than going to war, and Rafiq, another UESARIO member, would strongly agree with him. "I cannot stand this anymore" Rafiq declared, clearly irate, while checking the bonnet of the van.

⁴¹ UESARIO stands for Unión de Estudiantes de SAgua el Hamra y Río de Oro, for its initials in Spanish

As I have shown in this section, a number of the youth is frustrated and outraged; they think that the Polisario Front is not representing them. Also lacking jobs and opportunities, they feel in a permanent status of 'waithood' which they want to change. For this reason they are starting to organize on their own, in light of what they understand as government inaction. Some are taking action by non-violence resistance, while others are of the opinion that only going back to war will bring a real change. In what follows, I will draw first upon the non-violent alternatives, with theories of peaceful resistance techniques. Later on, with analysis on armed struggle, I will show the other side of the coin, that group of youth that, as Mared, does not see any other solution than going to war. Waithood, then, comprises forms of creativity that go in various violent and non-violent directions.

Be the bridge you want to see in the youth

How can the Sahrawi cause be maintained if there is a division between its government and the youth? Is therefore this conflict doomed to perpetuation? Is the frustration of the youth, leading some to flee the camps, a debilitating sign for the Polisario Front movement? Based on the data collected during my fieldwork, I argue that, even if the Polisario Front and the youth are following different paths, both groups are working towards a solution of the conflict: the Polisario Front following the diplomatic way, and the youth, skeptical of that approach, following a path of more direct action. Focusing on the Cubarawi youth, I intend to describe in this section one of the most popular peaceful actions the youth is pursuing in order to make their cause known, the marches to the berm, organized by the 'Cries against the wall' movement. I will later touch upon non-violent resistance in the occupied territories with the voices of six activists visiting the camps during one of the marches.

In Taulbee (1973) we find the reasons behind those who defend non-violent resistance. The political scientist acknowledges that "for the small state there is no defense through military means against a well-equipped overpowering aggressor. The problems of conventional defense for the small state [are] not open to practical solution" (1973:55). The risk is not only the limited resources, but also "extremely narrow margin of safety in terms of both space and time" (*ibid.*). For this reason, these states may have three alternatives; either seeking protection of a larger state, making sacrifices to retain a certain autonomy or

preparing for non-violent defense (56). Focusing on the social level, not the state level, the majority of the Sahrawis are choosing non-violence as a means of defense.

Scott's concepts 'weapons of the weak' and 'everyday resistance' represent very well this idea of non-violent resistance. On his book about peasant resistance in a Malay village, the anthropologist defined everyday resistance as the "prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them" (1985:29). Even if the Sahrawi case is not that of the Malay, they find themselves in the same situation of struggle against a powerful and richer agent, Morocco. Therefore, using their waithood status actively, they perform everyday peaceful resistance in the form of "words, feints, and counterfeints, threats, a skirmish or two, and, above all, propaganda" (1985:22). Inside the propaganda, the young Sahrawi are using social media to promote support to 'the Sahrawi cause', but they are also creating and participating in international projects for this purpose. Some of those projects are the FiSahara Film Festival, a festival made for and from the Sahrawi, in the *wilaya* of Dakhla (coordinated between a Spanish NGO and the Sahrawi cinema school); 'Dales voz a las víctimas' ('Give voice to the victims'), created between a Cubarawi cinema photographer and a Spanish journalist in order to have a space for the victims of mines at the camps (with office in the *wilaya* of Boujdour, managed by my 'brother' Ismail); or the Sahara Marathon, run by an Italian and a Spanish organizations, to promote sport activities among Saharawi youth.

As Scott acknowledges, this everyday resistance may sometimes become more active (1985:31), and "at times of crisis or momentous political change, they may be complemented by other forms of struggle that are more opportune" (273). It is in this context of more active forms of struggle where we find the 'Cries against the wall' movement. Away from everyday conferences, contact with international actors and propaganda, this group, led by two Cubarawis, march by foot to the Moroccan berm dividing the occupied territories from the liberated areas to peacefully confront the Moroccan army and the MINURSO representatives that may appear in the area.

Gritos contra el muro

"The movement 'Gritos contra el muro' emerged in 2012" Faruq said. He was a Cubarawi who study in Matanzas (30kms from the famous resort Varadero) and back in the camps, he was the representative of the movement, as well as the deputy director at the cinema school.



Sahrawis marching to the berm, which can be seen at the end of the picture. Photo by the author (2013)

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It was a cold evening in the camps, and there had been a power outage, something I was already used to, at that point. Under the light of a flashlight, Faruq started explaining the story of *Gritos contra el muro* ('Cries against the wall' [i.e. the berm]). As my interlocutor told me, the idea originally came from the diaspora in Spain: Three young Sahrawis realized that one of their biggest problems was that a lot of people in Spain, but most importantly, in the camps did not exactly know what 'the berm' actually was. They understood this as a handicap in the fight for their cause, and decided to do something about it. They decided to organize as a movement, showing both in the camps and abroad what the berm is and what it represents. According to their website, the organization is

a youth movement that expects to reaffirm the unity of the Sahrawi youth through the exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge, as well as reclaim through action its right to live on its land; free, independent, without walls, without anti-personnel mines, without occupation, without exile (Plataforma *Gritos contra el muro marroquí*, 2012. In Spanish, my translation).

According to Faruq, this youth realized that the best way to show what the berm was, was to be in front of it and they therefore stage demonstrations to this effect. With a big representation of youth who returned from Cuba and from Algeria, they demonstrate in front of the Sahrawi part of the berm, the part that lies in the Liberated Territories at the end of every month. Faruq asserted that these demonstrations not only help to make the berm visible to the Sahrawis themselves, for which, together with Sidi Abdel, another Cubarawi, they have also built a miniature of the berm in Boujdour (photo below by the author, 2013).



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By inviting international media and visitors to their demonstrations, they also make the berm visible to them, as they did on the two occasions I joined them. Also, he said, those marches serve to provoke the Moroccans, as it happened in their first march, when Moroccan soldiers answered to their approach by firing warning shots –this happened during the first time I was in the camps, in December 2012. A group of Spanish young politicians joined the Sahrawis to this march, confirming the firing story when they came back- (UPyD 2013).

Tinker says that “the non-violent resister employs techniques calculated to *provoke* a response from the opponent which can be made to seem unjust or unfair –thus confirming the resister’s claims against the power structure” (1971:777). As Musa, a Cubarawi cinema photographer would tell me on my first visit to the berm, making the Moroccans nervous was part of the plan because, as I also heard previously in Cuba, the Sahrawis could not be the ones breaking the cease-fire. If the Sahrawis attacked the Moroccans, they would be internationally blamed for breaking peace. The tactic was, therefore, to provoke the Moroccans at the berm in order to make them react. Musa and others would tell me that their

intention was not to be shot by the Moroccan army, but to make them nervous and on guard every time the Sahrawis were in front of them.



Two Sahrawis approach the berm with a Sahrawi flag and balloons with the colors of this flag, during one of the marches to the berm. Photo by the author (2014)

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Such a line of thinking conforms to the strategies of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* as exposed by Tinker, as "in non-violence the resister makes no attempt to physically harm the opponent although he may be faced with a violent response" (1971:782), this means that the tactic is to "restructure the conflict situation so that the opponent is responsible for the resulting actions" (783).

"We always take a big *haima* with us, and stay there for three or four days" Faruq explained. "The first demonstration was on the 1st January 2013, and then we were not more than 50" but the number of participants increased with every demonstration, and by the time I joined them for the first time, on the 29th November 2013, we were already around 100 people, among Sahrawis and international participants. Two months later I took part in the march celebrating one year since the first one. By then, and due to the importance of the date, the number of participants had increased considerably, and the march even included speeches from Sahrawis and the international representatives from Spain, Algeria, Argentina, Norway and Denmark among other nations, under the big *haima*. The novelty this time was the

presence of a group of young activists from the occupied territories who, facing arrest and possibly torture on their way back, decided to participate on this multitudinous march. Indeed, as they would tell us in an informal meeting back in the camps, several of them had been repeatedly tortured and imprisoned at the hands of the Moroccan authorities, and all of them had systematic bureaucratic problems when accessing university, looking for a job or renting an apartment. It was therefore even more important for them, they would assert, to be in this march, as then they could be in direct contact with many international 'tourists', as well as with international student organizations and unions, young representatives of political parties (especially Spanish) and some international media, and they could tell first-hand how life in the occupied territories was.

This is a crucial point, I argue. In order to succeed in their resistance it is not enough with organizing mass actions but, as well, to be internationally visible, that means, making people outside of the camps and the occupied territories know about them and about the 'cause', so they can gain their support. With this actions then, the Sahrawis "will produce the international solidarity that will pressure Morocco and its supporters in the United Nations to change their policies towards the region" (Daan 2014:49). Because of the extremely limited media access into the occupied territories, mobilizing from the camps becomes crucial in order to also give voice to their families on the other side of the berm.

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Detail of the Moroccan wall. As part of an art project ('A flower for each mine'), red flowers can be seen throughout the berm. In the back, Moroccan soldiers guard the fort while keeping an eye on 'the visitors'. Photo taken by the author (2013)

Occupied stories

"We [will] rather let you die than letting you go back to the streets to be an activist", this was, according to one of the youth from the occupied territories, a sentence he heard all the time while in a secret Moroccan prison. It was late in the day, and we were all tired from the long day at the berm, but still I managed to convince the six activists from the occupied territories to tell us (a group of internationals at the camps) about their life in prison. Tortures, rape, beatings, no clothes in the winter and no food were commonplace for all of them while incarcerated. "I was locked up for 16 years" said the eldest of the two women. "For us women it can be even worse than for men". She was not only deprived of food, tortured and raped, but also deprived of clothes, "I spent five years with the same clothes", she told us with composure.

Their testimonies became harder as they encouraged each other to explain their experiences. As a researcher, I found myself with a certain responsibility towards what I was listening to. I was witnessing and hearing horrendous tales, and I did not consider it ethically correct to "emphasize a separation from subject to object", as Daniel and Knudsen state Western academic research tends to do (1995:162). I agree with the authors in that

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some of us believe there are no ethics in silence, that we bear a responsibility, that the subject we choose is not value-free, and that informants are not specimens for observation, analysis, and documentation to be classified, theorized and filed. A balance is possible and essential (ibid.).

Furthermore I concurred with Jiménez and Pacheco's position that

Being partial, which always assumes the taking of a stance, does not have to eliminate objectivity. It is absurd, as well as an aberration, to ask impartiality of those who study the problem of drug addiction, child abuse, or torture. What should be asked and required is that those phenomena be analyzed with all the rigor and with a total openness to the data given by reality. This means that objectivity is not the same thing as impartiality. But the axiological options, which lead to rejection of certain things and to desire others, must constitute a horizon which sheds light on our subject of study, not as something superfluously added, but as something intrinsic to the scientific, academic or professional activities themselves (1990:67).

In front of six Sahrawis who had suffered continuous torture, I could not avoid taking a stance. It was not possible for me to treat them only as objects of my study and therefore it

would not be fair to pretend I was impartial. For this reason, what follows is a descriptive passage of our meeting with them, letting them talk without any interpretations.

No toilets, prisons filled with scorpions and cobras, using bloody blankets from dead inmates. Maybe what shocked us the most was the testimony affirming that the Moroccan prison guards made sure someone's dead "by breaking their spine". Our astonished and disgusted faces contrasted with their serenity and collectedness.

They were two women and four men, one of them mentally challenged, and he was the one suffering the most on his everyday life. "If they see me in the streets, any day, they beat me and insult me. If I am going to visit my family, they beat me and throw me to the river", he explained. He also narrated how he was cut with razor blades during the two days of his imprisonment in relation to the incidents at Gdeim Izik.

"We are sure there will be retaliation when we are back from the camps. We are in their black list, and this visit just adds to it", one of them would confess while the others nod in agreement, "but the love for the motherland exceeds the fear to the enemy" he declared.

They acknowledged they were taking big risks, but they were necessary, they said, as they had the opportunity to talk to us internationals about it, both in this meeting and that morning at the berm. "International media and activists are very important for us", the youngest women said, as this gave them the opportunity to be spoken about, to be seen. They mentioned the Spanish actor Javier Bardem and his documentary 'Sons of the clouds' as an example of how international personalities can give voice to the conflict. "We live in a continuous Intifada⁴²", another of the activists asserted, in relation to the almost daily Sahrawi demonstrations at the Morocco-controlled area; therefore they try to be in constant contact with international journalists in the area, with the MINURSO representatives and with international student organizations.

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Spreading the word

In order to spread images of what happens in the occupied territories, these activists started, in 2013, their own news agency under the name of 'Equipe Media'. Using the social media, especially Facebook, as a tool for spreading news, the Sahrawi youth in the occupied Western Sahara are using their phones to record those everyday life human rights violations

⁴² 'Intifada' roughly translates into English as 'rebellion', 'resistance', 'uprising', 'civil disobedience'

they suffer and human rights organizations are continuously denouncing⁴³. “It is dangerous to run Equipe Media”, they told us, but it is necessary, they argued, because of the limitations from international media to enter into the area. According to the activists, they have to be the ones reporting the abuses, as they are happening on a daily basis, but also in order to involve the Sahrawis in their own defense and to get their commitment to ‘the cause’.

This again can be place as an everyday form of resistance, as the media are being used as “ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups” (Scott 1985:29). Scott also admits that, “even a failed revolt may achieve something: a few concessions from the state or landlords, a brief respite from new and painful relations of production and, not least, a memory of resistance and courage that may lie in wait for the future. Such gains, however, are uncertain, while the carnage, the repression, and the demoralization of defeat are all too certain and real” (*ibid.*). That memory of resistance is precisely what Daud meant with his metaphor of the bridge: by mobilizing now, they can inflict that memory of resistance and courage to the children, and that may bring their long awaited independence in the future.

But as Scott says, such gains are uncertain, and because of this uncertainty, other Sahrawis are shifting to armed struggle. Taulbee writes that “one may either renounce war, and so place himself at the mercy of those who care nothing for the values he treasures, or prepare himself for a war that might destroy these same values as well as mankind. The problem is how to resolve the dilemma without producing a catastrophe” (1973:42). In this section I have shown how some Sahrawis are trying to resolve those dilemmas by peaceful means. In the next section I will explain the other side of the coin.

Freedom must come

“We never attacked anyone, but we are constantly attacked, by Morocco and by the other countries who exploit our land” Mared said during our meeting with the Italian engineers. “We want to be peaceful, but things do not change, therefore we have to do what we do not want, to take up arms once more. Freedom must come”, he assured. Mared’s was the common argument to go back to war, and one I had been listening to numerous times since the first time I was in the camps in 2012.

⁴³ For footage from Equipe Media, visit the news agency’s website: <http://www.emsahara.com/>

According to Dudouet, both unarmed and armed protests have certain similarities worth mentioning: firstly, they are both collective political actions. Secondly, they are carried out by organized movements “representing an oppressed minority or disempowered majority, engaged in a struggle against the structural violence of the state –characterized for instance by an exclusionary regime or a foreign occupation army or administration”. Thirdly, they are non-institutional, operating outside the conventional political channels. (2013:402).

All these characteristics can be seen in the aforementioned non-violent resistance: collective, organized and non-institutional protests. But based on this categorization, and according to my fieldwork data, I argue that these characteristics cannot yet be seen in those who vouch for armed struggle. Even if, as mentioned earlier, speeches like that of Mared are increasingly being heard in the Sahrawi community, I argue that this option is far from being accomplished in a near future. Despite representing an oppressed minority engaged in a struggle against structural violence, those who want to take up arms are not yet organized as a movement acting collectively, like in the case of the marches, for example. Still, that they are not a majority does not mean it is not important to listen to their arguments, which also derive from the same frustration as those who follow peaceful resistance. In what follows I describe, with ethnographic material, the key arguments of this youth.

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free

“Look at Palestine, everybody knows where it is and what happens there” an informant told me. Some other Sahrawis around us would agree with him. They were in favor of going back to war, and Palestine was their example. They compared Morocco with Israel, “a country that has even helped Morocco with the building of the wall” one of them would say, to add credibility to their comparison. Why do people around the world know about the conflict between Palestine and Israel? According to the Sahrawis, because of the armed resistance the Palestinians are carrying out, meaning that as the reason and excuse to go back to armed struggle. “The media only cares about violence; they don’t care about us being peaceful. They want bombs, not flowers” one of them would tell me. Consequently they blame the media for not covering their plea, and the UN for not doing anything to solve the conflict, and for not rewarding the Sahrawis for their patience and peaceful struggle since the ceasefire. For this reason, this youth asserts that talking about a return to armed struggle is not rhetoric anymore (Smith 2005:555). “There is no other solution to the conflict but war” Rafiq told me, and he continued

Everything we have got has been conquered with arms –against Spain first, and against Mauritania and Morocco later-. The Sahrawis, as a nation, have shown themselves that they can do this. We are few and with limited resources, but the wish to go back to our land pushes us forward. We are sons of martyrs who have fought for the motherland, and that is what we have learnt from them. When you see that the previous generations have fought and died for your land, you can only follow their example. The incarceration of 25 Sahrawis condemned by a military court after the peaceful camp in Gdeim Izik⁴⁴ is one of the main arguments from the youth to return to arms because, they claim, peaceful demonstrations are not having any positive effect neither on Morocco nor on the UN, and in fact, it is only making their situation worse.

But, as mentioned earlier, although the support to taking up arms is increasing every year, this decision is widely criticized both by other youth and by Polisario representatives. In the next section I will show some of those critical voices, both in Cuba and from the camps.

I don't know how to use a weapon

Adel's father was visiting him in Cuba. He was a diplomat in Spain and had fought for the Polisario Front against Morocco until the ceasefire. Knowing about my research, he wanted to give me his view on the youth:

I do not see today's youth prepared for war. The youth of the past lost everything from one day to the next, and that made them willing to fight. They were boys from 16 and up, defending their territory, their integrity as a nation, their identity. They knew what they were losing. But today's youth is not ready.

His son, nephew and their friends agreed on this. Even if they all complete the compulsory military service once back in the camps, the diplomat was sure that they would not know how to use a gun. The youth agreed again, and Daud added "I don't know how to use a weapon. What am I going to do with it? I just hope that the Polisario is secretly preparing people for war".

⁴⁴ On the 9th of October 2010 a small group of Sahrawi civilians from occupied Western Sahara started a demonstration in Gdeim Izik, 15 kilometers from Laayoune, the capital of Western Sahara. They began setting up tents, from 34 tents at the beginning of the protest, to 6610 by the moment the Moroccans dismantled the demonstration, according to the UN (UN Security Council 2011:1). The Sahrawis were protesting against economic marginalization under Moroccan occupation. The protest quickly transformed into a violent clash between the Moroccan security forces and the protesters a month later (Mundy 2010:2).

Hakim expressed the same anti-war opinion some days later:

I do not want to go to war. War cannot be an alternative because we are not ready neither militarily nor individually. We do not have enough people or arms, but Morocco does. They have planes to fly over the berm, the Sahrawi do not. The Moroccans also have more advanced techniques, and more military personnel than all the Sahrawi population together.

Adel's father was of the same opinion as Hakim, about the poor military preparation of the Polisario: "Polisario is not militarily prepared" he said, "It could never do anything against Morocco".

Another institutional view, that of the Minister of Youth at the refugee camps, was supportive of a "war without arms", making the revolution through the society. He criticized the views of that youth willing to go to war. "For the youth, war is always a solution", he said. "But if we are already in peace, we cannot go back to war. War gave us certain results, but is it the only solution? Certainly the fastest for the youth, but not the best". Most importantly, he defended that a war in Africa would be internationally seen as "another conflict in Africa", and they would lose international support, especially from Algeria. "Algeria supports a liberation movement, but liberation without terrorism", he declared. "Algeria is not going to give us support for war", Rafiq's friend would also say, another evening at the camps. "All Sahrawis think [about going back to war] but for that, we need Algeria's support" he continued, emphasizing the lack of materials and resources of the Sahrawi.

"Those who want war are those who have not known it" Adel's father would declare.

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Conclusion: urged to radicalization?

The last FiSahara film festival was on April 2014. Due to the celebration, many international media were in the camps, reporting not only about the festival itself, but also about the conditions in the camps and the stalemate of the conflict. As suggested earlier, the presence of international media is crucial in order to give a clear message: if the UN does not make any progress in the resolution of the conflict, the Sahrawis are ready to take up arms. This was exactly the message of the Polisario Front's Prime Minister, Abdel Gader Taleb Omar on an interview with Spanish online newspaper Eldiario.es. "The Sahrawi are tired of waiting", answered the Prime Minister to the journalist's questions (Eldiario.es, 2014b). Outraged by

the last UN resolution on the 29th April 2014, where the MINURSO mission was again renewed without monitoring human rights violations, the Prime Minister warned "we hope for the UN to make progress, otherwise the Sahrawi must prepare to take up arms in 2015" (*ibid.*).

The same heard another journalist from the same newspaper some days earlier, this time from the youth. "What they took by force can only be retrieved by force" said a youngster called Mansour (*Eldiario.es*, 2014a). "We are desperate" he continued, "and desperation can give rise to desperate measures" (*ibid.*).

These statements remind me of the ones I heard the first time I went to the camps, when I firstly met this youth. Then I was convinced they really meant it and it was a matter of months before armed conflict started. That was two years ago, and I have been hearing the same sentences ever since. With this I do not mean that they are not serious about it. The youth is definitely frustrated and desperate, and support for violence is increasing by the year.

I suggest that, although serious about their desperation about the stalemate, the Sahrawis use the alternative of armed struggle as a way of getting attention from the international media. As mentioned earlier, the Polisario Front is not militarily prepared to confront Morocco, as they are a small state-in-the-making with no logistic neither resources to overcome a powerful aggressor (Taulbee 1973:55). The Sahrawi youth is not ready for battle either, as most of them admitted; the majority of them has only been in touch with weapons during their compulsory military service, and are not planning on being part of the Sahrawi army.

In the last chapter of my thesis I wanted to analyze how the youth is moving towards finding new solutions for the conflict on their own and away from the Polisario alternatives. Focusing on the Cubarawi youth, I showed how the informal nationalism employed by the Polisario has become cemented in the minds of the youth, and how the Cubarawis come back with ideas of revolution. Still, the youth feel disenchanted by the Polisario government, feeling frustrated. In this chapter I presented how the youth is channeling that frustration by engaging in their own political actions, both in the camps and outside, away from the Polisario Front principles.

I used Honwana's concept of 'waithood' to illustrate the active and creative result of that frustration, connecting it with Scott's concept 'weapons of the weak'. With those concepts I have presented how the youth is creating their own alternatives to the solution of the conflict, appealing to international solidarity by non-violent resistance techniques like the marches to the berm and the peaceful resistance in the occupied territories. Lastly, drawing on Dudouet's theories on armed and unarmed resistance as alternative methods of popular mobilization (2013), I use ethnographic examples to show how the idea of taking up arms is gaining strength among the frustrated and disenchanted youth, especially among those who study in countries with revolutionary ideas like Cuba and Algeria.

As I have proved during this last chapter, the youth is full of creativity and is using every mean possible to help their situation by non-violent resistance. Both in the camps and in the occupied territories, as well as from the diaspora, the youth is organizing and creating new channels of expression and action. Working with foreigners, creating projects in the camps, peacefully demonstrating in the occupied territories and using the media to give voice to their plea are their way to contribute to the solution of a conflict that has been ongoing for almost 40 years.

CONCLUSION

Como el Che. Como el Ouali⁴⁵

"Amargo como la vida, dulce como el amor, suave como la muerte"

Sahrawi tea ceremony⁴⁶

"We fight both for the Sahrawi cause and for the Cuban cause", Yusuff told me on a late morning in the camps. It was by the end of my fieldwork, and my tea preparation skills had improved greatly. Hadiya, my Sahrawi mother, was in a wedding, and Amani, my sister was with the neighbors. Yusuff embodied all the characteristics of a Cubarawi: he loved dancing, being with girls, drinking, partying and not having to work. He did not consider himself religious, or rather, Muslim. He did consider Fidel as his God. He loved to talk about the Cuban revolution, the Cuban heroes and the Cuban women. At the same time, he did come back to the camps because he felt he had to, he owed it to his compatriots, but he did not feel represented by the Polisario government. As many others, he thought the Polisario needed new faces, new alternatives and new ways of dealing with the youth.

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My aim in this thesis has been to present and analyze this youth. A generation born and raised in the refugee camps in Tindouf, living a life of waiting. A youth that, thanks to external economic aid, is able to study in Cuba, gaining an education that will influence their view on the Sahrawi conflict, as well as on themselves. During this thesis I have argued that long-term residence in Cuba has shaped the personhood, minds and actions of this youth. I have placed an important weight on 'ideology', a concept that I have understood in a Gramscian way. In this sense, 'ideology' has been understood as a hegemonic world view which suppresses any other ways of explaining reality (Bates, 1975). This definition, I argue, is essential in understanding the political ideology of both the Cuban and the Polisario governments.

In order to back my argument, I have used different analytical concepts, each referring to and helping analyze various aspects of my ethnographic material, including personhood,

⁴⁵ 'As el Che. As el Ouali' is how Faruq ended a conversation about the Cubarawi youth fighting as both the Argentinian/Cuban and the Sahrawi 'heroes'.

⁴⁶ The Sahrawi tea ceremony has three rounds. The first tea is quite bitter ('bitter as life'), the second tea is very sweet ('sweet as love') and the third is sweeter than the first, but milder than the second ('gentle as death').

cultural identity, memory and politics. As reflected throughout, several terminologies were necessary in order to capture, explore and expose the complexity of being a Cubarawi, as this particular configuration or hybridization of being simultaneously Sahrawi and Cuban is a cross-cutting subject. It has been the aim of this thesis that such a plurality of analytical angles show a more holistic and complete idea of what it means to be a 'Cubarawi'. Let me specify and exemplify:

To understand why the Cubarawis keep their Cuban identity alive in the camps, I used Hall's definition of identity as a continuous process of becoming (Hall, 1996), supported by Ortiz's notion of 'transculturation' (Ortiz, 2001) and Turner's perspective of being 'betwixt and between' (Lessa and Vogt, 1979). Using the approaches of Hall, Ortiz and Turner I showed how their time in Cuba created a collective identity that is now part of their ongoing constructed identity: the Cubarawi identity. Because of what they feel as their moral duty -- what Eriksen calls 'informal nationalism' (Eriksen, 1993) implemented by the government-- they decide to go back to the camps. But because of their newly acquired Cubarawi identity, they feel they are in a liminal stage where they are not fully Sahrawi, but neither fully Cuban, which makes them see themselves as out of place in the camps. For this reason, they create a piece of Cuba in Tindouf, recalling their time in the island and the fond memories from that period -- a process Müller calls 'memories of paradise' (Müller, 2010).

As shown in this thesis, the reason they are sent to Cuba, in the first place, is to get a higher university degree that they cannot achieve at the camps, as there is a lack of higher learning institutions and general logistical support for this there. In this thesis I have argued that the students in this sense are mere instruments for the collective nation, as it rests with the Polisario to choose the studies of the Cubarawis (Fiddian-Qasmiyah, 2010). This studies are subjected to the 'nation's needs', which means that certain subjects are prioritized, like Medicine and Education. This utilization of the students as instruments for the 'common good' makes some students unhappy, as they cannot study what they would like. At the same time, this fact also highlights certain privileges of students related to the Polisario leaders. Using Boissevain's concept of 'patronage' (Boissevain 1966), I have shown how some students have an advantageous position in Cuba because of who they are related to back in the camps, which allows them to study subjects considered more prestigious. However, my research also shows that education does not serve only to instrumentalize the youth towards the Sahrawi nation but it also helps them embody the Cuban ideology, embedded in this education. Using Bourdieu's 'habitus' I have shown how the social practices of Cuba are

internalized and embodied by the Sahrawis, making Cuban practices their own (Navarro, 2006).

This subject -- the shaping of the minds and actions of the Sahrawi -- is what I have been dealing with as the thesis progresses. After situating Cuba in the context of South-South cooperation (Blunden, 2008; Gonzales, 2000), I argued that, with an education embedded within the socialist, patriotic, anti-colonial agenda, the students socialize into this message. I have supported this argument through the use of Johnson's exploration of the relationship between education and the state (Johnson, 1982), as well as through Durkheim's educational sociology (Ottaway, 1955). I have also indicated that it is not only Cuba who is shaping the Cubarawis' minds, but the Polisario front as well. As Fiddian-Qasmiyah (2011) also points out, the SADR selects the language and content of the curriculum of those students in Cuba, according to the needs of the nation. Therefore, the ideological and political agenda of both Cuba and the Polisario Front are shaping, limiting and controlling the education of the Cubarawis.

However, the control of the education goes beyond the contents of the curriculum, as I have shown with the description of the University Students Federation (FEU). Using the arguments of Aguirre about the formal and informal systems of social control implemented in Cuba (Aguirre, 2002) I have shown how the FEU gives educational, political and social advantages to those students who affiliate to their list, creating internal hierarchies and controlling the students. I supported this argument with Goffman's dramaturgy of social interactions (Cook, 2008), showing how this social control forces people to have two stages of interaction and how those stages can be read differently from each other. Using different means of social and educational control, as well as manipulation in the content of the subjects, the Sahrawi and the Cuban governments have tried to assure a one-way mentality among their students.

Lastly, when dealing with the political involvement of the Sahrawi youth, and the Cubarawis in particular, I have shown how the disconnection between the Polisario and the youth brings along frustration and disenchantment. Even if informal nationalism, as I pointed out above, has made an imprint on the minds of the youth, this one feels frustrated by what they understand as the Polisario do-nothing policy. Out of this frustration, the youth is moving towards new alternatives for solving the Sahrawi conflict on their own way and away from the Polisario alternatives. Using Honwana's concept of 'waithood' (Honwana, 2012), I have

shown how the youth is channeling that frustration with active and creative alternatives. Combining Honwana's notion of 'waithood' with Scott's 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985) I have mapped and analyzed several ideas of non-violent resistance -- both in the camps and in the occupied territories. Drawing on Dudouet's theories of armed and unarmed resistance (Dudouet, 2013), I have also given voice to that part of the youth who is ready to take up arms in order to fight for a solution to their conflict, at the same time that I have shown how this idea is gaining strength among the frustrated youth.

All these theoretical and analytical concepts were used to support the ethnographic examples from my 5 months multi-sited fieldwork between Cuba and the refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria).

There are, of course, a number of other ways this material could have been approached and analyzed. These include a stronger emphasis on, for instance, gender, south-south cooperation or religion. Gender, south-south cooperation and religion are certainly important concepts, and that is why I decided to include them in my thesis to support my main arguments. However, because of limited space, I decided to give these concepts secondary relevance to my project, and chose to narrow the scope of my thesis to the theories and concepts I finally used.

Finally, I would like to see my thesis and this research project as a contribution to the little studied state of perpetual becoming, active waithood and permanent limbo vast sections of the current youth finds itself in, in many regions in the world. As the recent example of the Arab Spring can show us, the youth has active and creative mechanisms to develop its political aspirations, when found in in-between states (childhood/adulthood, for example). Because of globalization, many youngsters find themselves moving in between cultures or in between domains of influence that make them transcultural subjects. This inbetween-ness -- and often one intensified by processes of transculturation -- puts them in an ambivalent relation towards their own initial identity, where Academia has to put more focus on. By placing this transculturation and permanent becoming within the context of South-South cooperation -- an alterglobalization of sorts -- my project has sought to contribute to the understanding of many cross-cutting issues relevant to transcultural youth. These issues should be developed further in other ethnographic contexts around the globe.



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Young Sahrawis in active waithood. March to the berm in January 2014. Photo by the author

Appendices

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Maps

MINURSO MAP OF WESTERN SAHARA 2014



UNITED NATIONS. Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section. Map No. 3691 Rev. 73 (2014)

MAP OF CUBA



Map from the United States Central Intelligence Agency - CIA World Factbook: Cuba.

MAP OF CUBA: PINAR DEL RÍO PROVINCE



Map from the Cuban Tourist information in Mexico, 2013

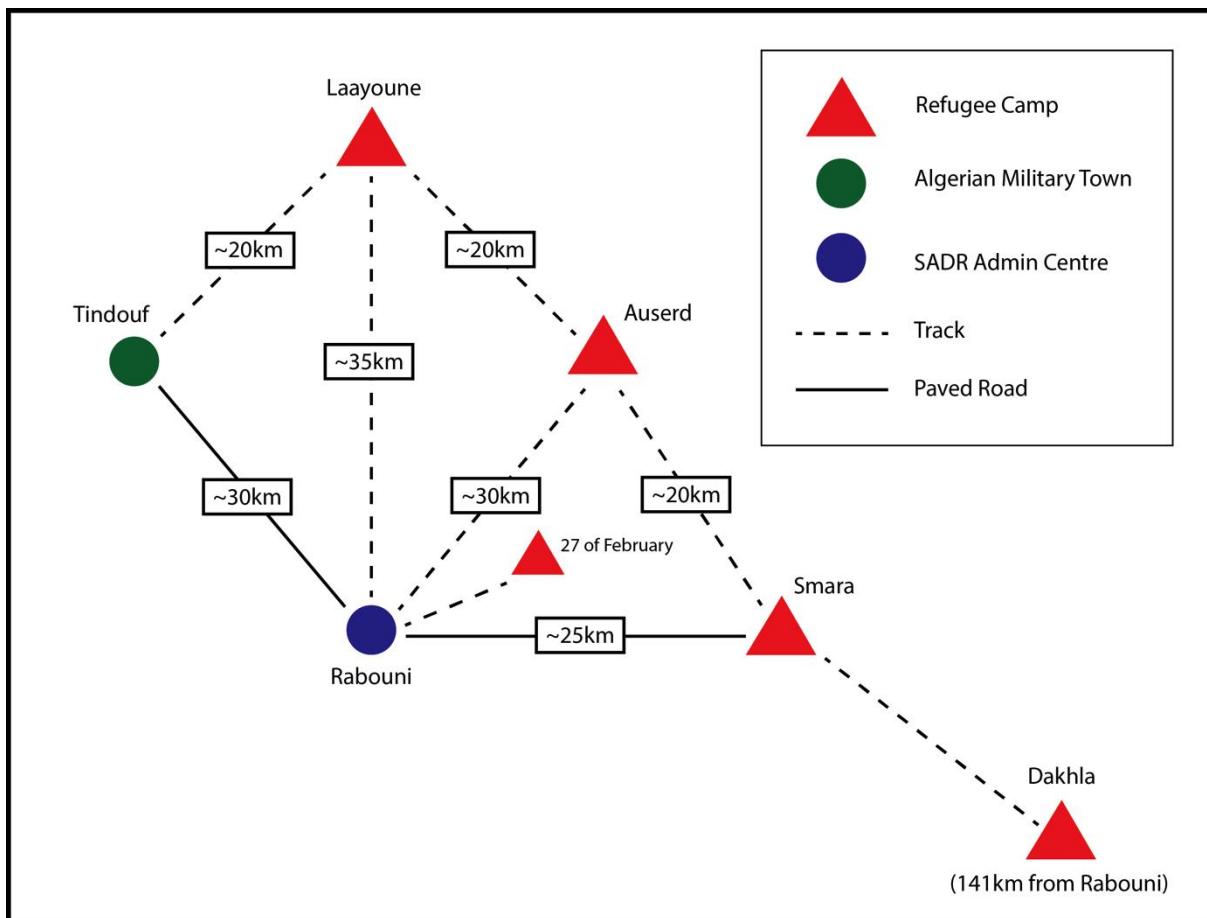
Graphics

MAP OF WESTERN SAHARA: MOROCCAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES



Historical graphic description of the Sahrawi/Moroccan conflict from the War Museum in the wilaya Rabouni, at the refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria). Inside the green box it says: «What the world DOES NOT SEE, what Morocco DOES NOT WANT TO BE SEEN, what the government of Spain DOES NOT WANT TO SEE, what the United Nations STOPPED SEEING, what a free citizen MUST SEE». Photo by the author (2014)

GEOGRAPHIC DISPOSITION OF SAHRAWI REFUGEE CAMPS IN ALGERIA



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Graphic by Colin Bent (2014)

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