Finding One’s Place
Finding One’s Place
An Ethnological Study of Belonging among Swedish Migrants on the Costa del Sol in Spain

Annie Woube
Abstract


This study explores how Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol in Spain create belonging and how this is expressed in migration stories and practiced in the daily life. The migrants are part of a migration phenomenon that is conceptualized as lifestyle migration, often to destinations in association with tourism and leisure. Based on ethnographical fieldwork carried out among Swedish migrants within the Swedish infrastructure of institutions, organizations and private enterprises on the Costa del Sol, the thesis examines how belonging is created adopting a phenomenological and constructivist perspective on transnational and diasporic practices. This is accomplished through studying migration stories, where the migration experience is being told, structured and made meaningful for the migrants. In addition, it focuses on internal and external identification and positioning on location on the Costa del Sol. Another concern is the study of how the migrants relate to notions and practices of new home, and old home. The thesis presents how belonging is shaped on a collective basis within the Swedish infrastructure, despite the fact that the interviewees make up a diverse group in different ages, with different reasons for dwelling along the coast, with different migrant experiences, with different approaches to living a transnational migrant life in-between the old and the new country, and with different degrees and range of incorporation to the local society. The study shows how a transnational position is created with a plurilocal frame of reference. It is marked by simultaneously expressing attachments and affiliations to several localities and contexts across territorial borders, shaped by past and recurrent travels and communication, and connected to the Swedish diasporic collective that can function as a compensatory source of national affiliation for the Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol.

Keywords: lifestyle migration, belonging, transnationality, diaspora, identification, ethnographic fieldwork, migration stories, materiality, Costa del Sol, Sweden

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Uppsala, September 3, 2014

Annie Woube
1. Introduction

Background

In the year 1960, six million tourists visited Spain, a country marked by the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1892–1975) and the strong symbiosis of conservatism and Catholicism. In isolation from the rest of the world, Spain had been a forgotten territory up until then. By recognizing the financial gains of open borders for tourism, General Franco had just given his consent to tourism from Northern Europe. This decision had a tremendous social, financial and cultural impact on the country and its population, causing the entire country to modernize and industrialize, a development other European countries had already gone through (Cardona and Losada 2009; Martín Ruiz 2000:77; Barke and France 1996:267).

Simultaneously, throughout Europe a consolidation of social reforms, such as a development of welfare systems, an increase in real income, and a reorganization of time within the labor sector, enabled millions of Northern Europeans to take annual vacations (Obrador Pons et al. 2009:2). With abolished entry visas, the constructions of large purpose-built hotels along with the air-inclusive package vacation deals and the opening of the international Málaga airport in 1961, hordes of middle-class tourists were able to meet the sun by the 160 kilometer long beach strip of the Costa del Sol along the southern Spanish coast by the Mediterranean Sea (King et al. 2000:31; Barke and France 1996:270ff).
The Costa del Sol, a 160 kilometer coastal strip ranging from Estepona in the west to Almuñecar, to the east of Nerja.¹

The Costa del Sol is the coastal stretch from Estepona in the west to Almuñecar in the east. Geographically this is an area connecting several coastal towns, often seemingly borderless as one town unnoticeably turns into another. In the 1970’s this beach strip was attracting mass tourism with 32 million visitors every year (Obrador Pons et al. 2009:2; García de Cortázar and González Vega 1995).

Along with the tourism growth in the 1960’s, Northern Europeans started to acquire second homes in order to stay longer periods of time (Gustafson 2009:71; Bendix and Löfgren 2007). Eventually the second homes turned into permanent residences for some of them. As a result, numerous relatively affluent Northern Europeans have come to migrate on a permanent basis to the region. To make this particular transition is to be part of a global migration trend conceptualized as *lifestyle migration* (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014; Benson and O’Reilly 2009a; 2009b), which is, as noted above, considered to be a tourism-informed mobility (Williams and Hall 2002; O’Reilly 2003; 2007). The aim of lifestyle migration is to increase the quality of life, often in areas of tourism and leisure in the world, through different features available in the destination in question, such as a warm climate, a different and interesting culture, or a relaxed way of life.

The Costa del Sol as a geographical field for the present study is of significance in that the Swedish ties to the region are historically strong. Swedish nationals were quick to embrace the charter tourism phenomenon in the 1960’s and 1970’s and have maintained the bonds with the area since then. Even at the time of writing, Spain is the number one tourist destination for Swedish citizens when choosing a country for vacationing (Svd Näringsliv, September 4, 2013). As a consequence I would claim that the infrastructure of Swedish organizations, institutions and private enterprises that has been established in the wake of the charter tourism boom on the Costa del Sol, is one of the most significant, possibly alongside the infrastructure of Swedes on the Costa Blanca, Spain, in comparison to other organized collective formations of Swedish lifestyle migrants at one single destination in the world.

There are a number of difficulties in finding exact figures for the total number of Swedes residing on the Costa del Sol. Not all Swedes living permanently in Spain claim residency in Spain, and deregistration from Sweden takes place after one year of claimed residency elsewhere in the world. Since an extensive amount of Swedes, especially retired nationals, live in Spain eight or nine months a year and spend summer vacations in Sweden, they are not eligible for deregistration. According to the editor-in-chief of the Swedish newspaper Sydkusten (produced on the Costa del Sol), Mats Björkman, there are about 30,000 registered Swedes living along the entire Costa del Sol. This is also recorded on the website of the digital version of the newspaper (Sydkusten²). Yet, this has to be viewed as estimation. According to Suvi Kauranen, the official representative of international residents in the municipality of Fuengirola, there were 1,297 Swedes registered as residents during 2009 in the municipality with its total population of 71,000 inhabitants. Against this background, the present study examines Swedish lifestyle migration to the Costa del Sol region in the south of Spain.

Objective

I regard migration as a process that frames the everyday lives of the migrants. Accordingly, the thesis aims to investigate the process of establishing oneself in a new place. The decisions to migrate in their unique contexts are considered, but also the everyday lives led by the migrants after the migration, that is, how migration is lived on a daily basis. The actual transition is a definite event (cf. Hage 2005), but it carries both possibilities and implications in its aftermath that shape experiences of how to feel at home, of how to create belonging on the Costa del Sol and maintain a sense of belonging to Sweden, as the country of origin, while living in a transnational context. The **objective of this thesis is to study how belonging is created and given mean-**

ing in everyday practice by migrants from Sweden on the Costa del Sol in Spain.

I understand belonging as experiences of inclusion, which is manifested through different practices shared with others. To belong is not only about identification but also about finding and understanding one’s place and position in a social world and feeling emotionally connected to it. In line with my understanding of belonging, the thesis is divided into five themes. The first theme is to study how the migration experience is told, understood, and made significant in migration stories. The second theme is identification and positioning on the Costa del Sol as a region of immigration. It deals with how a position as a Swedish migrant permanently residing on the Costa del Sol is considered, used, and given meaning. I will analyze how the migrants position and identify themselves and other groups, in addition to how they understand their positions. Third, I consider home-making and feeling at home important components in forging belonging. I will study how people create and value home(s) while living in a transnational context. Fourthly, I wonder what notions are connected to the country of origin and how they are understood and experienced. A fifth theme is to study how collective belonging is created within the Swedish migrant group dwelling on the Costa del Sol. I will discuss how collective belonging is created and remains stable in a region of tourism where the population is in flux.

This objective entails a paradox. I intend to study how belonging is created within the phenomenon of lifestyle migration, which is seen to be built on the late modern ideals of freedom to explore the inner self and to choose one’s lifestyle, according to the sociologists Michaela Benson and Karen O’Reilly (2009a; 2009b; see also Giddens 1991). In view of these ideals, I intend to explore belonging despite the seemingly contradictory quest for personal liberation through lifestyle migration.

Theoretical orientations

A starting point is to study how the migrants experience and understand their lifeworlds in light of migration and how meaning is created of the migration experience in an everyday life led in a transnational context. This is inspired by a phenomenological approach. I understand the concept of lifeworld as the immediate, here-and-now encounter with everyday life, where interpretation and making sense are secondary (see Bengtsson 2005; 2001). The experience of living on the Costa del Sol is dominated by social relations with a diverse international population and the vacation atmosphere of a tourist destination. I will explore how such experiences are told in migration stories and understood by the migrants. In addition to expressing the lifeworld through words, the experiences of living an everyday life on the Costa del Sol can be expressed through practices and actions. I will explore what kind
of practices and actions are put into play while the migrants find their place and forge belonging.

I view practices as being used in a goal-oriented fashion toward specific results, but often they are also used in a seemingly unconscious, effortless, and spontaneous way in relation to the surroundings (cf. Reksten-Kapstad 2001:11). They are considered to be a toolkit of expressions, symbols, narratives, actions, as well as habits, skills, and styles, used to order life and orientate oneself in relation to how life is led on the coast. When the migrants use a tool, they also demonstrate the command of a competence or a capacity that governs the way to act and behave that is suitable for the given situation, time or place. This knowledge is a resource for adapting to or managing life in a transnational context in relation to and within a group or groups (cf. Swindler 1986; Casey 1996:34; Frykman and Gilje 2003a:48). What transnational competences are practiced in order to create feelings of belonging on the Costa del Sol? In what situations are they used? The anthropologist Michael Jackson claims that “in most human communities the measure of the worth of any knowledge is its social value. Knowledge is vita activa, a form of savoir-faire, of knowing how to generate the wherewithal for life, and to comport oneself socially with gumption, propriety, and common sense” (1996:36). I will explore how transnational competences provide a social value for the migrants and how, where, and when this is put into play.

Inherent in the concept of practice is the dimension of acting with intention (ibid. 1996:34). This is acted upon when the migrant is able to draw on or be guided by previous experiences in response to what practice is suitable in the situation at hand. Expectations lie inherent in taking action, or put in the words of Jackson, human life “is an active relationship with what has gone before and what is imagined to lie ahead” (1996:11). To act with intention can be related to the scholar Sara Ahmed’s view of how migration is entangled with a process of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation (2011; 2007; 2006). Ahmed’s discussion resembles my view of how shaping belonging can be understood as a process and aspiration over time, which starts with having an orientation and a direction toward something that attracts our attention, which leads to acting upon practices of finding one’s way, by establishing one’s direction. The desire to migrate to the Costa del Sol is a matter of being orientated toward the endeavor of living along the coast. In expressing the desire, the migrants turn their orientation and intention toward a life on the Costa del Sol. I will explore how migration stories about being orientated toward migrating to the Costa del Sol are told together with me during conversational interviews. In addition, I will study the practices that are acted upon in order to find one’s way before and after the initial migration moment.

Ahmed writes that to be orientated is to be unaware of such a state of being because it means to be in place, to be at ease, and experience the surrounding environment as familiar and well-known (2011:151ff). To have an
orientation can be understood as knowing one’s place in the world, being orientated around something, where one is “at the center of one’s being” (ibid. 2006:116). To emphasize the bodily aspect of orientation, Ahmed states that orientations “are about the intimacy of bodies and their dwelling places” (2006:8). This means that it is the body that is the starting point and instrument from which the lifeworld is perceived and understood. Accordingly, to be orientated is to feel at home and in place with the body. Consequently, to have an orientation toward migration to the Costa del Sol is to aspire to feel at home and in place with the body on location.

Upon the arrival on the Costa del Sol, a state of disorientation that is felt through the body may appear. Disorientation is a sign of lacking orientation and feeling confusion, which is common in any life-transforming changes, such as a migration. In the context of a migration, disorientation can be understood as being disorientated in feeling at home and feeling that one belongs. It “can be described as the lived experience of having turned the face in at least two directions: towards a home that has been lost and towards a place that is not yet home,” Ahmed affirms (2011:153).

To create feelings of being at home is a bodily process of blending the inner self with the new place, in such a way that the migrant eventually stops feeling unsettled and starts feeling settled, at ease and at one with the surrounding environment—a reorientation might be gained. In other words, to establish feelings of belonging can have the effect of reorientation. To be reoriented, the migrant inhabits the new environment with body and senses, and therefore it has become a familiar environment. “Familiarity is shaped by the ‘feel’ of space or how spaces ‘impress’ upon bodies,” Ahmed argues (2006:7). When the migrants feel with their bodies that the surrounding environment is merging with their selves into a mode of incorporation and transparency, they feel at home and feel that they belong. They can be viewed as having gained reorientation. The migration stories that will be analyzed are told out of an aspiration for such reorientation or from the point of reorientation. In sum, with a focus on how orientation is part of the experience of the migrants, I wish to emphasize how body, space, and the social world are interwoven.

Identification theory

One aspect of belonging is the concept identification. I want to stress the use of identification, rather than identity, since it is a process of changeable and diverse character that is in the making from one situation to another, in relation to and in contrast to the Other, as argued by the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1996:52f). Identification is an ongoing practice that is never finished or completed. I am interested in how identification is put in play for the migrants. I will analyze how the act of separating and differentiating
oneself from others is used in order to establish belonging and identification. There is also a counter-process in the making, in that while the migrants are identifying themselves in relation to others, they also identify others in relation to themselves. Identification of the self becomes a means to attribution of the Other. I will explore how the process of identification takes place for the migrants on the Costa del Sol. Identification is a recurring practice and shaped at crossroads and lines of division, but it carries multiple options which overlap in practice and expressions (ibid. 2004:53, 1999:19; 1996:54). I will study available options of identification for the migrants and how they are overlapping and in what kinds of situations this happen.

To create belonging through identification is a personal process but is put into play, as noted above, in relation with and together with others, i.e. it is a social act. Hylland Eriksen writes: “Personal identity is shaped in interaction with social experiences” (2004:90, my translation; see also Svensson 2012:62; Eriksen 1996:54ff). It is the experiences with others that give fabric to identity-making. I will analyze how identification is constructed, challenged, altered, and made meaningful in relation to place, time, and social context.

In order to develop and strengthen the analysis of identification, I have taken inspiration from the sociologist Floya Anthias’ theoretical concept of translocalational positionality (2012, 2008, 2002). The concept aims to highlight the identification process through a focus on articulated position in migration stories “placed in three locales and their intersection: the society of migration, the homeland and the migrant group” (2002:500). Anthias puts an emphasis on where the articulated position is located in the narrations. This is viewed as the situational, temporal and relational settings where the migrants place themselves and are being placed by others with reference to social categories of gender, ethnicity, generation, age, and social class, i.e. location is related to social stratification of dominance and subordinance in social relations experienced locally, nationally, and transnationally (2012:130). As such, the concept has a valuable intersectional framing for the analysis.

I explore how the migrants position themselves and others, in addition to how they are positioned by others, and how the process of positioning is practiced and experienced. Moreover, I am interested in studying the different contexts where positioning takes place and the effects that come about due to different contexts, which implies that the positioning might be articulated differently from one location to another, depending on spatial, temporal, and social dimensions in the migration story, which might result in contradictions and complexities. In addition, processes of advantage and disadvantage are brought to light through the study of positioning. What kind of contradictions, complexities, advantages, and disadvantages occur in the practice of positioning oneself in relation to different collectivities on the Costa del Sol? In relation to Sweden? The act of positioning is active at all
times and in relation to different sets of networks of relations depending on the situation. Furthermore, the position enables or activates ways to maneuver in relation to the situation. In the migration stories, I will study how the migrants make use of and handle social positions and how structural and cultural conditions have an impact on the migrants’ understanding of their position in the world.

Translocational positionality sheds light on both boundaries and power hierarchies in social relations. Therefore, it “is an intermediate concept between objectivism and subjectivism, inhabiting a space between social constructionism and approaches that stress agency,” according to Anthias (2002:505). As such, the migration stories reveal both the outcome of acquiring a social position, and the process of positioning the self and others, which is seen as a set of practices, actions, and meanings. In a similar vein, the ethnologist Oscar Pripp argues that position and positioning highlight both objective identification and subjective identification (2005:73f). That is, the migrants encounter situations where they are given an objective identity by others, shaped by social categories, such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, generation, social class, in addition to personal characteristics. Entangled with the objective identity is the subjective identity of how the migrants view and regard themselves, which leads to ways of presenting oneself to the outer world. In the juxtaposition of the objective and the subjective identity, a hierarchy of power between the individual and the collective appears in different relations, in different situations, and in different locations. The process of positioning is a situated and contextualized practice, which I will explore in the present case.

There are several ethnological studies carried out with the aim of exploring individual and collective processes of identification and positioning among migrants in relation to Sweden as a country of residence (e.g. Farahani 2007; Ågren 2006; Pripp 2001; see also Agnidakis 2013 about intranational migration). But there has not been any ethnological study examining processes of identification among contemporary migrants from Sweden living outside of Sweden, prior to the present study.

**Transnational perspective**

A *transnational* perspective in the study aims to highlight relations and practices of transcending national borders in a variety of ways. It is both a matter of practice and notions created in a social context. That is, the migrants can act transnationally, *and* base their actions on ideas about the transnational or what they perceive it ought to be about. The two approaches are considered to be complementary and enable two different theoretical approaches. The intersection of constructivism and the phenomenology of lived experience constitutes a fruitful combination in giving a broad understanding of the
transnational phenomenon of being a permanent resident in a country other than the country of origin (cf. Frykman and Gilje 2003:9; Frykman 2006:69ff).

I view migration from Sweden to the Costa del Sol as a mobility underpinning a transnational social space, as suggested by the sociologist Thomas Faist (2000:12). Accordingly, research on transnational social spaces understands migration as a recurrent practice, involving more than one definite, completed, “singular journey but […] [being] an integral part of migrants’ lives” (ibid. 2000:13), which generates transnational social spaces in-between old and new countries. Similarly, the migrants are involved in a steady movement crossing the European continent, which enacts processes of exchange between Sweden and Spain, and in some cases other countries. In the chapters to come, I study how the transmovement affects the migrants’ lifeworlds and social relations with regard to forging belonging. In addition, I will analyze the different kinds of practices that the migrants are engaged in which uphold a transnational social space and how this is made meaningful for creating feelings of belonging on the Costa del Sol.

Moving between places often involves an exchange of immaterial news, ideas, and stories, besides material items, goods, and foods (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013), in addition to shaping social networks, which come to be a part of the constitution of a transnational social space in-between old and new countries (Faist 2000). “Transnational social spaces can be understood as plurilocal frames of reference which structure everyday practices, social positions, biographical employment projects, and human identities, and simultaneously exist above and beyond the social context of national societies,” according to the sociologist Ludger Pries (2001:23). How the exchange of immateriality and materiality affects the process of feeling that one belongs within the transnational social space will be explored in the thesis.

Here I would also like to make a distinction between practices of transnational being and practices of transnational belonging, which has been discussed by the sociologist Peggy Levitt and the anthropologist Nina Glick Schiller (2004). The migrants can live within a transnational social space on the Costa del Sol without acting upon or identifying with the transnational practices and representations occurring within the space. Instead, being transnational can be understood as finding oneself in a transnational condition of being in the world, and part of migranthood which influences the migrants’ lives long after the actual migration moment. The transnational condition puts an emphasis on a state of being in the world that is related to viewing migrancy as a form of consciousness, or a mode of existence, where home is neither “here” nor “there,” as argued by the literary scholar John McLeod (2000:210). In the thesis, I explore how such a mode of existence affects the process of creating belonging for the migrants.
Equally, there are practices of belonging “that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. […] Ways of belonging combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies,” Levitt and Glick Schiller argue (2004:1010). Along a similar line, the ethnologists Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren write that physical objects can be recharged with symbolism when entering a new environment: “Dishes become national dishes, dance becomes folkdance, clothing becomes folk [or ethnic] clothing” (2001:87ff, my translation). I will study how the Swedish nationality is acted upon and put into play for the migrants on the Costa del Sol. I will also examine the many different meanings ascribed to a Swedish nationality while residing on a permanent basis on the Costa del Sol. In addition, notions of Spanishness and Spanish nationality will also be studied in the migration stories. All in all, I will explore practices of being and belonging transnationally that are incorporated in everyday life among the migrants and how the practices are enacted according to context, time, and place.

In Swedish ethnology there are a few studies with a transnational perspective. Most notably, Maja Povrzanović Frykman has explored the relevance and applicability of using a transnational perspective in her studies (2004; 2001a), specifically through research on Croatian migrants living in Sweden. Her present research project aims to study the importance of material objects, while enacting practices of being and belonging to transnational migrant contexts (e.g. Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013). Rather like the present thesis, she has argued for a phenomenological approach in researching transnational practices (Povrzanović Frykman 2003, see also 2007).

Diasporic practices

A transnational social space is made both individually and collectively. Hence, the migrants make a transnational social space on their own, but also agree upon collective expressions and practices that manifest the shared transnational condition as Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol. In other words, they can acknowledge and share a transnational being, for instance, while being engaged in traveling and communicating across borders as a vital practice in their lives. This is different from manifesting a transnational belonging, which can be done through, for instance, attributing a practice or material object a specific meaning as a national practice or national object (cf. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). When the transnational belonging is manifested on a collective basis, the expressions and manifestations can be characterized as carrying diasporic features (Povrzanović Frykman 2004:85; see also Brubaker 2005). How a diasporic collectivity is shaped within the Swedish migrant group will be examined. In addition to the contexts where
the manifestation is put into play, I will also study how a collectivity of Swedes is made significant and valuable in creating feelings of belonging.

Using the adjective diasporic, instead of the noun diaspora, gives an understanding of practices leading toward collective identification with characteristics of the concept of diaspora, without establishing or labeling such a collective a diaspora. The anthropologist Steven Vertovec and the sociologist Robin Cohen’s conceptualization of diaspora (1999) has been a valuable interpretative tool for analyzing how the migrants manifest a shared transnational condition. Along the lines of Vertovec and Cohen’s conceptualization, I aim to study how the Swedish group collectively shape and manifest (1) a social forum for networking, (2) a type of consciousness of sharing a state of being in migrancy, as discussed above in relation to experiencing a transnational condition, while being engaged in (3) cultural production on location. As features tied to a locality, it is pertinent to regard the transnational practices as diasporic practices, whereas a transnational social space involves both old and new countries of migration.

A Swedish collective cannot be narrowed down to involve only the migrants who are permanent residents, but all Swedish citizens, whether tourists, seasonal visitors, temporary dwellers, or permanent residents circulating the area at all times. They can all figure in the specific articulation of a diasporic collective formation along the Costa del Sol, when this is set in practice. The collective thus thrives on the diversity of transnational experiences and diasporic practices through differences in age, gender, ethnicity, years of residency, sexuality, class, etc., apart from sharing Swedish citizenship and a privileged migrant position. As discussed earlier, I will explore how difference and diversity among the migrants are possible features in the making of a Swedish diasporic collective through Anthias’ concept of translocational positionality, which gives weight to social structures in the analysis of the diasporic collective (see Anthias 1998).

Both ethnologists and folklorists in Sweden have been interested in collective formations based on nationality when studying, for instance, the making of a Swedish cultural heritage in the contemporary United States as a result of the Swedish emigration to America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. Gradén 2003; Österlund-Pötsch 2003; Klein 1997a, 1997b, 1988; Fjellström 1970). There are also several studies concerned with the project of creating Swedishness within Swedish territorial borders, which has been an inspiration for this thesis through their problematizing stance on Swedishness, how it is viewed and made meaningful in different contexts (e.g. Bäckman 2009; Arnstberg 1989; Daun 1989, Ehn et al. 1993, Frykman and Löfgren 1991).
To capture the field

The ethnographic fieldwork that has provided the empirical material for the study was conducted between 2009 and 2013, divided over five periods of fieldwork. The main fieldwork was carried out from January to June 2009 when I lived together with my husband in an apartment in the coastal town of Fuengirola on the Costa del Sol. It was followed by four recurring visits of one or two weeks at a time throughout different months of the year during festivals and holidays in Sweden in order to enter the Swedish migration phenomenon with different foci, such as fieldwork in the Swedish organizations and institutions during festivities, observing the street life of Fuengirola, or reconnecting with interviewees.

During the different periods of fieldwork I had a variety of dwellings: hotels, a tourist apartment, and staying in the rented apartment of a Swedish national working on a contract with one of the Swedish institutions on location. The different dwellings were in line with the variety of dwelling options for the different categories of Swedish citizens in the region. I found it very useful, for instance, to visit the region as tourists do while staying in a hotel by the beach, with the waves of the ocean accompanying the visit, and becoming mesmerized by the vacation atmosphere. This is often the type of encounters that the migrants initially have had with the area, which is known to be a fact triggering the decision to migrate (cf. Williams and Hall 2002; O’Reilly 2003; 2007). Such a visit was also valuable to have experienced, in contrast to the main fieldwork from January to June 2009, which showed that residing on location obviously consists of days with routine, having obligations, and having to dress warmly because of a winter cold, i.e. a very dull everyday life.

Participant experience

The central intention of the fieldwork during the spring of 2009 was, besides carrying out interviews, to try to become a transnational subject attentive to the practices of belonging while living in a transnational context together with migrants from Sweden. This intention was inspired by the well-established method of participant observation, expanded into participant experience, a concept coined by the ethnologist Kjell Hansen (2003:160, see also Århem 1994:25 about the related concept of “participant reflection”). The method was a means to do sensory ethnography (Pink 2009; Pripp and Öhlander 2011:128). This meant that I participated and experienced everyday life with the Swedish migrant group. I took an active part in their activities and engagements where it was possible. In practice, I was living in Fuengirola on the Costa del Sol, while creating an everyday life with routines—such as grocery shopping, going to the gym, and eating out—that
offered daily and spontaneous encounters with all sorts of events and people living in Fuengirola. In addition, I actively tried to engage in the activities organized and offered within the Swedish infrastructure. That is to say, I had my meals at Swedish restaurants and cafés, I had my hair cut and chatted at the Swedish hairdresser, I attended holidays and festivities celebrated within the Swedish collective, and I had dinners with migrants who I had become friends with, and so on. Most significant was my participation in the choir in the Swedish church, where I was able to meet migrants informally and quite naturally, to make friends and take part in and deepen my understanding of the Swedish migrant cultural milieu. By interacting with migrants in places where they live and spend their everyday life, I used my own actions, interactions, impressions, and thoughts as a means to understand the researched phenomenon, as proposed by scholars engaged in research within the phenomenological tradition (Frykman 2006; Frykman and Gilje 2003; Bengtsson 2001). Along the lines of Sara Pink’s arguments for doing sensory ethnography (2009:34), my experience of everyday situations with migrants was a means to reach an empathetic understanding through sensorial experiences, personal engagement and embodied knowledge of participating within the Swedish migrant group.

My participant experience has to be recognized as a co-participation, in that I not only followed events and people, but also shaped them by being engaged, while participating, and sharing my experiences with others. This made me a constituent of the Swedish lifestyle migration phenomenon on the Costa del Sol. For instance, a Swedish radio show on location acknowledged my research on one occasion, and on another occasion I gave a lecture to high school students at the Swedish school. Since singing in the church choir meant singing Swedish songs to an audience, I was also a most obvious agent in contributing to cultural reproduction at concerts at the Swedish venues.

Despite having a general pre-knowledge of the phenomenon, as well as of Spain, my gender, age, and private circumstances, such as not having children of my own at the time, restrained me from naturally gaining access to all events and places of the Swedish migrant experience. I could hardly join the activities of the retired groups on an equal basis with the pensioners. Nor did I have access to the activities for families and small children. I was left out of the daily interactions and conversations in cases like those mentioned, which has an effect on the outcome of the thesis in that their experiences are left out. On the occasions where I naturally could take part in the activities, my outsider position was emphasized through ordinary talk since it differs depending on the talkers’ similarities in age, gender, region of origin, length of stay, reason for stay, etc.

When I review my fieldwork with a critical eye, I stumble on the quest for an experienced understanding of Swedish migrant lives on the Costa del Sol. On a philosophical note, I wonder to what degree it was possible to become
a transnational subject and try to embody the experience of others. Was it at all possible? On the one hand, experience is self-referral. As an ethnographic researcher you have to try at least to experience yourself in order to understand the experience of others. For my part, I was able to draw on an empathetic understanding from my own life in that my husband has another country of origin than his country of residence. Within our family we live transnationally in several ways. In addition, I am from a small rural community and discovered that many of the people I met were not from the big cities but had similar origins to my own. On the other hand, as a transnational subject my research aim was not to attain a similar or exact understanding of the migrants but to interpret and analyze the migration stories and practices that were being told and made about living transnationally. That is to say, I also found not understanding and not sharing experience beneficial because it made me ask other types of questions. Common experiences proved to be important in that they offered opened doors within the Swedish migrant group, but not knowing gave rise to important surprises, which in turn led to new and different insights into the phenomenon in question.

Serial interviews

While I experienced and participated as a transnational subject, I conducted a series of conversational interviews which were digitally recorded, with twelve migrants from Sweden, seven women and five men. I had a very spontaneous, flexible routine of asking random people on location if they wanted to be a part of the study. In addition, I had connections with migrants before entering fieldwork. Therefore, a natural starting point for me was to ask them if they were willing to participate or if they knew someone who would participate. Furthermore, I e-mailed companies that addressed the Swedish migrant population and asked if their staff wanted to participate. In addition, I asked the interviewees that were already engaged in the study whether they could recommend anyone.

Conversational interviews are also part of the embodied participant experience (Pink 2009:82), since it is not only a matter of talking but experiencing a sensorial social encounter or an event where gestures, sounds, tastes, and other embodied sensations are channels to a shared migration experience that we spoke of and related to during the meetings. The locations of the interviews were important in this sense since they were chosen by the interviewees themselves. This often led to an invitation to the emplaced life-worlds of the interviewees. To meet Majken for interviews meant, for instance, to sit on a stool at a messy desk with piles of books waiting to find their place on the shelves in the middle of Majken’s busy bookshop, while customers interrupted the interview with questions. Majken then changed from Swedish to Spanish in the middle of a sentence to answer the custom-
ers. Many of the interviews took place in public spaces, such as Majken’s shop, which always meant interviewing while I had to raise my voice in order to speak and be heard above the buzz of other people’s voices. This is related to Pink’s argumentation: “By sitting with another person in their living room, in their chair, drinking their coffee from one of their mugs, one begins in some small way to occupy the world in a way that is similar to them” (2009:86). The embodied experiences of interviewing contextualize the migration stories and will be presented if pertinent to the analysis. In addition, it gave the interviews an associative and spontaneous approach that deviated from my initial plans that are presented below, since we were able to talk about topics that appeared from the surrounding environment, such as comments about the location where we were sitting or people that happened to stop by while we were talking.

In order to acquire an in-depth character for the interviews, I met the interviewees on three or four occasions. Each occasion lasted from one to several hours, depending on the chemistry and talkativeness of both me as an interviewer and the interviewee. The aim was to let the interviewees thoroughly tell their emigration experience, their perception of being in a voluntary migrant position, and their strategies of living their everyday life with reference to a country of origin different from the country of residence; in other words, the general theme of the interview accounts revolved around the experience of migration, and how such an experienced is lived on an everyday basis. The interviews are considered to have more of a life story character than a traditional interview, in combination with a focus on the interviewees’ identification and position in relation to experiencing migrancy. Therefore, the material derived from the conversational interview is called migration stories.

My ambition with the migration stories was to follow threads about living as a migrant in a transnational context. I opened the first interview in a broad and general manner by asking how the interviewees came to migrate and live on the Costa del Sol, that is, asking them to tell me their migration story where the interviewee thought it started. Whenever the conversation came to a halt I had more specific questions to ask concerning the everyday life of a migrant in-between two different national contexts. Thereafter each conversational interview concentrated on different themes, but still revolving around migration as a frame for everyday life. For instance, the second occasion focused on the interviewees’ connection and contact with Spain versus Sweden. The third conversation dealt with how to create belonging and a sense of home. On the fourth occasion we spoke of civil issues such as citizenship, social responsibility, and loyalty to the two countries in question. If there was any reason to cut down the interview sessions, the series of interviews was narrowed down to three times, thus melding discussions of theme three and four together.
To meet several times for conversational interviews proved to be very pertinent in many ways because with time, both trust and confidence were built up between the interviewees and me. This enabled a better understanding of each individual story and background than if there had been only one interview. Moreover, a series of interviews gave me the possibility to ask clarifying questions when there was something uncertain and to fill in the blanks in the story told on the previous occasion we had met. Overall, the method of conducting several interviews with the same migrants also proved to be most suitable for the lifestyles led at a tourist destination such as the Costa del Sol. A common feature is the notion of having a more flexible and spontaneous attitude to time. Since some had relocated to the area to lead a slower pace of life, far from full agendas and scheduling, the choice of method matched the rhythm of the lives of the interviewees. It was never hard to interfere as many times as needed with the series of interviews.

My position as a researcher seemed to be looked upon in a variety of ways. Some of the female interviewees really wanted to talk about their experience and viewed the interview as therapeutic. Others viewed my role as yet another representative of a negative media coverage from Sweden about the Swedish lifestyle migrant phenomenon on the Costa del Sol that has been in the making over the years (see Svenska Dagbladet 2006:14; Kalla Fakta, TV4; P1 Dokumentär 2003). In a similar vein, some hoped that I would be the one to tell the world about “how it really is down here,” as a counter image to the negative media coverage. Due to my young-looking features I was also approached as a harmless and kind student writing my school assignment, as if I was not posing a threat of any kind when I came to ask my questions.

In addition to the serial conversational interviews, I also conducted shorter interviews with authoritative figures within the Swedish groups, such as the minister of the Swedish church, the pastor of the Scandinavian Tourist Church, the editor-in-chief of the Swedish magazine En Sueco, the headmaster of the Swedish school, and so on. I regard these interviews as material to contextualize the Swedish migration phenomenon.

To observe and describe

An additional method used was to note down observations as textual descriptions. Attempting the position of an outsider, I placed myself at different locations in the coastal town of Fuengirola, as well as at special events di-
rected to migrants. I visited the Swedish venues regularly to observe and describe the practices and interactions going on there on a habitual daily basis. To exemplify, I refer to occasions such as the coffee hours of the Swedish church, some classes I followed in the Swedish school, recurrent bridge playing at a Swedish restaurant, or singing religious hymns at the Scandinavian Tourist Church. The interview sessions were also events that I observed and afterward took notes on. That is to say, I noted down my reflections from the sessions about the place where we were sitting, if something happened during the interview or what was said after the dictaphone had been turned off. This was especially interesting since the interviews gave me opportunities to visit people’s homes, workplaces, and preferred restaurants and cafés to eat, which offered me a possibility to ask additional questions pertinent to the setting where the interview was held.

The outcome of this method is a corpus of descriptive material about the specifics of Fuengirola and different locations where migrants live and put their lives into practice. In a sense the method generated a limited or narrow type of data. However, in conjunction with the other types of methods used for the study, it is an important complementary resource. The shift of search-light from the insider to the outsider position adds descriptive richness to the analyzed practices.

Analysis and interpretation of migration stories

The phenomenological perspective views narration as a reflection of the lifeworld, according to Michael Jackson (1996:39). It is also a social practice that comes about in an embodied dialogue with the interviewer (ibid. 2002:18, see also Pink 2009). As such, the interviewees co-construct the migration experiences into narrative form along with me. This is done by choosing and making a selection of experiences that are worth telling me. The interviewees might have told their stories based on what they believed I wanted to hear. For instance, the individual effort of adjustment and adaptation to the local society was often stressed. A possible explanation for this may be that the interviewees thought integration to be the focus of the research. The interviewees might have responded to an assumed aim of studying integration. In addition, during recent years there has been a strong European public opinion about the need to integrate immigrants in European societies, also clearly apparent in Sweden (see Ågren 2006:16). This is a common discourse that is made noticeable behind the lines of the conversations. In addition, before my fieldwork in spring 2009 Swedish media had focused on themes such as escapism from Sweden, alcoholism among the Swedes, and segregation of the Swedish population on the Costa del Sol while reporting on the Swedish lifestyle migrant group along the southern
By articulating a migration story, the narration becomes a presentation of the self that reflects the experiences of the migration that leads to the present day. The ethnologist Susanne Nylund Skog argues: “Human beings change the relationship with the world by saying something about it. Thus, stories are practices, central to how we understand ourselves, our past, our future, and our present time” (2012:19, my translation). I understand the narration of migration stories in a similar way and study the migration stories as a process that interlinks form, content, and meaning, i.e. narrating is a practice of expressing one’s lifeworld by telling a story to someone else.

In addition, the accounts of the interviews are called migration stories because they are narrations of how the migration has come to reflect the lifeworlds of the interviewees. Similar to life stories (Arvidsson 1998; Atkinson 1998), I regard the biography of the interviewees as significant, but through the perspective of being a migrant. I base my understanding of migration stories on the general hypothesis that the migration moment can be considered a turning point in life on the basis of which the migrants orientate their experiences. The migration as a turning point becomes dependent on a before and an after the migration moment and has a change of lifestyle or social status at the core of the narration, along the lines of the ethnologist Alf Arvidsson’s discussion of turning points (1998:25). This is confirmed elsewhere in studies of lifestyle migration (Benson 2007; O’Reilly 2000; see also Benson and O’Reilly 2009b:616). Telling a migration story I regard as narrating a sequence of events, which can be viewed as major or minor turning points in life, i.e. significant and extraordinarily meaningful in the narrative orientation of one’s life, as argued by Arvidsson (1998:25; 61ff; see also 30

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Denzin 1989:33). To organize the turning points of one’s life trajectory into a coherent and unifying whole is a means to make the experiences meaningful and shape an understanding of one’s place in the world, which I find pertinent in the case of migration stories. This is related to Jackson’s argumentation: “Story-telling is a coping strategy that involves making words stand for the world, and then, by manipulating them, changing one’s experience of the world” (2002:18). I will explore how the interviewees shape their experiences as turning points and regard the effects and significance placed in this practice in the migration stories.

The migration stories are organized and structured, which makes the events retold coherent. The structure reveals something about how the accounts are valued by the interviewees as they are told in retrospect as a selection of lived experiences chosen for some reason. Depending on the age and life stage of the interviewee, the migration stories can be understood as told from a space of experience or from a horizon of expectation (cf. Koselleck 2004), which determines how the stories can be told. Jackson refers to this aspect of story-telling as bringing about a moment of closure (ibid. 2002:33). But the migration stories show that the closure can either be understood as a review of the interviewee’s past as it is seen at the moment of narration (cf. Arvidsson 1998:20, 21). Alternatively, it can be told from the perspective of having accomplished a migration, being established in several ways on the Costa del Sol, but simultaneously pointing toward the future, toward a horizon of expectation. The temporal dimensions of storytelling will be analyzed through this perspective in the thesis. The structure is also a proof of agency (Jackson 2002), as the interviewee actively revises and shapes the experiences, in addition to defining their meaning together with me during the interview. I will analyze the kind of organizing principles that are used while narrating a migration story.

The migration stories present experiences of identification and positioning, in line with the objective of the thesis. As discussed earlier, this is explored with inspiration from the theoretical concept of translocational positionality (Anthias 2012; 2008; 2002). The concept is pertinent to use in order to be able to examine the multiple and sometimes contradictory positions that are articulated in the migration stories. It is useful for being sensitive to the different locations and contexts that the interviewees tell stories about, that is, in the new country, in the old country, and in contexts of their own migrant group. In addition, the intersectional framing of the concept helps me to highlight the social categories that are activated in telling the migration stories. In sum, a migration story, like the life story, conveys interpretation and explanation of the lived life through the practice of story-telling with me as an interviewer and listener. The migration story also provides a presentation of the self and notions about others in the different migrant contexts that are set at play, in addition to expressing a moral stance, while being shaped on the basis of cultural and structural conditions.
The migration stories are told in dialogue with wider cultural narratives, contexts and conventions through time and locality. By telling a migration story, the interviewees are able to shape and negotiate their understanding of the self and the outer world. This is done by preserving and maintaining convention, according to cultural and structural conditions, whilst telling the migration story, but also by negotiating and portraying struggles against social orders, which can result in contradictory, contrasting, and ambiguous accounts of the practicality of the everyday life of the migrants. There are certain ways of making collective cultural and structural conditions shine through the migration stories, for instance, in the portrayal of personal experiences in the midst of changing historical and societal events (Lowenthal 1985:194ff). The story-telling can be seen as a reflection of moral norms and values in society in that the stories are framed by the aspiration of late modernity for free choice and the ideals of the individual taking life into his or her own hands, making something out of it, and telling a plausible story about it (see Svensson 1997). How the interviewees adhere to this particular norm by narrating their migration story will be discussed in relation to how structures of power and global world orders are handled through narration. In sum, I explore how the interviewees understand and present themselves, make meaning, and tell their lives in accordance with overall cultural and structural conditions, but also how they make space for individual agency and action in relation to cultural and structural conditions.

There are several scholars in ethnology who have devoted their research to migration stories (Wolf-Knuts 2000), even though they might not themselves use the term migration stories for the life stories of migration (see Nylund Skog 2012; Lukkarinen Kvist 2006; Pripp 2001). For instance, Beatriz Lindqvist’s dissertation Drömmar och vardag i exil (Dreams and Reality in Exile) (1991) depicts the life stories of Chilean refugees that came to Sweden after the coup d’état, when President Salvador Allende was overthrown by armed forces and national police. Through the perspective of Ricoeur’s dialectic phenomenology, Lindqvist analyzes narrated life stories about the relationship between a historical past and the everyday life in exile. Above all, Michael Jackson’s The Politics of Story-telling (2002) is an inspiring and insightful book dealing with the intersubjective conditions of story-telling about different forms of mobility and displacement experiences. The analysis is based on research on story-telling in a variety of worldwide contexts and settings, such as among refugees and other displaced groups. Jackson leans on Hannah Arendt’s work and views of story-telling, in which the connection of the private and public realms is explored.
Material culture

I explore how the migrants use *material objects* and express meaning through the dialectic relation between story-telling and using material culture in the process of creating belonging. Susanne Nylund Skog writes that material objects become charged with significance through a narration about the objects, but also that stories come about through objects (2012:143). In a similar vein, material objects and environments are a cause for narration in the migration stories, and given meaning through narration, as I will show.

I view materiality as a vital part of the process of forging belonging since material objects can be understood as reflections of the interviewees’ life-worlds and orientations, similar to how the anthropologist Daniel Miller understands and examines material objects in London homes (2008, see also Londos 1993). Through being used in different contexts, the material objects and environments become charged with notions, emotions, and symbolic associations as part of a self-presentation, as argued by the ethnologist Eva Silvén (2011:148).

Materiality plays a specific role in transnational migration, as material objects, such as clothes, foods, gifts, and commodities are sent, carried, packed, and unpacked across the European continent and connect one place to another. As transitory or linking objects, they embody continuity between the old and the new country, as Maja Povrzanović Frykman and Michael Humbracht (2013) argue. Material objects are not only potential symbols and carriers of meaning, they also create concrete social ties that bridge territorial borders and long distances as they are used and lived with on a habitual and daily basis despite a changed location.

Simultaneously, it has been shown that migration alters the way material objects are used and understood. In a phenomenological vein, objects can be understood as having an impact on migrants, and the impact is determined by the orientation of the migrant and what the migrant perceives. Sara Ahmed states: “Perception […] involves orientation; what is perceived depends on where we are located, which gives us a certain take on things” (2006:27). Hence, physical objects are changed as they are ascribed new meanings and areas of usage through both the spatial and the temporal movement. The temporal dimension is vital in the study of migration, as the relocation of things is linked to their biography in that they are redefined and used in new different ways, as argued by the anthropologist Igor Kopytoff (1986). The migration and biography of a material object might correspond to the migration and biography of the migrant, which can be understood as a personification of materiality (Tilley 2006a:63). Accompanying the migrants, material objects might become tools and expressions of anchorage and affiliation during the spatial transition between Sweden and Spain, but also from past times to present.
The study of the material world as a key to an understanding of the everyday life of people has long traditions in ethnology. From making descriptions and inventories of people’s material lives in early ethnological studies, the focus has turned to symbolic and meaning-making processes through materiality. For instance, Eva Londos’ dissertation *Uppå väggarna i svenska hem* (On the Walls of Swedish Homes) (1993) studies how people understand and construct their home environment by displaying different types of art work, paintings, pictures and things on the walls of their homes. In the Danish contribution to material culture studies in ethnology, *Materialiseringer* (Materializations) (Damholst *et al.* 2009), there is a focus on materiality with agency that means doing or making through processes, in relations with others, and through performance. A similar methodology is the approach to material culture that Povrzanović Frykman uses in her research project that aims to highlight the role played by materiality in making the social and spatial connections of migrants (2010; see also Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013).

**Ethnography in writing**

So to whom do I give a voice to tell the story of how belonging is created? In the following pages, the migration stories of Margareta, Lars, Markus, Andreas, Simon, Karin, Lena, Tilde, Eva, Majken, Anna, Fredrik, Sofie, Gunnar, Sonja, and other migrants from Sweden will be presented and followed through their forging of belonging and aspirations to find themselves at home on the Costa del Sol. The interviewees listed have been given fictive names and at times one person and his or her experiences may be hidden behind more than one name in order to further ensure anonymity. They are all Swedish citizens, ranging from 21 to 85 years of age, with a wide variety of reasons for having made the voluntary and exclusive decision to live on the Costa del Sol. The youngest have lived off and on in Spain and in Sweden during the last three years, but quite a few have spent over thirty years living permanently in the region. All but Anna have strong and daily links to the Swedish population and its institutions and organizations on the Costa del Sol. A majority of them lives in the coastal town of Fuengirola or in its proximity. The greater part of the interviewees in the study owns the apartments and houses they live in, and just a few rent an apartment. They all have strong connections to Sweden, as their country of origin, but the shape of the connection varies significantly. Some make frequent trips each year, others live there during the summer months, some have friends and family in Sweden who visit them and to whom they speak on a regular basis. All of them are consumers of Swedish media from Sweden in one form or another.

They are brought together in this study by their migration from Sweden to the Costa del Sol, where they are all registered residents and live on a per-
manent basis. In other words, at the time of the interviews they had no aspiration to return to Sweden but they share the possibility to return to and visit their country of origin when they wish to and for long periods of time. Hence, they are involved in a privileged, voluntary migration with an intentional permanency as registered residents of the municipalities on the Costa del Sol. Their motif for migration is a change of lifestyle in a region that can offer a more rewarding way of life for a variety of reasons: a better climate, a relaxing atmosphere, a different and more interesting culture, an international or multicultural population, or for the sake of personal factors such as to enable a transnational relationship and marriage. This particular migration is often conceptualized as lifestyle migration (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014; Benson and O’Reilly 2009a, 2009b). Included in and intersecting the noted migration phenomenon, there are also other types of migrations, such as love migration (see King 2002), which is based on transnational relationships and marriage, and student migration, which means the relocation of students who go abroad to study at university or on independent language courses and happen to stay put in the new country (ibid.). Several of the interviewees in the study carry these kinds of experiences. In addition, they share a connection to a Swedish infrastructure that addresses other Swedish migrants on location. They all contribute in constructing a Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol in multiple ways: by their participation in events organized by Swedish institutions on location, by their work for the Swedish infrastructure, or by their relation to different Swedish institutions, organizations, and private enterprises on a daily basis.

The migration stories will be described and analyzed together with my own reflective experience as a transnational subject in field. Thus, my voice as the researcher subject will be present at times in the text, with reference to my own experiences in the field and as a participant in the conversational interviews.

The use of language is an important issue in studies of transnationality (e.g. Wiklund 2011). In fieldwork almost all verbal communication, including the interviews, took place in the Swedish language, and my field notes were written in Swedish. I also speak Spanish and I communicated fairly easily in Spanish in different contexts when that was pertinent. I speak English, which is commonly used along the coast. To have a knowledge of these three languages is also common among the interviewees. A majority of them speak advanced Spanish. Many communicate daily in Spanish, English, and Swedish through their work or with neighbors, family, and friends. Hence, to share a knowledge of the languages the interviewees speak has been an advantage for me since we have shared a linguistic frame of reference, which was made noticeable in many different conversations and topics about the migration experiences.

Since the thesis is written in English, so that it can be disseminated to an English-speaking research community, the empirical material has been trans-
lated from Swedish to English, which meant an additional dimension of interpretation through translation. There are other examples of a similar procedure in ethnomethodological research (e.g. Gerber 2011:28, Farahani 2007:55). Throughout the text, the quotations from the interviews have the shape of a dialogue in English with the Swedish original transcriptions in footnotes as a service of transparency for the reader. Often in the verbal accounts the interviewees use an impersonal style of speaking, while using passive constructions and the word ‘one’ (man in Swedish) as the subject, which is fairly common while speaking Swedish. Here I have used the first person pronoun in the translations into English. All in all, the translations have been changed in order to be more easily read for the reader. I have removed humming, side-tracks, and other types of topics appearing aside from the general theme of conversation. In the text I have tried to maintain the form, convey the atmosphere, and present the differences in intensity and volume while speaking.

Outline

After this first introductory chapter the thesis continues with the interviewees’ desire to find one’s place on the Costa del Sol, which has generated an orientation toward migration to the southern coast of Spain. Chapter 2, *Narrating Migration Stories*, explores how the Swedish migrants narrate about the events that led up to migration, and how the relocation is accomplished in migration stories. In this chapter, there is a focus on how the migration stories are told, structured, and made significant as a part of creating belonging.

Chapter 3, *Positioning Oneself and Others*, deals with how the interviewees position themselves and others in relation to other collective groups, as well as in relation to other Swedish migrants dwelling along the Costa del Sol. This chapter also presents processes of identification, inclusion and exclusion with the use of language in transnational contexts.

To find one’s place and to create belonging subsequently leads to a desire to find oneself at “home” from a state of disorientation that can be a result of migration. Chapter 4, *Home on the Costa del Sol*, explores how notions of home are expressed and feeling at home has been accomplished in relation to residency on the Costa del Sol. The chapter analyses both how notions of home are expressed and how material culture is made significant in the making of homes.

Chapter 5, *Homeland Sweden*, turns the focus toward notions and practices in relation to the homeland, Sweden. The chapter presents how past and present connections with Sweden are understood and made meaningful for Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol.
Chapter 6, *The Swedish Collective Formation on the Costa del Sol*, focuses on practices that are acted upon in order create collective belonging within different arenas with Swedish connotations: the Swedish infrastructure as a workplace, social clubs, the Lucia celebration in the Swedish church, the Christmas celebration in family contexts, and a hat parade in the Swedish female social organization SWEA.

The thesis ends with a Chapter 7, *Finding One’s Place*, which will discuss how belonging is created while implying a reorientation in the Swedish migrants’ lives on the Costa del Sol.
2. Narrating Migration Stories

The present chapter studies how the practice of story-telling is part of forging belonging, as a form of identity-making and figuring out one’s place in the world while narrating about the migration to the Costa del Sol. How is the individual migration story told, structured, and made significant to me as a researcher and co-producer of the story-telling? How do the interviewees position themselves in the migration stories? How do the migration stories convey complex relations between the narrator self and wider cultural and structural conditions? How is story-telling about the migration experiences part of creating belonging? I explore how migration stories are structured and stand in connection to collective memories and grand narratives, but also how conventional ways of story-telling are contested, negotiated, and reveal contradictions and contrasts by the interviewees. The different roles of me as the researcher and the interviewees are also discussed, in addition to the self-presentations that shape the migration stories.

The chapter proceeds from the general hypothesis that the migration moment is considered to be a turning point in life, from which the interviewees orientate their experiences. Following the phenomenological approach of Sara Ahmed (2011; 2006), the migration moment can be understood as an event turning orientation in life into disorientation, as the interviewees aspire to inhabit a new place. One dimension of experiencing a turning point in life is to face oneself or one’s position in life. How do they portray themselves in the migration stories? Ahmed writes that “‘turning’ [is] crucial to subject formation. One becomes a subject through ‘turning around’” (2006:15). To tell of such a turning point is to depict a before and an after the life-changing event, with a change of lifestyle or social status at the core of the narration (Arvidsson 1998:25). This is also confirmed in other studies of migration stories of lifestyle migrants (Benson 2007; O’Reilly 2000; see also Benson and O’Reilly 2009b:616).

In the present chapter, I will pay special attention to the migration stories of Margareta, Lars, Markus, Andreas, Simon, Karin, and Lena. Their migration stories are seven representations that give an illustrative depiction of how the individual narration conveys different and similar migration experiences in connection with making sense of one’s place in the world.
Margareta—narrating against convention

For Margareta, born in 1933, the initial event which gave birth to the dream of migration to Spain is a sequence of events that she experienced from her early professional years as a flight attendant in the 1950’s on the first charter trips to Mallorca, Spain, from Sweden.

Margareta tells me:

“And I remember very well the first time I came back from one of the trips and I said to my parents: ‘I have discovered a new country!’ ‘Where is it?’ they replied. ‘It’s south of the Pyrenees and it’s called Spain.’ You know, back then the rest of Europe was well known but not Spain because it was hidden for the rest of the world and for tourism. It was back then it started slowly. ‘Aha!’ they said. ‘Oh, it is so amazing and it is nice and it is sunny.’ My mother was worshipping the sun so she said: ‘Oh, then we need to go and have a look at it. So they bought a charter trip and went down here. First to Mallorca on one trip, than to Barcelona on the next trip and then they decided to move. So they moved down. They moved to Spain already in 1959. My dad took early retirement and my mom was a housewife so it went well. They sold their home in Sweden and bought a house south of Barcelona and lived there quite a lot of years and then it was natural for us kids to go there when we had time off. That’s how it happened that Spain always became our vacation resort, you could say.”

The account is a complete and fixed version that Margareta depicts twice during our interview sessions, using almost exactly the same words about how the desire to migrate to Spain became an orientation in life for Margareta. I have also found the same narrated sequence told in another interview she gave in a Swedish magazine on the coast (En Sueco, January 2009). It is a version she has settled with as the origin of her migration experience. The account becomes her explanatory version of how her life came to be directed toward the Costa del Sol as part of her orientation. Because of the fixity of the account, it can be viewed as significant in her understanding and way of making sense of how she ended up on the coast. The ethnologist Billy Ehn claims that such fixed narratives are common in life stories together with

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two other types of narrations: (1) a spontaneous construction of the narration as the narrator searches his or her way through the conversation in order to settle with a version of a story, and (2) collectively established genres of how to tell a life story (Ehn 1992:215, see also Arvidsson 1998:25).

The unique and fixed episode of how Margareta discovered Spain is linked to the historical birth of the charter tourism era and the mass-tourism boom in Europe that brought people to Spain. Indeed, she even flew on one of the first flights from Sweden to Mallorca in the 1950’s when the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975) was about to open the country to tourism. Margareta’s individual migration story is connected to the European collective experiences of a reachable world thanks to affordable airplane fares and yearly vacations, as a consequence of Northern European social reforms in welfare systems, and an increase in expendable income (cf. Orbador Pons et al. 2009:2). Personally experienced stories are often told from the horizon of collective history. The narrators are able to link the individual experience with collective historical events and development (Lowenthal 1985:197). The individual biography can be understood as a search for belonging both in present life and in the past. To narrate one’s biography becomes a practice of establishing a connection between one’s own life and other people in the present time and in the past (Frykman 1992:259; see also Svensson 2011:26).

The relocation of Margareta’s parents to Spain spurred her own intention to migrate, but it was not done without effort. Before the migration, she lived periods of her life in other geographical places, such as Belgium, Stockholm, and Mallorca. To mention and recall her life in different places is a way to structure Margareta’s migration story together with the different occupations she upheld during the different periods, such as flight attendant, housewife, secretary, interpreter, etc. The organization highlights the periods of residency as more important than the exact temporal references, due to the different occupations and life situations she tells me about in association with the geographical places. The folklorist Anne Heimo claims that memory resonates with places rather than time references since places activate and attach memory to a wider set of senses (2006:53). To recall geographical places is a way to guide and ground the narrator in linking the past self to the present self (Povrzanović Frykman 2001c:128). In addition, the narrated course of Margareta follows the general procedure of lifestyle migration. It is often triggered by previous experience abroad (King et al. 2000).

There is always a structure organizing any story about personal experiences, which makes the events retold coherent. The structure or plot gives meaning to the different parts, since they are told in retrospect and selected for the purpose of narration. Causality is an organizational principle common in Margareta’s migration stories, in addition to organizing the narration according to the geographical places where she has lived. Unpredictable events were the cause of actions in a new direction for her, such as moving to Mal-
lorca, which came to an end when her son started to suffer from asthma, or controversies in the social club in Fuengirola where she came to work, which caused a relocation to the coastal town of Marbella for a period of some years. Margareta’s migration story is characterized by both settlement in different local and national locations and breaking up from them. In hindsight, the causal organization seems coherent and logical, but as a lived experience the events could have been perceived as disparate and with no interrelation (Öberg 1997:77). For Margareta, the coherence and logic of her migration story justify her life choices and enable an understanding of the sequence of events which led to her position as a migrant on the Costa del Sol.

In Margareta’s narration, there is a constant intention to migrate to Spain, which she declares with statements like: “It was always Spain that attracted me” or “Now I have to move down to Spain.” Such statements together with the portrayal of being an active narrator push the plot forward. Over a period of many years she made regular trips to her parents in Spain and eventually tried to materialize her dream of moving there herself. This she accomplished thirty years ago. She settled with her sons in Fuengirola, thanks to the Swedish School on location and the fact that she immediately was able to find occupation within the Swedish institutions. Both became important incentives for establishing herself and feeling at home. Margareta’s migration story can be viewed as an account of acting with intention and staying orientated toward migration to Spain, despite the many events taking her off course. Sara Ahmed states that to have an orientation toward something is to follow a line of direction, and in the dedication we become committed to what and where the line takes us until we reach the goal of our aspiration (2006:17). Margareta’s migration story can be viewed as a proof of this. On the other hand, Margareta’s story-telling is colored by my initial question, “How did you end up on the Costa del Sol?” Hence, the migration story can be understood as justifying the decision to migrate by repeating her intention to migrate, revealing the episodes that took her off course and presenting herself as someone who finally achieves what she wishes for.

The migration story is above all portrayed as an emancipatory project, where Margareta positions herself as an independent and self-sufficient woman. The position stems from her self-presentation as a professional woman, earning her own money, trying married life as a housewife while having small children in Belgium, which ended in divorce, moving to Sweden as a single parent whilst continuing her professional career, and then eventually migrating alone with two children as a single parent who had to provide for her family. The migration story demonstrates how a lifestyle migration is made possible to undertake for a woman and single parent dur-

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8 "Det var alltid Spanien som lockade.” “Nu måste jag flytta ner [till Spanien].” (Interview with Margareta, February 9, 2009)
ing the second half of the twentieth century. Margareta’s migration as an emancipatory project thus echoes the moral expectations put upon a Swedish woman during the 1950’s and the following decades, especially within the family, within which a woman was supposed to be a good wife and housewife, rather than undertaking a professional career and eventually migrating alone with small children.

In addition, Margareta’s migration story reflects a general development in understanding the self, along the lines of late modernity. According to the anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, a shift in self-definition occurred during the twentieth century. During the first half of the twentieth century, individuals defined themselves to a greater extent with reference to collective norms “of being of use” for others, in contrast to the second half of the twentieth century, during which there was a general tendency to formulate an understanding of the self in terms of “being oneself” and of making something out of oneself independently (1996:285ff). Accordingly, lifestyle migration as a globalized mobility can be connected to late modern ideals of self-creation, individual preferences, and self-exploration. Margareta’s migration story mirrors collective expectations put upon a woman during her family-building years, which was followed by her individual efforts to break loose from the expectation and carry out a migration on her own with her two children. Hence, her migration story reveals the cultural and structural conditions that have influenced her life trajectory, in which she has been able to maneuver and lead her life. Her account reflects a “structural reflexivity” (Lash 1994), within which a reflective standpoint is taken in association with structural conditions influencing the self, and with agency to act upon in such conditions. The tension between structural conditions and individual agency in Margareta’s story-telling can be seen as a social critique.

The migration story is a depiction of a successful endeavor, which follows a cultural life-script of how the migration experience ought to be narrated. Jonas Frykman argues that in following a cultural life-script, a person narrates a life story based on ideas of how a life story is supposed to be told (1992:261). To be under the influence of a cultural life-script is a means to establish understanding and coherence between the self and the outer world, between the individual experience and the collective experience. It is also a possible outcome in the situation in which it is narrated. The interview session with a researcher having a purpose with her questions enabled the migration story to be told and is part of the condition that might have spurred Margareta’s narration in shaping the migration experience into a prosperous and positive relocation. This also had an impact on how Margareta positions herself as a successful agent, in order to fulfill assumed expectations from me as a researcher. Similar experiences have been accounted for in research based on life story interviews (see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2006:37; Pripp 2001:71).
Lars—a success story in line with collective norms

The migration story told by Lars, a retired officer from the Swedish Armed Forces born in 1943, is yet another example of how an actual image of a lifestyle already encountered during his life was nourished as a dream to fulfill and be orientated toward during his retirement. His migration story proceeds from an episode about his experiences of a restaurant he had visited in the United States, while being in the Swedish Navy. After having regularly attended the social events organized by the restaurant, Lars had fostered a dream of setting up a similar restaurant during retirement in Spain. Lars’ migration story is chronologically told and is also organized with geographical places as the organizing principle. The geographical places are other lifestyle migration destinations, such as Marbella and Cyprus, where Lars had stayed before establishing himself in Fuengirola. Lars’ migration story also follows the trend of having previous experience abroad which influences the decision about lifestyle migration, like the conclusions of research by Russell King, Tony Warnes and Allan Williams (2000).

In addition, Lars’ narration is a depiction of relocation during retirement, which is a widespread phenomenon, conceptualized as International Retirement Migration (IRM) (Gustafson 2013; King et al. 2000). The geographical places that preceded his permanent move to Fuengirola are rushed through during the story-telling, since the focus is mainly on how he settled and came to accomplish his vision unexpectedly. He continues to tell me how he came to fulfill his dream:

“Then I had a colleague from the Swedish Armed Forces, who was the chairman of 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 I also 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. To improve the economy of the club I started Wine and Bingo. Not any boring bingo for people that are sitting like this. Instead it is an exciting atmosphere and fun. And that I think was just what I wanted.”

The social club Clúb Nórdico is a venue for elderly Scandinavians, mainly Swedes. The club became a substitute for the restaurant Lars had wanted to start:

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9 "Sen hade jag då en kollega ifrån Försvaret som var ordförande i någonting som heter Clúb Nórdico så då gick vi med där då va där och då blev Clúb Nórdico lite grann utav vad jag hade drömt om [… ] jag jobbade här på dagarna framför allt höll jag många fester [… ], inrättningsnänting som vi kallar pubafton som vi har en torsdag i varje månad och då kunde jag få göra precis det jag ville va, berätta små historier, sjunga allsång med folk va, hålla gissnings-tävlingar. [… ] För att bättre på klubbens ekonomi så startade jag Vin och Bingo [… ] inte så där trist bingo där alla sitter så här utan det är lite upptrissad stämning och så här kul va. Och det tror jag är precis vad jag ville." (Interview with Lars, February 16, 2009)
“Well, I actually searched for something like this. To be able to spend time on something other than what I had done before. That I would spend time on, not so much the cooking, but rather to devote my time to amuse people, rather than lead them.”

Despite wanting “to devote time to amuse people, rather than lead them” during his senior years, Lars portrays himself as a fulfilled leader, involved in the club within a wide social context of other migrants from Sweden, but also from the other Scandinavian countries. Retirement migration is generally associated with losing both network and status related to occupation, and changing social networks and family ties (Haas 2012:10). Being part of the social club became significant for Lars in this light, as it is a social venue where he could acquire a new social network of other elderly migrants. The engagement in the club helped him turn disorientation from having migrated into reorientation on location. At the time of our conversation, he had spent four years as an active member of the club, through which he has been able to keep his social status of being an active organizer in a leading position, similar to his leading position as an officer in the Swedish Armed Forces. His migration story is therefore dominated by his experiences of the club. He has devoted almost his entire life to it and the club manifested his dream of a restaurant.

Lars is an active narrator that moves the plot forward with speed but few details. His narration has a flavor of agency of how to accomplish a dream by his own initiative but is characterized by disengagement, possibly due to the disconnection between me as a young female researcher and him as a retired man, participating in the interviews more out of obligation as an active member of one of the lifestyle migrant social clubs than personal engagement and excitement. At the same time a cultural life-script of being a success story is prominent in the migration story about how a prosperous migration is to be accomplished. To narrate successful stories of migrations is a common practice within other migrant groups as well. The ethnologist Mirjaliisa Lukkarinen Kvist discusses how Finnish labor migration to Sweden is portrayed in similar terms in her dissertation *Tiden har haft sin gång* (Time Has Passed By) (2006).

In depicting the migration as successful and fulfilled, Lars is presenting himself as an agent who is able to prosperously turn a vision into form. He is similar to Margareta in relating his migration experience to a self-understanding of being an independent and accomplished migrant. Their individual initiative and execution of a lifestyle migration can be understood in terms of social class. Both Margareta and Lars have a middle-class back-

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10 "Ja, jag sökte ju egentligen just det här med att kunna ägna mig åt nåt annat än det jag hade gjort tidigare. Att jag skulle få ägna mig åt kanske inte så mycket det här med matlagning men däremot just att få ägna mig åt att roa folk istället för att leda dem." (Interview with Lars, February 16, 2009)
ground and their life courses have unfolded parallel to the post-war years of financial growth and female emancipation in Swedish society. Especially in the case of Lars, who has migrated during retirement, he can be considered to be “of a generation, the baby-boomers, who have, for the first time in history of the Western world, high levels of expendable wealth accumulated during their working lives and from the assets gained from property. This economic privilege facilitates the search for a new and different way of life” (2009b:618), Michaela Benson and Karen O’Reilly conclude as an explanation for the expansion of International Retirement Migration in the Western World.

This could be understood together with Lars’ self-presentation, which is in line with the conditions of late modernity, which emphasizes a combination of individual free will and free choice as the key to fulfillment and happiness. Accordingly, you are expected to make something out of your life, and to depict it as a prosperous venture (Svensson 1997:5ff). But there are scholars who are critical of such a general and encompassing notion of the modern individual, while arguing that free choice is indeed a privilege of the middle class (Skeggs 2004:57). There is also a rejection of the emphasis on individuality in articulating and depicting one’s individualized project as a successful story (Gullestad 1996:23), since story-telling is always shaped along the lines of collective norms and a collective acceptance of the chosen lifestyle. Hence, Lars’ successful migration story becomes a possible narration along the lines of individualized retirees within the European middle class with expendable wealth, which makes lifestyle migration an available orientation and option to undertake during retirement.

Markus—the successful migration touched by fate

In contrast to Margareta and Lars, it was the imagination that spurred the decision to migrate and gave Markus, a self-employed man born in 1962, an orientation toward migration. Whilst living and working in Sweden, he envisioned having an artist’s life abroad when retiring. It was a charged mental image that might have been generated by notions of Swedish artists taking refuge in Paris during the nineteenth century (cf. Jangfeldt 2003:50). To keep himself orientated toward the dream of migration, Markus gave the dream the working title Nice, which he repeats in his migration story in order to evoke the visions of such an artist’s life.

The overall structure of the migration story of Markus is a causal organization told chronologically. For example, on a Christmas vacation in Nerja, a coastal town to the east of Málaga, Markus and his husband Stefan found an apartment they decided to purchase but happened to lose just in front of their eyes to someone else. While continuing the search for another apartment, they suddenly found the perfect one very underpriced. Troublesome situa-
tions like these have turned into fortunate possibilities in the undertaking of achieving the migration. Events appearing to happen by chance finds their coherent structure due to the retrospective view of the narrator, Jonas Frykman argues (1992:261). Markus’ failures turn into minor turning points in the narration that leads to fulfilling the dream of Nice.

Fate plays a vital role in statements throughout the narration. For instance, Markus tells me about how he received redundancy money, after getting fired from his job, just in time to pay the deposit on the apartment they wanted to buy in Fuengirola. He says:

“I got the redundancy money and that redundancy money came a week before we had to pay the deposit for the apartment. Just like that. So that was really good. We believe in fate a bit, and then we’re meant to move down. When do you get 150,000 Swedish kronor just when you need it?”

As an active and engaged teller of his migration story, Markus is not only depicting himself as a driven person able to act with intention and along the lines of his orientation toward migration, but he also depicts how a higher power has influenced the outcome of his life. Fate signifies an asymmetrical relation (Arvidsson 1998:62), which can be seen as partially governing the life trajectory in Markus’ narration, in contrast to the migration stories of Margareta and Lars where it was solely their own initiative that paved the way to success. Fate is also used to make a narrative point since it is fate that brings forth unexpected solutions. For instance, in repeating that they certainly did not want to live in Fuengirola, Markus pushes the plot forward toward the unexpected relocation to Fuengirola of all places. Indeed, they even deliberately drove by Fuengirola without stopping when they were driving around looking for their dream house. Despite being convinced that Fuengirola was not for them, due to the established Swedish infrastructure which they did not find attractive, they eventually ended up in the coastal town anyway and came to regard it as home: “Now I have come home! It feels so good in my entire body!”

Hence, Markus suggests that a higher power has contributed to his feelings of belonging, articulated in the statement above.

Similar to Markus’ joyful exclamation above, he is very energetic throughout the narration, while using different paralinguistic tools to enhance his story, in contrast to Margareta and Lars. He changes his voice depending on who he is imitating in a dialogue, he gestures and he switches between speaking very fast and loud and speaking slow and almost whisper-

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11 “Jag fick skadestånd och det skadeståndet kom en veckan innan vi skulle betala depositet till lägenheten. Så det bara sväng. Så det var jättebra. Vi tror på ödet lite och då är det meningen att vi ska flytta ner. När får man 150 000 precis när man behöver dom?” (Interview with Markus, April 1, 2009)

12 “Nu är jag hemma! Det känns så bra i hela kroppen!” (Interview with Markus, April 1, 2009)
ing, depending on the effect he wishes to add to the drama being told. He is a very amusing performer and uses his entire body to make his point and transmit additional emphasis and meaning, as Arvidsson claims is the effect of paralinguistic tools (1998:17). I am also an appreciative listener of Markus’ performance as I laugh out loud, responding enthusiastically and getting very engaged in his story. Hence, my active and alert participation and commenting contributes to the embodied and amusing story-telling of Markus.

Markus’ migration story follows above all the cultural life-script of depicting the migration as a success story about how to manifest the vision of Nice in real life without leaving out different minor troublesome turning points that made him change direction along the way. However, such a success story is possible to tell precisely because the goal has been reached, that of being reorientated on the Costa del Sol. Markus is on the safe side at the moment of narration. In retrospect, he can reveal the struggles he has experienced since he has already achieved a position of success: “Now we are near the finishing line. What do we do when we have reached the finishing line?” he asks me rhetorically at the end of our first meeting, to mark the end of a successful story of migration.

Markus’ migration story is told from the intersection of inhabiting a space of experience, while standing at the horizon of expectation, which are concepts coined by the historian Reinhart Koselleck (2004). Koselleck means to say that experience is the past, which takes the shape of memories in the present. This is what migration stories are made of. On the other hand, when Markus asks me what they are supposed to do now that they have reached the finishing line, he suggests that he is standing at the horizon of expectation, which Koselleck describes as “the not-yet, to the nonexperienced, to that which is to be revealed” (ibid.:259), that is, experiences that are within reach. Koselleck claims further that the two temporal conditions are linked in the present, but contain asymmetry in that past experiences can be seen as a totality, but expectations are concentrated on a boundary line with the future. This suggests a prognosis for the future indicating that what is expected follows a line of past experiences. Hence, following this argumentation, Markus has reached the finishing line of his successful story, which is a success that can be achieved by him at the horizon of expectation for the future.

Andreas—narrating a strategic life plan

Andreas, born in 1964 and a professional employee of one of the Swedish institutions on the coast, portrays yet another theme in his migration story. It

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13 "Nu är vi vid målet. Vad gör vi när vi kommit till målet?" (Interview with Markus, April 1, 2009)
is dominated by the tension between searching for a life led internationally, and living in a more authentic Spanish environment, separated from the present Costa del Sol. While depicting this tension, his migration story is at times thoughtful and slow, as if he is trying to figure out what kind of information I am after. I have to ask many questions in order to make sense of the chronology of the plot. Andreas has an academic background and at the time of our interview he is about to complete a doctoral thesis based on interview material. Hence, his initial thoughtfulness and hesitant approach toward me could originate in the fact that he is initiated in the practice of interviewing. He might be uncomfortable with being an interviewee and not the interviewer asking questions. He also tells me that his reason for participation is to contribute to scientific research since he is himself professionally engaged in research. Hence, during the interviews with Andreas we have something similar to a collegial conversation about migration, based on a common understanding of the outcome of our meetings.

In his initial account, he tells me that the reason he started to travel was that he was an exchange student as a teenager. This point of departure spurred an orientation around languages, and other places, which was the incentive to move away from home. In addition, the aftermath of being an exchange student is portrayed as an important crossroads that enhanced an international and global orientation to life that led him to live in other countries, such as the United States and Denmark. Once more, the migration is depicted as being triggered by previous travels, as Russell King, Tony Warnes and Allan Williams have illustrated (2000). An international outlook on life can be categorized as a highlighted theme in his migration story.

A second theme is his fascination with Spain and orientation toward living in Spain. On a phenomenological note, Andreas’ migration story highlights the difference between having an orientation toward something and having an orientation around something. Sara Ahmed writes that to be orientated toward something is to be orientated in a certain direction within reach for the individual, in contrast to being orientated around something, which implicates that a thing is made central or “at the center of one’s being or action” (2006:115f). In Andreas’ migration story, this means that he is orientated around living an international life through the knowledge of different languages and being connected to different places around the globe, while being orientated toward migrating to Spain, which is in line with his international orientation in life.

Early on he reveals that he decided already during the 1990’s that if he was ever going to turn professional within his field of interest he wanted to work in the Swedish institution on the Costa del Sol where he works today. This decision was a way to be able to live in Spain. The particular plan can be viewed as strategic life plan, as proposed by Giddens (1991:85), as a means to acquire a desired future lifestyle, along the lines of individual free choice during late modernity. Giddens states: “Life plans are the substantial
content of the reflexively organized trajectory of the self. Life-planning is a means of preparing a course of future actions” (ibid.). Andreas’ particular life plan coincides with studies in Barcelona and social connections in the southwest of Andalusia, which he depicts as a more authentically Spanish region with genuine Andalusian culture. His combined interest in Spain led to doctoral studies and a thesis in a related subject which offered the possibility to live in Spain during fieldwork.

Late in the migration story he tells me the rather long episode of how he came to live on the Costa del Sol. We are talking about struggles of adaptation to the local society and Andreas tells me how complicated it is to buy a house in Spain, when he unexpectedly tells me:

“But maybe you would like to hear about how I actually… Actually why I bought the house?”

“Yes, I would like to hear about that.”

“It is a story that I tell people that many think is interesting but I think it was the power of fate.”

Andreas’ narration now becomes more animated and engaged, possibly because we have talked for quite a while when he associatively decides to tell me the episode that starts with him buying a dog at a fair while living in Seville. The dog became ill and had to be hospitalized. He was dissatisfied with the treatment of the dog and remembered that he had read an ad about a Swedish veterinarian in Fuengirola in a magazine on the plane down to Málaga from Gothenburg. He contacted the veterinarian and drove the dog to Fuengirola for treatment. Having three days at his disposal while waiting for the dog to get well, he wandered around Fuengirola and ended up in front of a real estate agent, who encouraged him to come along on a ride to look at a terrace house. Andreas accepted. When he saw the terrace house, it had an immediate appeal to him and he ended up buying it. However, despite having employment as a PhD student he needed an extra income to pay the mortgage. He happened to see an open position with the Swedish institution, where he had always wanted to work, so he applied for it and got it.

This sequence can be understood as a separate unit with a definite beginning and a definite end, with a complication that arises and is followed by a solution, in other words, the definition of a narrative as suggested by Arvidsson (1998:25). It is an account that is suddenly thought of due to random association as our conversations took off in different directions. Indeed, events are often remembered by the work of association in joint conversation (Lowenthal 1985:208). Andreas concludes the narrative by saying that it should have been the other way around, but he bought the house first and then got himself a job. As in the migration story of Markus, the migration

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14 ”Men du kanske skulle vilja veta höra egentligen… Egentligen varför jag köpte huset.”
"Ja, det vill jag höra.”
"Det är en historia som jag berättar för folk som många tycker är intressant men jag tycker att det var ju ödets makt.” (Interview with Andreas, March 5, 2009)
trajectory can be understood as being under the influence of higher powers. However, the migration story is primarily driven forward by Andreas himself as an agent acting with intention in line with his orientation of living an international life in Spain.

In conclusion, the path to fulfill the goal of being able to live outside of Sweden passed other multicultural environments but was accidentally accomplished when he found a terrace house by the Costa del Sol and simultaneously heard about an open position at the Swedish institution, where he ended up working. In this regard, Andreas’ circle of intentions was closed while he linked his migration story to a migration of success.

Simon—a life of fortunes and failures

Simon, born in 1926, is an experienced story-teller both in written text and verbally. Before our conversation he has written an unpublished autobiography divided into two parts, about his business life and his private life. Thus, in documenting his long life, he can be understood as having acted according to the expectations of modern society. Birgitta Svensson argues that as an individualized self during late modernity, people ought to show that they are able to make something out of their life, reflect on the experiences and document them as part of the reflexive project (1997:51, see also Giddens 1991). Simon’s verbal migration story is organized by the causal effect of events, which corresponds to the selected events depicted in the written autobiography. During the narration moment, he is now given the chance to enrich the experiences with paralinguistic tools, such as embodying dialogues that he took part in during the past.

Simon begins his migration story by stating that he is from Stockholm, grew up during the Second World War and graduated almost as the war ended. Right from the first sentence Simon connects his teenage years with the extraordinary times of scarcity, blackouts and biking during the Second World War. Thus, Simon wants to link the memories of his personal past with the war as a global and historically significant event that affected people’s lives in similar ways, which Lowenthal claims is a common approach in formulating a sense of self (1985:194ff, see also Nylund Skog 2012:47f). From this departure, he quickly tells a chronological odyssey of past job experiences in order to arrive at the offer of becoming the head of a punchcard department at one of the biggest retail companies in Sweden, which he eventually came to leave to start a private enterprise. The start-up of his private business is marked as a first turning point in Simon’s life. For Simon there is no single superior turning point, as for the other interviewees. Instead Simon’s migration story is paved with several turning points that changed his orientation and direction, and that have shaped his understanding of life.
In the second part of his migration story, Simon depicts how he is orientated around the construction of his own business within the punch-card sector during the 1960’s in Stockholm. He tells me he was able to create the biggest office in Sweden with 300 employees and departments in the three biggest cities of Sweden with the earliest models of computers. His company offered billing services to private enterprises and authorities throughout Sweden, but within five years a bank offered to purchase the company. Selling off his private enterprise made Simon a millionaire, but he stayed in the company as the managing director. This episode is depicted as the second turning point, with several consequences in the migration story.

The third phase is a narrated sequence of the events happening after Simon had sold off his company. The undertaking enabled him and his family to migrate to their vacation home on the Costa del Sol in August 1969. With the company sold, this period can also be understood as a change of orientation toward migration to southern Spain from having been orientated around the private enterprise. He was 42 years old and a wealthy man. He does not state tax reduction as a reason for migration, but there is a general assumption that several affluent people migrated to the area for this reason during the 1970’s and 1980’s. Not knowing whether the family would feel at home in their new country, Simon and his family kept the ties to the home country through weekly Swedish magazines that were sent down, telephone calls, and tape recordings of greetings from friends and family between the countries. The oldest daughter entered the newly-opened Swedish school in Fuengirola, in case they were to move back to Sweden. Overall, their attitude to their new living conditions was “to become Spaniards,” as Simon puts it, and a means to become Spaniards was to learn the Spanish language. The depiction above can be viewed as different steps that the family took to ease the disorientation of migration, while continuing to be orientated around a lifestyle they led in Sweden through habitual connections with the home country.

Simon is detailed and coherent in telling his story this far. Suddenly in the narration, however, Simon interrupts the continuity of the migration story by bluntly inserting the fact that he lost his entire fortune in three years due to speculation in properties with a Swedish swindler. His voice is marked by hesitation about telling me this failure and the next turning point in life:

“And what did you do then? Then you had to change your life?” I ask him.

“Yes, I sat by the kitchen table and looked out at our beautiful garden and told Edith: ‘I have ruined the whole life for you. I lost all the money we had. I am still a skilled computer system technician. I am sure I can get a job in Sweden.’ And then Edith, my wife, said: ‘But we like it here. We are well here. Why don’t we start constructing houses? We have land’ and I had. So she made me change occupation. Then we built over a hundred houses. Yes, in forty years you’ll have time to experience a lot. I built a fortune again of
three million [Swedish kronor] and lost it in a tax trial between 1979 and 1983 in Sweden.”

In telling me how he lost his fortune and then was able to rebuild it again by starting a construction business, Simon is also portraying yet another turning point in life and the disorientation that he felt at the kitchen table. However, after having rebuilt his fortune through the construction business, he once more lost his money in a tax trial, but this did not stop him from starting again by continuing to construct villas and terrace houses. He was able to rebuild his fortune a third time but lost the money for good in the economic crisis of the 1990’s: “And this was the start of the darkest period of my life,” Simon says and starts to sort out the twists and turns leading to the final defeat in his life. He tells me he was always conned by Swedish businessmen and not Spaniards. Therefore he stayed in Spain for forty years out of a fascination for the country, despite the financial troubles. The decision to stay can also be explained by Simon’s established reorientation, which can be viewed as characterized by feeling at home while living a transnational lifestyle between the old and the new country.

Until now the narration has had steady rhythm and speed. However, Simon’s style of narration changes when he finishes his account of the financial turmoil in his life. He tells me:

“I am Swedish. I always will be and I will die in Sweden.” He is quiet for quite some time, then tears start rolling down his cheeks:

“I loved my wife a lot. She got away from all the misery.”

Simon’s wife passed away during the last economic loss.

“I don’t know how to explain it all. I now live there.”

He leaves the hardships he is talking about by pointing to a picture hanging on the wall by his study. It is a red and white house in the country.

“I love it. It is my home. I own it.”

By changing the subject, he is seemingly turning to his country house in Sweden for comfort. He lives in the country house five months a year and it is his Swedish base, while he lives transnationally.

15 “Och vad gjorde du då? Då fick du ändra om ditt liv?”

16 “Och det där blev början till den mörkaste delen i mitt liv.”

[...]

The style of narration reflects the experiences of disorientation and confusion during this period of incomprehensible loss as he is relating to an emotional and financial collapse. The narration is broken up, while he scatters sentences one at a time, as if the experiences he recalls are too overwhelming to narrate coherently and with unity. This can be related to a general discussion in life story research about whether experiences of trauma are worth telling, since the inability to shape coherence and consistent stories of trauma lies inherent in the experience of a trauma, writes Susanne Nylund Skog (2012:88), drawing on the historian Zoe Vania Waxman (2008:119). Thus, the scattered form of relating to a turbulent time in Simon’s life suggests that the experience of a final defeat can be seen as traumatic.

When I analyze Simon’s migration story, I see that his narration is divided into eight parts marked by different turning points that change the orientation and course of direction. The migration story is about the experiences and conclusions of a long life tale told for an hour and a half. The eight parts comprise a narrative structure of eight events that can be understood as significant for Simon by the fact that (1) they are retold and remembered, and (2) they are told in a sequential order (cf. White 1981:19). The events that are retold have a significant meaning in the actual recollection and selection of them. As such they can be viewed as turning points (Arvidsson 1998:61), that is, crossing points where life changes its direction, which entails a period of disorientation until the individual takes a new direction. What is left unsaid in the migration story is, instead, often the taken-for-granted and routinized everyday life. Frykman states: “It is the too well-known and familiar that disappears. All the daily things that are so natural that one would not think of bringing them up” (1992:250, my translation).

Simon is an active and experienced story-teller throughout the narration, which is a depiction not only of success and loss, in addition to orientation-disorientation-reorientation. It is also a portrayal of the life of a creative, visionary and bold entrepreneur, who manages to turn defeat into new possibilities. Throughout the narration, Simon mixes three modes of presenting himself. The three modes are (1) “[c]hanges happen through the individual’s own […] initiative” (ibid., my translation), which is a mode of narration Simon uses when, for instance, he relates to the start-up of the private enterprise, or when he decides to migrate after selling of the company, which makes Simon a millionaire, (2) “life is portrayed as governed by other powers to a great extent” (ibid., my translation), which is a mode of narration used when Simon refers to the incidents and people that make him repeatedly lose his fortune. And (3) the individual [actively] “takes his/her fate into his/her own hands” (Arvidsson 1998:62, my translation), which is a noticeable approach of Simon when he tells about his recurring ability to rebuild his fortune from the bottom all the way to making millions again, which positions him as an agent in life.
The final part of Simon’s migration story can be viewed as a conclusion. He concludes his migration story in the following way:

“I am like the master of a ship in Vaxholm (a town in the Swedish archipelago), who knows all the shallows in the archipelago because he has been sitting on them. So that I have learned in life. I have become very experienced. The money is gone and that is a long story too.”

At the end of a long life, Simon is reviewing the disorientations and reorientations with a concluding stance. To conclude a life story with a metaphorical and evaluating statement is common in life stories (Arvidsson 1998:86). Simon reflects upon his life with insight and describes how he has reached an understanding of himself as a person facing failure but with the ability to stand up straight again. These are conclusions drawn from a space of experience (cf. Koselleck 2004). Simon’s migration story is a good example of how a migration story is a negotiated version depicting a view of the individual past as one is seeing it at the present moment, that is, a life review (Arvidsson 1998:21). Therefore, the migration story can be viewed as under construction, as one changes the ways to view the world as the story-teller gains new experiences that shape the story of his or her life. Through the practice of reflecting and thinking one’s life over, the sense of who one is can be understood as shaped out of the memory of who one was. Anna Johansson writes (2005:223 from Bruner 1986): “We become the self-biographical stories we tell about our life.”

**Karin—turning life around through love**

With Karin, born in 1981, I will now present another category of migration stories told by interviewees who did not make an active choice to relocate to the Costa del Sol. Karin’s migration story is divided into three parts starting with the arrival in Spain as a language student after graduating from high school. During her language studies she met her Spanish partner, Manuel. It is the initial meeting between Karin and Manuel that makes up the superior turning point in Karin’s migration story, which is a turning point that leads to migration. It is also the incentive to prolong her stay in Spain. On a phenomenological note, the superior turning point signifies an alteration in orientation. Having an orientation toward something and act upon the orientation also means following a line that leads to what is sought for (Ahmed 2006:12ff). From being orientated around a Swedish student lifestyle, while directing her intentions toward a line of academic studies and accomplishing a university degree in Sweden, meeting Manuel meant entering a state of

17 "Jag är som Vaxholms skepparen som känner varje grund i skärgården för att han har suttit på dem. Så det har jag lärt mig av livet. Jag har blivit oerhört erfaren. Pengarna är borta och det är en lång historia också." (Interview with Simon, February 28, 2009)
disorientation for Karin about where to live and reside, and the future implications of such a decision.

However, as a second part of her story, Karin tells me how her extended stay came to an end when she wanted to return to Sweden to study for a university degree in her hometown. The second part can be viewed as a reset of orientation or as being in line again, since it was redirected to a Swedish student lifestyle. As an active subject she declared to Manuel that she was going back to Sweden and asked him: “What do you want to do? Do you want to come with me or are you staying here?”

He decided to follow her to Sweden and lived with her during her three years of university studies. Unable to find a job, he ended up studying Swedish with other immigrants in the country:

“And then when I was finished with my studies we had to think it all through about where to go. And then he thought that ‘now I have given Sweden a chance, you’ll have to follow me to Spain again’. And that time it was probably harder than the first time because then I felt more definitely that if I move now then my whole life will be in Spain.”

This marked the beginning of the third and most dominant phase of Karin’s migration story. When Manuel is telling her that he has given Sweden a chance and now she has to follow him back to Spain, Karin loses her active involvement in narrating her story. Instead, the statement suggests her passive stance to the incentive of migrating as she was unable to follow her line of direction. Migration was never something she had envisioned in her life prior to this moment. Instead she begins a depiction of the disorientation of feeling a tension between trying to feel at home on the Costa del Sol and feeling a deep homesickness for the life left behind in Sweden. The narration to come is thus dominated by the disorientation that followed the loss of a place and the feeling of losing one’s place in the world.

When telling her tale, Karin reasons her way through the episodes told. She speaks carefully as she considers the right way to tell her story and understand how she ended up on the Costa del Sol. As a listener I am fully aware of my own previous experiences of homesickness, which adds further depth to the conversation due to the questions I ask on the matter. At the same time, this fact might have given the conversation an extra, unnecessary focus on homesickness and her struggles, rather than on her achievements.

The third part of her migration story begins, therefore, with the many questions that the disorientation evoked in Karin. Was living in Spain the life

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18 “Vad vill du göra? Vill du följa med eller stannar du här?” (Interview with Karin, February 12, 2009)

19 “Och sen när jag hade pluggat klart fick vi ju ta oss liksom en ny funderare på vart vi ska ta vägen. Och då tyckte väl han att ’nu har jag gett Sverige en chans så du får följa med till Spanien igen’. Och då var det nog svårare än vad det var första gången för då kändes det mer definitivt att flyttar jag nu då kommer hela mitt liv liksom vara i Spanien.” (Interview with Karin, February 12, 2009)
Karin had had in mind? Was that really what she wanted? At the same time she could not help but feel influenced by the common opinion of friends and family that living in the sun was exciting and glamorous even, which is a common collective cultural mediation of how to perceive the Costa del Sol life. She tells me that others said to her:

“‘How wonderful to live there where it is nice and warm all the time and how could you not like it there?’ And then it is hard to say that I don’t really enjoy myself but it’s difficult to put my finger on what it is. In the beginning I lived for Sweden a great deal as if I felt that some day I will return, soon I will return.”

The account reveals Karin’s stance of having an orientation toward life led in Sweden, which she constructs as the territorial entity Sweden, since she kept feeling out of place on the Costa del Sol. It is a common strategy among several of the interviewees to regard a future return to the old home as a reassuring emergency exit if the settlement abroad does not turn out as expected.

The first period after having moved back to the Costa del Sol was very much dominated by the feeling of living in Spain for the sake of Manuel and really missing her life in Sweden, Karin tells me. I ask her if she was able to share her homesickness with Manuel:

“Yes, as a matter of fact, I have been able to and I have been able to cry. I have returned from Sweden and stepped off the airplane and as soon as I have seen him I have broken down and ‘no, God, I don’t want to be here.’ And how nice is it for him when I have been on vacation and the first thing I do is to say that I don’t want to be here?”

Certainly Karin has stayed because she has wanted a life together with Manuel. She describes how the homesickness eventually disappeared and the feelings of finding her place, of how regaining orientation on the Costa del Sol has been a long and staggering process. When Karin tells me about how finding a job on the coast proved to be important for feeling at home and finding a place for her, she also recaptures her active stance as a subject in her narration. Karin quickly found a part-time job in a firm dealing with insurance, owned by a Swedish woman. She explains to me that it was a smooth transition, after having moved down on a permanent basis, to still work with a Swede in the three languages Karin speaks, Swedish, English,
and Spanish. After half a year Karin moved on within the labor market of the Swedish community and has been working for three years with a Swedish real estate agent, which is a sector she feels she has grown to like and can learn more about.

The fact that Karin also shares the experience of living abroad with her Swedish employer has been very important in tackling her severe homesickness in the first years on the coast. Knowing the distress Karin has suffered from time to time, her Swedish employer has agreed to extend the vacations throughout the year which gives Karin the chance to visit her family in Sweden a couple of times a year. This has had a significant influence on Karin’s reorientation to the life on the coast. Since she has been able to return to her family and friends in Sweden on a regular basis four times a year, she has found she can nurture the relationships from a distance. When they meet the time apart dissolves and everything is all the same again, she tells me. Moreover, an important factor in creating a sense of belonging to the coastal life is finding friends that are permanent, reliable and who live a similar life in the Costa del Sol area. Karin’s closest friends are Swedish in similar transnational situations to hers. Having a Spanish partner has also contributed to feeling orientated in Spain:

“I am grateful because it really helps a lot. When we came down here, sure I had to start from the beginning and build up my life but at the same time Manu had his here already so we weren’t two people who had to struggle about everything at the same time. And I found my place with him, you could say. I had to build up my own and it has taken time maybe because I haven’t been in a hurry.”22

With time and maturity, Karin is steadily finding her place and home. She is more sure of herself and who she is, she tells me. To enter a reorientation around a transnational life on the Costa del Sol has coincided with leaving youth and entering adulthood. Youth since the 1950’s has generally been depicted as a phase in life when finding oneself is the specific task (Gulleetad 1996:286). In conclusion, with the narration of her struggles of homesickness and disorientation and eventually establishing herself and being reorientated around a transnational life on the coast, Karin’s migration story, like the rest of the migration stories, portrays how obstacles can be overcome and success can be experienced. However, the migration story is narrated in the midst of experiencing reorientation. This can be understood through the concept of horizon of expectation (see Koselleck 2004). Karin tells her story from such a standpoint while gazing toward what a transnational future

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22 "Jag är ju liksom tacksam för det hjälper ju mycket. När vi kom ner här, visst jag fick börja från början och bygga upp mitt liv men samtidigt så hade ju Manu sitt redan här så vi var ju inte två som hade kämpat om allt samtidigt. Och jag fick min plats med honom kan man säga. Sen att jag har byggt upp mitt men då har ju det också fått tagit tid kanske för att jag har inte haft lika bråttom." (Interview with Karin, February 12, 2009)
might bring. For sure, it is a future that is different from the future expectations that she initially had in mind for herself in life before migration.

Karin’s migration story is part of a category of migration stories where the meeting with a Spanish partner is the superior turning point, conceptualized as love migration in research on migration (King 2002). The migration simply happened the way it has unfolded without plans or actions taken in order to live the transnational lifestyle they are living today. To live in Spain was initially to live an adventure in another country for a short or long period of time with an eventual return to everyday life in Sweden. The force that changed the orientation was in these cases the love of a Spanish national. The adventure thus gradually turned into a permanent daily life to adapt and adjust to through the overlap of love and lifestyle migration. The essential incentive for establishing a reorientation of feeling at home and wanting to establish oneself in the Costa del Sol area is in these cases the Spanish partner. However, belonging linked to the love of a Spanish national can be viewed as two separate sides of the same coin. To make oneself at home in the new environment is vital for nourishing the relationship. Furthermore, fostering belonging is facilitated thanks to the Spanish partners and their already established orientation on location.

Lena—narration of transnational ambivalence

Lena, born in 1976, narrates a migration story similar to Karin’s. After falling in love with a Spanish national, Juan, Lena has lived along the coast for eight years at the time of our first meeting. Lena’s migration story is told chronologically and divided into five separate parts. At first glance it is dominated by her narration of her unexpected stay in the country. She depicts her arrival in the town in the Andalusian countryside, where she came to study Spanish, specifying the exact date, weather and feelings of coming to a new country without any previous knowledge of the customs, language, and lifestyle. Her detailed account is a sign of valuing the event as extraordinarily significant in her life.

However, the second part is told as the superior turning point. It depicts her first meeting with Juan, which she regards as her most life-changing experience. The account can be seen as a narrative, i.e. a sequence told as a complete unit with a definite beginning and a definite end (Arvidsson 1998:25), which is marked by the couple’s decision to stay together. Lena continues her detailed and precise account, told with humor and that special glow of being in love. Meeting Juan meant a turn in her lifeline and a change of orientation: “To travel abroad to learn a language then turned into travel
abroad to work instead.” Thus, she does not regard the migration as such as a turning point in life, since she says she has not yet decided to stay in Spain. This statement also highlights the third section in the migration story. Now she stresses the period of disorientation she experienced while she struggled to find an appropriate job that matched her university degree. However, the doors of the Spanish labor market turned out to be closed for her, which led to periods of unemployment, mainly because there was no such thing as a degree in communications equivalent to her Swedish degree within the Spanish university system. She was offered work in the service sector, but having had a very good offer in Sweden before she left for Spain, she was hesitant about accepting any proposal that involved a lower salary and less responsibility. As time passed without Lena managing to follow her career visions, she had to turn her orientation toward the international labor market along the Costa del Sol.

The next part of her migration story is a depiction of the different types of work she was finally able to achieve on the labor market on the coast, which is a market friendlier to foreigners than elsewhere in Andalusia. However, throughout her entire migration story she repeats her aversion toward the Costa del Sol: “I did not like the Costa del Sol. I was absolutely not going to have anything to do with ‘Solkusten.’ There are only a bunch of Swedes here.” Although contradictory, she also highlights the possibilities the coast could offer her as a non-Spanish national: “Solkusten was not really the place where we wanted to live, but we knew that here at least there was a labor market for me.”

Lena’s migration story is similar to the one told by Markus in that it introduces fate as a vital component in the life trajectory. Lena had never wished to live on the Costa del Sol. She was rather orientated toward residing elsewhere in Andalusia, but eventually ended up along the coast. Within three months she was employed by one of the Swedish media outlets. Since then she has aspired to advance within the Swedish infrastructure. At the time of our conversation, she feels that her decision to live by the coast has implied a barrier to career advancement. She works long days, earning very little without much hope of a raise in her pay check. Over the years she has had several administrative positions in a multitude of sectors catering mainly to the international elderly lifestyle migrants.

23 “Att åka utomlands och lära sig ett språk blev då att åka utomlands och jobba istället.” (Interview with Lena, March 4, 2009)
24 Solkusten is Swedish for Costa del Sol and a very commonly used expression of the region among Swedish residents and Swedes in general.
Up until this point in the migration story, Lena’s narration has been a frame for the actual theme pervading her story, which is the fact that she has not yet decided whether she wants to stay in the country or return to Sweden, something she declares with a serious and frank voice. This non-decision shapes a *transnational ambivalence* in her. She is orientated *around* a job and partner on the Costa del Sol, and has ended up making the transnational everyday life work for her. Simultaneously, she is orientated *toward* returning to Sweden and living in Sweden. The ambiguous stance in life for Lena is a sign of *simultaneity*, claimed to be an important component in transnational lives. Incorporation in the new country can occur *simultaneously* as ties are maintained to the old country, and such practices are neither binary opposites nor incompatible (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1003). Marianne Gullestad writes on a similar note that “living in present stage of modernity seems to be that one is able to live with tensions, contradictions, dilemmas, paradoxes, and ambiguities—and to find solutions not in terms of either/or, but in terms of integration” (1996:21). Hence, the paradoxes in Lena’s transnational life are not settled, yet it is possible to live with them. The ambivalence is evoked through the interview setting, when I come as a researcher demanding answers about fixed and set affiliations. It is there she admits that in the back of her mind she still nourishes a dream of being able to return to Sweden. A dilemma arises when public officials, such as a researcher, demand fixed cultural identities of individuals living in transnational contexts since transnational lifeworld consists of shades of gray and border zones. Identification is multidimensional in transnational contexts (Hylland Eriksen 1999:60ff). Floya Anthias likewise affirms that research with a focus on identity is asking too much of individuals in that the discussion tends to revolve around identity as a possessive attribute and not as a process at play at all times and in all situations (2008:7).

At the end of the conversation I ask what Lena thinks about the future. She tells me, among other future plans, that she wishes that she and her partner will take their relationship to the next level and start a family. She seems hopeful. When I ask her about her future in ten years’ time, she says: “What I want? In ten years I wish with all my heart that we will be living in Sweden—but we won’t.”

Her narration ends. She is silent a long time and looks out of the window. Time drags its feet and I am uncertain about the silence. I do not know how to interpret her being so quiet. Is it hard to picture a distant future? Or is she sad? What do her eyes say? Then suddenly tears starts rolling down her checks and she tells me again that she wishes that she will live with her partner in Sweden in the future but it will never happen. They would never dare to risk the move. Yet she feels that it ought to be her time now. It ought to be

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her chance to make something more out of her life. Sometimes she feels as if she has had to sacrifice so much of her own hopes and dreams to live with the man she loves. She adds that she thinks that Swedish society seems better than Spain when it comes to starting a family, which she wishes to do. Besides, she is very tired of being a foreigner and missing out on the life of her friends and family in Sweden while being so far away.

Both Karin and Lena’s accounts speak of the moral issue of having left their families. As migrants, they are absent if something happens to their families in Sweden, and when the time comes to have children, the migration implies cutting traditional ties of generational cultural reproduction from grandparents to grandchild. This notion can be seen as a gendered morality in story-telling (Gilligan 1982), which implies that men’s stories are oriented toward a “morality of right,” and the women have a relational orientation, while expressing a “morality of caring” (Gullestad 1996). Such a gendered division is apparent in that the women, such as Lena and Karin above, express a greater concern for the family left behind, which is an absent notion in the migration stories told by the male participants. The morality of caring among the women in the study can be seen as a gendered difference of orientation. The women’s orientation toward Sweden revolves around an orientation toward the well-being of the family, whereas the male interviewees might also care for the well-being of their families but have explicitly stated that they are concerned with the well-being of Sweden as a nation. It is interesting to note that the present discussion can be related to “the common rhetorical figure of nationalism” (Hylland Eriksen 1996:56), where notions of caring for the family are often put in association with caring for the nation. “The nation, through being connected to loyalties of family, can remove the citizens’ family-related experiences from the concrete family to the abstract family—the imagined community, the ethnic group or the nation,” states Thomas Hylland Eriksen (ibid., my translation). The morality of caring might be gendered and bifocal, but its interrelation is an effect of feeling guilty for having undertaken a trajectory of migration.

At the end of the conversation, Lena tries to bridge the uncertainties in her life with frankness, but the ambivalence is ever present:

“We have decided to opt for this. It has to work. Right now we live in Spain. We work in Spain. We have our life in Spain. We have a social life in Spain. For the past one and a half years we also have had a home together. We bought an apartment here in Fuengirola. The day we signed the papers, I ought to have been happy. I was totally devastated because then I felt that now I am stuck here. This is a decision we have made both of us but since I signed the papers it almost felt like a sentence. Now you are stuck here.”

Lena’s account of not wanting to sign the contract for her newly purchased apartment on the Costa del Sol can be understood as an attempt to avoid formal establishment and settlement on the coast. There are similar accounts of migrants who avoid making practical arrangements at the destination of migration due to a desire to return to the country of origin. For instance, Beatriz Lindqvist depicts how a focus on returning to the homeland was reflected in the living environment of some Chilean refugees that came to Sweden after the coup d’etat in Chile in 1973 (1991:145ff). Since they were about to return, they had decided not to invest in more than a minimum of furniture and other types of improvements in their homes as a strategy of viewing life in exile in a temporary light without firm establishment in the new country.

The common statements of transnational ambivalence among this category of interviewees are highlighted here by the migration story of Lena. Such stories are told at the intersection of a space of experience and a horizon of expectation, along the lines of Koselleck’s argumentation (2004). The storytellers are not reviewing a life trajectory but standing in the midst of life trying to evaluate and come to terms with past, often unexpected, experiences of migration, while trying to foresee what a possible and desired transnational outcome might imply for the future. These migration stories can be traced to the arrival in Spain as students or young professionals through student or love migration (see King 2002). Soon afterward they began to focus on a family life, where the frame of reference is a Swedish welfare system with established parental leave and benefits, not comparable to the Spanish welfare system in this regard. Among the interviewees, only female participants assess the meeting with a Spanish national as the superior turning point and unexpected turn of orientation during their life trajectory.

Conclusion

The migration stories revolve around the migration as an extraordinarily significant event told as a key narrative. A key narrative is a revised story told about a significant and life changing experience (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2006:41). In the key narrative, the act of migration is viewed by some of the interviewees as a superior turning point, and used in an explanatory way as an answer to why the migrant’s life has unfolded as it has at the present time of narration. Minor turning points are also selected and used to organize the narration. The most prominent structure of the migration stories, however, is

an organization of geographical places, where the interviewees have spent periods of their life before the migration, together with a causality of events leading to the established position as a migrant on the Costa del Sol.

There are exceptions to the above. One is, for instance, the migration story told by Simon, whose narration is organized by the many turning points of economic growth and sudden loss dominating his life. The migration experience is subordinate to the individual financial experiences of affluence and loss of affluence. Being a visionary entrepreneur is emphasized in Simon’s narration more than being a lifestyle migrant. Another exception is the female interviewees who have migrated in the aftermath of meeting a Spanish partner. Undecided about their position as migrants, they organize their migration stories around the particular meeting with a Spanish life partner, which influenced their orientation, prolonged their stay in the country, and led to migration. A transnational ambivalence and mix of emotions about having settled and being reoriented around life on the Costa del Sol, and simultaneously being oriented toward a life in the home country is a dominant theme in the migration stories of this category of female migrants.

There is an additional overall gendered difference in the migration stories. The women have a clear relational orientation while narrating their stories. They depict their migration in relation to other people, and the implications that have followed due to their decision. For instance, Margareta’s migration came about while caring for her children, and making sure the migration worked well for them in addition to herself. Lena and Karin are similar in that their narration depicts a tension between migrating due to a Spanish partner, and leaving their families and friends behind in Sweden. The migration stories of the men have, in contrast, a stronger emphasis on their individual journey and how they have been able to fulfill and accomplish their lives as intended. However, in the stories of Markus and Simon, personal relationships shine through the narration. Markus conducted the migration with his husband Stefan and discusses it in terms of a “we,” and Simon recounts his financial roller coaster story in relation to both his family and his mother, while recalling her opinion of the migration. Gullestad discusses a similar gendered division in her research. For instance, she writes that the life stories are influenced by the social roles of women and men, in that the women have entered new societal grounds during the twentieth century but experience contradictions and paradoxes in trying to bridge the gap between new societal opportunities and the former traditional identities of motherhood and care-taking (1996:40). A similar explanation is pertinent to how social relations are regarded in the migration stories.

The narrator is given an opportunity to present the self through the narration. This is done in a number of ways, for instance, through the portrayal of themselves as experienced, active subjects that take the necessary steps to fulfill their dreams of relocating successfully to the Costa del Sol. Since the narrator depicts the migration as a prosperous journey while following a
cultural life-script of successful migration in line with culturally-bound structures of modernity, there is no need to leave out the undesirable twists and turns along the way. Instead the teller enhances the position as an independent and active subject able to cope with the unexpected. Interesting to note is the element of fate or higher power influencing the course of life that some of the migration stories contain, together with the ambitions of active subjects. Events, in these cases, have come to life through both free will and greater powers.

The migration story becomes a narrative construction of the lived life told in retrospect as one is reviewing the lived experiences. According to the sociologist Peter Öberg “the construction of a life story can be analytically distinguished as (1) the lived life, (2) the experienced life, and (3) the narrated life” (1997:80, my translation; see also Svensson 2011:26). The experienced life of the migration is made meaningful for the individual through the actual practice of narration and the choices made in narrating one’s life. The narration meets a need to place one’s life experiences in relation to other people, other places, and past times. In the present time, there is a general assumption that telling one’s life story, particularly if it is connoted with bad and traumatic experiences, is a healthy and beneficial practice (Harding and Pribram 2009:9f). Especially the female interviewees who have migrated thanks to a Spanish partner have stated that the act of reasoning and discussing the different events leading up to the present day as an unexpected migrant on the Costa del Sol have worked therapeutically in the enhancement of feeling at home on the coast. The interview sessions with me as a researcher asking the interviewees to narrate a migration story have meant enriched feelings of belonging through establishing a sense of place for them, but have also evoked an ambivalence, as in the case of Lena, that had been there all along but was brought to light by my stereotypical focus on cultural identification along strict national demarcation lines.

A successful migration story is indeed personal but is also shaped against collective events, worldviews and moral order. The migration stories exist in a grander context of a globally reachable world, which stems from cultural repertoires such as local oral stories, fiction, movies, and media mediation of travel and migration (cf. Appadurai 1991:199, see also Giddens 1991:84), besides vacation on location. As such, both lived experience and imagination turn out to be vital ingredients in fostering the desire for lifestyle migration in general. In the case of Margareta, she had experience of tourism in Spain through her travels as a flight attendant on the first charter planes, or in the case of Lars, he envisioned setting up a restaurant he had encountered during his professional work life abroad. To have an orientation toward lifestyle migration is also connected to the sense that the world is accessible to each and every one, encouraged by a collectively nourished imagination of possible lifeworlds in another way in another place. Such was the origin of
Markus’ migration, with the dream of an artist’s life abroad, which he named Nice.

The practice of choosing and dreaming of a different lifestyle is not an attempt to meet one’s immediate needs, writes Anthony Giddens (1991:81). This is confirmed by the migration stories in that they are products of Swedish nationals of the middle class. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues in a similar vein that mobility has become a valued condition of globalization, and can be used to distinguish privileged individuals “high up” from poor migrants “low down” through global stratification by their freedom to choose where to live and reside (1998:86; see also Skeggs 2004:47–52). The migration stories depict a privileged and exclusive mobility, along the lines of how a globalized society stratifies its members based on their degree of mobility, and their multiple options to choose a lifestyle for themselves, as a feature of late modern life (e.g. Giddens 1991:81). Lifestyle migrants, in contrast to other types of global migrants, do not only have the privilege to choose their residence but also the privilege and the resources to return to their home country, whenever their adventure abroad has come to an end.

Continuous mobility and travel become a style of life and an orientation in life, which is emphasized by the routes of geographical places leading to the present-day Costa del Sol in the migration stories. Many depict mobile lives prior to the undertaking of migration, and have incorporated a mobile lifestyle in the present, especially by the recurrent translocation between Sweden and Spain, as a part of forging and maintaining belonging. In Susanne Nylund Skog’s study Livets vägar (Roads of Life, my translation) about life stories of Jewish women in contemporary Sweden (2012), she claims that a lack of roots linked to a specific place can be replaced by cultural routes of different places, which anchor the Jewish women in the study to the past, the present and the future. The routes generate new stories that ground the individuals in time and place (ibid. 2012:62). A narration of places can also be understood as anchoring points that are meaningful in that they constitute an outlined trajectory for the interviewees. It connects past times to present life on the Costa del Sol, which is given additional significance in shaping an understanding of the migrants’ position and place in the greater scope of events, through the practice of narration and reflection.
3. Positioning Oneself and Others

This chapter will explore the forging of collective belonging and identification through ways of positioning in expressions and everyday practice within the Swedish migrant group on the Costa del Sol. I will study how the interviewees consider their position as Swedish migrants permanently residing along the Costa del Sol. I base the discussions on an identification perspective, where positioning oneself and others is at the forefront of the analysis. In relation to whom do the interviewees identify themselves? In relation to whom do they not identify themselves? How do they position themselves in different contexts in their daily lives? What positions are ascribed them by others and how do they respond in expressions and practice to this act of positioning? How can the interviewees’ practices of positioning be understood?

In the present chapter, I have been inspired by Floya Anthias and her concept of *narratives of location and positionality* (2002). In the migration stories the interviewees highlight identification through a focus on articulated position placed in locations that interconnect the society of migration, the homeland and the lifestyle migrant group (2002:500). The locations aim at the specific spatial and temporal contexts where the interviewees place themselves in relation to others in terms of an intersection of social categories, such as gender, ethnicity, generation, and social class, while they narrate their migration stories. When stressing the different locales pertinent to the narration, identification is highlighted and articulated as a social experience through story-telling, that is, to position oneself and others concerns the affiliations or identifications that emerge through the narration, and how these affiliations are experienced socially. According to Anthias, what is to be gained with the theoretical concept is to view the story-telling as a space that is shaped between social constructions and individual agency (ibid. 2002:505). This is noticeable when positions are given to others by the interviewees and ascribed to them by others in the migration stories. Simultaneously, the positioning reveals contradictory and changeable stances depending on context and location. This leads to narrated hierarchies of power between individual and collective relations that is highlighted through a focus on position and positioning (Pripp 2005:73–74). The positioning is put into play in relation to global postcolonial power structures, which is shown in encounters with strangers on the streets of the Costa del Sol. I have here gained inspiration from the theoretical writings of Sara Ahmed (2000). By
recognizing the stranger—as a conceptualized figure—the positioning of the self emerges through processes of differentiation in how embodied Others appear and are understood, in addition to the kind of effect such encounters will have for the interviewees, which will be analyzed empirically from the migration stories of street life on the Costa del Sol.

The chapter will start with an analysis of how the interviewees understand their position as Swedish immigrants permanently residing on the Costa del Sol. This is followed by a discussion about positioning in relation to different groups of people along the coast, such as the local community, other Swedes residing on the Costa del Sol, the British population and West African street vendors. Thereafter follows an analysis of how language works in practice as a component in attaining positions of both inclusion and exclusion on the Costa del Sol.

Swedish migrants permanently residing on the Costa del Sol

When I ask the interviewees to label themselves as residents on the Costa del Sol, all answers narrow down to the following position: a Swedish immigrant that permanently resides on the Costa del Sol. But it is also a description with reservations and individual variation. To have acquired a permanent residency is a practical fact. In Spain the migrants have to register residency and receive an identification number for foreigners, an NIE number—Número de identificación para extrañjeros—in order to be able to work and reside in the country. This is not something they have chosen but a legal means to live in the country.

All the interviewees but Karin share the view of having immigrated to Spain. The concept of migration is for the most part both a subjective definition and an objective definition of the relocation that has taken place. Only Karin questions the idea of migration:

“Have I emigrated from Sweden? I don’t know. I have but in a way I have not.”

“When haven’t you? Or what do you mean when you have not?”

“I don’t know. I don’t want it to sound the wrong way but I have had a reason to move here. It is love really that brought me here and I know that if I weren’t, no matter how much I like it here, if I weren’t with Manu I wouldn’t live here. Then everything that is in Sweden would attract me too much. Then I would have a family and friends there that meant something. Then I would move home. Well, the choice I have made to actually move from Sweden is not because no, I don’t like Sweden, but because I chose a
relationship and chose to focus on that. That is why I have a hard time saying that I have emigrated from Sweden and left it behind me.”

Karin moved with her partner Manuel to Spain after having lived in Sweden for a couple of years. The move was never a desire on Karin’s part but a way to enhance the relationship. As described in the previous chapter, Karin’s path to achieve belonging has been dominated by remaining orientated around her life in Sweden, which has evoked homesickness and a longing for the life she once lived there. In that light, being a migrant is too strong a word to describe the position Karin identifies herself with. Her migrant position in that regard is based on temporary grounds.

Being Swedish?

All interviewees depict themselves as Swedish nationals. As a legal status, the national citizenship is mainly viewed in practical terms and not of any importance in daily life since both Sweden and Spain are European Union (EU) member states. National affiliation and identification is, however, a highly disputable fact carrying individual variations of meaning and significance among the interviewees.

Andreas tells me that he considers himself to be Swedish but the answer is filtered with doubt and a lack of interest in the matter which leads to the following conversation:

“In any case I’m not a Spaniard. That I have to say…”

He is silent for a while and I ask him:

“But there is still a long silence so can there be something else too?”

“Yes, but not a Spaniard either. Not yet anyhow. Maybe in ten years, I don’t know. I mean I have had more contact with the US over the years since I was a teenager. I mean it’s a contact over thirty years’ time soon so for sure I feel more like… an American? I don’t know. But an American, what is that? That is also a… continent that has so many nationalities and cultures mixed into one, do you understand what I mean? So that is also difficult. Multicultural, yes definitely. But… what did you ask?”

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28 ”Har jag emigrerat från Sverige? Det vet jag inte heller. Det har jag ju men ändå inte på nåt vis.”

”När har du inte det? Eller liksom hur menar du då när du ändå inte?”

”Jag vet inte. Det får inte låta fel men jag har ju liksom haft en anledning för att flytta hit. Det är ju liksom kärlek egentligen som har tagit mig hit och jag vet ju att skulle inte jag, hur bra jag än trivs här, skulle jag inte vara med Manu skulle jag inte bo här. Då skulle det som finns kvar i Sverige dra för mycket. Då skulle jag ha familj och vänner där som betydde nånting, då skulle jag flytta hem […] Alltså det val jag har gjort att verkliga flytta från Sverige är ju inte för att nå, nu gillar jag inte Sverige utan för att jag valde liksom en relation och valde att satsa på den. Därför har jag lite svårt att säga liksom att jag har emigrerat från Sverige och lämnat det bakom mig.” (Interview with Karin, April 15, 2009)
“Yes, I said that there was a long silence. It was not totally clear, a hundred percent Swedish, but not Spanish but could it be something else?”

“Yes, something else definitely. Multicultural, I would say then. And what that means I really don’t know either.”

Andreas’ positioning is entangled between the transnational connections and orientations important to him; that of Sweden, Spain and the United States. In the words of Anthias (2002:498ff), these are the different locations that matter in this particular articulation of identification. To determine a national affiliation and position is not made easy and not of any interest to Andreas. As he dwells on the multicultural as a position to assume, yet not knowing how to define the significance of the word, he also highlights the general possibility to fill the word with a variety of meanings. Andreas’ account shows that national identity, as a device for differentiation along distinct demarcation lines, is not compatible with everyday life in a transnational context. There is no conflict for him to feel affiliated and connected to several localities and contexts simultaneously, which is a common transnational stance (cf. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). The stance stems from regarding identification as a process that is variable and at play at all times and in all situations, instead of adhering to the tendency to view identity as a possessive attribute (Anthias 2002). Povrzanović Frykman points to a similar conclusion about a transnational position common within the group of Croatian refugees that migrated to Sweden in the 1900’s. She writes: “Analytical categories delineating either-or loyalties might be helpful in the process of defining research aims. Yet, when imposed on people’s lives, they might miss the basic logics of social and cultural dynamics if […] there is no either-or conflict within the person herself” (2001b:25).

While continuing his migration story, Andreas tells me that there are occasions when being Swedish are an asset to him. Such was the case when he bought his terrace house and had to make complaints about the construction. Then he pointed out that he was a Swedish national and from a country where the equipment in the house was standard equipment and not high-quality luxury, as the contractor had claimed. By drawing attention to his nationality, he made the contractor aware that it would be a mistake to fool
Andreas about the purchase—as a Swedish national he was well informed about the quality of the equipment in the house. As in this short account, there are situations when Swedish nationality comes in handy for Andreas in relation to a global and historical hierarchy of power among nation states. Andreas points to his origin in a modern and advanced Northern European country, in contrast to the slower historical development of Spain with advancement toward a modern industrialized nation state that started as late as during the 1970’s. By pointing to nationality, Andreas brings a European hierarchical order of industrial advancement, in which he claims Sweden to be superior, into an ordinary encounter with a Spanish house contractor in order to get a favorable agreement when making complaints about the house. This is an example of how nationality has an impact on social positioning in transnational migrant contexts. The connection to a nation state and its position in a global hierarchy of “weak” and “strong” national welfare states come to influence the social position of the migrant (Weiss 2005).

On the other hand, Andreas, among other interviewees, tells me that he does not feel Swedish among other Swedes. To position oneself as a Swedish national citizen is indisputable, but affiliating with traits and qualities they perceive as Swedish is not applicable to their sense of self. Hence, positioning oneself along the lines of a Swedish nationality is done in relational terms depending on the situation. Anthias highlights the importance of location when studying identification: “The focus on location (translocation) recognizes the importance of context, the situated nature of claims and attributions and their production in complex and shifting locales” (2002:502).

To be “unSwedish” in behavior and manners is a common description among the interviewees, which can be seen as stemming from structural aspirations to become internationalized in Sweden during the 1960’s. Orvar Löfgren writes: “In Sweden of the 1960s there was a heightened interest in the international, a wish to be part of the world and to put Sweden on the map” (2000:236). Ever since then, to show off a pride in being Swedish domestically has been connoted with being conservative and traditional, that is, in contradiction to the project of becoming a modern and industrialized front runner in the world, which has been an ongoing aspiration during the greater part of the twentieth century and until today in Sweden. In addition, displaying ethnic markers of Swedishness in Sweden has come to be closely related to the political extreme right-wing parties and organizations in association with racism and alienation of immigrants (ibid. 2000:236ff). This is linked to the fact that Swedish nationalism stems from a notion that connects a shared and common culture with ethnic bonds to a common territory, within which a *jus sanguinis* is the basis for national belonging, that is, nationality is based on blood or biological lineage. This is an ethnic nationalism, in contrast to a civic nationalism, which is based on societal and cultural inclusion through citizenship (see Borevi 2002:22ff).
In contrast to the internationalizing project during the latter part of the twentieth century, there are many articulations and expressions of pride in being of Swedish origin in the migration stories, which will be discussed further on. Showing such national pride abroad has always been appropriate and does not conflict with the political and societal winds affecting the use of nationalism in Sweden.

Time changing affiliations

Majken, born in 1959, highlights the dynamics of positioning when reviewing her life through her migration story. She migrated to Spain as a nine-year old with her family and has lived in the country for 41 years. She tells me:

“When I had children it changed, then I suddenly became much more from here. Then I got my roots from here in another way because my children were from here.”

The father of the children is from Fuengirola and his extended family lives in the area. When Majken’s children were born into the local traditions and way of life of a Costa del Sol family, Majken’s feelings of belonging to the region were enhanced. Through the children her ties to the Spanish family were also strengthened, which affected her position of being locally bound. As the children grew older, Majken came to identify herself as Swedish in terms of upbringing and raising them, in contrast to the local ways of raising children. She constructs a Spanish mother as authoritarian in disciplining her children, while Majken has been indulgent and permissive, traits which she perceives as originating from her Swedish background.

Different stages of life, time, and age have influenced the way Majken has viewed herself in terms of affiliation. She explains that in her forties she dwelled a lot upon belonging in-between her Swedish and her Spanish network of friends on the Costa del Sol:

“Ten years ago I felt mixed feelings about the Swedes and it was the same thing. Did I belong there, didn’t I belong there, did I like it, would I want to belong, would I want to reject it? So I wasn’t really sure about my own place in the situation among Swedes and Spaniards.”

“And now during the ten years that have passed since then, how do you think you have settled with those thoughts?” I ask her.

“I think I am more stable down here, more stable in myself. That I am neither Spanish nor Swedish but I am myself. I think more like that. That I

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30 “När jag fick barn så ändrades det, då blev jag plötsligt mycket mer härifrån. Då fick jag mina rötter här på ett helt annat vis för att ens barn var härifrån.” (Interview with Majken, March 24, 2009)
don’t need to belong, to be Spanish in any way, I don’t need to be Swedish either.”  

Majken portrays herself as having come to terms with her mixed positions in-between the different contexts of affiliation: the extended family on the Costa del Sol; and the local social network containing friends of both Swedish and Spanish nationality. She has settled with being herself despite her transnational stance. Establishing a sense of self emotionally overshadows any position in-between Spanish and Swedish related contexts. Majken’s account highlights how the process of identification changes over time as she has entered new life stages and found herself in new contexts.

**Transnational positionings in-between Swedish and Spanish contexts**

In Simon’s migration story, his national stand is not locational, contextual, or temporal in the sense of the examples of Andreas and Majken. Simon takes on the position of being simultaneously Swedish and Spanish throughout the conversations we have during the spring of 2009 when the fieldwork was conducted. He explicitly expresses this dual position:

“I enjoy myself in this country. But I am Swedish, always will be and will die in Sweden.”

The next time we meet, he tells me:

“I have lived here for such a long time. I consider myself a Spaniard. Yes, I feel like a Spaniard among Spaniards.”

There is another important feature of such a transnational position in Simon’s story-telling. He continually uses the pronoun “we” regardless of whether he is discussing Swedish or Spanish national issues and affairs. Choosing either the pronoun “we” or “them” in connection with one’s own expressed position is an articulation of inclusion or exclusion. After forty years as a resident on the Costa del Sol, Simon is simultaneously positioning

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31 "Och då så för en tio år sedan så kunde man också känna kanske blandade känslor om svenskarna och det var väl samma sak där. Hör man dit, hör man inte dit, tycker man om det, skulle man vilja höra dit, vill man ta avstånd? Så man var inte riktigt säker på sin egen plats i det sammanhanget bland svenskar och spanjorer.

"Och nu under de här 10 åren som har gått sedan dess, hur tycker du att du har landat i dom tankarna?"

"Jag tror att jag har blivit mer fast härefter, mer fast i mig själv. Alltså jag är varken spansk eller svensk utan jag är mig själv. Mer så tänker jag det. Att jag behör inte alls höra till, att vara spansk på något vis, jag behör inte heller vara svensk.” (Interview with Majken, April 14, 2009)

32 "Jag trivs i det här landet. Men jag är svensk, kommer alltid att vara det och kommer att dö i Sverige.” (Interview with Simon, February 28, 2009)

33 "Jag har bott här så länge. Jag betraktar mig som spanjor. […] Ja, jag känner mig som en spanjor bland spanjorer.” (Interview with Simon, March 18, 2009)
himself as belonging to both the Swedish national collective and the Spanish national collective by using ‘we’.

For the majority of the interviewees, to position oneself in affiliation with the Spanish population is contextual and not as natural as for Simon. Lena expresses the following experience from her job with a Swedish media outlet on the coast:

“I never feel Spanish but I feel more Spanish than most of the Swedes down here. That I do. My last boss has lived here for nineteen years and doesn’t know any Spanish and knows two Spaniards I think and doesn’t know anything about Spain. Then I feel a lot more Spanish than he does and I usually say that I worked eight hours in Sweden and then I got out to my real life that took place in Spain and that’s really how it is.”

Lena’s account is told in relation to other Swedes with less knowledge of Spanish language and culture. In contrast to them, she positions herself as belonging more to the Spanish collective than they do. An important parameter in national affiliation to Spain is the length of residency in the country, which is why Lena’s boss is a remarkable exception to this norm. To become emotionally attached over time to the local specifics of the Costa del Sol can be seen as having gained a reorientation around belonging on location. Likewise, within the collective of British lifestyle migrants on the Costa del Sol, length of residency in the country is an important parameter in relation to other Britons (O’Reilly 2000:126). When positioning herself as more Spanish than most Swedes along the coast, Lena might also be adhering to an assumed purpose of my research in studying integration within the Swedish migrant group. Because of this assumption it is as if she wants to emphasize that her real world is not her eight-hour workday with the Swedish media outlet, but her real life starts when her workday is over and she enters the local life outside. With this statement she might wish to differentiate herself from other Swedes living on location who are less orientated around a local everyday life, and position herself with a higher degree of affinity within the Spanish collective.

Markus, on the other hand, is the only interviewee that considers changing citizenship. He clearly states that he and his husband desire to be able to identify with the Spaniards, at least legally through citizenship:

“We want to become Spaniards. We can’t wait for the day when we can become Spanish citizens. We want to be in Spain so much.”

Later he adds:

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34 “Jag känner mig aldrig spansk men jag känner mig mer spansk än många svenskarnas hârner. Det gör jag ju. Min förra chef har bott här i 19 år och kan ingen spanska och känner två spanjor tror jag och vet ingenting om Spanien. Då känner jag ju mig vältligt mycket mer spansk än vad han gör och som jag brukar säga jag jobbade i 8 timmar om dagen i Sverige och sedan kom jag ut till mitt riktiga liv som var i Spanien och så är det verkligen.” (Interview with Lena, March 19, 2009)
“This is where we will live and die, so to speak, and then we want to contribute to this society. Have the same obligations and rights, be able to follow the Spanish laws.”

I ask further on in the conversation:
“But what function does citizenship have?”
“I don’t know. It is just the feeling of being Spanish.”

Markus starts laughing but continues:
“Because now as a resident you have health care, all of it. There is no change. It is only the feeling.”

A change of citizenship has no other function than the possibility to participate in national elections in Spain. Markus and his husband Stefan already live under Spanish law and with the right to the Spanish welfare system and local and EU elections as registered residents in Spain. To legalize Spanish national citizenship is in this case only important in enhancing the feelings of belonging to their choice of residence.

Being a Swedish national, through Swedish citizenship and/or feeling a Swedish cultural affinity, is a contested category for the interviewees in this study, yet an active category in everyday identification practice. The interviewees use and understand their position as Swedish nationals in relational, situational, locational and temporal terms, as suggested by Anthias (2002). This implies that Swedishness is thought of in terms of different parameters, such as cultural traits stemming from the country of origin, Swedish citizenship, the norms of the local Swedish migrant group on location, and as membership of a modern and advanced nation state, in comparison to the nation state of Spain with its delayed industrial development, in the eyes of the interviewees. In the continuation of this chapter the position as Swedish nationals will be examined further, but now in relation to other collectives dwelling on the Costa del Sol.

Position: el extrañjero

Apart from positioning in affiliation with nationality, there is a recurring position ascribed to the interviewees depicted in the migration stories. It is that of being positioned as the foreigner or the stranger, el extrañjero in Spanish. This can be understood in relation to the fact that the Costa del Sol

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35 "Vi vill bli spanjorer. Vi bara väntar på den dagen vi får bli spanska medborgare. Vi vill vara så mycket i Spanien. [...] Det är här vi ska bo och dö så att säga och då vill vi bidra till det här samhället. Ha samma skyldigheter och rättigheter, kunna följa de spanska lagarna.”

"Men vilken funktion har ett medborgarskap då?”

area has become a region of international and circular population, apart from the Spanish population. There are many nationalities dwelling on location, with different dwelling patterns within the lifestyle migration phenomenon: as short-term tourists, long-stay international tourists, second-home owners, seasonal migrants, and permanent residents (King et al. 2000:43f; see also O’Reilly 2000:52–59; Betty and Cahill 1999:87ff). In addition, at the time of the fieldwork, there were other categories of migrants inhabiting the area as well, such as labor migrants from Eastern Europe, Morocco, and Latin America and asylum seekers or refugees from West Africa. With the diverse coastal population as a local frame of reference, the interviewees mean to say that the Spanish population is not able to differentiate them as permanent residents from any other Northern Europeans that visit the region. They are all considered to be foreigners or strangers, *extrañjeros* in Spanish, in the eyes of the local population.

Marie, a migrant from Sweden, whom I meet occasionally during my fieldwork, tells me how this fact has come to affect her. She tells me that in her spare time she started to attend gymnastics for adults arranged by a Spanish-owned gym. The instructor liked doing exercises in pairs, which resulted in no one wanting to be with Marie, since they assumed that she did not speak Spanish. Or possibly the Spanish women did not feel comfortable doing gymnastics with a foreigner. Marie tells me that even though she is an adult and speaks Spanish, to always be chosen last was too hard for her. When hearing about aerobics organized through a Danish shopping center, she decided to join the Northern Europeans, instead of the group of Spanish women.

In the account, Marie is recognized and positioned as foreign and a stranger to the Spanish women during gymnastics. Sara Ahmed writes in her book *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (2000) that in defining a ‘we’ in relation to any body that appears different from one’s own body, there are some bodies that become recognized as bodies of strangers and possibly different. The stranger, as a figure, becomes “an effect of inclusions and exclusion, or incorporation or expulsion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities” (ibid. 2000:6). In the embodied encounter with the Spanish women, Marie’s body might be read as a sign of a body of a stranger, which positions Marie as strange and different from the Spanish women. Ahmed claims that the stranger is recognized as such, not from being unknown from a distance, but rather due to the recognition of being someone that does not belong within the familiar environment. The stranger as a figure not only imposes him/herself onto a community, but also shape the boundaries of a collectivity through his or her presence. In the gymnasium, Marie’s presence can simultaneously be seen as a sign of a stranger that is out of place and a body that is part of shaping a collectivity of Spanish women by being different.
The body is not primarily of interest as a visible sign of difference, in Ahmed’s argument, but it is rather the skin of the body that matters. The skin functions as a “border that feels, functions as a mechanism of social differentiation” (2000:45), for both Marie and the Spanish group of women. When Marie is recognized as a stranger within the Spanish female collective, she feels the separation. The affectivity of difference makes her join the Danish aerobics class, instead of feeling anxiety about being too different from the Spanish women.

Ahmed goes on to say that encounters with strangers stand in relation to historical and general presumptions of the Other. She states that “encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular—the face to face of this encounter—and the general—the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism” (2000:8). Marie’s particular encounter can be understood as framed by a general discourse on the Costa del Sol, where the position as foreigner/stranger is held equal to the label of the tourist (cf. O’Reilly 2003; Gustafson 2002). Karen O’Reilly discusses how British lifestyle migrants are associated with tourists in the following way: “Britons (and other foreign nationals) in Fuengirola are marginalised by Spanish labelling. They are often referred to as ‘residential tourists’, establishing their status, for Spaniards, as marginal or temporary rather than as fully participating Spanish citizens […] and are thus conceptually parcelled off with the tourists” (2000:148). In an area purposely constructed for tourism and leisure, Northern Europeans are assumed to visit the Costa del Sol as tourists, from whom to make money, rather than befriend or take into account as members of society on a permanent basis. The tourist label is an effect of the dwelling patterns of the inconsistent, flexible, and volatile circulation of international citizens in the area, whose “spatial moves are something more than this, more than tourism and travel, but closely related to it,” O’Reilly argues in her article “When is a Tourist?” about the blurring articulations of tourism and migration among the British lifestyle migrants (2003:305). The definitions are blurred among researchers on migration in Spain as well, where the term “residential tourism” is commonly used for Northern Europeans (King et al. 2000), in contrast to the term “immigrants” when referring to non-Europeans.

Sofie, born in 1975, tells another account of why her body is seen as “una extrañjera”—a stranger—in the eyes of the local community:

“Let’s start with the physical aspects. I am the tallest one wherever I go. I am 1.76 tall, I am blond, I have blue eyes. Now I speak good Spanish but despite how well I speak Spanish I will always speak with an accent, ‘acento’. So when I enter a clothing store I will always be spoken to in English ninety percent of the time.” 36

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36 “Vi kan ju börja med det rent fysiskt då. Jag är längst var jag än går. Jag är 1,76 lång, jag är ljushårig, jag har blå ögon. Nu pratar jag bra spanska men oavsett hur bra spanska jag än
The physical features of the Swedish interviewees, who are all ethnically Swedish, indicate a Northern European visitor in the encounter with the Spanish population. According to Ahmed, some bodies are related to as being more estranged bodies than others in the daily encounters. They become *out of place* and in an awkward position in relation to bodies that are at ease in the surrounding environment (2011:143). There are certain bodies that fit in and certain bodies that do not fit into specific cultural contexts. Bodies that are perceived as white are normally seen as *in place* and invisible since they are bodies in a state of comfort and at ease in the physical environment, according to global body-politics (2011:131; 2000:46).

The accounts of Marie doing gymnastics with Spanish women and Sofie depicting her encounters on the Costa del Sol streets suggest that the invisibility of whiteness is relational, situational, and locational. Both Marie and Sofie experience situations when their bodies are out of place on the Costa del Sol, being a tourism destination purposely built for white Northern European tourists, despite their whiteness and assumed comfort that lies inherent in being white, along the lines of a post-colonial hierarchy of global power structures. This is related to a discussion by Susanne Nylund Skog, who writes about how a Jewish woman passes as white in different situations during her life (2012:122ff). Nylund Skog concludes that there are situations in the woman’s life when whiteness and being blond has not signified a privileged position, but instead made her into a stranger in the eyes of the surrounding context, such as in the meeting with the in-laws, who all have the darker hair and physical features of the Middle East. Marie’s and Sofie’s accounts are similar in that their northern features and fair physical appearance do not naturally mean an exclusive, privileged position in the encounter with the local community in everyday situations, even though whiteness is a privileged position in the hierarchy of global power structures.

**Strategies of incorporation**

In order to handle any misinterpretations of them being temporary foreigners, the interviewees use different strategies to show their residence status, permanent stance, and claims of belonging. For instance, many of the interviewees tell me of being spoken to in English as *extrañeros* in daily interactions with the local population. In such situations, a common strategy is to insist on speaking Spanish and maybe claim that they do not know English. Sofie, above, avoids using high heels as a means to downplay her ethnic feature of being tall. Moreover, she has been determined to learn and speak a

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pratar så kommer jag alltid ha en accent, ’acento’. Så att när jag går in i en klädaffär så kommer dom till nittio procent alltid att tilltala mig på engelska.” (Interview with Sofie, March 4, 2009)
high level of Spanish. She claims the language is a powerful tool in her everyday life since she is able to inform herself about the local society without anyone else’s help, unlike the majority of the international population in the area.

By pointing to her status as a foreigner/stranger, not originally from Spain, Sofie tells me she also uses this position as an asset in her job while making phone calls to authorities in order to create confidence and goodwill in relation to the Spanish receiver on the other end of the phone. Markus also states that being different is an asset in the daily interaction with the Spanish population. He gives an example of this when I visit his roof terrace one afternoon as the sun is about to set. We talk about what a lovely place they have up on the terrace, overlooking the roofs of neighboring houses, when he spontaneously tells me that the couch I am sitting in is the second one he has purchased with his husband Stefan. Hence, decorating the terrace was not done without trouble. I ask him how on earth they were able to move the couch up to the terrace with only a narrow spiral staircase leading to it:

“Well, a rope. We put it upright on the wall down there on the patio and then I stood and pulled, Stefan got up here and we stood here and pulled together. Ok, now we got it, and then the rope broke…”

“And nobody was under it…”

“No, fortunately. It fell into the neighbor’s swimming pool and it was like slow motion if you can picture a couch falling four stores down … pooooo. Newly purchased, we hadn’t had it a month even. From above where we stood we thought, ‘wow, it stayed together.’ And then there were Spaniards standing in the other house watching and Stefan and I looked at each other and I said to Stefan, ‘This is the way Swedes act, totally normal. Let’s go down and get it and don’t feel ashamed a bit.’”

As a foreigner and stranger with foreign and strange habits and norms, Markus and his partner were able to mentally solve a troublesome and embarrassing situation while playing on their difference and otherness as extrañjeros. They had additional alternatives to behave in a different way. They used this in their favor as strangers in relation to the local society by the fact that the local society expects them to inhabit different ideals of how to act in a given situation. This can be viewed as a coping strategy, while experiencing the stranger position in relation to the local society.

37 "Ja, rep. [Vi] sätter det på högkant på muren därnere på patio […] och så står jag och hänger, Stefan kommer upp och så står vi och drar båda två. Okej, nu har vi det och så gick repet av…”

"Och det var ingen som var under som…”

A most common strategy to enhance the position of inclusion and residency is to point to the number of years as a resident in the area. Simon tells me the following recollection from his first years as an entrepreneur in the 1970’s:

“When we were to establish an ‘urbanisación’, a residential area, once someone spoke appreciatively about me and said, ‘He is not like the other ones, he will stay here.’ And then I said, ‘Why did he say that, he doesn’t know me.’ Well, I had planted walnut trees. And I smelled a rat and went and looked it up and then the first harvest was after thirty years. So they looked at me with approval and said that he is one of us.”

Planting a tree that gives its first harvest after thirty years gave hints that Simon, as a new immigrant, planned on staying permanently in the country. Showing permanency has proven to be a key element in order to achieve acceptance among the local population since there are so many dwellers with circular and uncertain patterns of movement in and out of the area. In stressing their stance of permanency, a common practice is to call attention to the transnational competence that the interviewees themselves have in the Spanish language and local ways of life. This makes them different and more integrated than other Swedes dwelling along the Costa del Sol.

In a similar vein, Markus tells me of his faltering steps at making friends and acquaintances with the neighboring locals:

“Well, in the beginning during these two years when we only had our apartment as a vacation home or haven the Spaniards saw that, well, they come here, they say hello politely and all that, but now we think that they see that we work, have stayed, and will live here. They see that we take care of ourselves because foreigners only drink, or not only, but they think that we drink a lot and many do that down here. I never drink, for example, and we take care of ourselves, we have work and we give work to the Spaniards too.”

Markus speaks of a trust to be earned from a local population that he does not yet belong to. The trust can be defined by a resemblance in life conditions, such as having a daily routine with work or walking the dog in the morning, or proving an intention to stay permanently, which all in all might
eventually result in a higher degree of inclusion in the local community. In the meantime, Markus and his partner are studying the local society from an outsider position with a desire to turn the knowledge into reorientation and full participation as residents on the Costa del Sol.

Transnational differences

The retiree Margareta highlights yet another perspective on the relation to the local society. She speaks Spanish fluently and has lived in the country for thirty years and yet she stresses another aspect of difficulty in building relations to the local population:

“Well, I do feel that the Spanish friends, as far as I know, have a hard time accepting me, but then you shouldn’t forget the generation, my generation. Among the Spanish women in my generation there are very few who have work experience or education or knowledge of languages. They have been housewives, they have lived and been provided for by their husbands and taken care of their children and so on. And have no experience outside of Spain. They have no knowledge of languages. They have no education and that makes it very hard. Well, it really is.”

Margareta’s account points to her position as an elderly woman with financial capital and a professional background in several European countries. She finds it difficult to interact and connect with her local female friends, who are constructed as traditional housewives who have lived their lives in the Andalusia region. Moreover, Margareta has lived on her own during most of her years in Spain. She has not had a husband who could provide for her. Even though Margareta speaks Spanish, has local knowledge of the society and region and belongs to the same generation as her local friends, the differences in life conditions and social class affiliation are a hindrance for in-depth friendships. Anthias states that “narrations of belonging and otherness cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class” (2002:502), which Margareta’s account highlights. Her narration reveals how specific meanings of gender, which are class-based and specific to the local context, come into play in an everyday practice such as making social relations across national boundaries on the Costa del Sol.

On the other hand, her account might also be an attempt to point to similar professional aspirations and interests that she assumes she shares with me, since I am there as a professional researcher and she knows that we share language skills. Hence, the differences she highlights might also be a contrasting means to bond with me. Simultaneously, she points out that integration is reciprocal. Even though she might have done her share to reach a high level of incorporation into the local community, there is a counterpart that has to commit to integration as well. Many speak of the difficulties they face encountering the local population.

Some of the interviewees also highlight a difference in signification attributed to social relations from what they are used to. For those with a Spanish partner, the local friends that they refer to are often friends of the partner. Often it is pointed out that these friends signify a shortcut to local friendships and inclusion in the local community which otherwise might be tough to attain on one’s own. Sofie maps out her relationships along the coast for me during our first meeting in a noisy café environment. I conclude her explanation by saying:

“Ok, then, you have the Swedish girlfriends and then you have your bigger Spanish gang.”

“Yes, most of them are my partner’s friends since before and in that gang I am now a part. I will always be the strange one there. I’ll always be the one that doesn’t know the jokes in the children’s shows that they know because they were watching at the same time. I am the one who has not experienced their history. I am the one they might have to explain things to an extra time because I don’t know how things work.”

Sofie is pointing to a lack of shared childhood experiences with her local friends. However, her statement should be viewed in relation to a later conversation I have with her about her strong belief in the importance of her 1970’s generational background in Sweden. Because of her specific generational background, she believes she was given equal opportunities in life due to a national welfare system based on homogenization and a shared cultural experience cutting across regional, ethnic, and social class differences. Sofie’s perception stems from the components that shaped a shared “Swedish” childhood. From the 1960’s onward, the nationwide, state-subsidized cultural production of books, music, movies, television, and radio programs produced a Swedish national childhood, according to Orvar Löfgren (2000:239ff). Thomas Hylland Eriksen affirms that

41 "Ok, så då har du de svenska tjekompisarna och så har du ditt spanska lite större gäng.”
particular childhood experiences have been nationalized and become national childhood experiences in order to strengthen the identification with the nation (1996:57ff). Sofie’s confusion in relation to a shared “Spanish” cultural childhood can be understood with reference to a shared uniform and homogeneous childhood within her own generation of the 1970’s in Sweden.

Sofie ends by saying that she thinks the Spaniards do not share the same meaning of friendship. She seeks substance and depth in a friendship and her local friends see friends as peripheral. Sofie’s account portrays inclusion in a group of local friends, which is highly valuable for understanding and feeling a sense of belonging to the local community. On the other hand, Sofie speaks of exclusion and of fully not taking part in the spirit of the group. In order to understand her position in relation to the group of friends, Sofie’s construction of friendship is based on intercultural differences in the sense that she views close friendships of trust as a Swedish phenomenon. Friendships in Spain are constructed as being based on light-hearted social gatherings, i.e. simply hanging out together in groups. She notes that she does not share the meaning of friendship with her local friends.

Despite the many differences and adjustments needed in order to position oneself within the local community, the friendships made have a profound influence in feeling that one belongs. The interviewees’ own background and ways of conduct need to be matched with the practices of the local arena in order to separate oneself from the notion of being a foreigner or stranger. To be given access to the local community at a tourist destination such as the Costa del Sol without the support and shortcut of a family unit, which will be analyzed next, requires a commonality of living conditions, such as a working life, a local social network or signaling an ambition to remain on location for the foreseeable future.

Family-in-law

In the process of finding one’s place and advancing toward a reorientated position as a member of the local population, one vital element for the Swedish women with Spanish partners has proven to be the partner’s family. Majken tells me the following when I meet her the first time in the book shop she runs with her Spanish husband:

“I would like to say that the leading character for me in my Spanish life is my mother-in-law. One could say that I won the highest prize in the lottery.”

42 "Jag skulle säga att huvudpersonen för mig i mitt spanska liv är min svärmor. Man skulle kunna säga att jag har vunnit högsta vinsten på lotteriet.” (Interview with Majken February 12, 2009)
Majken’s statement is related to her notion of Swedish girls being connoted with the idea of *La Sueca*, a cultural icon of the 1960’s and 1970’s portrayed as a liberated, (overly) sexualized, blond Swedish female in a bikini, an image ascribed to any blond Northern European woman in the early years of the lifestyle migration phenomenon in Spain (Cardona and Losada 2009:64ff). She suggests that any mother-in-law would have been hesitant if her son had started to see a Northern European girl during that time. Despite the general notion, Majken was embraced by her husband’s family.

Majken’s mother-in-law has also had an important impact on her life by introducing Majken to the customs, traditions, and ways of life of the family. She has translated the common sense of the Andalusian countryside for her. I ask her to give an example and she says that since Fuengirola is still a little village in the eyes of her mother-in-law, Majken has been taught not to say everything she knows to everybody since everybody knows one another in the local community, of which Majken now is a part. Transmitted from the mother-in-law to the Swedish daughter-in-law are elements of social control, still perceived as appropriate despite the place not being a small fishing village anymore but a purpose-built tourist resort for an international population.

Similar to Majken’s strong connection to her family-in-law, Sofie stresses the family of her Spanish partner of nine years, José, as being the essential foundation for finding her place and establishing a position of inclusion on the coast. Strengthening Sofie’s sense of belonging to José’s life and relations is the fact that Sofie lived a year and a half with José’s family in their house in Coín, part of the time by herself without José living there with her. He had a job in a neighboring town, where he stayed during the weekdays. She tells me that in the beginning it was a difficult situation to adjust to. While living in Sweden she had lived on her own and really enjoyed being independent. She had moved away from home at the age of 18 and lived by herself until she was 25, while studying for a university degree at one of the universities in Sweden. She moved to Coín to study Spanish, and during her time as a language student she met José. The encounter led to an extended stay while working at a local hotel and living with José and his family. She explains how restricted she felt during that time because she was obliged to spend all her time with his family while sharing the family activities.

The couple was eventually able to live on their own but they still felt an obligation to visit the family every weekend. The weekly trips turned out to be very tiresome for Sofie. After some negotiation they now spend one weekend a month in Coín with José’s family. Over time the weekends with the family in-law have become an important event in Sofie’s transnational life. She now looks forward to seeing her partner’s family. The negotiations with José’s family have resulted in a durable position for Sofie in-between

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43 Spanish for “the Swedish woman”.

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her need for independence and the Spanish family’s routine of meeting every weekend. She realizes that the amount of time spent together has resulted in a reciprocal understanding for one another:

“Many times it has felt good to have a family that says: ‘Come home! Come home to us!’ And his mother is very physical. She likes to hug and is happy when we come. Because I feel like I have a Spanish family when I come home to them. I have three homes really. I have my home where I can relax completely in my environment. Then I come home to José’s family and there we have our bed in our room with our family and our shared activities. And it feels like I am coming home to my parental home of a sort and get taken care of and it has been very important during these years.”

Identification with the family-in-law norms and routines has over time meant a position of inclusion and membership. For Majken and Sofie the identification process has gone beyond the family unit and passed on to a better understanding and strengthened a sense of belonging to the local society as a whole, which cannot be understood as a total incorporation in the local society. This is the basis of the transnational condition, in which full participation and belonging to the local society will never be in reach for the migrant.

The internal other

The conversational interviews were suitable occasions for stressing the interviewees’ desire to engage in the country of settlement and their ability to do so fully, if they were to be admitted by the local society as accepted members of the coastal community. In the meantime, many put an emphasis on distinguishing themselves from other Swedes.

For instance, Lena and I discuss how to maintain the ties to the home country for Lena’s future children while living in Spain. I ask her if the Swedish school on the Costa del Sol wouldn’t be an option. Her reply comes instantly:

“No, it isn’t. We are Spanish. I am Swedish but we live in Spain. My partner is Spanish. I don’t think the Swedish school is particularly integrated. They do have Spanish classes, as far as I know, but the pupils, most of them, don’t know any Spanish. Have nothing to do with Spain. It’s an entirely

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different clique in the society. We don’t play golf on Saturdays or have investments in stocks. We have another life.”45

The notion that the Swedish presence on the coast is made up of privileged and wealthy elite families with no desire to integrate in the local community is revealed through Lena’s migration story. By pointing to other Swedes as playing golf on Saturdays and having investments in stocks, Lena stresses her lack of financial resources, which positions herself in a social class different from the elite families. She has also had to struggle to make her way in the labor market, which is also an experience she assumes she does not share with the housewives of the elite families she is referring to. Moreover, she indicates that the elite can afford not to integrate, since they have financial means to put their children in the Swedish school with a yearly tuition fee, and to stay detached from the local society and only rely on the Swedish infrastructure along the coast.

Lena’s positioning is in line with Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s statement that identification is primarily collective and is based on contrasts in social relations (1996). The act of separating and differentiating oneself from others is a most common practice in order to establish belonging and a position for oneself. But Lena’s transnational experience stands in relation to a differentiation from within her own group of Swedes. Her migration story demonstrates the practice of creating an internal other (cf. Gerber 2011:21; Volčič 2005:166). The concept of internal other aims to conceptualize the practice of contrasting the self to others within the same group. Other ethnological studies of collective identification highlight similar practices of othering internally. For instance, the ethnologist Sofie Gerber, in the dissertation Öst är Väst men Väst är Bäst (East is West but West is Best) (2011), discusses 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. In addition, Maja Povranović Frykman concludes, through a depiction of her embodied experience of a cramped and smelly bus ride through Europe with Croatian migrants: “Ethnic groups in diaspora and exile are often seen as ‘ethnic communities’, but some intra-communal differences are visible even in the loose interaction patterns in the course of bus rides, and especially in more or less loudly uttered remarks intending a differentiation from within, a confirmation of self-ascribed distinction” (2003:69; see also Pripp 2001).

Indeed, practices of othering internally are widespread among the interviewees in the study and are often related to other migrants’ lack of interest and knowledge of the Spanish language and society, and an overemphasis on

being orientated around cultural traits originating in Sweden. This is also the construction of other Swedes expressed by Margareta when she speaks of other senior Swedes residing along the coast:

“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, that really it is just the climate they pay any interest 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 or all those things.”

Margareta tells me her opinion of the elderly internal other that she differentiates herself from by the fact that she has thirty years of residency in Spain and local knowledge and language skills. She might be of the same generation but experiences a discrepancy in the meaning ascribed to the transnational life conditions among the Swedish migrants. She has devoted her professional life to establishing the different supporting activities of the Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol, such as working with Swedish media on the coast, doing administration for one of the social clubs for Swedish retirees, teaching Spanish to other retirees, and so on, while managing and adapting to the norms and regulations of the local society. Her aspiration and reorientation toward integration has been pivotal for establishing a lasting Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol. Today, on the other hand, she meets retirees of Swedish origin of her own age, who come to live and enjoy the fruits of her efforts without any desire to have any deep engagement with the local society.

The practice of creating an internal other is also a practice of positioning other Swedes as subordinate to Margareta, who is endowed with a transnational competence, due to her many years as resident in Spain, Spanish language skills, and local knowledge of the region. A transnational competence can be viewed as an asset or a capital in the Bourdieuan sense. To master a transnational competence tends to enhance one’s social position through an exchange of formal and informal services within the collective of Swedish migrants (Woube 2013). This is also a widespread feature of the British migrant community. Karen O’Reilly writes: “Settled migrants have more to bring to the exchange in the way of knowledge, contacts and goods. This establishes their higher status within the networks. Knowledge of the area, of the pitfalls of settling there, of laws and regulations, and of where to go or who to ask to get what, is highly valued” (2000:127).

Despite Margareta’s resentment and annoyance about the internal other of Swedish seniors, Margareta devotes a lot of her time to the daily activities

46 ”De umgås med varann, de spelar golf, dom har parties, dom går på svenska restauranger, svenska barer och så vidare. Det är så svenskt, så svenskt så det är egentligen bara klimatet [de har intresse av]. Och dom vet väldigt lite om Spanien och det spanska. Dom flesta har inte ens spansk tv. Men på den tiden när jag flyttade hit då fanns det inte något annat. Det fanns inte svensk tv och alla dom här sakerna.” (Interview with Margareta, April 24, 2009)
organized by the institutions with Swedish affiliation, such as the churches and the social clubs. Through this participation she is daily strengthening her feelings of belonging and affinity with the appointed subordinate group of Swedish retirees. Margareta’s account shows how the practice of positioning hides contradictions and complexities of identification, which is a feature of the variability of identification in narratives, according to Anthias (2002:502). When the many contexts of positioning are taken into account, the identification process can be understood as an ongoing and changeable practice that occurs on a translocational level.

Refraining from the Swedish collective

Leaning on a transnational orientation is something Margareta shares with Andreas. Resembling each other in their dependence on the Swedish population for work, their orientation toward a Swedish presence in everyday life differs. While Margareta embraces and regularly takes part in the activities within the Swedish infrastructure, Andreas expresses a deeper desire to avoid any affiliation with the same group of Swedes, besides his working hours at the Swedish institution:

“It is a bit different for me because I drive to work and from work by car every day. I am not the one living around the corner, and many of those who work live here. That is, they’ll walk to the job in five minutes. I don’t, instead it takes me 25 minutes to get to work if I take the freeway and park and so on. It’s a totally different thing. That is, I drive to work, I drive from work so I have a distance in a way.”

members of the “Swedish colony,” in being a life of leisure in the sun where Swedish nationals cling to other nationals without any interest in the rich cultural expressions of Andalusia. The lack of authenticity in the lives of his fellow nationals indicates a subordinate position, in Andreas’ view. He distinguishes himself from an internal other with too much of an orientation toward anything linked to his Swedish origin, while living in Spain. Instead, his motivation for a life on the Costa del Sol is the international features he can enjoy, such as an international range of restaurants, sharing location of residency with a diverse population, and making friends with people of all backgrounds.

The ambition to distract oneself as a permanent resident from the Swedish population also stem from the gossip, personal intrigues, cheating, and a constant desire to increase personal status that several interviewees express as representative, but unwanted, traits of other Swedes. Another feature is suspiciousness toward one another, especially noticeable in the first period of interaction within the group. One woman tells me that she experiences a hesitation among fellow Swedish migrants in telling her about everyday matters such as whom they have spent the weekend with. The reluctance might be traced back to the fragile grounds on which relationships rest due to inconsistent and flexible routine of dwelling in the area. Moreover, there are power struggles embedded within the social networks in the group, giving particular families more status than others. That is to say, there are some families that one would rather spend the weekend with than others, according to the interviewees. Several tell me of their disapproval of the gossip and social control. They state this as a reason for refraining from contact with the Swedish population. One of them is Markus, who says:

“You won’t notice it but, boy, the Swedes speak a lot of crap. That is why Stefan and I, well, we didn’t know it beforehand. I thought ‘you are Swedish. I can trust you here’ but then you get home and ‘oh, this doesn’t work’. They rip each other off, say bad things about each other.”

“Also, professionally? Those who have private businesses?”

“Yes, there are some who have made the habit of not giving a guarantee but they have so many customers anyway. All of Costa del Sol is their catchment area.”

Initially, thinking nationality is a reliable parameter, Markus and Stefan have experienced on a firsthand basis how nationality has failed them. They

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“Även alltså professionellt, de som har firnor?”

“Ja, det är en del som har satt det i system att man får ingen garanti men de har ju så många kunder i alla fall. Hela Solkusten är ju deras upptagningsområde.” (Interview with Markus, April 1, 2009)
have chosen not to take an active part socially in the group of lifestyle migrants from Sweden. However, Markus is engaged in the Swedish church on the Costa del Sol and justifies this engagement by saying:

“In church you meet many of the authentic people you feel that you can talk to without being stabbed in the back.”

As shown through the migration stories, the group of Swedes living on the Costa del Sol exercise a close-knit, narrow-minded social control of its members. This can be related to the study about Swedish Churches abroad, conducted by Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson, who state that the social control in smaller contexts of Swedish migrants is also a problem to be dealt with for the church staff of other Swedish churches in lifestyle migration areas (2012:50).

The jet set of Swedes

In the coastal region there is yet another group within the Swedish collective which the interviewees wish to avoid. Sofie and I were discussing the rumors of wealthy Swedish tax evaders that are said to have come to the Costa del Sol during the 1970’s and 1980’s, when she told me her experience of living further down the coast in Marbella:

“There is a special clique of people, I don’t know, it’s very superficial. Maybe not here in Fuengirola, I think there are a bit more ordinary Svenssons, but I experienced it when I lived in Marbella that there was another kind of people, a lot of other kinds of persons of a special group in society living there. It’s a lot more superficial, there is more partying and glamor, another type of financial status, totally different values than what I was used to and it shocked me a bit. Relationships of all kinds and infidelity and it did not seem very strange. It is not strange if many have a mistress or a man in his sixties is married to a woman in her thirties. It seems pretty normal. Where I come from in life it is not normal to see a man in his sixties with a girl in her thirties. It’s not the norm anyhow. In Marbella I have experienced that it is not that unusual. Fat men who play golf. I don’t understand it. They don’t do much else than that and eat a good meal at night. Well, they live their lives. I don’t feel we have anything in common despite being Swedish citizens. No, we don’t interact in the same sphere and never will do. We have nothing in common.”

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49 ”I kyrkan träffar man många av dom äkta människorna där man känner att jag kan prata med dig utan att få en kniv i ryggen.” (Interview with Markus, April 15, 2009)

50 Referring to ordinary Svenssons is equivalent to referring to ‘the average Joe’ in North America or the Smiths in English-speaking countries.

51 ”Det är väl en speciell klick av människor, jag vet inte, det är mycket yta. Kanske inte så mycket här i Fuengirola, jag tror att det är lite mera vanliga Svensson, men jag upplevde det när jag bodde i Marbella att det var en annan typ av person, många andra personer av en
Sofie refers to migrants from Sweden, who live in Marbella with a luxurious lifestyle typical of the jet set of Europe: “Not the jet set of Sweden but suddenly they spend time with princes and barons and a totally different world.”  

Through the account, Sofie makes yet another distinction within the group of Swedish migrants living on the Costa del Sol. There is a geographical separation among Swedes on the coast in that those living in Marbella are said to belong to a financial elite, separated from the Swedes living in Fuengirola, who have more modest incomes and pensions. The othering internally in this case also entails a lifestyle of an elite that is based on a different set of norms that regulates interactions within the elite group in Sofie’s understanding. The financial and social differences have an excluding effect for Sofie, making her feel different from the Swedish migrant group in Marbella.

In most cases the practice of internal othering is connoted with negative stereotypes. The stereotypes can be connected to self-representations of the interviewees that might be a consequence of the critical reporting on the Swedish population on the Costa del Sol in Swedish media in Sweden over the years. Hence, while the interviewees practice internal othering, they are also positioning and portraying themselves as competent and orientated around the Spanish language and society in contrast to other Swedes, along the lines of the concept of strategic interlinkage, coined by Oscar Pripp (2011:69). Strategic interlinkage aims to describe how prejudices about a group mediated through media are linked to the interview session and strategically responded to with counter-images of traits valued positively by interviewees.

A divided and diverse group of Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol have been mapped out through the practice of othering internally in the migration stories. The migrants from Sweden cannot be understood as a coherent and homogeneous collective, but a group of migrants that dwell along the coast in different financial and social conditions based on social class, generation, knowledge of languages, dwelling patterns, and aspirations for their stay. In relation to and in encounters with other national and ethnic groups,
the Swedish collective is often viewed as homogeneous. The interviewees tell stories of how the Swedish migrant group as a whole is regarded as an appreciated migrant group, viewed in a favorable light, which is also favorable to them as members of the Swedish collective.

In a favorable light

A unison perception is to regard the Swedish nationality as an asset for the migrants in their daily lives in relation to other nationalities and ethnicities dwelling in the region. Their nationality enables the migrants to be viewed positively by other residents on the coast, which positions them in a more favorable light than other nationalities. Lena gives the following account:

“I belong to one of the nicer European countries. One of the more socially accepted European countries. A developed European country. A country that has not depended on the EU to build up the entire country like many of the Eastern European new member states that have had the opportunity to become developed countries thanks to the EU. Sweden was a developed country long before we became members of the EU. It definitely gives me an advantage down here.”

When constructing Sweden as a superior EU member state, Lena points to the fact that over the years Sweden has been a contributor to the EU collaboration, more than a beneficiary of EU subsidies. Moreover, when Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in 2004, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the southern province of Andalusia was left with the impression of having lost its agricultural benefits due to a redistribution of EU subsidies to the new member states. Lena’s account suggests that interactions between residents of different national origins on the Costa del Sol are affected by European financial politics. Therefore, a more superior position is attributed to the Swedish migrants than to Eastern European migrants by the local population. In addition, the Swedish migrants belong to the privileged and exclusive group of lifestyle migrants from Northern Europe alongside migrants from the UK, the other Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands, while migrants from Eastern Europe migrate in search of labor in order to enhance their living conditions, a possibility opened to them with EU membership in 2004. The account is yet another example of how social positions are affected by the hierarchical global order of “weak” or “strong” nation

states. This determines how migrants are viewed in the new country depending on their national origin and the global position of the nation state and its relation to other nation states (cf. Weiss 2005, see also Lundström 2014).

In a similar vein, Tilde, born in 1934, speaks of being proud to be a Swede:

“In some way I am proud when they come and ask me where I was born, where I come from. I am proud to say it and I think that Sweden and the Swedish people have a good name here. It would have been worse to say that I was from Russia or something because then it is the mafia or something. But if you say that you are Swedish, no one thinks about the mafia.”54

Many accounts of a shared pride are related to constructing Sweden as a country that has a good reputation in the world, which is said to rub off on the Swedish migrants living their everyday life in Spain. Many interviewees view this notion as a spin-off from the years 1969–1976 and 1982–1986 when Prime Minister Olof Palme, representing the Social Democratic Party, held office. It can also possibly be traced back to a historical notion going all the way back to the seventeenth century that describes Sweden as a culturally superior nation and a transmitter of its cultural values and ideals of peace to the world, i.e. a local version of Eurocentrism, according to Katarina Schough in her work *Hyperboré* about the historical notions of Sweden’s global position (2008:13). The local version of Eurocentrism has survived over centuries, but since the last half of the twentieth century Sweden has more profoundly aspired to be part of international politics and position the nation as a peaceful force in the world (Löfgren 2000:236).

“Fish-and-chips tattoo tourists”

The Swedish nationality is also viewed as an asset in relation to other groups of lifestyle migrants, such as the British population, with which the Swedes have daily encounters and interactions. The British community on the Costa del Sol is the largest community engaged in lifestyle migration (O’Reilly 2003). Since it is such a big group of migrants, several critical remarks about the British population on the coast are heard from the interviewees in the study. Tilde says:

“If you think about the bars and the restaurants, there are a lot of English ones and they have English names and English text on the boards they put out and if you come there they’ll speak English. If you ask in Spanish you’ll notice that they want you to speak English and I think that’s stupid. They can

54 "På något sätt är jag ju stolt när dom kommer och frågar var jag är född, var jag kommer ifrån. Jag är stolt att säga det och jag tror att Sverige och svenskarna har ett gott namn om sig här. Det skulle vara värre att säga att man var från Ryssland eller nänting för då är det ju maffia eller nåt sånt. Men säger man att man är svensk så är det ingen som tänker på nån maffia inte." (Interview with Tilde, April 14, 2009)
come here and start something but learn the language of the country and have the menu in Spanish. And then the tourists that come, and I do think there are a lot of British, they look horrible when they walk on the streets in some kind of shorts.”

“Could you describe what they look like?”

“Yes, they don’t wear a shirt for example and they are, as my daughter’s father-in-law say, ‘they are white in the skin’ or maybe red and a bit porky and brusque maybe too and speak loudly and I don’t know. The Spaniards have nicer manners in that way. They speak loudly but in another way. They are happy, laugh and have fun but, no, I think the British have spread out too much in a way. Some Swedish places have opened too but I think they too are more discreet. Have better manners. They are good, they blend in more into the environment.”

Lightly dressed British tourists distinguish themselves from the more heavily clothed Spanish residents in wintertime. Photographer: Annie Woube

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55 “Om man tänker på barer och restauranger så är det ju väldigt mycket engelskt och de har engelskt namn och engelsk text på de här tavlorne de sätter ut och kommer man dit så pratar de ju engelska. Frågar man på spanska så märker man att de vill att man ska helst prata engelska och det tycker jag är väldigt dumt. De kan gärna komma hit och kanske starta nånting men tala landets språk och ha menyn på spanska. Och sen även turisterna som kommer och faktskt tror jag att det åter är väldigt mycket engelsmän, dom ser ju förskräckliga ut när de går på gatan men nån slags shorts på sig.”

”Kan du beskriva hur de ser ut?”

”Ja, det har ju inte skjorta på sig till exempel och dom är ju som min dotters svärfar sa ’dom är ju vit i skinnet’ eller kanske röda då och lite fläskiga och lite burdusa kanske också och pratar högt och ja, jag vet inte. Spanjorerna är ju mycket finare i sitt sätt på det sättet. De pratar högt men på ett annat sätt. De är glada, skrattar och har roligt men nej, där tycker jag att britterna har brett ut sig för mycket på något sätt. Det har ju öppnat en del svenska ställen också men då tror jag att de är mer diskreta. Lite finare i sättet. Dom är bra, dom smälter in mer i miljön.” (Interview with Tilde, April 14, 2009)
Based on the languages spoken and clothing on the streets of Fuengirola, the British population is clearly visible any time of the year. A majority of average strollers on the beach promenade speak either English or Spanish. The British, possibly tourists and not residents, distinguish themselves by being dressed too lightly in comparison to others that walk the streets during the winter season when temperatures are low. This picture is confirmed by Per Gustafson’s article about tourism and seasonal migration (2002), where the Swedish interviewees are said to be separated from tourists in their way of knowing how to dress appropriately for the seasons. It is through the clothing or lack of clothing that the interviewees claim they are able to distinguish the British from other groups. The interviewees base their assumptions on reading bodies as signs, in line with Ahmed’s discussion of bodily differentiation practices (2000:8). The bodies in too light clothing mark the British population as being *out of place* and not fitting into the local customs of clothing and appearance in the streets of the Costa del Sol.

The statement above is a sign of additional internal othering within the group of lifestyle migrants from Northern Europe. It is a construction that speaks of a social hierarchy on the Costa del Sol, where the Swedish population is regarded in a more favorable light and superior to the British population in that the Swedish presence is said to be more subtle and discreet. The interviewees also refer to an inferior social class when speaking about the British population, giving them names such as “fish-and-chips tattoo tourists,” although the two groups have a similar origin in industrialized Northern European countries, and despite not knowing whether the British are tourists or dwelling temporarily or permanently. That is to say, the British populations that the migrants from Sweden encounter on the street are constructed as different from the Swedish dwellers both in social class and in cultural manners of behavior. The British population is numerous on the streets of the Costa del Sol, but this group is not the only collective that the migrants from Sweden relate to on the streets. Another distinctive group of people, about which the interviewees give an ambivalent account, is the West African vendors wandering the streets with different types of goods.

**The annoyance along the beach promenade**

While I sit down to have a cup of coffee on the beach promenade there is one element in the Costa del Sol bliss that both bothers me and makes me concerned during my periods of fieldwork. A steady stream of West African vendors keep coming to interrupt me with offers of pirate CDs, DVDs, fake watches, purses, sunglasses, and jewelry. Others have put their merchandise on display on a blanket on the promenade. They are mostly young men who appear properly dressed and clean, in comparison to the lightly dressed and careless appearance of tourists on the beach promenade. A few West African
women also offer to make braids in people’s hair. Some are dressed in what appear to be colorful outfits of their home countries. Others have modern Western clothing and I read the designer names of Gucci, Dolce and Gabana, Chanel on their belts, shoes, and hats. Their appearance and their occupation are contradictory to me because I rarely see anyone buying their goods. Most of the time they are very polite but the multitude of young men that keep on disturbing the coffee break is a nuisance.

The everyday encounters and interaction with the West African vendors is an annoying and suspicious element in the street life of Fuengirola for both me and the interviewees. For instance, on the occasions when I meet Karin, we always meet at a Swedish-owned café where we can sit outside. However, by sitting outside we are also constantly being interrupted by West African street vendors who want us to buy their merchandise. We experience the encounters together, but I bring up the matter when she gives the following account:

“There are so many of them that I get a bit blasé. I don’t even see them when they are approaching when we sit like this and maybe I don’t wave them off but I barely look at them and only say: no, no, no, no. I don’t want anything and then I don’t even make the effort to look them in the eye. If I do, they won’t walk away. They are trying to sell but at the same time there are horrible life stories.”

The West African vendors are regarded with suspicion since the interviewees have also noticed that the vendors rarely sell anything, and they wonder how they can survive. Simon tells me that he approached one young man:

“I have not gotten an answer that makes sense from them. I have tried to ask: ‘Have you tried to ask if you can get funding to become a bus or truck driver? You are competent, you are strong, you are intelligent and we are crying out for drivers.’ But then he smiles. There is something that I don’t understand. They are from Senegal, most of them. I think it is a shame because they are a good workforce and they are nice and happy people.”

Simon, while speaking for the Spanish collective in using the pronoun we as in “we the Spanish population are crying out for drivers,” have tried to understand the whereabouts of the West Africans wandering the streets of Fuengirola. Due to an apparent lack of demand for their goods together with


their black bodies among a white international population, the West Africans are seen in a questionable light and are in the position of being marginalized strangers in the streets. Strangers “‘have no purpose,’ that is, they have no legitimate function within the space which could justify their existence or intrusion” writes Sara Ahmed in order to define who a stranger is (2000:31). With no purpose and uncertain intentions as strangers along the coast, the West African vendors are constructed as mysterious and suspicious ingredients in urban legends and crime stories that make a symbolic narrative of a Costa del Sol noir in association with stories of money laundering, drug and human trafficking, and the mafia (see Alsterdal 2010; Marklund 2008; Edwardsson 2008; Eriksson 2002).

The appearance of the West African vendors also put the interviewees in an awkward position, as in the case of Karin when she recognizes the vendors as different through the look of their bodies. It is a difference that is felt through the skin of her body that produces feelings of discomfort, according to Ahmed (2000:45). The recognition of the vendors as strangers makes her act as if the vendors are not there, which can be seen as a sign that she has indeed been touched by their appearance, and feels unease, which is shaped by the proximity of the stranger. The vendor’s body is “a body that is out of place because it has come too close” (ibid. 2000:49). According to the sociologist Beverly Skeggs, referring to the work of Sarah Ahmed (2000), “the proximate stranger who is not easily identifiable presents anxieties” (2004:165). Hence, it is the inability to establish a basis of similarities due to the uncertainties about the vendors and their whereabouts that causes an effect of unease. Karin simply does not know how to position them and understand their practices on the streets, which in the long run means that she is unable to position and draw a boundary for herself in relation to them. Not wanting to buy anything, she acts as if they are not there. At the same time she is aware of the dangerous and desperate undertakings that make the many West African refugees cross the Mediterranean in small boats, which leads to many being washed ashore on the beaches of southern Spain.

Being connected through migration, the migrants from Sweden as privileged lifestyle migrants, and the vendors, risking their lives in coming as refugees, highlight a social hierarchy on the Costa del Sol through their bodily encounters. The encounters shed light on the coast as a space orientated around whiteness. Through the encounter the migrants position themselves as a white, privileged elite, which means that they are able to live the lives they have chosen in accordance with the lifestyle migration phenomenon. As such, they follow a body-politic of being in-place on the streets of the Costa del Sol, purposely built to serve white Northern European visitors. The West African vendors, on the other hand, through their black bodies and their selling practices on the streets, are out of place as a strange and annoying element in the vacation bliss. The Costa del Sol supports practices of white lifestyle migration trajectories, “which makes nonwhite bodies uncomforta-
ble and feel exposed, visible, and different when they take up this space” (Ahmed 2006:133). Bodies that are out of place highlight the Costa del Sol as a space of whiteness, which reproduces the characteristics of such a place and makes the social hierarchies visible. On the other hand, as shown in earlier discussions with Marie and Sofie in their encounter with the local society, positioning on the basis of whiteness is neither fixed nor stable in the hierarchy of global power structures. They are also relational, situational, and spatial. Migrants from Sweden can position themselves as superior to West African vendors due to skin color, social class, and lifestyle migration practices, but they are positioned as subordinate to the local population. Despite sharing white bodies, the encounters between the Swedish migrants and the local population rest on other factors, such as positioning the migrants as temporary tourists with no deep engagement in the region, which hinders incorporation into the local society.

Positioning through the use of language

Due to the diverse population on the coast, it is common to speak and use a variety of languages in transnational everyday lives, as Ulla Börestam has shown in her research on naming practices among Scandinavian lifestyle migrants in Spain (2011:39). To have a knowledge of languages is very important when living an integrated life on the coast. In my field notes I wrote the following after two months on the Costa del Sol:

I always speak Spanish when I open up to other people, and mostly they answer in Spanish too. If they answer in English, I continue to speak Spanish. I speak English in all the British places and they always speak English, regardless of the language you have started the conversation in. In a British place they asked if we were Americans. But many times when we come they think we’re French. In the Swedish places we speak Swedish. But then I have interviewed quite a lot at the Finnish café by the Swedish school and there mixed Spanish and English and spoke the language that they spoke when they addressed me. But the last day when I was to pay for my coffee the older man said “uno diez, en och tio” (for the coffee) and we both laughed when it turned out that he understood that I was Swedish and for me that he knew Swedish. 58

As the field notes indicate, language is a means to use in order to position others and the self into different collective formations. The international atmosphere also creates confusion in this regard, as there are situations when it is difficult to establish someone’s position within the groups residing along the coast. Depending on location and situation, I was appointed different positions during the fieldwork on the Costa del Sol. The British owners of pubs and cafés thought my husband and I were Americans because we both speak English with an American accent after having lived in the United States. At times when we were not speaking we were taken for a French couple, due to our mix of black and white skin color, as interracial relationships are assumed to be common in France. My experience in the Finnish café ended with a twist as the older man who had served me on many occasions spoke to me in my mother tongue, Swedish, even though I had addressed him in Spanish. Not knowing that we shared a language, we had previously used the most common languages on the coast, which are Spanish and English, in order to communicate at the café.

In the continuation of this chapter I will extended the analysis of how language is used to create belonging to different groups through being a means to position oneself and others in practice on the Costa del Sol.

A practice of inclusion

The use of language is both a way to show belonging and to show that one does not belong. Anna, born in 1987, uses such a practice of identification most clearly. She lives together with her Spanish partner Isabel and they work at the same company in the harbor in Torremolinos. She tells me from the start that she agreed to participate in the study in order to be able to speak Swedish because she did not have that opportunity elsewhere since she spent most of her time among Spaniards. Hence, right from the start she is positioning herself as being incorporated into the local society with partner, friends, and work with Spanish connotations.

During our conversation I perceive her as mellow, almost shy, and her voice is low. She is thoughtful and I understand that she has thought a lot about her position in-between Swedish and Spanish contexts. There is another reason for her thoughtful appearance. She does not remember words in Swedish anymore. Often she tells me the words in Spanish and I translate them for her or suggest words. During the following three interviews with her I also notice that her intonation follows the way of stressing the words in Spanish.

skrattade båda två då det visade sig att han förstått att jag var svenska och för mig att han kunde svenska. (Field notes March 31, 2009)
After our first interview, we walk over to the apartment she shares with her partner Isabel. Isabel is at home and we change language from Swedish to Spanish so she can join the conversation too. In the change of language the mellow and thoughtful Anna disappears. Instead I perceive Anna as an energetic young woman, who is quick to comment on the topic of conversation. She speaks very rapidly in accordance with the Andalusian way of speaking Spanish. She shortens the words accordingly and swallows the sounds at the right places. That is to say, ‘s’ at the end of Spanish words is silent in Andalusian Spanish. Her way of speaking also changes the impression I have of her. She seems more aggressive, swearing, using harsh words, and mixing in slang in a way that I recognize as the language of the street used among the Spanish youth. Since Isabel is there too I realize that the way Anna is communicating is inspired by Isabel.

My first encounter with Anna depicts how she has acquired a transnational competence in communication and languages that transcends ways of expressing meaning and conveying a message. By showing that she masters several types of cultural codes, and has acquired the ability to code-switch common to young people in multicultural settings (Ehn and Löfgren 2001:92), she uses the language in order to position herself within the group of young Spanish individuals she spends most time with. Through the use of the Spanish language she expresses belonging and participation in the daily interactions that she has. Thomas Hylland Eriksen affirms that communication and dialogue are the very basis for identifying oneself with others since it is a means to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes (2004:37).

During our second meeting, Anna tells me that she views Spanish and Swedish society as being very different from each other. This she believes affects how she speaks and who she is in Spain. Now she starts to comment on my observations from the first interview:

“Here I have started to say things that I have never said before.”
“Like what?” I ask her.
“Insults, fucking idiot, he’s so stupid. I might be more brutal and I’m more angry here too. I have more of a temper in a strange way. I don’t know how. But it can be difficult to explain to my friends in Swedish. When I am speaking Swedish I don’t know how to express it. Express with the same words in Swedish… *gilipollas* (Spanish for asshole or dickhead) for instance. How am I going to translate that?”
“Bullshit,” I try testing.
Anna does not answer but continues to add swear words to the list. I then ask her to describe the Spanish Ana and she asks in return:
“Can I compare the Swedish Anna with the Spanish Ana? In Swedish I am more… what’s the name for it? *Educada*?”
“Educated, well-raised?” I ask to clarify.
“Yes, polite, much more polite. And maybe nicer too compared with the Spanish. And I think the Spanish Ana, now it sounds like I’m speaking about
two different selves when it comes to the personality. The Spanish Ana can probably be more expressive in a way. At least express what I feel and think.”

“And that you don’t…?”

“No, not in Swedish or when I am in Sweden. And it can even be with friends from Sweden that it’s more difficult to express myself if I’m disappointed or if I get angry about something, then it can, what is the name for it? Cost a lot…?”

In the dialogue above, which we held in Swedish, she adds the Spanish word educada instead of saying in Swedish the word well-raised. Moreover, she wishes to say the Swedish word for personality, which is personlighet, but ends up mixing the Spanish word, personalidad, with the Swedish word and says personalitet. She ends the sequence with the expression cost a lot, which is a direct translation of the Spanish expression cuesta mucho. This means that something is complicated, troublesome, and steals one’s energy. The conversation here displays the way Anna mixes languages and expressions from Spanish to Swedish.

For Anna and other interviewees who master Spanish fluently, the language is more than a means of communicating a message. Anna also positions herself within transnational contexts, which depend on and are contrasted by the choice of words, speed, body language, interruption, or waiting and not waiting for one’s turn when others are speaking (e.g. Kahlin 2008). Anna positions herself as affiliated with her Spanish peers when she articulates how she becomes vulgar, coarse, and dares to show her feelings in an aggressive manner in Spanish. Hence, she is constructing the Spanish language in contrast to the Swedish language, through which she is said to

59 “Här har jag börjat säga saker som jag aldrig har sagt förut.”
“Som till exempel vaddå?”
"Skitsnack"
[...]
"Får jag jämföra den spanska Ana med den svenska Anna? På svenska så är jag mycket mer…vad heter det? Educada?"
"Utbildad, uppostrad?"
"Ja, artig, mycket mer artig. Och kanske mer trevlig också på ett sätt som om jag jämför med den spanska. Men jag tror också den spanska Ana, nu låter det som om jag pratar om två olika om man tittar på personliten. Eh, den spanska Ana kan nog vara mer uttrycksfull också på något sätt. I alla fall uttrycka vad jag känner och tycker.”
"Och det gör du inte…?”
"Nej, inte på svenska eller när jag är i Sverige. Och det kan till och med vara med kompisar som jag har från Sverige så kan det vara svåreare att uttrycka mig typ om jag skulle vara besvi-ken eller om jag blir arg på någonting så kan det, vad heter det? Kosta mycket…?” (Interview with Anna, February 18, 2009)
change her style of speaking in order to be polite and wait for her turn to
speak. This is a way of expressing how she is able to feel that she belongs
among Swedes. The positioning through the use of language is relational,
situational, and contextual. Anthias states: “Narratives are disjointed, but
tend to focus on the negative and the positive, and to a striking extent they
rely on comparison and are therefore relational. While a strong normative
component is found, ambiguity and contradiction are central elements of all
narrations” (2002:512).

Anna tells me that she becomes someone else depending on the language
that she speaks. This can be related to how research on lifestyle migration
has depicted the trajectory as carrying a transformative potential for migrants
(Oliver 2008). The presentation she gives of herself is of someone that has
acquired a transnational competence or a skill that Anna has come to master.
In any situation she acts through the use of language as the collective does
depending on transnational context.

With a phenomenological understanding, Anna’s practice is also about a
bodily adaptation to context. According to Jonas Frykman and Niels Gilje:
“[To] speak is a real speaking act, it involves the senses and the whole
body—a skill that you rely on and that you can practice” (2003a:41). This is
related to Sneja Gunew’s argumentation that to know a language can be seen
as an embodied space, in which one can feel at home or feel estranged when
using. To master a language can be understood as a way to gain access to
such a space of hominess and belonging, which becomes a portable home to
carry wherever one goes. A portable home is always there to enter or acti-
vate. Hence, to be bilingual or multilingual can be seen as having access to
different linguistic spaces in which one belongs (2003:41ff), which is the
case for Anna.

Anna tells me that not only does she embody the Spanish way of speak-
ing, she also passes as Spanish among her Spanish group of friends. Sara
Ahmed affirms that to pass as someone else or to be taken for being some-
one else is to shape a special bond of closeness to others. The passing, as a
specific form of identification, can be connected to cultural and embodied
practices in wanting to be like the others. Through this embodiment of lan-
guage, Anna manifests a transnational reorientation of being in place and
comfortable among both her Spanish peers and her Swedish peers. Such
reorientation is generated over time through the migration, according to Ah-
med (2011:51ff).

Anna’s use of language is a question of expressing inclusion and belong-
ing to a group with the choice of words, slang, and the language of the
streets, i.e. the content of the Spanish language. Her belonging to the Span-
ish collective is also enhanced through the form of bodily communication
when she interrupts others, raises her voice, and speaks rapidly with her girl-
friend and friends. The use of language becomes significant and meaningful
for the transnational position that Anna upholds.
A practice of exclusion

Anna’s positioning while pointing to her communication skills is presented here as an example of how to use the language as an inclusionary factor. Now, in contrast, follows a discussion of how the use of language can be exclusionary in situations among different residential groups living on the Costa del Sol. Andreas tells me about meetings that he attends for the people in his residential area. The majority of residents are of British origin but the meetings are held in Spanish:

“There you have the Spaniards apart and the foreigners apart, the majority are British. It does not matter if a British person says something. There is a ‘No’ immediately from the Spanish. It does not matter, you don’t even have to look at the proposal. And the other way around. It is really tough. They speak Spanish really fast so the British won’t understand. There are translators there too who have to translate. It is really very interesting to see.”

Not having skills in Spanish is an important tool for the Spanish in order to exclude the British from being able to understand the meeting and make decisions important to them as residents in the area, Andreas claims. When expressing this, he also highlights his position of being outside of the depicted interaction, and not affected by the excluding practices of speaking too fast. He does not position himself within either the group of Spanish or the group of foreigners. But by relating to the account as “interesting to see,” Andreas suggests that he can identify with the residents that do speak Spanish fluently, are not lost in translation, and are able to follow the agenda of the meeting.

This practice has proven to be effective elsewhere along the coast. When I speak to Malin, a mother of a girl at the Swedish school, she tells me that the children at the Swedish school effectively exclude and bully each other by speaking Spanish in groups where not all know Spanish. She adds that it is not very strange that the children do so when the parents have a similar behavior. She goes on to tell me about an experience in the Swedish church when she had sat down to talk to another mother, when the other mother’s Swedish friend came. They had greeted each other and started a conversation in Spanish, which Malin could not participate in since she could not speak Spanish at the time.

To exclude others by speaking Spanish in groups, where all do not have knowledge of the language, is a feature among migrants in the Swedish establishments. To practice exclusion through the choice of language, the mi-

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grants put the *internal othering*, discussed previously in this chapter, into everyday tangible practice. To choose to speak Spanish among other Swedes, where the Swedish language is most dominant, common, and appropriate, is a deliberate and obvious way of rejecting other people’s membership of the group, of making them different from the self while pertaining to the same collective. Karen O’Reilly describes a similar practice of inclusion versus exclusion among the British lifestyle migrants on the Costa del Sol: “They adopt some Spanish words, usually a little anglicised, which have particular relevance in their lives as expatriates or foreign residents. Words such as *abogado* (lawyer), *traspaso* (lease agreement), *tinto de verano* (red wine with a soft drink like lemonade) […] are part of everyday conversation between residents” (2000:111).

To use the Spanish language in Swedish milieus and contexts is a practice of positioning oneself as both incorporated into the local society and more transnationally orientated as migrants than other Swedes. Simultaneously, it is a practice of positioning others as subordinate. The choice of language has a function in practices of both inclusion and exclusion. Following the phenomenological approach, the usage of language on the Costa del Sol is an enlightening example of how the migrants’ lifeworld needs to be adaptable and flexible in mastering the transnational contexts they live by at an international lifestyle migration destination. To master several languages, both as a communicative content and a communicative form, is an important factor to have in store when the Swedish migrants face complex combinations of different collectivities on a daily basis. The Swedish migrants need to be receptive and resilient in determining the appropriate practice to act upon in order to forge belonging and be adaptable in relation to the different collective formations on the Costa del Sol.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the interviewees’ expressions and practices of positioning the self, being given a position by others, and positioning others in the migration stories, as well as in the everyday life on the Costa del Sol. The chapter has highlighted the practice of positioning in stories of everyday encounters with others, which have shown that identification is an ongoing and changeable process, as the interviewees depict sliding and differentiated positions in relation to different contexts, i.e. different locations that make the positioning translocal (Anthias 2002).

For instance, all the interviewees position themselves as Swedish nationals but view their Swedish nationality differently in relation to location, time, context, and other groups. One example is Simon, who expresses affiliation to the Swedish national collective, which he regards as equal to his affiliation to the Spanish national collective in his migration story by including
himself in both groups by using the word “we.” Forty years of residency have affected Simon’s position in relation to the two national collectives. Such a positioning should not be seen as a contradiction for the individual migrant. Dual (or more) positions of affiliation are indeed possible in transnational contexts. The social and cultural dynamics of an everyday migrant life might appear linear, but I have presented cases where belonging cannot be structured through fixed categorizations. Entities such as Swedishness and Spanishness are understood in a variety of ways, where different factors need to be taken into account. These include the local context on the Costa del Sol, where the individual migrant might have family connections with in-laws, a social network of friends of different nationalities, and work or voluntary engagements within the Swedish migrant group or for local employers. Positioning oneself within the Swedish migrant group on the Costa del Sol is also described as a complex and contested process. Affiliation is understood as being based on a shared migrant position, but only when a shared condition is at stake, such as sharing a professional life on location, or showing a durable residence on location, or retirement and engagement in social organizations with other seniors from Sweden.

Through daily experiences, which are mediated in the migration stories of the interviewees, the Swedish nationality is above all contested and shaped in relation to different groups dwelling on location. The practice of positioning the self against others results in a construction of the self through recognizing difference. By having a white body and Northern European features the interviewees are marked as foreigners or as the stranger on the street, el extranjero in Spanish, so that they understand themselves and their position on location. As foreigners they are labeled tourists, which is regarded as obstructing incorporation into the local society. In order to avoid this, they stress their permanent residency and good knowledge of and interest in the Spanish language and local conditions, which roots them in the region. By showing their local neighbors that they lead similar everyday lives with working hours, walking the dog, and staying faithful to the region, they claim that they are able to be incorporated and feel that they belong to some degree to the local community. Simultaneously, the interviewees highlight their position of being Swedish, in which they take pride, defining themselves as having their origin in a more modern and advanced country than Spain, which gives them a superior hierarchical position on the Costa del Sol. The interviewees’ shared practices rely on comparison but highlight both ambiguities and contradictions through story-telling (e.g. Anthias 2002:512).

The practice of identification and positioning within daily social encounters in relation to different groups residing on the Costa del Sol highlights demarcation lines within different sets of collectives: the collective of Swedes, the collective of lifestyle migrants, and the collective of international migrants. Hence, a collective formation cannot only be defined through
differentiation practices against an Other, which is a common model for defining nationhood (Cohen 1994). There are also borders of difference within the different translocal collectives that the Swedish migrants belong to. For instance, an internal other within the Swedish collective is created by pointing to the fact that there are migrants who remain orientated around Swedish matters and everyday practices while living on the Costa del Sol, with no interest in or knowledge of the Spanish language and local customs. Demarcation lines are also drawn in relation to Swedes with good resources, who can afford not to integrate in the local society.

Sara Ahmed argues that a common yet contested “we” can emerge through such internal differences and through recognizing processes of estrangement within the collective (2000:88; Brah 1996:183, 242). Such processes can be viewed as a sociality of difference in the context of migration (Ahmed 2000:48). This is a differentiation practice that is pertinent to the international migrant context in the Costa del Sol region, as well. As an embodied practice on the streets and public spaces of the Costa del Sol, bodies are affected by other bodies in line with a global power structure of a body-politic. The sociality of difference reveals and reproduces a hierarchy of global power structures as an effect of the different conditions spurring migration to the Costa del Sol. For instance, both residents from Sweden and residents from West Africa have come to the Costa del Sol as migrants and in search of a good life. But in the sudden moments of interaction at the restaurant table, at times even without eye contact, the very different life conditions of the two groups are made visible. The hierarchy of global power structures, articulated through the migration stories, sheds light on social, political, and economic implications fostering both the different motives for migration and the different possibilities offered the groups as dwellers on the Costa del Sol, along the lines of gender, ethnicity, and social class. Hence, I have shown in the present chapter that there are social encounters in the migration stories that reproduce social order and hierarchies due to fixed categorizations. Simultaneously, the interviewees depict everyday situations when fixed categorization does not resemble the affiliations created from living everyday transnational lives as permanent residents on location.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that identification through positioning is an ongoing and relational process based on individual experience of social interaction. The practice leads to an unfixed, ever-changing, plural identity of the self, which comes to light through telling stories about both everyday internal and external differentiation processes among the migrants from Sweden.
4. Home on the Costa del Sol

Home is both a symbol and a place, and this linkage gives the word additional power. Home is both something we live in and something that we live with, a material world and a mental image of the good life. It is the linkage not only between home and family, but also between home and house that increases the cultural dimension (Ehn and Löfgren 2001:25, my translation).

The above quotation is a starting point for the present chapter, where I regard the making of a physical home and the meaning attributed to home-making as a component in the process of forging belonging. This chapter discusses the concept of home in a diversified way and explores home-making among the interviewees in this study. I view the concept of home as a key symbol, discussed by the anthropologist Sherry Ortner (1973) as a symbol charged with meaning which varies according to context, place, and time.

In the present chapter, I study how the notion of home and feeling at home can be regarded in relation to the different localities important to the interviewees: the Costa del Sol as the region of residence, and the individual home. In addition, the materiality of home-making will be addressed: how are homes created through material objects and the physical environment? How is materiality used in the homes of the interviewees as part of their presentation of themselves and reflections of their lifeworlds?

With the theoretical inspiration of Sara Ahmed’s phenomenological approach to home-making (1999), I explore how the interviewees express notions of how to feel at home when inhabiting a migrant position. Ahmed writes that “we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home” (2006:9). I am inspired by Ahmed’s emphasis on the bodily experience of home-making. She means that to be reorientated after disorientation is a matter of how feelings of being at home come to emerge (2006:7), which the chapter addresses in relation to the lives of the migrants.

The materiality of migration is an additional theoretical inspiration of this chapter (see Appadurai 1986; Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013). On a phenomenological note, material objects give insights about the lifeworlds of its users, consumers, or owners. Combined with Sara Ahmed’s discussion about the relation between orientation and objects in her work
*Queer Phenomenology* (2006), material objects can be understood as “orientation devices.” As such, they highlight the orientation in the lives of the interviewees through the use and the inscribed meaning of the material objects. In the undertaking of migration, material objects become constituents of social relations while being circulated, exchanged, and moved across territorial borders and through the history of time (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013; Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). How this is achieved is an objective of the present chapter.

The chapter starts with a discussion of notions of how the Costa del Sol is considered to be a home. This is followed by an exploration of how the interviewees have made and established themselves in their physical homes. A closer analysis is made of how to regard and understand the usage and meaning of material objects in migrant homes.

**The Costa del Sol as home**

All the interviewees have made active choices to relocate to the Costa del Sol, even though the incentives and resources differ for making such a decision. There is a desire to become established on the Costa del Sol and oriented around a life led on the coast. For many, this is connected to a desire for a change of lifestyle. How this is accomplished is a matter of the motivation and the reason for the relocation.

The locality of the Costa del Sol is connected to notions of vacation and leisure, which is often illustrated with images of the beach at Fuengirola. Such notions have had an impact on the orientation toward lifestyle migration among the interviewees. Photographer: Annie Woube
A common reason for lifestyle migration to the Costa del Sol is to be able to live a relaxed life in the sun. The Costa del Sol as a place to reside is above all associated with constructed notions of mass tourism, leisure, vacation, and a relaxed lifestyle, which have influenced the interviewees’ orientation toward migration. Ehn and Löfgren affirm that “cultural anchorage is never easily connected to a limited territory—physical and mental places flow into one another. It is hard to differentiate how to move around and use a landscape from the memories and associations one carries” (2001:102, my translation). In their choice of residency, the interviewees have to relate to the many notions, memories, and associations of vacation and leisure that are connected to the Costa del Sol, which they speak of in both explicit and implicit terms in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of making the coast their home. Almost everybody cites the nice weather and the relaxed outdoor life as an important pull factor in orientation toward migration. The sunny weather and vacation atmosphere of a tourist destination is also a lived everyday experience in a phenomenological sense, which only some of the interviewees regard as a component in the identification process of making the Costa del Sol a home.

Local sensations that interfere with home-making

Fredrik, who works long hours at one of the Swedish bars, tells me that he enjoys his life on the Costa del Sol most when he gets to experience the vacation atmosphere:

“When I have a day off and when I am able to really feel that I’m in Spain, can sit by the beach, have a cup of coffee and read a newspaper in the sun and it is really warm and I feel that I can go down and swim. Then it is really nice to be here and not have to think about what to do for the next ten minutes but only sit there the whole day if I feel like it.”

Fredrik desires an everyday life that resembles vacation, but this might not evoke home feelings for him. He wants to be touched by the warm sun, hear the sea by the beach and feel that the whole day lies ahead without making any claims or demanding anything of him. He wants to feel a difference from his everyday orientation around other migrants and his life in Sweden, to have a day off and be able to really feel that I’m in Spain. Fredrik does not desire to feel at home on the Costa del Sol, but rather to feel that he is in another place than home. The sensations of a vacation atmosphere of a warm sun on the beach are feelings that are expressed by Fredrik as experi-

61 ”När man är ledig och verkligen kan känna att man är i Spanien, kan sitta nere på stranden, ta en kopp kaffe och läsa tidningen i solen och det verkligen är varmt och känna att man kan gå ner och bada eller så där. Det är då det är riktigt skönt att vara här och inte behöva tänka på vad man ska göra de nästa tio minuterna utan sitta där hela dan om man känner så.” (Interview with Fredrik, April 29, 2009)
ences of the lived body that inhabits a place in line with a phenomenological understanding, according to the philosopher Edward S. Casey (1996:21ff). Casey claims that a condition for emplacement is to perceive a place with the living and sensing body, that is, to make and influence the place with the presence of the body but also to be made and influenced by the place. In the words of Casey: “[A] given place takes on the qualities of its occupants, reflecting these qualities in its own constitution and description and expressing them in its occurrence as an event” (1996:27). To put it simply, sunbathing, relaxing tourists make the Costa del Sol a tourist destination fit for sunbathing and relaxation. The body and the place have an impact on one another, but emplacement is not enough for feeling at home. Casey continues by arguing that the experience of a place is inherent in establishing feelings of belonging to a place; a person needs both to be in the place and to become part of the place (1996:33).

Casey’s argument is in line with Sara Ahmed’s view of home-making. She claims that to feel at home is equivalent to inhabiting a space and being inhabited by a space in such a way that “the subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other” (1999:341). It is a question of familiarity that in Ahmed’s understanding reflects how the space is felt and has an effect on bodies (2006:7). When this is accomplished, the migrants are centered, feel at home, and in a state of orientation around the Costa del Sol, where the locality becomes invisible and transparent while the migrants are able to move naturally in an unrestrained way. To be in a state of orientation around the Costa del Sol is often to be unaware of the orientation, without the need to regard it since it constitutes a familiar and natural part of the everyday local life.

The warmth from the Mediterranean sun and the breeze from the sea are local sensations bound to the Costa del Sol and have not yet merged into Fredrik as natural characteristics of feeling at home for him. Instead they are sensations that make the Costa del Sol exotic and different, which at the time of narration hinders him from inhabiting the locality of the Costa del Sol as a home of the familiar and the well-known, but this might alter over time. In the meantime, he will remain orientated around an everyday life led in Sweden, which is his starting point in life. It is from this orientation he understands the locality of the Costa del Sol as exotic and unfamiliar. He is living in Fuengirola because of his job at a bar, which his former employer in Sweden owns. Working at the bar means an opportunity to live abroad a period of his life before becoming too established in Sweden. Like many other young international residents of working age, his stay is temporary in that he will stay as long as he regards it as fun and exciting. The Costa del Sol can be seen as made meaningful in what it offers to Fredrik, which he cannot acquire in his Swedish context in Sweden.

The home-making in the migration stories can be understood as a matter of reflection, where the new home is seen, understood, and made meaningful
from having the old home as a point of reference. In the words of Ahmed’s phenomenology: “Orientations are about how we begin; how we proceed from “here,” which affects how what is “there” appears, how it presents itself” (2006:8). Povrzanović Frykman outlines a similar explanation in regard to transnational migration: “it is the connection elsewhere that makes a difference here” (2001b:14). Hence, orientation around the Swedish origin can be viewed as a starting point, from which the world unfolds and has an impact on how the Swedish migrants understand the Costa del Sol as their home, which I will give additional examples of.

Activities outdoors enable feelings of being at home

For Tilde, the outdoor life enabled by the sunny weather and a lifestyle of leisure on the Costa del Sol is, on the other hand, indeed stated as an important component in feeling at home:

“This is my home! And I must say, as it is right now I could absolutely not imagine a life as a 75-year-old sitting in Umeå. Here there are, as I have understood it, more things going on and you can just look at my diary here for the month of March, it is full every day… that’s how it is, no, I really enjoy it.”

Tilde came down to the coast with her husband in 1961 and over time she has developed strong ties to the region. The move was indeed triggered by a sunny and relaxed vacation experience on the coast before the move. This is a most common incentive for lifestyle migrants to move abroad, according to Russell King, Tony Warnes, and Allan Williams in *Sunset Lives* (2000). Michaela Benson and Karen O’Reilly write in their critical exploration of the concept of lifestyle migration that it is the fact that the tourist destination can offer “escape, leisure, relaxation, and ‘tourism as a way of life’” that attracts, rather than “any desire to be with other tourists” (2009b:612).

Tilde and her husband wanted to exchange the dark winter season of the north of Sweden for sun and light all year round in the south of Spain. The sunny weather allows Tilde to spend time outside throughout the year, in contrast to an indoor life as a senior citizen in her hometown of Umeå, located in the very north of Sweden, with long and dark winters. The feelings of being at home for Tilde can be understood as the effect of the mirroring process that was mentioned earlier. The Costa del Sol is viewed as her home for its local sensations of a warm climate enabling outdoor life throughout the year, which Umeå can never offer its senior citizens.

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62 Umeå is a town in the north of Sweden.

63 ”Det är ju mitt hem! Och jag måste säga, som jag har det nu skulle jag absolut inte kunna tänka mig livet som 75-åring och sitta i Umeå va, här är det ju vad jag förstår mycket, mycket mera hålligång och du kan ju bara se på min almanacka här för mars-månad, det är fulltecknat alla dagar... så att det, nå jag trivs jättebra.” (Interview with Tilde, March 31, 2009)
In contrast to Fredrik, the locality of Fuengirola for Tilde has merged into everyday life as a vital component in feeling at home. Tilde can be understood as being orientated around living on the Costa del Sol, which is a state she has achieved over time. “Orientations also take time,” Ahmed suggests (2006:20). Tilde has a fifty-year-long family history in the region, with children and grandchildren also living in the Costa del Sol area, and a network of friends to spend time with. All this constitutes feelings of belonging. Tilde can be understood as both orientated around and centered in Fuengirola.

There are similar accounts of migration contexts that depict social relations as important factors for settling down in a new place. For instance, Swedish-Finnish labor migrants who reside in the region of Mälardalen in Sweden are similar in that their process of creating belonging comprises emplacement over time, in addition to a social network (Lukkarinen Kvist 2005:132). Moreover, in her study of Jewish women in contemporary Sweden, Susanne Nylund Skog discusses home-making and concludes that home has its locus inside and through the family. It is through the family that the affiliation to Jewish tradition and identity is expressed (2012:63).

Making home by starting anew

Eva, born in 1958, likewise regards Fuengirola as a place she can call home. She came down to the coast after having lived at several places in Spain. She is very decisive when she leans over the dictaphone to drown the buzz of voices surrounding us at the ice cream parlor where we usually meet for our conversations:

“I think I have found my place on earth. I have gotten this feeling the longer I have lived here too, that this is where I want to live, where I want to be, where I am most comfortable.”

And later on in the interview she clarifies:

“I want to say that … in Sweden … I moved away from home very early. I moved away from home when I was, when I had just turned 17 years old. And when I think back on my upbringing then, I lived with my mom and that… no. That was not … not, not fun. That was not fun. It did not feel like home. It did not feel, it did not feel good, and now I think that now I have at least been able to…”

“…create a place?” I fill in.

“Yes, create a place,” Eva responds.

64 “Jag tror att jag har liksom funnit min plats på jorden. Jag har fått den här känslan ju längre jag har bott här också, nä det är här jag vill bo, här jag vill vara, här jag trivs bäst.” (Interview with Eva, March 8, 2009)

65 “Jag vill säga det att… i Sverige så…Jag flyttade ju hemifrån väldigt tidigt. Jag flyttade hemifrån när jag var, när jag precis fyllt 17 år. Och när jag tänker tillbaka på min uppväxt då, jag bodde med min mamma och det…, nej. Det var liksom inte… inte, inte kul. Det var inte
As will be noticed, the topic of conversation makes Eva uncomfortable. She talks slower and is more thoughtful when she carefully expresses herself about her childhood experiences. In contrast, she talks faster during the interview session, eager to describe her experiences when we discuss other things, such as being a Swede living in Spain. The account points to an experience of not feeling at peace in her home as a child. Through the words of Sara Ahmed (2006:9), a state of disorientation in her childhood home can be seen as the incentive for Eva’s migration trajectory. The disorientation meant that she was unable to feel at home and felt out of place. This is in contrast to many of the other interviewees, whose migration trajectory often started from a state of orientation. The migration to the Costa del Sol was then a cause for a state of disorientation for them. But as in the case of Eva, disorientation may be felt at home, and does not necessarily imply a change of location. Ahmed describes this state of being as not feeling incorporated into space, i.e. bodies feeling out of place even though they have been given a place. She continues: “Such feelings in turn point to other places, even ones that have yet to be inhabited” (2006:12; see also Fortier 2003:129). Eva’s feelings of discomfort turned her orientation toward migration to Spain and eventually to the Costa del Sol. As for other interviewees, the Costa del Sol home has given her an opportunity to start all over. She has been able to build anew and create something that suits her, and thereby gain a reorientation in life where she can feel at home.

The notion of home is often associated with the home and family structure where one was born and raised. The childhood home is frequently referred to as a place of safety, security, and comfort. Eva, as noted above, depicts how starting anew in her Costa del Sol home stands in relation to her childhood home, which instead represents distress and discomfort. Leaving the childhood home can become a means for self-realization, writes Susanne Nylund Skog (2012:154), in relation to a study about queer lives by Anne-Marie Fortier (2003). Fortier claims that in queer lives, a home and home feelings often become something to gain in the future, rather than being lost from the past. In a similar vein, Eva’s home on the Costa del Sol can be seen as a place where she has been able to create a home as she wishes, as a reflection of the old childhood home she could never influence or change. Here she can find peace and be herself, but the reorientation has been achieved gradually. To inhabit the lived experience of locality is a condition established over time (Ahmed 1999:341). To incorporate the smells, the sounds, the noise and local ways of life into the self is part of the migration process, which requires time to experience the locality. After having lived in

kul. Det kändes inte som hemma. Det kändes inte, det kändes inte bra och nu tycker jag att nu har jag åtminstone kunnat…”
”…skapa en plats?”
”Ja, skapa en plats.” (Interview with Eva, March 8, 2009)
Spain for 26 years and having tried to establish herself in several places in Spain, Eva has settled for Fuengirola because of its international and multicultural atmosphere of tourists and migrants, to which she has grown accustomed as an important element of being-at-home, she tells me.

An apartment of one’s own

In contrast to the appreciation of living in a vacation area, some interviewees express hesitation about the area in this regard. Explicitly, Lena states over and over again in her migration story:

“I absolutely did not want to live on the Costa del Sol.”

“But what was it you saw that you didn’t like?” I ask her to clarify.

“I thought it seemed like a tourist ghetto. Aesthetically very ugly. Sun and swimming and beaches and long nights. The labor market seemed only to be based on the tourism industry and maybe there’s no difference today either because everything is probably about that but I didn’t think this was at all genuine but more a life in a bubble imagining what vacation life might be like. So no, we were definitely not going to live here. Then I got a job here.”

A labor market open to foreigners made Lena initially change her mind about the Costa del Sol since the international population of tourists, temporary visitors and permanent dwellers enabled her to find employment. Despite this, she keeps regarding the Costa del Sol as a temporary stop of passage:

“This is a stop of passage where we are right now. For a lot of people it is probably an easy life along the Costa del Sol. I don’t think it is. Hard work, tough to get work, tough to get a good job, tough to get a good salary and a big investment in time. You work a lot and get little in return. It’s also a stop of passage because it’s a place where a lot of people pass by in life.”

As discussed in the second chapter, Lena and her partner Juan came to live in Fuengirola because of the possibility of finding employment within the Swedish infrastructure on the coast. Since Lena migrated as a language

66 “Jag ville ju absolut inte bo på Costa del Sol.”

student after having met Juan, she was in need of work in order to be able to establish herself and make a home. Initially the couple had wanted to settle elsewhere in Spain but had to give into the international labor market on the Costa del Sol in order for Lena to make a living. Since her incentive for migration was not a relaxed lifestyle, her associations with the coast are instead the demanding conditions for employees and long working hours catering to privileged lifestyle migrants and tourists. She also means that the poor and demanding labor conditions influence the volatile international population, in that many Swedish migrants want to reside and earn a living but tend to return to their old home due to difficulties in coping with the labor conditions. Because of the disorientation felt in relation to the labor market, it has been difficult for Lena to establish feelings of being at home and let the everyday locality of Fuengirola be incorporated in the self. Disorientation in regard to establishing feelings of being at home is part of the migration context, in which the disorientation is felt from the experience of being orientated around a home which is lost, and a place which is yet to be called home (Ahmed 2011:153).

In the light of her struggles in the labor market, Lena’s feelings of being at home are connected to her apartment on the hillside of Torreblanca to the east of Fuengirola city center. With the purchase of the apartment, the feelings of belonging to the coast were enhanced. Now Lena was able to set up and create a permanent home:

“Outside the walls of this home it could be very turbulent. I could have had a job that I didn’t like or that I wasn’t comfortable with or spent time with people that I didn’t really understand. Partly because of the language but also because I couldn’t understand the social codes, and then it has been nice to come home to my own apartment after such a day and feel some peace and quiet.”

Lena’s statement suggests that the locality of the Costa del Sol has been a troublesome experience for her. She has not been able to blend the space and herself into one another in such a way that feelings of being at home can emerge, in the sense that Sara Ahmed proposes (1999:341). This is possibly due to her feeling of resistance toward the area and the act of migration as such, which blocked a positive experience of the coast. In this light, the apartment in itself can be understood as a representation of haven, where Lena, during her nine years in Spain, has been able to feel at peace even though the outer world has been in turmoil. As Lena states, language difficulties and cultural misunderstandings can be kept at bay in her own home. Ehn and Löfgren state that “the home and one’s own family can be viewed

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68 “Utanför hemmets väggar så kan det ha varit väldigt turbulent. Man kanske har haft ett jobb som man inte har tyckt om eller som man inte trivts med eller man har umgåtts med människor som man inte har förstått ordentligt. Delvis på grund av språket men också på grund av att man inte kan läsa de sociala koderna och då har det känts skönt att komma till sin egen bostad efter en sån dag och känna lugn och ro.” (Interview with Lena, March 19, 2009)
as a sort of shelter for the ethnic identity that is downplayed in public situations" (2001:92, my translation). Accordingly, the home is a place where her different cultural background can be set aside, in contrast to life in public where the difference in cultural background is a constant reminder and implies hard work in everyday connections with the local society.

Home as a representation of safety, security, and stability in life is a common notion (e.g. Povrzanović Frykman 2001c:150f). For instance, such a notion was attributed to the home of sawmill workers in Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century. The ethnologist Håkan Berglund Lake writes that the home became an anchorage to hold on to and guard in relation to an uncertain surrounding world. The home was a symbol of stability and security, under the control of and managed by the workers themselves, in contrast to the working life that was regulated by other people (2001:72f). In a similar vein, Lena depicts her struggles with the structure of the labor market on the Costa del Sol, which she feels has limited her options for work, demands long working hours, and offers too small a pay check. In contrast, her home has become a place of sanctuary, where she can feel free from the transcultural expectations of the local community and just be herself.

Lena adds:

"We usually say, now the last couple of years more than ever, that we are enjoying ourselves in Spain more and more both of us together. So we say with joy when we have been to Sweden for two weeks that ‘now we’re going home to Spain’ because we feel that we aren’t just going to Spain but going to something in Spain: our work, our friends, now also our home. Previously it was more his family we went to. Neither of us really felt that, well, more Juan of course, because this is his home country, but still he felt that I couldn’t find my place entirely. But now I feel it is nice to say ‘now we’re going home to Spain’. And even more since we have got this apartment. Because this is our shared project."

To find one’s place through ownership of a home is one component of several for Lena in order to truly feel at home and feel a sense of belonging on the Costa del Sol. In the long run, to be established in the labor market and to have a social network are of equal importance. The significance attributed to acquiring a stable home is also persistent in the migration stories told by Sofie and Karin who, like Lena and Eva, have come to dwell in the region because of Spanish partners. The physical home has come to repre-
sent an important piece in the puzzle of creating belonging, since they did not regard the vacation atmosphere and the relaxed lifestyle as an incentive for residing in the region. Establishing themselves in a permanent home to care for has been a solace while experiencing some indecision and doubt related to their choice to live along the coast.

Los Boliches—a neighborhood of significance for home-making

Noticeable in the migration stories while discussing Costa del Sol as a place of home is the notion of regarding the coastal town of Fuengirola, where most of the interviewees live and work, and the Costa del Sol in the same manner. The interviewees do not make any distinction between the two in their migration stories but paint similar pictures of Fuengirola and the Costa del Sol region. Despite the fact that a region consists of several places with individual variations and differences, the notion of regarding a town and a region in similar terms indicates a shared commonness and sameness that is based on a material essence with a content that is inclusive and common. Particular places can be understood as holding a condensed content of an entire region and may be associated with traits and features that constitute the regional specific (Casey 1996:30ff). As such, Fuengirola has been given the specific cultural identity associated with the region as a whole. Accordingly, the town of Fuengirola has its unique traits, but they are overshadowed by the encompassing notion of being part of an area for leisure, vacation, and activities in the sun.

The beach promenade of Fuengirola is the locus of the coastal town, where the locality of vacation and relaxation in the sun is most prominent. Photographer: Annie Woube
In addition, the interviewees divide Fuengirola into different zones of activities. The main center of Fuengirola is the beach, from which the urban activity radiates and gradually subsides further inland toward the hills of Mijas. There are two sections called Los Boliches and Torreblanca to the east of the city center. They are separated from each other by two dried-out rivers. Fuengirola city center has an urban air with two wide and open avenues running parallel to the beach promenade.

One of the open avenues in Fuengirola that runs parallel to the beach which contrasts the narrow streets of the neighborhood of Los Boliches in the migration stories. Photographer: Annie Woube

They are emically called “the bus street” and “the train street,” since the bus station is located in one of the avenues and the train station in the other. The avenues are lined with tall apartment buildings or hotels and wide pavements.

Many interviewees and residents in the Los Boliches neighborhood mention their specific area of residence as significant. The coastline of the neighborhood resembles the beach of Fuengirola city center but the streets of Los Boliches are narrower with lower buildings, which adds to the impression of a small, quaint town. When the retired couple Sonja and Gunnar, both born in 1932, express their feelings of belonging, they emphasize Los Boliches as their home, rather than Fuengirola. Sonja says:

“We feel at home here.”

Gunnar adds:
“Yes, especially in Los Boliches, this charming little part of the town that really was a fishing village once upon a time. We live here for real, so to speak. That you can say for sure.”

I ask what living for real means and Sonja replies:

“People ask, ‘What do you do all the time when you are there?’ They think that if you are away for two weeks and stay at a hotel, then there are maybe some days that you don’t know what to do because it rains, but I mean, we live here. We go to the library, we go grocery shopping, we need to go to the bank, we walk a lot and we rent a car all the time when we are here and drive out in the country to walk.”

Gunnar and Sonja speak of feeling at home through their everyday life in Los Boliches, which is separated from leisure time and sunny beaches with their connotations of vacation on the Costa del Sol. They have chosen to buy an apartment in an area for tourism but have developed an interest in the area based on botany and cultural history, besides having led a professional life in one of the Swedish institutions during the 1980’s. Their attachment to Los Boliches as their home is based on personal experience from their working lives, as well as a cultural knowledge and fascination with the region. They possess an educational capital, which characterizes their everyday life rather than spending their senior years as vacationers on the Costa del Sol.

70 ”Vi känner oss hemma här.”
”Ja, framförallt i Los Boliches, denna lilla, gulliga stadsdelen som verkligen var fiskarby i en gång i världen. […] Vi bor här på riktigt så att säga. Det kan man säga.”
[...]”Folk frågar ’Vad gör ni hela tiden när ni är där?’ Man tänker man är borta fjorton dagar och bor på hotell så kan det vara vissa dagar då man inte riktigt vet vad man ska ta sig för för att det regnar, men jag menar vi bor här. Vi går på biblioteket, vi går och handlar, vi behöver gå till banken, vi går väldigt mycket ut och går och vi hyr bil hela tiden vi är här och åker ut i markerna och går.’ (Interview with Sonja and Gunnar, February 26, 2009)
The main street of Los Boliches with lower buildings gives the impression of being a small, quaint town, to which many interviewees express a special attachment. Photographer: Annie Woube

Markus likewise considers himself lucky to have an apartment in the peaceful Los Boliches:

“Los Boliches is the small village that can function with tourism. That’s the case with Fuengirola too. So it was pure luck. And I think, if I had moved to Benalmadena I would have eventually moved here. It is peaceful here. When we lived in Stockholm we lived in the middle of the city and I went out a lot in my youth so I’m tired of the big city. When I’m here I travel to the big city instead. Here other things happen, I value new things in life, to enjoy myself and have a nice time and see beautiful things. That’s enough and it doesn’t feel like a village because it’s so international.”

The atmosphere of Los Boliches enables a relaxed and peaceful lifestyle that is in line with the motive for the migration for Markus and his husband, which will be discussed further on. They wanted a change in life from their busy city life in Stockholm, which could be attained through their apartment in Los Boliches.

71 Benalmadena is a coastal town east of Fuengirola.
72 ”I Los Boliches är det ju lilla byn som fungerar tillsammans med turismen. Så är det ju i Fuengirola också. Så det var ju bara rena turen. Och jag tror hade jag bott i Benalmadena så hade jag flyttat hit[...]. Det är lugnt här [...]. När vi bodde i Stockholm så bodde vi mitt i stan och jag har varit ute mycket i min ungdom så jag är trött på storstan. Här åker man till storstan [istället]. För här händer så mycket andra saker, man har fått nya värderingar i livet, och njuta och ha det skönt och titta på vackra saker. Det räcker och det känns inte heller som en by för det är så internationellt.” (Interview with Markus, April 23, 2009)
Creating national belonging through the home

When I arrive on the Costa del Sol in 2009 for fieldwork, it is a damp and cold Saturday night in winter. The ground is wet and I immediately recognize the raw chilliness that makes its way into your bones, slows down the circulation in hands and feet and refuses to leave, which I have experienced earlier by the Mediterranean Sea during the winter season. The welcome by the Costa del Sol is far from the general notion of sunny beaches, easy living, and mild winds. The rather unpleasant first impression is suddenly altered by recognition from my Swedish home environment. Catching my attention is a big, bright blue, square building with four equally bright yellow letters in the left-hand corner that spell IKEA, the global furniture company of Swedish origin and with the habit of playing on “Swedishness” in its advertisements. Later, upon arriving at a rented apartment in what locals and Swedish migrants refer to as a rather Spanish neighborhood with orange trees, and houses decorated with tiles, I realize I am in IKEA heaven. The whole apartment has traces of IKEA, which signals and symbolizes Swedishness for me: a common IKEA armchair, bedding from IKEA, an IKEA rug and so on.

IKEA bedding on my bed in the rented apartment, resembling interior decoration from my Swedish home environment, which added a sense of feeling at home for me when the fieldwork was carried out during spring 2009. Photographer: Annie Woube
Even though IKEA is a common global trademark nowadays, to me the furniture is more than cheap and practical. The home my Spanish landlord has made for me is one of recognition, safety, and security in that the objects from IKEA has an emotional value of habit and everyday life. I am used to living with and leading a life around furniture and interior design of a similar fashion. In addition to the resemblance to my life in Sweden, the objects represent a national affiliation to the home country as such. In several ways, it is a home that I can belong to right from the start. I am strengthened by the fact that all of a sudden the Costa del Sol, through the familiarity of Swedish national objects like IKEA furniture, is a bit like my home environment in Sweden.

Once more the home-making is based on contexts and localities that reflect one another. In my Costa del Sol apartment, it is the familiarity of the style of interior decoration from my Swedish origin, mediated via IKEA, that shapes my sense of being at home. A similar result was found in Povranović Frykman and Humbracht’s study on the role of materiality for home-making among four medical doctors originating from different countries but with a similar socio-economic background, who worked and resided in the south of Sweden (2013). The objects that were valued the most in order to feel at home in the accounts of the respondents were used daily in a habitual manner despite a change of location: a teapot, books in the mother tongue, particular foods, and so on. It is the familiarity of using the same material objects across borders that is at play, allowing for continuity in everyday practices, which creates hominess among the respondents of the study.

There are other groups related to Swedish migration within which IKEA is said to function as an arena that actualizes and emphasizes one’s ethnic ancestry, for instance, among Americans of Finnish-Swedish ancestry, according to the ethnologist Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch (2003:135). She writes that the descendants use IKEA as a source of ethnic pride during their visits to the furniture store. Defining objects in the homes of migrants as national or ethnic if they originate from the old country is common among both interviewees and researchers (see Österlund-Pötzsch 2003; Nylund Skog 2012:139–162), as in my own experience with the IKEA furniture above. For some of the interviewees in the present study the national aspect of interior decoration has a special significance; it is with pride that a Nordic design has been chosen.

Being and belonging transnationally through furniture

When Sofie and her partner José moved into their apartment they realized that the windowsills and moldings were made of oak veneer, which is more common in Swedish houses and apartments than in Spanish ones. The couple took this as a sign of the apartment being perfect for them as a transna-
tional couple. Sofie, being very interested in interior design and decoration, read interior decorating magazines from Sweden and realized that oak furniture was very popular at the time in Sweden. All together this led to the decision to try to buy oak furniture for their apartment even though Spanish furniture stores seldom carry that type of furniture. By accident they happened to pass a Scandinavian furniture store in Fuengirola called Camas Nórdicas (Spanish for Nordic Beds), which indeed sold oak furniture from the province of Småland in Sweden. She recalls how they came to buy the furniture:

“We just happened to pass the store. A Swedish small store for beds and we didn’t know they carried other types of furniture. So we passed one night and saw that they did, which resulted in us returning another night of the week and left having ordered beds, nightstands, a chest of drawers, dining room table with chairs, a TV stand, couch table, and I don’t know what else.”

The couple had to wait a month for the furniture to be shipped down from the factory in Sweden:

“And then two sturdy Swedish men came and delivered all the furniture and it smelled of unfinished wood when everything was all new in the entire apartment. And then, it was a very strange feeling, like now we’re living here for real. Now this is for real. Now this is ours.”

In Sofie’s understanding the oak furniture is associated with her Swedish national origin and an important link to the home country. Through the interior decoration she is able to materialize her national origin through a specific type of wood that is considered to be Swedish in the couple’s view. The national pasts of both Sofie and José have been blended through the choice of furniture, which enhanced and made the permanency of Sofie’s residency on the Costa del Sol more definite than before. “The objects that we direct our attention toward reveal the direction we have taken in life,” Ahmed argues (2006:32), which can be related to a transnational orientation in life for Sofie and José, which can be seen as manifested through oak furniture in an apartment constructed in a Spanish fashion.

Accordingly, there are cases when furniture can be understood as a materialization of homeland (cf. Nylund Skog 2012:146). This can be linked to ethnic expressions within the realm of the home and within family contexts of descendants of Finnish-Swedish immigrants to North America. Österlund-Pötzsch writes that the ethnic expressions are important markers of ethnicity within the stated group. Objects that are considered to be Finnish-Swedish or

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Scandinavian may symbolize an appreciated lifestyle or stand in association with a locally-bound recognition of a place (2003:150).

Sofie and José’s home is now a home where they are both living an everyday life, thus, being with their chosen furniture, in addition to signaling belonging through their furniture. Levitt and Glick Schiller suggest that ways of being in a transnational setting refers to the practices that migrants are engaged in and committed to within such a context. On the other hand, ways of belonging in a transnational context signal that practices of identification are at stake in the given situation, which the migrants choose to demonstrate (2004:1010). This is related to theories of objectification where material objects are used on the one hand as part of socialization with the surrounding environment, and on the other they are regarded as keys to an individual’s understanding of the self, which is a basic phenomenological standpoint. Through the objects that are in use, on display or accompanying everyday life, individuals become who they are and gain knowledge about themselves. Individuals stand in a dialectic and constitutive relationship with their material surroundings. The interaction can be understood as a medium through which identities are constructed. Hence, objectification removes the binary opposition in subject and object since they are in a reciprocal connection as creators and the created (Tilley 2006b:61ff; see also Damsholt and Simonsen 2009). The migrants are able to understand themselves and find their place both culturally and socially through living in specific material surroundings, simultaneously as materiality is given specific value and significance through being used, consumed, or on display by the migrants. Hence, to live and surround oneself with oak furniture that comes to signify Sweden can be seen as a practice of bridging national affiliations through materiality in the Costa del Sol apartment, through which Sofie is able to identify with the transnational life that she has ended up leading, which enables her to come to a better understanding in the transnational context.

Objects making home through border crossings

The retiree Lars has given national flavors to his two homes on the Costa del Sol and in the Swedish archipelago. He has brought objects to Spain that reflect his past professional life in Sweden, such as medals and plaques from his military career and paintings with images from the coastal area where his summer cottage is located. In contrast, his summer home in Sweden is decorated with paintings with motifs from Andalusia and Spain.

Lars’s transnational life is materialized by the objects he has chosen to represent his former professional life in Sweden while living in his apartment on the Costa del Sol, and his retired life in Spain while living in the cottage in Sweden during the summer months. The objects can be understood as manifestations of orientations from his former and present life,
through which Lars’ life span is reflected through materialization. The objects from his military career can be seen to some degree as memory objects or life-story objects from lifelong experiences, which are artifacts used as means to review and remember one’s life, as suggested by the folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1989:133; see also Otto and Pedersen 1998:79). Later on there will be a more in-depth discussion about different life review objects. In this specific case, Lars’ story-telling indicates that the military objects represent his national affiliation. In addition, within the sphere of the national, there is also the emotional value of having completed and been rewarded for a military career, which is displayed in his apartment in Fuengirola.

When I meet Lars for the third time in the middle of April 2009, he is about to plan his summer trip back to Sweden. He tells me he keeps a frame to hang an Iberico ham in his summer cottage. Thus, he always brings a full-length Iberico ham and three fifteen-liter containers with Spanish-produced wine with him to last for the summer in Sweden:

“I figured that what I have down here reminds me of Sweden and what I have in the summer cottage in Sweden reminds me of Spain. I take some Spain with me to Sweden and some Sweden with me to Spain.”

Later in the conversation, he adds:

“Then we cook a lot of food that is Spanish at home, and here a lot of Swedish food.”

In the account above, Lars acknowledges particular foods as Swedish or Spanish. It is through such an acknowledgement of food as national that food is enacted as an object of belonging. Following the argumentation of Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), in articulating the ties to the national, the Swedish migrants, such as Lars above, express their identification with the old country Sweden through buying, transporting, preparing, eating, and enjoying food. Without such an acknowledgement it is just plain, ordinary, everyday dishes of food that migrants from Sweden happen to eat. Ehn and Löfgren write in a similar vein that “ordinary food […] can be transformed into an ethnic symbol in the confrontation with the cultural patterns of the new country” (2001:11, my translation).

Using food as a materialization of home is a common and an immediate practice in the present study and other migration studies (e.g. Karisto 2013; Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013), since preparation and eating food evoke emotions and memories through multiple senses. The anthropologist Elia Petridou suggests that different kinds of food “evoke the experience of home as a sensory totality” (2001:89). When using ingredients and

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74 "Jag tänkte så här alltså att det jag ska ha härnere det påminner om Sverige och det jag har i sommarstugan i Sverige det påminner om Spanien. Jag tar lite Spanien med mig till Sverige och lite Sverige med mig ner till Spanien. […] Sen lagar vi mycket mat som är spansk hemma och här mycket svensk mat.” (Interview with Lars, April 17, 2009)
specific ways of cooking and preparing the food associated with a national tradition, the whole body and its senses are in use in the practice of making a home. Consequently, food associated with home often becomes connected to notions of the national specific. The ethnologist Anna Burstedt argues that food as cultural cuisine is tied to specific national territories and notions of the national (2001:63; see also Bursted et al. 2006; Nylund Skog 2012:164–169).

In Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht’s study (2013), food does not function as an ethnic marker but is used to create feelings of being at home through the familiar and habitual practice of eating and sensing particular kinds of food. Eating the same food in the new home as in the old one is an embodied practice of home-making that connects places of importance in migrants’ lives (ibid. 2013:64). As such, Lars’ practice of not only buying and preparing Swedish dishes while in Spain, but also bringing Spanish food to Sweden during the annual summer months to share with family and friends is of particular interest. It “confirms the multi-relational character of transnational spaces that engage both migrants and those who stay behind,” according to Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht (ibid.).

On the Costa del Sol, there is a frequent and everyday materialization of the Swedish nationality through food. For instance, daily servings of coffee and cinnamon buns at the Swedish church are part of the collective home-making for Swedish dwellers on the coast, where the food is seen as something Swedish. In addition, the annual transportation of food across the European continent, together with the grocery store in Fuengirola selling food from the Scandinavian countries, enables the practice of home-making and feeling at home through nationalized food for the migrants.

**Technology making transnational home**

Like Lars’ annual journeys across the European continent, the retiree Simon has developed a similar pattern of transmovement between Sweden and Spain over the years. But it is a different form of materiality that is important in Simon’s transnational experience. He lives in a big apartment facing the Mediterranean, with many spare rooms for guests. When invited to his apartment for the first time in late February, I am greeted by the smell of fresh bread from the oven made by a visiting Swedish friend of Simon called Kenneth, who lives with Simon a couple of months every year. Since Kenneth is baking in the kitchen, I follow Simon’s careful and slow steps to his bedroom for our chat. Besides a modest bed, there are old photos of his late wife and his two daughters together with a picture of a red and white cottage hanging above a desk. It is a picture of his summer house in the countryside of Dalecarlia, a province of Sweden, and a daily reminder of the summer destination of his transnational life.
On his desk, Simon surprises me by being equipped with a computer with the most recent technology. As a narrow-minded researcher, I find his shuffling way of walking too far apart from being a person online with a list of acquaintances on the screen via modern software applications, through which Internet users can chat and make voice and video calls over the Internet. On the side of the computer, Simon has hung two wireless earphones. I sit down on the bed and reach for my voice recorder, whereupon Simon opens a drawer and hands me a similar one. Most obvious and visible is Simon’s interest in technology and everyday use of the Internet and digital communication. He tells me he had decided to move back to Sweden in 2007 but once modern technology made it possible to connect over territorial borders, several obstacles were erased:

“Then the voice telephone came. I could listen to Swedish radio and sit here with wireless earphones and sunbathe and listen to P1.75 I could watch all the television shows on all the channels. I could call all my friends, it didn’t cost me a nickel. I could even call and watch them and see if they are alright. That meant that the feeling of being isolated or away from my friends is almost totally gone.”76

Simon suggests that modern technology made him virtually mobile through the Internet at a point in life when a deteriorating body was starting to fail his annual routine of traveling between Sweden and Spain. This is related to the phenomenological perspective, where objects are viewed as extensions of bodies (cf. Merleau-Ponty 2009), which brings both new possibilities and limitations. Hence, the computer with Internet access can be seen as an extension of Simon, enabling him to remain in a transnational position. To be able to remain orientated around Swedish and Spanish affairs and keep social connections through the Internet increases Simon’s sense of being mobile, which generates both agency and control. Modern technology has given Simon a mobile life, despite a deteriorating body, which would confine him to his apartment.

Technology as materiality has value in enabling interaction with the outer world, whether it is in Simon’s Costa del Sol apartment or his house in Dalecarlia, Sweden. Practices acted upon through modern technology can be seen as a source of fixity in Simon’s life, which is centered around mobility that cuts across borders and blurs the distinction between “here” and “there.” Instead the virtual world remains a space of its own by making the habitual online activities detached from national spatiality, which in Simon’s case means feeling at home transnationally through a familiar daily practice of

75 P1 is a radio channel in Sweden.
using modern technologies. The anthropologist Daniel Miller found a similar practice of technology usage while researching homes on a single street in London in his book The Comfort of Things (2008). In the flat of another, yet much younger, transnational male, Miller found that the most stable and permanent address in the life of the young man was his e-mail address (ibid. 2008:68), which resembles Simon’s case.

Materialized home-making that transcends borders has value in different ways for transnational migrants. Objects hold their meaning as they move and are moved around (Urry 2007:34). The ethnographic accounts above depict a relation between movement, material objects and home-making, as material objects bridge transnational feelings of belonging through their movement. Part of making transnational homes and belonging transnationally in Simon’s and Lars’ cases involve the practice of digitally transferring ideas and news for Simon, and transporting things and foods for Lars across territorial boarders. This practice in itself has little to do with national affiliation, and speaks more of a naturalized routine of relocating materiality which is inhabited in the transnational condition, i.e. a form of being transnational, as argued by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004). Noteworthy is the fact that the Swedish migrants live within a context of a relative affluence, where material border crossing is a simple and taken-for-granted practice of transnationality. Less privileged migrant groups might be forced to make more reflected choices about the material objects they transport over territorial borders and the frequency of such transportations (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013:63).

Home-making through objects as life companions

When Karin moved down to the coast on a permanent basis with her boyfriend, Manuel, she chose to send a couple of boxes with things to Spain:

“I really could have taken two suitcases with clothes and then it would have been settled and done but I sent down … I think it was … four boxes with a truck because it felt like certain things, some photo albums, certain books, some kitchen things, plates—things I had been given, that I felt I had started my life with in Sweden. All this with moving away from home and building a home … It felt like … instead of starting all over again and buying everything from scratch. No. I wanted to have all the stuff with me. Well, that meant something because I had saved to buy them myself or they had been given to me as presents and the like.”

The objects that Karin sent to the Costa del Sol in a truck can be understood as symbols of liberation from adolescence into adulthood. They signify continuity despite a change of location and can be regarded as material companions. The folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses how different types of material objects can be understood as materializations of peo-
ple’s life reviews in her article “Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review” (1989). She lists distinguished objects and their value as life review devices in being *material companions, mementos, or memory objects*. She states that objects used as material companions “are not ‘saved’; they are allowed to grow old and, however humble, they accumulate meaning and value by sheer dint of their constancy in a life” (1989:330).

With the bowls and vases Karin brought to Spain, she had once created a life of her own in Sweden. The materialization of her life continued with her move to Spain. The boxes filled with things came to be linking objects from one phase of life to another (cf. Wettstein 2009), besides linking one country of origin to a new country of residence. In addition, Karin emphasizes that since the transition was not smooth and easy for her, but filled with anxiety and indecision, the material objects naturalized and eased her feelings of hesitation and doubt concerning the decision to relocate. Migrating with the material objects meant starting a home on the Costa del Sol and starting to feel at home with the things she was already familiar with. She tells me:

“To feel that this I used when I lived in Sweden, now I use it when I live here. That means that I do live here and am able to accept it.”

Karin’s material companions can be understood as being charged with normality and the comfort of the ordinary and familiar in a transnational situation that had contained a lot of emotional turmoil and disharmony. When continuing to use the objects on the Costa del Sol, they can through time become part of everyday life through the habit of using what is at hand as practical and functional. Thus, the material companions may lose their signification as linking objects from one national arena to another and become objects that Karin lives by and uses daily. This may change the value of material objects from being collectively defined as national to being privately redefined as a daily tool to use (cf. Kopytoff 1986:76). Scholars of material culture emphasize the importance of continuity in using material objects in everyday life (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013; Gumbrecht 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:330). However, the scholars stress different effects that are generated by such continuity in material practice. The objects might become of importance in direct everyday contact for their *presence*, rather than by being given a specific meaning (Gumbrecht 2004). Familiar objects can also shape a sensorial dimension of home-making by being used in a habitual kind of manner or being lived with on a daily basis.

77 ”Man hade ju egentligen bara kunnat tagit två resväskor med kläder och så hade det varit klart men jag skickade ner, jag tror det var, fyra flyttkartonger med en lastbil för det kändes som vissa saker, lite fotoalbum, vissa böcker, lite kökssaker, porslin, saker man fått som ändå kändes som det jag har startat mitt liv med liksom i Sverige. Det här med att bo hemifrån och byggt upp ett hem. Det kändes som att, istället för att börja om helt och köpa allting från scratch. Nej, jag ville ha dom där sakerna med mig ja, som betydde nånting för att man har spart ihop till det själv eller man har fått det i present eller så där. […]För att känna det här hade jag när jag bodde i Sverige, nu har jag det när jag bor här. Det betyder att nu bor jag här och kunna acceptera det.” (Interview with Karin, April 15, 2009)
Material practices can be seen as valued for making home in migration contexts when the daily usage may remain uninterrupted despite a change of location (Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013:63f).

In sum, Karin’s objects are examples of materiality that is not primarily associated with a Swedish heritage and origin. Karin attaches a higher significance to using objects daily that have indeed transcended national borders and therefore can be regarded as Swedish. But they are marked as significant by Karin for accompanying her along her life trajectory, from adolescence to adulthood, which is a change in life that happened to unfold as she changed location. Material companions may function as orientation devices, as suggested by Ahmed (2006), which can highlight the orientation toward specific national affiliation. In this particular case, however, a higher value is placed on the continuous usage and everyday presence despite location, and not for carrying ethnic or national value. The photo albums, books, kitchen devices and plates are continuously present and used habitually and daily, and as such they generate feelings of home and hominess.

Making home, making the self

Home-making through the sheer presence of objects can be related to the expectations and conditions surrounding the choice of lifestyle migration. In the case of Markus, the incentive to relocate was a desire to live a more relaxed and comfortable life, different from the busy city life he led in Stockholm. In other words, Markus desired a change of lifestyle. During all my meetings with Markus he spoke about the importance of living in harmony between body and soul, something his life along the coast enabled him to do. The desire for a changed lifestyle is yet another example of how the present home context is viewed in relation to or in comparison with one’s past home context. In Ahmed’s words, this signals a change of orientation (2006:8; see also Povrzanović Frykman 2001b:14).

The shift in life philosophy is also reflected in the interior decoration of the apartment he owns with his husband, Stefan. The colors they have chosen for the apartment are colors of nature: beige, brown, green etc., in order to create a calm home where the couple can contemplate without being bothered by ugly or disturbing objects.
The roof terrace on top of Markus’ apartment with tiled floors and an abundance of plants, which are thought to create harmony in line with their aspiration to change lifestyle. Photographer: Annie Woube

The apartment has a roof terrace which they have decorated with plants, couches, an outdoor kitchenette and a dining area, i.e. an outdoor living room in colors of the nature, without disturbing objects. The home has been created in order to give a sense of harmony. The couple wishes to find peace in life while spending time in their harmonious home. Through the making of the home, in which Markus claims they want to live the good life, the interior decoration is in line with their changed lifestyle, which is a part of the life project of creating the self, according to Anthony Giddens (1991).

The couple wishes to create an effect in accordance with the colors of nature and aesthetics that do not disturb the harmony. A calm environment in their home is supposed to have an impact on Markus and Stefan through the senses of the body, making them calm and harmonious. The materiality is important in that it will do something or have an effect on someone, rather than mean something in itself (Damsholt et al. 2009, see also Gumbrecht 2004). The archeologist Christopher Tilley affirms: “Through making, using, exchanging, consuming, interacting, and living with things people make themselves in the process” (2006b:61). The interior decoration becomes a mode of self-expression and construction (Miller 2001:10). Simultaneously, the effect that is generated through the material objects can also be seen as meaningful and valuable.
Past and present life through objects

Andreas has had another strategy when decorating his house on the hillside to the west of Fuengirola, facing the Mediterranean. It is decorated in accordance with the life stage he had entered when moving down to the coast. He tells me that his home means very much to him, possibly because he has spent his entire life on the move, traveling to different places and living short periods of time on different locations. Finally, with the house on the Costa del Sol, he has been able to settle down. Before the move to the coast, he arranged a container with all the household goods he owned that he shipped from Sweden to Spain. On location, he organized the things and selected what he wanted to keep for the future. Today his house is decorated with objects from all the different travels he has done, as well as with antiques from a family farm in Sweden. Each object has a special significance and sentimental value for him. Through interior decoration Andreas keeps both his past family heritage and his present international life of travel vivid and visible.

In an Indian cabinet Andreas displays a photo album, old cookbooks belonging to his grandmother, postcards sent from the grandfather to the grandmother while they were courting, as well as a calendar dated 1903 with written records of life on the farm. The family history objects in Andreas’ home can be understood as *mementos* in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s categorization, as they are objects that reflect lost times and absent persons (1989:331). All are on display because of a desire to call attention to Andreas’ unique heritage, coming from a line of farmers. To present and set up a family shrine in the style of Andreas’ Indian cabinet increases the symbolical aspects of significance that are attached to the objects. As family reminiscence, the objects in the Indian cabinet “are rooted in the history of a life and are generally valued more for what they signify, for the larger biographical whole of which they are a part, than in themselves” (ibid.). Charged with a family history origin, the objects “constitute a kind of autobiographical archaeology” (ibid.). The objects place Andreas’ relocation within a temporal and spatial context of a rural family history of farmers in Sweden.

Andreas’ display can be related to an account in the ethnologist Eva Londers’ dissertation about paintings and objects on display on the walls of private homes in Sweden (1993). A business leader who claims that he does not feel attachment to any specific place considers the paintings and photos of deceased family members and past times to be channels to a lost home, which in themselves generate feelings of being at home. The objects can be understood as a means to reconstruct the childhood and family life of the past (1993:39).

The material memories of travel are related to the international lifestyle Andreas aspires to live and has managed to attain through his Costa del Sol house; they stand in sharp contrast to the past objects of his rural family his-
tory. In accumulating the material memories they become *memory objects* as a means to relive and revive past experience (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989:331). They are also important in that they organize and order the life trajectory by their sheer presence on a wall or on a shelf. The ethnologists Lene Otto and Lykke L. Pedersen label similar objects *life-story objects* in that they “symbolize life and the self, and […] hence help to shape a person’s self-perception. Life-story objects both derive meaning from life and give meaning to life. They should thus not be regarded merely as passive symbols of lost moments of life, but also as actively helping to shape a life story” (1998:79). On the other hand, the life-story objects do freeze time and are used as a nostalgic tool to sediment idealized past times. Otto and Pedersen suggest further that the nostalgic dimension of displaying objects of the past is “a way to avoid relating to it, by freezing it in petrified, timeless moments and putting it in boxes, drawers, and albums” (ibid. 1998:81). On a contrary note, Sara Ahmed states that objects of the past do not put the user in a state of the past; instead it is the expressions of the past that are kept alive, and while they are kept alive, they infuse the present moment (2011:163). This is significant for Andreas, who aspires to live within an international context on the Costa del Sol. The travel memories of the past intersect with the present lifestyle, which makes the international life trajectory of Andreas appear continuous over time.

For many of the elderly interviewees, memory objects are very important in their special function of evaluating and organizing one’s life. They are not only objects chosen as memories but also structure past experiences and memories. The memory objects provide an understanding of the owner of the object and the course of life of the owner (Otto and Pedersen 1998:80). For instance, Margareta has her own painted art work on display on the walls of her apartment. The art illustrates the many countries and places important to her, where she has lived. Moreover, the art reflects the different stages of her life and the experiences she has lived through in the different places. Another way of collecting memory objects is to organize photos. When I start meeting Tilde, she is engaged in this task. She tries to remember the travels and events in the photos and writes an explanatory note and the date before sorting the different photos into envelopes for her children. Simon has written his memoirs divided into two versions: a personal and a professional one that he shares with me. His memoirs reflect his life work, through which he is able to organize the experiences he has had both in Sweden and in Spain. For Simon, this is a continuous practice, since he also has the habit of writing a monthly newsletter to his friends. The autobiography as a memory object contains reflections from a long life.
Conclusion

To create a home and to feel at home is a question of shaping familiarity or turning the unfamiliar into something familiar and homelike for the migrants on the Costa del Sol. Familiarity in this regard does not necessarily signify sameness, but rather that which is well known to the migrants. Home-making in this sense is not a matter of feeling at home “here” versus “there.” Instead it is embodied processes of letting the locality of multiple places emerge into the migrants in such a way that the localities go beyond the familiar and known into transparency. The Costa del Sol is not a home because it is familiar and well-known but because the locality has emerged into the person and become one with the person. There are no barriers left. To feel at home on the Costa del Sol is additionally based on components such as a network of friends and family, and having a stable and permanent home.

Home-making through what is familiar for the migrant is put forward through processes adhering to the Swedish roots and origin of the migrant, and through maintaining everyday practices and daily encounters that are already familiar or that will evolve beyond the familiar over time. Sara Ahmed writes that domestic spaces, such as a home, are dependent on how the familiar comes to be differentiated from the unfamiliar, by turning the unfamiliar into something almost familiar or by transforming the unfamiliar into a tool (2011:159). In the Swedish migrant context presented here, the familiarity of roots and origin function as the basis for orientation, i.e. to be orientated around something can function as a starting point for home-making in the context of migration. Most of the migrants are orientated around practices that stem from their life in Sweden in one sense or another, i.e. they start their process of acquiring a reorientation with their life in Sweden as their frame of reference, which determines how the locality of relaxation, vacation, and leisure on the Costa del Sol will appear and be regarded as a place of home, following Ahmed’s argumentation (2006:8). Hence, the home-making in the migration stories can be understood as a matter of reflection or a mirroring practice, where the new home is seen, understood, and made meaningful by having the familiarity and knowledge of old home and the departure from it as a point of reference. For instance, the notion of cold winters and an indoor type of life in the north of Sweden makes Tilde value and feel at home on the Costa del Sol, where she can lead a busy social life and spend time outside in a mild climate. For Eva, on the other hand, it is the discomfort and distress that she remembers from her childhood home in Sweden that make her value her Costa del Sol home, since it has given her an opportunity to start anew. A busy city life in Stockholm is used to contrast the aspiration for a relaxed and simple lifestyle on the Costa del Sol for Markus and his husband Stefan.

To make a home and generate feelings of being at home in relation to the country of origin is also to maintain and make the familiarity of the old
home present whilst living on the Costa del Sol. Materiality can function as an orientation device in the sense of linking material objects to roots and origin, as argued by Ahmed (2011:164). As such, the material objects generate effects of meaning. The present chapter has shown that objects used by the interviewees are given meaning while they represent national affiliation, emotional value, recognition, family history, and memories of the past. The material objects bridge the present time living on the Costa del Sol with past times, past places, and distant people. But materiality can never bring about what is lost or distant, writes Ahmed (ibid.). Instead material objects are part of new processes of creating belonging, and as such they characterize the transnational condition of plurilocal affiliations and attachments.

In the physical home, the familiarity, as a component in home-making, may surface in the daily and habitual use of material objects, such as kitchen tools or specific foods, that may have transcended territorial borders. Such objects generate an effect by their presence to a higher degree than by their meaning, in accordance with the theoretical discussions on materiality by the literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2004; see also Mordhorst 2009). By living with and using things daily for their function or by habit, the object adds a sense of worth through its sheer presence, which enacts the familiar and serves as a basis for home-making and feeling at home. A strong example of this is the use of modern technology, in the case of Simon, which makes the continued habitual practice online play an important role by enabling stability and fixity in his transnational mobile everyday life. To live with the familiarity of oak furniture for Sofie is an example of how material objects generate meaning in being identified as Swedish furniture, but also have value for their presence and daily usage in the home of Sofie and José.

In sum, this chapter has shown that home-making is a question of familiarity and how that question finds an answer over time, in-between different contexts and through the mirroring process of living an everyday life that transcends borders.
5. Homeland Sweden

In the everyday life led by the migrants on the Costa del Sol, the transnational experience is viewed by many, first and foremost, in relation to having life in the country of origin, Sweden, as a frame of reference. Many migrants remain orientated around Swedish matters. In this chapter I will analyze how Sweden as the place of origin can be understood as transformed in meaning and familiarity over time for the interviewees. How is Sweden present as a notion of home on a daily basis? How is Sweden experienced, understood, and valued during travels and trips in the country?

To remain orientated around Swedish matters determines how the Swedish migrants live their transnational lives and understand their lifeworlds. Sara Ahmed writes:

> What comes into view, or what is within our horizon, is not a matter of what we find here or there, or even where we find ourselves, as we move here, or there. What is reachable is determined precisely by orientations we have already taken. Or we could say that orientations are about the directions we take that put some things and not others in our reach (2007:152).

This chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the kind of views and practices that the migrants find in reach, while to the greater part remaining orientated around life in Sweden as a frame of reference, or having to relate daily to life in Sweden as a frame of reference. What kind of effect does such an orientation have on forging belonging from a migrant position? The Swedish origin is found to signify different sets of meaning depending on the degree of contacts and connections the interviewees have with the country of origin. I will discuss how Sweden is present as a physical territory to live in and travel to, and as the basis for the interviewees’ worldview and everyday life.

Virtual and annual transmobilities between homes

When I meet Lars for the last time, he tells me that even though he is settled and engaged locally in Spain, he views Sweden as his home because he has his family there and a profound interest in the development of the country:
“I’m interested in how it goes for Sweden. I am still interested in my old job with the Armed Forces. I follow their website. And I still have engagements in Sweden. I am a member of two academies. And even though I don’t attend their meetings I read about all that is happening there. And then I’m still part of some orders there in Sweden too which I still want to be in contact with. I have many friends there.”

Both Lars, and Simon below, have integrated a habitual practice of keeping themselves orientated around Sweden by daily following news and events in Sweden, mainly through the Internet. Simon takes part daily in the public debates through Swedish radio and television broadcasts online:

“An ordinary day for me … consists of some hours mostly on the computer. With this computer I can listen to Swedish radio. I have wireless earphones so I sit in the sun on the balcony and listen to P1, I can watch all the Swedish television I want. I can speak to my friends both visually and acoustically without paying a nickel through having Skype here. I have MSN too. I simply socialize, even though I don’t socialize.”

Modern technology makes Simon a most active participant in the Swedish news and public debate on a daily basis from his apartment by the Mediterranean. This practice can be related to Ghassan Hage’s research on how reading a Lebanese newspaper within the Lebanese migrant community in Sydney becomes a practice “to bridge the distance between ‘Lebanon’ as an imagined totality and the migrant” (2003:83). Hage recalls that there is a difference between reading an Australian newspaper with news items about events in Lebanon and reading a Lebanese newspaper on the same event from a Lebanese perspective. He states that “the Lebanese newspaper provides an imaginary positioning of the self as a Lebanese in Lebanon, not as a Lebanese migrant in Australia reading about Lebanon” (ibid. 2003:839). Similarly for Simon, the distance between his balcony by the Mediterranean, where he sits with his earphones listening to news and discussions on the Swedish radio channel in Sweden, and the nation Sweden, mediated through the broadcast, is erased as the listening is an entrance to specificities of the Swedish national pouring into Simon’s lifeworld through his earphones.


79 P1 is a radio channel in Sweden.

use Hage’s words: “[O]ne does not [listen to or hear] about the nation, one [hears] the nation” (ibid. 2003:84).

Simon has organized his everyday life through the use of modern technology in such a way that his orientation toward Swedish affairs does not interfere with his equal interest in Spanish news and public debate, which he takes part in through analogue media outlets, such as the Spanish national and local television, radio, and newspapers. In Simon’s case, his dual interest and engagement has a specific aim in the monthly newsletter he writes in Swedish about the local, regional, and national societal development in his two home countries in relation to his own life. The newsletter 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.

Noteworthy is the fact that Simon and Lars share the habit of being engaged in Swedish news and national affairs, in addition to living several months during the summer in Sweden. Hence, living part of the year in the home country can be seen as an enhancement of the engagements in the country of origin during the time spent on the Costa del Sol.

The sociologist John Urry (2007) writes that there is a need to expand the mobility concept in the sense that people not only travel physically but also use “communicative travel” through person-to-person communication, such as phones, letters, e-mail etc., “imaginative travel” through television, newspapers etc., “virtual travel” through the Internet, and travel with and through objects. All these modes of travel strengthen the bond to the country of origin, as in the cases of Simon and Lars, who have the privilege to travel to Sweden on an everyday basis, along the lines of Urry’s mobility concept. Frequent physical travel to Sweden is often a privilege for the senior citizens along the coast.

Detachment from homeland

Migrants who do not split their lives between Sweden and Spain annually through the ownership of two homes describe a detachment from an orientation to news and events happening in present-day Sweden. Karin stresses how the transnational in-between position she holds leads to a faltering understanding of both Swedish and Spanish affairs. When I ask about her interest in the topic, she hovers around the matter, not sure of how to describe her standpoint and then she reasons out loud toward the core of her thoughts. She tells me that it is hard to follow Swedish matters and news and get complete insight because she is not there on location to follow the incidents. On the other hand, she says, that ought to mean that she follows the Spanish media coverage fully, which she does not because she does not feel close enough to Spanish affairs even though she lives in the country:
“It is sort of strange sometimes because, what world do I live in? Can I stand with one foot here in Spain and one in Sweden and how long will it work? Or do I have to sort of let go of one and really let go of Sweden then and only follow Spain but at the same time when you keep in touch with those at home and when you go home you have to follow what is going on at home in Sweden or else you will be totally lost when you get home.”

She continues:

“I am really in favor of this, that if you live in a country you ought to integrate in the country. And why should I hold on to the Swedish, but at the same time it is important too but then maybe I ought to start and get an interest and feel more for Spain than I do.”

To finish off she says:

“It is here I live and it is here I ought to want to engage and have an influence and want to know what is going on and want to have an interest since I have left Sweden and don’t need to check what is going on there. But still it is as if it is closer, warmer to my heart.”

Karin’s statements about how to regard the two homes important to her are affirmed by Agnes Heller (1995:17), who states:

The density of our sensual home-experience varies from home to home. One home is closer to the logic of the heart, the other to the logic of reason. There is a multiplicity of hierarchy among these homes, criss-crossing one another. This hierarchy is strictly personal and not normative.

In addition, Karin’s battle with herself ought to be viewed in the perspective of not really having made a solid decision to migrate on her own but having followed her partner, Manuel, and slowly making herself at home on the Costa del Sol. The demand for integration in European, as well as Swedish, public debate in recent years can be seen as influencing Karin’s account, and it contradicts the voice of her heart, still wanting to feel connected to her country of origin. A similar discussion about the demand for integration is found in Marja Ågren’s dissertation about individuals of Finnish

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origin who live in Sweden and are assumed to be integrated in Swedish society (2006:16).

It is worth noting the unison perception among the interviewees that an orientation or update on Swedish news and events is pivotal for them when traveling to Sweden. In order to still be able to follow daily regular conversation, know about the latest pop songs or celebrities, and be a part of the everyday life of friends and family, they need to be familiar with local news. This puts them in a position of involvement as if they had been present throughout the year. A common strategy is to randomly make sure they are updated at least to a minimum degree through the use of Internet in order to still feel that they belong to the life of friends and family in Sweden. The interviewees watch Swedish television shows, movies, listen to Swedish music, order Swedish books online, read newspapers, listen to the Swedish radio, regularly talk to relatives through Skype and regular phone, and so on.

Ghassan Hage discusses this form of involvement in news and events happening in the old country of migrants as a form of caring, generated by feelings of guilt about having abandoned the old home (2003). Hage states: “Not all migrants feel indebted to their nation, […] but most feel indebted to their family. This guilt-inducing state of indebtedness is most apparent in times of crisis when your family, your village or your nation is going through a hard time and you […] are not there to help” (ibid. 2003:90). A comparable notion is expressed especially among the younger interviewees. They voice a deep concern for their elderly parents in Sweden, in a similar vein to what Hage discusses. As compensation, an involvement through participating in news and events becomes a manifestation of belonging. They know that topical events function as a motor in everyday communication and talk, and they need to be able to give fuel to that motor of conversation during visits to Sweden. Participation in conversation can therefore be seen as an expression of belonging.

Distant home, disappearing home

Modern technology has revolutionized the migrants’ abilities to stay connected between the old and the new country. Despite novel means to stay connected, time and geographical place generate a mental distance to the country of origin and the feeling of looking from the outside in.

One day Andreas was curious to know what people did in his home town in Sweden:

“Here it’s sunny almost always. I thought what do they do in Sweden? I went to check online. It was International Women’s Day. Now. I checked the local newspaper. They were out demonstrating. It’s like May the First. So they marched there in the pouring rain. Christ! It was not pouring rain here.
Here it was 25 degrees Celsius and I was sitting in the sun and had a very cozy and relaxing time, you know! How can we bear the weather!?”^82

By the means of Internet Andreas could satisfy his curiosity about what people did in his hometown, here thought of in terms of the nation Sweden, on that particular day. By viewing Sweden from a distant position he was able to reconnect in practice to his home country, which he does recognize as a country he belongs to while using a we, as in “we Swedes,” in the exclamation “How can we bear the weather!” The very same comment about the weather also indicates a distance to an everyday life he does not share with the inhabitants of his former town and clearly feels he can do without. The practice of experiencing the hometown activities online in real time for Andreas resembles Hage’s research on Lebanese migrants in Australia, who experienced the immediate Lebanon by reading a newspaper from Lebanon (2003). Modern technology enables Andreas to be distantly present in events happening in Sweden at the very moment of their occurrence. Through the way he reads an online newspaper from his hometown while living on the Costa del Sol and is affected by the reading, the account can be understood as a practice of becoming transnational in the moment.

The accounts of the interviewees reveal feelings that have emerged over time, of viewing the home country as distant and unfamiliar. Sofie explains yet another perspective on this:

“It feels as if it is a tougher climate. I don’t know how to explain. Partly it’s that I come home and feel a bit like I’m watching from the outside in. I recognize the streets and I recognize the stores and the places but I don’t know the faces anymore as I come walking.”

“You mean in your home town?”

“Yes, and I don’t feel as if anybody recognizes me. I have been gone too long now.”^83

Sofie describes how an orientation around a life led in Sweden can over time be turned into disorientation toward the same. With the lapse of time, the distanced feelings toward the home country can be expressed as viewing the image of Sweden as a geographical map of the country. Both Majken and


”Du menar i din hemstad?”

”Ja, och jag känner inte heller att nån känner igen mig. Jag har varit borta för länge nu.” (Interview with Sofie, March 20, 2009)
Markus give me this answer when I ask what Sweden signifies for them now. Markus says:

“It is just a map. A map—Sweden. No, I really want to be… in Spain. Really want to be in Spain. So Sweden is disappearing more and more.”

Even though contemporary Sweden is perceived as distant and hard to access in the statements above, Sweden is still perceived as a home for the migrants in that it is shaped by a recognition of social codes and behavior, an ability to orientate oneself, as well as local knowledge of the place. I discuss homesickness and notions of Sweden with Lena, when she explains the comfort of being in a familiar environment when coming home to Sweden:

“I’m coming home to something that I recognize. At home at my parents’, it is, first of all, where my parents live and where they do their stuff and where they have their things that I have always seen surrounding me my whole life. It doesn’t matter if it’s another house. I recognize those things and have memories of them. But to come home to Sweden is the same thing. I am coming home to something that I recognize, that I know more or less how it works and that I feel a certain security with, that it, well, that it’s not something foreign.”

Majken, however, has a different view of what it means for her to recognize the home environment on her Swedish trips.

She explains:

“It is with mixed emotions sometimes that I come to Sweden. You think, God, I do belong here but no, it is very much like home but I don’t belong anymore. Because it’s very much like home, you take the subway and go here and go back and you do the shopping, you walk to ICA or some supermarket or something. Very like home but then you know that this is not mine. At the same time you feel that this is not my environment.”

Hence, to recognize something familiar and to know how to behave in certain situations increases feelings of being at peace with the situation, but

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86 A chain of supermarkets.

87 ”Det är blandade känslor ibland när man kommer [till Sverige]. Man tänker men gud, jag hör hemma här men nej, det här är väldans hemvand men jag hör inte hemma längre […]. För det är så enormt hemvand, du åker tunnelbana och åker hit och åker tillbaka och du handlar, du går in på ICA eller sånt där snabbköp eller nänting. Enormt som vant men sen vet du att det här är inte alls mitt. Samtidigt känner man det att det här är inte min miljö det här.” (Interview with Majken, April 14, 2009)
it does not in itself create a sense of belonging, which is a notion shared by migrants who do not visit Sweden on a regular basis. The familiarity of a place is important in creating belonging but it is not the most “decisive constituent of the feeling of being-at-home,” states Agnes Heller (1995:5). According to Sara Ahmed (1999:343), the mental distance appears because migration is not only a spatial dislocation but also a temporal one. The migrants can be understood as perceiving Sweden as a home that has become distant and unfamiliar due to the temporal dislocation of their departure; the old home can never be inhabited through the body with ease and a naturalized state of being, where the familiar environment is able to become one with the person, since it is a home of the past and not of the present. On a phenomenological note, home-making has bodily implications. Ahmed states that it “is impossible to return to a place that was once lived as home, precisely because the home is not exterior to a self, but implicated in it” (ibid.). The migration and the time elapsed since the initial movement have made the migrants separated from what was once their home environment because they feel out of place and a discomfort from the process of detachment that happens over time in migration trajectories.

Homesickness

The migrant’s absence together with an emotional and physical distance in relation to Sweden as a home country comes into an emotional light in relation to another transnational dilemma. I ask Lena when she misses home: “When my mom tells me on the phone, ‘Why don’t you come home for Good Friday because your brothers and sisters are coming to us for dinner’ and I’m not there. Then I am far away. Then I live four hours by airplane and an hour by bus and 300 euros away from my family.”

It is mostly Lena’s mother that evokes the homesickness by speaking about everyday things and events of which Lena has familiar experience from before but cannot be a part of now. Hage has found, through his research on experiences of homesickness and nostalgia among Sydney’s Lebanese community, that affect and degrees of intensity in feeling affective is an important aspect in researching migrants’ symbolic distance to the home country. In his article “The Differential Intensities of Social Reality” (2003), reading a Lebanese newspaper becomes an intensified means to become involved or implicated in the old country. Hage means that it is the intensity of reading that is an indication of “the extent to which a reality is involving and affecting” (2003:80). To clarify, he states: “An intense reality is primarily an intense relation where the person’s engagement in reality contributes to constructing its intensity” (ibid. 2003:81). Both reading a newspaper in Hage’s example, and talking on the phone to one’s mother as in the case of Lena, will evoke intensified feelings of affect through the involvement in the
events of the old country. The reality of old home is a familiar and possible reality to act upon and be engaged with since reading the newspaper or talking on the phone becomes a sphere of homeliness and familiarity of old home despite of the fact that the migrants are themselves located thousand miles away from the actual locus of the events read or talked about. Hage concludes:

The information received is comforting in that it sustains the feeling that people have not totally left their home country, are still connected to it, and feel implicated by what is happening in it. News items are subject of discussion and sometimes of intense arguments and operate as classical triggers of nostalgic feelings (2003:81).

In the discussion with Lena, I ask her what she is longing for. She tells me insightfully:

“Well… that I won’t need to… well, I long for a home that does not exist, and that makes it even more painful maybe, I am aware that what I am longing for does not exist.”

Because the time as a resident in Spain takes Lena further and further away from the life she once led in Sweden, the object of her homesickness is a life in her homeland that does not exist anymore. The feelings can be understood as “homing desires” (Brah 1996:180), in the sense that the sociologist Ann-Marie Fortier discusses homing desires as a return to a home that is remembered differently. Through the lapse of time, the former home becomes detached from specific places, faces and bodies, and emotions (2003:130). In the context of migration, the life longed for becomes most vivid as a mental image, rather than a possible reality for migrants (Westin 2000:42f). The homesickness can be related to nostalgia of lost times in a faraway place, which is a common theme in migration stories (see Wolf-Knuts 2000).

While Lena is telling me the difficult aspects of homesickness, early memories of my own homesickness are being evoked. On returning to my home environment after a year living abroad as a teenager, I had a most intense wish to rewind time to life as I had experienced it before my departure. The components making up my home environment had changed during my absence in such a way that I returned to a reality different from the one in my dreams of longing. Sitting in front of Lena, I sympathize and understand

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88 "När mamma säger på telefon, 'Kan du inte komma hem på långfredagen för då kommer dina syskon hem till oss och ska äta middag' och då är inte jag med. Då bor jag fyra timmars flygresa och en timmes bussresa och 300 euro ifrån min familj."

[...] "Ja...att inte behöva..., ja jag längtar ju hem till nätting som inte finns, det gör ju att det är mer smärtsamt kanske. Jag är medveten om att det inte finns det jag längtar till." (Interview with Lena, March 19, 2009)
her pain in realizing how impossible her feelings of homesickness are. With her account of longing, our conversation evolves from being an interview situation to one of a profound exchange of transnational experiences of homesickness. The act of longing is an important component in the transnational condition, which involves a state of simultaneously being at home and away from home, of simultaneously being at ease with one place and feeling a longing in relation to the other.

With time spent in Spain, often with less frequent trips to the country of origin, places and once familiar contexts in Sweden become perceived as distant, harder to access, and possibly harder to understand. In the migration stories some interviewees express how life in Sweden becomes unreachable, remote and even foreign, which are shared notions of the home country expressed by migrants who have relocated to other places of the world as well (Eastmond and Åkesson 2007; Svenska Dagbladet 2010). Despite the possibilities of daily interaction online, not being able to be physically present and experience on location increases feelings of alienation, longing, and homesickness for times as they were before the departure. Such affective states can possibly be bridged through short trips.

Short trips to Sweden

Some of the interviewees divide their time between a Swedish and a Costa del Sol home over the year. But more common are frequent shorter trips to the home country every year or less often, which play an important role in keeping feelings of belonging to the country of origin. When commenting on her trips four times a year to her parents in a middle-sized town in Sweden, Karin exclaims:

“It is really like coming home! When I enter the door at home at mom and dad’s then it’s like, well it’s all natural for me to be there again. There’s nothing that is strange. We sit down and chat for a while and then it’s like it normally is. As I sometimes say when I come home… ‘well, I come home, I have traveled all day, I arrive at night, I might start unpacking. And my dad goes and sits by the TV just as usual and my mom does what she does.’ And then I have sometimes said ‘Well, how nice to come home after a couple of months and nobody cares.’ And they go ‘Well, isn’t that nice. Then everything is as it usually is.’ And at the same time, it is. It is really nice. Rather than having to sit and talk to each other in order to find each other again every time. That wouldn’t work.”

Upon entering the door to the home of Karin’s parents in Sweden, time is put on hold and the social atmosphere in the family is restored. The months apart are erased by the habitual and familiar interaction of the family. The life she once had with her family can be revived.

Following similar lines, Sofie speaks of an ideal Swedish experience she seeks during her yearly trip to Sweden. Almost like a ritual, she relives the most sought-for experiences from when she lived in Sweden in order to preserve her representation of her home country.

“First of all my mom has made sure that it smells of cinnamon buns when I enter the door and she has planned the meals so I’ll at least have some of my favorites. Then I meet my nephew as much as possible and do as many fun activities as possible. If I’m in Borås I have to meet the friends I want to see in Borås and have a coffee at the mandatory cafés that I have longed for a lot.”

She adds:

“And I come home on vacation. It is a life of vacation nonstop when I get home. We do all the things I would have done myself if I had lived in Sweden and been on vacation and hadn’t had money to go anywhere but stay home and make the best of it. That’s how it is.”

“And how does that feel?”

“It feels, well it depends on how long I’m home. Eh, ten days feels like a lot of fun, two weeks then I long to come home to Spain. Because the fact is that this is where I live. This is where my life is. This is my everyday life. It is always a lot of fun to be on vacation but east or west, home is best.”

Noteworthy in Sofie’s account is her effort to experience favorite and extraordinary pieces of what she associates with Swedish life, in contrast to

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”Och hur känns det?”

Karin who seeks the ordinary everyday life she had with her family. This can be traced to the homesickness and reluctance Karin has felt about migrating as a permanent decision, which I discussed in the second chapter. It is the well-known daily life in Sweden that has triggered her homesickness and made her stay on the Costa del Sol a troublesome one. For Sofie, on the other hand, it is through a vacation in Sweden that she reconnects with her roots in the home country. In doing so, Sofie is no different from other interviewees, or immigrants that have come to Sweden (e.g. Ågren 2006:56ff; Lukkarinen Kvist 2005:129). They too relate to and refer to their country of origin in association with their experiences of traveling there in summer time, since the reconnections often happen when many are on a summer vacation. The mental representation of the homeland is partly experiences of vacation visits, which I will continue to discuss in the next section of the chapter.

The transnationalism that stems from lifestyle migration on the Costa del Sol is closely related to the welfare state, paid annual leave from work, and modern vacationing. Initially, the lifestyle migration phenomenon in Europe arose from vacations spent on extended travels around the Mediterranean during the second half of the twentieth century. In its wake, the transnationality expressed and created on the Costa del Sol by the Swedish migrants is triggered by the annual paid vacations spent on travels back to Sweden.

Summertime Sweden

Representations of Sweden are, as shown, enacted by vacation visits to Sweden. This fact is expressed in a variety of ways among Swedish migrants. In the late winter of 2009, the ninth-graders in the Swedish School on the Costa del Sol were working on a project called “My Life This Far…” in English and art. They were to write a text in English about themes or memories important to them from their lives and illustrate the chosen topic in some kind of way placed in or on a box that they would create in art class. During the exhibition there were a notable number of pupils who had chosen to illustrate and write about the summer cottage in rural Sweden and the outdoor activities they engage in when they live in Sweden during the summer. The summer home in Sweden plays a vital role in the knowledge of and associations with the home country for these young Swedes since their lives in Sweden are often narrowed down to spending the long summer vacation in a summer house.
The red summer cottage by the lake in Sweden is an important representation of Sweden among the Swedish population along the coast. Here illustrated by a pupil at the Swedish School in Fuengirola. Photographer: Annie Woube

The roots and memory of an idyllic rural Sweden, similar to the concept of Heimat in German-speaking countries, defined as a collective mystical place of innocence (see Blicke 2004; Petri 2003; Hobsbawn 1991:68), is a most vivid imagery expressed by the migrants in migration stories, regular conversations, and elsewhere, such as during the school project. For instance, Andreas tells me Sweden for him is the farm in the countryside where he grew up partially with his grandparents. The farm constitutes an important piece of his life, as all he has left in Sweden and something he will inherit in the future. He reconnects with his childhood on the farm once a year every summer for a week when he visits his dad, who lives there today:

“...My dad picks me up at Arlanda and the first thing that strikes me if it’s a late flight, is that it’s still so bright outside. And then when we go to the house, it takes 45 minutes and it is so darn beautiful, so verdant.”

The red summer cottage with white corners by a lake in the countryside or in the archipelago is an important mental representation of Sweden, which is transformed into the place for vacation to which migrants return in summer. Similar to the concept of Heimat, the red summer cottage represents a local context that, from the distance of southern Spain, comes to be connoted with

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92 The airport outside of Stockholm is named Arlanda.
93 ”Pappa hämtar mig på Arlanda och det första som slår mig om det är ett sent flyg, det är ju att det är ljust fortfarande. Och sen når vi åker till huset, det tar ungefär 45 minuter så är det himla vackert alltså, all grönska.” (Interview with Andreas, March 17, 2009)
the national specific of Sweden as a whole. The ethnologist Barbro Blehr discusses the connection between locality and national dimensions in her study about the Norwegian national holiday celebration on May 17. She writes: “Local mediations make national dimensions noticeable and understandable by anchoring them to something that is close to heart. It is an effective technique and best known in contexts of nationalism” (2000:177, my translation; see also Petri 2003:326).

The imaginary of the rural Swedish countryside has its origins in the nineteenth-century formation of the Swedish nation and the search for a common national origin to call upon in times of radical societal change through industrialization and urbanization. The answer found was the disappearing peasantry and a life led in an untouched countryside, which was seen as a counterpart to the growing and crowded urbanity. The Swedish landscape became loaded, and over time it has been reloaded, with notions of a common past and national symbolism, which historically is an international practice from the nation-building era of the nineteenth century (Ehn et al. 1993). Outdoor activities in the countryside that are connected to an imagery of the national specific are also found in Norway, Denmark, and the German-speaking countries (Petri 2003:330). In Sweden, the image of the simple red and white...
cottage is part of the same peasant origin. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, it has been an active ingredient of an imagery that makes up Swedishness. Through technologies of mass production, the red and white cottage could be and still is spread through postcards, prints, and tapestries, to reinforce the national symbolism (Ehn et al. 1993). As a symbolic image of the Swedish nation, the red cottage functions as a representation and surpasses territorial borders to the everyday lives of the Swedes on the Costa del Sol.

The nostalgia associated with rural Sweden in summertime has an emotional imprint that resembles the notions of home among Swedish emigrants in North America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, according to H. Arnold Barton (2000:100). The emotional longing for the homeland that the Swedish emigrants had left behind was an idyllically charged regional or provincial homeland (hembygd in Swedish), far from the notion of the sovereign nation state of Sweden, which had negatively connotations of a state that demanded loyalty and constrained its citizens (Stråth 2003). The emotionally connected imagery of the rural homeland, Sweden, was at the time for the Swedish-American immigrants and is still today for the migrants on the Costa del Sol in itself a solace, as a vital component of the migratory experience.

Memory and place are connected, according to Sara Ahmed (1999:343), in that they are bound together by the “impossibility of return.” The place that the Swedish migrants left is not only spatial but, indeed, temporal since as the older they become, the further away they find themselves from their homeland, their view of it and understanding of it. The migration scholar Charles Westin states: “There is a place in this time-space continuum that corresponds to one’s homeland. One can return to the spatial location of this place but not to its temporal location. The true homeland exists in the mind of the migrant” (2000:42f).

Hence, to view Sweden as a home is often to think of a place connected to childhood or times that have been but do not exist anymore. On the other hand, life in Sweden is associated with a country dressed in a lush summer costume in the countryside, which is still experienced during June, July, and August every year. For the ninth graders and for many other migrants from Sweden on the Costa del Sol, a rural idyll is not only a representation of Sweden from the past, but also represents their notion of present-day Sweden. It is the actual experience of summer vacations in the countryside that is perceived as something authentically Swedish, which enhances the identification with the Swedish nation. Thomas Hylland Eriksen states: “[M]any sorts of experiences, and in particular childhood experiences, are expropriated and nationalized with the citizens in a nation state” (1996:57, my translation). To relive similar experiences strengthens the incorporation into the national fabric, which is a fostering factor for the many trips to Sweden during the summer months.
Evidently, the transmovement is brought forth, partly, by the desire to live in Spain during the greater parts of the year, especially during the colder season, and partly, by the memory of living in a summer idyll in Sweden. This specific transmobility practice in-between the old and the new home can be considered as “a mode of being in the world,” as suggested by Povrzanović Frykman (2003:59), that is, making migrancy a form of consciousness, a mode of existence, as argued by the literary scholar John McLeod (2000:210). The annual transmovement can be viewed as intrinsic in forging transnational feelings of belonging. This is the case especially for the senior generation.

Frequent trips to Sweden are not part of the everyday life of all migrants from Sweden on the Costa del Sol. Several of the permanent residents whom I meet during my fieldwork spend their vacations in Spain, choose to travel to other countries or do travel to Sweden but not as a habitual annual practice. For instance, when I happened to ask one of the elderly male members of the choir in the Swedish Church if he was going home to Sweden over the summer, his instant reply to me was: “Home? What do you mean by home to Sweden? This is my home.”

A safe haven

Despite the decision to migrate permanently, there are accounts of viewing the dwelling on the Costa del Sol in a somewhat temporary light in connection to constructing Sweden as safe and secure, partly for having a peaceful historical development during the past 200 years.

Sofie tells me during a conversation:

“If I decide tomorrow to move back to Sweden I am very happy to be a Swedish citizen already at this point, to be able to move back home. I don’t need to fuss a lot. I can just stand on the border and say ‘Now I’m coming home’ and I’ll be welcome.”

With almost the exact same expression Eva tells me that she has always wanted her two children to grow up bilingual because if something happened to them for whatever reason she could move back to Sweden with her children and they would be able to understand Swedish society, even though the children were born and raised in Spain. Eva’s life in Spain started off when she was a young woman interested in Spanish language and culture 26 years ago:

95 "Bestämmer jag imorgon för att flytta tillbaka till Sverige är jag väldigt glad att redan nu vara svensk medborgare, att kunna flytta hem. Jag behöver inte krängla så mycket. Jag kan bara stå på gränsen och säga ’Nu kommer jag hem’ så är jag välkommen.” (Interview with Sofie, March 25, 2009)
“I think I could go off and try my wings and all the time I could feel certain that if anything went wrong at least I would have something secure to come back to.”

“Do you still carry that feeling?”

“Oh yes, yes, I still feel that if anything goes wrong in any way I always know that I would go to Sweden, that I would be taken care of.”

Along the same lines of keeping something safe and secure in Sweden, Markus and his husband Stefan have had their apartment in Stockholm rented out but have kept it as a guarantee if their relocation to the Costa del Sol were to fail. When I meet Markus, he has lived in Fuengirola with his husband for three years and finally feels that they have established themselves enough in order to dare to rely on the transnational situation and sell the apartment they have kept until now in Stockholm. He explains that he has become so determined in wanting to live in Spain that he actively allows Sweden to be mentally diminished little by little in his everyday life.

Sweden is here viewed as a home in the sense of being the country of origin. To have a past, in the form of a birthplace, family history or lived experience, in connection to a geographical place is often seen as implying a right of access to that particular place. An important characteristic of this notion is “the right to return,” which gives migrants a form of continuity and stability to rely on in a transnational life (Petridou 2001:88; Hylland Eriksen 1996:75). Swedish citizenship can be viewed as a transnational capital, that can be understood as a resource for Swedish migrants when trouble comes (Lundström 2014).

The right to return is noticeable elsewhere among the Swedish migrant population on the coast. For instance, the frequent change of owners of restaurants claiming to be Swedish, or the volatile body of pupils at the Swedish school from year to year are two other indicators of the perception that if something goes wrong in the new country, there is always a return ticket to the country of origin. Karen O’Reilly, who has studied British lifestyle migration, discusses the idea of returning to the homeland in relation to a lack of integration into the local society (2000:95), which can be understood as the case for the temporary bar owners described above. For permanent Swedish migrants, “the right to return” rather highlights another dimension related to heritage and family history: that one’s own biography seems very important alongside one’s life choices when making a home and identifying oneself (cf. Blehr 2000:51).

96 "Jag tycker liksom att jag kunde ut och pröva mina vingar och hela tiden känna mig säker på att gick nånting snett så har jag i alla fall nånting säkert att komma tillbaka till."
"Känner du fortfarande så idag också?"
"Oja, oja, jag känner fortfarande att skulle det gå snett på något sätt så vet jag alltid att jag skulle åka till Sverige, att jag skulle bli omhändertagen." (Interview with Eva, February 22, 2009)
Conclusion

The chapter proceeded from the notion that the transnational experience on the Costa del Sol is understood in relation to having one’s origin in Sweden as a frame of reference. Life in Sweden is present both through travel and through habitual orientation around news, events, and Swedish popular culture, mainly online. By taking part in events and news in real time through broadcasts located in Sweden and transmitted through the Internet, the physical distance appears diminished and the migrants can be seen as distantly present in events that happen in Sweden. This practice has turned out to be pivotal when they travel to Sweden. Being familiar with local news can be seen as putting them in a position of involvement and participation, as if they had been present throughout the year.

Annual travel for longer or shorter periods of time enables the habitual and familiar reconnection and interaction with family and friends in Sweden, when everyday ordinary and extraordinary experiences can be relived from the past through events, places, and practices that are locally bound. Through the travels between Spain and Sweden in summer, the familiarity of life in the homeland is constantly reloaded with new content over time, such as keeping vivid the representation of Sweden in connection with an idyllic rural past that stands in connection to lost times. The representation is evoked through the imagery of a red cottage with white corners by a lake in the woods during summertime. Here Sweden is understood as an important entity in the migrants’ lives. However, it is also common to relate life in Sweden to different localities, local contexts, and smaller networks of people in Sweden. Hence, meaning is often ascribed by the interviewees to a very narrow and local understanding of life in Sweden, which comes to be associated with Sweden in the interview with me. This is probably because the interviews were conducted on the Costa del Sol, while the object of conversation was at a distance, referred to as “over there up north in Sweden.”

The chapter also reveals experiences of losing one’s orientation around the old home, which fades into difference and estrangement if the familiarity is not maintained through daily updates from the country of origin and frequent trips. Some interviewees signal disorientation by articulating experiences of a mental distance to life in Sweden that has emerged over time. They express a feeling of looking from the outside in, even though they recognize social codes and behavior and know how to get around in a certain place. Not being physically present and experiencing things on location increases feelings of alienation, longing, and homesickness for times as they were before the departure. The alienation can be understood in connection with the temporal dislocation of their departure; the old home can never be inhabited in the present with ease and a naturalized state of being, where the familiar environment is able to become one with the body, since it is a home of the past and not of the present. A migration is not only a spatial reloca-
tion, but above all temporal, which leads to a changed understanding of the homeland. The migrants might have a possibility to return to their country of origin, but they are unable to consolidate and understand the present life in the homeland with the frame of reference used before migration. A reverse process of mirroring might appear where the old home is seen through the familiarity of new home as a point of reference. This results in experiences of “a splitting of home as place of origin and home as a sensory world of everyday experience,” as Ahmed suggests (1999:341). The splitting of home is part of the transnational condition, where home is neither completely “here” nor “there,” but lies inherent in the migrant position in-between the old and the new home. The migrant might rather come to identify with the transnational condition itself, i.e. the transnational condition becomes an embodied home in its own right.

A transnational home-making is determined by how and to what degree individual migrants keep connections between the localities important in their lives and maintain familiar practices, connections, and relations; how often they travel, communicate, and are involved between different localities.
6. The Swedish collective formation on the Costa del Sol

In this chapter I turn the focus to how collective belonging is created and experienced by the interviewees. As shown in previous chapters, they are part of a diverse group of migrants from Sweden, separated by age, gender, social class, reason for dwelling in the region, length of residency, and aspiration to belong transnationally. Hence, the Swedish migrant group is marked by difference and diversity within the collective, while they all participate in formulating and practicing belonging on a collective basis on the Costa del Sol, which is a region characterized by a volatile and changeable international population. What kind of collective practices and expressions are acted upon while shaping collectiveness among migrants from Sweden despite such internal and external differences? How is collective belonging shaped? And with whom? How do the migrants create collective belonging that is lasting and stable in a region where the population is changeable, incoherent, and in flux?

Through the theoretical inspiration of diaspora research, I explore how collective belonging is created through “specific processes of community formation” (Butler 2001:193) that are linked to how a collective of migrants who share nationality or ethnicity is shaped outside of the country of origin, as discussed by Wahlbeck and Olsson (2007:46), with shared collective experiences of migration (cf. Hübinette 2007:209), and with shared collective consciousness of being in a migrant position (Vertovec 1997; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). In the present chapter, I discuss practices that lead to collective belonging within the Swedish migrant group and that are based on existential attachments to Sweden as a homeland, i.e. making the homeland a basis for everyday practices of collective identification and collective belonging (Alinia 2007:280). What kind of practices enacts a Swedish origin and are linked to the forging of collective belonging? What kind of practices shapes a Swedish collective? How can they be viewed as diasporic? And who takes part in these?

I will now present different activities and practices that lead to a forging of collective belonging: working within the Swedish infrastructure, engaging in volunteer work aimed at other Swedes, building social network through

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97 See Wahlbeck & Olsson 2007 for a research overview of the diaspora concept.
the Swedish infrastructure, celebrating Swedish traditions and festivities with a special focus on the Lucia celebration, celebrating Christmas in family contexts, and participating in a hat parade event within the Swedish female social organization SWEA.

Earning a living

I meet Markus for the first time over a book table, with cheap second-hand books in Swedish, in the Swedish church, where I approach him for interviews. He agrees to meet me and during the first conversation, I try to understand what he does for a living and ask him:

“Just so I understand you correctly. You have a company that offers service…?”

“We had to start a business to live here.”

“…that offers service to the housing society?”

“Yes, a part of it. The housing society is the biggest client and we could live on that, but we had to cut back a lot.”

“So to sum up, the business has these apartments that you rent, take care of cleaning, laundry and all administration…” I insist to clearly understand the private enterprise Markus runs with his husband.

“And do bookings and make sure the owners get their money, and make some renovations, and run the housing society with all that it entails with maintenance and the garden. And now we have employed Sandra, a Swedish girl, because there it has to be Swedes for the sense of security of the housing society because they are supposed to be able to come down and live here and not worry about anything. They are supposed to have a good time. They just call us when the fridge is broken, they just call us and we fix it because we fix everything because we think it’s fun. And now we actually just work two days a week. For one important thing is that we are supposed to feel good down here. We notice how we feel, do we feel alright? Because we’re not supposed to grow, but we’re growing anyway.”

98 “Bara så att jag förstår dig rätt. Ni har ett företag vars tjänster…”
“Vi fick starta företag för att bo här.”
“…vars tjänster ni erbjuder till [bostadsrättsföreningen]?”
“Ja, en del. [Bostadsrättsföreningen] är ju den största kunden och det kunde vi leva på fast vi fick [dra ner] ganska rejält.”
[...]
“Så om man sammanfattar det, det företaget gör är att ni har de här lägenheterna som ni hyr ut, ni tar hand om städning, tvätt och all administration…”
“Och bokningar och att ägarna får pengar och gör lite reparationer och sedan sköter [bostadsrättsföreningen] med allt vad det innebär med skötsel och trädgården. Och så har vi anställt Sandra nu, en svensk tjej, för där måste det vara svenskar för det är tryggheten för [bostadsrättsföreningen] för att de ska kunna komma ner och bo utan att bry sig nätting. Dom ska bara ha det bra. Dom bara ringer till oss när kylen går sönder, dom bara ringer till oss och där fixar vi allt för vi fixar allt för vi tycker det är roligt. […] Och nu jobbar vi faktiskt bara två dagar i
Markus and his husband, Stefan, set up a business upon arriving on the Costa del Sol after migration. Their company caters to second-home owners of Swedish nationality by taking care of their apartments when the owners are in Sweden. They rent them out, clean them after rental, and manage all the administration. In addition, to offering service to private persons, they also work as janitors while managing and taking care of a housing society for Swedish nationals. The housing society was the first Swedish housing society in Spain, run according to the Swedish law on housing cooperatives, even though the building with 84 apartments is located in Fuengirola. They offer their service for all kinds of Swedish nationals, whether they are returning residents, temporary residents, seasonal visitors, or tourists. With their private enterprise, Markus and Stefan can be categorized as entrepreneurial migrants, who have followed the footsteps of the retirement migration, according to Karen O’Reilly (2003:303).

In contrast to O’Reilly, my data shows that this is not a recent development among the migrants from Sweden, but that the entrepreneurial migrants started to migrate to the area parallel to the retirement migrants. One exam-

veckan. [...] För en viktig sak är att vi ska må bra här nere. Vi känner efter, mår vi bra? För vi ska inte växa men vi växer i alla fall.” (Interview with Markus, April 1, 2009)
ple of such an early entrepreneurial undertaking is the migration story of Tilde and her late husband Sten, who immigrated to the area in the early 1960’s and have had several businesses of their own. Quickly after relocating to the area, they began to make a living thanks to the charter phenomenon on the coast:

“Well, then Sten took pictures of people stepping off the airplane at Málaga Airport. You know back then you stepped right on the ground from a ladder. And then he took pictures of them when they went up to Nerja riding donkeys. [...] We printed the pictures and then we went to the hotels where the people stayed and we sold the pictures.”

This was just the beginning of a highly varied entrepreneurial life for the young Swedish couple. Soon Tilde and her husband opened a photo shop, which they had for ten years, they sold Swedish newspapers, besides developing pictures, selling and mending cameras. On the other side of the street from the photo shop, they opened a record shop selling Spanish music. The customers of the photo shop were both the Spanish population and tourists since the travel guides recommended the shop to the visitors. Later on, they had other companies with a more deliberate connection to Swedish visitors and residents. After being a travel guide for a Swedish youth travel company, Sten bought a hotel for the young Swedish tourists to stay in. Later they also had a restaurant, where they trained Spanish chefs to make Swedish traditional food. The restaurant cooperated with Swedish travel agencies that sold food coupons to the tourists that they traded for food at Tilde’s restaurant. After moving to Fuengirola, they started a bakery branch selling Swedish pastries from a Swedish bakery in Torremolinos. Eventually they settled for the travel agency business, which they kept until retirement. During their professional years they offered their services to the Swedish population on the coast, but often it was extended to customers of other Scandinavian nationality.

Markus and Tilde’s migration stories reveal the interdependence between permanent entrepreneurial migrants and temporary, short-term dwellers from Sweden. Throughout her life along the coast, Tilde has been in a position to cater to the Swedes in the area by offering different types of services, at the same time as she has been dependent herself on a Swedish population choosing to visit and reside along the coast in order to earn a living for herself and her family. Several of the interviewees have similar accounts of devoting their working careers to catering to the Swedish population on the coast, which might evolve toward voluntarism in different ways when the migrants have entered retirement (see Woube 2013). By taking advantage of the large

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99 ”Så då fotograferade Sten folk när dom klev av flygplanet på Málagas flygplats. Du vet då klev man ju av direkt på plattan ut på en stege så här, ja så fotograferade han dom då de åkte upp till Nerja och red på åsnor. [...] Men då gjorde vi så att vi gjorde bilder och så för vi runt till hotellen där de här människorna bodde och så sålde vi bilder.” (Interview with Tilde, March 17, 2009)
number of fellow nationals in the coastal region, many migrants of working age have been able to set up small businesses aimed at a Swedish, Scandinavian or international community. In this way they enable service in Swedish to other nationals and make up the elaborate infrastructure of enterprises, institutions, and associations linked to the Swedish population. The infrastructure goes back to the 1960’s, and functions as pillars of community-building through its services and practices (cf. King et al. 2000; O’Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008). These private businesses can be seen as marginal and independent in relation to the Spanish economy (cf. O’Reilly 2000:122). There is a greater dependence on the Swedish economy since the businesses are directed to Swedes, and payment often comes either from the salary of an employee in Sweden or from a state pension in Sweden.

There is a surprisingly enlarged spirit of business-mindedness in general within the Swedish migrant group with extra time and money. There are many examples of making good use of one’s talents in offering informal services to the Swedish population. Swedish parents set up after-school activities for Swedish children, such as football practice or dance lessons. One lady bakes cinnamon rolls by the hundreds in her apartment every week for the many different clubs and associations with Scandinavian connotations. Similar to the British lifestyle migration community (see O’Reilly 2000:129), a sense of collectiveness is created through the formal and informal work within the networks of Swedish migrants. Collective belonging is created for the individual migrants, while taking active part through private enterprises, informal voluntary work, and other kinds of organizational work toward one’s own group, which are practices that shape a collective of Swedes through an orientation toward shared and similar routines, behavior, and manners.
A Swedish dental practice that advertises through a sign in blue and yellow, the colors of the Swedish flag. In stating that the dental practice is Swedish, the practice wishes to attract the attention of Swedish nationals. Photographer: Annie Woube

In contrast to the retirement migrants, many of the Swedish nationals who belong to the entrepreneurial group of migrants work long hours and are short of both money and time. Many have a siesta schedule; working from 9 in the morning until 9 at night with a siesta between 2:30 and 5 in the afternoon. In the restaurant and café sector their hours are extended through the daytime until the last guest leaves at night. Private company owners are said to: “really struggle and many of them get very little for [their work]. They have to fight to make ends meet week after week. They do not have an easy time,”¹⁰⁰ as Eva told me during an interview session. Many have witnessed the alteration in companies and company owners in the area. Entrepreneurs try their luck a few years and leave when the area has proven to be too tough a place to do business in. During my fieldwork in the spring of 2009 there were at least three new restaurants that were directed to the Swedish population or restaurants with new Swedish owners opening in Fuengirola.

To work for and toward other Swedish nationals does not have to naturally be equated with forging collective belonging. I get in touch with Anna

¹⁰⁰ “sliter ju verkligen och får väldigt lite för det många av dom. Dom får kämpa för att få det att gå ihop vecka efter vecka. Så dom har det inte lätt.” (Interview with Eva, March 1, 2009)
through an ad in one of the Swedish magazines on the Costa del Sol. She is looking for any kind of job within the Swedish migrant group. But when I ask her about her connection to the Swedish group on the Costa del Sol, she surprisingly replies:

“It hardly exists. There isn’t any. You!”

“Me, yeah exactly. Is that right that your connection, that I could be your connection?”

“You are the closest connection that I have or have had. The only thing is that we have shopped there a couple of times but not much. It’s a store.”

“Is that important for you that you have that possibility? That those kinds of Swedish institutions exist?”

“No, it was a coincidence that I ended up here. It was only because we were able to rent an apartment, from Isabel’s mother’s boss. The rent was cheap and we wanted to live by the sea. So it was just a coincidence that we ended up so close to the colony.”[101]

Thanks to empty tourist apartments during wintertime, Anna and her girlfriend Isabel ended up on the Costa del Sol. On location, they started to look for any job available to them within the tourism sector. Hence, a natural source for job opportunities was the extensive Swedish infrastructure of organizations, institutions, and private enterprises. This does not entail forging collective belonging to the Swedish group the coast, but attachment to the Swedish infrastructure, through a common language and origin, is rather a means to find a livelihood and be able to live as a resident along the coast. Hence, Anna’s connection to the Swedish collective, called the Swedish colony on the Costa del Sol, is me, a researcher doing research on migrants from Sweden living on the Costa del Sol and their practices of collectivity.

Social support and voluntarism

Apart from using the Swedish infrastructure and collective in order to find a job and earn a living, there are several migrants who engage in different types of voluntary work directed toward their own group (Woube 2013). Markus is one of those who devotes his free time to the Swedish church on the Costa del Sol. He tells me:

101 "Den existerar knappt. Den finns inte alls. Du!
"Jag, ja precis. Är det så att din koppling, att jag skulle kunna vara din koppling?"
"Är det viktigt för dig att du har den möjligheten? Eller att det finns de här svenska inrättningarna?"
"Nej, alltså det var bara en tillfällighet att jag hamnade här. Det vara bara för att vi kunde hyra en lägenhet som var Isabells mammas chefs. Hon hyrde ut den billigt och vi ville bo vid havet. Så det är bara en tillfällighet att vi hamnade så pass nära kolonin.” (Interview with Anna, February 18, 2009)
“I want to do something and now it turned out in such a way that I do something for the Swedes down here. Because it just feels like I want to do something more than the business so to speak, so I guess I always will be involved on the board of the church.”

Markus has a history of political engagements in Stockholm before migration and feels that an engagement in the well-being of others will always be important to him, which is a feeling that does not change with the relocation to the Costa del Sol. Practices that were acted upon in Sweden will also be acted upon on the Costa del Sol because they are part of Markus’ daily life. His engagement is significant for him because it gives him a greater cause and structures his days since he has a lot of free time.

The location for the interview is in fact the church terrace, where Markus tells me about his engagement in the church. While we are talking several people greet him and stop to chat with Markus. His voluntary work has clearly also been beneficial for creating a new social network and a new social context, within which he can belong and be a part of. During the last interview session, Markus continues to tell me more about his voluntary engagement:

“I am with the AA in the church and then I got to know the priest and see how the church functioned.”

“Did you know that they had an AA group?”

“Yes, before we moved down and it was pure luck. Wow. It was a big advantage. And then the AA moved to the premises of the Swedish church. Then when I saw the role of the church here, oh, they do this and they do that. That’s where people in crisis come when something happens and when they are on vacation and it is the small Swedish community that we have discussed. But the Swedish social security network in the Swedish church can be there. And yes, that I liked.”

Being a member of the AA is an additional engagement and source of social network on the Costa del Sol for Markus. The group meets once a week and he also has individual meetings with a mentor once a week from the group. During the summertime, Markus steps in to organize the meetings since many of the other members go back to Sweden during the summer,
which Markus does not. Membership of the AA also led Markus to further engagement with the church when the AA meetings started to be held in the premises of the church. He met the priest and eventually the priest asked him to join the board of the church.

The Swedish church is one of the most dominant institutions of the Swedish infrastructure. It is an establishment with the intention of being an arena for social interaction, even though the general mission is to offer religious services, religious education, diaconal service, and mission in the Swedish language in accordance with the Church of Sweden (Kyrkoordning för Svenska kyrkan 2010, 2 kap. 1§, [Ordinance of the Church of Sweden 2010, 2 chap. 1§], my translation). The Swedish church addresses the entire population of Swedish citizens or residents of Swedish decent. The average and most frequent visitor to the Swedish Church is a senior citizen. According to the staff of the church, the main visitors are retired men and women aged 58–75, who live in Fuengirola during the wintertime (Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson 2012:45). They visit the daily café for coffee and cinnamon rolls, they use the library and computers, they read Swedish newspapers, they take part in concerts or lectures held at the church, in addition to attending Sunday services or celebrating festivities arranged by the church.

There are also social gatherings in the Swedish church that are directed to specific categories, such as the Tuesday afternoon children’s café, which has the aim of meeting a demand from an increasing new generation of migrants who have moved down to the southern Spanish coast from Sweden or who migrated as children and stayed faithful to the area as adults and today have children of their own. Visiting the afternoon children’s café are children from the Swedish day-care center by the Swedish school. But also children going to Spanish elementary schools, and take part in the extra Swedish lessons given by the Swedish School. They might have parents of mixed Swedish and Spanish background, have two Swedish parents or one Swedish parent and one parent of another nationality. I have never, however, experienced other nationals, or other ethnicities, than Swedes spending time with their children in the Swedish church during the children’s café. There are a limited number of Swedish citizens with other ethnicity than Swedish who live and reside on the Costa del Sol. During my fieldwork I encountered Swedes of Persian descent who claimed to make use of the Swedish establishments mainly in association with their children’s education at the Swedish school. That is, they take part in the activities for children organized by the school and the church. However, as soon as their education is completed they are said to abstain from the social activities and the celebration of Swedish traditions practiced within the Swedish establishments on location, even though they might remain residents in the area and offer services to the Swedish collective in the Swedish language.

Markus highlights the importance of the Swedish church in meeting the different needs of Swedish nationals on the Costa del Sol. According to
Markus, the church staff, and other volunteers that I have spoken to, the workload of the church staff has exceeded the nurturing of souls in a religious sense to involve, for instance, social support in individual life crises, and the development of an organization of readiness in case of a major crisis, such as a terror attack. Similar assistance in emergency situations is given in other Swedish immigrant churches to Swedish migrants worldwide: “It refers to the excluded, drunk, or psychologically ill that collapse on location after they stop taking the medicine. In a time of globalization and especially at the big tourist destinations, crises like these do not seem like totally unusual,” according to Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson (2012:46, my translation). To offer assistance and social support in all kinds of matters, as a substitute for the social support that the Swedish citizens normally receive from the welfare system in Sweden, makes the Swedish church an actor in civil society (ibid. 2012:14).

Voluntary engagement and involvement, mostly by senior migrants, is part of the daily activities of other Swedish immigrant churches around the globe (Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson 2012). The volunteers contribute unique competence in that they often are permanent residents on location or seasonal visitors that have been coming to the destination for many years: “they stood for continuity and for knowledge of the local environment and culture” (ibid. 2012:41). As volunteers the elderly migrants are seen as vital for the immigrant churches abroad, both by visiting and legitimizing the churches’ existence by their visits and daily engagements, and by their voluntary work that contributes to the daily activities and the survival of the immigrant churches worldwide (ibid. 2012:95).

The role of the Swedish church on the Costa del Sol can be related to the importance attached to the churches by Scandinavian immigrants on the American continent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and up until today. Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch (2003) writes in her dissertation American Plus about how early Swedish-Finnish immigrants found more than spiritual nourishment in the activities of the immigrant churches during their early years in the new country. Instead, the churches worked as social centers where the immigrants could meet nationals speaking the same language, get different kinds of assistance in relation to the American society, and receive news from the old country. Many immigrants, despite not having been active participants in the church in Finland, now found a new place of belonging and involvement in the immigrant churches. They were essential in enforcing feelings of security, structure and social support in a familiar ethnic realm for the newly-arrived Finnish-Swedish immigrants on the American continent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Social venues

One night at the Tuesday choir practice at the Swedish Church I had a firsthand experience of a significant component in the process of creating collective belonging on the Costa del Sol. The average members of the choir are in their fifties or above, mostly women, but there are also a handful of male members. In addition, during the spring of 2009 there happened to be a small number of women aged 25–40 in the choir. The younger women were working on a contract for one or two years for the organizations and institutions that cater to the Swedish population on the coast. Only one had moved down on a permanent basis.

The choir practice unfolds as it usually does. However, at the end of the practice one of the young women stands up and declares in a commanding voice that she wants to talk to the younger members of the choir, including me. The tone of her voice almost makes me feel guilty about having done something forbidden. Maybe my singing does not measure up? Maybe I have done something wrong? The rest of the choir members pass us to leave as we wait to approach her. Alone at last, she simply and surprisingly states that she wants to make friends and invites us for dinner!

In hindsight, this experience demonstrates a difficulty in making friends due to the enormous number of people circulating for shorter or longer periods of time in and out of the Costa del Sol area. Hence, the many social organizations and institutions can be seen as most valuable for gathering Swedish nationals and facilitating social interaction and networking in a region with a fluctuating population.

Lars is heavily engaged in one of the social organizations called Clúb Nórdico. It is a social club for senior members from the Scandinavian countries, with a majority of Swedish nationals. He tells me about the purpose of the club:

“The purpose is to help those who are members when they come down here and are new, partly with advice and such things from those who have been here a long time, and partly to create different social activities for these people and give them a social circle when they come down here.”

One daily activity of the club is to offer a café where the members can use the Internet, read Scandinavian newspapers, borrow books in Swedish, meet other retirees, and buy drinks and sandwiches. The club also offers weekly activities:

“If you take an ordinary week at the club there is: Monday. Then we have square dance. And then on Tuesday we play bridge at three o’clock. Then on Wednesdays we have different sorts of membership activities. On the one

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105 “Syftet är ju att hjälpa dom som är medlemmar när de kommer hit ner och är nya, dels med råd och annat sånt där ifrån dom som har varit här längre och dels att skapa olika sociala aktiviteter då för dom här människorna och ge dem en bekantskapskrets när de kommer hit ner.” (Interview with Lars, February 9, 2009).
hand, we have lectures, and once a month we have a monthly meeting and then the members come and in connection with that we have a lecture when someone tells a story or gives some other lecture. And then on Wednesday night we have cultural activities of different kinds. Right now we have jazz night every other Wednesday. Then on Thursdays, we have a nurse coming at one o’clock for a health hour and then the members can come to her and get their blood pressure taken, get an injection, or she can help them to understand prescriptions and other things. Then at three o’clock on Thursdays we have a painting class and on Thursday night at six o’clock there is a singalong. But one Thursday a month we have a pub evening instead and then I’m in charge of the pub evening and tell stories and we have a guessing game and an accordionist that plays and we sing along and eat. Yes, I forgot a thing that on Wednesdays we have boules and kubb too. And then on Fridays we have wine and bingo. Then it’s me who lead the bingo and people win wine. And then on Saturdays we have a party once a month. We had a party for the staff last Saturday for those who do volunteer work here. And on Sundays there is no activity.”

The organizations function as important hubs for networking and socializing, where any kind of temporary or permanent migrant can meet, similar to how social organizations are used by a mixture of dwellers within the British community on the Costa del Sol (O’Reilly 2000:105). A significant characteristic of foreign retirement migrant communities is that the members are part of a social organization, according to the sociologist Per Gustafson (2008). When approaching the Swedish collective through these centers, it does not take long until a network of relationships and affinity becomes noticeable. A lot of people clearly make use of the establishments both for scheduled activities and for social interaction during the daily cafés. Many are regulars on a first-name basis with each other. Lars tells the following

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106 Kubb is an outdoor game from the island of Gotland, Sweden.
107 “Om man tar en typisk vecka på klubben så är det: Måndag. Då har vi squaredance. […] Och sen på tisdagar då spelar vi bridge kl. 15. […] Sen på onsdagar har vi olika sorters medlemsaktiviteter. Dels har vi […] föredrag och en gång i månaden så har vi ett månadsmöte och då kommer medlemmar och i anslutning till det så har vi föredrag där någon berättar eller ett annat föredrag. Och sen på onsdagskvällarna har vi kulturaktiviteter av olika slag. […] Just nu så har vi varannan onsdag […] jazzkväll. […] Sen har vi då på torsdag så har vi klockan ett en sköterska som har en hälsotimme så då kan medlemmarna komma in till henne och få ett blodtryck taget, få en injektion eller hon kan hjälpa dem att förstå recept och annat. […] Sen klockan tre på torsdagar så har vi målarkurs […] Sen på torsdag kväll kl. 18 så är det allsång. […] Men en torsdag i månaden så har vi pubafton istället så då leder jag en pubafton och drar historier och så har vi en gissningstävling och en dragspelare som spelar och så sjunger vi allsång och åter. […] Ja, jag glömde en sak att på onsdagar så har vi boule och kubb också. […] Och sen på fredagar då så har vi vin och bingo. Då är det jag som är utropare för bingo och så vinner folk vin. […] Och sen på lördagar så har vi fest en lördag i månaden. Vi hade personalfest i lördags för dom som jobbar frivillig här då.[…] På söndagar så har vi ingen aktivitet.” (Interview with Lars, February 9, 2009).
account of the importance of living in the proximity of the Swedish establishments:

“I attach a great deal of importance to that. I had previously been to Marbella before I moved down and then I decided where I was going to live. That it was in Fuengirola and not somewhere else. An important part and an important piece in that decision was these activities because I had noticed them.”

During the next interview, Lars tells me:

“And everything can be found here in Fuengirola. That is of great significance.”

“Yes, everything is here, well, the Swedish consulate is not here but that is in Málaga, but we had that too here before, but otherwise there’s the Swedish school, there are several of the Swedish or Nordic organizations and there is a lot that is here in the area.”

Like Lars, many attribute great meaning and value to the proximity of the network of establishments that cater to migrants and have a clear ambition to be a venue for Swedish nationals specifically. There is a concentration of Swedish institutions, organizations, and private enterprises located in Fuengirola. Besides the Swedish church, there is a Scandinavian Tourist Church, a Swedish school that offers education from kindergarten to high school, using the Swedish curriculum and following the Swedish law on education. In addition, there are many private enterprises that direct their services to a Swedish or a Scandinavian population; there is a Swedish monthly magazine, a weekly newspaper in Swedish, Scandinavian radio station, grocery stores with Swedish food, restaurants serving Swedish dishes, Swedish dentists, physicians, carpenters, painters, real estate agents, and more. In recent years an increasing new generation of migrants has moved down to the coast, which has been acknowledged in the different Swedish institutions and organizations. There is a children’s café for parents and children at the Swedish church, there are youth groups at the church, and there are social gatherings for migrants of working age within the social clubs etc.

Karin tells me that she and a friend had been to a cocktail testing event with SWEA, part of an initiative to attract younger members to the associa-

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108 “Jag tillmäter nog det en hel del [betydelse]. […] Jag hade ju varit tidigare då i Marbella […] innan jag flyttade ner och då bestämde jag mig för var jag skulle bo va. Att det skulle vara just i Fuengirola och inte nån annan stans. Det var en viktig del och en viktig del i det [beslutet], det var dom här aktiviteterna för det hade jag hunnit se.” (Interview with Lars, February 23, 2009)

109 “Och så finns ju allting här va i Fuengirola. Det har ju stor betydelse med.”

"Allting? Vad är det?"

"Ja, här finns allting, ja numeras finns ju inte svenska konsulatet utan det ligger i Málaga men det hade vi också här förut men i övrigt, här finns svenska skolan, här finns flera svensk föreningar eller nordiska föreningar och det är väldigt mycket som finns just här i det här området." (Interview with Lars, April 17, 2009)
tion. SWEA stands for Swedish Women’s Educational Association, which is an association for Swedish women living outside of Sweden. Karin tells me with fascination that she would never have gone to an event with women of mixed ages in Sweden. Hence, she meant to say that she engaged in the event with other migrants on the basis of sharing migranthood, gender, and nationality, despite the age differences. Karin also explicitly states that the Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol is a vital factor in finding her place and feeling that she belongs on the coast. She tells me:

“I think for me it makes me feel a bit more at home, I think so. To know that there are others in the same situation. That there are Swedes around me, it is a security and just being able to get Swedish ingredients if you want to bake Swedish gingerbread for Christmas. For me, it means a great deal. I do think so.”

Karin puts an emphasis on living together with other Swedish permanent residents who experience a similar transnational condition. To know that there are other people who have the same cultural background and language and who are in the same situation is also to know that there are other people you share the consciousness of a transnational life with. There are others who know what it means to be affiliated to several places simultaneously. To them she can belong as they are co-living and co-creating a transnational migrant experience, in line with the diaspora definition of Vertovec and Cohen (1999; see also McLeod 2000:210).

Sofie, on the other hand, does not attribute the Swedish infrastructure any particular significance for forging belonging:

“The Swedish institutions that are down here, the church, the school, the papers, the store, they are exotic ingredients but I live very well without them. I read a Swedish paper because there are Swedish papers but if there hadn’t been any, I would have read Aftonbladet, do you understand? I don’t need the Swedish paper here because I can read the Spanish paper. I think that it is a bit exotic, a bit fun, yes, a quaint ingredient to know what kind of beds Pelle Plutt sells in Marbella because he is Swedish or why Bibbi at Swedbank in Andalucía chooses to become a Spanish citizen after 17 years in Spain. I can regard that as fun but to me it’s like reading any kind of gossip magazine.”

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110 “Jag tror att för mig så gör det nog att jag känner mig lite mer som hemma, jag tror det. Att jag vet att det finns andra i samma situation. Att det finns svenskar runt omkring mig, det är nog en trygghet och just att du kan få tag på svenska ingredienser om du vill baka svenska pepparkakor till jul. För mig så betyder det ändå en hel del. Det tycker jag.” (Interview with Karin, April 15, 2009)

111 Aftonbladet is a newspaper in Sweden.

112 Swedbank is a bank in Sweden, which has a local office on the coast.

Sofie does not need the Swedish infrastructure to feel a sense of belonging on the Costa del Sol. However, she is in need of the Swedish infrastructure in order to earn a living, which the Swedish collective can provide for her. In the account, she makes a mockery of the peculiarities of the Swedish collective that the Swedish magazines on the Costa del Sol report on. The mockery ought to be viewed in the light of the shared position as young professionals that Sofie shares with me. This is a common basis during the conversations that we have. Like many others, Sofie has unexpectedly come to migrate along the coast and during the interview she might feel a need to emphasize that her migration experiences are separated from the experiences of the migrants who are part of the lifestyle migration phenomenon that she feels shapes the Swedish collective. By pointing to the exotic, fun, and quaint components that make up a Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol, she is simultaneously positioning herself with different, serious, and profound interests in life, far from vacation, tourism, and relaxation in the sun.

Lucia celebration in the Swedish church

The Swedish infrastructure does not only shape a social network and provide professional and voluntary work for the migrants. It is also an organizer and reproducer of Swedish national traditions and festivities.

Tilde tells me that her family has always enjoyed celebrating Swedish holidays and festivities at the Swedish school, even though her children did not attend the school. I ask her to tell me what she thinks about the celebrations and she responds:

“They have been very good. For example Walpurgis Night. They have always had waffles and herring sandwiches and hot dogs and singalongs and a small bonfire, a lottery. Lucia was very festive with a Lucia procession and the consul general came from Málaga and now there’s also a Lucia procession in the church and it’s very popular. The latest Lucia festivity I brought my son’s parents-in-law-to-be and also my daughter’s were able to join and see Lucia here. It was so nice and then they have to drink mulled wine.”

Tilde’s account is expressed with a sense of pride in being part of national traditions and festivities. The family-in-law of her children can be seen as
being incorporated into the Swedish collective through participation in the
Swedish migrants’ manifestation of a tangible reproduction of the Swedish
heritage. It is a noted feature in migrant contexts in the United States to be
temporarily incorporated in a national or ethnic collective for persons with a
different nationality or ethnicity through celebrations and festivities (Klein
1988:63). In addition, one of the most common Christmas season celebra-
tions among immigrants of Swedish descent throughout the world is to cele-
brate Lucia on December 13 (cf. Österlund-Pötzsch 2003:137; Ehn and

During a week of fieldwork in December 2009 I took part in the Lucia
celebration. Traditionally the queen of lights, the Lucia, and her procession
is said to bring light and songs of light and communion to a dark and cold
Sweden in the middle of December. Appropriately, it is a dark and chilly
Sunday night when I enter the assembly area of the Swedish church on the
Costa del Sol. A strong and well-known scent of Christmas is striking by the
entrance, as glögg, spiced mulled wine, is served with gingerbread cookies
and saffron buns, all of which are popular Christmas foods in Sweden. There
are already a lot of mostly elderly people standing in groups, chatting loudly
in Swedish, and, unexpectedly for me, in Spanish. I assume the Spanish visi-
tors are married to migrants from Sweden or relatives of someone married to
migrants, rather like how Tilde has told me that she brings along her chil-
dren’s Spanish family-in-law. Remarkably many of the visitors are new fac-
es for me, but also for the company I am with, even though they are perma-
nent residents and daily involved with the Swedish population through both
the Swedish church and the Swedish school. A possible reason is the power-
ful incentive that a national tradition, such as the Lucia celebration, has for
the migrants, in itself attracting a wider Swedish population than the other
daily activities offered by the Swedish church.

The celebration starts with the entrance of Mats Björkman, the editor-in-
chief of the newspaper Sydkusten, which is published in Swedish. He places
himself in front of the altar, where an Advent candlestick holds three burning
candles. He presents the annual award “Swede of the Year,” an event the
newspaper has been in charge of since 1992. He says that the award has
grown in prestige for efforts on behalf of the Swedish colony or the integra-
tion of Swedes in Spain. It has been given to private individuals, Swedes and
Spaniards, but also to companies and associations. The year before a group
of pupils at the Swedish school was awarded for their work with the integra-
tion of different international groups on the coast. He continues by saying
that the Swede of 2009 had a dream of producing wine in Spain and for the
effort Rickard Enqvist is awarded ‘Swede of the year’. The ceremony of
“Swede of the Year” is an annual part and an additional ingredient of the
Lucia celebration in the Swedish Church. A similar award appears as part of
the celebration in an account of a celebration of “Sweden Day” on Long
Island outside New York City, with a large concentration of Swedish immigrants (Klein 1988:48).

The Lucia event continues with the community singing of a famous Swedish Christmas hymn called “Nu tändas tusen juleljus” (Now a Thousand Christmas Candles Are Lit) about the lights that illuminate a dark Christmas in the northern hemisphere, as well as the star that guided the three wise men or kings to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. The singing of the hymn creates an atmosphere of Christmas spirit and communion for me, erasing the fact that we are not at all sitting in a dark and cold Sweden waiting for a light-bearer to brighten our world, but on the Costa del Sol.

Earlier in a conversation with Sofie, she affirms this sentiment:

“Some holidays throughout the year I go to the Swedish church. I like to go to Lucia for instance and I do that, above all, those years when we don’t go to Sweden for Christmas. Because I can feel that I miss a sense of Christmas. It is sunny and it is warm and people are lying on the beach on December 13 and it feels very weird. Then I go to the Swedish church and lock myself in and watch the Lucia celebration for an hour and eat a saffron bun and then it almost feels like winter. Almost as if it is closer to Christmas.”

As Sofie indicates, by entering the Swedish church to watch and sing during the Lucia celebration, the actual location of the Costa del Sol is mentally removed in favor of the nostalgic and well-known imagery of a Christmas dressed in white snow under a dark but starlit sky in the homeland, Sweden. The imaginative transformation that occurs through our singing can be understood as a practice that highlights the transnational angle of the celebration in the most tangible way. This can be sensed and felt through an embodied participation in the festivities.

The practices that are linked to Sweden do not only emphasize the relation to the homeland, but become significant in contrast to the local society. The practices are not a conscious part of a boundary-making toward the surrounding local society. But it is indeed the difference in atmosphere when leaving the sunny Costa del Sol, with people sunbathing on the beach on December 13 to enter the familiarity of the Lucia celebration at the Swedish church that is a striking element in feeling a sense of belonging. The familiarity is brought forth by changing language, experiencing a conduct that resembles social gatherings in Sweden, in addition to attending the celebration itself with well-known elements of singing and eating specific Christ-

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mas foods. The collectivity that is shaped through these familiar features requires a counterpart in the local surrounding environment. In Sara Ahmed’s words, it “requires the proximity of ‘strangers’ within that space” (2000:100; see also Cohen 1994), if stranger here can be defined as that which is strange or that which is different from us. Hence, the collectivity of Swedes within the Swedish church emerges when contrasted to the different public space outside the glass doors of the Swedish church.

The account of Sofie’s Lucia celebration is also interesting in light of her earlier contrasting remark that she can live without the Swedish infrastructure and its activities. The ambiguous view of the Swedish collective in Sofie’s migration story can be recognized as a feature of the contradictory and variable migrant position that is often revealed in story-telling, along the lines of Anthias’s concept of translocational positionality (2002:502). Sofie suggests, accordingly, that she is not interested in the activities of the Swedish collective on location as such, but she values how they provide an ability to celebrate Swedish festivities and traditions as a channel to her origin and past life in Sweden.

Back in the service area of the church, the priest is now welcoming the Lucia and her procession. From far away we are able to hear the song of Lucia faintly at the back. Through the darkness of the assembly room the Lucia and her choir proceed closer and closer into the service area while the singing grows louder. She has real candles in a crown in her hair and her companions hold candles in their hands. The girls enter the service area and line up in front of us. Some flashes from cameras go off and the procession starts to deliver a repertoire of traditional Lucia songs. Occasionally someone reads a poem between the songs. All the songs are sung in Swedish, but as the choir sings “Silent Night” in Swedish, the second verse is sung in Spanish.
The Lucia procession on December 13 in the Swedish church on the Costa del Sol shapes collectivity by producing memories and sentiments from the past in Sweden, in addition to taking place in a dark and solemn church in contrast to the busy street life outside the glass doors of the church. Photographer: Annie Woube

As the Lucia and her procession have come to the last song and proceed out of the service area, my friends and I are very touched by the nostalgic moment. We have both seen and been active in similar Lucia arrangements before in Sweden, and the celebration is part of the cultural fabric that gives us similar associations with our country of origin, a common childhood, and the anticipation evoked by the Christmas season. Birgitta Svensson states that collective memories, such as previous Lucia celebrations, function as identification devices and shape collective belonging through rituals, symbols, and traditions. It is the connections between the personal and the collective memory that make personal experiences understandable in relation to that which is experienced collectively (2012:36; see also Löfgren 1993:218).

Even though the location of the sunny Costa del Sol, one would imagine, ought to remove any sense of authenticity, the feelings of awe and wonder are enhanced by the fact that the location of the celebration is indeed the Costa del Sol, and not Sweden. Authenticity is put on hold by the emotional need for an existential context that can be offered by a Swedish collective which is manifested through the celebration of Lucia, which in turn reinforces genuine and authentic emotions for us in the audience. The embodied sensibility of the celebration can be understood as tying us in the audience
closer together by its intensity. My friend and I are drawn into the collective practice of sharing Lucia by being affected, thus being individually connected to a greater whole, such as Swedish collectivity.

Noteworthy is the fact that the sentiments are instilled only when they meet the expectations of how a Lucia celebration ought to be carried out. For me as a researcher, I am able to draw conclusions about an interpreted meaning of how the Lucia event is bodily perceived because of my past experiences of the Lucia celebration. I am able to sense through the body the anticipation of sitting in the dark, as I have done many times before seeing the Lucia proceed with lights into the pitch-black venue of the Swedish church, listen to and recognize the carols and put them in association with how a Christmas ought to sound, smell and taste the gingerbread cookies, the saffron buns, and the mulled wine. I am there with body and senses that are attuned to what is happening and is expected to take place in front of my eyes. Therefore, I am able to link my perceptual world with my reflections about it.

Expectations are also central to how the migrants will perceive and value the celebration in the Swedish church. One of the church staff members tells me that she was formerly part of organizing the Lucia celebration, and had then proposed modified versions of the traditional Lucia songs. She was trying to modernize the Lucia celebration. This very creative adjustment of a deep-rooted tradition was met with harsh criticism by elderly members of the Swedish population since her order of things did not fit into the conventional way of making traditions, in other words, her choice did not meet the expectations and memories of how a Lucia celebration ought to be carried out according to the elderly members. Similarly, Blehr found that repetitiveness was crucial for understanding one’s participation in the national celebration of May 17, National Day in Norway. She writes that the traditions ought to be a series of repetitions of movement, practices, and of strong impressions. There are strong memories and significance attached to the repetitive feature of making traditions (2000:72). In this sense, the Lucia celebration becomes a traditional event since the actual procession is supposed to recur in an imaginary exact form, deeply rooted in past experience.

The Lucia celebration can be understood as a powerful element to take part in and be orientated toward. When the orientation toward something is determined on a collective basis, “a ‘we’ emerges as an effect of a shared direction toward an object” (Ahmed 2006:117). When many direct their attention toward a certain object, a collective force is in the making (ibid. 2006:119). Such collective force is strengthened by collective sentiments that can be connected to experiencing restorative nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia can be understood as being shaped when the Swedish collective meet and restore elements of a longed-for past through directing the attention toward the Lucia celebration. Svetlana Boym (2001:44) affirms: “Distance is compensated by intimate experience and the availability of a desired object.
Displacement is cured by a return home, preferably a collective one.” The Lucia celebration in the Swedish church shapes collectivity through the collective force of repetitive, communal, and shared orientation of experiencing the festivity as a ritualized Swedish past through the embodied sentiments of restorative nostalgia.

Christmas season on the Costa del Sol

The Christmas season is a tradition that the migrants from Sweden celebrate but they individually use different and separate ways of practicing the tradition. For instance, starting on the first Sunday in December, some decorate their homes with electrical Advent candle holders and stars in the windows of the houses. For a visitor, the illuminated ornaments in the windows are a surprising sign of Swedish residents.

Many migrants decorate their homes with electric Christmas candle holders, which give a sign of Swedish residents for pedestrians on the street. Photographer: Annie Woube
Moreover, many put an emphasis on being able to have access to Swedish traditional Christmas food as a way of infusing a Christmas spirit related to the Swedish origin. The food becomes a tangible symbol of Swedish nationality, which the migrants are able to purchase through the IKEA store in Málaga or through the Nordic grocery stores that sell traditional food from the Nordic countries. When I visit the Nordic store, Casa Nórdica, just a few days before Christmas, the staff is doing an inventory of the Christmas supplies that need to be sent for. The demand for Christmas food is high and the stockpile of the mulled wine (glögg), the packages of gingerbread, the saffron buns, the Christmas ham, boxes of chocolates, and candle holders, among other things, are piled up on display on the floor in the center of the store. The demand for food can be seen as a need to manifest the Swedish origin and Swedish traditions.

The number of years of residency on the coast in connection with the kind of food the migrants claim to eat for Christmas can also be seen as an indicator of collective belonging. For instance, one temporary resident told me about choosing a Spanish Serrano ham instead of the traditional Swedish Christmas ham on the Christmas smorgasbord. Temporary residents might feel that they need to stress their integration in the new country through an emphasis on choosing Spanish food rather than choosing Swedish traditional Christmas food when they talk to me, a researcher interested in transnational lives. The choice of Christmas food can consequently be seen as a sign of the fact that many temporary dwellers are surrounded by and acknowledge the notion of an integration demand from Europe in general and Sweden in particular when living in a foreign country, as discussed by Ágren (2006:16). Swedish food can be understood as a symbolizing a lack of integration in this respect for the temporary dwellers.

This stands in contrast to several of the interviewees, who have had a thorough opportunity to explain their engagement with the local society, and openly and honestly dare to tell me about their Christmas celebration with many of the traditional Swedish meals as symbols of their Swedish origin. They seem to uphold a secure and lasting position as transnational permanent residents who are not in conflict with a national manifestation of their Swedish origin through food (cf. Petridou 2001).

Such is the case with Tilde, who has lived on the Costa del Sol since 1961. Since her children have Spanish spouses, her Christmas celebration is a bricolage of both Swedish and Spanish cultural elements. She explains:

“When we have been at my Spanish in-laws’ house I have always brought something Swedish. I can’t have a Christmas Eve without lox and herring, for instance, and meatballs. Even though they have theirs with calamares and seafood and such things. It is a mix.”

“So you bring it with you?” I ask Tilde.
“Yes, I always want the Swedish food to be there too and I think I’m the one who introduced Christmas Eve to them because before that they only celebrated the Epiphany.”

The Christmas celebration has been modified to suit the transnational family contexts the interviewees live in. The Epiphany on January 6, El Día de los Reyes (Spanish for The Day of the Kings) in recognition of how the three wise men came to worship the baby Jesus in his crib in Bethlehem, is a more significant religious holiday for the Spanish population than Christmas Eve. Therefore, many interviewees call attention to the fact that Christmas Eve naturally may include a Swedish celebration. According to the migration stories, this explicitly signifies eating traditional Swedish Christmas dishes, such as Christmas ham with mustard, Jansson’s Temptation (a potato casserole with herring), gingerbread cookies etc.

Eva, a resident in Spain of 26 years, highlights the fact that there are different religious traditions affecting the Christmas season in transnational families. The Swedes are normally Lutheran Protestants, whereas the Spaniards are Roman Catholics, which influences the different aspects of Christmas that are brought into light and to what extent a transnational hybridity of traditions is reinforced. In the case of Eva, she explains how this is practiced in her family:

“I am from a Protestant background, my husband is from a Muslim background and we live in a Catholic country. Religion at our house, it’s stories that we laugh about and tell each other at the dinner table and such, but we are not religious so we view Christmas as a way to socialize and spend time together.”

For many families, a diverse set of cultural traits, together with connections over national boundaries, requires creative solutions in order to celebrate Christmas. It is done in accordance with a nuclear family tradition, rather than valuing Christmas as a religious festivity. This is done, on the one hand, through a bricolage of the celebration content, as in the case of Tilde, and on the other, by switching the time and place for the celebration. For instance, by disconnecting Christmas from the month of December, Lars, manages to fulfill his desire to celebrate Christmas with his grandchil-
dren. Living in a summer cottage in Sweden during the summer, he has re-

vived the Christmas celebration with his grandchildren in July, instead of December:

“We have Christmas food and then we have a Santa Claus and everything like that. And I tell Molly that Santa Claus is coming soon. She is the eldest of the grandchildren. She is five. So the year before last year when we started she said ‘No, Grandpa, Santa Claus doesn’t come in the summer.’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘at Grandpa’s Santa Claus comes in the summer.’ So then they get presents in the middle of the summer in July.”

The Christmas celebration in July in Lars’ family puts an emphasis on to-

getherness and spending time with the family. This has become a contempo-

rary core value with reference to Christmas in the westernized countries

(Miller 1993b). The actual religious components in relation to the liturgical

year are removed in favor of gift-giving, a manifestation of Swedishness

through Christmas food and being together as a family. Other interviewees

have solved the transnational dilemma of celebrating Christmas with the

immediate family by traveling every other year to Sweden, and spending

every other year in Spain. The Christmas traditions and their intensity differ

from location to location, but the goal of spending a family Christmas re-

mains intact.

A Christmas tree in the home of Sofie, which is part of the cultural reproduction of a Swedish Christmas celebration. Photographer: Annie Woube

The Christmas season is celebrated through an orientation toward a continuous practice of cultural (re)production of a celebration known from the time when the migrants were living in Sweden. This is done individually as a nuclear family based holiday, but also as a festival through the many institutions and organizations connoted with the Swedish population on the coast, such as the Lucia celebration in the Swedish church. The reproduction of national traditions tends to be modified and practiced through different creative adjustments in the transnational settings where the celebration takes place (Ronström 1992:214; Österlund-Pötzsch 2003:137), such as modifying the songs in the Lucia performance in the Swedish church to fit the local context or adjusting a traditional family gathering to the different cultural backgrounds of the members of the family.

As a collective festival, Christmas connects permanent, temporary, seasonal, and short-term dwellers “in a devotion to the local community as pseudo-family” (Miller 1993a:23). The celebration creates a space for collective belonging for everyone affiliated with a Swedish heritage through common memories, smells, tastes, and experience evoked through the celebration. Whatever the length and degree of engagement and commitment to the Swedish collective, the Christmas celebration manifests and enhances a Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol through individual practices, such as displaying illuminated stars in windows, or a joint celebration of Lucia. The Swedish institutions can be understood as national arenas in their orientation toward practices that stem from how Christmas is celebrated in Sweden, while being orientated around the collective of Swedes.

Swedish female collective

Tilde and I discuss how the Swedish infrastructure is significant in her life when she tells me the following:

“When we moved down in the sixties all the Swedish clubs and activities didn’t exist but we worked and had a travel agency and did radio programs and then I didn’t have time for all that but later when SWEA came, I can’t say if it was ten, twelve, fifteen years ago, I got involved in SWEA, even though I was working and had to tear myself away to join the lunches. And now that I am a pensioner I think it’s very nice to come here to the church and to the Swedish Pensioner Organization and the things they organize and so on.”

And she adds later on:

“I used to be in SWEA for many years and I was on their board and organized trips and there I felt a great sense of community when we meet and,
yes, everybody speaks Swedish and, yes, I felt very Swedish then when I was with them.”119

At the time of our meetings, Tilde has a special assignment for the local division of the global organization SWEA, the Swedish Women’s Educational Association. She is organizing a hat parade with lunch in Fuengirola:

“Everyone that comes for lunch is supposed to wear a hat. And then we meet in the church square at half past one and then we walk together to the restaurant not far from there. In previous years I even called Fuengirola TV. And they came to photograph us and film us and then we talked about Sweden and that we like 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.”

She ends by saying:
“Maybe you want to come?”120

I accept the invitation, which gives me the ability to participate and experience the community of Swedes that Tilde has told me is a significant component in her engagement in SWEA. One weekday in May I join thirty or forty Swedish ladies in their fifties or older in hats for lunch. We meet in the church square of Fuengirola city center, surrounded by people sitting under the pergola looking at us inquisitively. There is no Fuengirola TV present but an editor-in-chief of one of the local Swedish newspapers is taking pictures of the many inventive creations on the heads of the ladies.

119 “När vi flyttade ner på 60-talet då fanns inte [alls alla svenska klubbar och aktiviteter] utan då jobbade ju vi va och hade resebyrå och vi gjorde radioprogram och då hade jag ju inte tid med nåt sånt men sen när SWEA kom hit, jag kan inte säga om det var 10, 12, 15 år sedan, då gick jag med i SWEA, om än jag jobbade jag slet mig loss så att jag kunde gå på luncherna och så va. Och nu när jag är pensionär så tycker jag det är jättetrevligt att gå hit [till kyrkan] och vara med SPF och saker dom ordnar och så där. […] Förut var jag ju med i SWEA i många år och var med i deras styrelse och ordnade resor och där kände jag ju mycket gemensamhet när man träffas och ja, alla pratar svenska och ja, man känner sig mycket svensk då när man är med dom va.” (Interview with Tilde, March 24, 2009)

120 “Var och en som kommer till lunch ska ha en hatt på sig. Och då träffas vi på kyrkogården halv två och så går vi i samlad trupp till restaurangen som inte ligger så långt ifrån. Något tidigare är så har jag till och med ringt till Fuengirola TV också. Så dom har kommit och fotograferat och filmat oss och då har vi pratat om Sverige att i Sverige har man gärna hattar på sig på våren och att det skulle vara trevligt att göra det även här. Så går vi på den här lunchen med hattarna på och så får vi ju dela ut priser i kategorierna vackraste hatten, roligaste hatten och det bästa helhetsintrycket. […] Kanske vill du komma också? (Interview with Tilde, April 14, 2009)
A funny hat of a SWEA member that materializes her transnational belonging during the hat parade within the local SWEA division in Fuengirola. Photographer: Annie Woube

It is a merry atmosphere when we march to the restaurant through streets of 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 with white buildings with balconies surrounding it at all angles. Similar squares can be found in many towns of Spain. The restaurant has prepared our tables, placed like a horseshoe in the middle of the square under big, white parasols 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. At my end of the table the women have lived in the region for ten or twenty years, and we speak of how they miss Sweden, but how cheap airfares have 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 look at our hats to decide which one is the most beautiful, the most amusing, and which outfit and hat give the best impression.

The hat parade can be understood as a public ritual (cf. Klein 1995), during which *communitas* is created, which is essentially built on a spirit of
collectivity and togetherness emerging during a ritual (Turner 1969). The concept of communitas can be used here to describe how the Swedish national fabric is strengthened through the ritualization of a hat parade, which shapes a sense of belonging to a collective of other female migrants. Barbro Klein writes that “the ritual de-individualizes people and they are portrayed more than ever as a collective” (1995:16, my translation). It is also an event that manifests connections and inter-linkage between Swedish women abroad in a global context. Similar hat parades are repeatedly organized within the SWEA organization throughout the world. Repetitiveness is a prominent feature in the theorization of rituals (ibid.:15). As members of SWEA, the participants in the hat parade are part of an exclusive, privileged and affluent migration that makes a transnational elite in the context of global migrants. According to the sociologist Catrin Lundström, who has studied the migrant position of Swedish women and SWEA members in the United States, Singapore and on the Costa del Sol, migration abroad for Swedish women is often characterized by upward mobility in terms of social class and lifestyle (Lundström 2010a, see also 2014; 2010b). Participation in the hat parade highlights the SWEA identity of exclusiveness. The hat, expressing ideals of the upper social class and bourgeois elegance, becomes the prop of the ritual, a materialization of belonging to a transnational female collective of Swedish migrants abroad.

The hat parade can also be seen as a display event, as the folklorist Roger Abrahams has suggested (1981), since it portrays and displays the Swedish woman on the Costa del Sol. To be visible and on display in public spaces is an important feature of the dramatized ritual (Klein 1995:17). During the hat parade, it is the Swedish female body that is on display; looked at both by a cheering audience during the march to the restaurant, and by the waiters inspecting the women in order to decide the winners of the hat competition. Above all, the female body on display can be understood as part of a heterosexual matrix, where gender is constructed in opposition to one another with specific traits and features, according to the gender scholar Judith Butler (1999 [1990]:42f). One such feature of gender construction is the objectification of the female body by the male gaze. The march can be seen as a playful practice of the above noted gender system in line with the concept of courtliness, coined by the ethnologist Karin S. Lindelöf (2006). Lindelöf writes: “By courtliness I mean practices where men are courteous and attentive and women are graceful and let themselves be attended to—that is to say, a rather strict separation of what is the role of women and men in the relation between the sexes” (2006:37, my translation).

The Swedish female body in Spain has a specific history in the idea of La Sueca, a cultural icon of the 1960’s and 1970’s portrayed as a liberated, (over-)sexual, blond Swedish female in bikini with a deep desire for a Latin lover during her short vacation. The notion of a sexualized Swedish femininity in Spain during the charter tourism boom of the 1960’s and 1970’s coin-
cided with the portrayal of the Swedish woman in movies like Federico Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* from 1960 with the Swedish actress Anita Ekberg and Vilgot Sjöman’s *Jag är nyfiken—gul* from 1967. Catrin Lundström discusses similar notions of contemporary Swedish women living in the United States, possessing “embodied capital such as beauty and blondness [causing] Swedish femininity [to become associated] with positively racified stereotypes” (2010a:32, *my translation*, see also Lundström 2014). According to Lundström, the notions are historically situated and gender-specific. La Sueca can thus be understood as a sticky icon that has remained associated with this specific context since the 1960’s and 1970’s. The participants in the hat parade can be seen as being connected to the exotization of the icon, despite their elderly bodies.

When Tilde invites me to join the lunch she tells me, as noted in the account: “In previous years I even called Fuengirola TV. And they came to photograph us and film us and then we talked about Sweden and that we like to wear a hat in the spring in Sweden and that it would be nice to wear one here as well.” At the moment of conversation I find her construction of Swedishness a bit peculiar since my experience is that Swedish women living in Sweden do not wear a hat in springtime. But I figure that Tilde migrated in the early 1960’s and maybe she is referring to her experience of living in Sweden as a young adult. However, with the cultural icon of La Sueca in mind and the imagery associated with the Swedish women as liberated and sexual, through the organization of a hat parade a counter-image of the Swedish women is produced. Within the SWEA context, the Swedish woman is presented as virtuous, and modest with style and elegance. The ritual of the hat parade also presents a paradox, in that some of these modest and elegant Swedish women in global elite positions are wearing rather humorous and entertaining creations on their heads. The women are both manifesting an exclusive collective of bourgeois migrant women, and making a mockery out of such elite position. Klein affirms that a ritual simultaneously establishes and confirms social structures, and uses them for play, fun, and mockery during the event (1995:19).

**Arenas for speaking Swedish**

The Swedish infrastructure and its arenas are viewed by many as valuable and important for offering an ability to speak Swedish. Karin tells me the significance she attaches to speaking Swedish at her workplace:

“The language is never a barrier or an obstacle between us as colleagues. And we sort of know when we are making jokes and when it is serious. It
makes it easier to have the language as a common denominator. I think that’s nice.”  

Lena speaks in similar terms about working in Swedish:

“If we start with work then it’s a little bit less stress emotionally for me to work in Swedish even if I work in other languages because in a way I don’t need to show as much of what I know in my own language. When I work in a completely Spanish labor market I have to fight from below and show that I know as much as them and that I can do as good or better than them because I know their language as well as they do. I don’t need to do that in Swedish. I have to fight too but not at the same level. So to work with Swedes or in relation to Swedes gives me more value for me personally but also in my work. I can feel more useful, more available.”

Karin and Lena’s account can be understood when viewing language as culturally meaningful as an embodied space, within which Lena can feel at home and feel that she belongs, because she knows how to articulate herself and make herself understood in an unrestrained way. Mastering a language can be compared to carrying a portable home that can be activated and put into use when and wherever a person is located (Gunew 2003:41ff). To work or make friends with other Swedes in Swedish, to sing Swedish songs in the children’s café or at singalongs at clubs, to be able to read books and newspapers in Swedish, and to be able to speak to someone in the mother tongue can be viewed as practices that create collective belonging due the joint understanding of the space that is created by speaking the same language. This is similar to the significance ascribed to the English language within the British lifestyle migrant community on the Costa del Sol (O’Reilly 2000:91).

The Swedish infrastructure can be understood as a Swedish sphere that enables such a space where the Swedish language is the dominant language (cf. Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson 2012:64). This is given additional significance in light of the amount of migrants that do not speak the Spanish language, according to the interviewees. This is confirmed by research concerning retirement migration to destinations along the Mediterranean (see Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Jeppsson Grassman and Taghizadeh Larsson 2012:99). The lack of Spanish language skills results in a strength-

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121 “Språket blir aldrig någon barriär eller något hinder så mellan oss som arbetskollegor. Och man vet lite grann när man skämtar […] och när det är allvar […]. Det underlättar att ha språket som gemensam nämnare. Det tycker jag är skönt.” (Interview with Karin, March 12, 2009)

ened Swedish collective through social interaction mainly within the Swedish group, or with other Scandinavians where the migrants can speak Swedish. But as the accounts of Karin and Lena indicate, the embodied space that is created by speaking the same language is also valuable and significant for the permanent residents, who do indeed speak Spanish and are incorporated in different ways in the local society.

Conclusion

I have presented different practices and activities within the Swedish infrastructure that shape collective belonging even though the Swedish migrant group is a diverse group as regards categories of age, gender, social class, reason for dwelling, patterns of dwelling, and so on. Karen O’Reilly discusses divisions in the British group on the Costa del Sol, referring to the British lifestyle migration phenomenon as a trend and not an identifiable group of individuals (2000:68). She refers to the trend as being in constant change and development, yet undetermined and unpredictable in nature, stating: “The ethnic community that outsiders see is a community made up of both permanent and temporary migrants; of Full and Returning residents; of Seasonal and Peripatetic Visitors; and even of tourists” (2000:104). The Swedish collective of migrants on the Costa del Sol is similar to the British, in that it is also constituted by a changeable, flexible, and inconsistent collectivity of the listed categories. Even though the Swedish migrant group can be characterized as volatile and incoherent, it is indeed the practices of work toward one’s own group, of socializing within the group, and of celebrating traditions that are put into play within the presented contexts that shape collectivity by providing stability and continuity, through the shared and repetitive orientation toward practices that originate from Sweden. The joint venture of directing attention toward shared practices connoted with Swedish everyday life creates a collective force that is lasting, stable, and lends a sense of continuity to the Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol.

The persistence of the Swedish collective force is the reason for the Swedish presence on the Costa del Sol, which can be dated back to the 1960’s and is likely to continue, despite the diversity and circulation of Swedish dwellers. As such, the practices can be understood as part of the community formation process (cf. Butler 2001:193f). Noteworthy is the importance of certain practices, such as professional or voluntary work, in that they constitute a condition for the continuity and survival of the Swedish collectivity. In the community formation process, the role of the permanent migrants can be viewed as similar to the elite or middle-class migrants of traditional diasporas, who figure as leading characters in the establishment and mobilizations of diasporic formations (see Wahlbeck and Ohlsson 2007).
I have shown how the interviewees are part of different and diverse groups and social gatherings, which shape collective belonging through practices that are linked to Sweden as the shared country of origin. Despite being separate practices, they overlap in being part of the joint formulation of a Swedish collective since the practices acted upon are directed toward a shared orientation to Sweden that is put into play together with other Swedish nationals. As touched upon initially in the present chapter, an orientation around a collective of Swedish migrants outside of Sweden based on a shared origin with shared collective experiences of lifestyle migration, and with shared collective consciousness of being in a migrant position, evokes practices that can be perceived as diasporic. How can the practices presented in this chapter be understood as diasporic?

According to the migration scholars Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (1999, see also Vertovec 1997), there are three essential meanings of diaspora. They view diaspora as a *social forum*, as a *type of consciousness*, and as a *cultural production*, which are all definitions that stand in relation to how collective belonging is shaped among Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol. First, along the lines of the definition of viewing diaspora as a *social forum*, the practices presented in the chapter are acted upon in social gatherings or in order to facilitate social interaction among Swedes in Swedish arenas. As such, the practices that are put into use have specific ties to both historical and geographical origins in Sweden in that they are shaped out of voluntary migration, they constitute collective belonging, they contain notions of everyday life in Sweden, and they involve continuous ties and frequent trips to Sweden. In addition, the Swedish migrant group can be viewed as on the sideline of the local society since they are not fully incorporated socially, politically, financially, or culturally. But there are no political or financial aspirations vis-à-vis the local society in mobilizing a collective based on origin. Nor is it a collective formation in relation to residential segregation or being a geographically defined community, which is a common feature for other marginalized migrant groups living in diaspora.

Secondly, through the different practices that have been described, a *type of consciousness* lie inherent in conducting the practices described. There is a dimension of being aware of sharing a migrant position outside of the country of origin and having such a migrant position as the starting point of orientation. This can be exemplified with social organizations that offer social activities in Swedish with other migrants who share the same position, age, social class, and interest (and/or gender, such as within SWEA). This is part of the mirroring process of basing the migrant experience and understanding of one locality in relation to the locality left behind. Once more, what appears significant and valuable in the new home is a reflection of and stands in connection with what is left in the old home (cf. Povrzanović Frykman 2001b:14; see also Ahmed 2006:8). Hence, the consciousness referred to implies having an awareness of a plurilocal frame of reference that
stems from a similar and shared experience of creating a home outside of one’s original home, i.e. being transnational and experiencing estrangement to a certain degree in relation to both the local society and the country of origin, Sweden. Sara Ahmed states: “Migration can be understood as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home. The word ‘estrangement’ has the same roots as the word ‘strange’. And yet, it suggests something quite different. It indicates a process of transition, a movement from one register to another” (2000:92). Such a transition is related to the argumentation that migrants experience a state of being in the world that is related to viewing migrancy as a form of consciousness, or a mode of existence (McLeod 2000:210). Specific practices that stem from Swedish contexts and are activated on the Costa del Sol are the result of having an awareness of living in a specific and shared experience of migrancy, in a migrant position, and through a transnational condition. The collectivity of Swedes on the Costa del Sol can be viewed as shaped out of these circumstances.

Third, the practices presented in this chapter are all based on a cultural (re)production of Swedish traditions and everyday practices in the setting of the Costa del Sol. I have shown collective and individual manifestations and reproductions that are part of creating belonging on a collective basis. To reproduce means to modify, adapt and adjust the practices, when for instance celebrating traditions or acting upon everyday practices from a Swedish point of view in order to suit the local setting: for instance, to add the award “Swede of the Year” to the Lucia celebration or to have a working schedule with a siesta during the afternoon, which means that the business is closed between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., even though the services are in the Swedish language and directed to the Swedish migrant community, which originally is assumed to have other habits of organizing the day.

In sum, the practices that are put into action while creating collective belonging can be viewed as diasporic since they are orientated toward practices that originate from Sweden from a collective migrant position. As such, the practices are vehicles of social interaction within the Swedish population on the Costa del Sol, instrumental in maintaining an awareness and consciousness of experiencing a migrant position, and reproducing Swedish cultural traditions, traits, and features on location. The diasporic practices are put into play regardless of a volatile, flexible, and diverse population of Swedish dwellers, which make the Swedish collective lasting, stable, and reliable, while forging collective belonging.
7. Finding One’s Place

In 2003 the television program “Cold Facts” broadcast a documentary in Sweden about the Swedish population living in Fuengirola. After a commercial break the presenter gave the following introduction:

“Welcome back to Cold Facts, which tonight is visiting Sweden’s most southern located town, Fuengirola in Spain. More and more Swedish families with children are moving to Spanish Costa del Sol. They have established a miniature Sweden in the sun and the Spanish authorities have started to complain about integration problems. Because the Swedish immigrant youth lack an adequate knowledge of the language, they easily get into fights in the streets.”123

The documentary is part of the negative and stereotyped media portrayal of the Swedes on the Costa del Sol that has been in the making in Sweden. The specific presentation above suggests that the Swedish population is a group of families with children that live together in isolation and segregation in separated communities. These are supposed to be made up of and centered around specific stereotyped Swedish features, such as the Swedish-speaking arenas of the Swedish church, the Swedish school, the grocery store selling Swedish food in the Swedish language, restaurants owned by Swedes, Swedish radio shows aired locally, and so on. The unison depiction is a portrayal of Swedes who live prolonged vacation lives with other Swedes with a dominant orientation around Swedish habits, customs, and norms. This is assumed to have gotten out of hand and resulted in alcoholism, segregation, isolation, and conflicts with the local society. In pointing to the lack of integration within the Swedish group on the Costa del Sol, the group is compared to a general discourse on the incorporation of migrant groups in Sweden, while trying to imply that Swedes ought not to demand integration out

of others when they cannot achieve it themselves on the Costa del Sol (see Faktum 2014, PI Dokumentär 2003\footnote{http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=909&artikel=3773645, September 4, 2013})

In contrast to such a general, encompassing and stereotyped image of the Swedes on the Costa del Sol, the objective of the thesis adds complexity and contradiction by offering an analysis of how belonging is created through daily practices and through migration stories. The study is based on understanding the group of Swedes as migrants living in a diasporic setting, but with the shared privilege of inhabiting a superior position in global ethnic hierarchies. In addition, they share the possibility to return to the old country. Through such an understanding, I have presented a diverse group of interviewees of different ages, with different reasons for dwelling along the coast, with different migrant experiences, with different approaches to living a transnational migrant life in-between the old and the new country, and with different degrees and range of incorporation in the local society. And yet, they all contribute and take part daily in the Swedish infrastructure of organizations, institutions, private enterprises, and events with Swedish connotations. This is similar to practices within other migrant groups worldwide. Migrant research shows that a common means to cope with the social migrant reality in the new country is to establish a diasporic infrastructure (Castles 2000:199).

Simultaneously, the story-telling of the interviewees reveals practices of positioning and identification that emerge in relation to a social world and global power structures through social encounters in different localities. This provides an understanding of a privileged migrant group of the middle class that inhabits a superior position in the global power structure and makes up a complex scheme of flexibility and collectivity on the Costa del Sol. In addition, the migrant group has developed and established an historical collective Swedish presence that surpasses residential tourism (O’Reilly 2009, 2007), which is both a research concept and an emic term used by Spanish authorities to define Northern European dwellers who reside in tourist destinations. Nor can the group be limited to retirement migration (King et al. 2000; Rodriguez et al. 1998), since it is a migrant group of all ages. In addition, it is not as fluid and unstable as suggested in the term affluence mobility (Schriewer and Encinas Berg 2007), since the migrants do establish attachments and loyalties to several localities and contexts in the region that are developed and maintained over time. With a focus on belonging, the thesis expands the understanding of lifestyle migration (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014; Benson and O’Reilly 2009a, 2009b), while reaching beyond a cultural understanding of the late modern quest for enhanced quality of life. My contribution has been to show that belonging is created within one’s own migrant groups, in relation to other groups on location and in relation to con-
texts and settings in the country of origin, while being under the influence of
social categories of gender, social class, ethnicity, nationality, and age. 
Through ethnographical methods I have shown that belonging in-between
several different localities is created in order to make everyday life function
for the migrants. There are scholars who discuss lifestyle migrants on the
Costa del Sol in terms of liminality and marginalization (Lundström 2014;
O’Reilly 2000). In contrast, I would not consider the Swedish migrants limi-
nal or marginalized. Instead, they create belonging and degrees of incorpora-
tion in a multitude of locations and contexts that transcend national borders,
in order to cope with everyday life as migrants in a foreign country.

Transnational belonging

Belonging is created in several ways. Telling the individual migration story
is made beneficial through reflection on and narration of one’s experiences
in relation to other people, different places, different events, separate trajec-
tories and past times, i.e. by bringing an understanding of one’s place and
position in a social world through both the individual biography and the
collective history. It is evident that several interviewees depict successful
migration stories, in which they portray themselves as active and earnest
subjects. The story-telling also reveals a possible life trajectory of the mod-
ern middle class. As has been shown, such story-telling is not only light-
hearted but carries accounts of ambivalence and moral issues of leaving
loved ones behind.

The thesis has also demonstrated how transnational lives are lived and
given meaning on an everyday basis. This reveals how the migrants ground
themselves and create feelings of belonging to multiple places and social
contexts simultaneously. It is a complex, ambiguous but possible process.
Strict national contexts are negotiated and become significant in a variety of
ways depending on how Swedishness and Spanishness are defined. National
contexts are also challenged in line with how social categories appear and
are understood in everyday situations and social relations. The result is be-
longing that is forged into new social and cultural collectives across borders.

Let us exemplify with the interviewee Tilde. She migrated to the Costa
del Sol in the early 1960’s with her late husband. Together they started a
variety of private enterprises, some of them with Spanish personnel, directed
first and foremost toward the Swedish or international population on the
Costa del Sol, i.e. tourists, second-home owners, temporary residents, and
permanent residents. Their different companies have been part of the Swe-
dish infrastructure on the Costa del Sol from the initial setup in the 1960’s.
Hence, Tilde can be positioned as one of the pioneers in establishing the
Swedish presence along the coast. Right from the start she took Spanish
classes, learned the language and had daily encounters with neighbors, local
business associates, and other local inhabitants that became part of her everyday life. The couple had two children, who grew up on the Costa del Sol with a local nanny, and went to local schools. The children learned Swedish at home, and have followed the tracks of their parents in that they too have a business that offers service in Swedish to a Swedish (or Scandinavian) population along the coast. The children are married to Spanish partners, and the grandchildren go to local schools and do not speak Swedish. Tilde spends a lot of time with her children, her grandchildren, and the family-in-law of her children. She is orientated around local issues and news through reading Spanish newspapers, watching Spanish television news, following Spanish “telenovelas,” i.e. dramatized television series or soap operas, and reading Spanish gossip magazines etc. In addition, she is very committed and engaged in many of the different organizations with Swedish affiliation that are directed to Swedish seniors. On one of the occasions when I meet her she shows me her diary, which is fully booked with different social activities and arrangements within the Swedish diasporic collective. She has been to Sweden sporadically in recent years, and expresses a wish to visit her brother in the south of Sweden.

As she presents it, Tilde’s everyday life consists of continuous activities in different contexts and settings at different localities on the Costa del Sol, strong engagement within the Swedish diasporic collective, and an express pride in being of Swedish origin and having roots in Sweden. These are not separate loyalties but make up a joint venture of simultaneity (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), i.e. attachments and loyalties to different and separate contexts and localities can be and are indeed activated simultaneously. The different attachments are underpinned and strengthened by one another through the process of simultaneity. I suggest that this joint venture can be understood as a reorientation toward forging a transnational belonging, which is based on having a plurilocal frame of reference.

It is noteworthy that an aspiration to belong to local contexts and settings can never signify full incorporation into the new local society. The impossibility and inability to achieve full participation and belonging to the new local society is a condition that goes with any migrant position. Hence, a reorientation around transnational belonging on the Costa del Sol is an oxymoron. Full participation and belonging is not within reach in the new country to which the migrants have migrated. Nor are the migrants able to remain fully incorporated in the old country they left behind or to return to the country of origin, since inhabiting a migrant position changes one’s self-understanding and one’s place and position in the world. The migrant can never belong to the country of origin on the terms that were understood and experienced before migration. Instead, reorientation around transnational belonging means a constant process of maintaining loyalties and engagements that overlap national belonging. This in turn makes self-presentation and self-understanding appear ever-changing and under constant revision.
The transnational position is an in-between position but complete in itself and can be seen as a state of being in the world, which the migrants are not only in need of but can fully identify with. As a form of consciousness, or a mode of existence that can be shared with others (McLeod 2000:210; see also Chambers 1994), the transnational condition can be understood as working to compensate for strict national affiliations and incorporations.

Plurilocal contexts

A focus on the migrants’ everyday life brings an understanding that belonging is not linked to strict national contexts per se, but to different localities and contexts that sometimes are understood and defined as Spanish and Swedish, but at times are not, yet together they create a plurilocal frame of reference. To create a sense of belonging to Spain is defined as having acquired enough Spanish language skills and knowledge about the locality of Costa del Sol to be able to function and take care of oneself, but also to be adaptable to the norms and values of the local society. It also means being able to follow a livelihood similar to the local neighbors and to show that the migrants are similar to them. It can be viewed as living an everyday life with locally bound family, work, or a commitment to the local community that is expressed through staying put as registered residents with the stability and permanence of a home of their own. In addition, it can be seen as being orientated around Spanish news and issues in order to be able to take part in public national discussions. Another definition is to be part of a local social network, such as a group of friends, colleagues, or a family-in-law and the ability to enjoy local family traditions. Belonging to Spain can also be narrowed down to inhabiting the locality of Costa del Sol as a place for vacation and relaxation in such a way that the locality is not just familiar, but appears invisible and transparent as a home to belong to.

In turn, Sweden and Swedishness is presented as a notion of familiar and well-known practices and conduct that stem from Sweden, i.e. they describe their conduct as Swedish or something they have learnt in Sweden, such as making sure one is on time, or paying the rent well in advance. Moreover, Sweden can be seen as meaningful in the encompassing orientation and interest in news and events happening in the country. Sweden is daily present in the mindset of the migrants, which is articulated in the migration stories.

In addition, to express belonging to national Swedish contexts needs to be understood as expressed belonging in relation to different localities and contexts in Sweden: the childhood house or hometown, the town where the migrant lived before migration, the nuclear family, the summer cottage where the migrant spends the summers, images of lakes in lush, green scenery with red-and-white summer cottages in rural landscapes, the town where the parents of the interviewees live, or a specific region or province. Sweden is also
constructed as an advanced and modern country that has a superior position in the global power order. In addition, Sweden is defined as the welfare state apparatus. The different mediated news channels in the Swedish language that are aired and broadcast both from Sweden and from the Costa del Sol, are additionally defined as Swedish by the migrants. Other localities that are marked as Swedish are all the locally placed different social organizations, institutions, and private enterprises that offer work opportunities and direct their engagement and service toward the Swedish population on the Costa del Sol, such as the Swedish church, restaurants owned by Swedes or serving Swedish food, social clubs or companies owned by Swedes with services in Swedish. Such diasporic localities are described as islands of Swedishness in the midst of the local environment. Also, the physical homes of the interviewees have been described as Swedish homes in that they are decorated with objects that represent national Swedish affiliation, emotional value, recognition, family history, memories of the past, in addition to the material objects that add a sense of worth through their sheer presence or their function. This generates familiarity that stem from life led in Sweden.

A Swedish diasporic collective

The migrants individually manifest their transnational belonging in a number of ways. This is linked to the fact that they constitute a divided and diverse group of Swedish nationals that reside permanently on the Costa del Sol. Despite their internal differences, they all engage in and are committed to the Swedish diasporic collective, which plays a significant role in their lives. They come together and base their collective belonging on practices and traditions that are familiar from both everyday life and festivities in Sweden. The Swedish infrastructure on location may be used daily in a variety of ways and for different purposes, such as being able to work while living in Spain or for the sake of understanding one another in the mother tongue in everyday situations. More than anything, the Swedish presence on location becomes valuable as Swedish arenas, around which to orientate one’s daily life. Some of the interviewees relate to the experience of lost or diminishing connections and relations with Sweden as the territorial country of origin. In its place, the Swedish diasporic collective and its arenas become a compensatory source of national belonging, where the national affiliation to Sweden can be proliferated daily and infused with practices, expressions, and traditions of a Swedish past and present.

Within the Swedish diasporic collective the past is used in a dual sense, adhering to a shared national origin both through daily practices and through traditions enacted during festivities. In addition, the past is made meaningful for the migrants in that many of them share a past of being pioneer migrants on location since the 1960’s. As such, many of the senior interviewees relate
to shared experiences of founding the different supportive institutions that make up the Swedish infrastructure, which is part of the formulation of a history of the Swedish diasporic collective on the Costa del Sol. A shared past is a common resource for shaping collectiveness and cultural identification based on nationality, according to Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1996:6). In addition Hylland Eriksen confirms that past experiences linked to a specific place often comes to signify a natural right of admission and belonging (ibid. 1996:75). This is apparent for the senior migrants, who regard their attachment and belonging to the diasporic collective in relation to their length of residency. Their engagement and supporting activities within the Swedish infrastructure both currently shape the diasporic collective in the present time and have shaped the same since the establishment phase in the 1960’s. The senior migrants’ past achievements have signified stability and continuity for the Swedish diasporic presence on the Costa del Sol, which is an area with much circulation of people.

The diasporic collectivity is made in arenas like the Swedish church or the Swedish school. They are significant for being based on a common origin. They can also be seen as important for representing an extension of present-day Sweden in that they function as an extension of the welfare state. That is to say, when the migrants have found themselves in financial, social or existential trouble, the church or the school has stepped in as a substitute for social services offered by the welfare state. In addition, the arenas have also come to function as an intermediary link between the migrants and the local society. For instance, when there have been situations of crime involving Swedish citizens on the coast, the priest has worked alongside the police.

It is worth noting that present-day Sweden does only appear as an extension of the welfare state apparatus in the arenas noted above. The common everyday practices, expressions, and traditions of today’s multicultural Sweden are not being shaped within the arenas of the Swedish diasporic collective. Hence, the arenas can be understood as ethnic Swedish arenas for specific practices performed by and acted upon by a specific group of Swedes, i.e. Swedes that have inherited their cultural identity through blood linage, which excludes Swedish nationals of other ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.

**Mobility and communication**

In order to maintain plurilocal social relations across borders, the interviewees depict movement, travel, and communication as vital for leading a transnational life. As presented in the analysis of the individual migration stories, continuous mobility and travel has become a style of life and an orientation in life for many of the migrants. This is emphasized by the stated routes of geographical places that lead to the present-day Costa del Sol in the migra-
tion stories. Narratives of spatial experiences can be understood as anchoring points that are meaningful in that they make up an outlined trajectory for the interviewees. The practice of moving between Sweden and Spain (or other localities of importance in the migrants’ lives) is a prominent feature of leading transnational lives. Some have developed an annual pattern of spending half the year on the Costa del Sol, and half the year in Sweden. Others make many shorter trips throughout the year to different locations in the old country. Many present a structure of alternating between spending Christmas or the summer vacation in Sweden. There are those who visit Sweden sporadically. The travels are understood as practices that reconnect and strengthen the ties to the origins of the migrants through re-experiencing familiar and well-known places, people and events from the past, such as childhood places in the summertime. Travels to Sweden not only bridge spatial distance. They can also highlight temporal distance by evoking feelings of unfamiliarity when different localities and everyday conditions have changed and appear different in the eyes of the migrant. The time elapsed from the initial departure to the Costa del Sol may result in estrangement from the country of origin.

In order to stay connected and remain implicated in localities and contexts in the old country, it is common to habitually use diverse forms of communication. New and old technologies are put into use daily and habitually to get insight into what is happening in the old country, which is pivotal during visits to Sweden. To be able to show involvement in news, issues, and events that concern the social networks in the homeland means being able to participate in daily conversation and reconnect with a sphere of hominess and familiarity. It is an important means to remain included in social networks in Sweden.

Between familiarity and difference

The present thesis shows that creating transnational belonging means simultaneously living an everyday life with a plurilocal frame of reference. This leads to the daily recognition of familiarity and difference in the proximity on location and from a distance in the view of the old home. The strange and different can be understood as desirable when deciding to migrate in order to change one’s lifestyle and enhance the quality of life. The migration is often viewed as an adventure and is contrasted with the dull and busy everyday routine before migration. It is the familiarity of everyday life in the home environment that is seen as a starting point for directing attention toward the Costa del Sol.

Once on location, the transnational position is articulated in relation to other groups and one’s own collective group on the Costa del Sol. Social encounters in different localities of importance to the migrant appear both
familiar and different, regardless of whether they occur close by or from a distant perspective. After migration, there is also an aspiration to reach and inhabit familiar local practices and sensations, acknowledged as bound to the locality of the Costa del Sol. Indeed, many come to acquire such local sensations in order to regard Costa del Sol as a home that they can belong to. Simultaneously, over time the old home is for some interviewees turned into something distant, different, and strange that evokes ambivalence, longing, and homesickness despite continuous and annual visits and communication. The Swedish diasporic collective is in turn orientated around the familiarity in practices from the everyday life led before migration, with the proximity of different practices of the locality of the Costa del Sol as a counterpart. The Swedish diasporic collective is continuously shaped by existing in connection with these differences.

Transnational belonging lies inherent in the correlation and interaction of daily experiencing a shifting movement between familiarity and difference, proximity and distance. This creates a transnational position with a plurilocal frame of reference. It is marked by simultaneity, shaped by past and recurrent travels and communication, and connected to the Swedish diasporic collective that can function as a compensatory source of national affiliation for the Swedish migrants on the Costa del Sol.
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Appendix: Interviewees

Name: Andreas  
*Year of birth:* 1964  
*Years in Spain:* 7 years  
*Occupation:* Working for one of the Swedish institutions  
*Civil status:* Unmarried

Name: Anna  
*Year of birth:* 1987  
*Years in Spain:* 2.5 years  
*Occupation:* Clerk  
*Civil status:* Partner

Name: Eva  
*Year of birth:* 1958  
*Years in Spain:* 26 years  
*Occupation:* Working for one of the Swedish institutions  
*Civil status:* Married

Name: Fredrik  
*Year of birth:* 1985  
*Years in Spain:* 2 years  
*Occupation:* Waiter  
*Civil status:* Single

Name: Gunnar  
*Year of birth:* 1932  
*Years in Spain:* 5 years  
*Occupation:* Retiree, previously working on a contract for one of the Swedish institutions  
*Civil status:* Married to Sonja

Name: Karin  
*Year of birth:* 1981  
*Years in Spain:* 5 years  
*Occupation:* Receptionist  
*Civil status:* Partner
Name: Lars  
Year of birth: 1943  
Years in Spain: 6.5 years  
Occupation: Retiree, former officer  
Civil status: Partner

Name: Lena  
Year of birth: 1975  
Years in Spain: 8 years  
Occupation: Receptionist  
Civil status: Partner

Name: Majken  
Year of birth: 1959  
Years in Spain: 38.5 years  
Occupation: Owns a shop  
Civil status: Married

Name: Margareta  
Year of birth: 1930  
Years in Spain: 33 years  
Occupation: Retiree, formerly a Spanish language teacher, travel guide, flight attendant  
Civil status: Divorced

Name: Markus  
Year of birth: 1962  
Years in Spain: 3 years  
Occupation: Entrepreneur  
Civil status: Married

Name: Simon  
Year of birth: 1926  
Years in Spain: 40 years  
Occupation: Retiree, earlier entrepreneur  
Civil status: Widower

Name: Sofie  
Year of birth: 1975  
Years in Spain: 9 years  
Occupation: Administrative personnel  
Civil status: Partner
Name: Sonja
Year of birth: 1932
Years in Spain: 5 years
Occupation: Retiree, previously working on a contract for one of the Swedish institutions
Civil status: Married to Gunnar

Name: Tilde
Year of birth: 1934
Years in Spain: 48 years
Occupation: Retiree, earlier entrepreneur
Civil status: Widow