

Retirement migration and transnational lifestyles

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ABSTRACT

Research on international retirement migration has so far focused on quantitative measures of migration, migrants' wellbeing, reasons for migration and consequences of migration in the receiving areas, while paying scant attention to the transnational experiences of the migrants. Research on transnational forms of living, on the other hand, has largely ignored the life projects of retirees. This paper tries to bridge that gap, by investigating experiences of transnational mobility, multiple place attachment and cultural differences among Swedish retirees pursuing seasonal migration between Sweden and Spain. Qualitative interviews were made with 46 respondents who spent at least three months per year in each country. The analysis of the interviews produced three ideal-typical transnational lifestyles: translocal normality, multilocal adaptation and routinised sojourning. These lifestyles reflect different strategies for managing cultural difference, but also different forms and aspects of place attachment and different ideals of mobility.

KEY WORDS – retirement migration, lifestyle, mobility, place attachment, Spain, Sweden.

Introduction

This paper presents findings from an interview study with Swedish retirees who spend the summers in Sweden and the winters in Spain. The purpose was to examine the interviewees' views and experiences of dual residence, especially with regard to place attachment and mobility. The analysis showed that most respondents regarded as positive and desirable mobility between Sweden and Spain (but also mobility more generally), and also multiple place attachment (feeling 'at home' both in Sweden and in Spain). However, mobility as well as place attachment often meant different things to the respondents. I will suggest here that these different meanings were associated with

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different ways of managing cultural difference, and reflect different transnational lifestyles.

In much social science, mobility and transnational forms of life have been ignored or regarded with suspicion, as deviations from a norm of place-bound community, cultural homogeneity and social integration. More recently, globalisation and cosmopolitan ideals have brought about a set of opposite discourses, claiming that in important ways contemporary society is characterised by mobility (Bauman 1998; Castells 1996; Eade 1997; Hannerz 1996; Urry 2000). These latter accounts sometimes present mobility as a norm or as normality, and place attachment as a deviation or as resistance against contemporary globalising forces. In my view, neither place attachment nor mobility should be regarded as a priori better or more important than the other; on the contrary, empirical investigation and analysis of both, and of the relationship between them, may be crucial for understanding how people live and make sense of their lives in today's society (Gustafson 2001*b*).

Several social scientists have recently investigated transnationalism and mobile forms of life which question traditional bonds between people, place and culture. Research in this area has investigated, for example, the networks and life strategies of labour migrants (Pries 1999; Werbner 1999), the practices of global professional elites (Hannerz 1990, 1998), the narratives of refugees (Malkki 1992), the emergence of transnational diasporas (Cohen 1997), the multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of 'global cities' in the Western world (Eade 1997) and the cultural implications of tourism (Rojek and Urry 1997).

The international mobility of older persons, however, has so far received little attention in this kind of research, although many retirees in contemporary Western society have the resources required for extensive mobility and do, in some cases, develop innovative forms of transnationalism. As Warnes (1992: 181) points out, old age 'has been converted from a short "empty" period marred by ill-health and physical or mental incapacities, to a "third age" of life during which new social and recreational activities are pursued'. Increases in longevity and declining legal age of retirement during the past decades have produced large numbers of retirees, many of whom are in good health and enjoy high incomes from pension schemes and accumulated savings (Williams *et al.* 1997, 2000). In addition, today's retirees often have considerable experience of international mobility as professionals and/or as tourists. Their life projects, once they reach their 'third age', may involve frequent holidays abroad or other forms of international mobility (*cf.* Beck 2000: 72*f*; Kelly 1997; Ylänne-McEwen 1999: 420).

One expression of these trends is the growth, during the past few decades, of long-distance retirement migration. Increasingly, retirees choose to move, permanently or temporarily, to regions where they expect an improved quality of life during their old age (King *et al.* 1998). To date, most research on retirement migration has attempted to estimate the extent of migration flows and the size of expatriate populations, to explain the migrants' decision to migrate and their choice of destination, to describe the impact of retirement migration in the receiving areas, or to evaluate its consequences in terms of wellbeing for the migrants themselves (*e.g.* Day and Barlett 2000; Longino and Marshall 1990; McHugh and Mings 1994; Rodríguez *et al.* 1998; Williams *et al.* 1997, 2000). With O'Reilly's (2000) ethnographic study of British people on the Costa del Sol and some North American research (*e.g.* McHugh and Mings 1996) as important exceptions, less attention has been given to the migrants' experiences of mobility, to their dual and sometimes multiple place attachment, and to their strategies for managing cultural differences between their home countries and the countries to which they migrate. These latter issues will be examined here.

In the following sections, I summarise the phenomenon of Swedish retirement migration to Spain and briefly describe the method, sample and analytical procedures used in the present study. I then analyse my respondents' experiences and expressions of place attachment and mobility, and continue by considering the interplay between mobility, place attachment and cultural adaptation – using three interviewed couples to illustrate different 'transnational lifestyles'. Finally, I summarise my findings and discuss their implications.

Swedish retirement migration to Spain

Since its emergence on a large scale in the 1960s, tourism-induced retirement migration from northern Europe to the Mediterranean has become increasingly important, in terms of its scope as well as its consequences (King *et al.* 1998). This migration may involve substantial relocations of social and health care costs, as well as of purchasing power and other forms of economic activity (Williams *et al.* 1997). It may influence, favourably or adversely, the wellbeing of relatively large numbers of retirees (Warnes *et al.* 1999). The increasing flows of migrants also have socio-cultural and demographic consequences in the receiving areas (Casado-Diaz 1999; O'Reilly 2000).

The scope of international retirement migration is difficult to estimate. It is widely recognised that a large proportion of this kind of migration is unrecorded in official statistics (Williams *et al.* 1997; King *et al.* 1998), and there are also substantial definitional problems, as retirement migration is a highly diverse and flexible phenomenon. Some migrants settle permanently in the Mediterranean, whereas others maintain a residence in their home country to which they return more or less regularly and for longer or shorter periods of time (O'Reilly 2000; Williams *et al.* 2000). This flexibility, however, also makes retirement migration an interesting area of study with regard to experiences of mobility, place attachment and transnationalism.

The earliest and most significant flows of retirement migration to Spain have come from Britain and Germany but, since the 1960s, Swedish and other Scandinavian retirees have also settled in Spain in large numbers (Rising 1970; Svensson 1988). The warmer climate stands out as the most important reason for migration (*cf.* Warnes *et al.* 1999: 722), especially for those suffering from poor health (rheumatism, heart diseases, respiratory problems). Lower costs of living and lower taxes in Spain provide another important incentive and, once in Spain, many retirees have come to appreciate the social environment of the expatriate communities there (Källström 1997; Valdemarsson and Malmström-Valdemarsson 1989).

In the late 1990s, it is commonly estimated that over 40,000 Swedes, mostly retirees, have residences in Spain (see *e.g.* Gustafsson 1999; Westman 1999). Spanish population statistics however only recorded 8,548 Swedish citizens as residents in Spain at the end of 1999 (INE 2000). Many permanent residents probably avoid registration, but the very low number of Swedish immigrants reported in official statistics also suggests that many Swedes in Spain are 'winter residents' who maintain summer residences in Sweden. The largest groups of Swedish retirees live in the coastal areas of mainland Spain, but significant numbers also stay in the Balearic and Canary Islands. The survey made by Rodríguez *et al.* (1998) suggests that Scandinavian retirees in Spain are mostly upper middle-class and that many have been executives, senior managers, entrepreneurs, employers or professionals (*cf.* Törnberg 1999).

Although handbooks for Swedish migrants to Spain encourage retirees to learn Spanish and get acquainted with Spanish society, they also point out that migrants can in fact live their everyday lives largely within the Scandinavian communities (Källström 1997; *cf.* King *et al.* 1998). Swedish and Scandinavian clubs and associations flourish and organise a wide range of activities; they also often provide Swedish

newspapers and even small libraries with Swedish literature. In some areas, residents have access to locally-produced radio broadcasts and news magazines in Swedish, and may purchase goods and services from local companies with Swedish-speaking personnel (Hampshire 2000: 387–405). In addition, many Swedish expatriates in Spain have access to television and radio broadcasts transmitted from Sweden via satellite. Because of these extensive Swedish ‘infrastructures’, integration into Spanish society and adaptation to local ways of life become a matter of individual choice. Many Swedish retirees speak relatively little Spanish, live in housing areas dominated by expatriates and have limited contacts with the Spanish (*cf.* Jägerhorn 1996a, 1996b; Kubu 1997).

Sample and method

For the present study, semi-structured interviews of about two hours’ duration were made with 46 retirees: 22 married or cohabiting couples and two women living alone. Their ages ranged from 55 to 88 years. As the purpose was to examine transnationalism, mobility and multiple place attachment, the sampling was directed towards seasonal migrants who (except for one couple) had residences in both Sweden and Spain and who spent at least three months per year in each country. The interviewees were generally recruited through personal contacts and chain referral sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). They lived in different parts of southern and central Sweden; in Spain 19 of them lived on Gran Canaria and 27 in mainland Spain, primarily on the Costa del Sol.

The interviews were held during the summer season, usually in the Swedish homes of the respondents; the couples were interviewed together. The interviewees were asked to describe their experiences of living in two different countries, with some emphasis on their life in Spain. They were also asked why they had chosen this way of life, what Spain and Sweden meant to them, and where they felt at home. The interview transcripts were coded and analysed, using the NVivo software for qualitative data analysis (Kelle 1997; Richards 1999). The focus on place attachment and mobility, derived from earlier studies (Gustafson 2001b), provided a starting point for the analysis, whereas analytical themes emerging from the interviews came to play an increasingly important role as the analysis proceeded (*cf.* Layder 1998). As the sample was non-representative, the purpose was not to

make generalisations from sample to population, but to arrive at analytical themes and typologies that were theoretically relevant. The analysis of common patterns as well as of variation in the interviews was important in these efforts (*cf.* Flick 1998: 62–73; Miles and Huberman 1994: 27–31). The results were derived from the analysis of all the interviews; however, in a later section of this paper, three interviewed couples will be presented in some detail in order to illustrate different transnational lifestyles.

Mobility and place attachment

In their study of retirement migration from Britain to the Mediterranean, Williams *et al.* (2000: 38) found that most of their respondents lived some kind of ‘peripatetic life style’, moving between the Mediterranean and the UK. They also noticed ‘considerable variations in whether they identify the UK or the destination as their principal home, or whether they possess or experience genuine dual (and in a few instances, multiple) residences’. Thus, issues of mobility and place attachment seem to be crucial for understanding the lifestyles pursued by winter residents in Spain (*cf.* McHugh and Mings 1996), and these broad themes were used as an analytical starting point in the present study.

Ideals of mobility

Mobility – implying movement as well as the ability to move – was important in several ways to my interviewees. To begin with, they referred to many kinds of mobility: seasonal journeys between Sweden and Spain, other journeys abroad or within the two countries, short pleasure trips, daily walks and other forms of physical mobility in their everyday life. In the interviews, these forms of mobility were often expressed as closely interrelated aspects of the respondents’ way of life, and ‘being mobile’ was perceived as important and desirable. Further analysis, however, indicated that different respondents held different ideals of mobility: some rather modest, others more advanced. Some basic meanings of mobility were widely agreed upon; others were held only by those with advanced ideals of mobility.

When the respondents discussed the future, most of them said they would continue their seasonal migration to Spain as long as their health permitted, but would stay in Sweden in case of serious illness or the

death of a spouse. Thus, their journeys to Spain came to signify life and health, confirming that the respondents were still alive and well. Their everyday physical mobility, and their ability to live an active life in Spain, were often interwoven in these accounts, whereas immobility and inactivity were on several occasions explicitly associated with disease or death. Mobility and activity also implied avoidance of the boredom that the respondents felt was associated with an immobile life.

The accounts of mobility often also pointed at variation and newness. Moving between Sweden and Spain made life less monotonous; it brought along new experiences and new social contacts; it encouraged the retirees to see things from new perspectives and, in some cases, implied open-mindedness. However, respondents did not embrace those aspects of mobility to the same extent. Some were satisfied with the opportunity to spend the winters in a more friendly climate but maintained most of their 'Swedish' habits in Spain, whereas others fully enjoyed the cultural differences between the two countries.

The latter group sometimes also associated mobility with other personal qualities and abilities. Mobility might signify individual freedom and independence; several respondents pointed out that most people, even if they had the necessary economic resources, did *not* in fact go to Spain. Those people, the respondents argued, did not have the initiative and courage required for living that kind of life. As for themselves, these respondents might describe their seasonal migration in terms of imagination, curiosity, initiative and excitement. Winter residents, they argued, had the ability to overcome practical difficulties associated with their mobile way of life; they made use of the possibilities that life had to offer and were perhaps even somewhat adventurous.

Thus, in the accounts of my respondents, mobility was generally associated with life, health and activity; often also with variation and the avoidance of boredom. Those entertaining relatively *modest ideals of mobility* were satisfied with that, whereas several respondents also associated mobility with newness, new perspectives and sometimes open-mindedness. Those with more *advanced ideals of mobility* also associated the seasonal migration between Sweden and Spain, and mobility more generally, with imagination and freedom, initiative and courage, excitement and adventure.

Multiple place attachment

Although the seasonal migration between Sweden and Spain implied a mobile way of life, place attachment also turned out to be an important theme in the analysis of the interviews. The terms 'place' and 'place attachment' are used in a very general sense here. 'Place' implies a meaningful spatial unit and 'place attachment' represents people's affective, cognitive and behavioural bonds with one or several places (Altman and Low 1992). Places may be of different spatial scale (Canter 1997; Low and Altman 1992: 5); place attachment may thus involve feelings of being 'at home' in one's residence as well as identification with one's home country. Also, as Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992: 143) point out, place attachment 'is not a state but a process that continues throughout life', and it may even be the result of conscious personal efforts (Gustafson 2001a; McHugh and Mings 1996).

Even though most respondents described their bonds with Sweden as in some respects stronger than those with Spain, they usually felt at home in both countries and claimed that Spain as well as Sweden mattered a lot to them. The accounts of place attachment in Sweden and in Spain contained similarities as well as differences; they often involved the same general themes, whereas the specific content of these themes differed between the two countries and to some extent also between the interviewees.

As for Sweden, the interviewees' accounts reflected the fact that most of them were born there and had lived there for most of their lives. They often expressed place attachment with reference to continuity, stability and memories, and identified themselves as 'Swedish' and/or as inhabitants of a specific Swedish region or town. Sweden also gave them a sense of security and familiarity, not least because Swedish was their native language. Friends and relatives in Sweden (especially children and grandchildren) were another source of place attachment, and the respondents frequently pointed out the importance of keeping in touch with their Swedish acquaintances during the stays in Spain. Most of the respondents also associated place attachment with their house or apartment in Sweden; some had built or designed the house themselves, and some had lived there for a long time (adding to the theme of continuity). Finally, several interviewees were very much attached to Swedish traditions, Swedish nature and the seasonal changes in Sweden.

Thus, the respondents expressed their place attachment in Sweden in a number of ways (*cf.* Gustafson 2001a). Some referred primarily to

themselves – to their biographies, self-identifications and emotions. Some pointed to their social relations, friends and relatives, as an equally important part of their place attachment. Their own residence was another source of place attachment and, finally, some were attached more generally to ‘Swedish’ features: the language, culture and nature.

Interestingly, the same general themes often appeared in their accounts of place attachment in Spain, although with partly different content. As for individual biographies, some respondents pointed out that they had been in Spain for a long time whereas others, who had arrived in Spain more recently, sometimes presented the acquisition of a second home in Spain and the forging of roots there as a personal project aimed at giving meaning to their lives as retirees. As for identity, the winter residents generally did not identify themselves as ‘Spaniards’. They strongly resisted, however, being regarded as tourists; instead, the community of winter residents became an important point of reference for their identifications (Gustafson forthcoming). Place attachment in Spain was also associated with emotions, primarily physical wellbeing (because of the warm climate). As in Sweden, social relations were an important source of place attachment in Spain and, whereas most respondents had little contact with local Spanish populations, the Swedish communities often gave rise to dense social networks. Place attachment in Spain was also often associated with residence, as most respondents owned their Spanish house or flat. Also some respondents expressed attachment to Spain more generally, often with reference to Spanish mentality, culture and history.

Thus, although most respondents described their roots as deeper in Sweden than in Spain, they usually expressed an attachment to both countries and regarded such dual place attachment as positive and desirable. Indeed, those who had a summer house in Sweden, in addition to their ordinary residence there, might even consider themselves to have three different homes. Some respondents however diverged from this pattern of multiple place attachment, considering themselves to be at home in one country but only temporary visitors in the other. This orientation will be discussed later in this paper.

Among those who felt at home in both countries, the expressions of *multiple place attachment* differed in character. Some interviewees described their seasonal migration in terms of two different lives which they wanted to keep separate. They enjoyed cultural differences, made great efforts to learn Spanish, and were proud of their ability to deal with various, more or less trying, features of Spanish everyday life. In

these accounts, Spain and Spanishness were often described in positive terms; and even when the interviewees admitted that Spanish manners and customs might at times be frustrating, they argued that they, as foreigners, should accept them and do their best to adapt to them. Thus, an important aspect of their multiple place attachment was their ability to manage or adapt to *difference*. Other respondents claimed that they were living the same life in Spain as in Sweden. They maintained Swedish habits during their stays in Spain, lived their life in Spain almost exclusively within the Swedish communities, and felt at home largely because they were able to pursue a Swedish way of life: they expressed multiple place attachment in terms of *similarity* rather than difference. This difference/similarity distinction does not signify two distinct categories of respondents, but rather forms a continuum.

Transnational lifestyles

Thus, mobility and place attachment meant different things and were experienced and expressed differently by the respondents. Their accounts of their life in Spain also differed greatly with regard to Swedish and Spanish influences and to views of cultural difference. In this section I explore these issues further, and argue that different expressions of place attachment and mobility are associated with different ways of managing cultural differences between Sweden and Spain, and hence reflect different transnational lifestyles.

Three such lifestyles were identified in the analysis – translocal normality, multilocal adaptation and routinised sojourning. They will be presented below with three of the interviewed couples as illustrations (names have been changed in order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents). However, most respondents in the total sample did indeed display aspects of more than one of these lifestyles. Thus, the lifestyles described in the following represent ideal types rather than clearly distinguishable groups of respondents.

Translocal normality

Mr and Mrs Andersson were in their early 70s, living six months each year in a flat in a small town in Sweden and six months in a primarily Scandinavian *urbanización* (residential area) in Spain. Before retirement, both had worked in a private company in Sweden, Mr Andersson in a managerial position, and his wife as a clerk. Mrs Andersson had retired early because of rheumatic pains, which were still a major handicap to

her, although they were much alleviated in the warmer Spanish climate. This couple had acquired their Spanish residence 18 years previously, and since then had spent as much winter time in Spain as their employer and their health had permitted. At the time of the interview, both suffered from poor health and were not sure for how long they would be able to pursue their seasonal migration.

They regarded their life in two countries as primarily an adaptation to Mrs Andersson's illness, but they had also come to enjoy their stays in Spain very much. They were both active members of a local Swedish organisation in Spain, through which they had made many friends, and they greatly appreciated the intense social life in their residential area. In Sweden, they described living a quieter life, keeping up their family relations and also some organisational commitments, although their poor health restricted their outdoor activities.

These respondents' *mobility* between Sweden and Spain was thus of significant importance for their wellbeing and, at the same time, their ability to make their annual journey to Spain became, in their account, a proof that they were still alive and well. Thus they associated mobility with life, health, wellbeing and the ability to pursue a reasonably active life, although their everyday mobility in both countries was limited by physical handicaps. As for *place attachment*, they described feeling very much at home in Spain as well as in Sweden. Mrs Andersson pointed out that 'we're not feeling homesick [in Spain], and we're not longing for another place when we are here [in Sweden] either'. Their attachment to Sweden was largely due to their children and grandchildren. In addition, they associated Sweden with a sense of security, especially with regard to medical care and the possibility of speaking Swedish with the doctors. If their health would no longer permit travelling between Sweden and Spain, they would stay in Sweden, although they would certainly miss their winters in Spain. Their place attachment in Spain, apart from the improved quality of life experienced by Mrs Andersson, owed very much to their social relations within the Scandinavian community. They also pointed out that they had been staying in the same part of Spain for a long time and therefore knew the area well. They repeatedly emphasised that they were not tourists or temporary visitors, but that they were indeed *living* in Spain, and they were clearly annoyed when Swedish friends asked them what they were doing there. Mr Andersson commented:

They keep saying: 'But what are you doing down there? Are you just sitting there, lying on the *playa*?' Then I reply, 'What are we doing here then? Lying on the *playa* of [our home town in Sweden], or what? We have the same home here, we do the same things. ... We just live an ordinary life'.

Yet, although they expressed place attachment in Spain as well as in Sweden, they did not adopt 'Spanish' ways of life. They spoke very little Spanish, socialised mainly with other Swedish residents and visitors, and lived their everyday life very much as in Sweden. They got up at eight in the morning, as in Sweden, had oatmeal porridge for breakfast – 'can't live without it!' – then watched Swedish television news, went to some activity organised by the Scandinavian club or perhaps stayed home, treating Swedish visitors to home-baked cookies and Swedish coffee. Indeed, an important reason for their feeling at home in Spain, as the quotation above indicates, was the possibility of pursuing a highly Swedish lifestyle there.

The Anderssons provide a good illustration of one lifestyle identified in the interviews: 'translocal normality'. Respondents who preferred this lifestyle expressed strong place attachment in both countries. They generally acknowledged and accepted cultural differences between Sweden and Spain (*e.g.* different customs and manners) but did not regard cultural difference in itself as desirable, nor did they adopt Spanish ways of life during their stays in Spain. On the contrary, they appreciated the Swedish 'infrastructure' in Spain, and the possibility of getting help from Swedish-speaking people when they needed it. Most of them spoke very little Spanish and they usually expressed no desire for more than superficial contacts with Spanish society and the local Spanish populations. Instead, they lived largely within the Swedish or Scandinavian communities in Spain and often participated in activities organised by Scandinavian clubs and associations.

Thus, their multiple place attachment was, in important respects, based on similarity, whereas the difference that these respondents appreciated in Spain was associated with the friendly social climate in the Scandinavian community (in addition, of course, to the weather) rather than with Spanish culture. Also, place attachment in Spain was generally directed towards the respondents' residential area or town, and the Scandinavian community there, largely excluding the Spanish people, Spanish culture and Spain as a country.

The ideals of mobility associated with translocal normality were usually quite modest. Mobility represented health, wellbeing, the ability to live an active life and to avoid boredom, while the more advanced ideals of mobility discussed above – associating mobility with freedom, initiative, courage, adventure and so forth – were absent from these accounts. Translocal normality thus combines modest ideals of mobility with multiple place attachment which privileges similarity in the everyday life and which, in Spain, focuses on the area of residence. Translocal normality implies a very low degree of cultural adaptation.

Multilocal adaptation

The Berglunds were a couple aged around 70. Mr Berglund, a former manager in a producing company, and his wife, a retired public-sector professional, lived in a detached house in a Swedish village and a flat in Spain. They had decided long before to acquire a residence in the Mediterranean where they could live as retirees and, having searched in Italy, France and Spain, they had bought a house in Spain some 20 years earlier. Since then, they had moved twice within Spain. Before retirement they had often spent their holidays in Spain; after retirement they had gone there for longer periods, and during the past two years they had divided their time roughly equally between Sweden and Spain.

In Spain they played a lot of boules and golf, walked in the mountains, travelled around, and socialised with other retirees, mostly Scandinavians. They enjoyed what they described as a very different way of life from that in Sweden; their desire for variation and for an active life emerged as their main reason for spending the winters in Spain. In Sweden they took care of their house and garden, played golf and went to see friends. They had made journeys abroad every year since 1947 and still, in spite of their seasonal journeys to Spain, often went to other countries as well. They usually did not travel to and from Spain together – Mr Berglund went down a month before his wife in the autumn and stayed a few weeks longer in spring. He also made short trips back to Sweden during the winter season to look after their house. In addition, they travelled frequently, and often for fairly long distances, within Spain.

For these interviewees too, *mobility* was associated with health, wellbeing and activity. Because of their journeys to Spain, Mr Berglund argued, he would surely have a longer life than if they had spent the winters ('indoors') in Sweden. This mobility, but also mobility more generally, represented variation – a point they repeatedly made during the interview – as well as freedom and independence. They both enjoyed the possibility of moving between their Swedish and Spanish homes independently of one another, without too much planning and preparations, and they also enjoyed their ability to switch between Swedish and Spanish ways of life. In addition, they sometimes discussed mobility in terms of courage and initiative – those who could not imagine going to Spain, they argued, did not have the courage, whereas the winter residents were perhaps a bit adventurous.

Like the Anderssons, the Berglunds clearly felt at home in Spain, as well as in Sweden. Sweden represented roots, old friends and security

(about medical care and about societal matters as a whole). They had discussed registering in Spain for fiscal reasons, but had not done so yet, mainly because Mrs Berglund felt that this would violate her attachment to Sweden. In Spain, the Berglunds expressed *place attachment* primarily with regard to their residence, residential area and neighbours, but also to Spain more generally (language, people, habits). In the interview, they emphasised their attempts to adapt to local conditions and to live a Spanish life while in Spain. They had studied Spanish for several years before retirement, tried to speak Spanish as much as possible, and were sometimes asked to help other Swedes in contacts with Spanish authorities. During their early years in Spain, they had acquired several Spanish friends; at their present place of residence they had, to their disappointment, found it much more difficult to make such contacts. However, they sometimes went to a local Spanish retirees' organisation (although they also participated in activities organised by a Scandinavian club), and they searched for Spanish-speaking settings rather than Swedish ones:

Mrs B: There are many Swedes who live down there without knowing ten words in Spanish, who have lived there for many years, and who don't bother to learn anything, and that's a bit sad. They don't know how to ask for the bill or how to count to ten in Spanish, for example. There are many of them.

Mr B: Yes, we only go to Spanish-speaking restaurants down there. ... We think one should try to speak Spanish. ...

Interviewer: Why?

Mrs B: Because we want things to be Spanish when we are down there.

Mr B: We are in Spain, and then one should try to speak Spanish and live in a Spanish way. For example, I don't take my car to a Swedish mechanic. We've got one just 500 metres away, but I drive to [the nearest city], that's 10 kilometres, to leave my car at a Spanish garage.

Although their life in Spain contained some 'Swedish' aspects (*e.g.*, they had access to Swedish television and newspapers, and Mrs Berglund appreciated the library at the Scandinavian club), living 'in a Spanish way' was important. They described changing their daily routines, getting up later, taking *siesta* and staying up later at night, eating mostly Spanish food, and trying to adapt to the *mañana* mentality (although, they said, the latter could be a bit difficult). Having a warmer climate than in Sweden was not enough, they argued: 'The whole way of life should be different!'

The Berglunds are good representatives of a second lifestyle, in several respects the opposite of translocal normality, which could be described as 'multilocal adaptation'. This lifestyle contains a desire for difference and new experiences. For those aiming at multilocal

adaptation, playing golf, visiting the Swedish club and enjoying the warm climate were not enough: they also wanted to expose themselves to cultural differences and learn how to manage them. These respondents often told me stories about their encounters with the local Spanish population, Spanish mentality and Spanish bureaucracy; they were proud of these experiences and of their ability to manage such encounters, and also tried, for their own part, to adopt some Spanish habits during their stays in Spain. Although they also made use of the Swedish 'infrastructure' in Spain, they tended to do so with a certain reservation, and they might even express some disapproval of those who maintained conspicuously Swedish habits.

Multilocal adaptation was associated with strong place attachment in Spain as well as in Sweden. In Spain, the respondents felt at home not only because of the Scandinavian community but also because of their knowledge of Spain and their ability to adapt in some respects to what they regarded as Spanish ways of life. They often made substantial efforts to learn Spanish and to become familiar with Spanish culture, history and habits. Also, they often expressed a desire to make friends among the Spanish or, in other ways, reach outside the expatriate environment. Thus, their place attachment in Spain referred not only to their local community but to Spain and Spanishness in general. Some respondents also pointed out the regional level, referring to cultural characteristics of Andalucía or Canaria.

Respondents striving for multilocal adaptation entertained relatively advanced ideals of mobility. Just like those opting for translocal normality, they associated mobility with health and activity; but variation, new perspectives, open-mindedness and freedom were also important themes in their accounts. In addition, because of their desire for difference and their efforts at local adaptation, they often discussed mobility in terms of initiative, courage or adventure. Thus, multilocal adaptation combines relatively advanced ideals of mobility with multiple place attachment privileging difference and referring not only to the area of residence but also to Spain as a whole. It implies a desire for, and often quite substantial efforts towards, cultural adaptation.

Routinised sojourning

Mr and Mrs Carlén had three homes: one in a residential district outside a big Swedish city, the second a summer cottage at the coast nearby, and the third a small house in a mainly Scandinavian *urbanización* in Spain. They were aged around 75, and both had worked

as professionals in the public sector. They had bought their house in Spain some ten years previously, as Mrs Carlén had been advised by her doctor to spend the winters in a warmer climate. Their stays in Spain lasted from early October to just before Christmas and again from late January to mid-April; during the summers, they frequently moved between their two Swedish homes.

In Sweden as well as in Spain, they spent much time gardening and socialising with friends and neighbours, and also with their children (one of whom lived in Spain) and grandchildren. They had both learnt some Spanish, sufficient for shopping and other practical purposes, but not enough to carry on a conversation, and their acquaintances in Spain were all foreign retirees. In Spain, they appreciated the climate, the social life and the activities organised by local Swedish or Scandinavian organisations (boules, bus tours, etc.). In Sweden, on the other hand, they lived more comfortably, moved around more independently, and could enjoy music and theatre performances which they found lacking in Spain.

With regard to *mobility*, they had somewhat different opinions. Mr Carlén very much enjoyed travelling abroad, whereas his wife was not equally fond of journeying, partly because of medical problems, and they described their seasonal journeys to Spain as a compromise which they could both accept. Mr Carlén argued that going abroad was a good thing – ‘everybody should do that, really’ – as visits to other places and encounters with foreigners made people more open-minded and gave them new perspectives on their home country. They both associated their seasonal migration with a desire for variation, although Mr Carlén would have preferred even more variation than that offered by recurrent visits to the same place. Because of the more pleasurable climate, they also lived a more active life in Spain than they would have done in Sweden in wintertime. Activity and variation, they argued, were beneficial to the health and wellbeing of elderly people, and thus important aspects of their mobility between Sweden and Spain.

Contrary to most other respondents, this couple made a clear distinction with regard to *place attachment*: they felt much more at home in Sweden than in Spain. Sweden represented culture, language, traditions and continuity, which gave them a sense of belonging. They had lived and worked in Sweden all their lives, they had designed both of their homes there by themselves, and neighbours and friends in Sweden meant a great deal to them. In case of illness, they would also feel more secure in Sweden. They certainly valued their social relations in Spain as well, and having their own Spanish house gave them a feeling of homeliness there, too. However, this feeling was not at all

comparable to what they felt in Sweden, and they clearly pointed out that Spain, unlike Sweden, was not 'their' country:

Mrs C: But we feel at home in Sweden, which we do not do in Spain. ... We haven't had any place in [the Spanish] society. We've just been living there, eating and drinking and having a good time, but we haven't taken part in the country, in its development, we haven't participated. That makes a difference. I think, where you've been living and working, that's where you're at home. ...

Mr C: Yes, that's right. We're just there as visitors, so to speak, so it isn't our country. Although we enjoy it.

They repeatedly argued that they were Swedish and belonged in Sweden, while their journeys to Spain were more of 'a temporary thing' which 'doesn't mean that much to us, we could live without it'. Also, unlike most other respondents, they did not mind describing themselves as tourists in Spain (*cf.* Gustafson forthcoming). They made few efforts at local adaptation in terms of Spanish lifestyle and had very little social contact with the Spanish, whereas they described their contacts with Sweden as very important during their stays in Spain.

In addition to translocal normality and multilocal adaptation, a third lifestyle, perhaps less transnational than the other two, thus appeared in the interviews. I have chosen to call it 'routinised sojourning'. It was pursued by those respondents who, like the Carléns, felt at home in one country and more like temporary visitors in the other. In some accounts, these visits stood out as temporary breaks from the normality experienced in the country where they felt at home; in other accounts, they amounted rather to residential tourism – part of a normality, but still 'away from home'. The ideals of mobility showed no clear pattern among these respondents, and their accounts put relatively little emphasis on local adaptation and cultural difference.

Most respondents leaning towards this lifestyle regarded Sweden as their home place; two male respondents, however, explicitly claimed to be more at home in Spain than in Sweden (their wives did not quite agree). Both spent most of their time in Spain – eight or nine months per year – and had done so for a long time. They appreciated certain aspects of Spanish culture, but also pointed out that Spain had undergone rapid modernisation during the past decades, which had substantially reduced the differences between Spain and Sweden.

To sum up, routinised sojourning implies little or no multiple place attachment. Those who pursue this lifestyle make a clear distinction between being at home and being temporary visitors. Ideals of mobility and views of cultural adaptation differ among them, although there was a tendency to downplay issues of cultural difference.

The choice of lifestyle

Thus, for retirees who spend the summers in Sweden and the winters in Spain, several different orientations towards transnational life are possible. They may regard themselves as only temporary visitors in one country; they may make themselves at home in Spain as well as in Sweden but pursue a mainly 'Swedish' way of life in both countries; they may try to adapt to local habits, enjoy the cultural difference and, to some extent, live two different lives.

For all my respondents, life in Spain contained significant 'Swedish' elements. Most of them socialised mainly with other foreign retirees and lived the major parts of their 'Spanish' lives within Swedish or Scandinavian expatriate environments. Indeed, several authors have pointed to the practical difficulties for foreign retirees of integrating into Spanish society, and argued that the expatriates' notions of Spanishness may be highly influenced by the somewhat inauthentic tourist areas where they live (King *et al.* 1998; O'Reilly 2000). In spite of these reservations however, the ambitions and efforts of those respondents most eagerly striving for 'multilocal adaptation' were real and, in their orientation towards cultural difference, they differed markedly from those preferring translocal normality or routinised sojourning.

Nevertheless, I would emphasise that the lifestyles presented here are not clear-cut categories of people, but analytically derived ideal types. The interviewees often mixed elements from different ideal types in their accounts – sometimes unproblematically, sometimes with a good deal of ambivalence. In particular, translocal normality and multilocal adaptation seem to form a continuum, where most respondents could be positioned somewhere between the lifestyles represented by the Anderssons and the Berglunds.

The variation found in the interviews raises the question of why people choose one lifestyle or another, or a specific combination of lifestyles. The routinised sojourning lifestyle occurred mainly in two situations: first, when the interviewees spent considerably more time in one country than in the other, and secondly, when the spouses or cohabitants had differing opinions (as with the Carléns) or experiences of living in two different countries. As for translocal normality and multilocal adaptation, the interviewees' preferences depended to a large extent on an interplay between their individual capacities and the role of their dual residence in their overall life plans.

Those who preferred translocal normality often considered themselves too old to learn a new language and to adopt new habits. They

went to Spain in order to enjoy a calm and pleasurable life in a warm climate, which they felt they deserved after a long working life. Several of these respondents also suffered from illnesses which caused them fewer problems when they spent the winters in Spain: their seasonal migration was primarily an adaptation to ill-health. Those who leaned strongly towards multilocal adaptation on the other hand, were often former entrepreneurs, executives or professionals who had sometimes retired early, and who regarded their seasonal migration to Spain as a new project in life. They usually had relatively good physical health and were intellectually curious. They had wanted new challenges once their working life had ended; learning Spanish and exploring Spanish culture and ways of life became one such challenge. The interviews also indicated that lifestyle preferences may change over a period of time – towards more cultural adaptation when life in Spain is regarded as a new life project, or towards less adaptation because of diminishing physical or intellectual capacities.

Significantly, however, the issue of transnational lifestyles also contains a good deal of value judgement, as there are strong tendencies in society – and in social science – to favour multilocal adaptation. This lifestyle has much in common with cosmopolitan ideals that celebrate knowledge and an ability to handle cultural difference (Hannerz 1990). It is, to some extent at least, in accordance with norms of integration often present in discourses of migration (O'Reilly 2000) and, as for retirees, the focus on new challenges in later life echoes ideals of 'successful ageing' (Baltes and Carstensen 1996; Fischer and Specht 1999; Torres 1999; *cf.* Kelly 1997). A certain degree of integration and local adaptation is also strongly recommended by handbooks for Swedish migrants to Spain (*e.g.* Svensson 1988: 88). Those opting for translocal normality on the other hand, run the risk of being regarded as limited and narrow-minded, and foreign retirees in Spain have at times been subject to negative media reports for this reason (Jägerhorn 1996a; O'Reilly 2000: 3ff; Williams *et al.* 1997: 131).

These norms and values were also expressed by my interviewees. Those making claims of multilocal adaptation sometimes criticised those who did not, whereas those who preferred translocal normality sometimes felt that they had to defend this position by explaining why multilocal adaptation was not a realistic option for them. Yet many respondents clearly achieved an improved quality of life because of their stays in Spain, without striving for local adaptation, and indeed without having the necessary resources and abilities for doing so. This suggests that normative judgements in this regard should be made with some caution (*cf.* King *et al.* 1998: 102f; Warnes *et al.* 1999).

At the same time, it is important to note that my respondents' lifestyle choices were made from a socially, economically and politically privileged position. First, pursuing a life in two different countries requires resources that are not available to everybody: such as money, social contacts, personal abilities and a secure legal status. Secondly, coming from a rich northern European country, they are probably better received in Spain, by the authorities as well as by the general public, than many other immigrants, whether they try to integrate or not (*cf.* Dahl *et al.* 1995; Källström 1997: 70). Thirdly, their position as retirees (not having to earn their living in Spain), and their access to supportive Swedish-Spanish 'infrastructures' in Spain, make integration into Spanish society an option rather than a necessity.

Conclusion

Previous research on transnationalism has largely overlooked the experiences of older persons, and research on international retirement migration has paid little attention to the migrants' experiences of transnational mobility, multiple place attachment and cultural differences. The present study has tried to bridge this gap, using qualitative interviews with retirees pursuing seasonal migration between Sweden and Spain. The analysis shows certain common patterns. The respondents usually considered their roots to be deeper in Sweden than in Spain, but at the same time, most of them expressed attachment to both countries. The analysis also showed variation with regard to mobility (modest or advanced ideals of mobility), place attachment (high or low degree of multiple place attachment; focus on difference or similarity) and orientation towards cultural difference (high or low degree of adaptation). A central argument of this paper has been that the respondents' positions along these analytical dimensions reflect different transnational lifestyles. Three ideal-typical lifestyles were identified:

- Multilocal adaptation, combining advanced ideals of mobility, strong multiple place attachment with a focus on difference, and a high degree of cultural adaptation.
- Translocal normality, combining modest ideals of mobility, strong multiple place attachment with a focus on similarity, and a low degree of cultural adaptation.
- Routinised sojourning, indicating little or no multiple place attachment.

In most forms of transnational life, norms, ideals and practical circumstances probably push towards local adaptation and efforts of integration. In this case, however, the relatively privileged position of the winter residents made cultural adaptation an individual choice rather than a necessity. Under these conditions, a relatively wide range of variation occurred, which reflected differing individual capacities and differing objectives with the seasonal migration. The study suggests that whether the retirees opt for multilocal adaptation, translocal normality or routinised sojourning, life in two countries may be a highly positive experience and contribute substantially to their perceived quality of life.

However, the character of these possible gains in welfare differs between the lifestyles, and most clearly so with regard to multilocal adaptation and translocal normality. As for multilocal adaptation, it fits well into the achievement-oriented ideal of successful ageing that prevails in Sweden and other Western countries (Torres 1999). In this lifestyle, seasonal migration and efforts of cultural adaptation in Spain often seem to represent a search for self-fulfilment through individual achievement, and may thus provide a sense of continuity between the migrants' working life and their life as retirees (*cf.* McHugh and Mings 1996). Those who strive for multilocal adaptation are usually in good health, and regard their mobile lifestyle as a way of remaining so. Those favouring translocal normality on the other hand, have other reasons for their seasonal migration – reasons that are sometimes related to ill-health, sometimes to a search for a pleasurable life more generally. Rather than striving for continuity with their earlier working life, they try to adapt to a calmer, less demanding life as retirees, a life marked by diminishing physical and/or intellectual capacities – in some cases indeed by severe health problems. Their seasonal stays in Spain and their choice of lifestyle reflect their attempts at coping with this situation, and thus they opt for continuity in terms of culture, language and everyday habits rather than for new challenges. This variation shows that seasonal retirement migration may be associated with health, wellbeing and ageing strategies in several different ways.

The findings presented here also suggest that studies of older persons may contribute to the understanding of transnationalism and globalisation. So far, research on transnationalism has usually had a relatively narrow focus on labour migrants and their transnational activities, whereas writings on cultural aspects of globalisation have often described global professional elites, diasporic populations and the multi-cultural milieux of 'global cities'. Yet, in the Western world at

the turn of the century, increasing numbers of retirees are well off, active and internationally-minded. As the case of international retirement migration shows, they do develop new transnational ways of life. Their experiences and the social and cultural consequences of their lifestyles probably differ in important respects from those of other groups. Further investigation of retirement migration and other forms of later life mobility may therefore provide new knowledge, not only about ageing and wellbeing, but also about globalisation and transnationalism.

In addition, although the transnational lifestyles described above reflect a specific group of people in a specific context, these lifestyles and the underlying analytical dimensions also reflect more general questions evoked by transnationalism and mobile forms of life. This study suggests that careful empirical examination of place attachment, mobility and orientations towards cultural difference, can be a fruitful approach for investigating transnational life in other contexts as well. Such investigations may show that other forms of transnationalism produce lifestyles similar to those found in the present study, or they may result in the identification of other transnational lifestyles.

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