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This is the **accepted version** of the journal article:

Borràs Català, Vicent [et al.]. «The role of territory in the employability of young people». *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 35, Num. 2 (2022), p. 154-166 DOI 10.1080/13639080.2021.2018411

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Borràs, V., Trinidad, A., Alcaraz, N., & Moreno-Colom, S. (2022). The role of territory in the employability of young people. *Journal of Education and Work*, 35(2), 154–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.2018411>

# **The role of territory in the employability of young people**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this article is to analyse how the territory operates in the employability of young people who have failed or dropped out of school. As a starting hypothesis, we propose that the local traditions and the productive model linked to the territory condition the training and work expectations of the young population. A case study conducted within the framework of the AJOVE project "*Millorant l'ocupació de la joventut al territori*" funded by the Observatori Català de la Joventut is presented. The methodological strategy followed is qualitative, so we could compare the training and labour trajectories of three production models linked to different territories, specifically industry, services, and agriculture. The results indicate, on the one hand, common aspects shared by young people, regardless of place of residence, according to their training experience, family status, and gender. On the other hand, the territory is

important in the construction of expectations that underlie the decisions made about school and work.

**Keywords:** youth, employment, territory, training, gender

## 1. Introduction

Despite the historical nature of youth unemployment, the latest data on Spain show that the employment crisis that began in 2008 has introduced certain developments. On the one hand, male unemployment rates are close to those of women: the unemployment rate for men aged 16 to 19 is 45.53% and for men aged 20 to 24 is 29.62%, while that of women aged 16 to 19 years is 50.28% and for women aged 20 to 24 years is 30.72% (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2020, INE, 2020). The late industrialization process in Spain was characterized by an irregular territorial distribution, with the northern areas of the country (Catalonia and the Basque Country) becoming industrialized and the south (Andalusia and Extremadura) not, a situation that explains part of the current data. Thus, in the autonomous communities where the primary sector has traditionally had more weight (Andalusia, Extremadura, Castilla la Mancha), the unemployment rates of those under 25 are higher than 40%, while in communities in which the industrial and service sectors have had and still have more weight (Madrid, Catalonia, and the Basque Country), unemployment rates are less than 30%, though they are slightly higher for women in all these territories (1st Quarter 2020, INE 2020).

These data point to the prevalence of territory as a key element that could explain the situation of young people in the labour market and the convergence between genders, not because women's job expectations have improved but because young men's have worsened. In this sense, the specialized literature points to different explanations for the relationship between youth employment, territory, and gender.

First, from a historical perspective, the jobs done by women have adapted with the demands of domestic work and family care (Gadea et al. 2016; Torns et al. 2007). Following this same line, some work shows that the learning acquired in relation to domestic work and care is functional to certain jobs (McDowell 2000), just as young people make adaptations when occupying workplaces that have traditionally been dominated by the other gender (Otis and Wu 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019).

Second, there are those who have focussed on the territory as a fundamental element that configures the different cultures of work and, therefore, the expectations about work (Palenzuela 2014, MacDonald 2011, Green and White 2007, Pickering et al. 2012). Along the same lines, but offering a different point of view, Herod et al. (2003) focus on the expectations and strategies of individuals as a shaping element of the territory. Years ago, Massey (1984) noted that spatial patterns are not only a result of social relations, but are also part of the explanation for said relations. Sociospatial considerations, that is, the perception that young people themselves have of the territory in which they find themselves, influence decisions about their future employment trajectories (Escott 2012; Green and White 2007; Pickering et al. 2012; Ralphs et al. 2009).

Finally, there are studies that point to the territory as an identity-shaping element. The meanings of places and the links established with them are related to genealogy, economics, religion, and the personal narrative itself. The place implies a culture and a lifestyle that involves young people in all areas and therefore impacts their employment opportunities (Pickering et al. 2012, McDowell 2002).

This article considers to what extent the prolonged situation of unemployment, inactivity, and job insecurity among young people conditions their expectations, aspirations, and social identities in relation to work. To this end, part of the results of the AJOVE project “*Millorant l'ocupació de la joventut al territori*” funded by the Observatori Català de la Joventut are presented. This is a case study done in Catalonia in 2018. Considering Catalonia as the territory under study, unequal processes of industrialization are observed here. Barcelona and its metropolitan area have been characterized heavily by industry and services, while in the province of Lerida and some regions of Tarragona, the weight of the primary sector is much higher. On the other hand, the tourism sector of the province of Gerona has grown much since the 1960s. This study aimed to analyse the weight that the territory has in the construction of the work trajectories of young people who have experienced school failure or dropout.

As a starting hypothesis, we propose that the local traditions and the productive model linked to the territory condition the training and work expectations of young people. The transformations of the social value that young people attribute to work, the invisibility of skills and abilities that are not learned in training and professional fields, and the socioeconomic specificity of the territory are investigated.

A qualitative methodological strategy is taken to analyse the structure, meaning, and content of youth labour practices in the territory. We take into account different profiles of young people according to their school and employment situation, as well as gender and place of residence. Specifically, the training and employment situation of young people who are in places with different production models—services, industry, and agriculture—are compared.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The employability of young people is part of the political and scientific agenda. From a historical perspective, young people have been part of the most vulnerable groups and have been harmed by the employment crises in the European Union as a whole. However, the problem of youth employment in Spain emerges not only as a consequence of the economic crisis. It is a persistent phenomenon with structural features, which is accentuated in the context of the economic situation that represents the current crisis (Berlingieri et al. 2014). The seasonality, temporality, and low qualification of employment delay the entry of youths into the labour market in Spain compared to other countries. Unlike in previous years, the current situation incorporates four novelties: the volume of young people who want to work and cannot find work; the increase in unemployed men; inactivity as an individual response to unemployment; and prolonged precariousness, a situation that today with the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened for these same groups. Thus, unemployment and inactivity are not the only reasons for the fragility of young people, but the working conditions also lengthen the periods of transition, and uncertainty generates, in the long term, the so-called scar effect (Plantenga et al. 2013). This is an effect that has its roots in frequent employment in low-quality jobs has a long-term impact on income (Gregg and Tominey 2004; Escott and Buckner 2006; Green and White 2007; Webster et al. 2004), giving rise to a youthful perception of the labour market as a “hard and exploitative” environment (Furlong and Cartmel 2004).

If we add the gender perspective to this situation, we see how women have sought to adapt to the productive structures of the territory in a dual sense. In some cases, they seek to reconcile their jobs with the demands of the domestic tasks and care that they perform in their families (Torns et al. 2007). Gadea et al. (2016) show how, in the case of women who work in fruit handling warehouses, the type of work establishes a relationship between the productive and reproductive space. In others, adaptation

involves taking the more natural, household-linked skills and applying them to the demands of certain jobs (McDowell 2000). Gender markers, understood as values attributed to men and women, are adapted and reconstructed according to the demands of the work (Kemec 2008; Otis and Wu 2018; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles 2019).

Territory is a key element to consider in explaining the improvement of youth employability. The debate is between those who consider it a cause and those who consider it a consequence. On the one hand, it is understood as an explanatory variable that configures work cultures and the expectations that are created according to the different territories (Méndez et al. 2015; Palenzuela 2014, MacDonald and Marsh 2005, Green and White 2007, Pickering et al. 2012, Ward, 2007). On the other hand, turning around this unidirectional conception of territory as an explanatory factor, Herod et al. (2003) place the focus on the expectations and strategies of individuals as a shaping element of the territory. Therefore, this concept is not static but instead changes over time, where actors and the actions they help contribute as part of the result and its explanation (Marssey, 1984). They consider that the characteristics, expectations, and perceptions that young people assign to or have about their territory are those that influence and configure the possibilities that they themselves can offer and that in turn configure and reconfigure their spaces and places (Escott 2012; Ralphs et al. 2009). Territory goes beyond what is exclusively related to the productive structure: It is based on a notion of space linked to the idea of social relations of local support networks, which allows it, at the same time, to configure interconnections between them and the expectations of those who inhabit it (Ellem 2015). In this way, as pointed out by Palenzuela (2014), we consider that through work, space is transformed into territory and socialized space with interventions that modify its morphology but also give it a symbolic function, which serves as the basis for social reproduction.

Identity emerges as another dimension considered key in relation to the territory and its explanatory capacity. The importance of places to the identity of people has been recognized for a long time (Livingston et al. 2008; Relph 1976). Pickering et al. (2012) consider that territoriality is rooted in the culture of places, and this configures identities linked to education, the labour market, leisure, and ways of relating to each other. Although some authors, such as Giddens (1991), point to the loss of the importance of the locality and face-to-face contact, many studies that show the importance of the community, the neighbourhood, to the most privileged groups and especially to the

most disadvantaged (Gore et al 2007, Atkinson and Kintrea, 2004; Johnston et al., 2000; Loader, 1996). Relationship spaces and the local environment influence the psychosocial needs of young people. McLaughlin (1993) shows the importance of the locality to young people and how they use the place to shape their "embedded identities". Hall et al. (1999) also argue that locality is central to the identity of young people, and Cockburn (2008) suggests that most young people have a connection to their identity, place, and heritage. This is especially relevant to the situations of the most disadvantaged young people (MacDonald and Marsh 2005, Green and White 2007, Pickering et alt 2012). It is the ties that are established in these territories that are useful in the search for employment. Evidence suggests that social networks operate in complex ways, both facilitating and limiting, with varied intersections of the influences of family, friends, and the community (White and Green 2015). The place gives meaning to people, and people give meaning to places (Harvey, 1978). Places are the mortar for the conduct of daily life and the focus of the development of local identities and loyalties (Ward, 2007).

Finally, the works of Willis in the 1970s provided certain keys to understanding the school failure of young people from the working classes in Great Britain. Studies that explore the association between class and educational performance repeatedly show that young people with lower qualifications have greater problems in securing permanent work (Bradley et al., 2007). Along these lines, it is worth noting the review by Feito (2014) on the work of Willis 30 years later, questioning the place that was the subject of the research: a middle-class position from which young people of the working class are replaced. This review opens new questions and challenges, such as by investigating to what extent the exits from the formal educational system, or the failures in it, impact a person's fortunes in a labour market with precarious employment. Likewise, in some of his later works (1990 and 2004 with Dolby and Dimitriadis), Willis shows how the informal relationships of young people play a key role in understanding the appropriations and forms that serve to integrate or reconvert dominant cultural patterns into their practices.

Based on these debates in the specialized literature, we analyse youth employment trajectories based on the contributions of gender, territory, and social class with special attention to the process of identity construction according to the reinterpretation and assimilation of training received.

### **3. Methodology**

A qualitative methodological strategy was undertaken to analyse the employment situation of young people. We took into account training and work processes, the axes of social inequality, and territorial contexts. Thus, the variables that characterize the typological profiles analysed are based on three axes.

First, the presence/absence of institutionalized activity was considered according to whether young people studied and/or had a paid job or, on the contrary, did not perform any of these activities in their daily life.

Second, gender and social class. Specifically, we selected only young people (men and women) of the working class who have completed (or are working on) intermediate or higher education and who have some work experience. This decision was based on the greater impact that the employment crisis has had on this sociodemographic group. To ensure the desired demographic was selected and eliminate the effects that middle-class origins may have on some young people, we selected young fathers and mothers who had not enrolled in a university. Finally, the age of the people interviewed was between 18 and 24 years to ensure that they were in an early phase of their career.

The third axis was the local perspective, considering the need for a specific approach. A methodology is proposed that allows field work to be done in different territories based on their productive structures. The territories selected for the fieldwork are the metropolitan region of Barcelona, the city of Girona, and the regions of Ponent (province of Lleida) and Priorat (province of Tarragona). These places were chosen to cover significantly different traditions and productive structures, including the industrial sector, the service sector, and the agricultural sector, respectively.

Taking into account this set of variables, three typological profiles were constructed based on the absence or presence of institutionalized activities in the daily life of young people. The first profile consisted of young people who had left the educational system and who were currently not employed. A second profile was made up of young people who, at the time of the interview, were engaged in training or paid work in addition to having had an episode of unemployment or work inactivity. The third profile included young people in training.

Data were collected through the in-depth interview technique. A total of five interviews were conducted in each of the territories to cover all the characteristics that make up the set of typological profiles constructed. The qualitative data were analysed through content analysis to capture both the context in which the discourses of young people are framed, as well as the meanings they attribute to the different phases of their training and work trajectories.

The young people were recruited through several public agencies present in the different territories, such as the Regional Councils and the technicians who implement youth employment policies, as well as through direct contact with public educational institutes. The fieldwork was carried out during the months of November 2017 and March 2018. All participants were informed orally and in writing of the anonymity of the interviews, and a document was signed prior to the interviews. The interviews were divided into four informative blocks focused on study formation, work, free time, and future expectations.

Table 1. Characteristics of the typological profiles.

TYPOLOGICAL PROFILE		
AGE	GENDER	TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL/EMPLOYMENT PATH
18–24 years	Man/Woman	School failure (without compulsory high school). Currently, he/she neither studies nor works.
18–24 years	Man	Failure/dropout. Return to training (currently continuing to study).
18–24 years	Man	Career continues with both school and work, with some period of no studying or working.
18–24 years	Woman	Failure/dropout. Has returned to training while back in school.
18–24 years	Woman	Career path continues with both school and work, with some period of no studying or working.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

#### 4. Results

The results are presented under the three domains that make up the analytic model: training as a configurator of job expectations; work that includes the processes of entry, expectations, and experiences; and identity at work as a cultural element.

#### **4.1 The formation between refuge and possibility**

The educational system continues to expel working-class young people, as Willis pointed out in the 1970s, either because teachers are perceived as strangers who do not care about them or because they do not find meaning or motivation in the things being taught. This situation contributes to the adoption of a strategy of collective resistance to the educational system by the peer group, establishing disruptive practices in the daily life of classrooms.

*"For example, the math teacher was rude. He explained and you could do what you wanted, but if he caught you he would scold you...and if you asked him, or when he said: "do you understand?" if you asked him, he would tell you the same thing but slowly, then you figure: "Well, then, I will not even ask..." And then if, he would...if I failed then he would say: "You do not study." (WRTI)<sup>1</sup>*

Studies and their relationship with employment opportunities are strongly linked to perceived territory in two dimensions. On the one hand, the territory's productive structure offers the possibility of working in what one is being trained in, and the possibilities are concretized through the social networks that exist in it. On the other hand, the territory is also configured by a framework of training, social relations, and employment expectations, extending beyond the productive structure of the territory, and this is what governs the selection of a career path (Ellem 2016). This situation operates positively in the service sector:

*"Even before I finished 1st, I had not even finished the 1st year, and they already offered me a job, in a kind of refreshment stall in a hotel. I had already worked, I already have...because here it is very important too, you have contacts. Whether it is a colleague...he knows his boss and this boss already calls someone, because he needs people for an event, for example. A banquet, whatever...Of course, people say: "Instead of getting someone from the street and having to teach them from scratch, at least the first-year students already have a base here." (MRTS)*

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<sup>1</sup> The citation codes were created from the following outline:  
W/M: Woman/Man

DO/RT/TC: Dropout/Returned to training/Trajectory continues

A/I/S: Agricultural sector/Industrial sector /Service sector

Examples: WRTI: Woman, Returned to Training, Industrial sector; MDOA: Man, Dropout, Agricultural sector

The situation differs in rural territories, which are perceived as limited in that there are few training opportunities and the job expectations they can offer are underwhelming. A place where, despite the existence of a social network, the perception of existing work is negative and is considered as a last resort, so that it ends up discouraging its professionalizing potential and excludes the youth from some possibilities.

*"Because you have to go to Reus to have something else on offer." (DRTA)*

*"My father told me that if I did not study I would go to work in the fields (...) They were settled on this, and it was either study or work." (MRTA)*

All this is due to a labour tradition in these sectors of low-skilled jobs, where training has been carried out mostly on the job. This situation is observed, as we have pointed out, especially in the agricultural and service sectors, although differences between them emerge. In the hospitality sector (services), the territory offers employment opportunities, with training being something added: there is the possibility of professionalizing an existing work activity, and it is perceived that with training, employability will increase. The sector offers work according to availability, aptitudes, and skills without requiring, in many cases, prior training. However, people with specialized training have more job opportunities.

*"And the man comes to me, and says: "Do you want to work with me? Like that, without further ado he gives me the job. In terms of: "You do very well, and such...Where are you going to study?" And I had already discussed it with my mother, and I told him, "I am going to enter the Institut d'Hostaleria (Institute of Hospitality) of Girona." And so he looked at me with a face as if saying: "Wow..." And he took me in. And I have been working there until... Precisely, thanks to him, he contacted the hotel manager and now I'm working at the hotel." (MRTS)*

In contrast, work without training is very common in the agricultural world, where there is no need to professionalize such employment, in part because it does not configure the horizon of the labour project and therefore does not seek to become professionalized.

*"Everyone works for the family. Some more, some less, everyone, yes. It's that here everyone has land, or there are few of them, so everyone works a little at the least." (DRTA)*

The discourse on training includes a set of dimensions that overlap and show some contradictions between the imagined and the practical. On the one hand, training is perceived by the family in two ways: the desire for social mobility that will enable sons and daughters to get an education that will give them better job opportunities, and on the other hand, the need to find a job in a world of work where the possibilities are worse than those of the parents. For previous generations, work was more stable, and training was not necessary. In contrast, now the work is unstable, and training is not a guarantee.

*"Before, people...before, it was more normal for people not to...not to complete compulsory high school. They would go straight into work. Now perhaps it is too extreme. Back then it also was, but in the easy direction, and now it is too extreme in the difficult direction. You have to be very prepared, there are very prepared people, that if university degrees, that if titles, that if cycles, that if...work experience, people with trade also...It is good because we leave more prepared, but it is more difficult than when it comes to...to...to finding stability." (MRTI)*

However, the growing importance of training among young generations implies, in the case of the working class people interviewed, a dichotomy between desire and reality. On the one hand, assuming the discourse is more typical of the middle class, the desire to study to get a job that they like is perceived as vocational. On the other hand, the most pragmatic and realistic vision understands training as a condition for finding employment, which is necessary to earn a living. A dichotomy that allows us to understand the imbalances and paradoxes that are manifested between the training received and the likelihood of having a job in the sector for which they have been trained.

*"Well, I think not, because there are always offers, but there is never what you are looking for. With my friends who go, one did the electricity PQPI, and there is never that kind of job, then another that got a middle degree, I do not remember what it was, and there is no job for that, and I look for anything that doesn't require schooling, because that...I do not have my compulsory high school, so I look for anything, whatever they will give me, and there is nothing. So we always say: "Why the hell do we go here if there is nothing for what we do?" (MDOS)*

#### **4.2. The territory: expectation and possibility of work**

The stories of the people interviewed show that the gateway to the world of work passes, mostly, through informal channels where social capital is of the utmost importance. These contacts come from family and friendships that are closely linked to the territory and, therefore, to its productive structure.

In the territories of the primary sector and the service sector, it is observed that informality as a way to access work opportunities has been more the norm than the exception, whether in agricultural work (regions of the province of Lleida or Tarragona) or in the hotel industry (regions of Gerona province). These are sectors where traditionally, employment has been characterized by temporary contracts linked to seasonality and where informality has been a usual form of work. These are some characteristics of employment that have been and continue to be perfectly functional for the type of small and family business that characterizes a large part of the labour supply. At the same time, these sectors adapt to this type of youth that presents changing itineraries, with inputs and outputs of the training system:

*"I started thanks to a gig. Thanks to my mother's friend. And I said: "What do I have to do?" And that's it...opening bottles of cava, serving cava...wine...serving people. Of course, it was an opening. And of course, they told me: "We have an alternative, but it is very expensive, so if you want, we will pay you for the books." (MRTS)*

Youths accept these routes of entry, as well as the working conditions linked to them, which were traditionally more typical of the agricultural sectors and services linked to tourism. However, the transformations that have taken place in the production processes and successive labour reforms have caused these temporary and informal conditions to extend to the industrial sector, which were traditionally much more stable.

*"Well, I had a colleague who was manager at the time at a Condis. But, well, it was 1 year...well, it was 6 months and the extension. I completed the year; but...it was no longer necessary. I already told my colleague that...if it was a few months...that...he could just tell me, it seemed perfect because I was already looking for something else in the meantime." (MRTI)*

Perceptions about the ease or difficulty of finding a job change depending on the territory. Young people coming from the agrarian world share the perception that it is always possible to find work in the field, either through networks of friends or through family members, so that being without a job is not an option. However, a paradox emerges to the extent that the shared imagination maintains that one can always go to work in the field, but nobody wants to do it. It is a discourse learned from the family itself. Young people have internalized that this work can always be done but that it is the worst possible option. Entering this sector is seen as a punishment, as becoming familiar with harsh working conditions, and as a way to appreciate the value of training for improving oneself. These are therefore local contexts that permeate conceptions about the possibilities and aspirations of youth in relation to work (Escott 2012).

*"The first year I don't mind...because he's a friend of my father's, and my father told him: take him, try him out and if you don't like him, if you see that he does not do well, you give him back to me, with no strings attached or anything." (MRTA)*

In industrial areas, the ways to access the labour market combine traditional forms, such as family networks typical of other sectors such as agriculture, with the normalization of online searching. The nature of the job offers and high demand lead to this combination of strategies: from the use of internet portals to the delivery of resumés by hand to temporary work agencies (TWAs) and family contacts.

*"I do not know...There is the Infojobs, the internet to look for work. I would look on the internet...and maybe I would do a resumé, which they are teaching us to do well, I would go to companies...I do not know, I have not thought about it much." (WRTI)*

In the case of the service sector, specifically in the field of hospitality, there is also an overlap of traditional forms (contacts, resumes) with new strategies (internet portals) for

job searches. However, the same characteristics of employment—a high rate of turnover, temporality, and informality—reinforce traditional strategies, so that one's network of contacts becomes the usual way of finding work. Here, again, the territory has its effect through the network of local relations that facilitate access to the labour market (Green and White 2007, Escott 2012).

*"And... and it has truly been...through contacts, and me searching a little, and the resumé, that helps a lot. The truth is that it has been quite easy for me. I suppose that also because it is the hospitality sector, the contacts help a lot, also the resume, and obviously that you do the job well, of course." (WTCS)*

Another of the key elements that make up the perception of work and the possibilities of access to it is gender. Women have internalized, or rather naturalized, that there are sectors where the demand for labour always exists. The work of caring for children in its most informal and less professionalized version will always exist and can be taken when other options are not there.

*"I can always be a babysitter, I suppose." (DRTI)*

*"Man, before it was very fashionable to be a babysitter, a waitress...Now what I see more is...I do not think that...I do not even consider it a job, because for what they pay and what is done, for me, that is not working." (WTCI)*

This perception is supported by the first work experiences of women, in which it was presumed that they had innate skills and attitudes. Thus, a correspondence is established between their condition as women, the perception of job opportunities, and their entry into the labour market, configuring the perception that certain jobs are seen as attractive opportunities.

*"Because I like children a lot, free time...especially in the open air, the mountains, movement activities I like... I like to face the public, that helps me overcome shyness, which I have a lot of...I like people." (WRTA)*

*"I think with children, anything, but with children. Because here the majority of work is in the field, I have no idea about the field. And I don't like it either." (WRTA)*

These young people perceive and conceive as successes the situations in which training is linked to the productive sector of the territory, and they feel fortunate to find employment. Thus, the fit between individual choices and employment opportunities in the territory converts expectations into aspirations linked to employment opportunities.

*"Even before I finished 1st, I had not even finishing the 1st year, and they already offered me a job, in a kind of refreshment stall in a hotel. I had already worked, I already have...because here it is very important too, you have contacts. Whether it is a colleague...he knows his boss and this boss already calls someone, because he needs people for an event, for example. A banquet, whatever...Of course, people say: "Instead of getting someone from the street and having to teach them from scratch, at least the first-year students already have a base here." (MRTS)*

#### 4.3. Work continues to be at the forefront of the youth's mind

Work continues to occupy a central place in the decisions, expectations, and trajectories of youths, and this happens regardless of territory and gender. Thus, the experiences of unemployment and the absence of work and school are experienced as emptiness, as nothingness, which is more crude for men.

*"But there are also many people who want to work and...they fall apart, because they are looking for it in any way, if you need to lift stones with your nails, you understand what I mean, right? Anyway, come on. And he does not get it, he does not get it and he collapses. And I understand that because I have lived through that stage, and it happens...I had a very rough time, I had a very rough time." (MRTI)*

However, it also happens very clearly for women. Work is very important, it is what gives meaning to life, so that even in a world where material needs disappear, they do not conceive of a life without working. In this hypothetical scenario, work acquires a dimension of personal fulfilment more typical of conceptions of the middle classes and not as instrumental as occurs in the working classes, as shown by other studies (Borràs et al 2019).

*"I ask you a hypothetical question: if you won the lottery and you had enough money to live without working, would you like to work?"*

*"Yes, yes."*

*"Why?"*

*"To feel fulfilled. I would feel a little useless. I feel useless if I do nothing. Doing nothing bores me, it's like no, I would be bored." (WRTA)*

The future always involves work. When one does not have it, it is the search for it that gives meaning to time. Here, again, it is the territory that marks the path; the territory, its networks, its space, and the possibilities of mobility in it that explains the search, the time, and the dedication to work.

*"Well, luckily here in Granollers there are many industrial areas, and I went from company to company. (MRTI)*

*"All of us here, Granollers, those who play with the Llagosta, Martorelles, what there is in La Roca...Then I went more to what is Montornés, Parets, that there are more...But I already travelled the entire Vallés." (MRTI)*

There are certain imbalances between the desires of young people to study what they like and the reality of the labour market offered by the productive model of the territory. In this sense, the discourse of young people from the working class integrates two visions. On the one hand, the hegemonic discourse of the dominant middle-class groups perceives work as a realm of personal fulfilment. It is based on an idyllic vision of

freedom of choice and of vocation that is manifested even in sectors such as the hospitality industry, where poor labour conditions and the absence of labour promotion are the norm.

*"I love working as a waiter, it's what fulfils me, it's... yes, yes. Maybe I wouldn't work every day, but I love it. It is what I have told you before, or Pole Position mechanic or in the kitchen, service...[laughs]. Yes, yes, I love talking, social relationships, and that is why I love being a waiter." (MRTS)*

*"A good job is...that you like doing it. That you feel comfortable, that you like to do it, and I do not know, and that you enjoy doing it. And that is it, I think it is the most important thing and I don't know...and that you enjoy doing it. That's the most important thing, I think, and not counting the hours you are at work or anything like that. It is more to feel satisfied." (MTCS)*

On the other hand, the need marked by the situation these young people have left gives them a reality principle in which work represents the only alternative to avoid falling into a vacuum. They are aware that the situation can always worsen, so the work is necessary, and they feel lucky if they have it or their family members have it.

*"Luckily, my parents have always done well. Luckily, they have not been short of money, they have always been working. I have had that luck. But of course, other families have been like...with evictions...Well, the barbarities that have been seen...I have a couple of friends who were like me, well that in other...I mean, that at different times, different from mine, they have also been without work or anything, and their parents were kicked out of work and they fired one. Well, we helped them and everything so that they would not be evicted, but another was kicked out of their house. That I have lived through my friends these evictions, you know? That I don't even want to think about it for my family..." (MRTI)*

It is therefore about two visions that may seem contradictory but that agree about perceptions and about reality. The discourse of personal self-realization depends on having a job where there is a good relational environment, although the working conditions are bad and there is a false perception of choice, given the few or limited possibilities that the territory offers, so having a stable job is the best possible scenario.

*"Well, one who works, of course...I do not know, well...full time, that. It would be fine, yes." (MDOS)*

These young people are looking for work and specifically a job linked to the territory but that does not confer an identity, beyond the possibilities of employability.

These circumstances work perfectly well in a local production system, where some of the existing training in some cases (hospitality) is adapted to the work opportunities, conferring a necessary plus, which helps to build the idea of personal self-realization. In others (agricultural sector), since the training has been traditionally carried out in the workplace, the training that exists now has no relation to the job opportunities or is not related to the unskilled workplaces that are hiring.

## **5. Conclusions**

The article analyses the weight that the territory variable has in the construction of the labour and training trajectories of youth who have failed or dropped out of school. As a starting hypothesis, we proposed that the local traditions and the productive model linked to the territory would condition the training and work expectations of the young population.

The results of this study confirm the importance of the territory variable. They show that the expectations of the interviewees emerge in line with the possibilities that the productive sectors of each territory offer. The territorial differences are clear. On the one hand, the service sector is characterized by a greater success of fitting between the training supply and the labour demand. In the industrial sector, the myth of training prevails; young people come into a complicated reality and have notable difficulties entering the labour market despite training degrees. Finally, there is an absence of training oriented to the agricultural sector, and there is a perception of agricultural jobs as a "punishment" due to the poor working conditions (in most cases gained through family tradition). Thus, the meaning of training is also linked to the territory. While young people perceive entering the service sector as a success, an agricultural job is seen as a failure. In the industry and service sectors, training is perceived as an opportunity for job improvement, while in the agricultural sector, training is an opportunity to flee to other sectors.

In the agricultural and service sectors, to a greater extent than in the industrial sector, jobs are gotten through local networks, friends, and family. The territory or its conception goes beyond the productive structure, since it is through these networks and the local conception of the type of work that ends up shaping the expectations of youth. Success for these young people lies in getting a job that they have training for, which they assume will be a better job with better conditions through which they will feel a certain degree of self-realization. Their work experience has been contradictory to this expectation: the work they have done has been characterized by poor conditions and little chance of promotion. To a certain extent, the temporal reality of inputs and outputs of training and jobs ends up determining the job opportunities that exist in the territories.

Returning to the main theoretical debates, job expectations are strongly linked to territories (Palenzuela 2014, MacDonald and Marsh 2005, Green and White 2007, Pickering et al 2012, Ward, 2007), while they also shape one's own territory (Herod et

alt 2003, Escott, 2012, Ralphs et al., 2009). The youths studied here perceive training as a refuge when nothing can be done and an opportunity to get a job that, at best, they may like. In cases where training is linked to the employment opportunities offered by a territory, achieving a fit between employment, training, and territorial opportunities is considered a success. Mostly, the expectations that young people internalize are based on a model of precarious labour market entry and no guarantee of stability in the medium term.

Finally, in relation to the transformations of social value that young people with truncated training trajectories attribute to work, this work confirms that such transformations continue to be a central element in their lives. While there are no gender differences in labour centrality, they do emerge in the job expectations. Women have internalized or rather naturalized the existence of a precarious market niche linked to domestic and care work to which they can always turn. They share with children a paradoxical vision: Work is a path to personal fulfilment linked to the usefulness of training, which is part of the world of desires; at the same time, their work experience places them in unstable, precarious jobs where an instrumental value predominates, placing them on the plane of need—a need to which they are subject due to their family origin, the work environment in which they are socialized, and their own work experiences. In a way, work and its connection to the territory configure a type of identity, as Pickering et al. (2012) and contrary to what Giddens (1991) pointed out. Work, and the perception of it, crosses other explanatory axes, such as social class and gender, as we have pointed out.

## 6. References

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