Chapter 4. To make a living

> "[…] somos como una fantasía sexual, dentro del mundo de la mujer."
> *(Paquita 2003, sex worker)*[1]

This chapter explores the ways the trans experience of my interlocutors influenced their possibilities and capabilities of making a living. Because in our 'western' societies formal education and employment situation are important areas of life and influence how we earn a livelihood (although not the only ones), I start with these two topics to unveil both obstacles and achievements. However, in focussing on the labour market, this chapter spans more than just the circumstances of employment. To earn a living is connected to a broad array of aspects of life. That is why, although starting with the work situations of my informants, this chapter goes beyond. It reflects, in short, finding one's way around. Furthermore, the time span of several years between my two data collection periods allows for a comparison of the *then* and *now* of my interlocutors, of imaginations of the future and the reality the years brought along.

4.1 The work situation as a challenge

A survey done by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) showed that trans people experience a disproportionate degree of discrimination in the environments of school and the workplace (bullying and negative reactions in school because of their gender expression or identity; discrimination just because they are trans when looking for a job or discrimination at work) (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014). Many of the statements of my interlocutors in Andalusia reflect these findings. Imelda sums it up:

> "[…] nosotras desgraciadamente para el trabajo lo tenemos muy mal. Tú vas con tu currículum a donde sea, y a ti todo el mundo no te coge, es muy difí-

1 "[…] we are like a sexual fantasy within the world of women." (Paquita 2003, sex worker)

> cil que tengas un trabajo corriente, muy difícil. Nos dejan muy poco camino." (Imelda, 2003)[2]

The majority of my informants did not have regular jobs. Several were jobless. Lora did some volunteer work. Hardly any of my interlocutors who pursued further education earned their living in the corresponding work environment. Except for Diego, who had a degree in psychology. His mother was a medical doctor and Diego stated that he was lucky to obtain a space in her office where he advises trans people and their relatives.

In their quantitative study with trans people in Spain, Dominguez Fuentes et al. (2011) discovered that the participants attributed their unemployment predominantly to their transsexuality. Nowadays however, the difficulties finding a job which will earn an adequate living are not limited to marginalised groups or people with little formal education. As Schwaller shows, the current generation of highly educated young people in Spain are confronted with a generally precarious job situation – a situation not experienced to the same extent by their parents' generation (Schwaller 2019). The economic crisis that hit Spain in 2008 led, among others, to a dramatic rise in unemployment, with a peak in 2013. Around 26 percent of the population of working age were unemployed (almost 56 percent of those were under the age of 25). In Andalusia, the unemployment rate was even higher: over 36 percent of the working age population were affected, with 66 percent of those under the age of 25 (the latter was one of the highest in the European Union) (Eurostat 2018). Thus, in this already difficult labour market situation, people with all kinds of backgrounds are affected. However, the accounts of some of my interlocutors revealed that their gender non-conformity added a crucial obstacle, impacting their lives as early as during school time, and influencing decisions about further training/education, work aspirations, potential career, job opportunities or job choices.

4.2 School and education

Among my interlocutors, education ranges from not having finished compulsory school to having a university degree. Several of my informants talked about not being motivated to go to school, which they attributed to their difficulties with bonding with peers and their being different, and hence, not being accepted because of their gender confusion. Tamara, whose school years date back to the dictatorship of Franco, is explicit in her disliking school and feeling uncomfortable:

2 "Unfortunately, it's very hard for us to find work. Wherever you go with your CV, they won't take you. It's very difficult to get an ordinary job. They leave us very few possibilities." (Imelda, 2003)

> "Oh verdad la escuela me da problemas porque yo era diferente, yo era diferente. A mí no me gustaba jugar a los juegos de chico, a mí me gustaba jugar a los juegos de chica, y eso por… y sobre todo en España que la educación antes era más … más conservadora, y más clasista, más racista, por la gente te margina, se, te mete contigo los niños. Se sufre … se sufre porque tú sabes, que están diciendo que eres un chico, pero tú por dentro te sientes una chica. Y se sufre." (Tamara, 2003)[3]

The discomfort a trans person experiences in school for not being respected and treated accordingly, is one societal obstacle that, according to Tamara, disadvantages a lot of trans people in their professional training, and, as a consequence, has an impact on their social position and cultural capital, which she judges as rather low:

> Tamara: "Te puedo decir que también que digamos el nivel cultural de las transexuales pues más bien es un nivel bajo. Y yo creo que hay que profundizar porque, porque porque … a tener problemas nosotras en la escuela, los colegios, se abandonó los colegios, no porque seamos torpe sino porque te cansa, te te …. te te trata tan, tan, digamos … inaguantable que no es cómodo, no es un ambiente, digamos, de relajación …"
> Christoph: "¿… a causa de los alumnos?"
> Tamara: "… a causa de los alumnos, de la familia, del entorno … porque no vamos a ser todas torpe, pero el hecho real, el hecho real, que todas … al tener poco … poco estudio pues son de un extracto social más bien bajo ¿no?" (Tamara, 2003)[4]

The lack of formal education, along with familial and societal rejection and no possibility to find 'decent' employment were commonly perceived as the reasons trans people entered into sex work or cabaret to earn their living – a situation, which, according to Mar, speaking in her position as the president of the ATA, the trans community has managed to alter in the last few years:

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3 "Oh the truth is, school gave me problems because I was different, I was different. I didn't like playing boys' games, I liked playing girls' games, and that's why … and especially in Spain where education used to be more … more conservative, and more classist, more racist, because of the people who exclude you, the children mess with you. One suffers … one suffers because you know that they are saying that you are a boy, but inside you feel like a girl. And one suffers." (Tamara, 2003)

4 Tamara: "I can tell you that, let's say that the cultural level of transsexuals is rather low. And I think we need to go deeper because, because … we, have problems in school, in college, one quits college, not because we're clumsy, but because it tires you, it … they treat you so, so, let's say … unbearably that it's not comfortable, it's not a relaxing environment".
Christoph: "Because of the pupils?"
Tamara: "Because of the pupils, the family, the surrounding environment … because we are not all going to be clumsy, but the fact is that all … in having little education … they are from a rather low social class. Right?" (Tamara, 2003)

> "¿Qué cambió? Pues bueno cambió en que hoy la juventud está en las escuelas, hoy los padres tienen más información con lo cual no hay un rechazo familiar tan grande como había hace veinte o treinta años atrás, donde las personas transexuales casi todas tenían que sufrir un desarraigo familiar. Tenían que salir de sus casas, dejar los estudios, eh, eh, enfrentarse a (lengthened) para supervivir, sobre todo las mujeres transexuales pues a la prostitución o (lengthened) al espectáculo. Hoy ese paradigma ha cambiado. Hoy la juventud está en las universidades, está en los institutos, hoy los padres no echan de su casa a sus hijos, sí no al revés luchan junto a sus hijos para que las leyes cambien y sus hijos no sean discriminados. Eso hemos cambiado." (Mar, president of the ATA, 2013)[5]

Nevertheless, and especially in the non-academic sector or public service, she still observes a lot of prejudice against trans people. This prevents employment and might explain why Magdalena, who completed her studies in social work *(asistencia social)* and whom I located during my second research period when she was working at the reception desk of a tourist hot spot in Seville (thus, in the public sector), was very careful about not disclosing anything from her sex/gender past at her work place. When I met Magdalena in 2003, she was on the UTIG's waiting list for the last step in her sex reassignment process, the vaginoplasty, which she finally underwent in 2007. Like a new birthday, she remembers the exact date and time when she was brought into the surgery room: "El treinta de enero. A las nueve y cuarto de la mañana. Entré en el quirófano." (Magdalena, 2015)[6]

In the meantime, she has had all her documents changed, and she emphasises that only her close friends and family know where she works: "Hoy yo por ejemplo casi nadie sabe dónde yo trabajo. Tengo mucho cuidado con que la gente sepa donde yo trabajo." (Magdalena, 2015)[7]

In having chosen this strategy, she is trying to prevent someone from stepping in from the past and revealing her former life. In the workplace, neither her superior nor her colleagues know about her gender reassignment. For Magdalena,

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5 "What changed? Well, it changed that nowadays young people stay in school, the parents have more information so there is no family rejection as big as there was twenty or thirty years ago, where transsexual people almost all had to suffer a family uprooting. They had to leave their homes, leave school, uh, in order to survive, especially transsexual women to prostitution or entertainment. Today that paradigm has changed. Today the youth are at universities, at learning centres, today the parents do not throw their children out of their homes, but the other way around, they fight together with their children so that the laws change and their children are not discriminated against. That is what we have changed." (Mar, president of the ATA, 2013)

6 "On the thirtieth of January. At a quarter past nine in the morning. I entered the surgery room." (Magdalena, 2015)

7 "Today, hardly anyone knows where I work. I am very careful which people know where I work." (Magdalena, 2015)

a disclosure in the workplace seems impossible and she thinks that it would definitely be a reason for dismissal. It is a public service job, she observes: "Pues es un trabajo de la pública." (Magdalena, 2015)[8]

Despite the structural discriminations anticipated by some of my research partners, another trans woman, Carmina, notes a general improvement in the situation of trans persons. Carmina grew up during the dictatorship of Franco. Her family belonged to the aristocratic class in Spain. Her father (with whom she had a difficult relationship) held powerful positions in the Franco regime, and never accepted his 'son's' non-conforming gender behaviour. Carmina attributes the perceived improvements trans persons are experiencing today to the work undertaken by the ATA, improved legislation (which makes it easier to have documentation changed), and easier access to medical assistance and advances in technology. In her perception, all these factors have contributed to a decline in social rejection, so that the younger generation does not have to endure the hard times of her generation: "Las niñas de ahora lo tienen muy fácil." (Carmina, 2015)[9]

This, in turn, will benefit the trans community, because with a better education and formal skills, she expects them to be more influential at political and societal levels: "Además hay niñas más listas. Hay de niñas que te hagan la universidad que son muy listas ¿eh? Y van a ser grandes luchadoras." (Carmina, 2015)[10]

How liberating it can be not to have to hide anymore at school becomes obvious in Bittor's account. He had a severe crisis in college that forced him to go to hospital for a medical examination. His school performance dropped. Only when he was able to open up about his gender non-conformity in his social environment, and started to express openly the sex and gender he always wanted, could he begin to concentrate on his future. In Bittor's narrative the disclosure emerges as a success-story; he made up for the missed examinations, got his driving licence, started his university studies: "Fue como aquí estoy yo y ahora me siento bien de verdad. […]. Y he seguido pa'lante pa'lante pa'lante." (Bittor, 2015)[11]

However, before being allowed to officially change his documents, his father mentioned that Bittor was still having a bad time at the university, because some teachers called him by his female name, even though the hormones had made him look manly: "Él, un hombre, pelo corto, barba, y decían Carmen." (Bittor's father, 2015)[12]

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8 "Well, it is a job in the public sector." (Magdalena, 2015)

9 "The girls today have it very easy". (Carmina, 2015)

10 "Besides, there are smarter girls. There are girls who go to university, who are very clever, eh? And they will be big fighters." (Carmina, 2015)

11 "It was like, here I am, and now I feel really good. […] And I've gone on forwards, forwards, and forwards." (Bittor, 2015)

12 "He, a man, short hair, beard, and they said, Carmen." (Bittor's father, 2015)

Although they informed the faculty about this issue, some did not manage to call Bittor by his male name. Looking back, Bittor seemed to take this inability of some teachers to address him in the masculine form better than his father did. Bittor did not judge it as transphobic. He even excused it by guessing that they were uninformed and did not do it intentionally. This tolerance might be explained by the fact that apart from that, he felt generally accepted: the professors spoke with him normally, nor did he think he was treated unfairly. People knew about him, saw his physical changes, heard the deepening of his voice:

> "No tenía problema ninguno. Solo los profesores que (lengthened) algún no me cambiaba el nombre, pero digo bueno. […] Tenía buen rollo con todo el mundo, y sí … con muchísimos amigos, muchos compañeros, y no tenía ningún problema con eso." (Bittor, 2015)[13]

(For a more detailed case description of Bittor, see Chapter 5).

The mechanisms of exclusion presented so far illustrate that discrimination appears in a variety of forms. Tamara, while reflecting about Andalusian society and machismo, addressed another subtle form of discrimination not mentioned yet. Discrimination is often not violent, but emerges as uttered pity and contempt:

> "No hay una reacción muy violenta, no, no. La gente de aquí, pues, digamos hay una sensación bajo terminus equivocos. Por ejemplo un poco, digamos peyorativo, también por pena, te compara un poco como si tú fueras una enfermedad … '¡Pobrecito …!', peor que ha nacido invalido, peor que ha nacido cojo." (Tamara, 2003)[14]

4.3 The tenacity of stereotypes

As already mentioned, the ways my interlocutors earned their living turned out to be manifold. However, especially during my first field research trip, the image of the trans person as a male-to-female individual doing sex work or working in cabarets out of necessity, seemed somehow to be difficult to erase from the public consciousness. Anabel holds a Master's in Psychology, but was earning her living as a mason the first time I met her. She addressed this dominant stereotyping while

13 "I had no problem at all. Only the teachers who (lengthened), some wouldn't change my name, but I mean, well. […] I had good vibes with everybody, and yes, with a lot of friends, a lot of companions, and I had no problem with that." (Bittor, 2015)

14 "There is no very violent reaction, no, no. The people here, well, let's say, there is a feeling under the wrong terms. For example, a little, let's say deprecatingly, also for pity, they compare you a little bit as if you were an illness … Poor one! Worse than being born handicapped, worse than being born lame." (Tamara, 2003)

we were speaking about her relationship with her work colleagues. In her case, this stereotyping did not happen, which she attributed to her behaviour:

> "La relación con los compañeros es buena. Es buena porque, yo me veo … o sea yo no (lengthened) soy (lengthened) tampoco un … la típica transexual que se imagina mucha gente ¿no? Que son las más llamativas. Las que aparecen en la televisión haciendo espectáculo. Yo no sé bailar. Yo no sé cantar. Entonces, no voy a salir en la tele, así ¿no? Las transexuales que se imagina la gente, o son prostitutas o son folclóricas, o … o hacen algo de espectáculo. Estríper o … Entonces si tú te comportas como una persona, a ti te tratan como una persona." (Anabel, 2003) [15]

However, concerning her professional career, the personal and societal obstacles her sex/gender non-conformity brought along had their impact by keeping her from a career as a psychologist. Actually, she would have liked to do something with her Master in Psychology. On one occasion, she mentioned intending to continue training in the direction of psychotherapy. Yet, self-entangled in questions of sex/gender identity expression, and having gone through a phase of hard drugs, she expected not to be accepted due to the fact that in those days she was psychologically unstable. Furthermore, feeling responsible for her own family (wife and daughter), the necessity to earn money was more pressing than pursuing a career. However, she did not want to earn her money in the above-mentioned sectors (sex work or cabaret) "que se imagina la gente" ("that people imagine"). Although she concludes that that would have been easier:

> "Mis objetivos vitales digamos son otros. Yo he estudiado una carrera para algo. Y he estudiado una carrera que me gusta, y quiero ejercer esa carrera, ¿no? Mientras más se aproxime mi trabajo a eso, mejor. Entonces, aunque … yo estoy trabajando ahora los albañiles porque me hace falta dinero. Pero solo por eso. Si no … Si tuviera vivir sin dinero, no … no trabajaría los albañiles y, y me hubiera permitido más tiempo buscando otro trabajo por otro sitio. Pero llega el momento en que ya hay un mes que no puedes, que no tienes dinero, y ese mes te hace falta. Entonces, acudes a lo que hay, a lo que te salga. Y, bueno. Sé que hay otros trabajos más fáciles por ahí. Seguramente a lo mejor haciendo estriptis, lo hubiera encontrado antes el trabajo en algún club de alterne. Pero que yo eso

15 "I have a good relationship with my colleagues. It is good because I see myself … I am neither a … the typical transsexual that many people imagine, right? Who are the most eye-catching. The ones who appear on TV doing shows. I can't dance. I can't sing. So, I'm not going to be on TV like that, am I? The transsexuals people imagine are either prostitutes or folkloristic, or do shows. Strippers or … So, if you behave like a person, you're treated like a person." (Anabel, 2003)

> no quiero yo … antes prefiero limpiar en las casas o, o ir de limpiadora, alguna oficina o …" (Anabel, 2003)[16]

4.4 Sex work

Anabel mentions that there would have been easier ways to earn a living, for example *"haciendo estriptis"* ("doing stripping"), thus, using her body according to common stereotypes about the typical work possibilities for trans people. She is not the only one of my interlocutors who considered the sexually connoted investment of her body as an easy *(fácil)* way to earn a living. For example, Tamara, who used to do sex work but later left this business to open a shop, considers sex work to be the easiest and fastest way to earn money. When I met her in 2003, she guessed that the majority of trans persons worked in this field:

> "Yo creo que la prostitución es porque, digamos es la salida más fácil que tenemos las transexuales para poder ganar dinero, y para poder ayudarte a tu transformación, porque todo es costoso, ¿no? pues, ponerte un implante de pecho, si tienes que hacerte alguna modificación de ganar y en fin … de varias cosas. Esto cuesta dinero y como se va a dinero fácilmente, pues en la prostitución. También te diría yo que digamos, yo estoy hablando no de un modo científico, porque no hay estadística elaborada de ello, pero te puedo decir bueno pues que a lo mejor de hay un ochenta o un poco más por ciento de las transexuales se dedica a la prostitución." (Tamara, 2003)[17]

Tamara estimates that a high percentage of trans people engage in sex work. In the meantime, the quantitative study by Dominguez Fuentes et al. (2011) provided

16 "I have, let's say, other life goals. I have studied a career for something. And I've studied a career I like, and I want to pursue that career, don't I? The closer my work gets to that, the better. Even though … I'm working as a bricklayer now because I need money. But only for that. If I didn't … If I didn't need money to live, I wouldn't work as a bricklayer, and I would have allowed myself more time looking for another job somewhere else. But there comes a time when there is a month that you don't have money, and you need that money. So, you go to what's out there, what comes out. And, well. I know there are other easier jobs out there. Surely maybe doing stripping, I would have found in some hostess bar. But that, I do not want … before, I prefer to clean houses, being a cleaner, in some office or …" (Anabel, 2003)

17 "I think prostitution is, let's say, it's the easiest way for transsexuals to earn money, to help you in your transformation, because everything is expensive, isn't it? To get a chest implant, if you have to make some modification, in short … of several things. This costs money, and how is it easy to get money? Well, in prostitution. I would also say, I'm not talking in a scientific way, because there are no statistics elaborated on it, but I can tell you there are maybe eighty or a little more percent of transsexuals engaged in prostitution." (Tamara, 2003)

some figures. Of the 153 trans persons who participated in their survey, almost half of them (48.2%) have been working in the sex trade.

Upon inquiring why she considers sex work as easy *(fácil)*, Tamara differentiated between *fácil* (easy) and *sencillo* (simple), which relativised the 'easiness' of earning money as a sex worker: "Es un camino fácil. No sencillo, pero fácil, ¿no? ¡Es fácil! Porque se gana dinero fácilmente … rápido, rápido." (Tamara, 2003)[18]

She also considered it to be easier, because in doing sex work, trans people met the expectations of society. Her argumentation goes that transsexual sex workers conform to societal expectations, and do not confront them. She, herself, who did not practise sex work anymore, who managed a shop in the centre of town, and who was living with her boyfriend when I met her in 2003, sees herself as someone who is more in confrontation with society:

> "Yo quizás he elegido un camino más de confrontación con la sociedad, porque he querido vivir con una persona normal, entre comillas. […] He querido ejercer un trabajo normal y demostrar a la gente que mi conducta sexual no tiene nada que ver para mis posibilidades profesionales." (Tamara, 2003)[19]

Between my two stints of field research, the transsexual sex work scene in Seville changed dramatically. This was principally due to urban planning, gentrification processes, a real estate boom (until the financial crisis), and immigration. In 2003 there used to be mainly two places in town where sex work was performed: in the Alameda, a neighbourhood in the historic centre, and in Nervión, a neighbourhood further away from the town centre. In the Alameda, transsexual sex workers offered their services mainly inside a house. (By the way, it is not always about sex, some clients just want to talk). They waited for their clients in the street or near a house entrance where (as I was told) they rented rooms from elder women. When I asked Paquita and Blanca (both working as sex workers in this neighbourhood) how it works, they pointed to a corner house:

> "Pues, aquí, esta es una casa … donde se alquilan habitaciones. […] Y la señora alquila habitaciones y tú pues te quedas en la puerta y hablas con los señores … les propones que si quiere algún servicio, y él que quiere pues entras para dentro y ya pues tú hablas del precio y ya pues … llegas a un acuerdo y entras ahí a

18 "It's an easy road. Not simple, but easy, right? It's easy! Because you earn money easily … fast, fast." (Tamara, 2003)

19 "Perhaps I have chosen a more confrontational path with society, because I wanted to live with a normal person, in quotation marks. […]. I wanted to do a normal job and show people that my sexual behaviour has nothing to do with my professional possibilities." (Tamara, 2003)

> dentro, alquilas una habitación, estás ahí dentro y después ya el señor se marcha." (Paquita, 2003)[20]

Although not yet visible at this time, the gentrification process that 'was cleaning up' the neighbourhood, had already begun. On my second field trip in 2015, there was hardly any sex work going on in this area of town, which Valentín described in 2003 as "*una zona de prostitución tradicional desde hace décadas*" ("an area of traditional prostitution for decades"). Valentín and Juan are two social workers who work for an NGO. They used to show up every Tuesday night on the Alameda. They parked their van, which had been converted into a mobile office and offered the sex workers prophylactics and information.

They started this job in 1993. In 2015, the Alameda was no longer a place for them to visit, because the sex work scene had disappeared (with a very few exceptions). Based on their experience of many years of engagement with the sex work clientel, they identify several factors that led to this change. Around the end of the 1990s the Alameda became part of urban planning fostered by a European project for the rehabilitation of central areas. This happened to coincide with the beginning of a real estate boom (bubble) in Spain:

> "Era una época en que empezaba a subir mucho, cada año subía un quince, entre un quince y un veinte por ciento la vivienda. Cada año. Si tu comprabas una vivienda, y la vendías al año siguiente, ya ganabas un veinte por ciento." (Valentín, 2015)[21]

The interplay of all the factors that led to the disappearance of the trans sex work scene in this neighbourhood might be complex and difficult to dismantle. Yet, it can be argued that the persons who rented or owned these *casas de cita tradicionales* (traditional dating houses) experienced the pressure of rising rents or the temptation to make more money with their houses:

> "Y entonces la mayoría de las casas que antes las mujeres estaban ejerciendo la prostitución, se reempezaron a reformar o a construir viviendas nuevas." (Valentín, 2015)[22]

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20 "Well, here, this is a house where rooms are rented. […] And the lady rents rooms, and you, well, you stand in the door and you speak to the gentlemen … you ask if they want some service, and he who wants, well, you go inside and you speak about the price and well … you come to an agreement and you go inside, you rent a room, you are in there and then afterwards the gentleman leaves." (Paquita, 2003)

21 "It was a time when the price of housing began to rise a lot, each year it rose fifteen, between fifteen and twenty percent. Each year. If you bought a house, and you sold it the following year, you already won twenty percent." (Valentín, 2015)

22 "And so, most of the houses where the women were formerly engaged in prostitution were reformed or new houses were built." (Valentín, 2015)

Juan and Valentín identify three further factors that led to transformations in the sex worker scene in general. One was the expansion of methadone maintenance programmes, also starting at the end of the 1990s. Many sex workers who executed their job out of drug dependency (especially heroin, or a mixture of heroin and cocaine) joined these programmes. According to Juan and Valentín, the transsexual sex workers were less affected by this, because, in general, they took better care of themselves and were less into drugs. Second, at the end of the 1990s there was an immigration boom related to the development policy which promised economic growth in Spain (at the beginning from Latin America and Africa, later from countries of the EU, like Romania). This led, on one hand, to increased competition in the sex worker trade. On the other hand, the ethnic composition of the sex worker scene was changing. Together with a legislative change which allowed sex trade procuration, there was an increase in hostess clubs *(clubs de alterne)*, mostly further away from the city in the countryside. (The liberalisation of sex trade procuration was withdrawn after a few years, not least because of difficulties distinguishing between consensual sex work and forced sex work, which was also related to human trafficking). All these factors, together with spatial-planning aspirations ('upgrading' the housing and closing the traditional dating houses, more space for pedestrians and less parking slots, more difficulties for the clients accessing by car), reduced the possibilities for executing sex work in the Alameda:

> "Entonces empiezan a proliferar, empiezan ya mujeres extranjeras, y cambia el perfil. Eso son mujeres jóvenes, muy jóvenes, y empezaran con un boom de la prostitución. En clubs de alterne. En la calle empiezan a llegar sobre todo mujeres nigerianas y (lengthened) y por lo que te he dicho antes, por el tema de los problemas de metadona, las mujeres españolas van desapareciendo, y van llegando mujeres extranjeras. A la calle. Y en los clubs son solo mujeres extranjeras, y en todo esto pues claro eh en dentro de la Alameda, cada vez hay menos posibilidades. Allí no se puede (lengthened) aparcar como se aparcaba antes, no se puede parar, las mujeres de las casas las van cerrando, y se va baleando ese una forma de prostitución. Que ahora actualmente quedan … sí queda alguna casita por allí por la calle." (Valentín, 2015)[23]

23 "So, there were more and more foreign women and the profile changed. These are young women, very young, and they started a prostitution boom. In hostess clubs. On the street, mostly Nigerian women were beginning to arrive, and what I've told you before, on the subject of methadone, the Spanish women were disappearing, and foreign women were arriving. To the street. And in the clubs, only foreign women. And in all of this, well, sure, in the Alameda there are fewer possibilities each time. You can't park there like you parked before, you can't stop, the women of the houses are closing them and that form of prostitution is going to be shut down. Now there are currently … yes, there's a house left over there down the street." (Valentín, 2015)

In the neighbourhood of Nervión, which also used to be a site for sex work (including some transsexual sex workers), a huge commercial centre was constructed and there was a lot of pressure from the neighbourhood (together with the police) to evict the sex workers. As a consequence, apart from the clubs, sex work on the streets migrated to industrial zones: "Fuera de Sevilla. Zonas industriales en las que durante la noche no hay ningún movimiento, no puede molestar a nadie, no." (Juan, 2015)[24]

In 2012 Seville introduced a law making it more difficult to perform sex work in public areas (in contrast to the clubs). In adherence to this law, clients were fined (the Swedish model).

All the above-mentioned factors taken together, and taking into account the time elapsed between my two field research trips, Valentín summaries: "Ya no es como antes que la mayoría de las m- transexuales eran españolas. O ya también han pasado los años." (Valentín, 2015)[25]

Besides reaching a certain age, the two social workers also assume that some sex workers managed to find another job, for instance in a bar. At least, this is what they were told, when they asked about someone.

The fact that nowadays Valentín and Juan hardly ever meet any younger Spanish trans women in their prevention work, might also reflect structural developments trans persons experienced (e.g. medical supervision, the existence of a Gender Identity law), and a somehow improved sensitisation in family and school (as outlined above), which might prevent individuals from taking up sex work out of necessity. However, what also happened was that sex work retreated from the public into the private sphere, as I will illustrate on the basis of Paquita, one of my research partners.

Paquita and Blanca were sex workers in the Alameda when I met them in 2003. Blanca had been working there for fifteen years, Paquita a few years less. Paquita had also worked in other domains before, e.g. in some company doing "well-respected work" *("trabajos bien visto")*. However, at these work places, she could not present herself as a woman, just appearing feminine, but as a man *("femenino pero chico")*. She entered sex work because she needed money:

> "Después cambié por mhm pues porque necesitaba dinero … para crearme un futuro, y era de la única manera que era más … más rápido. … Y más positivo para mi." (Paquita, 2003)[26]

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24 "Outside Seville. Industrial areas where there is no movement at night, where they can't bother anyone, no." (Juan, 2015)

25 "It's no longer like before that most transsexuals were Spanish. Or, they have already passed the age." (Valentín, 2015)

26 "Then I changed to mhm because I needed money … to create a future for me, and it was the only way …the faster way. … And more positive for me." (Paquita, 2003)

Both considered their current work to be something that should help them earn money for a future:

> Blanca: "Que no es un trabajo que lo tengamos para siempre, sino que para hacer un futuro de vida y ya cuando nosotras … nos veamos que ya tenemos hecho un futuro pues …"
> Paquita: "Dejarlo."
> Blanca: "… ya dejarlo." (Blanca and Paquita, 2003)[27]

To open a bar, to run a discotheque together with a friend, to invest in some flats to rent out, all these were ideas about the future. "Algo que no tengas que … que te de … que te deje dinero y que no tengas que ejercer la prostitución." (Blanca, 2003)[28]

The necessity to make plans in this direction was related to the fact that as sex workers, they were not part of the official labour market and could not reckon with any pension when they were older:

> "Porque lo tenemos más difícil. Porque no cotizamos, no tenemos un trabajo fijo, entonces no podemos tener un … un dinero que te pase el gobierno cuando tú seas mayor. Entonces tenemos que pensar en eso. No nos dejan otra opción." (Paquita, 2003)[29]

One evening, when I was looking for Blanca, I could not locate her anymore, and I was told that she had gone to Barcelona for a few months. She needed money, and (according to Paquita) there was more work in Barcelona. Also, the clients there used to pay more than in Seville.

Years later, during my second field research trip, I met Paquita again. She told me that after being in Barcelona, Blanca went to Palma de Mallorca to work. There she started to feel unwell, which eventually led her to return to Seville, where she was diagnosed with a malignant disease. She died and Paquita lost a close friend. Although they had experienced phases of separation in their lives, they had known each other for a long time, even before they started their gender affirmation pro-

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27 Blanca:"It's not a job that we have forever, but to build up a future in life, and when we … when we see that we have built up a future, so …".
Paquita: "Leave it".
Blanca: "Stop it".
(Blanca and Paquita, 2003)

28 "Something you don't have to … that … that leaves you some money and you don't have to engage in prostitution". (Blanca, 2003)

29 "Because it's harder for us. Because we don't pay contributions, we don't have a steady job, so we will not have money passed to you by the government when you're older. So, we have to think about that. They leave us no choice." (Paquita, 2003)

cedures: "Yo la conocí a la Blanca cuando joven. Ya cuando seamos sin tener talla ni pechos, estábamos en la eh haciendo el … el proceso." (Paquita, 2015)[30]

Paquita no longer works in the Alameda. Concerning the changes in the Alameda, she states:

> "Eh, yo hace años ya que no voy. Vamos, a trabajar. He ido a tomarme alguna copa, o a dar una vuelta pero lo que ocurrió fue ya pues que … porque empezaron a cambiar la estructura del barrio …. Lo hicieron peatonal. No sé si … si con alguna intención de quitar el barrio, y quitar la prostitución, y quitar el el ambiente que había. O bien porque tenían que hacerlo para darle más… otra, otra, otra cosa aquí a Sevilla, la capital. Pero no sé yo porque lo quitaron. Lo que sí sé casi ya dejó de ir la gente porque … la gente que van a los sitios de prostitución tú sabes tienen que ser sitios discretos, que pueden llevar con el coche y aparcar y entrar y después salir rápido." (Paquita, 2015)[31]

Although Paquita does not know exactly why the Alameda became the focus of urban planning, she realised that with the remodeling of the neighbourhood, easy access by car and the discreetness of the site had diminished, and the clients (thus, the income) stayed away. Additionally, it was not helpful for her business that new legislation introduced by the provincial government started to fine the clients in public spaces. Paquita (and, according to her, many others as well) solved this situation by withdrawing to the private sphere, that is, attending to clients in their private apartments. Paquita also retired a little from sex work because of her age. Furthermore, she inherited a little *finca* (farm) from her father in the countryside, where she now spends most weekends. Yet, she continues to attend to some clients, especially those she had known for many years. She sees more advantages in welcoming her clients at her place. The prices are higher, there is no haste, the clients are more relaxed, she has her own lavatory, and she feels much safer: "[…] y entonces pues la gente prefiere pagar un poco más, y estar en una casa." (Paquita, 2015)[32]

Furthermore (and congruent with the above-mentioned observations by Valentín and Juan) she states that migrant sex work started to dominate the streets.

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30 "I knew Blanca since we were young. Already when we were without waist or breasts, we were doing the … the process." (Paquita, 2003)

31 "It's been years since I've been going there, to work. I went for a drink, or a walk, but what happened was that … because they started changing the structure of the neighbourhood. They made it pedestrian. I don't know if … if with any intention to remove prostitution, and remove the atmosphere that existed. Or because they had to do it to give it more … something else here to Seville, as the capital. But I don't know why they took it away. What I do know is that people almost stopped going there, because … people who go to places of prostitution, you know, these have to be discreet places, which they can access by car, where they can park and get in and then get out quickly." (Paquita, 2015)

32 "[…] and then people prefer to pay a little more, and be in a house." (Paquita, 2003)

Consequently, the sex work milieu has become tougher, and the prices in the street decreased: "Ya cambió un poco la calle ya está más (lengthened) para las extranjeras, rumanas, hay más mafia ahora en la calle." (Paquita, 2015)[33]

The possibilities the Internet offers also facilitated sex work performed at home. Years ago, those who worked in private homes had to place advertisements in the newspaper, which was quite expensive. Nowadays there are internet portals like, *milanuncios*, that are free. Paquita uses this medium, too, although not very often:

> "Yo tampoco me anuncio mucho. Porque por los amigos que tengo y de vez en cuando, cuando estoy aquí, de no tener ir en el campo pues me pongo un anuncio y siempre pues viene gente, claro. Si lo ofreces un sitio tranquilo y un poco de (lengthened) de sexo… y ellos se van a sentir allí a gusto pues la gente viene. Sí." (Paquita, 2015)[34]

Reflecting about society and their perception of trans persons, Paquita does not see many changes over the last decade. She acknowledges that people are better informed because there is more information available, and because there are more movies that treat the subject of transsexuality. Furthermore, she observes that people appear to be more tolerant. However, she argues that none of this hinders people from discriminating at a given moment. She notes an existing 'double moral standard', and holds that many people still behave hypocritically. Secretly, they would enjoy non-heterosexual encounters, but to the outside, they condemn it:

> "Lo que pasa que hay una doble moral. La gente … cuando habla, habla y se siente muy (lenghtened) muy tolerante y todo. Pero después, como está la gente en su grupo después la gente s- o quieren hacer daños saben dónde atacar. Entonces aparte de que hay una doble moral, porque ya te digo que hay muchísimo aquí en Sevilla hay mucho (lenghtened) aquí en Sevilla hay muchos rollos. Aquí la gente son muy bisexuales en Sevilla. Lo que pasa que no lo son abiertamente. Los rollos son a través de eso de … de internet y de … Pero claro después si tú eres transexual o eres gay, pues entonces te enseñara muchas veces con el dedo …. Porque eres algo visible." (Paquita, 2015)[35]

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33 "It changed, the street is now more (lengthened) for foreign women, Romanians, there is more mafia in the street now." (Paquita, 2003)

34 "I don't advertise much either, because of the friends [long-term clients] I have, but sometimes when I'm here [in town], when I don't have to go to the countryside, well, I place an ad and there are always people coming. Sure. When you offer them a quiet place and a little bit of sex … and they're going to feel good, well, people come. Yes." (Paquita, 2003)

35 "What happens is that there is a double moral standard. The people … when they speak, it sounds very tolerant and everything. But afterwards, when they are among themselves, or when they want to do harm, they know where to attack. So, besides the fact that there's a double moral standard, I tell you, here in Seville people have many affairs. People are very

4.5 Cabaret and entertainment

Besides trans sex work, another domain where trans persons were 'traditionally' visible, is in cabaret or acting in shows. Among my interlocutors were three trans women who earned their living in this business: Ramira, Imelda and Luisa. They span almost three generations. None of them liked school and had either no interest or no possibility to pursue further studies. During our conversations, or when I saw them acting, all of them radiated a lot of agency and self-confidence. They did not give the impression of having chosen their way out of a lack of alternatives, but rather because they were guided by their interests. Imelda, who appears in her performances in beautiful flamenco outfits, declares: "Hago lo que quiero, vivo como quiero, vivo donde quiero, estoy feliz donde estoy." (Imelda, 2003)[36]

Luisa, whose performances are more body-oriented, states: "[…] me gusta cuidarme o sea como una mujer coqueta que soy me gusta cuidarme." (Luisa, 2003)[37]

Ramira, dressed on stage in traditional flamenco outfits and capturing the audience with her appearance and voice, sums it up: "Y yo esta vida la lleva bien, no me he metido con nadie, nunca, respecto a la gente, la gente me respecta a mí." (Ramira, 2015)[38]

In the following, I will present these three research partners at some length to provide a deeper understanding of how they earn their living on the back of their gender non-conformity. I start with Luisa, the youngest.

Luisa

Luisa is the youngest of the three. In 2003, when I met her during my first field research visit, she was twenty-two. She was explicit about her uncomfortable sensations back in school, belonging neither to the boys nor to the girls (see Chapter 2), and the fact that *"la gente te mire de manera rara"* ("people look at you oddly"). After finishing compulsory school *(Educación General Básica)*, she went on to secondary school. She also studied dance at the conservatory. She did not like studying at secondary school. Thus, she decided to leave and dedicate her time to dance. Upon my question, if it was these feelings of being different and discomfort that led her to give up secondary school, she states:

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bisexual here in Seville. The thing is, they're not openly so. The affairs are through the internet and … But of course, when you're transsexual or gay, they point the finger at you … Because you're something visible". (Paquita, 2015)

36 "I do what I want, I live how I want, I live where I want, I'm happy where I am." (Imelda, 2003)

37 "I like to look after myself, that means as the coquettish woman that I am, I like to take care of myself." (Luisa, 2003)

38 "I lead this life well, I haven't messed with anyone, never, I respect the people, people respect me." (Ramira, 2015)

> "Bueno, la causa real era que yo prefería dedicarme a la danza. Pero eso [the situation in school] ayudó. Mucho. Porque perfectamente podía haber llevar las dos cosas. Yo me sentía fuera de lugar. Porque no … me sentía diferente entre entre niñ- chicos y chicas me sentía diferente." (Luisa, 2003)[39]

The time we met, she was earning her living (besides training as a hairdresser) as a dancer and hostess, contracted through an agency. She described her work in a rather general mode:

> "[…] pues trabajo para una agencia de espectáculos y azafatas. Pues haciendo, bailando, haciendo estriptis. Eh haciendo un poco de todo. Eh haciendo presentaciones, haciendo … lo que es una agencia de azafatas y espectáculo." (Luisa, 2003)[40]

She described the meaning of these activities for her self-awareness in more detail. Presenting her body as a dancer, the physical aspect is very important for her. She perceives her work as selling an image. This is in contrast to her everyday life, where she does not want to attract attention:

> "Yo a mi trabajo, es vender mi físico. Es vender una, una imagen. Entonces yo cuando voy a trabajar sí voy vestida muy exclusiva, pero porque yo soy chica playboy. Yo he trabajado para playboy. Yo tengo que vender una imagen. Entonces pues sí voy con grande escote, minifalda. Pero porque es mi trabajo. Pero yo de un día normal, yo voy de camiseta, de, me gusta ir guapa, siempre. Y arreglada, pero porque es mi … es mi forma de ser, no me gusta ir sin peinar o sin pintar un poco. Pero por eso simplemente. Pero a mí no me gusta llamar la atención por la calle." (Luisa, 2003)[41]

Luisa's narrative reflects the investment she has put in the creation of her body, which she considers her capital for earning a living, a body she is proud of. At the same time, she needs the feedback of her audience to reassure her about her female attractiveness, to reassure her that people do not notice that she is not a biological

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39 "Well, the real cause was that I preferred to dedicate myself to dance. But that [the situation in school] helped. A lot. Because I could have perfectly well gone on with both. I felt out of place. I felt different between boys and girls. I felt different." (Luisa, 2003)

40 "[…] well, I work for a show and a hostess agency. Dancing, stripping. Doing a little bit of everything. Doing presentations, doing … whatever an agency of hostesses and spectacle does." (Luisa, 2003)

41 "My job is to sell my body. It's like selling an image. So, when I go to work, I'm dressed very exclusively, but because I'm a playboy girl. I worked for playboy. I have to sell an image. So, I go there with a deep neckline, miniskirt. Because this is my work. But on a normal day, I wear a T-shirt, a … I like to look pretty, always. But because it's my … it's my way of being, I don't like to go without combing my hair or having put on some make-up. But I don't like to call attention to myself on the street." (Luisa, 2003)

woman. Because she described the work on her body and the meaning it holds for her female identity so aptly and pictorially when we met, I quote her in full length:

> "Que como me ha costado tanto crear mi cuerpo, me gusta, me gusta que se vea bien. Que se vea bonito, que se vea armonioso, porque yo este físico no ha nacido de la nada. Este físico a mí me ha costado mucho, mucho sufrimiento. Me ha costado horas de médico, horas de de dieta, horas de muchas cosas. Entonces pues como soy orgullosa de él, pues además para mí es un orgullo ¿no? Poder trabajar con él. Que a la gente le guste verlo. Que la gente piense que es un cuerpo bonito, para mí eso es un orgullo. Porque me da la, me da la razón de que tengo un cuerpo bello como mujer. ¿Entiendes lo que te quiero decir? Sin saber la gente que soy una mujer transexual, no soy una mujer biológica. Entonces para mí eso es un orgullo. El hecho de yo trabajar y quitarme la ropa en un espectáculo, un estriptis, que es algo por supuesto es algo, eh, súper fino, súper elegante que no es para nada algo vulgar. Para mí eh es muy importante que la gente le guste. De hecho la única pregunta que hago después: ¿Te ha gustado? ¿Te ha gustado? Porque para mí es muy importante que la gente lo vea bonito, que lo vea elegante. No que lo vea borde. No me gustan las cosas bordes ni vastas ni vulgares. Me gustan las cosas elegantes, me gustan las cosas finas. Por eso para mí es muy importante que la gente me diga: Oye tú tienes un cuerpo bonito, me gusta. O tienes un cutis bonito, o tienes un pelo bonito. A mí me gusta, porque me lo he curado, porque me lo he trabajado." (Luisa, 2003)[42]

Luisa was one of the interlocutors in 2003 who aspired for genital gender reassignment, and who was on the waiting list for the vaginoplasty in the UTIG in Malaga. Besides getting rid of the last anatomical marker before feeling completely like a woman (as outlined in Chapter 2.2), she also expected this operation to make her work easier, especially in her performances as a stripper. Until now, she has been

42 "Since it has cost me so much to create my body, I like it to look good. That it looks pretty, that it looks harmonious, because my physical appearance was not born out of nowhere. This body has cost me a lot, a lot of suffering. It has cost me hours of medical treatment, hours of diet, hours of many things. I am proud of it, it is also a pride for me, right? To be able to work with it. That people like to look at it. That people think it's a nice body, for me that makes me proud. Because it ensures me that I have a beautiful body as a woman. Do you understand what I mean? Without people knowing I'm a transsexual woman, I'm not a biological woman. So, that makes me proud. The fact that I work and take off my clothes in a show, a striptease, which is something, eh, super fine, super elegant, which is not at all vulgar. It's very important to me that people like it. In fact, the only question I ask afterwards: Did you like it? Did you like it? It's important to me that people think it's beautiful, that they think it's elegant. Not that they think it's edgy. I don't like edgy things, or overdone or vulgar. I like elegant things, I like fine things. That's why for me it's very important that people tell me: Hey, you have a nice body, I like it. Or you have a beautiful skin, or you have beautiful hair. I like it, because I've earned it for myself, I've worked for it." (Luisa, 2003)

hampered by not being able to perform a full striptease, a problem which would be resolved afterwards:

> "Después [...] pues no lo tendría limitado. Podría hacer un estriptis integral completamente que ahora no puedo hacer." (Luisa, 2003)[43]

Being trans makes her daily life in general more burdensome. She notes that she attributes every problem she encounters in daily life to her gender non-conformity, although it might not be the real cause:

> "Por ejemplo eh yo tengo un problema en el trabajo ¿no? Pues yo tengo un problema en el trabajo igual que tengo yo un problema en el trabajo lo puede tener mi vecino. Pues para mi vecino a lo mejor es simplemente un problema en el trabajo, pero para mí es un problema en el trabajo y cuando ya estoy en mi casa pues empiezo a pensar tengo un problema en el trabajo y encima tengo una operación pendiente y encima tengo yo un tratamiento y entonces ya se te hace muchísimo más gordo el problema porque tú misma empiezas a pensar en todo lo demás. Y a veces piensas que todos los problemas vienen del mismo sitio. Que todos los problemas te vienen por eso simplemente porque eres transexual y piensas que que todo gira entorno a eso. Yo no … cuando no es cierto." (Luisa, 2003)[44]

Years later, when I went back in the field, I tried to locate Luisa and was only able to find her on Facebook that situated her in Mexico. The posted photos showed her dressed as a beautiful flamenco dancer, or as one among a group of scantily dressed showgirls and gym-trained showmen. Having in the meantime undergone all the gender affirmation procedures, the time of being *transexual* was over. Upon my question if we could meet again and talk about the last few years, she refused, writing back that she was now leading a normal life and had no wish to reopen the subject of transsexuality:

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43 "After that [...] well, I will not be limited. I could do a complete, integral stripping, something that I can't do now." (Luisa, 2003)

44 "For example, I have a problem at work, right? So, I have a problem at work like my neighbour can have a problem at work. Well, for my neighbour, it is maybe just a problem at work, but for me, it is a problem at work and when I am at home, I start thinking, I have a problem at work and I have a pending surgery and on top of it I have treatment and then the problem gains weight because you yourself start thinking of all these other things. And sometimes you think that all the problems come from the same place. That all problems come to you simply because of the fact that you are transsexual and you think everything turns around it. I don't … when it is not certain." (Luisa, 2003)

> "¿Sabes? Fue la primera y la última vez que hablé sobre ese tema, la verdad nunca más he hablado sobre ello solo con las personas más allegadas a mí, […] y para mi es muchísimo más fácil hacer una vida normal sin tratar ese tema." (Luisa, 2015)[45]

Her refusal to re-examine the subject that had cost her so much trouble in life confirmed the goals and wishes she had uttered years ago: To lead a normal life as a woman, to no longer have to bother anymore with gender non-conformity, and maybe, one day, to marry in white, a wish she attributed to the majority of women:

> "Pues yo, mi sueño es de casarme, además en blanco […]. No sé, es algo … creo que es el sueño de casi todas las mujeres ¿no? Pues el mío también (laughs)." (Luisa, 2003)[46]

Imelda

Imelda is the middle of my informants, who earned her living performing in shows. She did not finish compulsory school, and described herself as having been too lazy to study, because she was not interested. She failed and quit school at the age of fourteen. She started her career in the 1980s, at the age of sixteen, singing playback and imitating Isabel Pantoja, a contemporary famous singer of *coplas* (see introduction):

> "No soy torpe, pero no me … no me gusta estudiar. […] Ya casi a los dieciséis empecé a trabajar. Empecé a hacer espectáculo y hasta hoy no he parado. Desde los dieciséis años por ahí hasta hoy no he … no he parado de trabajar. Siempre me dedicaba a hacer copla e imitar a la Pantoja." (Imelda, 2003)[47]

Her admiration for la Pantoja has existed since childhood, not least because of the singer's appearance and performance, which Imelda perceives as very feminine, and which inspired her. Although *la Pantoja* does not just sing *coplas,* but also songs that are closer to pop music, it is just the 'classic', the *copla*, that Imelda is interested in. For her, the *coplas* are an identifying part of Andalusia:

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45 "You know, it was the first and last time that I talked about that subject. Truth is that I never again talked about it, only with the people closest to me. […] And for me it's much easier to lead a normal life without dealing with that subject". (Luisa, 2015)

46 "My dream is to get married, furthermore, in white […]. I don't know, this is something … I think, this is the dream of almost all women, right? So, mine as well (laughs)." (Luisa, 2003)

47 "I'm not clumsy, but I don't … I don't like studying. With almost sixteen, I started to work. I started to perform, and until today, I have not stopped. Since I was sixteen years old, I haven't … I haven't stopped working. I always dedicated myself to singing coplas and imitating la Pantoja." (Imelda, 2003)

> "Que más me gusta de ella es la copla. Que es lo nuestro de aquí, aunque la balada, la cosa la haga muy bien. Pero yo creo que como la copla no hay nada." (Imelda, 2003)[48]

Like the Pantoja, Imelda grew up and lived until recently in the neighbourhood of Triana. Triana is a city district of Seville, divided from the city centre by a branch of the Guadalquivir River. I have often been told that the people of Triana, called *trianeros*, traditionally identify strongly with their neighbourhood. It is famous for its traditional pottery and tile industry, and is said to have a vibrant flamenco culture. According to memorial tablets found in the neighbourhood, it was celebrities stemming from Triana who helped to raise awareness of the *coplas* in the world. Two years ago, Imelda moved to the centre of Seville. It was also two years ago (in 2001) that she had her name on her documents changed. However, the 'sex box' remained masculine, because it was still before the law had changed, and at this time, the sex in the documents could only be changed after genital reassignment, which she never aspired for.

Imelda's dedication to the *copla* reflects her view about Andalusia. As there is nothing like the copla *("como la copla no hay nada")*, there is also nothing like Andalusia (although she is critical of the attitudes of the local people, as we will see below):

> "Yo creo Andalucía es una tierra privilegiada … no sé, yo creo que es lo más bonito que hay, porque Andalucía es la luz, el sol, es … tiene sus pro' y su contra." (Imelda, 2003)[49]

It is important for Imelda to cultivate and follow the 'classic' customs, especially traditional dress, which varies according to the festivity. She regrets that these customs have changed nowadays (although not disappearing), and have become more modern:

> "Y yo creo que nunca deberíamos dejar … perder nuestro … nuestra costumbre, nuestra cosa … nuestro traje de flamenca, nuestro traje para el Rocío, las costumbres del Rocío que no son las mismas que para la Feria, nuestra mujer de mantilla, esas cosas. […] Y poquito a poco […] desvaría mucha la … la costumbre, la cosa, todo muy a la moda, y eso no puede ser, yo creo que esas cosas son clásicas y deberían de seguir siendo clásica." (Imelda, 2003)[50]

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48 "What I like most by her is the copla. Which is ours. Although the ballads, she does it very well. But I think there's nothing like the copla." (Imelda, 2003)

49 "I believe Andalusia is a privileged land … I don't know, I think it's the most beautiful there is, because Andalusia is the light, the sun, it is … it has its pro and its cons." (Imelda, 2003)

50 "I think we should never let … lose our customs … our flamenco dress, our costume for El Rocío [a famous pilgrimage in Andalusia dedicated to the Virgin of El Rocío, CI], the customs of El Rocío, which are not the same as for the Feria [a springtime fair with a lot of music, dance and

Her dedication to local and folkloric customs was also visible in her worship of the Virgin, which is overtly practised in Andalusia. She offered me a glimpse of her admiration for the Virgin and the Saints when I met her in summer 2003. Shortly before I started field research, she had had an accident with her scooter. Due to a broken leg, she was forced to take time out from her acting. This was annoying for her, not least because she did not have an income during this time. Because she was not performing, she stayed only irregularly in Seville (mainly to see the doctor). On these occasions, we met in the atelier of a friend of hers, who manufactured statues of the Virgin and Christ. She also spent most of the time in her parents' house in a village on the coast of Cadiz. That is where I visited her. On our first tour through the village, we entered the church of the Patron Saint of this village, the *Virgen de la Regla*, or Yemanya, as Imelda pronounced it, a Black Virgin. To take a closer look at the Virgin, she led me to the back of the church and upstairs, passing a huge display cabinet filled with votive gifts. The wall was covered with crutches and prostheses. She also guided me to a small chapel that housed a statue of Christ she liked very much (besides a little copy of the Virgin).

Imelda was critical of the Church as an institution and of the curates, and told of a sexual assault experienced by her mother as a child, but she was very devoted to the virgin cult that is very much a part of Andalusia: "Yo soy creyente, pero yo no soy practicante. A mí me gusta mucho la Semana Santa, me encantan los santos." (Imelda, 2003)[51]

She was also a member of a *hermandad* (brotherhood) in Seville. Once I met her by chance at midday outside a bar. She was with her friend from the atelier. We had a little chat, then she remarked that she had to go, because she wanted to say goodbye to her Virgin quickly, before she headed off to her village on the coast. It seemed to me that the relation to her Virgin was like the relation to a close person you feel the urge to say goodbye to before going on a journey.

Concerning society's attitudes to non-conforming sex and gender norms, Imelda criticises the people of Seville. In her eyes, rejection and prejudices concerning other people's different sexuality or gender expression are still widespread due to a lack of education. This forces gender non-conforming people to hide. A statement from Lindeman points out the way society pushes trans individuals towards a sex/gender dichotimisation: "Es scheint so, als würde von Transsexuellen als Gegenleistung für das Durcheinander, das sie anrichten, eine als

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entertainment, CI], our women with their shawls, all these things. […] And little by little […] the custom is deviating a lot, everything getting very fashionable, and that can't be, I think that these things are classic and should remain classic." (Imelda, 2003)

51 "I am a believer, but I am not a practitioner. I like Easter week very much, I like the saints." (Imelda, 2003)

affektiv notwendig erlebte, moralisch und ästhetisch ansprechende Gestaltung der Geschlechterdifferenz gefordert" (Lindemann 2011: 194).[52]

Imelda perceives the everyday pressure in Andalusia to conform to prevailing morals and aesthetics to be very pronounced.

When we spoke about surgical reassignment, she mentioned her disinterest in a genital reassignment. Similar to Carmina (see Chapter 2.2) she dismissed it by saying that no one sees what you have between your legs. Moreover, she adds that this operation does not change how people look at you, that they still label you as homosexual when they notice a gender incongruence:

> "Lo peor es como te ven. Es el rechazo, eso es lo peor. Que de maricón no te van a bajar … por muy mujer que tú seas. En el momento que se dan cuenta … dicen mira un … no mira eso es un tío, o eso es un travesti, o lo típico, eso es un tío." (Imelda, 2003)[53]

In this sense, she regards Andalusia especially (although Spain in general as well) as backward, and draws the common picture of a more developed North compared to the South:

> "Y sobre todo aquí en Andalucía es lo peor. […] Que todavía está muy atrasado. Pero en el momento que subes de España … arriba es otro mundo." (Imelda, 2003)[54]

What she sought for herself was to elude this societal perception; to think that she can walk in the street and nobody turns around, labelling her as a 'faggot': an endeavour she considers to be quite successful. Furthermore, Imelda recognises that especially with the implementation of the UTIG (which had only existed for a few years when we met) things are opening up in Andalusia.

Despite her criticism of other people's reactions, she herself holds a rather traditional picture of maleness and femaleness, a picture that is strongly linked to how men and women perform masculinity and femininity. Similar to her previously mentioned opinion regarding attentiveness to classical customs, she notes a general blurring of the sex and gender appearance, which she regrets:

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52 "It seems as if transsexuals, in return for the confusion they cause, are called upon to create a form of gender difference that is morally and aesthetically appealing, and that is experienced as affectively necessary [own transl.]" (Lindemann 2011: 194).

53 "The worst is how they see you. It's the rejection, that's the worst. For them, you're just a faggot, even if you're very womanly. The moment they realise … they say, look … no, look, this is a guy, or this is a transvestite, or typically, this is a guy." (Imelda, 2003)

54 "Especially here in Andalusia, it's the worst. […] It's still a long way behind. But the moment you go up from Spain … north, it's another world." (Imelda, 2003)

> "Hoy en día la mujer es muy poco femenina, eso es así, y los hombres están al revés, son más femeninos que las mujeres. Hoy ya los hombres se cuidan más, los hombres siempre van más arreglado, yo lo veo muy femenino y a mí eso no me gusta, me gusta un hombre hombre. No me gusta un hombre femenino. Y la mujer igual, una mujer femenina, siempre siempre siempre se ve por la calle, tú te vuelves a mirarla por lo andar y por la cosa [...]. Y esas cosas creo yo que se están perdiendo muchísimo, aunque la hay, pero lo mínimo." (Imelda, 2003)[55]

Imelda does not exclude herself from this increasing carelessness of how women dress and style themselves. Nor does she care so much about a very feminine outfit in everyday life, and wears jeans or a tracksuit, or "whatever just lies around". Although she sees the advantages of these freedoms, which also reflect a kind of progress, she nevertheless regrets this development, which corresponds with the above-mentioned attitude of not forgetting the local customs. The blurring of customs and the blurring of masculinity and femininity emerges in her narration as a blurring of local identity. However, the accusation of a declining manliness is not a new phenomenon. It was already lamented over half a century ago, as was documented by Pitt-Rivers in the 1950s: „'The modern race is degenerate', said a friend once, 'in the days of our grandfathers there was more manliness than today'" (Pitt-Rivers 1971: 91).

Years later, during my second field research trip, I was not able to locate her. The club where she used to work had shut down a few years earlier, and her friend's atelier, where she often stayed, no longer existed. There were rumours about her that she had gone through difficult times. Remembering some of Imelda's earlier statements, her social resources she mentioned years ago (the support of her family and some very close friends), and the self-confidence she radiated, had hopefully helped her to endure these times. Moreover, it might be a kind of a coincidence that Imelda's vanishing without a trace occurred in a period when La Pantoja's reputation was damaged because of tax offences. She spent two years in jail. At the end of 2016, La Pantoja resumed her career. Let us hope there will be an emerging trace of Imelda as well.

55 "Nowadays the women are very un-feminine, and the men, on the contrary, they're more feminine than the women. Today, men take more care of themselves; men are more dressed up. I see them as very feminine, and I don't like that. I like manly men. I don't like feminine men. And the women, the same. When you see a feminine woman walking in the street, you turn around, because of the way she walks, the things she wears [...]. And I think these things are getting lost. They still exist, but very limited." (Imelda, 2003)

Ramira

Ramira is the third of my interlocutors who acted on stage. Because she is the oldest of the three, having experienced the profound societal changes of the last sixty years, I will give a more comprehensive glimpse into her life. Concerning the situation of transgender elders, Cook-Daniels comments on the situation in the United States:

> No stigmatized group in U.S. history has benefited from as many policy and social attitude improvements as quickly as have transgender people. The current generations of transgender elders represent virtually the full history of the transgender experience, ranging from days when there was no word for their identity to today, when 'transgender' has become a word even the U.S. President [referring to Barack Obama] feels comfortable using on nationwide television. (Cook-Daniels 2016: 285)

For the situation in Spain, Ramira (although, with her sixty and something years, she was still a rather younger elderly) somehow represents 'virtually the full history of the transgender experience'. Her experiences range from the days of illegality and criminalisation up to today's liberal times.

I had known of Ramira for many years. A close friend told me that she was one of several rather folkloristic transsexuals from Triana, a very good *coplas* singer (not playback), but difficult to reach. Because she was rather witty and blunt, she was perhaps not the most reliable and coherent source for my research, he commented. One day we were passing by the house where she had her apartment. By chance, she was on the doorstep, ready to go for a walk with her little dog, a Yorkshire Terrier, and we exchanged a little small talk. I saw her again in June 2014, where she was performing on Friday evening at the Trans Pride party (see Chapter 6). I videotaped her acting, hoping to meet her again and show her the recordings. This eventually happened in May 2015. I had met a sculptor who told me that she sometimes visits him in his atelier. He promised to tell her about me and we managed to arrange a meeting. This was not self-evident, because I had failed in two former attempts to get in contact with older trans persons in Triana, where contact persons had also been involved.

We met in the entrance of her house and walked to a bar where she often goes for a coffee. On the way, she gave me a glimpse of how strongly rooted she feels in her neighbourhood. We passed the *Esperanza de Triana* Church, her virgin and her *hermandad*, and we entered for a short moment. Afterwards we sat at a table outside the bar, close to the *Santa Ana* Church, where she had been baptised. She also pointed to a house where her father had been born. People greeted her and she entered into a few conversations. I showed her the video recordings I had made of her acting at the *Orgullo Trans* (Trans Pride). She was pleased to see herself

performing, but complained that the organisers of the Pride had put her on stage too early, already around 7 p.m. That is why, when her friends and family arrived around half past nine in the evening, they had missed her contribution. This early schedule of her performance had upset her so much that she would refuse to act again at the next Trans Pride, if asked: "[…] mi familia no me vieron. Me pusieron muy pronto. Y este año no voy. No." (Ramira, 2015)[56]

Ramira was nicely dressed. She was very friendly, obliging and approachable. She had a normal presence, which contrasted with the powerful appearance she had while acting on stage.

Ramira left school at the age of thirteen, which was, in those times, when obligatory public school time ended (later it changed to the age of sixteen). She did not like school, which she attributed to the bad and one-sided education during the dictatorship of Franco. Richer people sent their children to private schools. At the age of fifteen, she was contracted to sing in a bar near Seville. She remembers the stair and the counter where she sang in this bar. This was in 1966, still in the time of the dictatorship of Franco. She adapted a female gender performance with plucked eyebrows *(las cejas al hilo)*, make-up *"y todo"* ("and everything"). That was her start as a *coplas* singer and performer, appearing in dance halls and cabarets all over Spain:

> "He estado cantando y estaba cantando en toda España ¿eh? […]. Yo después me fui a Madrid, me fui a Asturias, me fui a León, me fui a Canarias, me fui a toda España. Yo he recorrido toda España. Dos o tres veces, yo he recorrido toda España." (Ramira, 2015)[57]

Concerning her family, Ramira does not mention any major problems with her gender non-conformity. Her parents seemed to accept it after a while. When I asked if her parents had any problems with it, she said: "No, a lo primero sí, como siempre. Lo primero sí, porque claro no quiere … la gente. Tú sabes, por la gente. Pero después no." (Ramira, 2015)[58]

Ramira justified her parents' initially negative attitude with concern about the reaction of their social environment. However, they probably also realised that they could not change it. Because Ramira, who still lived with her parents when her 'transsexuality' became obvious, seemed to have left no space for discussion. She 'offered' to get her own apartment if they could not accept it. Eventually, by the

56 "[…] my family didn't see me. They put me on stage very early. And this year I won't participate. No." (Ramira, 2015)

57 "I've been singing all over Spain. […] Then, I went to Madrid, I went to Asturias, I went to León, I went to the Canary Islands, I have been all over Spain. I have travelled all over Spain. Two or three times I have travelled all over Spain." (Ramira, 2015)

58 "No. At first, yes. Like always. At first, yes, because, of course, they didn't want … the people. You know, because of the people. But afterwards, no." (Ramira, 2015)

time she was fifteen, when she started working, they said no more: "Oh ya, a partir de los quince años ya mh lo que pasa que yo estaba trabajando y a mí no me decían nada." (Ramira, 2015)[59]

It is possible that her parents' acceptance was also due to her generating an income from acting and singing at an early age, which continually helped to support the family:

> "Pero vamos que actuaba porque … que tenía que (lengthened) por mantener a mis padres también. ¿Sabes? […] no que me queda… otra vida. Vamos, hubiera servido nada para otra vida. Eh tenía a mis padres, tenía a dos hermanos más chicos, dos hermanos mayores también, los dos hermanos más chicos estaban estudiando, y había que darle los estudios, también." (Ramira, 2015)[60]

She had one great love in her life, a man she was with for eight years. She accompanied him to Madrid because his assurance company sent him there as branch manager. Although they were not married, she refers to him as 'her husband': "Como mi marido, era. Como mi marido." (Ramira 2015)[61]

However, in the end, he married another woman, which she explains by having been forced by his parents, who were rich and thought that he would be happier with another woman. This must have been more hurtful than her casual tone would let one assume. Although she recalls her life in a mostly positive manner (besides the dictatorship of Franco which did not allow any freedom) it is in this broken love that lies a drop of bitterness:

> "Lo demás yo a mí me ha ido bien la vida. Lo único es lo de (lengthened) mi amigo que se casó y estaba muy enamorado de é l… él de mi … él de mí también, pero por los padres no puede ser. Los padres eran … de dinerito …" (Ramira, 2015)[62]

This broken relationship is her main reason for not wanting another lasting relationship. Furthermore, she draws a very traditional picture of what it means to live in a relationship, traditional in the sense that the woman is responsible for the household, which would be a bigger burden with a man at her side:

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59 "Oh, from the age of fifteen, I was already, mh, what happened was that I was working, and they didn't say anything." (Ramira, 2015)

60 "I was acting because … I had to support my parents as well. You know? I had no choice for a different life. Well, I would have been useless for another life. I had my parents, I had two younger siblings, two older siblings too, the two younger ones were studying, and they had to be supported as well." (Ramira, 2015)

61 "He was like my husband. Like my husband." (Ramira, 2015)

62 "Otherwise, life treated me well. The only thing is that my friend married, and I was so much in love with him … and he with me as well. But because of his parents it couldn't be. His parents were rich …" (Ramira, 2015)

> "Yo me enamoré de este y se acabó y se acabó y se acabó. Yo ya no quiero más tío a mi lado ni muerta. Yo eh más tío a mi lado, no. […] Con un tío que yo le tengo que lavar los calzoncillos, y plancharle y hacerle la comida, ¡anda vete! (exclaiming). Ya no." (Ramira, 2015)[63]

Although she refers to herself as modern, she also labels herself as *"un poco antigua"* ("a little bit old fashioned"). On the one hand, she transgressed gender roles at a young age and during an oppressive political and societal system, acted in cabarets (even though her *marido* did not want her to do so when they lived in Madrid) and earned her own money. In doing so, she seemed to transgress many societal norms. On the other hand, she calls herself antiquated regarding intimacy in public. It bothers her when she sees women kissing in public, and does not consider it appropriate. In her opinion, some *mariquitas* (homosexuals) behave too intimately in public as well, and she suspects that *la gente* (the people) do not like that. She recalls a situation not so long ago, when she was waiting at a traffic light to cross the street. Two young men, 18 or 19 years old, were kissing very intensively, "almost eating each other". Ramira, who has a reputation for being very direct, addressed them, asking if they could not wait to do that at home? Furthermore, she told them that it was thanks to her and her kind that they have these freedoms nowadays. Thus, she reminded them that these achievements had to be fought for.

She recalls that she and the man she loved, her partner for eight years, never kissed on the street. On the one hand, this was because he did not like that. On the other hand, she, too, would have felt ashamed, although she emphasised that the public saw 'a man/woman' couple. She draws a strict line between private and public: "En la casa me hace lo que quiera. En la calle no. Lo antigua." (Ramira, 2015)[64]

Ramira is content with her sex/gender, and does not wish to have been born otherwise. She contrasts her attitude with other transsexuals she knows who would have preferred to be born biological women: "Yo como no conocí otra vida a mí me da igual. Nacer igual. Yo sí." (Ramira, 2015)[65]

We were sitting near the church where she had been baptised and the bell was striking the full hour. Just as she finished the sentence, there was a last loud stroke of the bell, as if to confirm her comment: *"Nacer igual. Yo sí"*.

Her explicit statement of not regretting having been born like this contradicts the majority of the trans people in the quantitative study conducted by Dominguez et al. (2011). To measure their life satisfaction, the study contained the statement 'if

63 "I fell in love with this one and it's over, it's over. I don't want another man at my side. No. A man whose underwear I have to wash, to iron them, prepare his meals, go! Not anymore." (Ramira, 2015)

64 "At home, he can do with me what he wants. In the street not. The old thing." (Ramira, 2015)

65 "Since I didn't know another life, I don't care. To be born the same. Yes." (Ramira, 2015)

I could live my life again, I would like everything to be the same'. This statement received the lowest value of all the questions in the survey. Thus, the authors point to a very low life satisfaction among transsexual people in Spain (Dominguez Fuentes et al. 2011).

Not so Ramira. Moreover, she had never felt the need to have any surgical gender affirmation procedures done to affirm her as a woman: "No, a mí me da igual. Yo ¿para qué vaya operar? Si yo me encuentro de mujer […] ¿Qué me voy a operar? A mí no me estorba." (Ramira, 2015)[66]

She picks a faded page of a newspaper (an advertisement for the club where she worked in León) out of her purse. She was 29 years old in the photo, and stunning. She emphasises that the picture had not been taken in a studio, but instead very spontaneously as she was ready to go on stage. She also starts combing through the many pictures on her smartphone, and motivates me to take pictures of the pictures. She presents many snapshots showing her as young and beautiful. She is proud of how beautiful she looked, but emphasises that growing older does not bother her: "Yo la vejez la tomo bien." (Ramira, 2015)[67]

She contrasts her attitude towards ageing with the attitude of some of her friends, who are having operations *par' arriba* (up) and *par' abajo* (down).

Around the age of 55, she decided to retire from acting: "Cuando ya … los tíos me decían '¿Tú que edad tienes?' Digo, oih, ya hay que quitarse." (Ramira, 2015)[68]

Although she emphasises that there is no age limit for acting, especially in her genre where there are actresses who are still singing at seventy or eighty, she decided to stop officially and started to work in a restaurant as a cook. Seven years ago, she had a heart attack. Thanks to the fact that she was employed, her inability to work was covered by the insurance, and subsequently she got the medical affirmation of not being able to work anymore. As a result, she was entitled to an early pension.

Earlier in this paper, I mentioned that the people of Triana have the reputation for identifying strongly with their neighbourhood. This holds true for Ramira as well. She tells of three *amigas* and one homosexual *amigo*, who all live in Triana. The *amigas* are older trans women, who also used to work in cabarets (two of them for many years in Paris). They form a closely-knit group and Ramira's emphasis and tone about their common origin (Triana) reflects her rootedness in this neighbourhood: "Vamos, que habemos … que somos de aquí de Triana ¿eh?" (Ramira, 2015)[69]

66 "No, I don't care. Why should I undergo surgery? When I see myself as a woman […] Why should I have surgery? It doesn't hinder me." (Ramira, 2015)

67 "I take old age well." (Ramira, 2015)

68 "When the guys started to ask 'How old are you?' I thought, it's time to quit." (Ramira, 2015)

69 "We are from here, from Triana!" (Ramira, 2015)

Rather than being part of the city with its anonymity, she refers to Triana as a village. Here, she feels respected, is well known, and feels at home.

Furthermore, she calls her neighbourhood *muy libre* and holds that she never had any problems in Triana because of her gender non-conformity (except from the police during the Franco dictatorship). She links this open-mindedness to the fact that in the past, people did not oppose homosexuals; on the contrary: "Que a los homosexuales sí le encanta la gente de … le encanta antiguamente." (Ramira, 2015)[70]

This was especially true for those homosexuals who behaved very effeminately. Lesbians were less accepted, except one, who was an accomplished flamenco singer and appeared as a man. The example of this lesbian points to the fact that it was possible to acquire cultural capital (in this case by having artistic virtue) that compensated for the social rejection. Following this line of thought, Ramira's positive experiences with the people in her neighbourhood point to her great cultural capital, which she acquired through her virtues as a folkloristic singer and her rootedness in the neighbourhood.

Upon my question as to the most difficult obstacles in her life, she first refers to the time of the dictatorship and the lack of freedom: "Yo, me creo que fue Franco. Sí. En no tener libertad." (Ramira, 2015)[71]

She holds a deep disgust towards the *franquistas* (followers of Franco), appreciates the achievements of democracy, and remembers the worrying times at the beginning of the transition (the years following the end of the dictatorship), when it was not clear if there would be another war. This kind of not fully trusting in a steady democracy is still apparent:

> "[…] yo siempre he dicho que como aquí venga (knocks on the table) entre otra dictadura (laughs dryly), yo en que tengo ochenta años me voy ya de España. Yo sí. En que tengo ochenta años, y me quede cuatro días que vivir en otro sitio. Me voy. Aquí no me quedo. No no." (Ramira, 2015)[72]

She is probably exaggerating how she would react if there were another dictatorship. However, it does reflect her bad experiences under that regime. Nevertheless, when Ramira talks about her life during Franco, she does not do this in a suffering manner (as can sometimes be seen in documentaries portraying elderly transwomen). Indeed, she emphasises how she managed to live her life without letting it get her down: "Yo … yo podía con todo." (Ramira, 2015)[73]

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70 "People loved homosexuals … they loved them in the old days." (Ramira, 2015)

71 "I think it was Franco. Yes. In not having freedom." (Ramira, 2015)

72 "I've always said, if there is another dictatorship, even if I'm eighty years old, I'll leave Spain. I will. Even if I'm eighty years old, and I have only four days to live elsewhere. I'll leave. I would not stay here. No." (Ramira, 2015)

73 "I … I could handle everything." (Ramira, 2015)

Around the age of fifteen, she was put in prison *"[…] por homosexual"* ("for being homosexual"), just for walking around as a *chico*, but wearing rather feminine accessories: "Porque en la época de Franco no podía ir de chica. ¿Sabes?" (Ramira, 2015)[74]

Her father took a lawyer who had her released after one month. (After the dictatorship, *"a la hora de la democracia"*, she was compensated with 4000 Euro for this month of imprisonment, and the entry in the police record was deleted). She thinks that her imprisonment was worse for her father than for herself. Upon my question, if it had been a hard time, she answers: "Para mi padre sí. Para mí me dio igual. A mí me dio igual. Yo … yo podía con todo. No me han pegado nunca, eh." (Ramira, 2015)[75]

During the dictatorship, the police often harassed her and her peers. She developed strategies to escape them. Sometimes they ran away. She remembers one occasion when they had gathered at a meeting point by the river. When the police arrived, she climbed up a tree and stayed there for four hours, until everybody had disappeared. Others jumped in the river and swam to the other side. In retrospect, she describes these constant encounters with the police as a farcical cat-and-mouse game: "Y ya era un cachondeo." (Ramira 2015)[76]

Especially around the *Semana Santa* (Easter week), with its religious processions that attracted the public, there was widespread repression going on. Two weeks before the ceremonies started, the streets were cleaned of 'homosexuals'. They were put in prison during these days. Ramira avoided going out then and left only in the early morning, to see her Virgin. She remembers what Franco and his followers were doing as a very hypocritical thing; banning the 'deviant' in the name of Christianity: "¿No sabes que los criminales de guerra son así? Son así, son muy cristianos y son muy malos." (Ramira, 2015)[77]

When she sees couples behaving intimately in public, like the two men kissing, she remembers those repressive days, and the struggle she and her kind had to endure, a time when such liberal behaviour was unthinkable.

However, being transsexual is no longer the main preoccupation in her life. This became obvious at some points in our conversation. When she mentioned that she had been in Madrid during the transition, I assumed that she was referring to her gender transition. However, she meant the political transition after the death of Franco. When I asked her about present day obstacles and challenges (I was alluding to the situation of trans people in Andalusia), she mentioned the high unem-

74 "Because in the times of Franco, you couldn't dress as a woman, you know?" (Ramira, 2015)

75 "My father, yes. For me, I didn't care. I didn't care. I … I could handle everything. They never hit me, eh." (Ramira, 2015)

76 "And it was already a joke." (Ramira, 2015)

77 "Don't you know that war criminals are like that? They're like that, they're very Christian and they're very bad." (Ramira, 2015)

ployment rate and the corruption of the politicians (the day we met was Election Day, and the news had been full for weeks and months of scandals of politicians who had embezzled money). Her gender experiences were no longer the *eje central* (central focus) (Nieto 2011) in her life and it was rather the prevailing conservative political situation, the lack of employment possibilities (especially for the younger generation), and the politicians' greedy behaviour ("robbery") that upset her.

4.6 Being employed

Anabel, who studied psychology in the early 1990s and earned her (and her family's) living in jobs that were not associated with the 'classic' or 'folkloristic' transsexual, faced other challenges on her journey to self-realisation. As mentioned earlier in this book (see Chapter 3.1), Anabel was aiming for the complete gender affirmation procedures, including genital surgery. This was finally done in 2007. She remembered the date exactly, and like Magdalena (see Chapter 4.2), she spoke of it like a new birthday: "[…] el día 27 de febrero de 2007, pues fue cuando me reasignaron a mí en Málaga." (Anabel, 2013)[78]

Anabel had to wait five years for this operation, which was done in the UTIG in Malaga. When we met in 2003, she had a job as a mason (see Chapter 3.1) that ended the following year, leaving her unemployed. She described the year 2007 as a turning point in her life, not only because of the long awaited operation, but also because she had finally found a job as a bus driver (after three years of unemployment). After Anabel's patience had been tested for many years, both the job offer and the call for surgery were a kind of magic: "Fue como que una barrita mágica me hizo 'pling', y me llamaron." (Anabel, 2013)[79]

The dilemma was that both calls reached her the same day. She should have started her new job the following Friday, and only two days later, on Sunday, she should have gone into hospital. She figured that the bus company would not keep her if, only one day after starting her new job, she told her boss that she had to go to hospital. Although the job was very important for her economic situation, sacrificing the sex surgery was not an option either: "Me jode mucho, pero lo otro llevo muchos años esperándolo y es vital." (Anabel, 2013)[80]

She risked contacting her future boss, explained her situation and asked to delay the beginning of her employment for one month. He agreed. Furthermore, he fulfilled her wish to record her personal data in the company with her new identity

78 "It was the 27th of February 2007 when they reassigned me in Málaga." (Anabel, 2013)

79 "It was like a magic wand went 'pling' over me, and they called me." (Anabel, 2013)

80 "I was really fucked, but for the other [the sex reassignment] I'd been waiting for many years, and it was vital." (Anabel, 2013)

in advance, even before Anabel had changed her official documents. Anabel asked him for this favour because, when starting to work, she would have to introduce her working card and her name would appear. She did not want it to be her male name.

She was hired permanently after six months, which was also due to the general obligations of the bus company to employ more women. Thus, some male co-workers, who even after three years did not have a permanent position, were sceptical. Anabel has been doing this job for many years now, although somewhere in her mind she has kept the wish to work as a psychologist someday; a wish she increasingly abandons as the years go by (she refers to it as a fact you actually know, but won't speak about).

4.7 Without a job

Several of my interlocutors were affected by unemployment. Although the unemployment rate is generally high in Spain (as mentioned earlier), some considered it particularly difficult to become part of a working environment because of their non-normative sex/gender biography. Ronaldo, as a trans man, found it especially difficult to make a living in the times when he felt himself to radiate an ambiguity. People stared at him in the streets and he felt rejected by society. This affected his job possibilities as well as his intimate life:

> "[…] no podía … pedir trabajo en cualquier sitio ni … relacionarme con … chica de cualquier manera, ni … socialmente no podía hacer lo que yo quería por mi apariencia." (Ronaldo, 2003)[81]

The more masculine his gender appearance became, the more he felt at ease, and things got easier.

As an FtM, he sees advantages with regard to achieving the desired masculine appearance so that people do not notice anything. For MtFs, on the other hand, who are aiming for a feminine appearance, it turns out more difficult to undo masculine developments, such as a deeper voice or typically male physical traits. Because of societal rejection towards discernibly trans people, he thinks that this influences the possibilities on the job market as well:

> "Incluso el, lo nuestro, la transexualidad será distinto también. Yo supongo para las, para los transexuales femeninos porque … la gente es muy mala y sigue no-

81 "I couldn't ask for a job anywhere or relate to a girl in any way, or… socially, I couldn't do what I wanted for my appearance." (Ronaldo, 2003)

> tando ese cambio, y a la hora de ellos no sé del trabajo de contratar a una persona que sea … transexual, yo lo veo más fácil para mí que para ellas." (Ronaldo, 2014)[82]

In 2006, Ronaldo underwent genital surgery, which turned out to be more complicated than he had anticipated. He reckoned with one operation and a stay of fifteen days in the hospital. However, because of insufficient blood circulation, the top of the constructed micropenis (a technique that uses the clitoris to construct a penis) was necrotic when they took the bandage off, and he had to endure two more operations. He was in the hospital for three months.

With regard to the change of name and sex on the official documents, he waited until the 2007 law was enacted, which allowed this change without genital surgery; even though (because of his already performed gender affirmation procedures) he could have done this earlier. However, with the implementation of the new law in 2007, the administrative process was less expensive and less embarrassing, because there was no more need for an additional independent forensic expert to confirm the operated sex, which would have meant to *bajar los pantalones* again (see Chapter 2.2). Emilia and Ronaldo married in 2009. Although they could have married earlier (independent of the state of the gender affirmation procedures) Ronaldo did not want to marry as a 'woman' (referring to the name and the sex on the documents).

Concerning his sense of well-being at his workplaces over the years (during and after transition), the increasing physical change and being noticed as male, made him feel more accepted and more at ease because he did not have to explain himself any longer. However, when we met again in 2014, he was unemployed for the third year. Until 2011, he had worked in a nautical club where he was responsible for the maintenance of the swimming pools. According to Ronaldo and his wife, the club modified the scope of duties of his job and included medical attendance (like first Aid, physiotherapy etc.). Ronaldo was dismissed and replaced by somebody who was expected to cover all these areas of responsibility for less money. Although they did not officially admit this, Ronaldo could not help but think that his sacking had something to do with his non-normative gender history.

To their economic situation, they had bought an apartment shortly before this happened. Due to the loss of his job, they could no longer pay the mortgage, and the bank threw them out. This incident was linked to the financial crisis that hit Spain in 2008 (for an analysis of the crisis, see e.g. Ban 2016; Royo 2013). Charnock et al. argue: "The onset of the global recession in 2007 exposed the contradictions of Spain's ten-year period of economic growth, built as it was upon the expansion of

82 "Our transsexuality is different as well. I suppose for the female transsexuals, because … people are very bad and keep noticing that change, and when it comes to … I don't know, about the job, of hiring a person who is transsexual, I find it easier for me than for them." (Ronaldo, 2014)

Eurozone-wide fictitious circuits of capital and debt" (Charnock et al. 2015: 174). Intertwined with no (or lower) income affecting the working class population due to unemployment (or lower wages), the financial crisis had a severe impact on housing provision, with a growing number of (court-ordered) evictions due to mortgage debts. Social movements emerged that, among others, strove for the right to housing (cf. Di Feliciantonio 2017; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Ronaldo and his family formed part of this social movement. For two years, they lived in occupied houses, finally in *La Corrala* in Seville. This site made headlines because the building belonged to a bank, and was occupied for two years by around 36 families. The police finally vacated the occupied building (cf. Granado 2014). Ronaldo, his wife Emilia and their daughter Nina were given a flat with four rooms in a village south-east of Seville, where they have lived on social welfare since then. Ronaldo has maternal kin in this village who occasionally contribute to Ronaldo's household, or try to support him in finding a job. Placing the families in the proximity of relatives was one of the criteria the city council used when distributing the families.

Emilia (who is a cook, and is also looking for a job) emphasised how much being out of work depresses Ronaldo. It could be argued that his unemployment, besides the economic consequences, puts an additional burden on Ronaldo because of his sense of duty as a father. This point emerged when we spoke about the consequences his gender non-normativity had for his daughter in school. Ronaldo and Emilia conclude that this posed no problem *per se* for Nina, because nobody knew. They experienced other kinds of conflicts. There was a homophobic *vecina* (neighbour) opposite their flat in Seville where they were living when I first met them. This neighbour made their lives there so unbearable that they moved out. Consequently, Nina had to undergo psychological treatment. Ronaldo wishes his daughter to be proud of him, in spite of their precarious financial situation because he was out of work. Ronaldo remembers how she always used to speak of him proudly, which in his narrative was also related to his role as a father earning money:

> Ronaldo: "[…] ella se siente orgullosa de sus padres y nosotros de ella y no … no ha tenido nunca ningún problema."
> Emilia: "Mhm" (affirmatively)
> Ronaldo: "Al contrario. Siempre mi Papá … mhh está en la piscina [refers to the workplace] mi Papá … trabaja bien mi Papá … en fin que es lo típico de los niños." (Ronaldo and Emilia, 2014)[83]

83 Ronaldo: "She is proud of her parents and we of her and never … she has never had any problem."
Emilia: "Mhm" (affirmatively)
Ronaldo: "On the contrary. Always my dad … mhh he is in the pool [refers to the workplace,] my dad … he works well my dad … in short, which is typical of children." (Ronaldo and Emilia, 2014)

Nina is successful in school, and they would like to reward her with 'a little present' (*un regalito)*; however, their financial straits (they dispose of an income of 400€ per month) make this difficult.

4.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter offered some insights into the diverse occupations my research partners performed to make a living. Except maybe for the young FtMs among my informants (like Bittor, who was able to concentrate on his university studies, and Diego, who managed to find a place where he can use his degree in psychology), the gender non-normative experiences often interrupted a possible working career. It altered (and restricted) their wishes, their possibilities and capabilities (the latter understood as the chances society offers its people to realise their potential). However, the experience of being trans intersects with other aspects of life, and this has its impact on how you find your way around.

For example, Ronaldo's unemployment and their precarity as a family (although Ronaldo cannot help but think that his dismissal had something to do with his transsexuality) are closely linked to the financial crisis that affected Spain. Their experience as squatters had much to do with the financial crisis that affected the population in general.

The case of Ramira shows that the importance of the gender non-conforming experience might somehow recede into the background as the years go by. This became obvious when her narration started to focus on political inequities and the unemployment situation of the younger generation in general. Nowadays she seems to be more concerned about political and economic problems, and no longer with being transsexual.

Diego made similar statements. From the moment he managed to have the documents changed, he has had no more problems with his former gender non-conformity, except for the consequences of medical treatment (see Chapter 3.2). He observes that he even forgets about it: "Pero no tengo la transexualidad como algo que forma parte de mi vida. Se me olvida muchas veces." (Diego, 2015)[84]

Thus, both Ramira and Diego reflect a process of normalisation that is related to temporality and improved structural factors (e.g. legislation).

The cases of Magdalena and Anabel depict very different ways of dealing with disclosure at the work place. Magdalena is afraid that she would lose her job in the public sector if anybody knew about her trans past. Therefore, she is anxious that

84 "But transsexuality for me is not something that forms part of my life. I forget it many times." (Diego, 2015)

nobody knows. Anabel took the risk of disclosing her gender non-conformity to her superior at the bus company out of a dilemma. This worked out positively for her, although she sometimes feels some tensions emanating from her colleagues at work. These opposite forms of action and their underlying reasons also reflect the diversity (and diverse life experiences concerning sex/gender non-conformity) of my research partners. However, the cases of those who try to hide their being trans (or their trans past) point especially to the fact that despite a growing public awareness of the existence of trans people over the last years, and despite legal achievements, the fear of being disadvantaged and discriminated is still omnipresent. This points to persisting societal prejudices and devaluation of trans persons, which, in turn, hamper their possibilities to make a living.