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## Introduction. Mobility and Migration in Later Life

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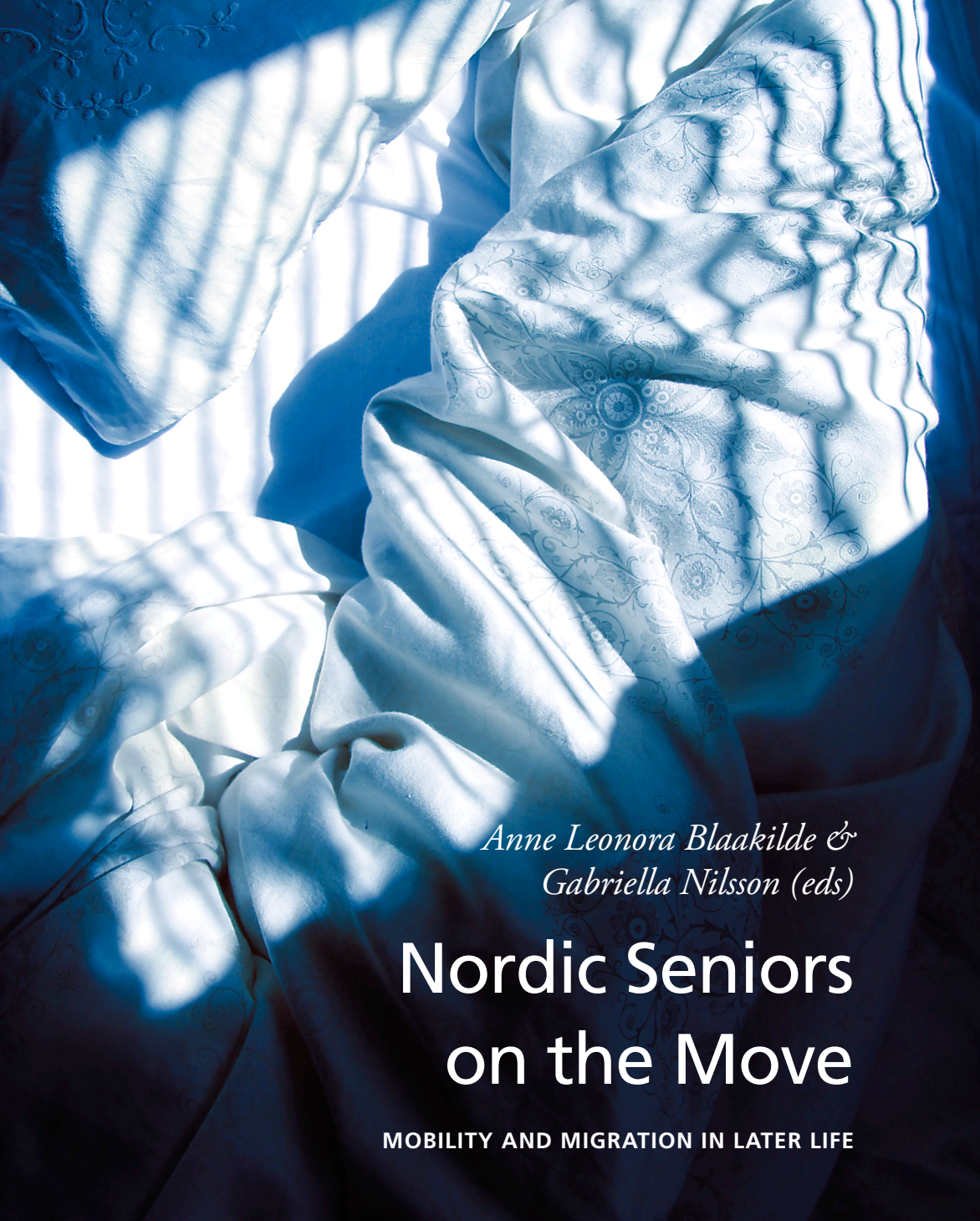
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*Anne Leonora Blaakilde &  
Gabriella Nilsson (eds)*

# Nordic Seniors on the Move

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION IN LATER LIFE

LUND STUDIES IN ARTS AND CULTURAL SCIENCES 4

## NORDIC SENIORS ON THE MOVE





# Nordic Seniors on the Move

## Mobility and Migration in Later Life

ANNE LEONORA BLAAKILDE & GABRIELLA NILSSON (EDS)



LUNDS  
UNIVERSITET

LUND STUDIES IN ARTS AND CULTURAL SCIENCES 4

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## Preface

The work with this book was initiated already in December 2011 as we, the editors, met at a conference held in Lund, Sweden, in the Nordic Network of Health Research within Humanities and Social Sciences. We talked about seniors on the move, which we had both studied, each from a different perspective, and how they are not only mobile, but in some ways really avant-garde; representing new ways of living in a global world with increasing opportunities of mobility.

We decided to invite scholars, who had studied Nordic seniors on the move from a qualitative perspective, to participate in the writing of this anthology. We sent out our invitations to scholars from the Nordic countries and we ended up with seven articles representing three of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Sweden and Finland. Furthermore, we were lucky to receive a positive response from the architect Deane Simpson, who has worked with retirement migration in a global perspective. His chapter on various types of international retirement migration presents an international context from an architect's perspective.

We would like to thank the authors for their contributions and patience during the process, which has been on the move in various tempi during these two years. In accordance with the increasing demands for academic control of quality, we will not refrain from mentioning that all the Nordic chapters have undergone double blind peer review.

Since the review process is completed, we would like to express our gratitude for the professional and constructive readings by Åsa Alftberg, Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University, Sweden; Eva Algreen-Petersen, Municipality of Copenhagen, Denmark; Janicke Andersson, Centre for Ageing and Supportive Environments (CASE), Lund University, Sweden; Jonas Andersson, Danish Building Research Institute,



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University of Aalborg, Denmark; Kirsten Danielsen, NOVA, Norway; Tove Harnett, School of Social Work and CASE, Lund University, Sweden; Anna Sofia Lundgren, Department of Culture and Media Studies, Umeå University, Sweden; Finnur Magnusson, the Faculty of Health and Society, Malmö University, Sweden; Bjarke Oxlund, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Christine E. Swane, the foundation Ensomme Gamles Værn, Denmark; Ninni Trossholmen, Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg, Sweden and Ida Wentzel Winther, Department of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark.

We would also like to thank Lund Studies in Arts and Cultural Sciences; a book series that started just when we needed a publisher. We are honoured to have this compilation of chapters regarding Nordic avant-garde seniors published in this new series.

The existence of this anthology is based on a generous grant from Center for Healthy Aging, University of Copenhagen in Denmark ([www.healthyaging.ku.dk](http://www.healthyaging.ku.dk)). The Center is financed by the NORDEA-Foundation; we owe great thanks to both the foundation and to the funding authority and leader of the humanistic programme within Center for Healthy Ageing, Astrid Pernille Jespersen, SAXO-Institute, Department of Ethnology. We also give thanks to the foundation Svend Grundtvigs og Axel Orlriks legat from Denmark. For the help in language revision, we will thank Judith Crawford who minutely went through the whole book for us, as well as Camilla Asplund Ingemark for her proofreading of the final manuscript.

*Copenhagen, December 2013*  
Anne Leonora Blaakilde

*Lund, December 2013*  
Gabiella Nilsson

# Introduction. Mobility and Migration in Later Life

*Anne Leonora Blaakilde & Gabriella Nilsson*

I believe that all people need to move about. Actually, some have difficulties in doing so. They stay in their home neighbourhoods where they've grown up and feel safe. I can understand that, but my wife and I, we didn't want that. We are more open to new ideas.

This anthology is about seniors on the move. In seven chapters, Nordic researchers from various disciplines, by means of ethnographic methods, attempt to comprehend the phenomenon of Nordic seniors who move to leisure areas in their own or in other countries.

The number of seniors involved in this kind of migratory movement has grown considerably within the last 20 years. An increase in mass tourism is one explanation, but this may also be the result of generally stronger finances among the age group. Costa del Sol, along the Mediterranean coastline and Österlen in Southern Sweden are two examples of locations that have become attractive to lifestyle migrants. The warmer climate and the expectations of a certain quality of life are recurrent pull factors. The quote above gives voice to one of these seniors, stressing the necessity of moving. In his view, this signifies an open attitude to new ideas – contrary to conventional images of old people as sedentary and disinclined to changes.

It is argued in this book that the fact that more people live longer, with better health, leads to a multiplicity of ways of growing old. As a result of

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this, paradoxes and polarities might arise; seniors cope with their lives all along the scale between fit and frail, weak and wealthy, poor and powerful, conservative, dynamic and unpredictable. This is valid for the Nordic seniors on the move as well. Moving may entail great economic dilemmas and challenges for individuals, social networks, and nation states. As shown here, mobility and migration have implications for identities, traditions, feelings of belonging, family relationships and friendships, health, images of old age, societal planning and policies, and even for religious attachment.

The phenomenon of seniors on the move is accompanied by a growing academic interest, and incorporates a variety of different perspectives and concepts, such as lifestyle migration, international retirement migration, rural retirement migration and health migration. This book contributes to the international body of literature about later life migration, specifically representing experiences made by Nordic seniors on the move. The incentive to place the Nordic countries in the limelight derives from the significant point that these countries largely share cultural and societal structures and – not least, the weather. The seven chapters representing experiences from a Nordic perspective are finalised by a chapter including an international perspective of retirement migration by the architect Deane Simpson who has studied and worked with “gerotopias” around the world.

This anthology presents a joint statement, intended for international scholars in the field, but also for Nordic policymakers and practitioners involved in the daily life and needs of the many people who move in later life. If movers and migrants in later life wish for a good read – you are most welcome.

### Nordic Seniors today

Humanity is getting older. In a global context, contemporary ageing cohorts constitute an increasing part of the population. Inherent in this development is the fact that more people live longer with better health, the outcome is that there are a multiplicity of ways of growing old. In short, the representations of later life are numerous – and they are changing significantly from previous ideas and images of what it means to be old.

As a consequence, recent retirees are often attributed other properties and characteristics than previous generations, such as a more active lifestyle, a better health and stronger finances (Edmunds & Turner 2002; Gilleard & Higgs 2007; Karisto 2007; Rasmussen 1985, 2005). This is also connected with the idea of increased mobility for elderly people today.

People can to some extent be seen as products of the times they have lived in, and one of the many tendencies of our time includes increasing possibilities and the propensity for mobility among all age groups. This is also the case with seniors. In their lifetime, a good part of them have lived with and experienced the phenomenon of globalisation in the meaning of greater interaction with countries and cultures all over the world. This may be by means of tourism to foreign countries and of the arrival of new items for purchase and consumption in one's home country, not to mention new citizens from other countries. Mass tourism to Southern Europe began in the Nordic countries in the 1960s; during this same period, the trend of backpacking arose amongst youths, many travelled in Europe as well as in Asia. Consequently, contemporary Nordic seniors have, compared with previous groups of elderly people, a life-long experience of tourism and travelling to sunnier and warmer places. This is not necessarily a tradition that comes to an end in later life; on the contrary, the amount of seniors moving and migrating is increasing.

Traditionally, ageing has been discursively equated with the opposite of mobility (Nilsson 2008), although in recent decades a different image of ageing has been established in the media and in popular science (Nilsson 2010; Lundgren & Ljuslinder 2011). Their life-long experience of tourism and travelling are understood to make seniors today more mobile. Over the last decades, a gradual increase of moving as a way to achieve a certain quality of life has become evident, especially among recent retirees (Walters 2000; Andersson 2002; Abramsson & Andersson 2012).

Another phenomenon of mobility relevant for the Nordic countries is the societal change from a structure based on rural and decentralized living and working conditions to an urban society supported by a network of infrastructure, which gives easier access to get around. Hence, some of these rural localities have now changed from previously being desolate, to currently being attractive resorts because of their natural environment.

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Such places have increasingly grown in value, connoting leisure time for (primarily) affluent people. The importance of nature for the image of “the Nordic identity” has been discussed, (Louisiana 2012; Löfgren 1993; Öhman & Simonsen 2003), and these rural and natural areas tend to attract Nordic seniors who aim for peace of mind, nature and a simple life. Even other kinds of mobility related to the living arrangements of seniors concern a newer tendency in the Nordic countries, which in various forms are connected with an international trend of age-based community living; so-called “gerotopias” (Simpson 2012). Nordic countries do not (yet) have separate senior villages like for instance the Villages in the USA, presented in Deane Simpson’s chapter in this book. However, new forms of intranational lifestyle migration occur, for instance in specific rural and /or attractive areas, as shown in Gabriella Nilsson’s chapter. In addition, certain cooperative ways of living in later life are emerging in the geography of housing arrangements, described by Marianne Abramsson.

### Seniors in later life

“Seniors” is a concept we have chosen among many possibilities for the people in question in this book, belonging to a certain phase in life, for which we prefer the term “later life” in this context. We sometimes apply “the elderly”, or “retirees”, as broad designations in general terms, mostly as a case of linguistic variation. A handful of concepts and life course categories entitling seniors are available, such as “old age”, “the third/fourth age”, “the baby boomers” or even “Mappies” (Mature Affluent Pioneering People); (Laslett 1989; Philipson 2007; Karisto 2007; Nilsson 2011). We concur with the theoretical point of departure indicating that not only old age, but also the course of life in which old age is contextualised, are cultural constructions (Cole 1992; Hazan 1994; Hareven 1995). This implies a wariness of certain conceptualisations of “the old” that are applied in popular and academic discourses, as they are defined by means of different indicators and connoting a multitude of meanings (Nilsson 2011). Most of these terms are contributing to a delimited understanding of a population group, which in fact is characterised by considerable heterogeneity (Blaakilde 2007a).



While avoiding to indicate precise definitions of the population in focus in this anthology, we employ no common chronological age definitions, and no particular indications of either frailty or energy. In some studies presented here, the chronological age is not defined; in some it starts at 55 (Abramsson), and in others, even migrants at the age of 40 years are included (Blaakilde), depending on their life situation related to migration. In some chapters “third age” is applied as an indicator of resources and leisure time (Simpson). Our choice of rather blurry age-definitions are also used because of a theoretical preference to life course perspectives of aging, trying to grasp the important influences of earlier events and experiences for later life (Rossi 1955; Hareven 2000).

Several of the chapters in this book apply an intersectional perspective, incorporating social categories of not only age, but also gender and social class, in order to grasp some of the many representations of people living in later life. The phenomenon of retirement migration tends to be conjured up in the literature as presenting the retired seniors primarily as affluent people (Williams et al. 1997; King et al. 2000; Warnes et al. 2004). In some of the forthcoming chapters, this figuration will be challenged. We aim at incorporating these heterogeneous representations in general terms with an age categorisation such as senior, and we also try to acknowledge the blurriness between life phases by utilizing the rather vague term “later life”. Our intention of choosing these terms is to embrace, and not to confine, possible images, meanings and experiences represented by the different populations studied in this book.

By choosing the term senior we are supporting a discourse originating from the corporate field of business, which is specifically discussed in the chapter on senior housing by Abramsson in this book. However, the term senior is also widespread in general usage, it is distinguished from “old age” in that the latter term to a higher degree connotes diseases and frailty, whereas we want to include implications of strength and energy in the perceptions of later life.

From a cultural historical perspective, it must also be acknowledged that even though the representations of old age will always be multifaceted, this group of people are exposed to, and imprinted by, different social and material realities, which influence their lives and their life course (Eisen-

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stadt 2003/1956; Mannheim 1952; Hareven 2000; Edmunds & Turner 2002). This is an important aspect for the conditions, possibilities and experiences of the populations studied in this book, especially concerning the options for mobility and retirement.

### Retirement and pensions

Whether or not the “Classic, Nordic Welfare State model” (World Economic Forum 2011) is a homogeneous entity is a point of debate. There is, however, no doubt that the Nordic countries to a large degree have been historically engaged in a societal development influenced by the social-democratic welfare state principles of universalism, which were especially prevalent in the middle of the 20th century. During this period, a pension system and a social system was effected, based on universalistic principles, providing every citizen with a state-financed right to social and economic security regarding both old age pension and free access to public health services (Petersen & Åmark 2006). Since the 1980s, the Nordic welfare model has become more diffuse; in various ways, the Nordic countries have accepted supplementary principles of corporatism, encouraging private pensions especially linked with the labour market. However, the basic universalistic principles are still ensuring every Nordic citizen security concerning a basic economic help and free access to most health services, which is an important prerequisite for the mobility and migration options for Nordic seniors. The rights to retire from the labour market and to receive economical support, such as a pension or other financial means, are fundamental preconditions for any option to leave one’s home and to make a move in later life. Both public and private pensions are in most cases provided also while living abroad, whereas access to public health services can be limited only to citizens staying in their home country.

The basic public pension benefit is considerably lower than the mean wage, but it should ideally be sufficient for an independent living in one’s own home. This is in accordance with the ideology of old age in the Nordic countries (Szebehely 2003), since the overall, societal structure is based on a combination of universalism, individualism and citizens’ rights, as

opposed to societies with a high dependency on kinship relations (Eisenstadt 2003/1956). Though the Nordic welfare states are known for their “high core values of equal opportunities, social solidarity and security for all” (Norden 2013), income levels in later life can be immense, and for some of the seniors on the move studied in this book, their financial capacity are way beyond average. For instance, this is the case regarding the Swedes who move to Österlen, as described by Nilsson in this book. Others, for instance some of the ill Danish migrants whom Anne Leonora Blaakilde met at Costa del Sol and in Alanya in Turkey, have an income below the average of retirees in Denmark.

According to social law in some of the Nordic countries, people who have been living outside the country during the course of their lives are only entitled to a part of the basic economic support which is provided to people who stay within the borders of their country all their lives. Especially Denmark has strict rules regarding this, which will be touched upon in Blaakildes chapter. This rule may, for instance, concern immigrants who arrived later in life, or Nordic citizens who went abroad sometime during their life-time.

Consequently, national borders are fundamental prerequisites for getting access to Nordic welfare. These are examples indicating that other factors than age, such as gender, economic background (Fors 2010) and national status are important when studying migration in later life. Such factors are likely to influence the ascribed meaning of mobility and migration, as well as the possibility to actually live a mobile life; this is a reality that especially single women with only little incomes have to cope with (Olesén 1999; Trossholmen 2000; Andersson 2002).

The age of retirement varies throughout history and in different countries; on top of that, different retirement solutions are available, depending on private savings, income level and health. Furthermore, especially in recent years, national policies are in the midst of changes in order to increase the retirement age, due to the global calls for precautions regarding the demographic aging of the world. All this points to the fact that precise definitions of “retirement age” in the Nordic countries are difficult to present. Generally speaking, the retirement age and right to pension starts from between 61 (Sweden) to 67 (Iceland). The Nordic countries, howev-

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er, represent a high degree of participation on the labour market in the age group of 50–64 (OECD 2011), and they rate among the highest 11 countries in the OECD regarding worker's participation in this age group; with Iceland, Sweden and Norway at the very top of this list, and with Denmark as number eleven (*Ibid.*).

In addition to retirement pension systems in the Nordic countries, which are age-defined, the Nordic countries also provide other social security benefits and pensions, for instance due to ill health or bad social situations. Furthermore, all Danes have since 1979 been offered an earlier, supplementary, but full pension, which is considered to be the reason why Denmark is ranked lowest in working participation in the age group 50–64, compared with the other Nordic countries. This pension is now being phased out of the social security system, due to its cost and the increasing ageing population. The ill health pensions and social pensions can be obtained at all ages, and this will also influence the way we describe and how we delimit the topic in the chapters to follow.

### Which kind of migrant?

In the use of the words “move” and “mobility”, we are pointing to living arrangements only, and not to topics relating to, for instance, transportation, functional decline or accessibility in the home or the public sphere. By applying the term “migration”, we also signify this kind of movement, but since we include migration both internationally as well as intranationally, this term needs to be read in a broad manner. Several concepts for the phenomenon of migration in later life are applied in this anthology. First of all, we use “lifestyle migration” or even “voluntary lifestyle migration” indicating that people move to achieve a better quality of life, and that they do so voluntarily (King et al 2000; Brown & Glasgow 2008; Oliver 2008; Benson & O'Reilly 2009). In this way, the discourse of migration in many of the chapters also deal with various aspects of transmigration regarding practical arrangements, identity, and politico-juridical phenomena.

## Lifestyle migration

Lifestyle migration, as a research concept, is sprung out of academic research on the voluntary, exclusive migration from the northern, colder countries to southern, warmer places around the globe to what Deane Simpson in his chapter terms “solar utopias”. Sun, nature, fresh air, a certain water quality and temperature are strong incentives for lifestyle migration with evident allusion to a healthy, active life, and a good economy – a successful age, even (Baltes & Carstensen 1996). The concept encompasses a range of mobility movements in close relation to tourism, prolonged travel, and permanent dwelling in areas of tourism (see O’Reilly 2000; Geoffrey & Sibley 2007; Benson & O’Reilly 2009). Lifestyle migrants are in search of purpose-built destinations for tourism, a holiday atmosphere of freedom, relaxation, and enjoyment.

Nowadays new kinds of lifestyle options are available to people of all ages. To some of the interviewees in the studies described in this book, the thrill of a change in lifestyle was a decisive factor. This was true of people who move to another country, or for those who move to a new housing project with resources to provide a more social or pleasant life in their home country, which is touched upon in Abramsson’s chapter describing a Swedish senior housing project for able-bodied and independent seniors. This can be referred to as moving into new housing for lifestyle reasons and by means of freedom of choice (Clapham 2005).

## Retirement migration

While the concept of lifestyle migration includes migrants of all ages, one specific form of lifestyle migration – retirement migration – is, evidently, dedicated to migration happening after retirement. This typically involves a move from the Northern hemisphere southwards to a warmer climate, for instance to the southern parts of the US (Florida, Texas, Arizona), Mexico, or European Mediterranean areas such as Spain, France, Italy and Cyprus. In an international, academic context, this phenomenon is even labelled “International Retirement Migration” (IRM), which has increased significantly within the previous three decades, and parallel to this, evolved



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as a distinct research topic (Warnes 1994; Williams et al 1997).

Naturally, the term international involves only cross-border migration, which is most current in Europe with its many borders, and for North Americans going to e.g. Mexico (Sunil et al. 2007). We embrace both kinds in this book, focusing on both intranational retirement migration and international retirement migration. International retirement migration has been described as a highly diverse, flexible and continual form of mobility (Gustafson 2008). Many retirement migrants seem, in fact, to be continuously mobile. They have retained residence both “at home” and abroad, making it possible to move between two countries depending on the season (Longino & Marshall 1990; King et al 2000), which is described by Antti Karisto and Annie Woube in this book; thus touching upon the phenomenon of transmigration, which also pertains to many of the other chapters in the book.

International retirement migration specifically causes challenges for the senior citizens in that it signifies a transformation in both lifestyle and place of residence, which is also discussed in Karisto’s chapter. Within the academic discipline of international retirement migration, migrants have been classified into certain categories according to their relationship with their host country and home country. Full-time residents reside in and feel at home in their host countries; returning residents are temporary migrants with residence permits in their host countries who prefer to spend summers in their home countries; and seasonal visitors are residents in their home countries, who visit their host countries within the period allowed by their respective governments (O’Reilly 2000). The ethnography conducted on location shows that for many migrants, the general intention is not to migrate permanently, but to use the leisure area during their senior years.

As mentioned above, the representation of retired migrants is very varied. Migration and tourism studies in particular tend to describe elderly migrants as an active, upper-middle-class group (e.g., Gustafson 2002; Williams et al 1997; King et al 2000; Simpson 2012). Other studies find that some retired migrants have a working-class background, that several have passed their 75th birthday and that there are those who suffer from poor health (Blaakilde 2007b; Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Rodríguez et al.

1998). Eva Jeppsson Grassman & Annika Taghizadeh Larsson write in their chapter about retired Swedish migrants all over the world. In Ayia Napa/Cyprus, for example, about 15,000 Swedes stay in the area during the winter, and a high proportion of these people are older, and not necessarily wealthy; winter after winter, these migrants stay in one of the empty hotels or in holiday-flats, for a relatively low off-season price. Many of them are very old (aged 85–90) and in several cases rather frail and in need of care. Thus, although (international) retirement migration has become an option for the more affluent groups of retirees, the phenomenon is experienced by people representing a great variety in income and social class.

### Rural migration and health migration

Rural retirement migration is a type of migration pursued by retirees moving from an urban area to a rural one within the national context (Brown & Glasgow 2008). According to Brown & Glasgow, areas likely to become rural retirement destinations commonly tend to be attractive places, rich in environmental amenities, leisure activities and beautiful scenery (*Ibid.*). Philipson describes how in Britain there are small non-metropolitan districts in favoured rural areas that are increasingly colonized by affluent retirees (Philipson 2007). In comparison with other forms of retirement migration, rural retirement migration has a long history among groups of affluent retirees who move for amenity reasons (King et al 2000; Brown & Glasgow 2008). In Sweden, Österlen, more than any other area is discursively understood as a rural retirement destination for active, healthy and affluent recent retirees, which is described in Nilsson's chapter in this book.

Some people migrate for the benefit of their health situation with the intention of being in charge of their own weakening health situations (Blaakilde 2007a; 2007b). Part of this migration phenomenon can be termed “health migration” (Breivik 2011). We suggest that there is an unclear line between the words health migration – a term in reality including all age groups, as long as they are ill or disabled in some way – and retirement migration, which traditionally represents migrants in later life, who may suffer from a variety of ailments. Some migrants move to warmer

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places or to recreational areas to alleviate their health conditions, and, according to them, they also improve their quality of life. In turn, this might help to reduce the demand on health services and social benefits in their home countries, which would be a national economic benefit. In her chapter about this subject, Blaakilde suggests a term for this practice; namely “transnational field of health promotion”.

### Daily Life

Embedded in all these different concepts and specific politico-economic circumstances, is a group of Nordic seniors moving, migrating and living under a variety of circumstances. They are experiencing different ways of belonging, believing, socialising and sensing. In the following chapters you will follow Nordic seniors in their daily lives on the move; either in new living arrangements in their homeland, or in new situations in foreign countries. Some of the chapters in the book examine the motivations for the move. Abramsson has studied Swedish retirees who chose to move to senior housing in Sweden, primarily because they wanted to increase their participation in social networks there. Nilsson analyses how motivations for the move to a recreational place in Sweden convey positive images of seniors representing discursive ideals of freedom and mobility. Blaakilde has studied Danish retirees and pensioners who moved to Costa del Sol and Turkey; many of them with health and illness as motivating factors.

For those who participate in international retirement migration, issues of national identity and transnationalism are almost natural parts of everyday life abroad. Chapters from Denmark, Finland and Sweden touch upon the migrants’ nationality and some of its implications. This may concern politico-economic circumstances linked to migration policies provided by their nationstate, as is the case in Blaakilde’s chapter. It may relate to their connectedness to national identity, which is described in the chapters by Karisto, Spännäri and Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson, or even transnational practices connecting social groups or elements from their homeland and host country, as shown by Woube.

In this book you can read about the importance of taste and senses in this regard. This is specifically pertinent in Karisto’s chapter about the

antinomies of taste and the practices of foodways represented by Finnish migrants living at Costa del Sol and their changing habits concerning likes and dislikes, (for instance their “meatball dependency”). The Swedish church is also aware of the powers and persuasions of the smell of Swedish cinnamon buns and coffee, compellingly drifting out onto the streets from open doors, which is described by Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson. Churches, faith and religion among Nordic migrants are topics in both Finnish and Swedish contexts, which is central for the chapters by Jenni Spännäri and by Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson. They find that religious faith and traditions seem to have an increased importance for Nordic citizens abroad – while, at home, not so many of them are active in religious activities or declare themselves to be religious. Also, it is found that the religious community around the church is very important for feelings of belonging (“doing and feeling at home”), for establishing a connection to the homeland, for creating and maintaining social relationships abroad, and for diaconical help regarding healthcare and social work.

Migration is also a vulnerable situation, challenging the migrants’ usual capabilities to manage problems in daily life because of foreign customs, practices and language. This calls for certain activities and arrangements for a social life, which can create a supportive network consisting of single persons or groups; such circumstances are described by Woube, Spännäri and Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson. In situations of loss or lack of normal possibilities to act and live independently, which is available in one’s homeland where language, structures and institutions are well-known, retired migrants who do not master the new language, may feel compelled to create social networks consisting of fellow-countrymen. In this way, they might contribute to inclusive activities, creating a discursive “otherness” of people who are different (for instance the original inhabitants of the host country), which is mentioned by Woube in her chapter. On the other hand, as such instances of otherness are some of the effects of retirement migration, it is relevant to consider the variation among retired lifestyle migrants, acknowledging that the phenomenon attracts and absorbs many different kinds of people. With this final remark it is appropriate to end this introduction with the conclusion that even Nordic se-

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niors on the move encompass a very heterogeneous population, though they share some of their historical, cultural and politico-economical background.

However, when comparing with other international phenomena of seniors on the move as described in the chapter by Deane Simpson, the Nordic practices of lifestyle migration do have certain similarities in common. For instance, the Nordic seniors do not (yet) establish age-segregated communities as the American groups described by Simpson. Certainly, the Nordic seniors on the move seem to be attracted to having fun and being socially active, but they do not conduct themselves like the American groups, congregating in specific nostalgic theme parks, trying to live out later life as a copy of their youth. In particular, they do not enclose themselves within delineated areas and villages.

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# Breaking Free and Settling Down. Contradictory Cultural Meanings of Rural Retirement Migration among Swedish Seniors.

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Retirement migration has been described as a highly diverse, flexible and continual form of mobility (Gustafson 2008). Many retirement migrants seem, in fact, to be continuously mobile (Longino & Marshall 1990; King et al. 2000). Traditionally, ageing has been discursively equated with the opposite of mobility (Nilsson 2008), although in recent decades a different image of ageing has been established in the media and in popular science. There is a notion that the so called baby-boom generation which is now retiring, is more healthy, active and affluent than previous generations of seniors. As a consequence, conceptions such as mobility, uprootedness and freedom are assumed to be of central value in their lives; in contrast to immobility, being situated in one place and stagnation (Blaikie 1999; Edmunds & Turner 2002; Urry 2002; Gilleard & Higgs 2007; Karisto 2007). Instead of turning into sweet old ladies and nice old gentlemen, seniors are described to be straddling their Harley Davidson's and heading off into a second age of mobility and freedom that recalls their teenage years (Adamo 2008). From this perspective, life as a senior is largely thought to be characterized by a uni-aged lifestyle and a quest for non-ageing (Featherstone & Hepworth 1991).

When referring to retirement migration as a way to live up to the

non-ageing ideal, interchangeability is often implicitly assumed between the concepts of moving and mobility. On one level, by literally setting the senior in motion, retirement migration could be seen as a way to live up to the ideal of mobility and would thus work against the process of ageing. However, the tendency to break up and move back and forth does not necessarily indicate a state of mobility or rootlessness. Instead, the idea of increased migration as something that creates nomadic identities has been much criticized (Massey 1994). An important question is therefore, whether moving away always should be seen as equal to mobility? Is breaking free incompatible with settling down?

## Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that moving as a way to counter the negative aspects of ageing (actual as well as symbolic), is both dependent on mobility and contradictory to it. The overall purpose is to investigate the relation between moving and mobility in the accounts told by people who have chosen to migrate as seniors in order to enable a certain lifestyle. In what way does the discursive ideal of freedom and mobility, apparent in media and in popular science today, influence the way these seniors imagine, experience and talk about their move? To what extent do their accounts of retirement migration include traces of continuity and change, freedom and security, as well as mobility and rootedness? Could the move function as a way of breaking free and settling down simultaneously?

Although often described as recurrent for "seniors today", suggesting that the active and mobile lifestyle applies to the whole age group, in reality, the possibility to live up to the non-ageing ideal requires good health and, not least, strong finances (Nilsson 2011; see Katz 2000; Blaakilde 2007a). It is assumable that the socioeconomic background influences the ascribed meaning of mobility and freedom, as well as the possibility to actually live a mobile life (Trossholmen 2000). Nevertheless, even though seniors move less than any other age group according to statistics, over the last decades a gradual increase of both national and international retirement migration has become evident, especially among recent retirees (Walters 2000; Andersson 2002; Abramsson & Andersson 2012). Research on

retirement migration supports the indication of a growing share of voluntary life style migration (King et al. 2000; Brown & Glasgow 2008; Oliver 2008; Benson & O'Reilly 2009). International retirement migration has increasingly become an option, not only for the more affluent groups of retirees (Featherstone & Hepworth 1991; Olesén 1999; Huber & O'Reilly 2004; Blaakilde 2007b; Gustafson 2008; Oliver 2008).

The chapter draws on empirical data collected in a minor study that was carried out in Österlen, in the southeastern part of the province of Skåne in Sweden, during 2009–10. Semi structured qualitative interviews were made with seven, by their own definition, healthy, active and affluent recent retirees, who explicitly wanted and thought themselves able to live up to the ideal of freedom and mobility. The group of informants consisted of both men and women in the ages from 58 to 73. All of them had moved to Österlen from the urban area surrounding Stockholm together with a heterosexual partner, either in the midst of their working life or as recent retirees. In this chapter, this is understood as rural retirement migration. With regard to finances, the group is to be found in the upper stratum. The participant men had all been managing directors of, or had owned, large companies. When sold, or upon their retirement, these companies had generated a great deal of financial capital. The women, as professionals, had had qualified positions in the health-care sector.

In this chapter, the research questions will be discussed in relation to three themes. The first elaborates on the symbolic and strategic function of a certain place, then the relation between ageing and the cultural meaning of home is described; finally, the discussion concerns how freedom is attained through a feeling of security. In the introduction to the next section, a brief description is given of the specific location, Österlen, and of the phenomenon of rural retirement migration.

## The meaning of Österlen

The name Österlen is a relatively new and a rather vague designation for the plains and coastal landscape in the southeast of Skåne. There is a recurrent and financially motivated disagreement about where the line should be drawn between what is Österlen and what is not. Conceptually,

however, the geographical area commonly connotes scenic beauty, long and white sand beaches and picturesque coastal communities. On the one hand, it is thought of as genuine, and on the other as chic and classy. The number of permanent residents is decreasing, forming an age bulge of residents just under the age of 60. Since many of the houses in the countryside as well as within the small communities are used as summerhouses, the population is multiplied during the summer. Although, in comparison to well-known international locations for retirement migration, such as Costa del Sol in Spain or Florida in USA, Österlen cannot (yet) be said to constitute an enclave of seniors. Nevertheless, the immigration figures of the area are in fact dominated by the age group of 50 to 67 years of age (Nilsson 2010). In Sweden, Österlen, more than any other area is discursively understood as a rural retirement destination. The designation “the Österlen retirees”, commonly implies a group of affluent and active seniors who have moved to Österlen in order to achieve a certain lifestyle, not least characterized by golf playing. Moreover, the description of Österlen as “Sweden’s Florida” functions as a humoristic way for some of the interviewed seniors to talk of their chosen residential location.

In research on retirement migration, the type of migration pursued by the seniors in this study, that is, moving from an urban area to a rural one within the national context of Sweden has been termed rural retirement migration. According to Brown and Glasgow (2008), areas likely to become rural retirement destinations commonly tend to be attractive places, rich in environmental amenities, leisure activities and beautiful scenery. Philipson (2007) describes how there are small non-metropolitan districts in favoured rural areas in Britain that are increasingly colonized by affluent retirees. In comparison to other forms of retirement migration, rural retirement migration has a long history among groups of affluent seniors who move for amenity reasons (King et al. 2000; Brown & Glasgow 2008). Thus, although international retirement migration, as mentioned above, has become an option not only for the more affluent groups of seniors, this does not necessarily make retirement migration independent of class aspects, but remains socially selective in terms of income and social class (King et al. 2000).

Not all retirement destinations carry the same cultural meaning. Some



retirement migrants, writes Philipson (2007), select the specific location as a means of announcing or reaffirming their class identities. The choice of location can function as a process of social distinction (Benson 2009). This makes it interesting to reflect upon the socio-cultural meaning ascribed to Österlen in the accounts of the seniors in this study.

A distinction between different retirement locations is visible in the interview with Erik (73). When he and his wife, prior to moving to Österlen, discussed the possibility of migrating abroad, “certain parts of France” was an option, while Costa del Sol was not. The symbolic meaning Erik ascribes to France differs, in his understanding, from the meaning of Costa del Sol. Above all France is understood to be more expensive and chic than Costa del Sol. In fact, he came to realize, too expensive even for him and his wife. In this situation, the alternative was not the possibly less expensive, although still Mediterranean, option of Costa del Sol, but rural migration within Sweden to the “classy” Österlen. Retirement destinations such as “Florida”, “Costa del Sol”, “France” and “Österlen” are thus not necessarily comparable or symbolically interchangeable but somewhat stratified in terms of social class (see King et al. 2000). This is similar to how the seniors in Benson’s study understand themselves and their migration. While stressing the unique nature of their own lives in rural France, they condemn other life style migrants for leading unexceptional lives, as well as presenting British retirees in other destinations negatively. According to them, their life in France had no similarity to retirement migration in certain parts of Spain (Benson 2009).

One possible explanation to this distinction has to do with charter tourism. The increasing number of migrating retirees has been analysed as a consequence of changed travelling habits during the past fifty years. For those who do not align their travel endeavours with charter- and mass tourism, migrating into areas associated with these might be problematic. The symbolic meaning already attached to a certain place through tourism can in fact create a socioeconomic divide in the choice of location (see King et al. 2000). In the next section, I would like to reflect further on the cultural meaning ascribed to Österlen by the seniors.

## Peace and quiet

In the light of the existing images and cultural conceptions of Österlen, it becomes interesting to reflect upon how these affect the lives lived by the retirees. One important aspect is the landscape in itself. In the general understanding of it, Österlen is commonly appreciated, not least discursively and in popular culture, for its peace and quiet due to the open landscape and closeness to the sea. What significance does this have for how the migration is understood?

Nature, fresh air, a certain water quality and temperature have been strong incentives and still today function as major pull factors for retirement migration (Brown & Glasgow 2008). Admittedly, outdoor activities and long walks by the sea are highlighted by the retirees as one of the positive features of Österlen, characteristics that from a Swedish perspective are seen as being of central cultural value. In the symbolic construction of “Swedish identity” and in the definition of “Swedishness”, images of wild nature and romantic conceptions of the countryside have long been important rhetorical tools, and still carry substantial cultural meaning (Löfgren 1993; Jansson et al. 2010). An interest in nature and a preference for spending time outdoors, staying physically active, has a history of being understood as typical Swedish. In the national context, rural migration can thus be seen, not least symbolically, as something positive. In an ageing context, however, peace and quiet seems to be a contradiction to the mobile and active contemporary discursive ideal imposed on recent retirees today. How is it possible to live an active and mobile life when there is a general understanding of Österlen as a place for peace and quiet? And do the retirees interviewed in this study at all want to lead a mobile life?

The possibility to live “the quiet life” is highlighted as an important explanation for the migration of seniors (Olesén 1999; Brown & Glasgow 2008; Oliver 2008; Benson 2009). When asked about this the retirees usually hesitate:

No, I can't say that we were looking for peace and quiet, exactly. But we have come to appreciate it more and more. And besides, all you need for daily use is right here. (Kristina, 65)

In this short quote, peace and quiet, even though it was not sought for when moving there, seems rather unproblematic. When asked to elaborate this further, however, it becomes apparent that a slow and “retired” life, characterized mainly by leisure and amenity, is only hypothetically possible in their romanticized descriptions of what a completely different life in Österlen could be like.

I had imagined golf, books, cars, and especially, cooking. I thought, wonderful, plenty of time, walk down to the harbour and buy some fish, make a good dinner for my wife. Devote some time to finding the ingredients, making it with a certain amount of quality. [...] But no, it would have been too sedentary just wondering whether all the spoke rims are polished properly, could I hit a better golf stroke, or why haven't I read that book. I had an image of how life would be, but of course it didn't turn out like that at all. (Lennart, 58)

In her study on the paradoxes of aging as retirement migrants at Costa del Sol, social anthropologist Caroline Oliver has identified a contradiction between the wish to live life from day to day, adopting a leisure perspective on life, and the demand for spending the time left wisely and productively. As a consequence, she discusses a conscious balancing between “activity” and “retiring” (Oliver 2008). This balancing is visible in the quote above as well. However, the general wellbeing that is seen as the overall purpose of the migration in the studies by Oliver (2008), Olesén (1999) and Benson (2009) is here dismissed as sedentary. Rather, activity is viewed as equal to, but also a prerequisite for, quality of life. To remain healthy and “non-ageing” is recurrently described by the seniors as a job that requires planning and time-management, in opposition to living from day to day. Instead of unscheduled time, their calendar is described as “pretty full”.

This is in line with the discursive connection between activity and moral in western societies such as Sweden. Passivity and lack of occupation, not least among seniors, has a long history of being portrayed as both morally illegitimate and, from a health perspective, risky behaviour (Mannerfelt 1999; Andersson 2007). The responsibility for activating oneself

rests with the individual (Nilsson 2008), which is apparent from how brusquely Lennart interrupts his romantic reveries on the slow life in the quote above. The distinction he makes between the dreamed, but rejected retired life and the chosen active and responsible lifestyle can also be analysed as a self-justification process through which it is being confirmed that he is on the right track (see Benson 2009).

### A place for possibilities

Even though the general image of Österlen is peace and quiet, the place described by the seniors in this study, consists of something else, which on the contrary, enables activity, rather than hinders it. The prolonged golf season is one point that is highlighted by the Österlen retirees. With winters that are often snow free in Österlen, it becomes possible to play golf almost all year round. Instead of being a freedom from restraints of various types, moving to Österlen is described as increasing their possibility to be active. Here it is evident that a place is always “a place for someone” (Olesén 1999). That is, the experience of a certain place depends on the meanings attributed to it. It is possible to distinguish between, in a social sense, empty geographical space, and place that has been given significance by being formed and named by different people (de Certeau 1984). The space Österlen, in the sense of the Österlen retirees, is made a place in accordance with the discursive ideal of activity and mobility, not in opposition to it.

One concrete way of redefining rural Österlen, from slow and stagnant to a symbol of mobility, is by emphasizing its closeness to “the continent”:

We have become more and more interested in travelling and that was perhaps one reason why we moved down here. Being able to travel down to the continent. We enjoy travelling by car. Not having anything booked but to be able to go when it is suitable and to wherever we find it nice. It was much more complicated to travel by car down from Stockholm. Well, complicated, but it takes more time and costs more money. So we travel a lot now, and it is very pleasant, we think. So it is a positive factor down here. (Erik, 73)

In this quote, an increased interest in travelling is highlighted as one of the reasons for moving to Österlen, that is, Österlen is assumed to facilitate, not counteract mobility. To understand this reasoning we must be aware that the preferred type of travel is by car – being able to jump into the car and drive off at short notice, as opposed to having to book a plane ticket in advance. Travelling by car, as a symbol of freedom and youth, has as long a history as the car itself (O’Dell 1997). It is not difficult therefore to accept the significance that this interest in travelling might have for the possibility of describing the own lifestyle in accordance with the discursive ideal. In fact, there is a strong resemblance between this quote and the use of the Harley Davidson as a metaphor for freedom, as referred to in the introduction to this chapter. From an ageing perspective, to be able to drive a car still, is a way of signaling that you are not old (Alftberg 2012). It is possible to understand the connection between driving a car and freedom as particularly strong for retirees due to the fact that old drivers are often considered a problem (Nilsson 2010).

To understand the full meaning of Österlen in this context, however, it is important to acknowledge the way that the geographical shape of Sweden influences the idea of travelling. In the quote, to travel by car from Stockholm is described as “much more complicated” than from “down” in Österlen. Those who live in Stockholm need to sacrifice one whole day of travelling just to get outside of Sweden. When travelling by plane, this distance is of minor importance, but from a Nordic perspective, the symbolic meaning of “closeness to the continent” still seems to be a strong cultural value. This is the basis for understanding the symbolic meaning of Österlen as a symbol of freedom and mobility.

From this perspective, to move from Stockholm, where travelling is complicated, to Österlen, where it is easy, can be made to seem to be in accordance with the ideal. The closer to the continent, the freer you are. The freedom, conceptually connected to Österlen in terms of an open landscape and closeness to the sea, has been redefined into a freedom to travel, because of its closeness to the continent. This can be understood as a way of shaping the location according to particular biographical choices and priorities (Philipson 2007).

## Home – the same, but new

The retirees devote much effort to describing their active lifestyles in Österlen. In addition to the many trips down to the continent, they play golf several times a week, run their “hobby businesses”, exercise regularly, walk the dog, go to concerts and lectures, renovate their houses or socialize through a game of bridge. Moving to Österlen is described as a prerequisite for this active lifestyle. Given the fact that they have left urban Stockholm, where the selection of activities is in fact far greater than in rural Österlen, this description seems contradictory. However, I wish to propose two different justifications. The most evident is perhaps a wish, or even an increased need, for accessibility. It is simply easier to get around in a small town than in a bigger city. Even more important though, I would argue, is the meaning of the familiar. Such a concept is normally understood as positive, but in a context of modernity and ageing respectively, this could be seen as negative.

Home represents security, tradition and stagnation, quite the opposite of courage, mobility and freedom (Lindqvist 1996). The retirees talk of their former home environment, as a place where everything and everyone was experienced as familiar. If they, as they say, would have stayed “at home”, they would have felt “they know it all” already. Surprisingly, despite the variety of activities offered there, staying put in Stockholm is described in terms of stagnation, and as a consequence, premature ageing. In opposition, moving somewhere (anywhere) new, meant that everything and everyone was unfamiliar and new; simultaneously, they signal that they are people who, in their own words, “dare to make the leap” and are not at all “ready for the grave”. As one senior puts it:

I think everybody needs to move about, to move. Some have difficulties in doing so. They stay in their home environment, where they’ve grown up and feel safe. I can understand that, but for me, and for my wife’s part, we didn’t want that. We’re more open to new ideas. (Rolf, 69)

Here, staying in the home environment, being resident rather than mobile, stands out as something negative associated with characteristics such as an

inability to adapt to new ideas. To prefer security above freedom is not in accordance with this man's view of a good life as a retiree, nor, I would argue, with the discursive ideal directed at retirees in general as a way of counteracting premature ageing and bodily decay.

What is interesting though, as has been pointed out by anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, is that retirement migration is not necessarily a matter of experiencing new places, environments and lifestyles that drastically differ from what one is used to at home (Hannerz 1996). In reality, the move does not result in a radical change of life, but in many aspects allows a re-creation of the life lived before the move. Even though talked of as a "completely new life concept", in reality, in the life as rural migrants, "new" should rather be understood as "the same" but in a new place. New social relations, new housing, new activities, but not a new kind of life; both continuity and change at the same time.

For the seniors in this study, this means doing pretty much the same in new surroundings. But, as I have argued in a previous article, an active lifestyle in accordance with the contemporary discursive ideal for recent retirees does not require a "new" way of living. Rather, an important point is an ability to demonstrate a reluctance to change into a traditionally more "age appropriate" way of life, instead continuing to live life as always before (Nilsson 2011). Doing the same as before signals that the retirees have not changed as individuals just because they have retired, that they are in fact not, in the symbolic sense, ageing. While simultaneously doing "the same" and something "new" sounds contradictory, I would argue that it is a prerequisite for living the discursive ideal.

### Objects from the past

For the retirees in this study, the move represented a substantial break up from the lives they had lived for decades, which meant selling the house where their children had grown up. As a consequence, they needed to decide what to do with all the material belongings they had accumulated over the years. Objects are strongly connected with feelings, loaded with individual meaning by being landmarks in the biographical story (Young 2000); they act as a support for the personal identity (Alftberg 2012). In

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this section, I would like to argue that a central aspect of moving as a senior is the choice between bringing or leaving, keeping or disposing of belongings; a choice that simultaneously says something about, and does something to, the individual. Rolf describes the move as a deliverance from the past, even its material ties.

We got rid of everything old, basically. We didn't keep much; we know that we can't take anything with us the day we die, anyway. So we bought what we wanted and let the kids take the old things, or sold it. [...] None of us are nostalgic in the sense that we want to tie ourselves emotionally to objects. (Rolf, 69)

To be able to dispose of the material belongings without hesitation appears in this quote as a very concrete way to practice mobility and non-stagnation; this is loaded with positive meaning in many respects. In cultural studies on modernity, there is a notion that people in modern societies are less culturally bound to a certain geographical place, but have a greater ability to literally set themselves free (Berman 1982; Castles & Miller 1998). Simultaneously, mobility connotes youth as well as masculinity. Breaking up from the safe and homelike, is considered to enable personal growth and development, transforming the young man into a responsible adult (Lindqvist 1996; Edgren 2009).

In previous research, this type of attitude toward the material has also been interpreted in terms of social class. Ethnologist Mats Lindqvist, in his study of corporate leaders, writes that for the economic elite, nothing must be so dear that it cannot be disposed of when economically justified (Lindqvist 1996). To be able to part with material belongings is thus a strong cultural imperative. Contrary to this, nostalgia and a reliance on memories in material form are characteristics commonly ascribed to the category of old people (cf. Nilsson 2008). In this context, to state that one is in fact not at all nostalgic becomes a sign of youth and continued development. Hanging on to the gadgets from the past becomes a manifestation of aging.

For Erik in the following quote, however, the material remains from his life are described as being important. He is very hesitant to get rid of any



of his belongings and says that he "would panic" if he had to move to a modern apartment without proper storage space.

I've fallen in love with our stuff (laughs). I don't think they're worn out yet, and I may have need of them. I have too many clothes and every day I say to my wife that I ought to get rid of them. There are suits that I bought when I was working, that I've only used once or twice and that have been hanging in the closet for years. When should I wear them, I ask myself. But they're brand new. What should I do with them? Should I throw them away? (Erik, 73)

At first sight, Rolf's approach to the material objects of his past, in the first quote, seems more flexible and mobile than Erik's attitude. Nothing prevents him from moving about. By contrast, to have allowed himself to be lulled into a comfortable contentment, as Erik describes, becomes a sign of stagnation, the very antithesis of a modern, youthful and affluent life.

However, if we consider the approaches of Rolf and Erik from an aging perspective, quite the opposite interpretation is possible as well. Rolf explicitly states that one reason why he chose to dispose of his belongings was as a preparation for the day he dies. Ethnologist Charlotte Mannerfelt (1999) shows that a societal demand for a settlement of excess possessions has had a central place in the disciplining discourse directed towards seniors since the 1960s and onwards. Given this, Rolf's attitude can be seen as a responsible adjustment to a traditional view of aging, not as a challenge to it. Additionally, the fact that Erik has kept the objects from his professional life means that he still believes he might come back to his previous position. He is still a person that may be in need of a suit. Put differently, as long as he takes up place, and consequently has a need for storage space, he is a living human being, not a dying one. In this example it is clear that the suits function as "biographical objects"; they connect feelings to identity and life history (Hepworth 2000; see Alftberg 2012). However, I would argue that they also become a reminder of continued power and social status. Marion Young states that a home is built around those objects that a person needs in order to keep up his or her daily activities in life; simultaneously, they reflect what is valuable in that person's

life (Young 2000; Alftberg 2012). The objects thus function as a strategy for either being on the offensive or being defensive in relation to ageing.

### To pause in movement and anchor oneself

A place has been seen as a pause in movement; an opportunity to stop and anchor oneself in the surrounding world (Tuan 1977). The retirees in this study accentuate the houses of their own as a central feature in their life as retirement migrants. The possibility to pause one's movement thus appears to be of great importance, in fact, the "anchor" tends to be more emphasized than the move itself. Finding the right house is described as a prerequisite for moving to Österlen at all. Even though, as stated above, migration requires breaking free, simultaneously generating symbolic capital in an ageing context, the main objective in the sense of the retirees is not increased mobility, but re-settlement in new surroundings, above all striving to create a home away from home (see Olesén 2008).

With the concepts of uprooting and regrounding, Sara Ahmed (et al. 2003) has tried to analyse this relation between moving and home in a migration context. She states that being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed, and being mobile is not necessarily about being detached. Instead, home is a constant creation and re-creation of perceived stability and imagined community (Ahmed et al 2003; see Edgren 2009). Ethnologist Orvar Löfgren (1997) also stresses the fact that migration does not necessarily mean the loss of home, but that both home and identity must be seen as constructs. Despite being discursively understood as a sign of freedom and changeability, moving is inevitably characterized by stability and security. For the seniors in this study, selling their previous house in the vicinity of Stockholm brought great economic opportunities and a freedom to live the life of their dreams. Buying a new house is one concrete way of re-creating stability; it literally forces them to pause in movement both economically and physically.

One recurrent aspect when describing the house, however, is with emphasis on the fact that they are not bound by it. They can move at any time.

We had this place built, but at the same time we said that if we didn't like it, we'd sell and move away, there's nothing more to it. We have no fixed bindings to the things we buy. (Rolf, 69)

Here, it is evident that an important part of portraying oneself as being in motion requires a potential loosening up when it comes to house owning. In order to understand this reasoning, I will in the next section discuss the meaning and cultural value attached to the idea of owning a house of your own, in opposition to the, from a societal perspective, in some sense more age-appropriate, renting of a smaller apartment (Mannerfeldt 1999).

### Freedom and security

As stated above, selling their previous homes near Stockholm, where the prices are high, meant increased economic freedom. When tying this capital to a new house, this freedom is to some extent given up (see Olesén 1999). Additionally, through the constant need for maintenance, the house literally compels them to stay put. Oliver describes this voluntarily re-introducing of restraints to be equally common among the retirement migrants at Costa del Sol (Oliver 2008). A relevant question is therefore what the reason for this voluntarily decreased freedom might be.

Perhaps the aspect of continuity is the most obvious reason why a house of their own is of such importance. As argued in the previous section, there is a significant connection between “new” and “the same” in the construction of the ideal retirement lifestyle and identity. On the one hand, a continued development and change is requested in order not to stagnate and age prematurely. On the other hand, it is important to signal the opposite, that you have in fact not changed into an old person at all, but are still the same. From this perspective, whereas the move might signal newness, owning a house symbolizes continuity. To abandon house ownership would be to position oneself as a “former house owner”, in a similar way that retirees are former professionals. If you have always owned a house, why should you suddenly stop?

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I have always lived in a house and I find it much better than living in an apartment. You are in control, you make the decisions. (Erik, 73)

To be in control, as expressed here, admittedly seems in accordance with the discursive ideal that enjoins activity and responsibility as opposed to passivity and dependence. Simultaneously, as already suggested, owning a house seems in contradiction to an ideal of freedom and mobility. This contradiction becomes even more visible in the quote below where the house is said to represent both freedom and a feeling of security.

Well it's ... freedom. We have a garden. Although I do not think gardening is that enjoyable, but it's nice to be there and there is no view into the garden. Then, to be able to have the children and grandchildren here visiting. To have room for them. Yes, having a house of our own is important, I think. There is a certain comfort. I can't really say what it is. But well ... to have plenty of room to move around in, without stepping on each other. It's nice ... And also, it keeps us going. We are busy taking care of our house. But mostly it's because we like it. It's hard to explain. It's a form of security. If other things are changing, we still have the house. (Inger, 67)

On the more concrete level, it is evident that Inger has difficulties in describing the benefits of owning a house. There is a certain comfort, but she cannot really say of what it is constituted. A house requires an endless lot of work, and gardening is not even that enjoyable. Rather, the positive features of house owning seem to be of a more symbolic nature, representing both freedom and security, which in this quote, must above all be understood as financial security. Instead of spending all their money on leisure, they have invested it in the house in case of future difficulties, similar to putting it in the mattress.

To understand how the two, somewhat contradictory concepts of freedom and security may be combined in view of owning a house, freedom must be defined from a traditional ageing perspective; in other words, as equal to independence and autonomy rather than mobility, as in the contemporary discursive ideal (Nilsson 2008). In regard to seniors, the idea of the good home tends to be associated with concepts such as autonomy, quality of life,

dignity and community (Öhlander 2007), as well as safety and security, activity and participation (Fänge & Dahlin Ivanoff 2009; Alftberg 2012).

The most common age-related threat is often not perceived to be actual health problems, but the way these might affect the individual integrity, restrict the personal space, and lead to an invasion of the own home (Torres & Hammarström 2007). To be able to continue living in your own house means that you remain in control. And as long as you are able to take care of yourself and maintain the house, you are not needy and helpless, but still a functioning adult. The possibility to just open the door and walk right out into the garden, as opposed to being dependent on functioning lifts or the kindness of home assistance personnel, is in this context a recurrent and seemingly culturally loaded image. In the definition of an independent and dignified life, this is a central component.

### The age appropriate home

In a review of advice literature directed towards recent retirees, ethnologist Charlotte Mannerfelt shows how society has long expressed a wish that the citizens, upon retiring, adapt themselves and their habits to a more age-appropriate life. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to housing (Mannerfelt 1999; see Abramsson & Andersson 2012). When moving to Österlen, as a way to legitimise the choice not to move to a smaller apartment, but rather to a new house of their own, the retirees point out all the ways in which they have customized the interior, with potential future needs for accessibility in mind.

We have arranged things so that we have guest rooms upstairs. We ourselves can live entirely on the ground floor, prepared for a wheelchair. We can easily go outdoors. No thresholds [...]. So we are prepared to be able to stay here for quite a long time. (Rolf, 69)

A requirement when we bought the house was also that it would be a single storey house. It's the only reasonable way as you get older. No stairs. (Kristina, 65)

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These two quotes articulate a common view of the consequences of decreased functioning due to old age (cf. Nilsson 2008). Without experiences of their own, it is understood that knees, legs and balance deteriorate as part of the ageing process. Based on this assumption, their bathrooms have been adapted for the use of a wheelchair, the bedrooms have been moved to the ground floor, thresholds have been removed and the gardens have been made easy to maintain. This way they believe they will be able to remain house owners far into later life. In their view of the house as a way to achieve freedom, some adjustments, particularly in regard to stairs, thresholds and toilets, are needed to secure this freedom in the long term, adjustments connected to an expected future of reduced mobility.

To some extent however, customizing their houses in this way seems contradictory. They wish to stay young by continuing to live in houses of their own, but at the same time, they have turned these houses into homes for old people. As pointed out by anthropologist Daniel Miller, a home is not unchangeable, but could be seen as a process where the materiality of the house and its inhabitants are constantly changing each other. At the same time as the individual changes the home, the home changes the individual (Miller 2001; Alftberg 2012). The retirees have customized their houses in order not to be hindered by the potential physical aspects of ageing. From this perspective, however, what is more interesting to elaborate on is the possibility of the opposite effect. What does this customizing do to the retirees? In what ways do the preparations for future disability simultaneously move them into this future?

Previously it was mentioned that a recurrent aspect when the seniors described their houses was with an emphasis on the fact that they were not bound by it, but could move at any time. This was analysed as a way of counteracting the stable lifestyle of owning a house, and instead exhibiting a mobile identity. However, yet another interpretation is possible, namely the exact opposite; it might be seen as a way to prevent any disappointment about not being able to stay on, as a result of death or health problems:

We have always thought that this should be the last place we would live. But I mean, it's not a disaster if this does not happen, for reasons beyond our control. (Erik, 73)

We have not said that we will stay here for the rest of our lives, but we give it ten years and then we will see how healthy we are. If we are alive and if we feel we want to stay. This is the prospect that we have had since we moved here. (Kristina, 65)

Even the best of plans for this period in life, Oliver writes, might be disrupted (Oliver 2008). In these quotes it is clear that one explanation of the ambivalent attitude towards motion and mobility vis-à-vis immobility might be the fact that aging per definition is a time and a process of uncertainty in relation to the certain mortality.

### The same somewhere else

With a focus on contradictions, the aim of this chapter has been to analyse the relation between the discursive ideal directed towards and imposed on seniors today and their lived lives. In doing so I have drawn upon empirical material collected in interviews with recent retirees who actually feel that their lives are in accordance with this ideal. At first sight, moving away can be seen as an important symbol of the seniors as mobile and active, being continuously developing and non-ageing individuals. Instead of falling into stagnation and premature ageing, they have set themselves free. However, their accounts reveal aspects that problematise this analysis. In particular, the choice of location itself, rural Österlen strongly connotes “peace and quiet”; this represents a setback for the image of activity and mobility. Accordingly, the importance of owning a house seems contradictory as well. Both features seem to be a voluntarily decrease in freedom.

However, concepts such as freedom might have a dual meaning. One side of the matter might be the new active ideal for ageing people, in the sense of straddling their Harley Davidson and heading off into a second age of mobility. Simultaneously, it may also involve a more traditional meaning, from an ageing perspective, of autonomy and independence in relation to decreased bodily functions. Thus, the main argument in this chapter has been that migration is not necessarily equal to mobility, freedom and change; at the same time, it is constituted of a longing for continuity, security and rootedness. The point being, however, that this does not mean a

failure in living up to the discursive ideal. On the contrary, it has been argued that the possibility to exhibit a continuation in lifestyle is a prerequisite for this non-ageing ideal. A strategy of relating to this apparent contradiction between mobility and rootedness, freedom and safety, change and continuity has been described as doing “the same” somewhere “else”.

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# Lifestyle Motives as Reasons for Moving to Senior Housing

*Marianne Abramsson*

During the last decade, a growing interest in new housing types has been seen among older people in Sweden. As a result of increased life expectancy, seniors today can expect more healthy years after retirement, and this may be a reason why different housing solutions are of interest to this group. The number of apartments in senior housing has increased and a variety of new housing types are available in the housing market aimed for seniors (SOU 2007:103; SOU 2008:113). In addition, recent Swedish studies show an increase in the residential mobility rate among those born in the 1940s compared to that of older age groups (Abramsson & Andersson 2012).

This cohort of elderly people has in particular been discussed in the media, politics and in research as regards their changing behaviour compared to their older counterparts (Majanen et al. 2007; Malmberg & Lindh 2000; Lundgren & Ljuslinder 2011; SOU 2002:29). The changing behaviour has also been discussed in housing research (Bonvalet & Ogg 2007; Malmberg et al. 2004), where their behaviour in the housing market is expected to differ due to their better educational and economic circumstances. This can result in new types of residential mobility patterns, where seniors move to housing that allows them to adopt a different lifestyle in later life. Studies on older people's residential mobility and the reasons for why different housing choices are made will help in planning for the future needs of housing. In addition, such knowledge will help in understanding

the role of different types of housing and the needs and expectations they can fulfil.

## Introduction

This chapter investigates the expectations of some seniors regarding their impending and subsequently performed move into senior housing. The type of senior housing studied here is rented housing aimed for people that are 55 years of age or older, that have no children resident in their homes. There are no obligations as regards social activities. In general, senior housing is available as rented or tenant cooperative housing and the age restrictions may vary. In addition, some of it can be co-housing, indicating a higher degree of social involvement. Senior housing is sometimes presented as accommodation that allows for a change in life style as it most often contains qualities such as common areas for social interaction or leisure activities (Kärnekull 2011).

In the study presented in this chapter, the seniors were interviewed about their reasons for choosing senior housing and about their expectations of this particular housing type prior to moving in. After the move, they were interviewed a second time and the interviews then centred on their experiences of the new housing type after the move. The first set of interviews covered their whole housing experience, that is, a recollection of the housing in which they have previously lived, as children and adults, in order to identify possible influences on their current housing choice based on their earlier housing experiences. The theoretical approaches drawn on are related to residential mobility and the life course. In addition, there is a discussion on the influence of lifestyle changes.

The aim of this study is to identify why the interviewed seniors chose to move into senior housing. What triggered the move? What were the social or physical qualities they searched for in the accommodation? Which qualities did the interviewees actually find? The study was conducted in order to get a better understanding of residential mobility patterns of older people and to increase our knowledge about the influence of a variety of housing alternatives on the housing market.

## Residential mobility throughout the life course and its role in the choice of lifestyles

In his life-cycle model, Rossi (1955) showed that the residential mobility of households is often the result of changes to the household in regard to size and composition. A move often takes place when a household changes from one stage in the life-cycle to another, such as upon marriage and having children (Rossi 1955). In an older population, such changes are usually related to the contraction of the household, such as children who leave home, but the most significant reason to move in later life is becoming single through divorce or widowhood (Abramsson et al. 2012; Andersson & Abramsson 2012). At this time, a dwelling may be experienced as too big or too expensive. As long as the household remains unchanged, it usually stays put (Abramsson et al. 2012; Andersson & Abramsson 2012; Haan & Perks 2008; Richards & Rankaduwa 2008). An adjustment of moving to a smaller dwelling when the size of the household decreases is, however, less frequent than moving to a larger dwelling when the household increases in size. Older people are generally stayers rather than movers (Abramsson et al. 2012; Fransson 2004; Long 1972; Lord & Luxembourg 2007).

Residential mobility cannot be limited to household changes only. In addition to the life-cycle model presented by Rossi, the concept of the life course can be used to describe and analyse the different stages that are passed in the housing career<sup>1</sup> of individuals and households. In an attempt to better understand the residential mobility of individuals, this theoretical approach also takes into account experiences from different stages of life, such as education, work, raising a family, as well as housing types and social skills (Champion & Fielding 1992; Elder et al. 2003; Elder 1985; Mayer & Tuma 1990). A history of previous residential mobility may lead to subsequent moves. To seniors who have a history of moving, that is, have moved several times during life, another move in old age is not nec-

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<sup>1</sup> For a further discussion of the concept housing career see Abramsson, M. 2012. Housing Careers. In Susan J. Smith, M.E., Lorna Fox O'Mahony, Ong Seow Eng, Susan Wachter, David Clapham (ed), *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*. Elsevier, Oxford, 385-389.

essarily a big obstacle (Bonvalet & Ogg 2007; Urry 2001). In addition, the structure of the housing market has to be taken into account, as have social and economic conditions, in order to understand the residential mobility decisions of households.

In this chapter, residential mobility is also discussed from the perspective of lifestyle changes, in general, made possible by better financial circumstances, increased life expectancy and the possible change in the role of housing (see the reference to Clapham below). Lifestyle research has, over the years, taken on a more individualistic approach. Giddens argued that in “modern social life” the life of individuals is to a greater extent the result of the choices made by each individual “among a diversity of options” (Giddens 1991:5). Lifestyles are also discussed as ways of living (Chaney 1996) or questions of taste (Bourdieu 1984) related to the cultural values of a society and to attitudes and customs; as such, also to structural conditions. The way lifestyles are used in the search for identity is important in housing research, as discussed by Clapham, when housing has changed from “a means to an end rather than an end in itself” (Clapham 2005:17).

With this in mind, in this chapter the importance will be examined of senior housing as part of a housing career, continuing throughout the life course and as a part of the lifestyles chosen by individuals or households. This will be based on the interviews with people from households that at the time of the first interview were planning a move into senior housing, and at the time of the second interview had undertaken this move.

## Seniors and the Swedish housing market

The interviewed residents moved into senior housing in municipal rented housing, to an apartment block originally built at the beginning of the 1960s. This was when the main building boom in Sweden took place in order to combat the prevalent housing shortage. Forty-two per cent of newly constructed housing between 1951 and 1970 was municipal rented housing. During the same period, owner-occupied housing increased its share of the housing market from thirty-eight to forty-three per cent. While the government promoted municipal housing, households that be-



came more affluent during this time wanted and built owner-occupied housing (Almqvist 2004) and subsidies gradually changed (Bengtsson 2006). From 1945 onwards, another type of tenure, the tenant co-operative<sup>2</sup> housing sector, had grown in importance, increasing from four per cent to seventeen in 2010. Of those aged 55 and older, a majority now own their own home, and among those born in the 1940s the proportion of home owners is about sixty-five per cent. However, among the oldest movers, rented housing (often in municipal housing) was the most important tenure choice (Abramsson et al. 2012).

Municipal rented housing in Sweden is available to everyone, but low-income households are over-represented, as they generally cannot access tenant co-operative housing or owner-occupied housing. Rented housing is attractive as security of tenure is strong; contracts run for an unlimited time, and the corporate rent-setting system (from 1968) regulates the rents (Andersson 2007). When rents are revised they are set by the municipal housing companies according to criteria such as quality and location, and all other landlords are impelled to comply (Andersson 2008). With more people becoming homeowners, the reasons for owning one's home may also be more varied and this may result in changing mobility patterns (Helderman et al. 2004).

Swedish pensioners are, in an international perspective, comparatively wealthy. Poverty and income inequality among seniors are lower than in most other countries (Förster & Pellizzari 2000) although income inequality has increased. Capital income has become more important to the economic situation of older people and is more unequally distributed than pension income (Gustafsson et al. 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> A tenant co-operative in Sweden is an apartment owned by the tenant, and as such is bought and sold on the regular housing market. However, rent is paid monthly and a new owner has to be accepted by the board of that particular tenant co-operative.

### Seniors on the move

Although the majority of seniors are stayers (Abramsson & Andersson 2012, Abramsson et al. 2012), recent studies show increased residential mobility rates among those born in the 1940s compared to older age groups (Andersson & Abramsson 2012). This may indicate a change in behaviour as we can expect moves at this age to be the result of a wish to move, rather than a forced move for health reasons. The latter is assumed to be the predominant reason for moving when very old; moves at this time of life, usually involve a move to rented apartments with little demand for maintenance (Abramsson et al. 2012). Residential mobility that is the result of a wish rather than a necessity to move might reflect the time spent in what is known as the “third age”. This is a time of life that follows after family and working life that can be spent on new social and recreational activities, a result of people now enjoying more years in good health after retirement (Laslett 1996; Warnes 1992:181).

For the total population, the majority of moves that are made are local moves within a municipality and often within the same housing area, this is true among seniors in particular (Abramsson et al. 2012; Fransson & Borgegård 2002). Local moves indicate that the reason for the move is the result of a wish to change one’s housing; that is, housing area, tenure, type or size or housing environment, while the household remains within the same social network (Abramsson et al. 2012).

### Senior housing in Sweden

A variety of housing types aimed specifically for older people, such as senior housing, retirement villages or the equivalent, can be seen in a number of countries. In Sweden, senior housing is usually intended for people over the age of 55, these are apartments in estates consisting of one or more buildings, available as municipal or privately rented housing or tenant co-operative housing.

There are no general regulations on what senior housing should be constituted of, but most senior housing is available for residents from the age of 55 or 60 years that have no children still residing in the parental home.

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Most have accessibility from the ground level to all other levels in the house, they have a common room and often a guest apartment. In addition, some have hobby rooms, a gym, a sauna, a library and some may offer holiday apartments, car rental, catering and cleaning services at reduced rates in co-operation with companies offering these services. Some offer additional services such as security alarms and holiday services. The apartment can be, but is not always, suitable also for residents who require a walking aid or a wheelchair.

The housing costs in senior housing vary depending on location and quality. Some senior housing complexes have features over and above the ordinary and are located in inner city areas. These are more costly than those that have been converted from ordinary apartments to senior housing which are geographically located further away from the city centre in, often municipal, rented housing areas. With limited extra features except the age limit and better accessibility, rent levels can be kept down to make the dwelling available also to low-income households.

Class differences between municipal rented apartments and a tenant co-operative senior housing have been studied by Nilsson Motevasel (2006). The study showed for example that socializing was organised differently in the two senior housing complexes. In the first, many of the residents were working class and socializing took place collectively, whereas in the latter, where many residents were middle class, socializing was based on individual initiatives. Common projects for the residents to join in, or to create together, develop a sense of community among the residents but may also create feelings of exclusion among those who do not want, or are unable to participate (Krekula 2012; SABO 2007).

Senior housing has increased in quantity since it first appeared in its current state on the market at the end of the 1980s. This increase occurred slowly at first but has accelerated since the year 2000 (Boverket 2011; SOU 2008:113). Part of the increase is the result of a transformation of care facilities to apartments in senior housing (SABO 2007; Larsson 2006). But a growing interest has been seen from housing companies, private as well as municipal, in building or refurbishing housing for this particular group (Paulsson 2008). Currently, more than 33, 000 apartments in senior housing are available in rented or tenant co-operative apartments, and an in-

crease is predicted during the coming years (Boverket 2013; SOU 2007:103). New housing companies have appeared on the market and private initiatives have been taken by groups of seniors themselves, in order to arrange their housing situation in later life (Kärnekull 2011; SOU 2007:103).

## Moving to senior housing – the house and its residents

The subject in this chapter is a new senior housing complex and its residents to be. The housing type is new in the city, and is as such interesting, as it is an addition to the existing housing market, offering a new type of housing to the city's senior population. Some of those that choose to move to this housing complex were interviewed about why they wanted to make this move. What qualities, social or physical, were they looking for and what did they actually find?

### The senior housing complex

This particular senior housing complex is located in a medium-sized Swedish city in southern Sweden and is part of the rented housing stock of the municipal housing company. The house was originally built in the 1960s as a high-rise residential building. For many years, the housing company had problems letting the apartments, and in the first few years of the twenty-first century, a decision was taken to strip the whole house, leaving only what was necessary for it to stand upright. It was then to be refurbished and let as senior housing aimed for tenants aged 55 years or older. Some extra features were added to the housing complex: two guest apartments, and on the top floor a common room, terrace and a sauna – the latter with a window overlooking a distant lake. On the ground floor, a gym was installed at the request of the residents, and one apartment located on the first floor was turned into a common area to be used by all residents for different common activities or to let out for special occasions.

As the house was to be completely refurbished, the tenants could choose between different materials for the apartment floors, kitchen and bathroom fixtures as well as wall paper, making them somewhat more exclusive

than the ordinary apartments offered by the housing company. The available options were on display in a temporary showroom close to the housing complex. The apartments varied in size from small and large 1-bedroom apartments, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments, as well as two 4-bedroom apartments, placed exclusively on the top floor; however, none of the interviewees lived in the latter. As they were moving into practically new housing, it was possible for them to follow the construction process, to influence the use of common areas and to some extent the way the individual apartments were fitted out. Rent levels in general were higher than in ordinary rented housing as the rent included the common area.

### Moving in to senior housing – the interviews

In the study, we interviewed seniors from 20 households on two occasions, prior to and after moving into a senior housing complex consisting of 58 units, in a medium-sized Swedish city.

The respondents were selected to represent a mix of the types of households moving in: one-person households (4 male and 4 female), as well as two-person (12) households. In the latter case, both household members were interviewed on the same occasion. Rent levels are higher in the upper floor apartments and lower in apartments on the lower levels and as a result, the interviewees were also selected on the basis of the different levels of the house into which they had moved.

The interviews were non-standardised and semi-structured (Kvale 1997). To get a better understanding of the move to senior housing, and to place it in a context of place and time, it was assumed that a better understanding could be attained when this last move was related to the housing history of the individuals. Their housing history was collected during the first interview, when the respondents told of the different housing changes they had experienced, including their parental home and throughout their adult lives. In this way, their housing choices were placed in a life course perspective (Mulder 1993). To some extent, the interview method is related to the life history method (Elliot 2005, Plummer 1983); the respondents were asked to recount their housing history as they remembered it. Rather than providing a complete life history, this provided an overall picture

of the respondents' housing situations and housing experiences through life. Although the focus here is on the last move, the narratives that include earlier experiences can help in understanding more recent actions.

The interviews focused on changes of housing, on why the move was made, the triggers and on the experiences of the respondents concerning their housing in regard to location, tenure, relations to their neighbours, the importance of family etc. The interviews lasted about one hour, were recorded and transcribed, and then systematically coded in the search for data related to the subject of this particular study; i.e., the reasons and triggers for, and the expectations of the move and how it related to a lifestyle choice. The analysis was performed in several steps and was mainly influenced by the methodological approach in grounded theory (Charmaz 2002; Glaser 1978).

It was possible to identify two groups of movers, those who made what is here referred to as a lifestyle move (13 households), and another group, that moved primarily because they no longer could, or found it increasingly difficult to, remain in their housing situation (seven households). In this chapter, the focus is on the lifestyle moves of retired households from the first group, a group that moved for other reasons than necessity. For the purpose of this particular study, nine of the thirteen interviewed households were selected. In four households, both partners were still working. Among the nine selected households, one partner was still working in two households and in another, the couple had taken early retirement. Five were two-person households, four were one-person households (three male and one female), in total fourteen individuals. All selected households lived on or above the sixth floor, which had the higher rent levels.

The interviewees selected for this study varied in age from 55 to 78 years old. Most had the equivalent of compulsory schooling; only two had a higher education at the secondary or university level. Several had made a career with different companies; as such, most households were financially well off. In the two-person households, all the women had worked part-time for a few, or many, years. All the households referred to a secure economy, although a couple of the one-person households had considered the rent levels once or twice before deciding on the move. In two of the two-person households, the women in particular expressed that if they

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were left to provide for themselves, it would be difficult to remain in the apartment due to the rent levels.

All had lived for many years in the city, or in the nearby part of the county; only four of the interviewees had a history of living in other places in or outside the country. When they were children, most of the interviewees had lived in small rented houses or housing that was supplied as part of the work contract, in a city or in the country. Only two of the respondents mentioned that their parents owned their home. However, some of the interviewees were uncertain about the type of tenure their parents had held.

As adults, ten of the interviewees had lived for a period of time – one household for more than forty years, another for twenty-five years – in a single family house that they owned themselves together with a current or previous partner. In addition, four of those had lived in a tenant co-operative apartment, as had another two of the respondents. Most of them had made several moves during their lives, some only a few. For one respondent, having remained in the parental home throughout life, the move into senior housing was the first move. Eight of the fourteen individuals had earlier in life divorced or separated from a partner, and one had always lived alone. Only one had lived in rented housing all his life and one had lived in rented housing all his adult life. At the time of the first interview, four households lived in a rented apartment, three in a tenant co-operative apartment, and two owned their own single family homes.

At the time of the first interview, the respondents had already made the decision to move to the senior housing complex, and at the time of the second interview, seven households had lived in their new apartment for at least nine months. Two of the interviewed households had moved in, but then left the senior housing complex at the time of the second interview; they were interviewed in their new residence.

### Why move to senior housing?

The interviewees presented a number of reasons for moving to senior housing. To move was to get away from maintenance and gardening responsibilities in their current dwelling – activities which age was making difficult,

although they could still manage. As such, it was a way of adapting to a physiological change and at the same time to enjoy a more leisurely lifestyle. They felt they wanted to spend their time (and money) doing something else. They preferred a rented apartment as this allowed them time to travel, or spend time in a summerhouse or a caravan while they were still able to. These reasons do not explain the move to senior housing in particular, as moving to any rented housing would result in a similar housing situation. A third reason, which was directly connected to the fact that they had moved into a senior housing complex, was the understanding they had, prior to the move, that they would move into a social situation that would enable and enhance contacts with their neighbours. This was frankly put by one woman.<sup>3</sup>

After all, what I was after was to get into contact with other people. (Woman, moving from a tenant co-operative apartment)

The majority of the interviewees thought they would befriend their neighbours as they imagined they would be at a similar phase in life, with working life and family life behind them. Still, they did not know their new neighbours beforehand and very few knew anything about this type of housing from before. In addition, when asked about their contacts with neighbours in their previous housing situations, it was evident that most of the interviewees had kept their neighbours at a distance. Many had good relations with previous neighbours but only two households said they had been in close and personal contact with their neighbours. Still, the social relationship with the neighbours was pointed out as important and was part of the expectations of the majority of the interviewees.

### The triggers inducing a move

When the interviewees became aware that this particular type of housing was available, some had already decided to make a move and were on the lookout for a new dwelling. Others had recently moved to what they had

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<sup>3</sup> All quotations have been translated from Swedish to English by the author.



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thought would be their last home, and some had no plans to move when they found out about the senior housing complex from the local newspaper or from the internet, friends or relatives. They were attracted by the fact that it was modern, comfortable, and with extra features such as common rooms, a sauna etc., as described above. It was also advertised as a social way of living as they, the residents, could influence what would become of it from a social perspective, so a sense of community would develop between the residents. These features triggered the first contact with the housing company, after which the whole concept was presented, with results as indicated below.

We said, well, we could go and have a look, not that we are going to move there but it would be interesting to see. And then when we had been, we were overwhelmed and signed a contract for an apartment. (Woman, moving from a tenant co-operative apartment)

The way the housing was presented acted as a trigger for a move. The housing company presented their senior housing category using three keywords: security, community, and accessibility, concepts that were of importance to those interviewed for this study.

One of the households that at the time of the second interview had moved out again, said that they had been attracted by the way the senior housing was presented but found, after having moved in, that the contrast between living in a single family house and an apartment in a multi-storey house was too great. They had been reluctant to leave their previous home to which they had been very attached.

Those moving in were involved in choosing wallpaper, kitchen and bathroom fixtures, floor materials etc. in their own apartment as the house was to be completely refurbished. The housing company offered a wider choice and to some extent a more extravagant one, compared to what was normally available to the tenants. This fact – that the housing company was prepared to invest more goodwill in this project – was attractive to some of those moving in, who would not otherwise have chosen a rented apartment. Extra qualities also included features such as different types of common areas; the tenants could use these for common activities. This was

how the community concept was presented; the house was intended to promote communal activities, but in a manner that the residents themselves would decide. The house, the physical structure, would provide the possibilities.

During the second interview, some of the residents mentioned that in the end, some of the options they had chosen had not been available and they had to choose from a smaller selection. This was a disappointment, but most still appreciated the possibility of making a personal choice even if this involved only choosing between two different materials.

### Age as a representation of a common lifestyle

The circumstance that the housing was aimed only for seniors was a decisive factor for some, but not for others. However, the advantages mentioned as a result of it being a 55+ housing were more or less decisive factors to all. They mentioned the point that the house would be quiet and clean, and that everyone would have similar expectations of what was involved in living there.

...what one wants is some peace and quiet and it becomes quieter with only grown up, old people. (Man, moving from owner-occupation)

Peace and quiet, as well as feelings of security, were features that they perceived as likely to be fulfilled in an environment with mature adults only. To know your neighbours is one way of feeling safe in your house. Orderliness is another issue pointed out as something that is more easily obtained in senior housing as opposed to ordinary rented housing. Even to those for whom the age limit was not important in the choice of housing, these factors – security, orderliness, peace and quiet – were pointed out as important to their choice of housing.

As regards age, some respondents mentioned that they found it difficult to mix with younger households; they could not think of subjects to talk about and had different expectations on how to live their lives.

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These people who have children, small children, it is difficult to talk about certain things, things they have never experienced, things I want to talk about because of my age, this is something we have thought much about, to be at the same level as the others, to have the same interests. (Man, moving from a tenant co-operative apartment)

They expected that socialising would be easier in the new residence where all the people moving in were older, and that they would have more in common with their neighbours. Some experienced a change in the area they were moving from; seniors move out and are replaced by young families. This was described as a feeling of community that had been lost. They found that they had different expectations of how to live their lives compared to the younger families who were moving in. Some referred to the time when their children were young and all the neighbours were in a similar phase of life; they had children growing up together and they got older together. When young families replace the neighbours, they find that their housing situation has changed. The change of housing is made to adapt to changing circumstances. The feeling of having less in common with the younger groups acts as a trigger for moving. With their neighbours in the senior housing complex, they will have more adult years in common, even though the age difference may be the same, or even greater, than with the young families referred to above.

At the time of the second interview most of the interviewees mentioned that they had very good relations with many of their neighbours in the house and their expectations were to that extent fulfilled.

Yes, the friendship in the house is pleasant, all are... yes, it is better

(Interviewer) It was better than you had expected?

Yes, I think so, all are like this, none keep to themselves, everyone that we have met is talkative and all show that they care. (Woman, having moved from a tenant co-operative apartment)

They were positively surprised and expressed the relations with their neigh-

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bours as being part of a community. They had made new acquaintances and several of the activities were performed with other residents in the house. Some households met privately in each other's homes; other activities such as gardening, Nordic walking, a reading club and watching football were performed with a group of other individuals. Some parties, arranged by one of the committees, had taken place involving all the residents in the house. The entrance to the house, where the mailboxes were located, turned out to be a main meeting point for the residents where many contacts were made and information was obtained. The entrance was considered a part of the residents' home and was also used for house parties.

However, among the interviewees, one of the households that had moved out found that the expectations of friendship and community had not been fulfilled. It was also evident that there was a divide in the house in that households had chosen to move in for different reasons. To some households the possibility of moving into a social community was the main trigger for the move, whereas for other households, the physical aspects, such as accessibility, acted as the main trigger. This latter group did not take part in social activities to the same extent as the households selected for this study, the lifestyle movers.

I guess that some of the older people never leave their apartment and we have never seen them...but they are just a few. (Man, now living in the house)

In the interviews, a sense of tension could be noticed as some households were not prepared to, or could not for health reasons, take part in the social life of the community (see Krekula 2012). The seven households remaining in the house for the second interview, all had positive experience of the community that had developed in the house. It made the housing situation different to ordinary rented housing that was not particularly aimed for older people; many returned to the fact that, because of their age, they had more in common with each other and to some extent shared the same values.

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### Easy living – worth paying for

In the interviews, many mentioned the fact that they were getting older as a reason for wanting an easy way of life, more comfort in their homes and less responsibility in relation to their housing situation. They were aware that this resulted in increased housing costs, but it was an expense they considered well worth paying, and it was not necessarily related to old age, as shown in the quotations below from two individuals, 20 years apart in age.

It is important to live comfortably when getting older. (Man in his fifties, moving from a rented apartment)

Well, yes, here we have to maintain and pay for everything ourselves, that is true. There are advantages with all types [of living], when having reached old age, well, then you have to pay for the comfort. (Man in his seventies, moving from a tenant co-operative apartment)

Most reasoned that having become older, they deserved a more comfortable and easier life – almost by right, as one interviewee said – without the concerns about the house and its maintenance or the worries that come with owning a home; and they were prepared to pay for these extra benefits. They explained their need for comfort and freedom of responsibility by the fact that they were getting older, but it was not necessarily related to poorer health conditions.

### Lifestyle as a determinant for housing choice

The benefits, described above, of living in a rented apartment were major factors in the decision to move, as was being able to perform other activities. Another frequently mentioned reason was the possibility to leave home for travelling; of just being able to lock the door with no concerns about the home other than getting someone to water the houseplants and look after the mail. Also, the possibility of travelling for longer periods of

time was mentioned by several people, this was referred to before and after the move into the senior housing. One couple in particular, in addition to selling their former tenant co-operative apartment, had sold their summer house, which they had owned for many years, and where they had lived for several months each year. Instead of using this house, they now spent both time and money on travelling; short journeys as well as longer trips for up to a month away from their current home. This was something they found they had in common with other residents in the house.

To be able to perform other activities, tenure was important and a rented apartment was described as the most convenient form of tenure. No matter what the reason was, by moving they counted on being able to spend more time on other projects than the home.

Another issue was the novelty of the house and the somewhat extravagant touch to the house, inside as well as outside. To some of the interviewees, this was a decisive factor, i.e. the housing project itself was exciting and they wanted to live there. This can be referred to as moving into new housing for lifestyle reasons.

In most of these cases, any ordinary rented apartment would have served the same purpose, but the senior housing complex was considered a more appropriate choice as the respondents expected to develop new relationships with their neighbours. A change of housing was used as a means of making daily life and particular interests or hobbies easier to manage.

## Senior housing a life style choice?

The individuals included in this study made a move into senior housing that could be linked to the life course and the housing careers of these individuals. Prior to this move, some of the households had moved several times during their lives, while others had moved very infrequently. The move to the senior housing complex was not necessarily related to changes in household size as in the life cycle model presented by Rossi (1955). However, the moves were made as a result of a change in the needs and wants of the households and could from that perspective fit the model. The way the senior housing was presented acted as a trigger for the move, but for most of the interviewees, this housing choice became an option at

a time in life when a move suited them. They wanted to move away from responsibility and maintenance, into a new social environment, or to experience a new type of living. To that extent, the housing situation was seen from a life course perspective, in that housing over time changes its role. At times, housing may be exchanged for a type that better suits a current life situation, in relation to physical needs, but also in response to changes in social needs, or in a search to express an identity as discussed by Clapham (2005). In the cases presented here, the moves were a result of a wish to change housing rather than as a response to a need. Only one couple mentioned a hesitation to move due to attachment to a prior home, and that household was not happy after the move.

The interviewees had lived through a period of welfare changes, in which the role of housing to most people changed from meeting a basic need, to being a commodity with which people can express different ways of living, as discussed by Chaney (1996). Moving to senior housing provides the possibility of living a different life. The move to the particular housing type that is the focus of this study was also part of a lifestyle change, as the housing in question was attractive and modern. The qualities of the house, making it something out of the ordinary, served as a major trigger for the interviewees, raising their expectations. It would also allow them to spend their time differently, which some referred to as a more leisurely lifestyle, including the new social community. Interestingly, the choice was made from an individualistic point of view, which relates to Giddens' discussion on the choice of the individual (1991), but incorporating the social network to the extent that the other residents became important for each other's well-being.

None of the respondents had any previous experience of this type of housing, but expectations within this group were high, particularly as regards community, and the possibility of establishing new social networks. They also looked forward to enjoying life in older age, since the housing was expected to be comfortable and accessible. Some of the interviewees thought that living with other people with similar life experiences would enhance their current life situation. They based this on the fact that even though they would all bring different experiences, they had been through many adult years, devoted to working life, family formation and bringing up children.

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Among the respondents that lived in the house at the time of the second interview, most were satisfied as regards their social networks and comfort. Of those who had moved out of the senior housing complex, one had moved for reasons related to the social community in which the respondent did not feel comfortable, as if not fitting in. This is discussed by Krekula (2012); the social community can become a burden to those who feel they do not fit in, or when getting older, no longer have the energy to join in the different social activities. The second household that had moved, a couple, moved for reasons related to discomfort and dissatisfaction with the dwelling. The individuals that were interviewed described their move to the senior housing as a result of both approaching older age and an interest in a specific type of housing available on the local housing market – a type of housing representing a lifestyle involving new social contacts, comfortable living and something that was new and exciting. This can be linked to the thoughts of Bourdieu (1994) and the question of taste.

The housing narratives proved to be useful as they helped in understanding the way the respondents talked about, for instance, their relations with neighbours, housing maintenance, the housing environment and tenure.

The knowledge collected in this study will contribute to the understanding of the role of different housing types, in this case senior housing, for the well-being of individuals. When a decision is made to move to senior housing, certain qualities are sought for. Some of them are related to the housing type of senior housing, whereas others are not; some relate to the physical qualities of the house, others to the social qualities. When planning for the housing needs of an ageing population, knowledge about their needs and expectations will assist in making a better fit between what the seniors want and what is on offer in the housing market. Such information is beneficial for planners, social workers as well as housing companies.

Some questions remain about the future of this type of housing and for this group of residents. How will it develop as people age in their homes? What are the possibilities to continue a socially active lifestyle when the residents grow older? Will there be a sufficient turnover rate to keep the house active, or will the age of the residents prove to be of less importance for the activity level, for the established social networks and the character of the house?



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## Coping with Antinomies of Taste. Eating Habits of Finnish Retirement Migrants in Spain

*Antti Karisto*

This chapter is about the eating habits of senior Finnish migrants. Retirement migration as a change of location may involve a change of perspective that is reflected in everyday life. New habits and life practices are adopted when living abroad, but along with the changes there are also strong elements of continuity in lifestyles. This is the case with the subject of this chapter; Finnish seasonal migrants who live on the Costa del Sol, Spain. They describe moving to Spain as “turning a new leaf” or “making a new beginning” in life. They are curious about the Spanish way of life, for instance, food and eating habits, and they are ready and willing to try new tastes. But at the same time, they often declare that their daily lives are still constructed in the context of “normal Finnish life”, and this is visible also on their dining tables.

### Introduction

A nostalgic commitment to familiar food is common, because eating is at the hub of primary socialisation and food itself is emotional memory materialised (de Certeau et al. 1998). The favourite dishes of ageing people are often familiar from childhood (Karisto & Konttinen 2004). For migrants, the dishes may descend from earlier generations. Amy E. Rowe (2012) studied people of Lebanese origin in the United States who considered

themselves assimilated and did not generally identify themselves as Lebanese – except when discussing, preparing and enjoying food. Food may become an object of “gustatory nostalgia” (Holzman 2006) or “armchair nostalgia” (Appadurai 1998) in which people long for things and times that they never experienced themselves.

Monica Janowski (2012) points out that eating is an important theme in understanding the ways in which identities of migrants are constructed. “The understanding of the processes of migration can benefit from examining them through the lens of food and drink”, she writes (*Ibid.*:175). In the same way as ageing is performed – for instance by questioning the ways it is represented (Basting 1998) – national and other identities also involve performativity (Tuori 2001), which may be represented through cooking and eating.

In discussing eating in Spain, Finnish retirement migrants often use terms such as “the Finnish way of eating” and “the Spanish food culture”, which are used also here. National food culture, however, is a slippery and far from clearly delineated concept, although it appears to be firm and factual. According to Linda Coakley, this concept is “regularly used but never really examined” (2012:323). For centuries, foodways have been international, and food cultures have affected each other, although in the era of nation states they have been presented as national and clearly defined. Local and regional traditions are long, but a distinctive Finnish way of eating, for instance, emerged quite late, in the nineteenth century, as the nation’s history, national identity and national symbols were constructed (see also Amilien 2003).

Times are changing, and so are eating habits. There has been a change towards healthy eating (Karisto et al. 1993) and towards diversification recently. Foodways are increasingly related to travel and mobility. Mass tourism explains taste trends, although the geography of travelling and the geography of tastes do not fully overlap (Karisto 1992). Until recently, Spanish culinary influences have not been very strong or visible in Finland, although Spain has long overwhelmingly held the number one position as a holiday destination for Finns. In any case, many retirement migrants first became acquainted with Spanish food as tourists. In their present life situation, there are different cultural forces pulling them in different direc-

tions. Curiosity and the desire for pleasure, regarded as typical of the modern consumer, tempt them to look for new taste experiences. The force pulling in the opposite direction involves the need for security, suggesting the hold of the old and familiar (see e.g. Ilmonen 1991; Metzger 2005).

The British sociologist of consumption Alan Warde (1997) draws on antinomies of tastes in his study of changing food habits. The concept derives from Immanuel Kant, who in his Critique of Judgement argued that taste is simultaneously private and universal, individual and social. "Taste has both a subjective aspect, in that it consists in a felt response to the aesthetic qualities of an object, and an objective aspect, in that we can give reasons for our aesthetic judgements" (Stern 1991:66). According to Kant, pure or disinterested taste "is the ability to judge or choose in a universally valid way", but how can something which is based on the subjective feeling of pleasure be universally valid (Gronow 1997:II, 86–87)? According to Kant, the antinomy of taste is theoretically unsolvable (*Ibid.*). In everyday life, however, it can be overcome or resolved in one way or another, and therefore the concept can be used in empirical research.

Warde (1997) has used Kant's concept to make complex and contradictory eating habits intelligible. He has distinguished four kinds of antinomies of taste. The first of these deep-rooted contradictions arises between novelty and tradition. Modern consumers are seeking novelties, and therefore food has to be innovative and exotic, unfamiliar and unusual, something new. But because perpetual change may cause insecurity, familiarity, tradition and perceived authenticity are greatly appreciated. The second antinomy exists between health and indulgence. Diet and health are strongly linked in current perceptions. Food has to be healthy, meanwhile people are increasingly worried about what they eat. At the same time they are prone to hedonistic eating, in which the deliciousness of the food is the main thing. The third antinomy identified by Warde lies between economy and extravagance. Food has to be inexpensive, but at least in festivities money is downright wasted on it, because food should also be distinctive and provide some luxury in everyday life. The fourth antinomy arises between convenience and care. Cooking is a caring activity and home-made food is highly appreciated, but so is convenience food, because time is a scarce commodity in the modern world (Warde 1997; see also Leipämaa-Leskinen 2007).

The Finnish sociologist of food Johanna Mäkelä (2002) has supplemented Warde's list with polar opposites: responsibility–egocentricity, technological–natural, safety–dangerous, and eating together–eating alone. Similar contradictions in people's food-related discourses have also been identified in other studies (e.g. Lupton 1996; Beardsworth & Keil 1997, Massa et al. 2011).

In brief, there are contradictory cultural forces pulling people in different directions as they make their dining choices. In the following I will describe which forces affect the eating practices of Finnish retirement migrants in Spain and how. How do the seniors cope with the “antinomies of taste”? This overall question will be discussed by way of more specific questions like: How do the Finnish retirement migrants encounter food in Spain? Which features are most recognised and discussed when they comment on food and eating in Spain? Do migrants eat in a “Finnish” or a “Spanish” way, or do they have mixed eating habits? How is Finnishness constructed and reconstructed at the dining table? Is it common to fixate on Finnish food even when living in Spain? Is eating just eating, or is the variation in eating habits somehow linked to lifestyles and to socio-demographic characteristics of the retirement migrants?

### Material obtained about the retirement migrants

The chapter is based on empirical studies of both a qualitative and a quantitative nature. The data were collected between 1998 and 2005 and were previously presented in the book *Satumaa* [Dreamland], describing the life and community of Finnish retirement migrants (Karisto 2008). Thirty semi-structured interviews (discussion-like, in practice) were conducted and fifty autobiographical texts were collected, describing Finns' experiences in Spain. Diaries were obtained from five retirement migrants describing their daily lives in detail. All the textual data were coded and examined with the Atlas/ti programme in order to make simple content analysis possible. In addition, field observations were made during the period of three months, and media data – Finnish newspaper articles as well as Finnish novels set on the Costa del Sol – were collected in order to examine how the daily lives of Finns are represented in such literature.



These data will be used only for illustrative purposes.

The quantitative part of the data consists of a questionnaire survey (N=404) directed to Finns living on the Costa del Sol. It was collected through several channels (Finnish clubs and restaurants, giveaways of Finnish newspapers delivered to subscribers' Spanish addresses, etc.) in order to obtain the best possible representativeness in circumstances in which no feasible census data are available. Those Finns who live permanently in Spain are listed in registers that could be used for sampling, but they are only a minority among the retired migrants (Karisto 2008; see also Helset 2000).

The characteristics of the retirement migrants can be described with the help of the questionnaire survey and by comparing it to a Finnish population survey in which the respondents were of a similar age (55+). Altogether three-fourths (77%) of those who responded to my survey were pensioners and belonged to the target population here. Nearly half (46%) of all were 60–69 years of age; a quarter (24%) were older than 70 (Karisto 2005; Karisto 2008).

There is a slight over-proportion of men in the Finnish community in Spain compared to the national population of a similar age. Three-quarters of the respondents were married, and most of the marriages were long-standing. But there were also many who had recently re-married or undertaken a cohabitation or an LAT (Living Apart Together) relationship after divorce or widowhood. The number of elderly people (55+) cohabiting is as much as three times greater than among their age mates in Finland, indicating that a new kind of lifestyle option is sooner available to older people in the Spanish retirement migrant community than in Finland (Karisto 2008).

On average, Finnish retirement migrants are more educated than Finns of the same age in Finland. The majority have worked in white-collar occupations or have been entrepreneurs, although the spectrum of socio-economic background is broad. Upward social mobility and dramatic changes in living conditions have been typical of the generation studied, whose members have memories of war-time, over-sized families and stark poverty in their childhood. Coming from this kind of background, people feel that they have worked long and hard, poverty has gradually eased off, and now is the time to enjoy an easier life in retirement (Karisto 2008).

The overwhelming majority of the people studied are transmigrants or seasonal migrants with another base in Finland. Only thirteen per cent live in Spain year round. Typically they spend four to eight months of the year on the “Coast”, and the length of residence is usually measured by “winters” (Karisto 2008). Winters are spent in Spain, but summers in Finland; trying to have the best of both worlds is the aspiration. This way of living is an example of “a double morphology”, where the rhythms and qualities of social life differ with the seasons (Mauss 1979; Massa & Haverinen 2001). Summer cottages – a widespread institution in Finland – may have habituated Finns to this change of rhythms.

### Continued comparisons

Although migration is seasonal, it is a grand project for many seniors, who are often proud of having had the courage to take the step. Something new is undertaken after their long years of working life, and many feel that their worldview has been enlarged. At the same time, however, the migrants maintain the continuities of their life courses. They do not plan to stay permanently in Spain, let alone apply for Spanish nationality.

The migrants often state that their Finnishness is condensing and strengthening rather than fading in Spain. Ceremonial features of traditional Finnish culture are highlighted there even more than in Finland. For example, the Finnish Independence Day is a pretentious event on the Costa del Sol, and mundane symbols of Finnishness are highly visible there as well. Or the mundane is intertwined with the sacred in a fascinating way. “It really hurt, when they converted a sauna to a wardrobe!”, one of my interviewees exclaimed when she was told about the remodelling done in a previously Finnish-owned apartment on the Costa del Sol (Karisto 2008:419).

Life in Spain is the mirror in which the seniors in this study look when they reflect on their way of life. They do not necessarily have close contacts with Spaniards, and they complain that it is difficult to become familiar with the locals. However, they are very curious about Spanish lifestyles, and they make cultural comparisons between Finland and Spain daily. They note differences and details in everyday manners, architecture and

living environments, traffic and spatial behaviours, dressing up and decoration, grocery store transactions and other types of social intercourse. Life in the South is ceaselessly compared to life in Finland, and this is also the basis from which these reflections are considered (Karisto 2008).

Evaluations of Spanish everyday culture may change over the years. If at first what is felt to be the noisy interaction of the Spanish people seems strange and irritating, a few moments later the Finnish taciturnity can seem at least as strange. The instant, annoyed reactions to the Spanish *mañana* – in practice not to be translated "tomorrow", but rather "later" – might turn into a romantic understanding of the healing sides of the "mañana-mentality", a slow, gentle lifestyle that is challenging the hectic way of life typical of our time. The presumptuous thoughts about northern supremacy in punctuality and fidelity can give way to a slight envy of those who are assumed to live in the present without the weight of tomorrow's responsibilities on their shoulders. Something of the "Spanish" is perhaps adopted as part of the lifestyle. Finns might, for instance, notice that during their Spanish winters they have become more sociable, they have started to greet each other with hugs and air kisses, or they might have changed their attire bit by bit from practical to polished (Karisto 2008).

### The symbolic meaning of food: five themes of eating

The questions about eating habits worked well in the interviews as they inspired people to talk. Many retirement migrants themselves acknowledged the symbolic meanings of eating, and they often had ready explanations as to why they eat as they do. The subject was also raised spontaneously, without my asking, in the autobiographical texts and in the diaries depicting life in Spain. These contained very explicit and almost daily descriptions of eating situations.

24.12. First thing in the morning we hiked for a couple of hours. In the great market hall we saw Peter's catch of fish. What wonders are hidden beneath the waves of the sea! We were admiring the giant fish on the table in the market hall. But I must honestly say I don't feel like eating fish soup today...

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30.12. We bought pork chops, cucumber and bread from the health store.  
We have made our meals lighter.

5.2. They are eating Runeberg tarts in Finland today. We had herring,  
potatoes, asparagus soup and plums and rice. We still have caramel pud-  
ding for the evening. Our appetites are enormous!

10. 2. This morning I made rice-apricot porridge. For lunch, it was simple  
and plain soup again. My goodness, the celery that grows in the sun here  
makes the soup magnificent.

The first diary entry quoted above, made by a lady in her mid-seventies, is dated Christmas Eve. The food she was looking at in the market hall with her husband aroused mixed feelings. The Mediterranean fish are admired, but also avoided, at least on that day, because the Finnish Christmas food, which is also widely eaten in Spain, is so different. In other entries, the Spanish food is applauded, because it is considered to be light, healthy and delicious. In the third entry above, when it is Runeberg's Day, "they" [the people in Finland] are singled out as eating Runeberg tarts (named after the Finnish poet to whom the day is dedicated), but the diarist enjoys caramel pudding instead.

### Healthy or delicious?

Five themes could be discerned in the interviews and textual data whenever the migrants commented on food and eating in Spain. The healthiness of the Spanish food is the first and most commented upon. To many, the excellence of the Andalusian cuisine comes from the perceived fact that it supports their efforts to lead a healthy life. This is of great importance, because for many retirement migrants, health reasons are the main motive for living in Spain or the reason with which they legitimise their being there (Karisto 2008). They especially praise the freshness of the ingredients and often applaud the local food as "the healthiest in the world"; similarly, they say that the Andalusian climate is "the healthiest in Europe". The legitimisation discourse based on "healthiness" is just as strong among

Danish retirement migrants, who have “a theory that moving to Costa del Sol gives them ten extra years” (Blaakilde 2007:24).

The deliciousness of food is another theme that often came up in the interviews and diaries. Whereas the above diary quotations primarily described health-oriented “rational eating”, the following diary notes express “hedonistic eating” (Beardsworth & Keil 1997:67–68). In this diary, kept by a woman in her early seventies (who was also interviewed), the meals are remembered and appreciated for their deliciousness. The healthy aspects of food are not forgotten when she describes the eating habits of herself and her husband in the interview and in the diary, but sometimes deliciousness simply takes over. Then food may be unhealthy but tasty, and “there is nothing green there”.

18.3. Having lunch with the folks from upstairs at Restaurante Happy Days. There is no other place where you can get such good and unhealthy food as there. The table groans with nothing but delicacies, and there is nothing green there. I must say that the Danish smörgåsbord is wonderful. There is pork, which has first been boiled and is then roasted in an oven so that the skin is nice and crunchy in your mouth. The liver paté melts in your mouth, and the smoked salmon goes down by itself. And the Danish herring can't be beaten. But there has to be some limit to all the goodies, too. We have decided that on each stay we only fall for “the Danish” once, but not more.

This diarist is quite a connoisseur of Spanish food. In the interview, she explained how she had dared to dispute a market-hall seller about what certain herbs actually are, but here she describes the splendour of the Danish smorgasbord. This is not accidental, because the retirement migrants encounter not only the Spanish kitchen, but also many others. The Costa del Sol is a transnational space where retirement migrants and tourists from almost every corner of Europe are living side by side, and a great variety of European kitchens are represented there. Asian food is also available in restaurants and is popular, especially among those who value its inexpensiveness; thus, the migrants have other choices than just between Finnish and Spanish food. However, it is primarily the Spanish food and the Spanish way of eating that they commented on in the interviews and texts along with Finnish food.

Exotic, proper or inexpensive?

Exoticism is the third quality that the Finns attach to Spanish food, although it is mentioned less often than healthiness and deliciousness. Exoticism is linked especially to fish and fruits. “The fruits of the South” are one symbol of the good life, something that the next informant, for example – a man in his sixties who has written about his first years in Spain – could not even begin to imagine having the chance to taste when he was young. All of his comments on the new living environment and the Spanish way of life represent euphoric liminality typical of newcomers and usually complemented by more reflexive and critical tones later on.

Oh, chirimoya, wonderful, my wife exclaimed as I placed the fruit on the table. I cut the fruit in half on a small plate with a knife and placed the other half on my wife’s plate. I went on to cut out a darkened streak from both halves that had formed at the base of the stem. I spooned up the white inside of the chirimoya. It had a sweet taste. There were some hard black seeds in the fruit. They had to be taken out of the mouth and put on the plate. The soft, white fruit flesh was easy to eat; I could taste chirimoya in my mouth. I was thinking to myself that I can’t compare this taste to any other fruit. But, cream apple... True, I have read somewhere that that’s what it’s called in Finnish. Yes, to me too it has a somewhat sweet and creamy taste to it.

The exotic and different have a strong positive appeal in this quotation, but these qualities may also trigger prejudice. Healthiness and deliciousness are, of course, thoroughly positive features of food, but the sentiments linked to the exotic are of two kinds: positive and negative. The strange food may also cause avoidance and even disgust. For some retirement migrants it may take several winters before they even become familiar with typical specialities of Spanish restaurants such as tapas. These “tiny dishes” are eccentric because they have no equivalent in the Finnish food culture. The integration of new dishes into one’s own eating system takes place through metaphorical expansions, if such expansions are available (Mäkelä 1990:31). In the excerpt cited above, chirimoya was compared to a creamy apple; and – to take another example – when boquerón, a fish common

to Andalusian waters, is called *muikku* (a Finnish lake fish) or *silakka* (Baltic herring), it is immediately sensed as appealing. But if it is called anchovy (as it predominantly is), then it is not perceived as tasty, because Finns are not used to eating fried anchovies (Karisto 2008).

The "properness" of food is the fourth theme, and unlike the previous themes, it is more often attached to Finnish food. Proper food is familiar and "modest"; it is sturdy and straightforward; it is something that one likes to return to after having embarked on a culinary adventure. "At home we ate a proper meat soup", writes one diarist after depicting at length her cooking experiments and the meals she had eaten in restaurants. Also in the first diary excerpts above, the lady called her lunch soup "plain and simple". There seems to be a contradiction between plainness and properness on the one hand and exoticism and extravagance on the other. To the Finns, especially to people of the generation studied here, a plain and proper meal means a hot home-cooked meal, which signifies emotional commitment and caring morality (Mäkelä 2002). "We don't eat out often; normally, we prepare meals ourselves" was an often-heard comment in the interviews.

The price of food is also often mentioned when the migrants comment on Spanish food or compare the groceries and restaurants in Spain and Finland. The food in Spain is said to be inexpensive, although extravagant. The statements on inexpensiveness are empirically grounded and reasoned, but the retirement migrants have a tendency to exaggerate how much cheaper the food is in Spain: "If one gets a bagful of food in Finland with a certain sum of money, here one gets a car load, with a couple of cognac bottles extra. It's absolutely fabulous!"

### Eating in a Finnish or a Spanish way?

Making one's own meal is a proper way of living, and among the elderly it is also an indication of the ability to live independently, of not being too old and frail (Andersson 2007). However, eating out is certainly more common among the retirement migrants than among people of the same age in Finland. The questionnaire survey asked how often people ate out. Seven per cent of the respondents ate out daily; one-fifth (19%) ate out

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several times a week, and two-fifths (38%) once or twice a week. Eating out is fairly common, but nevertheless it does not take place on a daily basis, though it does not fit the down-to-earth lifestyle adopted by the retired migrants. They declare that they are not on holiday in Spain, but are living there. A lady in her late fifties, still working seasonally, expressed with annoyance in the interview, that her clients in Finland wondered "How was your holiday? You are not so suntanned; how was the weather?"

They reasoned that I had been on holiday, just sunbathing. I said to them that I have to wash and clean here just like in Finland. You get hungry here too, and you have to wash dishes here. If I were only sunbathing, I would be a raisin, dry and wrinkled. It's not like that. Tourist life is different, but here we are living a normal, everyday life.

In the eyes of Spaniards, seasonal migrants may be a similar kind of *extranjeros* (foreigners) as tourists, but the migrants themselves tend to make a strong distinction between tourists and themselves (Karisto 2008). Whereas a tourist escapes repetitive, everyday life (e.g. Craik 1997), migrants build on routines. Norms regulating behaviour might be looser than in the home country, but they do exist, and their observance is monitored in the migrant community. Whereas the psychological core of holiday travel is often a getaway – from work, home, daily routines, prevailing norms (Krippendorf 1999) – migrants attempt to arrange and adapt to the familiar routines in the new surroundings (Karisto 2008).

Eating out, however, is fairly common in Spain, and there are plenty of Finnish-owned restaurants on the Costa del Sol serving Finnish food. Therefore, the questionnaire respondents were asked whether they preferred Finnish or other restaurants (which are not only Spanish) when eating out. Half of them replied that they almost always eat at restaurants that are not Finnish; a quarter ate mostly at non-Finnish restaurants. Only a few ate almost always (1%) or mostly (7%) at Finnish restaurants, and the rest (18%) ate as often at Finnish restaurants as at other restaurants.

Another question in the survey measured culinary orientation when eating at home. "When you eat at home or in your flat, do you eat more in a Finnish or a Spanish way?" respondents were asked. One-third said



that they eat “more in a Finnish way” and two-thirds said, “more in a Spanish way”. Interpretations were left to the respondents, but the Finnish orientation apparently refers, above all, to dishes and cooking methods. Although the ingredients are Spanish, the same ingredients are also used in the home country, and the meals are cooked in the same way as has been customary in Finland; Spanish recipes are not used. Likewise, Spanish eating orientation is based on respondents’ own definition and need not be categorical. Spanish restaurant food on the Costa del Sol may also be a simplified tourist version, even if advertised as *tipico* (typical, authentic). This was pointed out by a male interviewee, a disability pensioner in his fifties, who had worked as a cook in Finland:

You have to hunt Spanish or Andalusian food here. It is the same pulp everywhere. They are extremely few, those places that serve authentic Spanish food.

When I studied retirement migrants’ time habits, I noticed that many of them eat lunch between the hours of 11–13 and dinner between 16–18, i.e. much earlier than meals are normally eaten in Spain. Many retirement migrants also follow Finnish timetables in other respects. They wake up early in the morning and start the day by eating “a proper breakfast”, and they go to sleep early, on average between 22–23 o’clock, when the night is still young for Spaniards (Karisto 2008). Others, however, follow Spanish timetables, and readily demonstrate this by making a distinction to those fellow countrymen who – in their eyes – are living in a Finnish bubble. “Good morning!” they may salute other Finns who have already had their lunch.

Eating hours, however, were not included in my measure of culinary orientation, which was constructed by classifying the respondents into three categories according to the two questions mentioned earlier. Culinary orientation or eating habits were defined as Finnish, when the respondents said that they eat out almost always, mostly or at least as often at Finnish restaurants (as elsewhere), and when they also eat “more in a Finnish way” at home. One-fifth (22%) of the respondents had Finnish eating habits so defined, and a considerable proportion of them (38%) were so Finnish in their habits that their daily drink with a meal was milk, even in Spain.

## COPING WITH ANTINOMIES OF TASTE

The Spanish eating orientation was defined by eating out mostly or almost always at restaurants other than Finnish ones, and by eating “more in a Spanish way” at home. The proportion of Spanish eaters was 30 per cent, and three-quarters of these Finns preferred wine with meals. The third category is comprised of “mixed eaters” or those respondents who could not be defined by the above-mentioned criteria as either Finnish or Spanish eaters. Their proportion amounted to one-half (48%) of the respondents.

Mixed eating is exemplified in the following interview quotation by a lady who describes what she is going to serve for dinner when a Finnish couple is coming to visit:

I have already marinated pork with chili sauce. The marinade was made in the Spanish way; it includes onions and garlic, of course. The starter will be broccoli, which is so expensive in Finland. I have a kilogramme of it; I cook it, mash it and decorate it with a few broccoli blossoms. The salad is also Spanish. I'll prepare it with cauliflower, tomatoes and lettuce. The dessert is Finnish, but made partially of Spanish ingredients. It's a kind of sorbet with Finnish lingonberries and cream. I use Spanish cottage cheese, because Valio's curd is not available here. Our guests bring the lingonberries.

### Food choices are not just food choices

“Home plus” is a formula for mass tourism originally formulated by the travel author Paul Theroux (1986) and cited by the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1991). A tourist desires familiar, almost home-like circumstances, but at the same time something extra, something different from home: exoticism, adventure, new experiences. Eating habits of the Finnish retirement migrants follow the “home plus” formula. There are people who almost always “stay at home” and maintain the continuities in their culinary orientations. There are others who often “leave home” and seek change, but most often these two orientations are somehow combined, and thus the antinomy between novelty and tradition is resolved. One can leave home and peek into another culture and then return home or to one's own life world (Finkelstein 1989).

## COPING WITH ANTI-NOMIES OF TASTE

In the following table, culinary orientation has been compared to certain lifestyle-related attitudes and orientations. The correlations are clear and logical. Those with "Finnish eating habits" differ in every respect from those with "Spanish eating habits", with mixed eaters (almost) always placed between the two.

Attitudes and lifestyles according to culinary orientation (%)

Percentage of those who:	Finnish orientation	Mixed eaters	Spanish orientation
Think that the Spanish culture is of great importance to life satisfaction on Costa del Sol	38	44	66
Think that the existence of a large number of Finns is of a great importance to life satisfaction on Costa del Sol	36	18	8
Have a new hobby or interest that was started in Spain	26	40	38
Have plans for a near future to which they will devote much time	49	58	65
Have very meaningful little things in their lives	42	63	69
Find Spanish loudness irritating	65	50	47
Whose spoken Spanish is at least fair	18	25	35

For Spanish eaters, Spanish culture is also significant in other respects, and these Finns are more open to new experiences. Finnish eaters lead a life that is slightly more limited or more confined to the Finnish community. The connection between culinary orientation and language skills is also evident. The culinary orientation did not vary much with gender and, surprisingly, not with the length of time spent in Spain. One might expect that the Spanish kitchen becomes more and more familiar and attractive during the years the migrants live in Spain. This holds true in itself, but age, which is correlated with the number of winters spent in Spain, also has its effect. Among the oldest migrants (70+) a Finnish eating orientation is more common than the average. Similarly, among those who live alone, there are exceptionally many Finnish eaters and those who frequent Finnish restaurants. For them, food alone is not necessarily the primary motivator, but rather the company of other Finns.

The highly educated have a more than average likelihood of maintaining a Spanish culinary orientation, but the differences are not great in this

respect either. The conclusion is that culinary orientation is a matter of genuine choice or a taste preference that is not strongly determined by any socio-demographic characteristics, but which in itself is a very expressive indicator of lifestyle.

## Meatball dependence?

Homesickness sometimes hits when living abroad, and then it is comforting to find that familiar food is available. Feelings of insecurity and dislocation may form the psychological basis for fantasies in which also the Spaniards will become interested in Finnish food. One restaurant keeper (in a highly urban environment) whom I interviewed boasted that his Karelian pasties are so tasty that even the “Spanish fishermen” among his regular customers always order them. In the novel *Loma Espanjassa* (Holiday in Spain) by Elsa Anttila, the Finnish food and the Finnish way of life are represented as superior to the Spanish ones, which at first appear so alluring. In the novel, Finnish food makes a breakthrough in Spain: A new Finnish restaurant, serving sautéed reindeer and mashed potatoes, is launched, and the press enthusiastically reports the grand opening. Its dishes are praised by “an international expert”, and mashed potatoes become a real hit. Even “a Spanish kitchen maid turns out to be a natural talent at baking Karelian pasties” (Anttila 1992).

Yearning for national food, however, does not usually rise to the level of this kind of fantasy. And yearning, of course, is not typical of Finnish migrants alone. There are, for instance, several British restaurants on the Costa del Sol, and they are crowded with British migrants eating English breakfasts, fish and chips, kidney pies and Yorkshire puddings (O’Reilly 2000). Actually, my analysis revealed that total fixation on one’s “own food” is not particularly common among the Finns. But it is common on the discursive level, where it is called “meatball dependence” and discussed with irony. The Finns who are thought always to find their way to Finnish restaurants and are supposedly immune to Spanish food are laughed at.

Thus, the retirement migrants recognise meatball dependence in their fellow Finns, but not in themselves. This is because the fixation on Finnish food is interpreted to be typical of “bumpkins” and a sign of bad taste, and

therefore expressions of it are not easily revealed. On the contrary, in the interviews the migrants were eager to show some positive interest in Spanish cuisine, which evidently is a sign of "cultural goodwill" (Bourdieu 1986:321–323). By becoming acquainted with Spanish food, one can accumulate cultural capital that is valuable on the Costa del Sol.

Possessing this kind of cultural capital does not, however, devalue Finnish food. Exposing oneself to something new is not a threat to the old, and becoming acquainted with Spanish food may actually make people more sensitive to the Finnish delicacies or help them to appreciate their qualities. In Spain, Finnish food is remembered in a way that shows how people's relation to it has become more intensive. The interviews include mouth-watering tales about the taste of fresh fish caught in a Finnish lake – after praise of the Spanish delicacies. The following comment came from a previously quoted lady, who was really interested in Spanish food and had a considerable amount of cultural capital based on her knowledge of it. After getting a chance to taste salted Finnish fish in Spain she commented in her diary: "We tasted whitefish caught from Lake Puulavesi. How excellent it was! Nothing on earth beats it!"

### Finnishness in a suitcase

Very few Finns live in Spain all year round. Most of them come and go. The Finnish community on the Costa del Sol is most numerous in November and again in March–April (Karisto 2008). During their Spanish period, people may also visit Finland, for instance, spending Christmas there. Therefore, it was natural to ask the interviewees whether they had a habit of bringing food with them from Finland, something which they miss in Spain. One couple responded to the question this way:

Wife: Rye bread is something that we miss. I brought with me plenty of rye meal, and I've been baking rye bread from that flour. But what else do we have then?

Husband: Coffee.

## COPING WITH ANTINOMIES OF TASTE

Wife: THAT'S RIGHT, COFFEE! I can't get used to the coffee in this country, but there are those too who don't take coffee with them from home. When in Spain, do as the Spaniards do, they say.

With the help of the questionnaire survey, I analysed how widespread is the practice of bringing Finnish food for the winter months or the practice of buying it on location from the small Finnish shops on the Costa del Sol (there are several of them, and they are open according to Finnish schedules). More than every other migrant (54%) brings or acquires Finnish food products in this way while staying in Spain. It is hardly surprising that this habit is common among those with a Finnish culinary orientation (68%), but the importation of food or buying Finnish food products in Spain is not unfamiliar to those with a Spanish culinary orientation either (32%).

What are the Finnish culinary items people bring to Spain in their suitcases or shopping bags? Rye bread is one of the cornerstones of the Finnish diet, and a quarter of all respondents admitted to acquiring it while living in Spain. Bringing rye bread from Finland is a cultural statement, but it may also have been made with a kind of ironic camp attitude, as is the importation of special Finnish candies such as salted liquorice; both are common presents for meeting other Finns living abroad. Finnish coffee is also commonly imported but this is done more seriously. Finland is the number one coffee drinking nation in the world and the "Finnish coffee" is especially important to the generation studied here. It is served in the buffets of Finnish associations and in the Finnish restaurants in Spain. One restaurant owner, whose clientele was only partly Finnish, had a good nose for business as he told me in the interview; he serves Spanish coffee on regular days, but switches to Finnish coffee when a Finnish Bible group gathers at his place.

In addition to rye bread and coffee beans, porridge flakes and herring are basic ingredients of Finnish cuisine and commonly imported. Even malts and ingredients for making *mämmi* – rye pudding, which is one of those few dishes that Finns were eating as far back as the Middle Ages, and is now eaten only at Easter – are sometimes imported. Karelian pasties are not imported, but they are served at Finnish club events and in coffee bars on the Costa del Sol. Like *mämmi* they are "marker food" (Janowski 2012)

or "cultural superfood" (Beardsworth & Keil 1997) with a great deal of symbolic value signifying connection to the past and national traditions (Tuomi-Nikula 1986; Anttonen 2001).

When conducting the interviews in Spain, I noticed that in addition to food there are often other material objects that remind of Finland in Finnish migrants' Spanish homes: photos, Finnish utensils and decorative items. Spanish motives, on the other hand, have not spread widely to Finnish homes; at least they were almost totally absent in the few Finnish homes where I made the interviews. The food eaten in the summertime in Finnish homes is definitely Finnish, even among those who eat in a Spanish way while living in Spain. However, certain Spanish spices may be imported to Finland, and olive oil might be used in larger quantities than before. Those who consider Spanish food as light and healthy may reflect on how to eat in a light and healthy way in Finland.

At home, I am committed to avoiding the bad carbohydrates.

On an empty stomach, I shall eat my fruits.

I shall not buy sugar and honey.

I shall change wheat flour to wholegrain products.

I shall barely use fats, and they shall be of the right type,

olive and rape seed oil.

My diet shall be rich in fibre.

And I shall exercise

and avoid stress.

For this is the way to work for a better existence –

full time.

This diary excerpt, by a woman in her mid-seventies, is reproduced here like a poem in order to preserve the rhythm of her expression. Her eating habits are health oriented and rational, but also something else. Bryan S. Turner (1982; Beardsworth & Keil 1997) sees a parallel between earlier religious asceticism and the current health oriented lifestyles in his discus-

sion of rationalising eating habits. At the end of the diary excerpt there is something that brings praying to mind.

## Antinomies of taste

The sensuality of food makes it an intense and compelling medium of memory, says David E. Sutton (2001), whose study on food memories is a prominent example of “Proustian anthropology”. The madeleine cake depicted by Marcel Proust is an often mentioned literary example of food as emotional memory materialised. We have seen that rye bread, Finnish fish and coffee hold similar kinds of memories for retired Finnish migrants living in Spain.

The chapter has shown how the Finnish retirement migrants in Spain maintain, perform and construct their Finnishness at their dining tables. Finnishness, however, is not only maintained and reproduced, but is also reflected on and reconstructed. The migrants often feel that their lives have been enlarged or enriched during their retirement years living in Spain. Such a commonplace activity as eating may have been a factor in this. Food is not only a vehicle for recalling the past, but also has the potential for reflecting on and generating change and projecting the future (Janowski 2012). Foodscapes in Spain have offered new options, and the migrants may feel excited when they are able to enhance their food habits and make enjoyable additions to their diet and everyday life (see also Coakley 2012).

Becoming acquainted with foreign food cultures may also have a civilising effect. When such familiar everyday functions as cooking and eating, open up to a subtle space of ingredients, preparation, tastes and display, this might mean that people loosen their provincial attitudes in other respects. They may recognise that there are several different systems and symbolic spaces in everyday life that can easily co-exist and enrich one another (Karisto 1992).

Food plays a role in imagining nations, but it also helps to problematise the national (Appadurai 1998; Phillips 2006). Food defends boundaries, but also allows boundaries to be crossed (Janowski 2012). Living in Spain has an effect on the eating habits of almost every retirement migrant. Food is an important everyday medium when Finnish migrants orientate them-



selves to Spanish society. Eating in Spain is a context-dependent and dynamic balancing act between the novel (Spanish) influences and traditional (Finnish) influences. Tastes may change while living in Spain, although seldom do they change completely. My analysis showed that most retirement migrants are “mixed eaters” in one way or another.

Healthy, delicious, exotic, proper and inexpensive were the five features most recognised and discussed when retirement migrants talked about and commented on food and eating in Spain. A nearly unanimous opinion is that Spanish food is healthy, and it is considered delicious and inexpensive. Exoticism is also a recognized feature of it, but this is not solely a feature with positive appeal, because food that is unfamiliar and exotic may also raise prejudices. Properness is a characterisation reserved mostly for Finnish food, and very often it refers to a home-cooked meal and to cooking as a caring activity. Although eating out is much more frequent in Spain than in Finland, it does not happen on a daily basis. By making their own meals, the retirement migrants distinguish themselves from tourists and also prove that, despite the number of years lived, they are still competent actors, able to care for themselves and live independently, even abroad.

Not only the variety in the food supply, but also social expectations and cultural forces pull people’s eating habits in different directions. To analyse this, I used the classification of culinary antinomies identified by Alan Warde (1997). It turned out that the variation in the Finnish retirement migrants’ eating habits is often framed by the contradiction between novelty (Spanishness) and tradition (Finnishness). Also the antinomies between health and indulgence, between economy and extravagance, as well as between care and convenience could be distinguished, and the properness of food settled down into the opposite of extravagance and exoticism.

Warde calls these culinary antinomies “parameters of uncertainty”, while reminding us that food choices are often a source of anxiety in modern societies. But he also regards the antinomies as “values which can legitimize choice between foodstuffs”; they are familiar and widely applicable, and what is also important is that “people can appreciate the attractions of both poles of each antinomy” (Warde 1997:55–56). In the present study too, the antinomies turned out to be flexible rather than stiff and compulsory. People may feel that they should eat both in this way and that

way, but they do not find themselves in a “double bind”, where conflicting messages completely negate each other and create anguish (Bateson 1999). The distinguished antinomies do not force people to eat in a certain way, but rather open up possibilities for inter- and intra-individual variation in eating. Possible distress may even be turned into enjoyment when people realise that each contrary pole has its own attractiveness.

Coping with the antinomies can, in practice, occur in many ways. “Mixed eating” is one solution; temporal variation in eating is another. The retirement migrants may eat in a light healthy way most of the time, but at weekends they may feast and eat sumptuously. The “double morphology”, emblematic of the seasonal migration itself, also generates seasonal variation in eating: during the winters in Spain, Spanish food appeals to the migrants, but in the summer, when they return to the home country, their food is definitely Finnish. Becoming acquainted with Spanish food in Spain may make people more sensitive to the qualities of Finnish food.

Eating is not just eating, but an expressive indicator of lifestyle. This emerged when the survey respondents were classified according to their culinary orientations, which were consistently linked to more general orientations, attitudes and lifestyles. However, the culinary orientation – whether one eats in a “Finnish way”, a “Spanish way” or is a “mixed eater” – did not vary much according to socio-demographic characteristics such as gender or education. Eating choice was interpreted as a real lifestyle choice, made of course, under cultural influences.

Finnish food is readily available in restaurants on the Costa del Sol; these are visited not only for filling the stomach, but also in order to meet other Finns. Finnish retirement migrants have the habit of bringing Finnish foodstuffs along to Spain, but there are no strong indications that they are completely fixated on Finnish food nor are they living in a Finnish bubble, as has been claimed (Suikki-Honkanen 1996). The fixation on Finnish food – meatball dependence, as it is called – is common only on the discursive level, where it is treated ironically and interpreted to be typical of “bumpkins” and a sign of bad taste. The retirement migrants recognise this fixation in their fellow Finns, but not in themselves. Most migrants show some positive interest in Spanish cuisine, the acquaintance of which is valuable cultural capital for them.

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# Religious Life in a Finnish Retirement Migrant Community. Diasporic and Transnational Perspectives

*Jenni Spännäri*

A Finnish retirement migrant community in southern Spain – evoking images of endless beaches, low-priced wine and an abundance of golf courses – might not be the most obvious place to examine religious life of older adults. However, studying religious life in the context of retirement migration is most relevant, as a growing interest in religious and spiritual aspects of life is associated with later stages of life and especially adjustment to changes in environment (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi 1975; Connor 2012).

Religious life seems to be relevant for many of the seniors of the Finnish community in Costa del Sol, Spain. Finnish religious services are readily available, and they are also visibly promoted in the Finnish media in the area. The main organizers of Finnish religious life in Costa del Sol are the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Pentecostal/Evangelical Tourist Church (Turistikirkko) and the Finnish-speaking community of Jehovah's Witnesses. This chapter focuses on the two first mentioned due to their similarity in form, functions and relation to the Finnish community.

## Introduction

The Lutheran church in Costa del Sol has a parish hall in Los Boliches (Fuengirola) and two other meeting points in Los Pacos (Fuengirola) and Torremolinos. Services are mostly held in Spanish Catholic churches in the area, usually on Sundays, and are reported by the parish to have 100–180 weekly visitors. The Lutheran parish offers an informal membership for a nominal fee, but its functions and facilities are open to all. The Tourist Church has its own hall in Los Pacos with separate rooms for lunches (two to three times a week, 50–90 diners each day) and for smaller services or music nights. The Sunday service is held in The Scandinavian Tourist Church (Skandinaviska Turistkyrkan) in Los Boliches, Fuengirola and is reported by the pastor to have 80–150 visitors each week.

Senior migrants form the most active group of participants in the offered religious activities, which is in line with their active participation in other exclusively Finnish activities and clubs; one factor being language skills – or lack of them – which might prevent them from participating in international activities (Karisto 2008). Seniors are also proven to be active in many aspects of religious life, although attendance can decline with advancing age (Moberg 2008; Kääriäinen et al. 2010). For seniors, religious life can provide a meaningful framework for reflection, coping, social connecting and self-expression (Spännäri 2008).

Religion is a fuzzy concept, significantly overlapping many other categories of human thought and action. Many observed acts that can be labelled as religious, can be labelled as something else as well. When a Finnish person attends a religious Christmas Carol event in a Spanish church, organized by the Finnish congregation, is she or he participating in a religious, cultural, ethnic, national or some other event – or all of them? This may not be clear for the persons themselves, either. Consequently, the purpose in this chapter is not to define certain actions as solely religious, nor to build borderlines between various meanings and contexts, in which actions and thoughts can be placed. Instead, the aim is to look at various aspects of the lives of Finnish retirement migrants in the context of religious life. Following this line of thought, the definition of religious life in this chapter is wide, encompassing various forms and contexts of spirituality in addition to religious participation.



## Approaches to seasonal migration

Seasonal migration is a prominent feature of the Finnish community of Costa del Sol, especially among the seniors. The majority of older Finnish migrants spend three to eight months a year in Spain, either in hotels, aparthotels or rented and own property. The stay is almost invariably timed to the winter months from October to March. The typical Finnish retirement migrants to Spain have another base in Finland with a permanent address, social security and social ties (Karisto 2005; 2008). Instead of – or in addition to – the terms migrants or immigrants, Finnish sunbirds could be described as transmigrants.

### Transmigration

While immigration is associated with uprootedness and change of environment, transmigration is characterized by multiple and constant interconnections on many levels with more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller et al. 1995). Transmigration binds together gain and loss (Gingrich & Preibisch 2010). Trying to get the best of both worlds, transmigrants are prone to longing for the features, people and landscapes of the other country. Instead of assimilation and dwindling of the cultural and ethnic identity, which is associated with traditional migration, the retirement migrants' transnational living patterns create distinct styles for updating and maintaining ethnic and cultural identity both “at home” and “abroad” (O'Reilly 2000; Vertovec 2003; Gustafson 2008).

For transmigrants, their religious life is also situated in a transnational context. Transnational religious life is one strand of religious globalization, where religion can function as a catalyst of transnational lifestyles (Levitt 2001). Typical features of transnational religious connectivity include flow of money and other resources, persons, goods or information in the context of religious organizations and communities. Networks, in which these flows take place, are a fruitful target for research (Wuthnow & Offutt 2008). Transnational connections invite us to create and maintain “symbolic and imaginary geographies”, which function as frameworks for creating meaning (Jackson et al. 2004).

Transnational religious life can be observed both on the level of organizations, groups of people as well as on an individual level (Levitt 2003). Transnationalism might entail connections on the organizational level or it may flourish without them. Religious transnational organizations can be described in many ways, for example as “extended” with parallel activities home and abroad. In this way, they may simultaneously belong to the parish in diaspora and in the home country; “negotiated” with pre-existing, but flexible and negotiable ties to the home organization; or “recreated” with imported practices but looser ties with the religious organization in the sending country (see Levitt 2001, 2004). In their transnational religious life, individuals may engage in different transnational practices, with different goals and in different degrees compared with the other members of the same community (Levitt 2003).

## Diaspora

The term diaspora, on the other hand, is present both in the Bible and in migration research – and in the very same sense: meaning dispersion, or exile. The Bible highlighted the experience of being forced to exile, most prominently by a divine act as a punishment for disobedience, and thus being in constant longing for the spiritual, cultural and religious homeland. Contemporary use of the term, however, often refers to any dispersion, with a variety of migration patterns and motivations (Dufoix 2008; Faist 2010).

Safran’s (1991) widely used characteristics of diaspora include 1) dispersal from an original “centre”; 2) retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including its location, history, and achievements; 3) the belief that they are not – and perhaps never can be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate, also when it comes to religious life. Further characteristics are 4) the idealization of the putative ancestral home and the thought of returning when conditions are more favourable; 5) the belief that all members should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity. Finally included is 6) the consciousness of a strong ethnic group, which is sustained over a long time and based on a

sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate (Safran 1991; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 1997; Vertovec 2003; Faist 2010).

These characteristics rarely occur all together (Reis 2004). Multiple modes of diaspora – or multiple diasporas – have been observed, and a single definition is under discussion, as well as the usefulness of such a definition (eg. Dufoix 2008; Cohen 2007; Ben-Rafael 2013; Tsagarousianou 2004). Ethnicity can play an important part in defining and maintaining a diasporic community, although its role and definitions are ambiguous in many cases (Ben-Rafael 2013). Living in diaspora involves creating new cultural forms and identities, distinctive from those prevailing in the majority cultures of the countries of origin and destination. The tiles of old cultural mosaic (see also Chao & Moon 2005) are arranged anew, and hybrid cultures, identities and communities are born. According to Hall, there is no way "back home" from a diaspora characterized by hybridity. The country and community of origin would not be the same "home" woven into the new hybrid worldview (Hall 1993; Hall 1994; Fazal & Tsagarousianou 2002). These processes are the actual sites of religious globalization (Levitt 2003).

### Transnationalism

Diaspora and transnationalism are not used exclusively as distinctive concepts. The relations of the two concepts range from overlapping to encompassing one another (Stoessel et al. 2012). Diaspora has traditionally been studied as dispersion in the Jewish context, but the scope of examination has recently encompassed also multi-faceted "new", "contemporary" or "late modern" diasporas (Ben-Rafael 2013; 2010; Reis 2004; Faist 2010). For example, Vertovec writes about the characteristics of late modern diaspora: "actual ongoing exchanges of information, money, or resources, as well as regular travel and communication [...] hybridity, multiple identities, and affiliations with people, causes, and traditions outside the nation-state of residence" (Vertovec 2000). These come quite near the notion of transnational life. In the studies of late modern diaspora the phenomenon and thus the concept has come closer to transnationalism primarily via globalization and developments in information technology, telecom-

munications and transport (Reis 2004; Cohen 1997; Vertovec 2000).

Paradoxically, religion and religious life have not been exhaustively pondered in the contemporary context of diasporas nor transnationalisms (McLoughlin 2013; Baumann 2000). Migration to Costa del Sol has been examined in the context of transnationality and diaspora (O'Reilly 2000), but without emphasising religious life. Religious practices, beliefs, traditions and identities help to sustain transnational and diasporic lifestyles. Migrants can use religion and aspects of religious life in identity work, creating meaning, negotiating values and in solving questions of belonging (Levitt 2003; Connor 2012). In the context of migration, religion has become increasingly visible through globalization and glocalization, where the variety of styles of religious life have been recognized – but also through secularization debate in Europe and the securitization in the USA following the 9/11 attack (McLoughlin 2013).

In this chapter, diaspora and transnationalism are used to describe two essentially different features in religious life; diaspora as dispersion, when the themes of change and separation are pronounced; and transnationalism entailing interconnectivity and flexibility. Their overlapping features as well as their rootedness in different research traditions are recognized, but their distinctive features are stressed in their use as tools for analysis. This allows the scrutiny of and search for two distinct phenomena instead of describing religious life in relationship with one all-encompassing concept only. A similar use of these conceptual categories is encouraged in some of the latest textbooks on the topic (Quayson & Daswani 2013), and making distinctions between these two concepts is by no means rare (Sheringham 2013; Faist 2010).

The aim of this chapter is to explore transnational religion and diaspora in a community of Finnish retirement migrants. Specifically, this study investigates

- 1) how and where diaspora and transnationalism can be seen in the religious life of a transmigrant community and
- 2) how these concepts are being related to each other in the context of religious life.

## Material and method

The study presented in this chapter is based on qualitative material collected in the years 2009–2013. The data collection was launched in 2009 through free-form texts in which the religious life of the Finnish migrants in Costa del Sol was considered. The invitation to write was published in all the major Finnish newspapers and magazines issued in Spain, and also handed out and presented personally in all the major Finnish religious and social organizations at Costa del Sol. The invitation was open, “Write about religion”, but it also contained a few general questions about religious participation, spirituality and religious traditions, which the respondent could address. From the 64 texts that were accumulated, the themes and approaches for interviews, along with some of the interviewees, were picked out. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2010–2011 with informants of various denominations, levels of religious activity and with a gender balance. The four six-month observation periods in 2009–2013 involved following the activities of Finnish religious organizations and other associations, registering the observations in field notes and photographs. This data was analysed using grounded theory methodology, facilitated with Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. The fieldwork periods also included following the local Finnish media and current topics of discussion.

In addition to the interviews included in the research data and thus quoted in this chapter, more informal interviews with key persons in the community were made, according to the idea of “theoretical sampling” in the grounded theory methodology (Hood 2007; Charmaz 2006; Draucker et al. 2007; Dey 2007).

The interviewed persons included former and present pastors and ministers, some together with their spouses, active volunteers and other key figures in various Finnish organizations, Finnish entrepreneurs, journalists, artists and office-holders. These interviews and contacts provided information, for instance, about earlier times in the history of the community, and about various types of attendance. Limitations of this approach include the fact that the results apply only to those persons who relate to the social religious life of the community. Another question is to what extent the

results could be applied outside the retirement migrant group, to the larger Finnish community in Spain. As such, however, the results of this qualitative study provide deeply rooted information about the ways of acting and thinking that are present in the community.

Approximately eighty per cent of the writers in phase one were 60–74 years old. Of the interviewees, nine out of eleven belonged to the same age group. This age structure is in line with earlier studies, which show that young pensioners comprise a significant proportion of the Nordic communities at Costa del Sol (see Karisto 2008; Blaakilde 2007; Helset et al. 2004).

Over half of the writers in phase one stated – without any affiliation being asked – that their main religious affiliation was with the Lutheran church. If the persons who mentioned several affiliations alongside the Lutheran church are included, the proportion of the writers affiliated with the Lutheran church is seventy per cent. Considering that not all of the writers expressed their affiliation, this is fairly consistent with the figures of the church membership – seventy-eight per cent – in Finland (Kirkkohallitus 2012).

## Diaspora and transnationalism in three levels of religious life

Diaspora and transnationalism are flexible and multifaceted, but divergent concepts, which make them intriguing tools for analysing the religious life of the Finnish community of Costa del Sol. Its encounters and negotiations between here and there, between isolation and communion, continuity and change, are here examined in three levels of religious life: organizational life, social life and personal religious life. All these are among the levels and components of the transnational religious field that Peggy Levitt (2003) points out as targets of research.

### Organizational life – organization and practice

The Finnish religious organizations in Spain are diasporic, settled communities (see also Sheffer 2012), but at the same time they tackle the challeng-

es of transnationality, each in their own way, not least because many of their members lead a transnational life (see also Wuthnow & Offutt 2008). The two religious organizations on which this study is focused – the Lutheran parish and the Tourist Church – can be positioned differently in regard to their transnationalist and diasporic nature.

The Lutheran church functions through the Parish of Costa del Sol, in an organization directly under the church council of the Finnish Lutheran church. The Lutheran Parish has three paid ministers (two full-time, one for wintertime), one church musician (for the winter) and one part-time children's worker. All other workers are volunteers, who are responsible for the daily running of the parish halls. The volunteers are mainly older adults, who benefit from volunteering on many levels (see also Haas 2013). The ministers are recruited by the church council. Most of the costs of the parish, including the salaries of the paid workers, are covered by the church, although it can get some additional funding through voluntary membership fees and Sunday collections. The Lutheran parish has the characteristics of an extended transnational religious organization (see Levitt 2001 & 2004). The resources are managed transnationally and the parish is connected with the home church via the flow of religious workers (see also Wuthnow & Offutt 2008). The membership of the parish does not rule out the membership to a parish in Finland – in fact, in most cases it is an additional feature. The theology, rituals and religious material – for example the hymnals – are identical with those used in the home country.

The Tourist Church, on the other hand, has loose ties with the Pentecostal Church of Finland and some connections with the Evangelical Free Church of Finland. It is a member of the Federación Asambleas de Dios España, a sister organization to the Assemblies of God Fellowship prominent in the United States, but belonging to the federation does not enforce any practices or use of any religious or other material, nor does it involve any flow of resources. The Tourist Church functions entirely on a volunteer basis. It has an elders' council and a pastor, but they are not paid a salary by the congregation. The living costs of the pastor and some of the key persons are compensated. The parish gets its funding from private donations. Internationality is also deeply rooted in the theology of the Tourist Church as a part of the worldwide Pentecostal movement. In the context

of transnationality, the Tourist Church could be described as a negotiated transnational religious organization (see Levitt 2001, 2004). The ties between religious organizations in the sending country are informal and flexibly constituted. In many ways, the Tourist Church has developed its own practices and ways of functioning.

Levitt (2001) has called for exploration of everyday transnational practices, the ways in which organizations work on the grassroots level, to deepen the understanding about transnational religious organizations. In the context of the Finnish community in Spain, and especially the Lutheran parish, these explorations reveal features not visible in the organizational approach above. The data suggests that in addition to attending to the spiritual, social and psychological needs of people, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran parish in Spain is given some civil or secular roles, which are more pronounced than similar roles of parishes in Finland. The uniformity of an extended transnational organization does not necessarily apply to everyday practices and norms. Many of the features presented in this chapter apply also to other Finnish religious communities, although this chapter concentrates on the Lutheran parish.

First, the Lutheran parish in Costa del Sol answers to many practical needs and provides important services. The church premises are one of the first and few places where the latest Finnish newspapers can be read without having to purchase one. Moreover, the libraries are open to all without a registration or a membership, while many associations require membership to be able to use their collections. On the premises, the church and its voluntary workers provide maps and advice for tourists. Even some healthcare, mainly blood pressure testing, is available for a voluntary fee. These kinds of formal and informal services are, according to observations during field work also used by persons who do not have a personal relation with the church. Similar patterns can be found in many religious communities – especially those Christian churches that are associated with extended transnational institutions – ranging from Assemblies of God in Houston (Ebaugh & Saltzman Chafetz 2000; Dorsey 2000) to Irish Pastoral Centers in Boston (Levitt 2004). In many ways, the Finnish religious organizations in Spain resemble a community centre model, which also has historical roots in the settlement movement and in community oriented



social work (Ebaugh & Saltzman Chafetz 2000). A community hall is central for performing secular functions, since community centres, religious organizations thus support both "ethnic reproduction and immigrant adaptation" (*Ibid.*:55-59). They support both contacts with the home country and life in the new surroundings.

Second, the Lutheran church is in many cases the primary source of help and social aid for the Finns in Costa del Sol. Diaconal work is adapted to the life of seasonal migrants and becomes visible in exceptional cases. When a charter bus carrying Finnish tourists crashed in April 2008 on the motorway between Fuengirola and Torremolinos, resulting in the deaths of nine passengers, the Lutheran minister was immediately informed and thus was one of the first "authorities" on the site. The parish with its voluntary workers organized help at the airport, in the hotels and in support groups at the parish hall for the victims and other persons that were affected.

The church has also provided help in various personal crises. The problems related to careless alcohol consumption in Costa del Sol are perhaps not so prevailing in reality as in urban tales; nevertheless, the diaconal work has been much needed as a response to this and to other social problems. The need for Finnish social work was also a basis for a social project of the Finnish Deaconess Institute in the 1990s. Before and after the project, the Lutheran parish and its ministers have been the main source of help in crises related to illnesses, disappearances, mental, social and financial problems. The parish has also helped many Finns back to their home country for medical and social care. Interestingly, in the collected material, these undertakings are seen as a vital part of the functions of the parish, and many troubles and problems are primarily reported to the church workers. According to some interviewees, who themselves do not attend the church activities and may be critical towards the church, the parish is "at least doing something useful" when providing help to those in trouble.

The Tourist Church also engages in helping activities, with numerous voluntary workers and the Manos Abiertas aid centre. However, the position of the Tourist Church is different from the Lutheran parish. The former is generally perceived mainly to help its affiliates, to do charity work and to incorporate some spiritual help, while the latter is seen as a more

neutral organization, obliged to provide help to all Finns. In the winter season of 2011–2012, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs and Health provided funding for a Finnish part-time social worker to be posted at Costa del Sol, and the project has continued during the year 2013 with a full-time post. It will be interesting to follow the effects of this project in the community and in the roles given to religious organizations.

Third, the Lutheran parish is a partner in many official projects, where local expertise and resources are needed. A recent example is the crisis management plan, which is currently being drawn up by the embassy of Finland, located in Madrid, together with the parish and a representative of the main local Finnish newspaper in Costa del Sol. The tight collaboration between the Lutheran parish and the embassy is mentioned also on the embassy web page (Embassy of Finland in Madrid 2012). The parish works in close collaboration with the embassy also in cases of death, serious illnesses, lost IDs and travel related problems. During all the Finnish elections conducted at the time of our observation period, the Lutheran parish hall in los Boliches, Fuengirola, has served as a voting station, while the usual functions in the parish hall were cancelled. It is not an exaggeration to say, that the parish and its ministers have functioned as hands, eyes and ears of the embassy in Costa del Sol – although the embassy is consolidating its presence on the coast by adding functions of the Malaga Honorary Consulate. Moreover, the local Finnish associations see the parish and its ministers as somewhat neutral or unbiased actors, and the minister is often appealed to in conflicts. An interesting question remains; what is then the role of the Church of Finland and the connection between these two actors? Is the parish at Costa del Sol trustworthy because it is – or because it is not – seen as a part of the Church?

### Social life – attendance and quality

In Finland, religious attendance is at the North European low level. As many as seventy-eight per cent of the Finns are members of the Lutheran church, but only thirteen per cent participate in a service at least once a month (Kirkkohallitus 2012). According to an earlier questionnaire survey, it was found that a Finnish religious service was the second most popular

Finnish event at Costa del Sol; forty-six per cent of the respondents had attended a service and twenty-nine per cent had taken part in some other Finnish religious activity during the last winter season (Karisto 2008). In a study regarding the Finnish seasonal migrants and regular tourists in Spain and the Canary Islands, it was found that during their stay in Spain, fifty-seven per cent of Finnish migrants attend more religious services than they do in Finland, whereas only twelve per cent attend more in Finland than in the Canary Islands (Mäkeläinen 2011). Many of the persons attending the services in Spain do not take part in church activities in Finland.

In an earlier study, twenty-eight per cent of questionnaire survey respondents, who stated that religion is not important to them, still had attended a service during their winter stay in Spain (Karisto 2008). All data support the immediate observation, that both the individual frequency and general popularity of religious attendance is higher among the Finnish in Spain, than in Finland.

Here, compared with Finland, we attend parish activities ninety per cent more. And here, a Lutheran can join in with the Pentecostals, e.g. for a lunch, an excursion, events – they won't "chase" you off. (female in her late 60s)

The obvious and explicit explanation for the increased attendance is the possibility of meeting other Finns. Social connections and various types of associations have proved crucial to the well-being of retirement migrants and in creation of social capital (Casado-Diaz 2009; Simó Noguera et al. 2013). Many migrant churches and congregations constitute important platforms for forming social networks (Ebaugh & Saltzman Chafetz 2000). There are, however, various other instances, contexts and events outside the religious ones, where the Finnish migrants in the Costa del Sol could, and do, meet each other. While social factors explain some of the attendance, it leaves the particular demand for religious events hidden.

In the Danish community, as reported by Margit Warburg (2012), church was the only, or one of the very few, available organizers of national and cultural activities. In this context the participation was highest in the non-religious events organized by the parish. Contrary to this, the

Finnish community at Costa del Sol has a variety of clubs, associations and institutes to organize cultural, educational and entertaining activities. Also, the weekly services are clearly the most popular activities organized by the Lutheran parish. Religious activities have been strongly associated with well-being, especially the mental well-being of migrants, where non-religious activities did not have the same effect (Connor 2012). The reason might lie in the ability of religion to function as a tool of connectivity both in diasporic and transnational ways (see also Ebaugh & Saltzman Chafetz 2000).

For some, the religious attendance in Spain is an element of transnational religious life. The religious communities allow them to continue expressing their affiliation in the same way as in Finland. Religious communities can provide an important point of reference in a “peripatetic lifestyle” (Williams & Hall 2000). On the part of the Lutheran parish, the church and the service is essentially the same as it is at “home”. Minor and major details, ranging from the psalms and psalm books to the dress of the minister and the service liturgy, all add to the feeling of stability and continuity. Even the church year and ecclesiastical calendar with particular Bible texts are followed in the Finnish Lutheran Church in Spain, in a similar manner as in Finland. The Tourist Church worship service and other gatherings are less formal, but they contain mostly familiar elements for a Finnish participant: songs, songbooks, speeches. In Finnish religious communities in Spain, the greatest attendance falls to the same Sundays and church holidays as in Finland. However, it might be that the alternation of various holidays and weekdays are not as marked as they were during the work years, or as they would be when surrounded by Finnish culture.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the winter season holds nine out of ten of the most popular church holidays (Mäkeläinen 2011). A good example of this continuity is “The Most Beautiful Christmas Carols”, a popular Christmas sing-along event, significantly popular both in Finland and in Spain. In Finland it gathers over a million participants each year (from a 5,4 million population). The events are organized by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the local parishes; several events take place in most parishes, during late November–December. For many, the Christmas

Carol event may be the only religious occasion in which they participate during the year, apart from the occasional wedding and funeral ceremonies (Kari 2002). In Spain, too, the Christmas carol events, organized both in the Lutheran parish and in the Tourist Church, seem to be "the minimum participation"; perhaps alongside the Independence Day celebrations, which also contain a religious service.

For others, religious attendance is associated with their life in Spain only. This can be seen in the context of diaspora: dispersion and the insecurity connected with it, remaining separate from the host society, and longing for "home".

There is time here to ponder the meaning of life, different values and attitudes. It's good to build safety structures around oneself here, both physical and spiritual. If you're not able to do that, it's easy to end up as "driftwood", alcohol is cheap and everything under the sun is on offer. The church here is like a mother duck who calls her ducklings under her wings for shelter and protection, providing nourishment both physically and spiritually, the church and religion is much more important to us here than in our homeland. Aren't we like scattered in the winds of the world here; some ill, many without skills in Spanish, some spiritually broken, some with little funds. We rely on the church, the Word and each other. (female in her late 60s)

The longing for the "homeland" – a prominent feature in the diaspora theories – is even visibly present on the liturgical and decorative textiles and other art used in the Lutheran parish, adorned with migrant birds "always finding their way back home". In various texts and interviews, the religious life in Spain is presented in the context of security and protection. It is interesting that in their home country, the Finnish seem to have strong trust in the church as an institution, but do not have so much affection for it – or contact with it (Ketola et al. 2011). These notions bring into mind Marcel Mauss's findings from the beginning of the 20th century on double morphology, the different rhythm and organization of life in summer and in winter – alongside differences in religious conduct and moral framework. Mauss does not refer only to the adjustments to changing conditions of living, but also a persons' simultaneous need for social connectedness

and individual isolation (Mauss 1979; Ritter 1990). In the context of diaspora and the shared myth about the original "homeland", the Lutheran parish can be seen as a representation of stability, a link to "the past" or the "good old times". For retirement migrants, Costa del Sol is a transnational landscape or a kind of postmodern hybrid, which also includes strong elements of pre-modern community (Karisto 2008).

And finally, for some, the changes in religious attendance are not conceptualized in the context of volume but in the context of its nature. "People change here!" and "It's so different here!" are common statements among the Finnish retirement migrants – both in everyday and spiritual life.

The spiritual life here is clearly much more intimate between the parish members than in Finland, in corresponding parishes. Here people are more free and more ready for contact than in Finland. They have a sincere will to help.[...] It evoked in me the same warm help towards the other parishioners. When you are given help yourself, you have the will to give back. (female in her early 60s)

According to many informants, even the normally shy and closed Finnish persons open up in the sunlight, start to greet each other in the street and even offer their help. These experiences are reported also in religious life.

When I compare my religious participation in Finland and here in Fuen-girola, there are no differences in quantity but in "quality" there are, indeed. In other words, here I always go to church with enthusiasm. The church or the parish hall are full of people, sermons are touching and the unity with the other Finns is almost tangible. In Finland, there are only a few scattered persons in the church and you feel no unity. (female in her mid-60s)

Changes in the "quality" of participation are perhaps some of the most unexpected findings of this study. While the religious services have their social and other functions, an observer is faced with unexpected intensity of participation: singing, praying, following the liturgy/worship. In the Lutheran parish, a vast majority participate at the communion, while in

Finland the corresponding ratio is fifty seven per cent (Kirkkohallitus 2012). However, the observed intensity or atmosphere is easier to perceive than to verify and measure (see also Valve 2012, 53–64). One of the main sources of this atmosphere or “quality” is explicitly and notably often said to be the ministers and pastors of the Finnish religious communities:

It has been easier to participate in the parish in Costa del Sol than in Finland, first and foremost because all the ministers have been and are truly nice and down-to-earth, persons with a sense of humour who have seen the world, too. (female, in her late 60s)

The Lutheran church recruits its ministers for work abroad amongst plenty of applicants. Experience in challenging fieldwork, especially abroad, is usual. But are the ministers and pastors on the Coast really that far from their colleagues in Finland? Some of the friendliness that is expressed and experienced could derive from familiarity with the ministers, living their daily life in the same relatively small area as the parishioners. Some of the effect might sprout from mere exposure (see Bornstein & Craver-Lemley 2004); it might be accounted for by false and outdated expectations of ministers as self-righteous and stiff. Similar themes have been observed also in other Nordic migrant communities (see for example Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson 2013).

The changes in attendance can be set in the context of conversion. In the collected material, some stories of religious conversion are told, and in many cases, the change is more subtle than that. The core of the transition might be an activation of the vocabulary and religious resources, which these generations have acquired during their primary socialisation and time in school. In these processes, the elements of religious life might be combined to something new, a distinctive religious culture, lifestyle and cultural identity of Finnish retirement migrants in Spain, thus forming a more diasporic community with its distinctive ways of participation, conduct and communication. This might be connected with the double morphology of the retirement migrants’ religious life: after integration to the new set of norms of the diasporic community, return to the church at “home” might be difficult, or at least less tempting.

Personal religious life – spiritual growth in a new soil

Transnationalism and diaspora can also be contemplated on the level of emotion and personal experience. This can be conceptualized here via continuity and change; continuity in the transnational sense of staying in contact both with the familiar and the new; change as an adaptation to the diaspora and, at the same time, retaining an image of a dear homeland. From the spiritual point of view, change and continuity can go hand in hand. Balancing between these two, however, is not an easy task (Coleman 2009). Retirement migration can be a double turning point, where otherwise unacknowledged but nonetheless existing emotions regarding belonging, also in the form of citizenship, become active (Ho 2009; Haas 2012).

It is as if you could start your life anew now when you're retired, and do what you really want to and feel it's the right thing to do, that's spirituality today. (male, age unknown)

Many informants speak or write about continuity in their identities or personalities amidst changes in the living environment. In Spain, there are less regulations, fixed roles and social control, but also less cultural guidelines to fit into one's way of living. The new experienced freedom from social control is expressed in the data in many ways. On several occasions the question "Why do you attend religious events more in Spain than in Finland?" is answered by a list of reasons concerning why the person could not or cannot attend in Finland. The notion of religious occasions being reserved only for the "devout believers" is mentioned, and there is a reluctance to elevate oneself to that level – fearing not only the reactions of believers, but of acquaintances: "Who does he think he is!"

Belief is a personal encounter with Lord Jesus. The Coast gives the same possibilities for it as Finland does. Sometimes even better, when relatives, friends and neighbours are not there, "controlling". (female, age unknown)

Changes in personal religious life can be strongly related to the experience of dispersion and unfamiliarity of new surroundings, which are present in



the classic diaspora theories. When the physical environment changes, integrative processes both in communities and in persons transform (Mehta 2009). New spaces open up for creating meaning, the search for purpose and meaning in life – which is a strong emotional and existential need of older adults.

The absence from the familiar circles also makes you uncertain sometimes, things are not easy in the same way as at home. The world is different here, it's great and sometimes strange. It sets you in perspective, gives you the sensibility to experience your smallness, powerlessness in front of the infinite and inconceivable. (male, in his late 60s)

Peter G. Coleman depicts how different kinds of spiritual, also humanist, beliefs have an effect on the lives of older persons, in coping and providing resources and practices in the search for meaning. Coleman sees beliefs as a particularly useful and natural tool to process questions concerning aging, including end of life issues. Religion can be seen as an important factor providing resources, tools, platform and space for different kinds of spiritual growth in later life. He calls religion a “potent friend of ageing” (Coleman & O’Hanlon 2004). Life transitions and changes have often been seen from the perspective of crisis, but they could also be seen as possibilities, triggering spiritual seeking and learning from new experiences. Even hardship and traumatic experiences could aid – but are not needed – in the search for meaning in later life (Dillon 2009).

The search for meaning, together with changes in personal religious life may also be intrinsically motivated. These can be lengthy processes, weaving together elements of past life and future dreams, various places where a person has lived, and life experiences. In this sense, these processes come near the notions of transnationality, combining different domains and aspects of life to a single meaningful entity. Edmund Sherman writes about contemplative aging, a transition from doing to being. Contemplative aging has its philosophical aspects – pondering one’s life and its meaning as a whole – but it also has a psychological aspect. Contemplative psychological methods include conscious processes of introspection, prayer and meditation aiming towards integrity and the ability of coping with, for

example, cognitive dissonance and questions of finitude (Sherman 2010). Robert Atchley (2008, 2009) also presents spiritual growth as an intrinsic process, affecting the ageing person. These notions relate to Lars Tornstam's theory of Gerotranscendence (Tornstam 2005). Gerotranscendence does not necessarily take the form of religion, but can be described as a shift in meta-perspective, from a materialistic and role-oriented worldview to a more spiritual, transcendent one. It is seen as the final stage in the lifelong process towards wisdom and maturation.

Spirituality may be an important resource for an older person when responding to many developmental tasks of later maturity, ranging from retirement to bereavement (Havighurst 1948; Coleman 2011). Or, from another point of view, it could be a valuable aid in personal growth and learning. Older adults today have learned the "religious grammar" from their parents and grandparents (Voas & Crockett 2005) and could be ready to use it if they have access to a corresponding religious community or other resources (Spännäri 2008). Providing these, the Finnish religious organizations in Costa del Sol with their "low thresholds" can be important for the spiritual well-being of the older migrants.

## Diaspora and transnationalism engaged in a Finnish context

The study presented in this chapter examined diaspora and transnationalism on three levels of religious life: organizational life, social life and personal religious life. The research was situated in the Finnish retirement migrant community in Costa del Sol. Characteristics of both diaspora and transnationalism were found at all levels of scrutiny. Interestingly, it was not possible to define any of the areas of religious life as predominantly diasporic or transnational. Rather than counterpoints, they often appeared as the different facets of the same phenomenon, as regarding the role of the Finnish Lutheran parish, or as interlocking features; for example, in the meanings given to religious attendance. Seeing the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism overlap and intertwine is not rare in contemporary migration research. But even though this study examined and found these two phenomena as distinctive from each other, the analysis of the collect-

ed material revealed that they often appear together.

Another finding of this study is that both in the diasporic and transnational perspective, the religious life of the older Finnish migrants does not seem to be international or intercultural. In this same volume, Antti Karisto writes about the curiosity of Finnish retirement migrants towards the Spanish culture and way of life. Concerning religious life, the curiosity exists; in the interviews and written accounts, the participants mention watching the massive Easter processions, or visiting Spanish churches. But this research material does not witness a deepening of the relationship with Spanish religious life from curiosity to the level of a personal religious experience. Religious life and spiritual experiences were set in a Finnish context on all three levels of examination: in Finnish religious associations, in Finnish social contexts and on the personal level in the context of home and in the feeling of security. The informants presented their visits to Spanish religious events and sites in a cultural framework. Hardly any of them participated in activities of Spanish churches, or even Protestant churches of other nationalities. Religious conversion stories in the material exclusively involved various Finnish religious organizations. This is not only a question of a language barrier, it concerns rootedness of religious experience in the specific culture, customs, familiar surroundings and aesthetic elements. This is also a reminder that observations about religious life – for example attendance – are most fruitfully analysed when their meaning to the persons in question can be discussed and taken into account.

Future research on this subject may discover that generational differences might exist regarding the meanings given to religious organizations, religious participation as well as spirituality. In religious studies, it is still not agreed, whether and in what ways the greater proportion of older adults stating that religion is important to them derives from their age and proximity of death or their life history and experiences. Thus, it is difficult to anticipate the religious and spiritual preferences and practices of future retirement migrants. Either way, the community is in constant change through a high turnover of inhabitants and the rapid changes in the cultural environment. Also, longitudinal studies of religion in diasporic and transnational contexts have been called for (Levitt 2003). Subsequent stud-

ies will show the nature, direction and rate of these changes, and, furthermore, the correlation between future changes in the lives of retired persons in Finland and the phenomena observed by this study.

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# “Like Coming Home”. The Role of the Church of Sweden for Migrating Senior Swedes

*Eva Jeppsson Grassman & Annika Taghizadeh Larsson*

Of course language is important when you come here. But it is not only the language that is important, but this total feeling of home. They say: “ooh, it feels like coming home”.

The quote above is taken from an interview with the minister of a Church of Sweden parish abroad. With “they”, she refers to Swedes who come to the parish for various reasons during their stay in this particular tourist area. The Swedish Church Abroad has local parishes in around 45 places abroad. Their mission targets Swedes who stay in foreign countries permanently, or for long or short periods of time, for example senior Swedes who migrate after retirement, permanently or on a seasonal basis.

The need and desire to be connected to a place and to a local context may take on a particular significance today, when the relationship between time and place has been described as more fragmented than earlier and the possibilities of the individual to freely choose local contexts and belonging increase (Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson 2012; Jeppsson Grassman & Whitaker 2012). A parish of the Church of Sweden Abroad may be regarded as a local Swedish space and a structure that enables belonging – and perhaps care – while far away from the homeland. In a certain sense, it may function and be experienced as a home. Indeed, the Church abroad

and its parishes were described in terms of “a home” by the ministers and deacons who were interviewed by the authors for a research project about the Church of Sweden Abroad. The official slogan of the Church also happens to be “like home, though abroad”.

### Introduction

“Home” and “at home” may refer to various things. Sometimes “home” and “at home” refers to the country that one has left for a longer or shorter journey abroad, sometimes to a hotel room where one spends a couple of nights with few personal belongings, etc. “Home” may also have a religious connotation such as “our heavenly home”. Quite often, its meaning is represented as a binary opposite: “as a place of rest after a journey has been undertaken, as a private retreat from the public world” or as “a familiar and secure space within a strange and insecure world” (Wardhaugh 1999). To say that something “gives you the feeling of coming home,” or that “it feels like home” expresses a feeling of community and togetherness with one or several people. When we say that someone is “at home,” it usually implies that the person finds himself in his natural or legitimate place in a particular context. Furthermore, conceptions and ideas about “home” – and the relationship between home and homeland, various ways of creating home, having several homes etc.– have been described as central to people who were forced to, or persuaded to leave the place that they regard as their place of origin and homeland.

The concept of diaspora, common in migration research, has even been defined and theorised as “a kind of agency system and a social movement, the main objective of which is to create alternative “homes and communities” (Alinia 2008:334). Scholars in the field of migration research have also suggested “that ideas of home are relational across space and time, are often shaped by memories of past homes as well as dreams of future homes, and bring together both material and imaginative geographies of residence and belonging, departure and return” (Blunt & Dowling 2006:198).

How is “home” used in the parishes of the Church of Sweden Abroad in order to convey their message to Swedes, locally and globally? What kind of home do the church workers say that they wish to create and that

seniors, active in the parish, experience? These are some of the questions we intend to discuss in this chapter. The aim is to explore “home” as a phenomenon with its various meanings and expressions, in connection with the Church of Sweden Abroad and its roles and functions at a time of migration and globalisation, with focus on older Swedes. The chapter illuminates the crucial role presently played by the Church in providing support and belonging for Swedish retirement migrants.

## Method and material

The analysis is based on results from the project *Ageing and dying in a globalised world – The role of the Church of Sweden Abroad*. The project consisted of three studies. The first was a qualitative study comprising case studies of twelve parishes in various countries. We chose to include three larger cities (Berlin, Paris and New York), where the Church of Sweden has a long history. We further included two traditional port cities (San Francisco and Pireus in Greece) and modern tourist resorts, with focus on places frequently visited by retired Swedes as tourists, or places where they stay on a seasonal basis. These resorts comprise Ayia Napa in Cyprus, Haut de Cagne in France, San Agustin in Gran Canaria, Los Christianos in Tenerife, Fuengirola and Torrevieja in Mainland Spain, and finally the recently created parish in Phuket in Thailand. Each of these parishes is associated with different phases in the establishment of the Church of Sweden Abroad and its history. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 ministers, five deacons and with eighteen senior Swedes, aged 68–88, most of whom were active in the parish. Information was also gathered through observations during our visits to the parishes.

The second study consisted of mapping the web sites of all parishes around the world and of other written material that had been collected. The third study was an Internet-based survey, sent to all Church of Sweden parishes abroad. Responses were obtained from 39 of the 40 parishes. The presentation in this chapter is based on results from all three studies.

The parishes turned out to vary in terms of history, size, organisational structure and in how embedded they were in a local context. Yet the similarities were striking in many ways. “Home” turned out to be an over-arch-

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ing theme in the results among next to all the parishes, irrespective of the character and location of the parish; this was validated in the three studies.

### Perspectives and contributions

The project touches on several rather unexplored areas in research on retirement migration, as well as in research on migration and religion. While there is a growing amount of studies on retirement migration from Sweden and other North European countries (Blaakilde 2007; Breuer 2005; Gustafson 2001, 2008; Haug et al. 2007; O'Reilly 2000), none of these addresses the role of the migrant church in the senior migrants' everyday lives, other than in passing (e.g. Gustafson 2001). Moreover, whereas there is substantive research on the role of religion in the context of migration, generally speaking, few studies in this research field specifically concern migrants from North European countries. This also applies to research on the contemporary role of the Nordic State Churches abroad (however see Agedal 2007; Kverndal 1986). Furthermore, few works have focused on senior migrants and their contacts and involvement with religious communities in the new host country (however, see Gehui & Heying 2009).

Concerning research on the role of the Church of Sweden Abroad for Swedish migrants, there are a few historically oriented studies (published in Swedish), some of which are oriented towards specific parishes abroad (e.g. Bergmark 1974; Bjurström et al. 1976; Evander & Sjöström 2001; Murray 1980). Regarding the contemporary role of the Church of Sweden Abroad and its parishes all over the world, the current project appears to be the first one to address this subject, apart from some evaluations and investigations that have been conducted in recent years by the Church of Sweden itself (e.g. Svenska kyrkans utredningar 2001:1, 2009:1). This chapter thus touches on several rather unexplored areas.

### Outline of the chapter

In the following section, a description of the Church of Sweden Abroad and the activities of its parishes in foreign countries will be presented. After that, a number of home themes will be discussed in three sections.

That is, ways of “doing” and feeling home (Mallet 2004) that were more or less explicitly expressed on the parish websites, in the churches that we visited and observed and in the survey. This was also expressed in the qualitative interviews with ministers, deacons and with older Swedish participants. In a final section, we try to summarise these rich expressions of “home” and try to understand its significance in connection with the Church of Sweden Abroad. Furthermore, we will interpret our results in the light of earlier research on migration and transnational religious communities.

## The Church of Sweden Abroad

The Church of Sweden has long traditions of creating parishes abroad, mainly in the larger European cities and in connection with harbours, as Seamen’s Churches. In some larger cities, there are Swedish parishes with a history dating back several centuries. In later decades, however, the Church has started to follow the migration patterns of tourists and elderly migrants. Parishes have been established in southern Europe, primarily in Spain (Gustafson 2008) and, lately, in some Asian countries. To date, the Swedish Church Abroad comprises around 40 parishes located in 45 places, in 24 countries (Svenska kyrkan 2011a).

What, then, do the parishes do and who are the actors? The formal assignment of all parishes of the Church of Sweden is to “offer religious worship, education, missionary work and to provide diaconal social work” (Svenska kyrkan 2011b). This also applies to the Church of Sweden Abroad. Everything else the parishes focus on “is to be regarded as means to achieve – or a consequence of - this basic assignment”. There are similarities as well as differences between the parishes when it comes to how the ministers and deacons interpret and carry out this assignment at a local level.

Naturally, worship and religious services are offered in all the studied parishes. The parishes varied in the extent to which they performed the religious rites – baptism, confirmation and burial. Most parishes also offered social work and social services of some kind and 50 per cent of the ministers who participated in the Internet-based survey maintained that they were involved in care issues. A common role turned out to be that of

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acting as an intermediary, a mediating link between Swedes and local authorities regarding various questions, or as a sort of “information centre”, in order to help Swedes with practical problems. The image of service provider was generally supplemented by that of offering community-creating activities of various kinds. In all, about 100 staff on mission from Sweden and 70 locally recruited employees work in the parishes around the world. Besides employees, all the parishes have – from a couple to several hundred – volunteers.

The “typical church visitor” is a Swedish senior

Who are the Swedes who typically visit the parishes? Our project indicated that there were significant variations between the parishes in this respect. However, according to the survey results, in more than half of the parishes, 50 per cent of the regular visitors were 65 years or older. Particularly in the parishes located in South European countries, there were many seniors among the visitors, many of whom spend several months in the community each year. A common image of these, retired “snowbirds” or “overwinterers” (Breuer 2005: 329) moving from Northern Europe to warmer countries is that they are typical “third agers” (Laslett 1996): healthy, wealthy and relatively young seniors whose motives for migration mainly concern leisure, health and lifestyle. Research on the migration of retirees from different countries in northern Europe to Spain (e.g. Gustafson 2001, 2008; O’Reilly 2000) largely confirms this image of a – in a wider comparative migration perspective – highly privileged group of migrants. The European retirement migration has even been said to lack virtually all the characteristics that have been observed in more recent research on transnational migration (Breuer 2005).

Yet some studies rather confirm our results; which is that some retired migrants have a working-class background, that several have passed their 75th birthday and that there are those who suffer from poor health (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Rodríguez et al. 1998). According to our results, the typical senior visitor to the parish activities often diverged from the usual image of the retirement migrant. In Ayia Napa/Cyprus, for example, about 15,000 Swedes stay in the area during the winter. A high proportion of these

people are seniors, who are not necessarily wealthy. Winter after winter, they stay in one of the empty hotels, or in holiday-flats, for a relatively low off-season price. Many of them could rather be categorised as “fourth agers” than as being in the third age; they were very old (aged 85–90) and in several cases rather frail and in need of care (Baltes & Smith 2003). Yet, curiously enough, these seniors were quite invisible in the web pages of the parishes, which were dominated by pictures of younger Swedish people and of families with small children (Jeppsson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson 2012).

## Home on the websites of the parishes

In the globalised world of today, a Swedish migrant’s first contact with a local Church of Sweden Parish Abroad might well be through its website on the Internet. This forum has become increasingly important for religious organisations as a means of communication. All parishes have internet-based web pages.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the data collection for the second study of our project, the phenomenon of home frequently figured here, alluded to concretely or metaphorically, particularly as a way of inviting Swedes who are in the area (or who plan to go there) to come to Church. The repertoire consisted of texts and photos with attributes and details that, for Swedes, may be assumed to be associated with home as a place where people – families – live (Wardhaugh 1999) and/or with the homeland. There were, for example, often photos of the church premises on the websites, sometimes explicitly described as “homelike” in the text:

On the ground floor there is a library, on the first floor there is the great hall of the church, and a large homelike sitting room and a fully equipped kitchen.<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of home that is expressed in this quote, that is very common

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<sup>4</sup> The content of the home pages may change over time. A recent check indicated, however, that the home theme was still frequent on the homepages, in May 2013.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=654240> (downloaded 31st January, 2011)

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in the websites, is the “kitchen” with its various meanings and attributes.

### Food and kitchen as symbols of home

The kitchen in question is a “Swedish kitchen” associated with “typically Swedish” eating habits and food. A common feature on the websites was the announcement that the parish serves “pea-soup with Swedish punch every Thursday” or the more child-friendly alternative “pea-soup and pancakes”. This is a dish perceived and felt by many Swedes to be tied to the home country (cf. Burstedt 2006). Here is reflected how “food and drink are often important as national symbols” (Agedal 2007:61). Or, as Burstedt et al. (2006:14) put it: “In eating, a compressed image of origin may be formulated and consumed”.

However, the most commonly cited treat on the websites was coffee and cinnamon buns. “Are you longing for a cup of coffee and a cinnamon bun? Come and see us!” was the friendly message on a web page from the parish in Los Cristianos, Tenerife. On the web page of the Swedish parish in Oslo, the following text was to be found:

Coffee is one of the central words of the church. This is true for the Swedish St. Margaret Church as well. Gathering around the coffee table is valuable even if you prefer tea or fruit juice.

Coffee and coffee drinking, as expressed on the parish web pages, can be understood as a symbol of the home country as such, with its Swedish Church, and as expression of the home as a place where people live. “Church coffee” after the Sunday service is very common in the parishes in Sweden and coffee-drinking on the whole is a central aspect of Swedish parish activities (e.g. Jeppsson Grassman 2001). Furthermore, in most Swedish homes, coffee is served and it is often referred to as the Swedish national beverage par excellence (see e.g. Svensson 1970). The cinnamon bun – which holds a unique position, since it appears on the web pages of all parishes<sup>6</sup> – does not have the same distinct connection to the Church

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<sup>6</sup> Except for a couple of parishes, which only provide contact information on the home



of Sweden in the homeland. On the other hand, the cinnamon bun is often associated in Sweden with home and a homely atmosphere. It is furthermore often associated with the good or the ideal home and its caring potential.<sup>7</sup> It may be added that in latter years the cinnamon bun has become something of a national symbol in Sweden. In 1999, the bun was given a day of its own, the 4th of October, which is now included in many Swedish calendars.

### Sweden and Swedishness as home

On the web pages, there were also numerous examples of phenomena that, without having any direct connection with home/residence, are associated in various ways with the home country, Sweden. The possibility of reading Swedish newspapers, for instance, was a service that most parishes offered, according to the homepages. In Sweden, the daily press and particularly the morning papers are subscribed to and are delivered to the door before dawn; these have an internationally unique position among news media. Three out of four Swedes read a paper in the morning, at least five days a week (Hedman 2009; Nilsson & Severinsson 2001).

The possibility to read a paper in the parish building may be seen as a way to convey a feeling of “home”, at a time when most papers actually also come in an internet version. Other rituals to which Swedes were invited by the parishes have to do with the celebration of Swedish national feasts, such as the national day and the Midsummer festival. In Sweden, these feasts are not normally associated with the church and the parish activities. In a similar fashion, invitations to traditional Swedish dancing and to evenings presenting Swedish films were other examples of events, which allude to Sweden and Swedishness.

### A place without constraints is home

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page.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. blogs and chat forums where parents in Sweden discuss what a good home and good parenting means (eg <http://www.bukefalos.com/f/archive/index.php/t-525315.html>).

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Furthermore, on many web pages, the Church was presented as a “meeting place” or a room for gathering “all Swedes in the area”. The possibility of “feeling at home” as a (“typical”/“ethnic”) Swede, the offer of coffee and cinnamon buns, together with other things that had a connection to home and the home country were explicitly presented on the web pages. This sometimes seemed to be intended as a form of “bait”, the purpose of which was to help the reader of the website in his or her decision to visit the local Church of Sweden parish. What these texts have in common is that they describe the visit to the parish as something simple, artless, informal and without constraints – “just pop in”. No commitments are needed – it just gives you a chance to get a pinch of Swedishness and of the homely atmosphere that the parish offers. The following description was to be found on the website of the parish in Rotterdam:

When you are away from home, it is often particularly important to keep in touch with something that feels like “home”. Here, in the Church of Sweden, you can stop by, have a cup of coffee and a cinnamon bun, read Swedish newspapers and chat a bit with other Swedes.

### A spiritual home and “home as a haven”

It would be wrong to say that the information on the web pages only concerned things like cinnamon buns, St. Lucia celebration and an all-embracing “togetherness”, with a weak or unclear connection to spiritual and religious matters. This is not the case, yet the spiritual aspects of the parish mission often seemed down played. Some parishes were described as “a spiritual home for Swedes” and all homepages provided information about more typical “church events”, such as schedule worship and the procedures for weddings, etc. Photos that depict the altar dominate some web pages. A certain number of values that the parishes stand for were also described in most homepages. These correspond quite well to dominant meanings of “home as a haven” from the public world (Blunt & Dowling 2006:119) or to meanings of home as “a secure space within a strange and insecure world” (Wardhaugh 1999:93). The parish is a home that is open, but even

more encloses you in “togetherness and safety”, offering you the possibility of “sharing your sorrows and receiving support in difficult moments”.<sup>8</sup>

To summarise, the websites of the parishes of the Church of Sweden in different countries conveyed a number of more or less explicit and intertwined home themes in their web pages. Home in the sense of a place where people, typically families, live; home as the Swedish Church in Sweden; home as Sweden and Swedishness; home as a place without constraints; the spiritual home; home as a haven. The gesture of invitation was most often connected with “the Swedish home”, that is, with Sweden and Swedishness. This theme did not only dominate the web pages, it is a recurring theme in other informative texts about the parishes as well. The Church of Sweden Abroad has produced a booklet under the title *Like home, though abroad* – about the Church of Sweden Abroad (*Som hemma fast utomlands – om Svenska Kyrkan i utlandet*, Sjöström 2008). Here, we are introduced to the activities of the Church Abroad through a photo of a coffee percolator with two smiling young women stirring a big pot of pea-soup, not through a bible, an altar or some other Christian or religious symbol.

## Creating home in practice

How was home created in practice, in the different parishes? In contrast to The Church of Sweden’s local buildings in Sweden, which are usually easily recognisable as they take the form of churches and chapels, the church premises abroad are situated in more or less residential dwelling-like structures. In several ways many of the church premises that we visited as part of the first study, gave an impression of informality compared with many churches in Sweden. On the one hand, the informal atmosphere in the churches abroad made them less “homelike” in that they depart from how Swedish churches “at home” in Sweden often appear. On the other hand, they are also more “homelike” in that they have more resemblance with a room in a home where people live.

The most powerful associations with the quintessential Swedish home as a place where people live were, however, not to be found in the church

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=647744> (downloaded 31st January, 2011)

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furnishings, but elsewhere. The smell of baking cinnamon buns lingered inside the church premises and found its way outside, in a way that undoubtedly was meant to attract Swedish passersby to come inside. In all the Swedish churches that we visited it was possible to get cinnamon buns, just as promised on their websites, because the parishes usually also featured a café where the buns were baked. It was also possible, as promised, to buy coffee in all the visited churches; many specifically offered “Swedish coffee”, which is to say coffee bought in Sweden and customarily drip-brewed. Another thing that was a distinctive marker for national ties was that the language immediately changed from the local language to Swedish. The chatter around the café tables was in Swedish, as well as the announcements posted on the information board. Swedish was also the language used in the religious services, with some rare exceptions.

### Home according to the ministers, deacons and the senior participants

What kinds of “home” do the ministers and deacons working in parishes abroad aim to create? What does their work mean, and for whom is it? And what was it that made the seniors church participants and volunteers that we interviewed “feel at home” in the church and the parish? What does the parish abroad mean to seniors who live permanently or on a seasonal basis in a foreign country? These were some of the questions discussed in the interviews in the first study and in the survey of study three.

### The spiritual home and home as a haven

Several of the home themes that were most common on the homepages, were also among those that were cited by the ministers and deacons. In the responses to the survey, three home themes stood out as particularly central. The first theme had to do with the parish being a home in the sense of a haven protected from the outside world. This was described as a very important function. One respondent explained: “[the church] is like a home to turn to for people who feel lost and roughly handled by life”. A

second, connecting theme was that of the parish as a spiritual home, a place for worship and spirituality. The third theme was with regard to the parish as a Swedish home – a place for Swedish values, the Swedish language and Swedish culture. In particular, the values associated with the spiritual home and/or the home as a haven were expressed as a fundamental part of the parish and parish work. The religious service, diaconal social work and the church's role as a house of God were described as important. This was evident in the interviews; at the same time, the difficulty of prioritising spiritual pursuits over social activities was also apparent. Nevertheless, ministers and deacons expressed that their presence in the area as a Swedish church was crucial, particularly for older Swedes, not least because many of those who spend the winters in warmer latitudes choose these places as their second home. As one of the respondents expressed it:

On the other hand, for some, the churchly dimension is obviously the most important. I know of others who say that they would never have felt at home and probably never would have come here if there hadn't been a Swedish church. Otherwise [they] would not have spent their winters here. (Minister, parish in Spain)

At the same time, many of the parishes conducted religious services in somewhat unconventional ways compared with how they are performed in Sweden:

I don't design the mass myself. I follow the handbook as we should be doing – but not to the letter, just more freely /.../ Then we have the guitar too; we sing the most popular hymns. You know, hymns that people recognise. It's important, familiarity. (Minister, parish in Cyprus)

The Church in Sweden Abroad should be experienced, as some put it, as both a familiar place and as an “open home”.

Our ambition is to offer an open home where everyone feels welcome /.../ (Deacon, parish in Cyprus)

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Many of the ministers and deacons whom we met underscored the parish's aims of creating a feeling of security, a sense of community and a sense of belonging, not least for seniors. The minister in Cyprus emphasised the church's role in creating a feeling of security, notably for senior Swedes and especially for the rather frail individuals that spend their winters in Cyprus. "Many would not be in Ayia Napa if the church was not here. They know that if something happens, we're here."

A general pattern was that the older participants above all underlined the importance of the church room in itself and the social togetherness that parish life offered. But it was also a place for safety. In line with earlier research (Gustafson 2009), this pattern validates the importance of physical spaces for the sense of belonging and for the feeling of home. As expressed by two of the seniors in one of the parishes in Spain:

And then it is as if the church has become my home here. It is also a place where you can meet people.

This has become my second home. (How did that happen?) The unity and the atmosphere.

Several of the older participants also conveyed the opinion that a Swedish parish abroad is different from those in Sweden, more informal and accessible. One senior maintained that she had never felt such an affinity with others ever before in parish life and the community: "I never feel alone". But in the participants' narratives the church did not only stand out as a place that you visit because of familiarity and belonging. It also offered an opportunity for new contacts.

You always meet new people there too.

The church as room and the premises of the church is also a place where you can feel secure, according to several participants. When asked about this feeling, one male senior said:

Yes, it represents a feeling of security. But for me just the idea of entering

the church room represents security.

The church room was also described as a spiritual meeting place, where “there is help for your soul”. Or, as one woman said:

An important part is that here I get a feeling of belonging to something more...And I am an assistant at the Holy Communion...yes I feel strongly...

Just like in the interviews with the ministers, there was a pattern of divided opinions among the older participants about what was most important for the parish – to offer social belonging and togetherness “in general” or to provide for a spiritual community. Those who stressed the spiritual dimension would say, for instance:

Even if the church can provide a social community, in my opinion it should primarily offer a spiritual space and togetherness.

For me the most important thing is that it is a church and not a social club.

Others maintained that: ... the social and spiritual dimensions could not be separated.

However, an important discovery was that the older Swedish participants were not just “receivers” of home. To a very great extent, through their activities, and not least as volunteers, they were co-creators of the home in the parish and the values associated with this. A variety of tasks were carried out by the seniors volunteers, sitting on the church board, acting as a churchwarden, making clothes and decorations to be sold at the church bazaar, or singing in the church choir – these were some of the things mentioned by the ministers.

Other tasks had to do with giving support to church visitors, cooking at special church meals, being responsible for the church computers, or participating in renovation of the church. Another volunteer task often mentioned was that of running the parish café on certain days every week. The retired

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Swedish volunteers whom we interviewed explained how, in various ways, they contributed to the activities in the parish. One example of this was given by a retired migrant couple, Tor and Helga, aged 83 and 88, about their volunteer work in a parish in Southern Europe. It had all started with Helga singing in the choir, and now after a number of years as volunteers, the couple had “taken over running the religious service, all but the sermon”:

Tor: /.../ and this room, which is normally a place for playing bridge (in the hotel), is turned into a church room every Sunday. From November to April. And we spread the cloth and hang the special picture on the wall....turn it into a church room, and actually it becomes very nice.

Interviewer: And you do this? Are you a group of volunteers?

Helga: No, there is just the two of us. I read the texts, and Tor and I make the collection if there are many that come. ...And this cloth I have sewn ...not the altar cloth but this cloth hanging on the ...what do you call it?

Tor: ...that hangs on the pulpit.

Helga: Yes, I made it...

Several of the interviewed senior volunteers described similar careers – how they had gradually advanced from simple tasks to being responsible for certain parts of the parish activities. A 75-year old “snow bird” in Spain, for instance told us that she had “started by washing the dishes and had gradually advanced to become a matron’s assistant”.

### The Swedish home

Concerning the parish as a Swedish home, several of the ministers we met declared that the Swedish language – and even Swedish customs and culture – was an important part in the church’s activities. Many emphasised the church’s role as a transmitter of language and culture, for instance through supporting Swedish migrants in their efforts to teach Swedish customs and language to their children. Responding to a question about



the church's role for Swedes, this minister in a US-based parish replied:

A religious [significance] of course, for one thing. But we also have a social and cultural task. We are conveyors of Swedish tradition...

The ministers and deacons that we interviewed underlined that the Swedish language and Swedishness, in their opinion, apart from being vital for the second generation of Swedish migrants, is especially important to the retirees who spend their winters in southern European destinations and who had no or hardly any knowledge of the local language. In these cases, it was a question of having a chance to be understood, to get help in one's mother tongue and to feel at home. A minister assigned to a parish in the Canary Islands observed this about older Swedes:

Many probably don't speak Spanish even if they have lived here for a long time. Maybe they don't speak English so well either, and besides it's not always possible to communicate in English. So for them, there's also a security in knowing that the Church of Sweden is situated here /.../ I think it means a lot, especially for those who are staying here longer periods. To get some Swedish coffee, to feel like a Swede... We even have this slogan: At home, though abroad. I think that's how most people experience it. They come in contact with Swedish culture and are given a dose of Sweden.

The importance of Swedishness was also a central theme in the interviews with the older Swedes. However, according to some of those seniors, the fact that the church abroad was a Swedish church was the most important thing – and the very essence of what made you feel at home.

I have always preferred the Swedish church to other churches. I don't know why but I feel more at home here.

The most important thing is that it is Swedish and that you belong to the Swedish church.

Contrary to the description by the ministers and deacons, none of the

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participants mentioned the idea of "a Swedish home" – that is as a place for celebration of Swedish traditions, for the Swedish language or for having coffee and cinnamon buns. One reason for this might be that some of the participants did not find these aspects of parish life particularly important. However, a more plausible interpretation probably is that they took this Swedishness for granted, and it was therefore unnecessary to point out in the interview. Or, as a couple of volunteers in one parish (who were interviewed as a group) said:

Informant 3: Yes, it would look odd if it was all in Spanish...

Informant 2: Yes, wouldn't it.

Informant 3: Like if the parish did not have Swedish napkins and such things... And if they served Spanish biscuits. You know, no one likes them here, they are so sweet. Then I think people here would react and say "what is this now? Can't we have cinnamon buns instead?"

Informant 1: Yes, because that way it will be a bit like at home.

It is important to note that most of the seniors whom we interviewed were regular churchgoers – and volunteers in the Swedish parishes. People who visit a Swedish church abroad for the first time would probably describe their feelings about home and homeliness in different ways. One man, for instance, said that it was the Swedish cinnamon buns and newspapers that had attracted him and his wife to Swedish parishes abroad when they travelled around as tourists earlier. Now, however, when they stayed in the same place each winter, it was rather the feeling of togetherness and community that made them visit the local Swedish church regularly. In the interviews with retired Swedes however, it was implicit that the attraction was the togetherness with other Swedes. To some extent, this may be explained by the fact that none of the participants spoke the local language except for a few words and phrases. Interaction with the local population extending beyond superficial contacts with gardeners, shop assistants, etc. appeared to be rare.

In line with Breuer (2005), this lack of integration in the local commu-

nity, common among North European retirement migrants, might be explained by their specific situation and motives for migrating as primarily leisure- and consumption-oriented. Thus, the issue of social inclusion is secondary or, for some, irrelevant. However, the retired Swedes whom we interviewed did not explain their lack of language skills and the fact that they mainly socialised with other Swedish people as related to a lack of interest in the local population or their language. Instead, they blamed their (high) age for making it difficult to learn the new language and that it was hard to establish any close relationships with people in the local population without being able to speak their language fluently. Most of them had attended language courses or described how they, by using a dictionary, tried to expand their vocabulary.

At this age [75] it becomes more difficult. We studied Spanish with a private teacher for three and a half terms ... but it doesn't work anymore. It just stops. (A participant in a parish in Spain)

## An open Swedish church or an ethnic Swedish home abroad?

How can we then understand the prevalence of home themes in the Church of Sweden Abroad? Why is it that the churches construct themselves, in practice as well as in print, in relation to experiences, memories and ideas about the homeland? Why the focus on the creation of an ethnic home and the maintenance of migrants' ethno-specific (Swedish) cultural identity? After all, these churches are religious and spiritual organisations whose shared mission with other parishes in the Church of Sweden is "[to] offer religious worship, education, missionary work and to provide diacocial social work" – not to protect Swedish language and culture, or offer a feeling of home-likeness abroad.

First of all, it is worth noting that the Church of Sweden Abroad is not unique in its features and activities that are suggestive of home and the homeland. On the contrary, previous research on migration and religion describe other examples of migrant churches and diaspora spaces that

function as effective institutions for cultural preservation, such as delaying the loss of the mother tongue (e.g. Aagedal 2007; Beattie & Ley 2003; Hagan & Ebaugh 2003). The needs of migrants for togetherness and of adhering to an ethnic community – a home away from home – however, have generally been explained as an expression of the difficulties connected with migration (e.g. Hagan & Ebaugh 2003), as well as a way to face racism, exclusion and discrimination in the new country (e.g. Alinia 2008). This explanation is admittedly hard to relate to, with regard to the Church of Sweden Abroad and the retired Swedes who come as tourists, second home owners and migrants who pay visits to the Swedish churches abroad – or to any group of Swedes who visit the parishes. Neither does the need to recreate a Swedish home in the Swedish parishes abroad seem to fade with the acculturation process and the rise of second generation immigrants, as has been observed with many other migrant and ethnic churches (Beattie & Ley 2003:15).

The Swedish parishes abroad were not established to answer the needs of one large initial migrant group moving to a country and eventually integrating more or less at the same time. Rather, newcomers continuously stream in and turn to the Swedish parishes abroad, as had always been the case with the oldest Swedish parishes that started out as Seamen's churches. There are, however, additional interpretations to the phenomenon of "Swedishness" and the prevalence of home metaphors in the Church of Sweden Abroad in general. One is that the Church of Sweden has long held, until recently, the position as the state church, which implies a particularly strong link between the nation and the Church. Another, probably more important explanation has to do with how today's Swedes generally relate to churches and to religious faith.

Sweden of today is, according to some studies such as the World Values Survey, regarded as one of the most secularised countries in the world. It is plausible that many Swedes, regardless of age, have a more ambivalent relation to the Church than to the phenomenon of "home" and to typical symbols of Swedishness, like cinnamon buns and Midsummer festivities. The invitation to a homely atmosphere through cinnamon buns, Swedish coffee, a Swedish-speaking community and Swedish national newspapers could, in this light, be understood as a strategy for the churches abroad to

attract the bulk of Swedish migrants and tourists. They might be uninterested in, or have mixed feelings towards the church and religion, but nostalgically associate Swedishness and home-likeness as something positive when they encounter it abroad (cf. Agedal 2007:64). In other words, the frequent occurrence of home themes in the parishes' websites and activities, which Swedes easily associate with home as a place of residence and the homeland, can be understood as a pragmatic way of keeping the organisation alive when its *de facto* religious role and messages fail to attract many visitors.

At the same time, it is undoubtedly a problem – or at least a paradox – that this (re)creation of and welcoming to a Swedish home and homeland is likely to work particularly well when the local environment – the surrounding country's language, food, festivities, etc. – is perceived as strange and alien. In particular, it appears paradoxical in relation to the fact that the Swedish Church as an organisation, on a central level (in Sweden) explicitly supports “the multicultural and multilingual society”. The Church describes itself as a church “open for all”, where “people with different linguistic, national and cultural backgrounds are an integral part of the whole”, in a manner that is consistent with Christian egalitarianism. This is quoted in the Swedish Church's central website.

Creating and evoking feelings relating to home through traditions that contrast with local ones is not just a matter of taking advantage of the familiar, but also serves to emphasise that the culture around oneself is strange, somewhat frightening and “not like home” (cf. Al-Ali & Koser 2002:7). There is also a tendency that feelings of belonging and being at home become reinforced when there are others who do not belong entirely or do not belong at all. If Spanish locals or other foreign tourists were equally visible in the Church of Sweden's premises as in the streets of Los Cristianos, Torrevieja or San Agustin, the churches would probably have lost their function as a haven of security, community and home-likeness for Swedish migrants and tourists. As Young (2002:343) puts it, “home is a complex ideal” based on a nostalgic longing for security and well-being, which requires “those constructed as Others, strangers, not home, in order to secure this fantasy of a unified identity”. The desire, expressed by the church workers in the Church of Sweden Abroad, to create a wholly “open

home” in their own parishes, in this sense, seems as something of a contradiction – and creating a spiritual home where everyone really feels at home appears as an infinitely difficult task.

However, by offering a familiar environment with “typically Swedish” attributes, the parishes of the Church of Sweden Abroad create a sense of security and community and a “home away from home” for senior migrants in particular. The seniors, in turn, contribute by legitimizing the Church’s existence, as visitors and as recipients of support, and by contributing to the parishes’ activities and survival through their unpaid work. The presented results point to the importance of including senior migrants and their various roles in research on migrant religious communities, which so far has been rare. This is the case, despite the fact that church participation appears to increase with age and that seniors in general (this also applies to senior Swedes, see e.g. Weibull & Strid 2011) demonstrate significantly higher levels of religious involvement compared with young adults (McFadden 1995). The results from our project clearly indicated that for the retired Swedes who regularly participated in parish activities, the church abroad plays a crucial role in their lives as migrants.

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# Transnational Voluntarism among Senior Swedish Migrants on Costa del Sol in Spain

*Annie Woube*

In this chapter I will discuss when, where, how and in what context transnational competence occurs; how it is enacted, in which way it is used and what makes it significant in voluntary work. The aim is to offer an empirical assessment of how the transnational voluntary engagement of Swedish lifestyle migrants is valued and is significant for them as senior citizens and permanent residents on Costa del Sol in Spain. The following snapshot from my ethnography gives one example of the voluntary engagement in the lives of these senior Swedish migrants:

I am in the midst of one of my meetings with 76-year old Margareta, a Swedish national and permanent resident on Costa del Sol, when the telephone rings in her living room. It is not the first telephone call during our conversation. Margareta has been busy on the phone since I entered the apartment. A Swedish friend of hers had collapsed in her home prior to our meeting. The friend had phoned Margareta to ask her to call Helicopteros Sanitarias, a private emergency and doctor service in the region, since the friend is a non-Spanish speaker. Margareta had been deeply concerned and had asked to make a couple of phone calls before our chat, to make sure someone could spend time with the ill friend when the ambulance staff had given her the appropriate attention and care.

We are now finally sitting on Margareta's couch speaking about her connections to Sweden while living in Spain, and her role within the Swed-

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ish lifestyle migrant group on Costa del Sol, when the phone rings once more. She picks it up and all I am able to hear is her part of the conversation, which originally is in Swedish:

And what is it about this time? Why don't you sign up for my course? [Margareta asks and starts laughing]... Sure, we can do that. Do you have a special appointment when you need to be there? ... Listen, was the name Edificio Mónica? ... Listen, what is his number? ... Then I'll give it a try and we'll decide the time and then I'll call you back. I have your number somewhere but I'll write it on the same note. ... I HAVE IT SOMEWHERE BUT IT MIGHT BE PRACTICAL TO HAVE IT ON THE SAME NOTE. [She is raising her voice so the person on the other end of the line will hear her properly] ... Let's leave it at that, Arthur, and I'll keep in touch.

She hangs up the phone and gets back to sit on her green couch again. She leans back and says sighing:

Well, that is one of those things I constantly have to be engaged in. [She points towards the phone] People who have lived here such a long time but haven't learned how to speak. This was a person who wants to speak to his landlord, but can't because he doesn't know a word of Spanish. And he has lived here at least 10 years.

Interviewer: And then they call...?

Margareta: ...then they call me.

Interviewer: ... for you to call the landlord? With the errand? And you have to be the translator?

Margareta: Exactly. Yes, that happens all the time. All the time. Well, I do get some money.

## Introduction

The quote above gives one example of the voluntary engagement in the lives of senior Swedish lifestyle migrants. In this chapter, I draw on empirical material collected in the work with my upcoming doctoral thesis; this consists of an ethnographic fieldwork among lifestyle migrants on Costa del Sol. In this chapter, I focus on the accounts of four seniors and their different types of voluntary engagement – Margareta, Tilde, Lars, and Simon. One of them (Lars) can be termed retirement migrant, whereas the other three are lifestyle migrants.

Lifestyle migration, as a research concept, is sprung out of academic research concerning the voluntary, exclusive migration from the northern, colder countries to southern, warmer countries around the globe. The concept encompasses a range of mobility movements in close relation to tourism, prolonged travel, and permanent dwelling in areas of tourism (see O'Reilly 2000; Geoffrey & Sibley 2007; Benson & O'Reilly 2009). While lifestyle migration comprises migrants of all ages, one specific form of lifestyle migration – retirement migration – is dedicated to migration during retirement. According to the editor-in-chief of the Swedish-written newspaper *Sydkusten*, Mats Björkman, there are about 30,000 registered Swedish citizens living along Costa del Sol. However, there is a noted flow of people with connections to the area, dwelling there temporarily without registering residency. Therefore, there is no exact knowledge about the number of Swedish citizens involved in retirement and lifestyle migration along Costa del Sol.

The telephone call in the quote above is a consequence of a lack of regional interest and Spanish language skills among a main part of the Swedish retirement migrants. Similar to other Northern European citizens, many of these migrants do not speak the Spanish language; according to the interviewees in the present study, they do not engage in matters concerning the region, and need assistance in their everyday interaction with the Spanish host society. This is confirmed by research concerning retirement migration to destinations along the Mediterranean Sea (see Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Helset et al. 2004). Many have entered lifestyle migration in the search of a holiday atmosphere of freedom, relaxation, and

enjoyment in a purpose built destination for tourism. They can spend their senior years in such a laid-back environment until they become too ill, or are in need of medical care, which often leads to a return to the country of origin. The ethnography on location shows that for many seniors, the general intention is not to migrate permanently during retirement, but to use the coastal area and its opportunities for leisure during their senior years.

### Method and material

The chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted during a total of five months in 2009 – 2010 in the coastal town Fuengirola, situated on Costa del Sol in the south of Spain. Inspired by the phenomenological approach (Frykman 2006; Frykman & Gilje 2003), the intention of the fieldwork was to acquire an understanding of how, when and why transnationalism is set at play for those who reside on a permanent basis in the region. The main gateways to the senior Swedish migrant collective included the many different places where they spent time, such as the Swedish church, Swedish restaurants, social clubs and other Swedish establishments, where I made informal contacts and had conversations on a daily basis with Swedish senior. This chapter draws primarily from recorded conversational interviews with four senior Swedish lifestyle migrants who were all permanent residents, and in most of the cases had been for a long time, in Fuengirola or its surroundings.

Three of the interviewees, Margareta, Simon, and Tilde, have lived on Costa del Sol since the 1960s and 1970s, that is to say, during their professional years. They are similar in having made a career in offering different kinds of services to fellow Swedish nationals, residing on Costa del Sol temporarily or permanently, or while being tourists. A more common trajectory leading to retirement migration is similar to that of senior citizen Lars. He is 66 years old and a retired officer from the Swedish Armed Forces, whose migration story is different from the other participants in this chapter in that he migrated permanently as a retiree; thus, he did not spend his professional life on the coast. In this sense he embodies the definition of retirement migration (see King et al. 2000; Rodríguez et al. 1998).

That is to say, he migrated when entering retirement.

I met these seniors on four separate occasions, one interviewee at a time. Each interview was dedicated to a different theme concerning the fact that the interviewees had made the decision to migrate and establish themselves on Costa del Sol. Hence, the first interview session focused on the emigration experience as such; the second focused on the elderly migrants' connection and contact with their host country versus their home country. The third conversation dealt with ways to create belonging and a sense of home, and during the fourth occasion, we spoke of civil issues such as citizenship, social responsibility and loyalty to the two countries in question.

This chapter will focus specifically on the material, which concerns transnational voluntarism and mediation. More specifically, the chapter concerns the voluntary help provided by these migrants through their transmigrating capital to other seniors on Costa del Sol. It will be shown, that the transnational voluntarism and mediation, provided by senior Swedish migrants, are not only beneficial for the receivers of the services, but also for the Swedish migrants who are voluntarily engaged themselves.

### Transnational Voluntarism

For the four seniors who have been interviewed in this chapter, the outcome of a transnational everyday life is to simultaneously lead a life in reference to norms, routines and practices originating from different places and settings, such as Sweden, Spain, the Costa del Sol area, and the Swedish collective on Costa del Sol. A transnational competence of how to master and combine the norms and practices of a transnational life can emerge and become an integrated part of the everyday life, through time and experience on location. How the interviewees do this in reference to voluntarism and mediation will be shown in the present chapter.

The ethnologist Marianne Liliequist states that in order to obtain a cultural competence, one must understand the cultural codes of a society, i. e. socialization. Socialization is an on-going process throughout life as individuals adapt to new cultural codes and use the options available to them in order to cope with life (1993). In a similar vein, the anthropologist

Michael Jackson claims that “in most human communities the measure of the worth of any knowledge is its social value” (1996:36). Hence, competence sprung out of connections in-between multiple localities, i.e. a transnational competence, can be viewed as an asset or a capital in the Bourdieuan sense. Mastering a transnational competence tends to enhance one’s social position among other senior Swedish migrants on Costa del Sol. The transnational competence is used while working voluntarily and mediating knowledge pertinent to other elderly Swedish migrants in Spain. This is also a widespread practice within the British migrant community in Spain, according to the sociologist Karen O’Reilly (2000; see also Haas 2012).

The voluntarism in question can be defined as “unpaid work provided to parties whom the worker owes no contractual, familial or friendship obligations” (Wilson & Musick 1997:694). However, I want to emphasise the fact that there are cases of payment involved in the voluntarism which I am about to present, but the payment is minimal, and it is a means of extending the monthly pension. That is to say, the senior lifestyle migrants do not earn a living from their services but they view the voluntarism as an ideal practice of engagement during retirement when extra money is considered a bonus. In addition, swapping services between one another is a most common practice of paying back. My study shows that there are both formal and informal practices of helping other Swedish lifestyle migrants. Formal voluntarism takes place in the many organizations of the Swedish migrant group living along the southern Spanish coast, where many devote their free time to the cause of organizing activities within social clubs. Informal practices are initiated by private persons, without any involvement of organized clubs. Thus, the study is not about senior Swedish migrants engaged in charity work through a charity organization or specific helping programme (which is for example the case in Haas 2012).

The practices of volunteering and mediation are characteristics of the making of a transnational social field on Costa del Sol (cf. Faist 2000), since the volunteering practices are primarily based on a transnational competence, which is transmitted in different ways. The concept transnational is the result of having acquired multiple bonds connecting the senior



Swedish migrants' lives across the territorial borders of Sweden and Spain, since current migration is inclined to involve more than definite, completed, "singular journeys but [instead] tend to become an integral part of [lifestyle] migrants' lives" (*Ibid.*:13). The multiple bonds that transcend borders "generate transnational practices, relations and institutions of different kinds – social, political, financial, cultural", writes the sociologist Per Gustafson (2007:17). The result is migrants who create transnational social fields and incorporate transnational experiences that are shaped by the free flow of news, memories, and stories; besides frequent trips in-between the localities linked to the migrants' lives.

### Voluntarism and mediation based on a transnational competence

Many senior Swedish migrants living permanently on the coast have spent their professional years catering for the Swedish population on Costa del Sol. As retirees, with a Spanish pension, they have been able to continue, changing this activity from a paid full-time profession, during their professional years, to an activity based on voluntarism during retirement. In some cases, it is a continuation of the professional work, but now based on the retiree's decision to devote time and ambition to a cause. In the following, I discuss four individual examples of transnational voluntary practices conducted by senior Swedes permanently residing on Costa del Sol: Margareta, Simon, Lars and Tilde.

#### Mutual positioning and the internal other

Margareta, introduced through the telephone call with Arthur, can for instance decide when and how she wants to work, and for whom, which gives her a sense of freedom. However, she tells me that her work is also a means to earn extra money and extend her monthly pension from the Spanish welfare system. The work that she does as a retiree can be understood as a way for Margareta to continue and preserve her position as an independent, self-sufficient woman who can care for herself. This stems from the context of her professional years, when she migrated alone as a

single parent with two children and had to provide for her family. As a retiree, such a position comprises indications of successful aging (Baltes & Baltes 1993; Laslett 1989). Instead of viewing aging as a period of passiveness, loss of status and isolation, the senior years have become associated with active and independent retirees enjoying life. Thus, Margareta's positioning of herself is charged with a positive view of retirement.

From the telephone conversation, it is evident that Arthur, a fellow elderly Swedish migrant, has called Margareta on several occasions to ask for help on practical matters related to the local Spanish community, even though he has lived on the coast for 10 years. Her reply of "why don't you sign up for my course" is a brisk invitation to one of the language courses in Spanish that Margareta teaches to the elderly Scandinavian migrant group. She is engaged in translation and mediation of everyday practical matters for Swedish elderly migrants in their contact with the Spanish host country. As a permanent migrant, she has built her life around providing service for the group of other elderly Swedish dwellers on Costa del Sol.

In order to analyse Margareta's voluntary work and mediation services from the positions taken by her in our conversation, I have been inspired by the theoretical concept translocational positionality (Anthias 2002, see also 2012, 2013). The concept, developed by the sociologist Floya Anthias, aims to highlight the identification process of the migrants in their narrations through a focus on articulated position "placed in three locales and their intersection: the society of migration, the homeland and the [life-style] migrant group" (2002:500). Margareta places herself in relation to both the Spanish host society, and to elderly female members of the Swedish migrant group. While comparing her life with other female Spaniards of her generation, she assumes that they have never worked outside their homes and have no other interests than their families, and the Swedish female migrants have moved to Costa del Sol with husbands who (according to Margareta) provide for their wives. In reference to this, she clearly positions herself as a self-sufficient and independent woman. Margareta's positioning is in line with the anthropologist Tomas Hylland Eriksen's statement that identification is primarily collective and is based on contrasts in social relations (1996). In addition, the identification made by Margareta above is established in reference to the social categories of gen-

der (female), nationality (Swedish vis-à-vis Spanish), and generation (other retirees). Positioning in reference to social categories are also included in the theoretical concept of Anthias. Thus, when stressing the independent and self-sufficient position in the particular context of transnational voluntarism, the act of positioning can be seen in relational, situational and locational terms, i.e. as a variable process, according to Anthias (2002:494). In another situation, Margareta might identify and position herself differently.

The specific telephone call with the fellow Swedish national, Arthur, not only depicts the everyday practice of voluntarism, sanctioning Margareta's position of being an independent woman. It is also evident how Margareta undertakes and is assigned a mediator position by others, due to her many years of living in Spain, her accumulated language skills in Spanish, local knowledge, and contrarily, the lack of these competences amongst the majority of Swedish migrants dwelling on Costa del Sol. She is able to help Arthur when he needs to speak to his landlord, since she masters both the language and a transnational competence of the cultural and social parameters that govern a relationship between landlord and tenant in a Spanish context.

However, throughout our conversation she expresses resentment and annoyance towards the group of elderly Swedish migrants needing her help, i.e. she is ascribing them a subordinate position compared with her own. The fact that she has a long history in the region, and Spanish language skills, has provided her with an important capital in reference to others, which was also one of the findings in O'Reilly's study among British migrants on Costa del Sol (2000). Thus, contradictions and complexities are hidden in the mediator position given to Margareta by other elderly Swedish migrants, and in the subordinate position given to other elderly Swedish migrants by Margareta. The positions assigned to Margareta depend on other elderly Swedish migrants being assigned a subordinate position by Margareta.

In the telephone conversation with Arthur, it is apparent that the outcome of being given a mediator position carries a sense of obligation and even burden associated with the practice of helping out. Margareta will help Arthur, but she also feels a need to comment on the fact that if he had

joined her language course, he would be able to talk to his landlord himself. Margareta's annoyance directed to elderly Swedish migrants in Arthur's position is expressed in the following account.

They spend time with each other, they play golf, they have parties, they go to Swedish restaurants, Swedish bars and so on. It is so Swedish, so Swedish, really it is just the climate they are interested in. And they know very little of Spain and the Spanish. Most of them don't even have Spanish television. But in those days when I moved down here, there was nothing else. There was no Swedish television and all those things.

Margareta's statement highlights how she is positioning herself and her transnational experience in relation to other elderly Swedish migrants within the same collective. Thus, she is expressing the practice of creating an internal other (cf. Gerber 2011; Volčič 2005). The concept of the internal other aims to conceptualize the practice of contrasting the self to others within the same group. For instance, the ethnologist Sofie Gerber discusses in the dissertation *Öst är väst men väst är bäst* (2011) [East is West, but West is Best] how Eastern Europe has always been marked as the internal other of Europe, and how this is expressed by young Germans who grew up in the German Democratic Republic, informally known as East Germany.

When Margareta in this way is construing her peers as internal others, she initially adheres to the fact that she might be of the same generation and nationality, but then she emphasises a difference in her lifestyle and interests compared with other elderly Swedish migrants on Costa del Sol. The act of positioning others as internal others stems from the time when Margareta devoted her professional life to establishing various supportive activities important to the Swedish lifestyle migration collective. This included working with Swedish media on the coast, administrating one of the social clubs for elderly Swedish migrants and teaching the Spanish language etc. She did this while managing and adapting to the norms and regulations of the Spanish host country. Thus, her aspiration to integration has been significant for the establishment of a Swedish lifestyle migration collective on the coast.

Today, on the other hand, she meets elderly migrants of Swedish origin of her own age, who are living and enjoying the fruits of her efforts without any desire to have a deeper engagement with the host society. It may seem contradictory, but she is still in need of the elderly Swedish migrants, representing the internal other, since they are providing her with the possibility to continue her services and earn some extra money. They enable her to keep positioning herself as a self-sufficient mediator between the Swedish collective and the Spanish society.

### Transnational mediation through modern technology

Three of the interviewed Swedish migrants in this study stress their long-term relationship with the Costa del Sol-region and its local customs, norms and language. The decades of being permanent residents have given them a transnational knowledge and competence of living in Spain as a Swedish national, which they share in different ways.

Another of these migrants is 82-year old Simon, who mediates his transnational knowledge to friends and acquaintances by the means of modern technology. When I visited his home for the first time, Simon surprised me by being equipped with a computer with the most recent technology. In my own initial and narrow-minded view, his shuffling way of walking was too far apart from being a person online in contact with acquaintances via modern software applications, through which Internet-users can chat and make voice and video calls over the Internet. When I sat down on the bed and reached for my voice recorder, Simon opened a drawer and handed me a similar one. Simon's interest in technology and everyday usage of Internet and digital communication was most obvious and visible.

During the interview, he told me that he has integrated into his everyday life, a habitual practice of keeping himself up-dated with news and events in Sweden, mainly through the Internet. On a daily basis, he takes part as a listener and viewer of the public debates through Swedish radio- and television broadcasts online. Simultaneously, Simon is equally interested in Spanish news and public debate, which he follows through analogue media outlets, such as Spanish national and local television, radio and newspapers.

His dual interest and engagement in Spain and Sweden has a specific aim in that he writes a monthly newsletter in Swedish about the societal and financial development in his two home countries in relation to his own life. The newsletter is a form of mediation of a transnational competence that is sent out to friends and acquaintances, mostly in Sweden, together with pictures related to the themes presented in the newsletter and an essay about a specific chosen topic, often about his childhood in Sweden. Thus, Simon's transnational mediation is directed to a Swedish social network in Sweden. This contrasts with the voluntarism and mediation of the other interviewees in the present chapter, who direct their voluntary services to the Swedish lifestyle migrant group on Costa del Sol. Instead, he can maintain close connections to family, friends and acquaintances, while continuing to move between Sweden in the summertime and Spain during the rest of the year. Retirement migrants share this practice of keeping up connections (Gustafson 2008; Huber & O'Reilly 2004). Technology connects and holds the transnational condition together while Simon is sharing his time between his two home countries. That is to say, his daily activities online remain the same even though he changes home country during the summer.

The practice of transnational mediation through modern technology, in Simon's case, puts him in a position of being an active, engaged, and committed elderly migrant, despite a deteriorating and ill body, which would otherwise assign him a position of being passive, less mobile and confined to his apartment in the eyes of a narrow-minded researcher. He told me that this was possible due to the development in modern technology. Through the mediation practice of sending a monthly newsletter online, he positioned himself with a high transnational capital, with strengthens his position within his social network, as well as within the Swedish lifestyle migrant collective, in reference to other Swedish lifestyle migrants with less knowledge and less connection with the region.

### Voluntarism in social organisations

A third form of transnational voluntarism common among the four interviewed Swedish migrants is their engagement in social clubs. According to

the sociologist Per Gustafson, a significant characteristic of foreign retirement migrant communities is for the members to be part of a social organization (2008). When approaching the Swedish lifestyle migrant collective through social clubs, it does not take long before a network of relationships and affinity becomes noticeable. A lot of people clearly make use of the establishments and, based on the number of visitors, value the organizations as important in their everyday life. Several of the elderly Swedish migrants I meet praise the importance of living in Fuengirola, where most of the Swedish establishments and private enterprises are located – or in its proximity, because of the network of establishments, which have a clear ambition of being venues for the elderly Swedish migrants.

In the present study, both Lars, a 66-year old Swedish national, and Tilde, a 75-year old Swedish national, devote a considerable amount of time to volunteer work in social clubs directed to Swedish or Scandinavian lifestyle migrants. For Lars, the engagements in the social club, *Clúb Nórdico*, were the incentive and motivation for carrying out a migration during retirement.

Well, I actually searched for something like this. To be able to spend time on something other than what I had done before. I wanted to spend time on, not so much the cooking, but rather to devote my time to amuse people, rather than lead them.

Lars nourished a dream of setting up a restaurant in Spain while working professionally for the Swedish Armed Forces. On location in Fuengirola, Lars could make his dream come true unexpectedly, but not in the shape of a restaurant. Instead, Lars found a social club, which came to function as a substitute for the restaurant he had wanted to open.

I had a colleague from the Swedish Armed Forces who was the chairman in something called *Clúb Nórdico*, so we joined it, and then *Clúb Nórdico* became a little bit of what I had dreamed about. I worked here during the days and more than that. I held many parties here. I started something we call pub evenings which we have one Thursday every month and then I could do exactly what I wanted; tell some stories, sing along with people,

have guessing games. In addition, to improve the economy of the club I started Wine and Bingo. It is not some kind of boring bingo, where people are sitting like this. Instead, the atmosphere is exciting, and there is much fun. And I think this was just what I wanted.

With the engagement in Clúb Nórdico, Lars was able to realize his dream of organizing parties and social events for elderly Scandinavian migrants, mainly Swedes. Clúb Nórdico has elderly migrants from all the Scandinavian countries as members, but the majority belong to the Swedish nationality. Among the daily offers of the club is a café with internet access for members, availability of Scandinavian newspapers, books in Swedish and socialization opportunities with other elderly migrants. In addition, the club organizes Spanish language courses, dance classes, health check-ups with a Swedish nurse, seminars on different topics related to their lives as elderly migrants on Costa del Sol, and other kinds of social activities, such as spring dinners and travels around Spain.

Despite wanting “to devote time to amuse people, rather than lead them” during his senior years, the transition from a professional life in the Swedish Armed Forces in Sweden to volunteering fulltime for Clúb Nórdico on Costa del Sol, has not meant a lost position as a leader for Lars. At the time of our conversation, he had spent four years as the chairman of the club, through which he has been able to keep his social status of being an active organizer in a leading position. He is well-known as a prominent figure among the Swedish lifestyle migrant collective on the coast in general, which becomes quite clear during one of the interview sessions in a Swedish restaurant. During the interview, many Nordic migrants walk by, saluting Lars and maybe stopping for a chat. More so, he tells me that his previous career in the Swedish Armed Forces is reflected in the nickname given to him by other retirees, “The Officer”; an acknowledgement of him as a leader.

In comparison with Margareta, Simon, and Tilde, Lars has a limited knowledge of the Spanish language and a low transnational competence. However, Clúb Nórdico is an organization with the aim of bridging the Swedish migrants and the Spanish society through its activities; for in-



stance, by offering Spanish language courses or lectures about Spain and Spanish culture. As a chairman of the club, Lars is a supportive organizer of the transnational practices making Costa del Sol a transnational social field (cf. Faist 2000).

Lars reveals to me that his experience of living as a retiree on Costa del Sol, while working voluntarily full-time for the club, is very valuable for him. Being a retiree on Costa del Sol has implied being fully active in the club. Now he is happy to leave the heavy workload as a volunteer behind and use the club as a regular member for social purposes instead of as an organizer.

### Exclusive transnational positions

Tilde is another elderly Swedish migrant I met during my fieldwork. Like Lars, Tilde is also engaged in volunteering for Swedish organizations along the coast. For Tilde, her voluntary engagement is a way of leading an active outdoor life while meeting people, facilitated by the milder climate and higher temperatures in Spain. This has enabled her to transform her professional career into an active volunteer lifestyle. Her engagement is shaped by her knowledge about local habits, norms and orientation, in addition to mastering the Spanish language. Therefore, she often organises events in relation to the Spanish host society, such as booking guided tours in different places. She is engaged in several clubs, but decides for herself the type of activities she wants to help out with. Therefore, the volunteer work differs from her professional life in that it contains a certain amount of freedom.

During the spring of 2009, Tilde was engaged in the local division of the global organization SWEA, Swedish Women's Educational Association, which is an association for Swedish women living outside of Sweden. As members of SWEA, the female migrants are part of an exclusive, privileged and affluent migrant group, creating a transnational elite in the context of global migrants (cf. Lundström 2010a, 2010b). At the time of our meeting in April 2009, Tilde had a special assignment for SWEA. She was organizing a hat parade with lunch in Fuengirola. She tells me:

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Each and every one that comes for lunch is supposed to wear a hat. We meet by the church square at half past one and then we walk together to the restaurant not far from there. Previous years I have even called Fuengirola TV. And they have come to photograph us and film us and then we have talked about Sweden and that one likes to wear a hat in the spring in Sweden and that it would be nice to wear one here as well. And then we go to lunch with our hats and we award people in the categories: most beautiful hat, funniest hat, and the best general impression. Maybe you want to come?

I accept the invitation, and one weekday in May, I join 30–40 Swedish ladies in their 50s, or older, for lunch, all wearing hats. We meet by the church square of Fuengirola city centre surrounded by people sitting under the pergola, curious about our activity. There is no Fuengirola TV present, but an editor-in-chief of one of the Swedish magazines is taking pictures of the many inventive creations on the heads of the ladies. It is a merry atmosphere when we march to the restaurant through the streets, looked upon by cheering Spaniards and others standing outside their shops and companies. The restaurant is called La Farola, which is located on Plaza El Yate, a square in the form of a courtyard surrounded by white buildings, at all angles, with balconies. Similar squares can be found in many Spanish towns.

The restaurant has prepared our tables, placed like a horse shoe in the middle of the square under big, white sunshades to protect us from the sun. The luncheon offers a cheerful and undisturbed get-together with red wine and rather typical seafood dishes from the region. The women at my end of the table have lived in the region for 10–20 years, and we speak of how they miss Sweden, but that cheap airfare has made a spontaneous trip to children and grandchildren possible. Our chat is interrupted with a game and the possibility of winning a bottle of champagne. While we are eating, laughing and playing games, the waiters watch our hats to decide which one is the most beautiful, which is the most fun, and which outfit and hat makes the best impression.

The hat parade is an event and a spectacle that manifests connections and inter-linkage between female Swedish migrants living on Costa del

Sol, as well as between Swedish women living abroad in a global context. Similar hat parades are repeatedly organized within the SWEA organization throughout the world. Hence, the hat parade in its annual repetitiveness can be understood as a public ritual (cf. Klein 1995). The hat becomes the prop of the ritual, expressing ideals of the upper social class and bourgeois elegance. According to the Swedish ethnologist Birgitta Svensson, performative signs of gender, such as a hat, are very direct and obvious expressions of identity construction (2012). The hat parade of Swedish female migrants can be viewed in a wider historical context in that Swedish women in Spain are frequently related to the female cultural icon called *La Sueca* (Spanish for the Swedish woman), which appeared during the 1960s and 1970s in Spain. *La Sueca* was portrayed as an (overly-) sexualized, liberal, blond Swedish female in bikini with a deep desire for a Latin lover during her short vacation. Any blond Northern European woman came to be associated with the moral disaster that *La Sueca* provoked in the Catholic, conservative regime of General Franco (1936–1976) (Cardona & Losada 2009:64ff). *La Sueca* is, thus, a sticky icon that has remained associative to the Swedish woman since the 1960s and 70s. The Swedish female migrants in SWEA are included in this association, due to the exoticism, despite their elderly bodies.

Thus, the hat parade produces a counter image of the sexualized and liberal Swedish woman. Within the SWEA-context, the Swedish woman is presented as virtuous, modest, stylish, and with a sense of humour since some of the hats are, indeed, creative. Tilde, in the position of a voluntary organizer of the event is thus supportive of these ideals, which is also in line with the SWEA-identity. Through her voluntary work, she becomes a good and proper SWEA-member, since her practice of working voluntarily within the organization connotes expressions of upper social class and bourgeois ideals. She is not just supporting and doing voluntary work for any organization, she is working for a social network of privileged Swedish women abroad in an exclusive transnational position.

## Valued voluntarism in a transnational context

Transnational voluntary work and mediation is a significant part of the everyday life of the interviewed elderly Swedish migrants living on Costa del Sol. In many ways, the voluntary practices depicted in the present chapter have offered the elderly Swedish migrants a continuation of a lifestyle led while working professionally, which has smoothed the transition from professional work to retirement, in line with Haas' study of British retirement migrants on Costa Blanca (2012). That is to say, the voluntary work and mediation of transnational knowledge are valued for offering a possibility to remain engaged for a cause. This applies, whether it be writing a reflective monthly letter about news and development in Spain versus Sweden, as in the case of Simon, or organizing a get-together for privileged Swedish female migrants in Spain, as in the case of Tilde. Both examples rely on a transnational competence acquired during more than 40 years of living in Spain. However, the direction of the voluntarism varies; Simon directs his mediation of a transnational knowledge to other Swedes living in Sweden, and Margareta, Lars and Tilde offer their voluntary services to the Swedish lifestyle migrant group at Costa del Sol.

The voluntarism is a social practice offering a possibility to remain in a social context or enter a new social context on location. This allows an outgoing and extroverted everyday life, enabled by the mild climate, where the elderly lifestyle migrants can keep socializing with others through face-to-face meetings in organizations like Clúþ Nórdico, or elsewhere, and through the Internet. An everyday life, such as this, stands in contrast to a general notion of retirement signifying loss of occupational networks and roles (*Ibid.*).

A side effect of volunteering and mediating during senior years is the freedom to choose when, where, for whom and for what one wishes to devote one's time and energy. However, this does not leave out situations of feeling the obligation of having to engage with people, when the elderly lifestyle migrants have no desire to do so. As in the case of Margareta, this may shape expressions of creating an internal other. In addition, for some of the elderly lifestyle migrants, the mediation of a transnational

knowledge is a means to extend a slim pension, which is an incentive for the continuation of voluntary practices during retirement years.

International retirement migration specifically causes challenges for the senior citizens in that it signifies a transformation in both lifestyle and place of residence. As noted above, this can lead to a loss in both social position and social network. However, the elderly Swedish migrants participating in this study have remained in a position with financial resources, enabling them to travel back and forth between their two home countries. Some of them can even afford double places of residence, which facilitates the preservation of their social network (cf. Gustafson 2008).

In addition, they have been able to keep resourceful positions, which they shaped when they were professionals. For instance, both Margareta and Tilde uphold similar or almost intact positions as retirees, since their positions are based on a high transnational capital from having lived in Spain during several decades. It was their livelihood as professionals when working with services catering for the Swedish collective on Costa del Sol, and it remains to be the base of their position as mediators of a transnational competence to other elderly people in the Swedish lifestyle migration collective.

Simon is also positioned with a high transnational capital, which is the foundation in his work of mediation and of great value for him during his everyday life. He migrated thanks to his substantial financial capital in the beginning of the 1970s. However, over the years, his position as a Swedish migrant with financial resources has been altered, but this transformation in life came about prior to retirement. That is to say, retirement as such did not mean a loss in status for Simon, but the source of status can be viewed as having changed during the latest years from financial capital to transnational capital.

Lars made a similar alteration when entering retirement. However, his position transformed from working as a professional general and leader in the Swedish Armed Forces in Sweden to voluntary work in a social organization, with a position as a leader in this new context.

In conclusion, the elderly Swedish migrants participating in this study exemplify active and engaged senior citizens, who practice voluntarism and mediation of local knowledge and language. They do this in different ways,

but they all do it in a transnational context, and they have made this practice into a core component, valuable during senior years abroad.

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# A Challenge to the Danish Welfare-State. How International Retirement Migration and Transnational Health-Promotion Clash with National Policies

*Anne Leonora Blaakilde*

The phenomena of mobility and migration are growing as more people move and frequently change their residences – intra-nationally, transnationally and internationally. Traditional conceptualisations of nation-state borders used to be the contextual prerequisite for “citizenship”, but this is currently being challenged. National borders are no longer a comprehensive conception that can be used to understand and manage “citizens”. The sociologist John Urry coined this phenomenon “The post-societal agenda of the world”, because national borders are no longer natural borders (Urry 2000). Another sociologist, Peggy Levitt, further suggests that migration should be studied as transnational social fields, and not as “natural containers” of delineated national social fields (Levitt 2007). In this chapter, the focus is on the consequences of Danish national migration policies related to transnational social fields, which Danish retired migrants enter while moving to warmer climates in Southern Europe.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Policies can change promptly, and this chapter is based on current policies in Denmark in 2013.

## Introduction

Many studies within the research field of International Retirement Migration represent a dichotomous approach to aging and health. Migration and tourism studies in particular tend to describe senior migrants as an active, upper-middle-class group (e.g., Gustafson 2002; Williams et al. 1997; King et al. 2000; Simpson 2012). On the other hand, aging and health studies often focus on disease, frailty and the need for care, which implies economic concerns – especially for the host countries (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Innes 2008). Insights from cultural gerontology have shown that the aging experience, in varying degrees, includes a co-existent and processual development of frailty (i.e., illness and physical decline) and assets (i.e., maturity and the ability to handle problems in life) (Birren et al. 1996; Katz 2009; Myerhoff 1978; Swane 1996). These concurrent phenomena are not universal or evidently predictable; thus, their complex character is seldom incorporated in studies of seniors. Because migration can be a consequence of retired migrants' intentions to be in charge of their own weakening health situations (Blaakilde 2007a, 2007b, Karisto 2008; cf. Karisto 2013), retirement migration studies should be more concerned with the complexity related to aging experiences. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that some of these retirees are “health migrants” (Breivik 2011), who are migrating for the benefit of their health situation.

In this chapter, the theoretical point of departure is “transnationalism”, a concept that developed in response to the increasing worldwide flow and circulation of people, goods, information, values and finances (Beck 1998). Transnationalism has been explained as “the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement” (Glick Schiller et al. 1992:1). According to the migration scholar, Alejandro Portes, the term “transnational” is distinct from “international” and “multinational” due to its reference to cross-border activities that are initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors like groups or networks of individuals (Portes 2001; cf. Vertovec 2009). However, it has been proposed that studies should focus on the local level versus the global, economic and institutionalised levels, which include conceptualisations of transnationalism both “from below” and “from above”, (Smith &

Guarnizo 1998). Studies of social groups need to go beyond an examination of corporate life and the structures surrounding them, which could be global corporations as well as national governments (Kivisto 2001).

In this chapter I intend to investigate “from above” how the policies of the Danish welfare state correspond to the kind of health management that is practiced by migrants, and I also incorporate a “from below” examination of how government regulations directly affect the lives of these people. The aim of the combination of these two approaches is to investigate how the Danish policies meet the needs of the Danish transnational citizens.

Additionally, I discuss certain paradoxes found within Danish health and migration policies. To do so, I apply theories from the transnational body of scholarship. The anthropologists Wimmer and Glick Schiller have termed the failure to acknowledge the post-societal agenda of the world as “methodological nationalism”, indicating the assumption that a nation/state/society is the natural social and political form for the modern world (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002:301). Incorporating a transnationalistic perspective concerning the Danish retired migrants allows for a critical discussion of Danish political practices that have been influenced by methodological nationalism.

The collection of empirical material for this chapter employed two different methodologies that denote the two approaches. The “from above” perspective was informed by my study of selected Danish policy papers about the governmental structures and public attitudes related to Danes who migrate or want to migrate. The “from below” approach is grounded in two different ethnographies, which were conducted among retired Danish migrants living in Costa del Sol, Spain, as well as Danish migrants living in Alanya, Turkey. Because it is more recent and in concord with present Danish migration policies, the second ethnography is emphasised in my analysis, whereas the material from Spain is applied contextually to provide a long-term, temporal perspective on certain cases and instances of risk related to health care and migration.

The studies presented in this chapter derive from the scholarly field of International Retirement Migration; however, the term “retirement” must be clarified. In the material from the Spanish ethnography, the age limit for interviewees was 60 years, but the Turkish material did not include an

age limit for two reasons. Firstly, in Denmark, different types of pensions are available regardless of a person's age, and some of the interviewees had retired early (or never worked) due to functional disabilities. Thus, "retirement" here refers to anyone living on a public pension. Secondly, I developed a specific interest in the phenomenon of health migration after my initial fieldwork in Spain, since this is what a significant number of the migrants seemed to practice. During my second fieldwork in Turkey, I met health migrants who were aged 40+; hence, I made the choice to include this age group in the fieldwork material.

I provide further explanations in the sections about the aspects "from below", and in the discussion, I elaborate on the convergence between the terms international retirement migration and health migration. In the next part, I will describe the policy analysis I conducted and the resulting "above-aspect".

### Danish policies in relation to retirement migration – the view "from above"

According to the classic framework for public-policy analysis, several methodologies are available. Since the perspective in my research derives from cultural studies with an interest in interpretive analysis, I was inspired by Hendrik Wagenaar's methodological approach to policy analysis, which is influenced by theories from the humanities; namely those of Clifford Geertz, Paul Ricoeur and J. L. Austin (Wagenaar 2007). From this perspective, the aim of policy analysis is to interpret the meaning of policies; i.e., the intrinsic intentions based on cultural values and traditions. Wagenaar suggests that the different values and traditions – what Wagenaar calls the explananda behind the policies' explanations – are the most interesting to interpret (*Ibid.*). For such an implicit understanding, I suggest the alternative term "connotations"; so by studying policies related to migration, I intend to interpret their implicit values and meanings; their connotations.

For a typological framework, I have chosen to employ the terms for different types of welfare state regimes, as coined by sociologist Gösta Esping-Andersen: i.e., liberal, corporatist and social-democratic (Esp-

ing-Andersen 1990). To varying degrees, most nation-states include all three of Esping-Andersen's types. In Danish politics, the social-democratic (universalist), tax-based welfare model has been prevalent throughout the 20th century – and Denmark has a long tradition of prioritising decommodification – but, as noticed by Danish social scientists, this is now changing and elements from all three regimes are included (Goul Andersen 2007).

To gain a better understanding of how Danish migrants' lives are structured, I studied three specific policy areas, which I summarise and interpret separately here: The pension system, the public health system and taxation rules for Danish migrants.<sup>10</sup> Before I address the policy study in more detail, I will first include a short description of the general law that applies to citizenship and place of residence outside of Denmark.

### Place of residence

According to Danish law regarding civil registration, anyone who lives abroad for more than six consecutive months must register as “departed from Denmark” (Chapter 6, § 24; Retsinformation). This means that if Danish citizens remain abroad for more than six months, they are not allowed to keep a home available in Denmark; summer cottages are an exception, but they are normally not considered to be permanent accommodations.

Public social pensions (both age-defined pensions and disability pensions) are offered while living abroad, varying in amount depending on a person's individual circumstances. However, these pensions are seldom large enough to finance a mortgage to purchase private property. This means that among retirees who choose to reside abroad permanently, only the most affluent can afford to own property in Denmark and let it out while living abroad.

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<sup>10</sup> I consulted a range of Danish legislation and information aimed for citizens, all of which is available on official national websites; for example, the website about emigration (Borger.dk); the website about taxation (Skat.dk); the Ministry of Taxation's information website (skm.dk); and the public website for information about Danish legislation (www.retsinformation).

### Retirement policies

Most of the pensions granted by the Danish state are not limited by territorial restrictions, so the recipient is free to reside in any geographical location he/she chooses, but some kinds of pensions may be reduced due to foreign residency.

The original pension legislation from 1891 (which was reformed in 1956) was based on universalist welfare principles, which focused on equality and a kind of commonality that had national borders as a prerequisite (Ploug et al. 2004). In 1991, a new supplying pension element was instituted, following the corporatist model<sup>11</sup> and contains moral values related to individualism. The combination of these two types of welfare regimes has facilitated the current circumstances, which has allowed many Danish migrants to move to foreign countries. This is an example of how national politics can respond to Urry's call for a post-societal agenda with regard to mobility and migration (see above). However, since 1984, the right to receive a public age-defined pension is by law contingent on a person's residency within Danish borders for a minimum of 40 years between the ages of 15 and 65. This means that citizens who, for instance, have stayed within Danish territory for only twenty years during this life-span period are only eligible to receive half of the amount that would be available to other retirees.<sup>12</sup> This policy is imprinted by a corporatist regime, providing less decommodification; in turn, this can create a poor quality of life for migrants without the financial means to contribute to private pensions.

### Health policies

Health policies (and care for the elderly) are aligned with the universalist model in traditional Danish social-democratic politics; to a great extent, these benefits are financed by the state via public-health insurance taxation

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<sup>11</sup> Since the establishment of the corporatist model, the size of pensions also varies greatly, depending on an individual's previous income.

<sup>12</sup> The public retirement pension is percentage-dependent; for example, after staying in Denmark for 10 years (25 % of 40 years), a retired person is entitled to 25 % of the accrued benefits.

and are distributed free of charge to everyone. The intention is to provide all citizens with equal rights and access to health-care services – such as hospitals and doctors or other types of treatment sanctioned by the public health system – as well as home-help for personal assistance and/or house-keeping. Seniors are also eligible for accommodation at nursing homes; the criteria for a person's right to health-care services and home-help are based on his/her needs due to functional decline.

In contrast to the retirement policies, however, health policies require the recipient not only to be a Danish citizen, but also a legal resident of Denmark. For non-residents, there is no access to public health care, either in Denmark or in the EU. If they are legal residents abroad, Danish citizens may have access to the public health insurance in their host country, or they must buy private health insurances.

Since retired migrants often must exchange their Danish public health benefits for private health insurance, the more affluent migrants are once again given preferential status, due to their ability to buy insurance and hence receive proper health treatment when needed. Thus, Danish health policies have abandoned universalist principles in favour of corporatist ones.

### Taxation policies

The special Danish blend of taxation policies and migration policies is important with regard to the opportunities and limitations available to Danish migrants. The Danish welfare state is dependent on taxation, and the country has the highest tax rate in Europe (EU Information Centre 2013). Denmark has very complicated rules for residence and taxation while living abroad; for instance, the exact number of nights a citizen spends out of the country must be counted.<sup>13</sup> Denmark also has special

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<sup>13</sup> In 2011, a political case – and the subsequent media storm – regarding the current Danish Prime Minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and her husband, Stephen Kinnock, illustrated the complexity of Danish migration legislation. Since Kinnock was commuting within the EU due to his work and family obligations, his legal place of residence was questioned, and the couple were accused of tax fraud. Several high-level experts were needed to solve the case because it was too complicated for local taxation authorities or the couple themselves to manage.

“double taxation agreements” with specific countries; these agreements ensure that migrants are only taxed by their host countries, which may have much lower rates (compared to Denmark) or even no taxation. The double-taxation agreement between Spain and Denmark was eliminated in 2008, so Danes who migrated there after this date<sup>14</sup> must also pay taxes to Denmark (Ministry of Taxation 2013).

In one sense, taxation can be understood as the membership fee that must be paid to a national society in order to access its welfare benefits, especially within the social-democratic welfare model, because the “fee” is not fixed, but income-dependent. The Danish migration and taxation policies work as practical tools that are used to effectively control and protect spatio-national borders and the welfare benefits provided for members inside this spatially defined “natural container” (Levitt 2007).

### Connotations

Taken together, the governmental policies pertaining to the migration of Danish retirees suggest that it is possible to use income from public and private pensions abroad, but the period of time in which a migrant is permitted to live either abroad or at home are strict and complicated, especially in terms of the relationship with Denmark. When living abroad, Danish migrants in Spain – but incongruously, not in Turkey – have to pay taxes in Denmark. Yet neither group has access to the Danish public health system.

In both countries, Danish migrants must obtain either private or public health insurance (public insurance is free in Spain but must be purchased in Turkey). This requires economic capital,<sup>15</sup> which means that affluent migrants are more privileged – both in terms of their ability to pay for private

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<sup>14</sup> In my ethnography from Spain, the fieldwork was conducted in 2006; thus, it represents only people who were not being double-taxed by Denmark and Spain. Three of the Danish retirees I met in Alanya, however, had moved from Spain to Turkey primarily because, after the taxation agreement was discontinued, it became too expensive for them to continue living in Spain.

<sup>15</sup> On top of this, because of the complicated tax regulations, it is advisable to hire a professional accountant, which also requires further expenditures.



health insurance, which is thus more convenient (i.e., they are eligible for health treatment at private hospitals in Denmark and elsewhere). Furthermore, they may own residences available to them if/when they return, which gives them immediate access to the Danish public health system. Finally, most wealthy Danish citizens can live independently by means of their public and private pensions; but less affluent and ill people or others who receive social pensions or lower, public age-defined pensions may experience that the provisions are decreased, when living abroad – especially in comparison with their fellow citizens who remain within spatio-national borders.

Most of the policies in effect in the Danish welfare system are influenced by universal principles that demand a decommodifying distribution of goods and duties. However, when traversing the Danish border and migrating to another country, it seems that Danish retirees are subjected to a more individualistic requirement whereby they are expected to be independent and responsible for their own lives. As a consequence of leaving the spatio-national community they are denied social membership and access to public health services, even though some of them are still paying their “membership fee”: taxes in Denmark, their home country.

Interestingly, the Danish state seems to support migration opportunities for affluent people rather than those with lower incomes. These policies construct an economic inequality among migrants, which is more in line with the liberal model of a welfare society than the universal model; the level of economic wealth needed for a relatively easy migration experience is much higher than the average middle-class income. Hence, Danish legislation favours retirement migration by the wealthiest segments of the Danish population.

For some of the interviewees in my study, all of these policies have a tremendous impact on their situations – as I describe when examining migration “from below” in the next section.

## Ethnographies of Danish migrants – the view “from below”

I now turn to the below-aspect of my research: the ethnographies conducted in Costa del Sol, Spain, and Alanya, Turkey. First, I provide the back-

ground of my study, and then I present several interview quotes in order to analyse the migrants' experiences of current Danish policies for migration and their attitudes towards the matter. Due to this immediacy, the excerpts are primarily from interviewees in Alanya.

## Background

In 1995, 7,039 Danes received a social pension (disability- and age-defined) from the Danish state while living outside of Denmark; by 2011, the number was 46,090. The increase is remarkable, and it should be noted that these numbers represent different ages of Danish migrants receiving a social pension; however, most of them are over the age of 60. Also, the majority of these retirees have migrated within Scandinavia (Pensionsstyrelsen 2012). Within Europe, however, Spain is one of the most popular host countries chosen by Danish migrants, and Spain has a long history as a destination for retirement settlement. Turkey is a newer destination with fewer Danish residents, although there has been an increase (in 2011, 760 retired Danes lived permanently in Turkey while receiving a social pension from Denmark. In Spain, the number was 4,326.)

Within the academic discipline of international retirement migration, migrants have been classified into certain categories according to the relationship between their host and home countries. "Full-time residents" reside in and feel at home in their host countries; "returning residents" are temporary migrants with residence permits in their host countries, who prefer to spend summers in their home countries; and "seasonal visitors" are residents in their home countries, who visit their host countries within the period allowed by their respective governments (O'Reilly 2000). My study focuses on "permanent residents", a label that comprises both full-time residents and returning residents. The term "sojourners" has also been suggested (*Ibid.*), but it primarily refers to the kind of attachment the migrants have to their place of residence; e.g., feeling more at home in their home countries than in their host countries (Gustafson 2001) or even "clinging to the culture of [their] ethnic group" (Siu 1952:34). In the present analysis, I do not focus on feelings of belonging or adapting to specific cultural modes; using the transnational framework, my intention is to

understand how migrants perceive and experience the regulations of the Danish state and the connotations related to these policies.

### The fieldwork locations

The first Danes arrived in Costa del Sol in the 1960s; in 1981, a Danish-style Lutheran church was established in Fuengirola, Mijas, together with several Danish social clubs along the coast. In March and April of 2006, I spent five weeks doing fieldwork among Danish migrants in the area. As part of my ethnographic study, I participated in the activities of the Danish church, the social-club communities, took notes during and after conversations with thirty people and tape-recorded in-depth, life-course interviews with another twenty-eight Danes.<sup>16</sup> My criteria for the in-depth interviews were that interviewees should be retired Danish migrants, at least 60 years of age and have lived permanently in Costa del Sol for at least three years. In the course of conducting interviews, I met a few people who did not exactly match these criteria but who had interesting stories to tell about their health and living conditions; thus, I departed from this strict formula in a few cases.

The Turkish city of Alanya is a new settlement for Danes, but it has an official Danish club and some unofficial social gatherings at certain cafés and hotels. I spent five weeks there in February and March 2013; during this time, I interviewed Danes who were supported by a pension; either a public pension from the Danish state or their own private pension. In addition, since this study originally focused on health practices and attitudes to health among retired Danish migrants, I also included early retirees (age 40+), who had been diagnosed with an illness and were receiving a pension from Denmark for that reason. I ended up interviewing 16 people who were either full-time residents or returning residents, and one person who was a seasonal resident. Altogether, I conducted in-depth interviews with seventeen migrants, and took notes during conversations with another nine (from all three categories, according to Karen O'Reilly's typology; see above), with whom I had conversations but not formal in-

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<sup>16</sup> Other parts of this study have been reported in Blaakilde 2007a and Blaakilde 2007b.

terviews. I also took notes during various social gatherings in Alanya.

### Migration due to illness

The interviewees in both geographic locations represent a great variety. They were women and men from age 41 to 88; they had different levels of education and previous employment positions; they had different socio-economic backgrounds; and although they were all retired, it was for different reasons. Some received their pensions due to illness, some due to age; among the interviewees in Turkey, one couple retired independently after the successful sale of their company (their affluent financial situation was unique among the group of interviewees situated there).

The twenty-eight Danes I interviewed in Costa del Sol belonged to twenty different households, while the sixteen interviewees in Alanya represented twelve households; this indicates that many of them were single, but there were also couples and widow(er)s. A few of the interviewees in Costa del Sol were wealthy enough to own a house or a summer cottage in Denmark, but they all had legal residence in Spain, while only a few wealthy couples had available homes in Denmark. Especially among the permanent migrants in Alanya, their common characteristic is that they do not maintain a place to live in Denmark.<sup>17</sup>

From my interviews, I discovered that many of these retirees had migrated because the warmer climate was beneficial to their health. Thus,

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17 I learned that many of the Danes who live in either Costa del Sol or Alanya are seasonal double-home owners (Ethnologia Europaea 2007); they only spend the allotted amount of time abroad necessary to keep their legal Danish residence. However, this group of people is not represented in my study, even though they would have been an interesting group to study with regard to their experiences of transnational health management and national policies – especially because this subject was touched upon in the many conversations I had with this type of migrants. In general, they also appear to be wealthier than the group of full-time residents. Statements like this, however, should be slightly modified since many variables can affect ways of living. For instance, some of the seasonal visitors I met in both Costa del Sol and Alanya were not particularly affluent, but they were able to rent inexpensive apartments or rooms temporarily in their favourite host country while they also maintained their residence in Denmark by renting inexpensive lodgings in more rural areas. In addition, a few of the wealthy people in my study decided to stay away from Denmark for political reasons.

they could be considered “health migrants” – a term coined by the Norwegian social anthropologist Jan-Kaare Breivik, describing emigrants who migrate to cope with their health (Breivik 2011). Among the migrants in Costa del Sol, eighteen of them (more than half of the interviewees) were suffering from serious conditions: i.e. coronary and/or pulmonary problems, rheumatism or even cancer. In Turkey, there is even more emphasis on health migration. Of the sixteen Danish citizens I interviewed, eight of them were ill and six claimed that the decision to migrate was a direct consequence of their illness; in other words, over one-third of them had health motivations for their migration.

### Voices “from below”

I now present three cases of health migrants; here, I focus on their particular situations and their experiences with the policies of the Danish welfare state. In this case, I present voices solely from migrants who I interviewed in Turkey in 2013. This choice is taken because the recent fieldwork makes them more in touch with the current Danish policies.

There are two couples, Per and Pia, and Henri and Susanne, and one single man, Søren, all of whom were between the ages of 42 and 67 at the time of my interviews.<sup>18</sup> As already mentioned, the migrants in Turkey epitomise two kinds of pensioners: they either receive age-defined retirement benefits or a social pension, which is granted due to a disability; this means they comprise a wide age span. Migrants from the Spanish ethnography are included as secondary cases, due to their longer history of migration. The migrants’ experiences of a combination of illness, need of care and migration provide a context regarding the requirements for Danish retirement-migration policies.

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<sup>18</sup> These names are authentic, because the interviewees did not wish anonymity, contrary to what is often the case in qualitative studies. They have all approved their participation in the study by virtue of informed consent.

Per and Pia

Per and Pia were born in 1964 and in 1965, respectively, and they decided to migrate primarily because of Per's bad health. He was trained as a skilled builder, but after some physical injuries, he started work as a salesman. However, he developed even more severe physical problems and began receiving a social pension at the age of 46. He was in great pain but learned that a warm climate could be very beneficial, so he and Pia decided to prepare for migration. Because Pia was unemployed – which entitled her to receive unemployment benefits, but only while living within Danish borders – they planned to support themselves on only one income; namely, Per's social pension, which is €1,910 per month. In November 2012, when their plans to migrate were still a few years off, they heard “rumours”<sup>19</sup> that the Danish social pension for emigrants was about to be reformed, which meant that benefits would be reduced, starting in 2013. This disrupted Per and Pia's plans, so Per rushed to Alanya in December to rent an apartment. By migrating before 2013, he was still entitled to the former pension amount, thus providing him with €7,000 more each year, which was necessary for him as the sole provider.

However, he was frustrated in his dealings with the Danish authorities when arranging for their migration. With regard to the advice and treatment he received, he said, “I have seldom experienced anything so terrifying in my life”. In Alanya, he met with three other Danish migrants to compare which forms they had been asked to complete: “Not ONE of us had filled out the same papers!” Per then called four different authorities in Denmark, and none of them were able to provide the proper information. “I just could not get an answer! Because they simply did not know!”

After having been in Turkey for just a few weeks, Per returned to Denmark to visit his family for Christmas. However, during this time, he was suddenly hospitalised three times for suspected heart attacks. After the

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19 Per and Pia call this information “rumours” because it was not mentioned anywhere in the media, nor was it confirmed when they tried to contact certain authorities to get more details. In Per and Pia's narrative, they emphasise how there is often a lack of information before a new policy is established; they see it as an intentional act by the Danish authorities to conceal information.

third attack, a doctor said that he thought Per's attacks were caused by anxiety and not a cardiac problem. "And I must say", Per revealed, "I was REALLY frustrated, and furious and sad, I found it... you know... to move out of Denmark; they made it almost impossible to do that successfully".

After this experience, Pia decided to accompany Per back to Alanya immediately, in order to support him if he became sick again, and they have lived in Turkey together since January 2013. When they arrived, the couple bought private Turkish health insurances, which costs them each €131 annually. I interviewed them just a few months after their arrival, and the Turkish weather was not quite warm yet, but Per had already quit a lot of his medication because of the climate. Pia said to Per: "You are using SO LITTLE medicine now". To me, she added: "Once, he walked around like a zombie. He was on so much medicine, and it wasn't very pleasant".

### Henri and Susanne

Henri is a cook born in 1946, and Susanne is a social health assistant born in 1954. He is an age-defined retiree, and she receives a social pension because she suffers from fibromyalgia, depression and asthma. Susanne visited Turkey for a holiday in 2002, and after she discovered how much the warm climate benefited her health, she travelled there four times a year. The couple had always wanted to retire to a warmer climate, but because of Susanne's health ailments, they made the decision to migrate immediately; they had moved to Alanya almost one year prior to the interview. In Turkey, Susanne's asthma totally disappears and her fibromyalgia pain also dissipates. She used to take a lot of medication, especially painkillers, but she has been able to stop taking these completely since moving to Turkey.

S: I took so many pills. So many.

H: Now she forgets to take them!

S: Well, I actually don't take any painkillers.

AL: So there's a big difference?

S: There is a VERY big difference.

Susanne still takes medication for depression, but the amount has decreased from 40 mg to 10 mg daily. Henri said, “The better my wife feels, the better I feel”, and they agree that their marriage has improved a lot, as he was just about to apply for a divorce when they were living together in Denmark and she was very ill.

The couple has a combined pension from Denmark amounting to €2,371 per month. But when comparing their income with migrants who came from other Danish municipalities, Henri and Susanne learned that the taxation system in their municipality is different. For reasons unclear to them, they still have to pay taxes in Denmark while they live in Turkey. Moreover, even though they pay taxes in Denmark, the Danish public health policies prohibit them from having access to health services – not only in Denmark, but also any publicly paid health insurance in another foreign country. Once they have lived in Turkey for twelve months, they will be eligible to buy the relatively inexpensive Turkish public health insurance, but in the meantime, they are at risk since they do not have a proper insurance.

### Søren

Søren was born in 1971 and did not complete his architectural education because he was struck with a very aggressive form of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis at the age of 18; he has received a social disability pension from Denmark since he was 22. He has tried several different treatments for his condition, and of everything he has tried, a 28-day climate treatment in Israel was the most helpful. A new biological option is currently being tested to treat psoriasis, but Søren is not eager to try it; he prefers sunbathing in a warm climate, which benefits his health. In Turkey, he needs very little medication and his arthritis goes into remission, whereas in Denmark, it quickly reappears.

He moved to Costa del Sol in 2008, but the double-taxation policy between Spain and Denmark was repealed shortly thereafter; he then realised that Turkey was an option. Because he moved directly from Costa del Sol to Alanya, Søren's pension was reduced; the result was a monthly income of €1,561. Since then, he has bought a private Turkish health insurance for €263 a year, which covers everything except ailments related to



his psoriasis and arthritis. In the interview, Søren expressed criticism of the Danish policies applying to health migrants like him, because he has actually achieved a higher quality of life and health status while abroad:

It would be an enormous burden if all of us [ill migrants] suddenly returned to Denmark. But I think [the Danish authorities] do everything they can to drag us home. (...) I don't think people [in Denmark] realise that it's actually cheaper [to let us stay abroad]. You know, if I was to go into hospital two months a year, and then lie in bed all winter, and end up in a wheelchair some of the time...

In reality, Søren will probably have to return to Denmark soon because of the legislation that requires citizens to reside physically within Danish national borders for forty years, in order to receive a publicly funded retirement pension – which he needs, since he has not been employed in the labour market and has thus not contributed to private retirement insurance. When asked what he will do, Søren said:

[laughing a little]<sup>20</sup> I don't know! I try not to think too much about it, because it's not very nice. When you know there's a chance that you'll end up in a wheelchair or have more joints [become affected] – I mean, when it gets to your hip or shoulder, then you're bad. [pausing, and continuing in a low voice] Damn, I really don't know.

### Experiences of policies

For the people in these three cases, there is no doubt about the health benefits of migration; they clearly belong to the category of health migrants. However, these cases also show that it can be very complicated to migrate. First, it can be difficult to leave Denmark because the policies related to migration and the right to receive social-welfare benefits are

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<sup>20</sup> As indicated in many other ethnographies, laughter in personal interviews often signifies the opposite feeling as what it supposedly indicates. (Blaakilde 1991)

disseminated throughout several policy areas (Per and Pia). Second, staying abroad while maintaining contact with the Danish state is not easy, because the Danish authorities' governance of migrants abroad seems both heterogeneous and unpredictable (Henri and Susanne, who illuminate different local and governmental taxation policies) as well as discriminatory (Søren, whose disability pension was reduced when he moved). Third, the combination of different policies can actually prevent this kind of health migration, even though it may enable a better quality of life (Søren, who is likely to have to return home due to retirement pension requirements, thereby potentially damaging his health).

### Lives of the migrants – the downside

The migrants represented in these cases are all recipients of public social benefits from the Danish state; hence, they receive (in 2013) between €1,561 (Søren, single person) and €2,371 (Henri and Susanne) per month. By way of comparison, the average monthly income in Denmark is €3,344 for a single household and €6,975 for a two-person household (Denmark in Figures 2013). Of course, overall living expenses are higher in Denmark than in Turkey, and the interviewees are able to support themselves on this income, but the difference is significant. Furthermore, once they leave the nation state of Denmark, these migrants are simply not entitled to the same amount or quality of services and security that are given to other retirees who remain within Danish borders. Especially for migrants who are obliged to pay taxes in Denmark, this lack of reciprocity may be difficult to digest. The migrants must purchase health insurance in their host countries; the wealthiest pay for private insurances, which give them access to international hospitals, while others join the Spanish or Turkish public health system. It should be noted that a large number of the migrants I interviewed decided to migrate because of their poor health, while supported by Danish social benefits. It is important to keep this in mind, because images of international retirement migrants should reflect a heterogeneous population: people with different social, educational and economic levels as well as different health conditions.

Those migrants who are less affluent have to use the public health system

in their host countries, which means they must adapt to languages and health practices/traditions that are different than in Denmark (see also Woube 2013). For instance, as part of the Danish public health system, patients are eligible to receive professional care, but in countries like Spain and Turkey, family members usually care for ill people (either at home or in hospital). If the ill migrants do not have family living nearby, this difference can put them at risk, and – compared to the care options for Danes living in Denmark – the discrepancy is significant.

Because Turkey is a newer migration destination, the migrants I interviewed had not yet encountered specific illness trajectories that involved local health and care services. In Spain, however, I met several people who had such experiences. One woman had been in a Spanish nursing home but had to leave, because she did not understand the language spoken, and she shared a room with a violent woman suffering from dementia.<sup>21</sup> Another woman re-migrated from Spain because she became blind and could not take care of herself. Although she had a son in Denmark, she had no friends there; when I spoke with her on the phone after her re-migration, she said she felt like she was in “no man’s land”.<sup>22</sup> These are only a few of the stories resulting from the ethnography from Costa del Sol, and they are presented here in order to provide perspective on the risks created by the health and living situations in a particular host country – risks that may also affect migrants in other locations.

## Transnational health promotion

In this study, I want to elucidate the convergences between health migration – which, in practice, can include all age groups as long as they are ill or disabled in some way – and international retirement migration, which traditionally represents migrants in later life who tend to suffer from a variety of ailments. It is important to consider the variety of the people included in these groups, since migrants can be ill or healthy as well as

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<sup>21</sup> Even for migrants who speak Spanish, their language skills may disappear at the outset of dementia.

<sup>22</sup> In this case, we had planned an interview after the woman’s return to Denmark, but because she felt so confused and out of control, she cancelled the interview.

more or less affluent – and of all ages. What they have in common is the fact that they benefit from living in warmer climates and apart from their Danish pensions, they are not entitled to welfare-state benefits from Denmark, such as health or care services – regardless of whether they pay taxes to the Danish state. Younger retirees who receive disability pensions are more likely to encounter financial insecurity when they grow older, since they will only receive a part of the basic public age-defined pension provided by the Danish state.

I have included both (age) groups in this study in order to bring attention to the similar practices of coping with their own health, which is represented by these migrants. Their practices can be ascribed to transnational social fields, and it is worth emphasising the mutual benefits that the migrants and their home countries receive. Migrants move to warmer places to alleviate their health conditions; according to them, they also improve their quality of life. In turn, this may help to reduce the demand on health services and social benefits in Denmark – a national economic benefit resulting from what could be termed a transnational field of health promotion. This concept points to the phenomenon of citizens, from various nation states, who transgress borders in order to enhance their health situation and quality of life, while they are adapting to the post-societal agenda of the world.

On the one hand, this is rendered possible by the Danish policies that allow pensions to be available to those living abroad. On the other hand, the migration policies in general create various hindrances to such health promotion (among other things) because opportunities for health migration vary depending on a person's financial capital. Wealthy (upper class) people are favoured in Danish migration policies, and some of them even choose to hire housekeepers and private caregivers while living abroad; the (upper-) middle-class migrants may return to the property they own in Denmark or eventually buy a new home there, so that they are eligible to receive health and care services. But the less affluent – and those who are dependent on social benefits because of an illness or disability – do not have these options.

The people whose health benefits the most from migrating are those who encounter the least convenient conditions to do so, and they have no

choice but to accept the strict Danish national policies for migration. Their experiences with the Danish authorities illustrate the complexity and incongruence of policies that make it difficult for retirees to become health migrants. The migrant experience of breaking with the normative life course (in a national context) has been coined a hybridity (Torres 2006), and this hybridity constitutes a challenge to elements of unrecognised citizenship. The effect may be new forms of social exclusion (Phillipson & Ahmed 2006). Furthermore, their experiences from below attest to the fact that the complexity of migration legislation prevents the practice of a consistent migration policy nationwide.

One might expect that such a transnational field of health promotion would be applauded by Denmark and that it would be encouraged within Danish migration policies. Sociologist Peter Kivisto claims that homeland governments are starting to acknowledge the benefits of having retirees live abroad and to create mutually beneficial relationships (Kivisto 2001). However, as seen from above, the Danish policies reflect the preferential treatment given to affluent migrants: For people with more financial assets, many of the national rules related to residency, public health services and tax policies are simply easier to follow. Furthermore (or perhaps thereby), these policies reflect aspects of control, scepticism and even suspicion. The political demands for time-limited allowances to stay abroad and strict, bureaucratic control in relation to spatio-national residence – plus the denial of access to Danish benefits while living abroad – indicate connotations of a critical attitude towards emigrants; it is as if they were all rich and maybe trying to abuse the Danish welfare system. The policies do not seem to reflect the fact that people who are not very affluent or independent, but who are – conversely – ill and dependent on social pensions might also engage in and benefit from migration.

When studying the Danish state and its relationship to migrants, it becomes clear that these policies are ultimately based on “methodological nationalism”: an assumption that the nation state is the natural social and political form of the modern world (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). This means that the transnational field of health promotion, practiced from below, is not matched with the Danish migration policies from above. This may impede a productive approach to both health migration and migrants

who are coping with their health.

In effect, these policies create an inequality in social status and health among the retired health migrants; this could be claimed to be incommensurate with the universalist and social-democratic political regime that has been predominant in Danish politics throughout the 20th century. When leaving their home country, Danish retired migrants are excluded by a political system that favours decommodification and intentions of equality, and they are forced to enter a more liberal space represented by individual responsibility.

This problem is not only Danish, but also applies to the European Union, of which Denmark is a member state. The original intention of the European Market is claimed in the declaration for the rights for citizens and commodities to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. However, as law scholar and social scientist Ackers & Dwyer (2004) have shown, these ideals are primarily realised regarding working men in younger and middle ages, inferring that the legislation does not affect (or support) the lives of economically inactive persons. For such groups as retired migrants, the policy seems contradictory, compared with the ideals impeding their mobility and transnational residency rights. Not even in the EU, but on a global level, it has been observed that nation states seem to respond to transnational challenges in ways that are distinctly national (Mulcahy 2011). In a Danish context, this seems to imply that retirees are encouraged either to practice (and pay for) health promotion independently if it involves migration, or to stay within the borders in their home country.

When John Urry called for a post-societal agenda, he criticised sociological literature for failing to “recognise geographical intersections of region, city and place, with the social categories of class, gender, and ethnicity” (Urry 2000: 186). In fact, Urry “forgot” one important category here, namely “age”; an omission which is common in much sociological literature (Bozic 2006). Cases like those described in this article, illustrate that phenomena related to old age and elderly people may initially reveal perspectives not previously considered; these aspects are either ignored or considered in rather normative terms. Since old age is not often related to mobility (Nilsson 2013), complexities regarding retired migrants have not

been met with much consideration in Danish policies yet. However, the case of retired migrants in effect designates a more general challenge to the welfare state policies that needs to be addressed.

Policies rooted in practical nationalism are revealed in this case. The critical question is whether a distinction between two kinds of citizens – based on their geographical positions in a spatio-national context – is relevant in a post-societal world. The consequences of such a distinction are bifurcated. Firstly, it contributes to an unequal distribution of welfare benefits and obligations, which harms the weaker part of the population. Secondly, the mutual benefits of transnational fields of health promotion from below are discouraged by the form of nationalism practiced from above. With an increase in mobility among all age groups, it may be necessary to establish criteria – other than place of residence – that entitle all citizens to be full and equal members of the Danish welfare state. Furthermore, this analysis suggests that transnational health promotion is a field that could be supported and even be encouraged, because it might be economically beneficial for the nation state.

## Nationalism and health

Danish policies regarding the migration of retired Danes seem to favour affluent people, providing them with better legal options for migration. However, all migrants abroad are excluded from access to various benefits of the welfare state that are available to citizens living within Danish borders. The policies are based on a homogenous image of “an affluent, retired migrant” and, as I have presented here, connotations implying scepticism and control.

The from below perspective of Danish migrants in Spain and Turkey has prompted me to suggest the term “transnational health promotion” because many of these people can be considered health migrants, trying to improve their health and quality of life by virtue of migration; perhaps even avoiding certain costs related to health treatments in Denmark. However, some of them have an income that is significantly lower than the average income of Danes living in Denmark, and they may be at risk due to their future need for health and care services. In this context, the con-

notations of retired migrants as affluent and autonomous – as Danish migration policies represent – may seem paradoxical.

With their migration to warmer climates, retired Danes challenge the idea of citizenship in a Danish national context; their mobility illuminates certain asymmetries with regard to Danish citizens' access to health services and other welfare benefits. These services and benefits were originally intended to be a provision under a universalist welfare-state model, which values equal rights and decommodification for all citizens. But in the case of Danish migrants – especially those who are ill – the distinctions for territorial residence indicate that citizenship rights are primarily distributed based on spatio-national demarcations; hence, an effective practice of nationalism in Danish migration policies is also illuminated. As they enact their mobile lives in a post-societal world, these migrants challenge the principles of the Danish welfare state as well as long-held ideas about territorial stability. Furthermore, the practiced ignorance of transnational health promotion may imply a loss of possible economical assets for the Danish welfare state.

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# Mobilities of the Third Age

*Deane Simpson*

This chapter touches upon the emergence of experimental spatial formats of mobility in relation to emerging social-demographic conditions – in particular the expanded functional mobility associated with the group known as the Third Age or Young-Old. The content will address related themes to those presented in the Nordic examples in this volume – addressing a wider group of international examples that provide a wider framing of the implications of seniors on the move. Three examples chosen for their illustrative quality will be presented here: the urbanizaciones of Costa del Sol, Spain, the coastal region known as “the retirement home of Europe”; The Villages of Florida, the world’s largest retirement community; and the nomadic senior recreational vehicle (RV) community of the United States. In a range of ways, the socio-spatial formats of mobility-based practices tied to these examples fundamentally challenge conventional formats and notions associated with sedentary architecture and urbanism such as site, context, place, identity and spatial and temporal authenticity.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> A common distinction is made in this chapter between the terms “architecture” and “urbanism”. Architecture refers to the phenomena of singular designed buildings; while urbanism addresses the designed relations between multiple buildings (including the patterns or “built fabric” they produce collectively), landscape (including public space and other forms of space between buildings), and infrastructure (such as roads, water supply systems etc.). Urbanism tends toward a larger scale than architecture – for example at the scale of public space, quarter/neighbourhood, town/city. In the context of the distributed forms of settlement that have become increasingly common in the US and Europe in the last half-century, the term urbanism does not necessarily only refer to the city itself, or to

## Introduction

Methodologically, this study is based predominantly upon empirical documentation and analysis of these settings. Carried out in the period between 2005 and 2011, fieldwork has included interviews with residents, developers, and a range of related actors; site recordings leading to the production of documentary material such as isometric urban texture drawings, photography, diagrams and maps. This work has been conducted in parallel with expert interviews, literature studies and so on.

To date, the implications of population aging within architectural and urban discourse have been addressed largely through an undifferentiated conception of old-age that has focused on the limitations of the Older-Old through the paradigms of “care”, “accessibility” and “universal design” – and with the corresponding concentrated or distributed spatial formats for the elderly (e.g., Perkins et al. 2004; Feddersen 2009; Anderzhon et al. 2012).

The alternative starting point for the wider research this chapter touches upon is the differentiated conception of the elderly developed by the American gerontologist Bernice Neugarten (who articulates a distinction between the Young-Old and Old-Old) (Neugarten 1974), and later by British social historian Peter Laslett (between the Third and Fourth Ages) (Laslett 1989) – which is employed here to identify and frame the emergence of architectural and urban mutations provided by, for, and as a result of that particular social group. Laslett frames the Third Age as both a historical moment and a phase of life. As a historical moment, he outlines

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the density typically attributed to the city, but may refer to various collective patterns of settlement at lower densities. In these terms it may be used to describe attributes associated with the city such as high levels of infrastructure, service access, connectivity, etc. This distinction between architecture and urbanism is relevant to a general argument in this author's related research (e.g.: Simpson 2012) i.e.: that with the emergence of the Young-Old one can see a corresponding diversification from general architectural scale responses of “housing the old” (the institution, the retirement home, the multi-generational household, etc.) to urban scale responses addressing the Young-Old (entire enclaves, neighbourhoods or towns, such as urbanizaciones/Sun City/The Villages; urban territories such as Costa del Sol; or patterns of large scale urban activity, such as the distributed network of the RV community spread at different levels of density across the entire US.)

the coincidence of the demographics of extended longevity and the domination of retirement as an institution – a key moment he identifies as the mid-point of the twentieth century in the more developed countries (Laslett 1989:79).

In these terms, the prevalent notion of “old-age” bifurcates between an ailing and dependent Fourth Age (Old-Old) and a new and rapidly expanding population of healthy and independent Third Age (Young-Old). The Third Age manifests a relatively new form of leisure class distinct from those previously framed by theorists such as Thorstein Veblen (1899) and Dean MacCannell (1976) – characterised as both a mass phenomenon (in contrast to Veblen’s moneyed class), and as a permanent condition (in contrast to MacCannell’s tourist). As a phase of life, the Third Age is described as a period of late freedom – characterised by liberation from the responsibilities of childhood, including education and socialisation; freedom from the responsibilities associated with adulthood such as work and childcare; and freedom from the physical and mental disabilities associated with traditional old-age (Laslett 1989).

These freedoms extend to liberation from the sedentary constraints of those phases of life – enabling specific mobility potentials. Such freedoms to construct a utopian lifestyle transpire amidst a startling lack of existing protocols and precedents that might direct how and where individuals or groups might live in this new, historically unprecedented phase of life. The Third Age, therefore, by definition emerges as an experimental field for alternate forms of subjectivity and collectivity, and alternate spatial practices.

The experimental arrangements explored here stand in contrast to the dominant pre-existing socio-spatial formats for the elderly, reacting in turn to the perceived limitations associated with them – presented in different contexts as an alternative to the perceived propinquity and lack of privacy of the extended family home, to the impersonal and institutionalised stigma of the nursing home and to the burdensome maintenance and social isolation of the “empty nest” (Hunt et al, 1984; Golant, 1985; Pastalan, 1989; Counts et al, 1996; Stroud, 2001; D’Eramo, 2007). Similarly, these emerging urban formats may be characterised by their realisation of various registers of mobility, in contrast to the relative stasis attached to the

multi-generational household, institutionalised care, or aging in place.

It is proposed here to frame these recurring mobility formats according to three different categories: firstly as a more general form of infrastructure for individuals and collective groups that have consciously chosen to move to new contexts to improve their life conditions; secondly, and more specifically as a form of architecture or urbanism itself literally “on the move” as physically mobile objects or elements; and thirdly, as architecture or urbanism that operates itself as a form of media. The latter category refers to Marc Augé’s (1995:16) concept of a contemporary “excess of space,” which refers not only to the concept of the increasingly mobile individual – but also to the fact that “space/place itself is mobile, [...] becom[ing] a form of media.” Many of the sites described below occupy more than one of these categories.

With their climatic positioning in the world these sites could be defined collectively as solar utopia. Spanish architect Juan Palop-Casado (LPA 2009:9) has described a zone of such favourable climatic sites around the globe as the “geometry of paradise” – effectively two sub-tropical “corridors of good weather” that contain “a unique reserve of energies, economies, technologies, geographies, lifestyles, biology, times and places.”<sup>24</sup> These corridors increasingly function as sites of overlap between the geography of tourism and that of retirement migration – emphasised by the fact that all of the examples presented here are located within these corri-

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<sup>24</sup> LPA (Juan Palop-Casado), *Urban-Photosynthesis: Projects and Works by Laboratory for Planning and Architecture 2002-2009* (Las Palmas: LPA, 2009), 9. “In 1996 the Climatology Department of Syracuse University (USA) concluded that Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is the city with the best climate in the world. At a time when the word “climate” is always accompanied by bad news (climate change, greenhouse effect, sea level rise, etc...), we could not help to react to this good news... and ask: what does this mean for architecture and urbanism? [...] Since then we have had the “hidden agenda” or “conscious distraction” as the theme of good weather in each of the projects we have worked on. In parallel to professional work, we have also developed research to define the overall scale of the phenomenon: the two sub-tropical bands that go along the planet. Projects and research work, have enabled us to discover that this climatic condition contains a unique reserve of energies, economies, technologies, geographies, lifestyles, biology, times and places that are worth to decoding and spatially re-encoding again.”



dors.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, there are obvious parallels with the phenomenon of retirement migration in the United States centred on Florida and Arizona, reinforcing the increasing attractiveness of climate in relation to traditional institutions that maintained older persons in the places they had previously lived – in particular, the long-term proximity of family members, friends and broader social and functional networks. While both the American and European forms of retirement migration are common in their characteristic of moving large distances to experience more favourable climatic conditions and lower costs of living, the primary difference in the European case involves the crossing of national cultural and linguistic borders.<sup>26</sup>

## Costa del Sol

Just as Florida and Arizona define a migratory territory for American retirees, Spain's Costa del Sol and Costa Blanca have functioned historically as the corresponding migratory site for the seniors in Europe. Costa del Sol rather than Costa Blanca will be focused upon here based on fieldwork conducted there in 2009. Commonly referred to as "Europe's retirement home", Costa del Sol in particular has attracted hundreds of thousands of retirees particularly since the 1980s from northern and western European nations such as the Nordic countries as represented in this volume.<sup>27</sup>

While existing urban literature largely focuses upon the phenomenon of Costa del Sol in terms of a seasonal time-sharing logic between tourists, retirement migrants and "indigenous" residents (e.g., MVRDV 2000; Portela 2004); the focus here is the organization of the various constituents according to the coexistence of three spatial ecologies as encapsulated in

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<sup>25</sup> It is also necessary to mention that the attractiveness of these climatically favourable destinations is often enhanced by low living costs.

<sup>26</sup> The exact scale of this migratory phenomenon has been particularly difficult to quantify as it consists of a "veiled population" of predominantly unregistered foreign residents. The term "veiled population" has been used by José Maria Romero to describe this phenomenon.

<sup>27</sup> The term "Retirement Home of Europe" came up frequently during expert interviews, and interviews with residents along Costa del Sol.

what is known as the *Guia Oficial*<sup>28</sup> map of *Costa del Sol Urbanizaciones* (Producciones GeoGraphic 2009). Consisting of the historical towns, tourist resorts, and urbanizaciones, this arrangement registers the progressive historical and programmatic transformations of the Spanish coast during the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the central role the second ecology – the broad touristic infrastructure that developed from the 1960s and 1970s – plays in supporting permanent leisure populations of foreign retirement migrants.

Dominated by the latter population segment the urbanizaciones have emerged as the ascendant ecology in spatial and programmatic terms. Filling in or “silting up” the developable and accessible territory between the historical fishing villages and tourist resorts, several hundred residential urbanizaciones have formed a near-continuous linear carpet of urban substance stretching along more than 150km of the coast roughly between the settlements of Estepona and Nerja. This urban system supports a considerable population of seniors through a vast leisure infrastructure. Collectively, the urbanizaciones do not contribute to a coherent connective urban fabric, but rather to a field of disjointed entities that are distinct from much of their surroundings in both organisational and cultural terms.

Anthropologists such as Karen O’Reilly (2000) argue that the phenomenon of international retirement migration taking place on Costa del Sol produces a form of subjectivity “betwixt” two cultures and locations. Furthermore, it can be suggested that the urbanizaciones themselves represent a hybrid lodged in the gap between the vacation resort and the

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29 The standard urbanizacion is built by one developer or general contractor and consists of between a dozen and several hundred free-standing, semi-detached or terraced owner-occupied dwellings. Most urbanizaciones share communal facilities such as swimming pools, garden areas and sometimes golf courses and are often populated by concentrations of residents of a single nationality. For a detailed framing of Spanish urbanizaciones, see Andreas Huber, “Retirement Settlements in the Spanish Coastal Regions: a New Kind of Non-place?” (unpublished article, 2004).

gated community; and between the Andalusian pueblo and the colonial outpost.<sup>30</sup>

Just as touristic infrastructure is highly suitable for retirement migration at a regional scale, it is at the urban scale of the individual urbanizaciones themselves that the organisational and programmatic framework of the foreign vacation resort is an important influence. The urbanizaciones represent a mutation of the temporary typology of the leisure resort toward full-time leisure use based on the logic of “the vacation that never ends” – producing private forms of social space through an array of pseudo-communal leisure infrastructures such as golf courses, swimming pools, and bars. These are typically arranged within a demarcated perimeter of national occupation, defining a world distinct from the local contexts around them. The distinct environment of the resort engages in a dialogue between local and global conditions, articulating the exotic local destination (Spain) to the (Finnish, for example) visitor/resident, whilst at the same time operating according to familiar converging international protocols.

The promoted retirement lifestyles associated with these offers most resemble package holiday products, in terms of the tropes of desire they employ, and in terms of the formulation of a product capable of collapsing the exoticism of a foreign destination and the familiarity of home into a single space. Within the context of the vacation resort, the iconography of this “exotic” context typically operates as a form of applique to the sub-structure of the generic shell. The expansion of these approaches into environments for retirement migration has seen the increasing application of theming techniques from the worlds of the entertainment-industrial complex and representational post-modernism.

At the architectural scale this is often manifested through a representational, and to a lesser extent, programmatic schism between the interior and exterior of the building. Consider for example an elaborate Irish pub interior, with its menu, bar offers, activities, customs, and curated objects,

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<sup>30</sup> The term “gated community” refers to residential communities with security measures that include guarded entrance gates and in many cases perimeter walls or fences. This typology has become especially common in the United States since the 1980s. They are referred to here with particular reference to their development by a single developer, the shared facilities that are not uncommon, and the coherent urban identity that is typical.

and a Mediterranean Village style exterior – known in local real estate parlance as P.M. or Pueblo Mediterraneo style – characterised by vertical surfaces of white, beige or earth-toned stucco, deep walls and openings, and clay tiled roofs modelled to a certain extent the iconic hillside village of Mijas. Such a schizophrenic architectural format organises the gap between the exotic (local) and the familiar (faraway) less through negotiation or curation than through a form of topological nesting that interfaces at the meeting points of the interior and exterior – in particular at the location of door and window frames.

At a larger scale – that of the wider transnational context – the urbanizaciones of Costa del Sol function as spatial products with the mobility and reproducibility of neo-colonial formats such as the fort. Keller Easterling's term "spatial product" (Easterling 2005) refers to environments produced less according to the established tools of planning and design such as prescriptions of figure-ground relations, or public-private space – than by an abstract calculus such as currency exchange rates, retirement eligibility rules and inter-governmental immigration regulations. In other words, these formats of spatial organisation are to a large extent the product of what is commonly referred to as the market and its interface with state actors, although they are a function of a wider set of influences. Such an organisational calculus is central to framing the potential attractiveness of such urban habitats.

In these terms, the urbanizaciones may be defined as the product of an aggregation of several variables including: a) the specific characteristics of the territory in terms of favourable air and water temperatures, humidity, and sunshine hours per year; b) low relative living expenses; c) low relative cost of land and property; d) low tax rates; e) limited legal and institutional barriers to retirement migration; f) portability of pension and healthcare entitlements across borders; g) a high level of local, regional and global transport connectivity; and so forth. The ease of the possible redeployment of urbanization protocols is evidenced by their rapid emergence in territories such as Greece and the Balkans based upon changes in variables such as currency values, land prices and the expanding borders of regional alliances – and the more recent corresponding contraction in the property market on Costa del Sol.

## The Villages

Located northwest of Orlando, The Villages of Florida has expanded rapidly since its renaming in 1989, to become the largest single-site retirement community in the world. With a population just over 94,000 inhabitants as of 2012 – and an anticipated built-out population of over 110,000, The Villages offers an extensive and intensive lifestyle-product within the framework of a “vacation that never ends”. This program of hyper-activity artfully combines busy-ness (associated with the meaningful roles of the Second Age) and vigorous play (associated with the fun of the First Age).

With Florida’s favourable climatic conditions, lower land prices, tax rates and cost of living, the state has an extended history from the early to middle of the twentieth century of attracting both north-south tourism and retirement migration – developing the reputation of the “retirement home of America”. While statistics of the former home states of retirement migrants moving to The Villages are not made public by the developer, the composition of clubs at The Villages, and figures from similar communities, indicate residents’ of predominantly mid-western, and to a lesser extent (north-)east coast, origin.

As is the case with Costa del Sol, the mobile nature of the migratory inhabitants is matched by a similarly mobile architecture which may be understood to function as a form of media – mobile in this case in both spatial and temporal terms. Envisioned by its founders and developers as a “Disney World for Active Retirees” (Morse 2007), The Villages represents an application of the logics of the entertainment-industrial complex to the previously established post-war model of the American retirement community. Central to this project is the conception of the total territory as a comprehensively themed environment designed by a former designer of Orlando’s Universal Studios theme park. The theme uniting the project is the ubiquitous slogan “Florida’s Friendliest Home Town” – further emphasised in promotional material through expressions such as “small town charm” and “friendly neighbours”. Referring to the town in which one grew up and spent one’s childhood and youth, the notion of “hometown” in an American context would have different associations for different cohorts.

## MOBILITIES OF THE THIRD AGE

For a large proportion of the current cohort of American retirees who grew up in a considerably less urban United States than their grandchildren, they would have spent the majority of their adult lives in suburbia – but the hometown would more likely be a small town (US Census Bureau 2008). This aligns with the description by Gary Morse, CEO and President of The Villages, of the majority of residents as “small town people.” He writes: “We would not want to retire to a big city. So we decided to develop a series of 3 small towns just like the small town we grew up in. There was another small town up the road a few miles in each direction” (Morse 2007).

The theming of the “hometown” has a longer history with Walt Disney’s “Main Street USA” in the original Disneyland, later replicated in the “Magic Kingdoms” of all other Disney parks around the globe. According to sociologist Mark Gottdiener, Disney “...sought to recapture memories of his own youth by designing a space containing the fantasies of this childhood, including a recreation of the type of small Midwestern town where he grew up”, referring to Marceline, Missouri, a rural town of approximately 3,000 inhabitants (Gottdiener 2001:121). According to Disney, this would produce a form of temporal rupture from the present: “For those of us who remember the carefree time it recreates, Main Street will bring back happy memories” (Caroselli 2004:85).

The architectural and urban design of The Villages’ three downtowns in particular – built from the mid-1990s – is directed toward producing the image of generic small-town America from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, at the same time being inspired by the atmospheres and qualities of historical “native Floridian” towns such as St Augustine, Key West, and Arcadia (Mark 2008). Here theming contributes towards a wide-ranging environment of nostalgia spanning urban spaces, landscape, architecture and objects as well as a complete series of nostalgic programmatic offerings such as “hometown parades” and classic car “cruise-ins”.

Such temporal discontinuity in The Villages can be seen as an extension of a discontinuous temporal logic that prescribes the demographic makeup of the inhabitants themselves. Limited to those over-55 years of age, residents are displaced from conventional relational adjacencies to the young, and therefore are not constantly reminded of being old – or of getting

“older”.<sup>31</sup> This is tied to the intended effect of the town square as described by The Villages designer Gary Mark:

...a lot of our demographic, the people that move here, come from small towns, and a lot of small towns had a town square... ..where people meet, [where] they can be seen, [where] they can watch. [In] our town squares there’s entertainment there every night and it’s the hub... for our community. People go there and they dance at night, they shop, they eat, they watch, they drink, they have a good time. So, we wanted a downtown because to us, for our residents... for them it was a memory flashback to their childhood, or their bringing up, of the old-days. (Mark 2008)

In these terms The Villages performs both a spatial and temporal displacement, “transporting” residents to the location of their “hometown”, and to the time of their youth. This in turn suggests an alternate and more precise performative role for architecture and urban settings to that typically categorized as “representational post-modernism”.

The development of The Villages as such a large-scale destination for a relatively similar segment of retirement migrants generates a certain critical mass for tailored urban formats addressing a particular demographic group. For example, The Villages has developed a novel system of infrastructure designed for golf carts, incorporating pathways, tunnels, bridges and parking spaces. Allowing access to almost the entire ground plane, it produces a form of smooth vehicular space connecting the community. As the golf cart does not require a driver’s license to operate, it presents a viable mode of transport, bridging between the automobile on one hand, and the mobility scooter or wheelchair on the other. Similarly, The Villages presents a mutation of the conventional American strip mall typology. According to the requirements of the community, the strip operates not as a retail boulevard but as a hospital ensemble composed of dispersed clinics addressing various ailments and body parts. In doing so, this arrangement challenges – through diffusion – the negative associations attached to the image of the hospital as singular institutional mega-building.

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<sup>31</sup> A common response when asking residents how old they feel is: “I don’t feel old, I feel just like I did when I was a teenager.”

## RV community

The senior recreation vehicle community in the United States perhaps represents the most literal form of mobile architecture and urbanism of the Young-Old. While little in the way of official statistics pin down the quantity of this community, it has been conservatively estimated to number between two and three million retirees (Counts & Counts 1996:15). Motivated, according to the Canadian anthropologists Counts and Counts (1996), by the three-part maxim of “freedom, independence and adventure,” the lifestyle is associated with the rejection of sedentary homes and lifestyles for a year-round nomadic life “on the road.”

The senior RV community operates at the intersection of two large-scale infrastructures: one, the physical network of the US interstate and road system, incorporating formal and informal campsites and overnight camping areas; the other, the internet-based social networks accessible from any remote parked location with the use of an RV mounted satellite dish and a view of the southern sky. Hundreds of online clubs have emerged in recent years as the dominant staging area for the larger RV community, ranging in scale from a million members to small sub-cultures of a dozen or so individuals, and ranging from the generic Escapees or Good Sam Clubs to the more specialized RV Swingers Club or Loners on Wheels singles club. In tandem, these infrastructures produce a coherent urban field that is as densely connected socially as it can be sparse spatially. As a networked field, it is capable of being realized at a variety of spatial densities: from instant-cities of hundreds of thousands of RVers in the Arizona desert, to lone RVs in remote wilderness maintaining internet access and skyping daily with fellow RVers and family members.

The practices that define the phenomenon of the senior RVing play out at an architectural scale through a form of “compensatory domesticity”. The adoption of such a lifestyle necessitates in most cases a radical down-sizing of the quantity and scale of individual material possessions. The material fact of reducing the floor area of one’s former domestic space by a factor of between four and ten is described in an anthropological account of RVing as both traumatic and emancipatory (Counts & Counts 1996). Such an event may be framed in terms of a severing of one’s connection to



the sedentary ground of the suburban home within and around which the majority of RVers have spent their entire lives up to that point. As a result, the notion of “Home” transforms into a composite construct consisting of the recreational vehicle as a constant and stable figure, situated on a variable and unstable ground of temporary and often squatted occupations of public and private property. This process of uprooting the domestic home typically leads, in the case of RVers, to exaggerated homemaking practices aimed toward compensating for the potential emotional threat associated with homelessness and homesickness. These practices may be observed both in the interior and on the exterior of the vehicle.

Within the RV interior, for example, a form of hyper-domesticity more fitting to the suburban ranch house than a moving vehicle can be observed. Due to the obvious volumetric and weight limitations, this is often achieved with a remarkable efficiency of materials. The layout and designated functions of the familiar domestic “rooms” of the American middle-class home are both miniaturized and amplified, as is its most recognizable materiality and colour palette. Familiar domestic elements include the carpets, tiles and upholstery fabric of the “living room”, the stained oak or mahogany wood panelled cabinets of the “kitchen”, as well as common interior ornaments such as cushions, flowers and small tchotchkes that are stowed during periods of driving and refurnished upon parking. Such arrangements translate into the construction of an RV domesticity closer to the logic of the “moving home” than the “homely vehicle”.

The production of such a familiar and intensified image of domesticity within the interior is reflected in the immediate external surroundings of the RV. This space is often organized according to the structuring of the typical suburban domestic landscape through the articulation of semi-private, semi-public and public spaces. Within this schema, the positioning of the RV in relation to existing site characteristics and constraints such as trees, sun orientation and other vehicles, as well as the placement of particular objects and furniture are critical. Most RVs have a retractable awning that can be extended to produce a space mimicking the domestic veranda, a semi-private space that is often reinforced through the placement of an additional ground surface. Green artificial turf is most commonly used for this – mimicking the domestic lawn – to which is often

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added a “welcome” doormat, foldable tables and chairs. Additional items such as barbecues, temporary fireplaces, potted plants, exercise equipment, and a remarkable variety of garden ornaments such as whirligigs, neon palm trees and garden gnomes both personalize and demarcate the exterior domesticated space of the “home”. This reaches its most vivid form in the outdoor placement of deckchairs under the extended awnings of RVs parked in Walmart parking lots.

A variety of RV formations are legible from the air above informal camping areas – from rectangular courtyard houses to circular club corrals to more sparse equidistant arrangements producing instant suburban settlements. These formations define a range of spaces between vehicles that are often used for communal purposes. The social practices and events that take place there can include camp-fires, sing-alongs, pot-luck dinner, bake-offs and dances. Perhaps the most common of these activities is the pot-luck dinner, a form of social interaction that coincides with some of the primary limitations of the recreational vehicle: a kitchen large enough to cook for more than four or six guests, and enough plates and cutlery to service a larger group. Such an arrangement involves tactical practices on the part of RVers in which the timing of one’s first serving is critical, along with the size of tray one is armed with.

For many RVers, the ethos of these RVing practices resonates with those of the 19th century pioneers of the American west. Rather than the westward expanding frontier of that period, Counts and Counts (1996) have described the contemporary RV community’s engagement with an interstitial frontier based on finding or filling gaps where urbanity has not yet manifested itself (in the traditional sense of the city) or where it is under-manifested. Such colonizing practices in the empty spaces of the Arizona desert or Walmart parking lots are updated to a situation that is based less on the survival instincts of migrants searching for opportunity in the west than on a nomadic impulse suitable to disciplining the boundless leisure time of the contemporary senior.

## The emergence of a new senior mobility

Mobility may be employed as one of the key emblems through which the Third-Age or Young-Old may be understood. What is suggested in this particular chapter is a similar central role for mobility in the conception of environments for the same social group – perhaps most evocatively represented in the literally mobile individual architecture and collective urbanism of the senior recreational-vehicle community in the United States. The deployment of forms of mobility in the Third Age such as these clearly points to a problematisation of notions such as “home”, “place”, and “spatial identity”. While the most literal mobility associated with the senior recreational-vehicle community represents one of the provisional categorizations of mobility introduced earlier in this article it is also relevant to return to the remaining two.

While articulating extreme conditions, the examples presented here also reinforce relatively generic characteristics of a form of mobility infrastructure for individuals and collective groups in the Third Age. Common to the cases of north-south retirement migration – whether from the northern to the southern states of the United States, or from the north to south of Europe – is the influence of pre-existing formats dedicated to short-term leisure such as the resort or theme park. Here, the mobility associated with the vacation, and its potential opportunities (in terms of climatic favourability, lower costs of living, abundant leisure activities and so forth) are adapted to a permanent utopian logic of retirement as “the vacation that never ends”. Architecture, urbanism, and what we refer to in broad terms as infrastructure, play an important role in programmatically supporting these efforts. This is reinforced for example by the intersection of a global solar utopia of climatically ideal tourist destinations, with the dominant international retirement destinations it inadvertently describes.

Just as the functional role of architecture and urbanism in supporting particular forms of mobility is outlined here, it is necessary to frame its corresponding performance as a form of mobile media – mobile in both spatial and temporal terms. This is nowhere more explicit than at The Villages of Florida where the ambition to create “a Disney World for active retirees” is constructed through representational environments that pro-

duce totalizing, enclosed and internally consistent worlds. These environments function not only in representational terms, but also as generators of specific performative effects. At The Villages, the themed environment and its activities are designed to spatially and temporally transport residents back to the idyllic hometown of their childhood – a voyage supported by the architecture, urban design, planning and landscaping.

The emergence of theming in contexts such as these invites many of the same critiques directed toward themed environments in general. While these critiques address aspects including the levels of closure, prescription, social exclusion and control which such environments enforce, as well as the degradation of cultural history and the critical capacity of utopia, there are also unexpected and interesting slippages which define these sites as experimental settings for the staging of alternate subjectivities. This is the result of the spatial and temporal rupture of theming, in combination with a transformed program and user (which is radically different from that of the “original” environment that is referred to), and extended inhabitation (which is beyond the period of the vacation or theme park visit). This allows residents at The Villages to position themselves in a temporal gap between youth and old age, or those at Costa del Sol to place themselves in a spatial gap between e.g. Denmark and Spain. According to residents there this presents an opportunity to construct alternate locales, age perceptions, identities and lifestyle realities – a practice that represents a simultaneously escapist and emancipatory project.

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1. Lysaght, Patricia (ed.) 2013. The Return of Traditional Food. Proceedings of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Ethnological Food Research Conference.
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3. Carlsson, Hanna 2013. Den nya stadens bibliotek. Om teknik, förnuft och känsla i gestaltningen av kunskaps- och upplevelsestadens folkbibliotek [Technology, Sense and Sensibility: Enacting the Public Library of the Knowledge- and Experience City].



