

Unpacking the unequal privileges within transnational lifestyle relocation: Swedish lifestyle migrants' advantages and challenges in the Spanish housing market

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Funding information

Svenska Forskningsrådet Formas; Swedish Research Council on Sustainability, Grant/Award Number: 2019-01432

Abstract

Lifestyle relocation is a highly privileged form of mobility. However, the extent of such privilege needs to be addressed theoretically and empirically in countries such as Spain where lifestyle migration is rising. This article dissects the extent of such privilege by analyzing the economic advantages and challenges that different social groups have when acquiring properties for lifestyle reasons. By lifestyle reasons we understand here a mix of economic, leisure and life change motivations underlying lifestyle migrants' property acquisition.

To explore the unequal advantages and challenges faced by lifestyle migrants, we explore the variegated economic strategies conducted by Swedish lifestyle migrants in the property markets in the coastal areas of Majorca, Costa del Sol and Costa Blanca in Spain. Such trajectories that illustrate the extent of the privilege of lifestyle migrants are analyzed by (i) dissecting the privileged position of lifestyle migrants in what Wright labelled as the 'relations of production'; by (ii) exploring how the position in the relations of production intersect with other social structures and particularly age, gender and civil status; and by (iii) categorizing the trajectories of Swedish lifestyle migrants in the Spanish housing market according to three main positions of privilege: less advantaged, advantaged and super advantaged.

KEYWORDS

lifestyle migration, privilege, relations of production, Swedish homeowners

1 | INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle migration has upsurged in the last decades across the globe (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009), transforming housing markets as it unfolds (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Hayes & Zaban, 2020). Scholarship assumes—quite rightly—that lifestyle migration occurs because there is an economic-rooted *privilege* of lifestyle migrants vis-à-vis local populations (Benson, 2014; Hayes, 2018; Hayes & Zaban, 2020). Lifestyle

migrants take advantage of the asymmetrical social relations derived from a global division of labour which situates them economically above other social groups (Hayes, 2018). However, such asymmetrical social relations also exist amongst lifestyle migrants themselves, as the social composition of lifestyle migrants is highly heterogeneous (Huete & Mantecón, 2011; Molina Caminero & McGarrigle, 2023).

To fully grasp the nature and the extent of lifestyle migrants' privilege when operating in third countries' housing markets, the social

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differences amongst lifestyle migrants need to be scrutinized. The two key questions that this article aims to answer are the following. First, what are the social differences amongst Swedish lifestyle migrants in Spain? Second, how do these social differences shape the position of lifestyle migrants in Spanish housing markets?

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, this article explores the economic strategies conducted by Swedish lifestyle migrants to buy properties in Spain and in what ways such strategies are shaped by class, gender, age and civil status. Specifically, the article addresses the advantages and challenges faced by lifestyle migrants when acquiring a property; the economic strategies used, and the financial agents involved. Such empirical exploration is relevant conceptually in two following ways: first, it illustrates that the asymmetries amongst lifestyle migrants and between lifestyle migrants and residents are the result of the asymmetrical position of individuals in the relations of production. That is, the social differences amongst lifestyle migrants replicates Wright's (1980) class-based view that puts the position of the individual in the relations of production as the key factor shaping its social position. Second, and as Benson (2014, 13) suggested, the relative privilege of lifestyle migrants is fractured along a range of possible axes, including class, ethnicity and race. Together with class, we found gender, age and civil status to be main factors that determine the economic advantage of lifestyle migration.

Lifestyle migrants have been defined as 'relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that, for various reasons, signify a better quality of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, 609). Lifestyle mobility encompasses different phenomena such as digital nomadism (Mancinelli, 2020) or amenity migration (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011). The aforementioned labels refer to similar- and sometimes overlapping-forms of leisure-related mobility. Even if we acknowledge the differences and similarities between these forms of leisure mobility (some individuals engaging in leisure-related property acquisition fully relocate to the new destination whereas others not), we consider here all individuals who carry out such forms of leisure-oriented mobility as lifestyle migrants.

The article proceeds as follows. The first conceptual section discusses how the notion of privilege is used when addressing lifestyle relocation. As there are relevant social differences between lifestyle migrants, it is claimed that privilege cannot be taken for granted in lifestyle mobility. It therefore argued that one key aspect that remains understudied is the class differentiation within lifestyle relocation, the intersection of class differences with other social structures and the impacts of such differences on lifestyle-led transformations in the mechanisms to acquire housing. Section two discusses the methodological approach used in the article, dissecting how the respondents were approached and selected, and the main issues addressed in the semistructured interviews. The third section introduces the phenomenon of Swedish lifestyle migration in Spain by comparing the current tendencies in the Spanish and Swedish housing market and the main trends regarding Swedish citizens' transactions in the Spanish property markets. The fourth section explores

how prices, regulations, interest rates and taxation regimes constitute advantages and constraints for Swedish lifestyle migrants as they acquire a property in Spain. Furthermore, we establish three main categories of lifestyle migrants according to their position in the relations of production: less advantaged, advantaged and super advantaged migrants; and discuss the ways the aforementioned factors shape their trajectories in the Spanish housing market. We conclude by arguing that there is a high mobility within the social positions of lifestyle migrants and the ways by which housing is portrayed by lifestyle migrants (use value and/or exchange value) ultimately depend on the position of such individuals in the relations of production.

2 | UNPACKING PRIVILEGE IN LIFESTYLE MIGRATION: INTERSECTING ASYMMETRIES

2.1 | Privileges and asymmetries in lifestyle migration

Lifestyle-rooted push to acquire a second home amongst population in the Global North' and specifically amongst Swedish middle and working classes has occurred since at least the early 20th century (Aldskogius, 1967). If, in the early 20th century, lifestyle relocation occurred at a national scale, transnational lifestyle mobility blossomed in the postwar period hand by hand with the eruption of mass tourism (e.g., Coppock, 1977; Gaviria, 1974). Even if lifestyle relocation had been addressed through second homes scholarship for decades (Aldskogius, 1967; Coppock, 1977; Gaviria, 1974), the concept of lifestyle migration was firstly used in the early 2000s in migration studies (Benson, 2014; Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). Lifestyle migration has therefore been defined as 'the relocation of people within the developed world searching for a better way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, 608). The very fact that transnational mobility is carried out for lifestyle purposes denotes -and not for economic reason or to escape conflicts-, according to Benson (2014), a *privilege*.

Lifestyle migration scholarship mainly focuses on how lifestyle migrants' privileged position shapes their motivations and experiences: the quest for better climate, better life, cultural authenticity, seeking a change and/or an improvement in the personal life, amongst other aspects (Benson, 2014; Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). For geographers, lifestyle mobility has become a key phenomenon to grasp the complex relations between tourism and transnational forms of gentrification (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020; López-Gay et al., 2021; Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019). Lifestyle mobility is portrayed as the continuation of previous touristic experiences (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015), and the extent to which lifestyle migrants are interested in living -or not- in the same neighbourhoods as tourists has been widely discussed (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020). Either through its interaction with tourism development or on its own right, lifestyle mobility is considered to be the tenet of 'transnational' forms of

gentrification and/or displacement (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Hayes, 2018; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020; Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2020). Geographers have thus shifted the analytical focus from the individual motivations to carry out lifestyle mobility to the wider social conflicts triggered by lifestyle relocation (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2020). It has thus been argued that lifestyle mobility crystallized in home acquisition is only possible due to the asymmetrical differences between transnational homebuyers on the one hand and residents on the other (Hayes & Zaban, 2020; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020; Cocola-Gant & López-Gay, 2020). Hayes (2018, 12) argues that 'the historically higher incomes accrued to higher latitudes of the global division of labour' shape the ability of lifestyle migrants to invest in housing markets from 'lower latitudes'. From a political economy perspective, such asymmetrical relations in salaries and purchasing power are what constitute the privilege of lifestyle migrants vis-à-vis residents in the housing markets from the so-called 'lower latitudes'. Indeed, the accession of Sweden and Spain to the EU reinforced the respective positions of the Swedish and Spanish workforce in the global relations of production as a highly qualified workforce broadly specialized in producing high value commodities and services (in the Swedish case), and a low-waged workforce oriented to providing tourism and leisure services -in the Spanish case- (Charnock et al., 2014; Lundahl, 2007).

2.2 | Intersecting differences amongst lifestyle migrants and its impacts on housing markets' transformation

Lifestyle migrants' privilege is, as Benson (2014) has pointed out, not absolute, but *relative*. In fact, some of the lifestyle migrants had enormous asymmetries in terms of purchasing power amongst themselves and hardly had any privilege vis-à-vis local populations. In other words, asymmetries not only exist between lifestyle migrants and residents, but there are also important social differences between lifestyle migrants (as well as within residents!). However, the asymmetries amongst lifestyle migrants are as relevant as the asymmetries between lifestyle migrants and residents to understand the shifts triggered by the former in housing markets.

From a theoretical point of view, the inequalities amongst lifestyle migrants can be grasped through Wright's (1980) theorization of class. Wright (1980) defined class as shaped by the individual and social groups position 'within the social relations of exploitation'—using Wright's (1980, 150) words-. As in the case of other social groups, the asymmetries amongst lifestyle migrants are thus the result of the unequal position of such individuals in the relations of production. As our interviews showed us, the type of house acquired, the neighbourhood where they land, the financial strategies used, and the privilege vis-à-vis locals is very different, for instance, between a married Swedish male CEO in his late fifties and a single freelance Swedish woman in her mid-thirties. Wright's (1980) approach is therefore key to unveiling the social differences between lifestyle migrants.

Equally relevant, the asymmetry embedded in lifestyle relocation is not only generated by class divergences, but by the intersection of class with other structuring social factors, as Crenshaw (2017) masterfully explained. In this regard, the social differences amongst lifestyle migrants are not only shaped by class asymmetries, but also by variations in gender, age and even civil status, as the next sections will illustrate. To put it in another way: the social categorization following gender, age and civil status trigger, as McDowell et al. (2007) have argued, a segmentation in the job market, which denotes different positions in the relations of production, which in turn shape the asymmetrical relations amongst lifestyle migrants, and between lifestyle migrants and local populations. As Fauser (2020, 3) has pointed out, the ways by which lifestyle relocation is carried out 'reflects the hierarchical categorizations of class, race, gender, age and (not least) citizenship, and of space'.

Such social differences amongst lifestyle migrants also shape and are shaped by the variegated financial resources and strategies used to acquire properties, and the diverse ways by which housing is mobilized for its use value and its exchange value. In this regard, scholarship focusing on wealthy elites landing in global cities has highlighted the purchase strategies carried out by very wealthy individuals (Fernandez et al., 2016; Rogers & Koh, 2017). According to Fernandez et al. (2016, 2446), the dwellings acquired by super wealthy individuals' function primarily 'as a 'store of value' of which the exchange value is expected to remain stable at the least and appreciate significantly at best'. But as Rogers and Koh (2017) have argued, there is a need to go beyond wealthy individuals and to relate the different cohorts involved in home acquisition with different strategies to acquire properties and different ways of extracting rents from the acquired properties. Not only highly wealthy individuals are engaged in financialized strategies to acquire housing, but also, other social groups that are not in such a well-off position such as middle-class lifestyle migrants are also engaged in such strategies. Even if amongst lifestyle migrants, the uses of housing have the common denominator of being used mainly for lifestyle/leisure purposes (Cocola-Gant & Lopez-Gay, 2020; Hayes & Zaban, 2020), this social group often combines this use with other strategies such as a safe deposit box and/or as a way to store wealth (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Kadi et al., 2020). Depending on the social group where the lifestyle migrant belongs, properties are acquired for their use-value, or both by the use and exchange value.

3 | APPROACHING SOCIAL DIFFERENCES IN LIFESTYLE MOBILITY: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND DATA COLLECTION

To explore the differences in the social composition of Swedish lifestyle migrants operating in the Spanish housing market, we carried out 30 semistructured interviews between July 2022 and December 2022 to Swedish nationals who acquired a property or rented a property for more than 6 months. We mainly interviewed Swedish

nationals who acquired a property or rented in towns in Costa del Sol (Málaga province), whereas some of our interviewees acquired or rented properties in Costa Blanca (Alicante province), and Majorca (Illes Balears province). These are the provinces which have officially more Swedish people living both in relative numbers and in absolute numbers (INE, 2023). Thus, we assume that Swedish lifestyle mobility is particularly intense in the case studies we selected.

The interviewees were contacted initially through social media groups of Swedish people living in Spain, and we selected most of the individuals considering the wider diversity as possible in terms of age, gender and what we perceived as social status. We asked those already interviewed to refer to new potential interviewees, recruiting thus some of our interviewees via 'snowball' sampling. The ages of our interviewees ranged from 40 to 76; 14 of the individuals identified as women, 14 identified as men and we interviewed two heterosexual couples, with both the male and female responding indistinctly to our questions (see Supporting Information: Annex). We prepared an interview guide which covered four main topics: the social background of the interviewees, the motivations to carry out lifestyle mobility, their strategies to acquire housing properties and how they managed job careers and lifestyle mobility.

For this article we have mainly used the answers about their housing acquisition strategies. We asked how they choose where to buy (or rent), how did they fund the acquisition, and the financial and personal reasons which made possible for them to acquire properties in Spain. We also asked them to give us details about the mortgage deal with their bank: we were interested in issues such as the pros and cons of getting a new mortgage versus enlarging an existing mortgage, to what extent the property price was a constraint for them, and the personal and economic use that they make from the properties. The goal of these mostly descriptive questions was to grasp the differences in the financial strategies used to acquire properties amongst Swedish homebuyers. The interviews were transcribed and uploaded to a common online folder, and then we analyzed the main responses. From these responses we could identify three big groups: ones who did not need to require of mortgages loans to acquire properties; others that resorted to mortgage loans to acquire properties; and the last group that even if they wanted to, they could not get access to banks' mortgages and had to resort to familiar lending. Once we classified our interviewees according to the aforementioned criteria, we realized that these groups were quite different in terms of the gender, age and civil status, as the next empirical section illustrates.

4 | SWEDISH LIFESTYLE MOBILITY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH THE SPANISH HOUSING MARKET

4.1 | Unequal weight of Swedish buyers in the Spanish housing market: A geographical introduction

Swedish lifestyle migration to coastal Spain blossomed at the same time as mass tourism irrupted in the 1950s and 1960s (Gavanas, 2017). From the 1980s onwards, the accession of Spain

to the EU further facilitated the process of lifestyle relocation from Western Europeans including those in and out of the EU (Huete & Mantecón, 2009). Contrary to most of the 20th century when most lifestyle migrants were in fact pensioners (e.g., Bolzman et al., 2006; O'Reilly, 2000), the social profiles of Swedish lifestyle migrants are nowadays quite diverse: 75% of Swedish citizens engaged in lifestyle mobility are between 25 and 64 years old, and only 22% of population are above 65 years old and therefore qualify as pensioners (Svenskar & Världen, 2022, 10).

As of 2022, the provinces of Málaga (where Costa del Sol is located), Alicante (where Costa Blanca is) and the Balearic Islands (where Majorca and Palma are located) are the only ones in Spain where international buyers (which overwhelmingly correspond to lifestyle migrants) acquired more than 1/3 of the total dwellings traded (Registadores de España, 2022). In Andalucía (the region where Málaga is) Swedes are the second largest international group—after British—to acquire more dwellings; in Comunidad Valenciana (region where Alicante is located) Swedes are the third international group to acquire more houses after German and British (Registadores de España, 2022). Finally, Swedes come as the fourth largest international buyers after Germans, British and French that acquire properties in the Balearic archipelago, with an average that has decreased from 6% in 2014–2015 to 4% in 2020–2021 (Registadores de España, 2022). Swedish authorities estimate the Swedes living in Spain to be 104,000, with Spain being the country in Europe where more Swedes relocate and the second in the world after the US (Svenskar & Världen, 2022).

4.2 | Changing prices of the dwellings acquired by Swedes in Spain and in Sweden

The housing market in Sweden has historically been more expensive than the Spanish one. Such a difference peaked in 2016, a year when the average price in €/sq.m in Sweden doubled the price of housing in Spain (Consejo General del Notariado, 2022; SCB, 2022). However, 2018 was a turning point: it was the year when the acquisition of housing by Swedes peaked in Spain. It was also the year when housing transaction prices in Spain surpassed average housing transaction prices in Sweden; and the year when the average price paid by Swedes in Spain surpassed the average price paid by Swedes for acquiring a home in Sweden (see Figure 1).

Since 2019, housing prices in Sweden have surpassed the average housing prices in Spain, and the average price of the properties acquired by Swedes in Spain is more expensive than the average property acquired by Swedes in Sweden. Not surprisingly, the number of houses acquired by Swedish citizens have decreased, and most of those lifestyle migrants that we interviewed who acquired a property after 2019 perceive sharper constraints in the Spanish housing market. More important, the fact that properties in Spain are on average more expensive than properties in Sweden have triggered a significant reliance of Swedish homebuyers on credit in Spain. In fact, Swedish buyers in Spain were granted in 2021 an

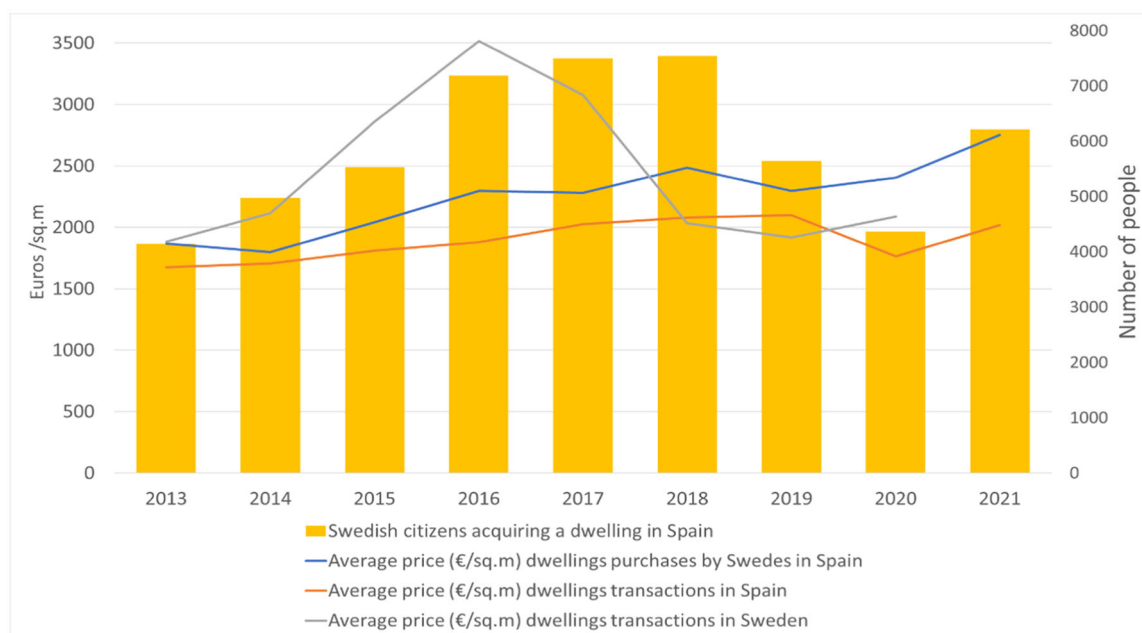


FIGURE 1 Average housing prices in Sweden, Spain, of properties acquired by Swedes in Spain and estimation of the number of Swedes acquiring properties in Spain. Source: own elaboration and estimations from SCB (2022), Consejo General del Notariado (2022) and Registradores de España (2022).

average €353,484 loan, well above the average loans of German buyers in Spain (€331,865), Dutch buyers (€245,747), British (€208,038), French (€206,995) and Spaniards (€145,287) (INE, 2022; Registradores de España, 2022, 9). More than two thirds of the Swedish lifestyle migrants that we interviewed told us that more than 50% of the value of their property acquired in Spain had been paid through mortgage loans. Swedes' capacity to access the credit market illustrates the strength and weaknesses of the advantage that Swedish lifestyle migrants have in the Spanish housing market: unlike an increasing number of Spaniards, most of our Swedish interviewees were able to access to credit markets. At the same time, most of our interviewees became indebted to accomplishing their lifestyle goals.

5 | EMBODYING THE PRIVILEGE? VARIEGATED TRAJECTORIES OF SWEDISH LIFESTYLE MIGRANTS IN THE HOUSING MARKETS OF COSTA BLANCA, COSTA DEL SOL AND MAJORCA

5.1 | Advantages and constraints encountered by Swedish lifestyle migrants in the Spanish housing market

The conditions under which Swedish lifestyle migrants' gain access to mortgage loans, together with the national differences between housing prices, interest rates, exchange rates and taxation regulations in Spain and Sweden are key structural factors that strengthen or

constrain the privileged position of Swedish lifestyle migrants in the Spanish housing market.

There are key differences amongst lifestyle migrants in how they perceive the difference in *housing prices* between Sweden and Spain. Some lifestyle migrants we interviewed perceive that the former gap in prices between Swedish and Spanish housing markets either gave them a strong advantage in the Spanish housing market before 2018–2019 or that the closing of the price gap hampered their advantage in the Spanish housing market after 2018–2019. One woman in her fifties working for a medical company that acquired a property before 2018 told us: '[Spain was] Much cheaper. Today, it is starting to close in. We paid 1.8 million SEK for our apartment. And now it is valued at 4.2 so it was a good investment' (interviewee 2). However, such a feeling of having conducted a good investment does not exist in a family that acquired a property in Fuengirola in 2019 and commute between Fuengirola and Halmstad. They told us that there is not a significant difference regarding prices: 'The price is almost the same [In Spain and in Sweden]' (interview 24). The impact of price is however, less felt in those lifestyle migrants with a higher income and a more privileged position in the relations of production in Sweden. For them, the difference or not of prices between the Spanish and Swedish housing market is not as relevant, and essentially, their relative advantage is not endangered by fluctuations in the housing prices of Spanish markets.

The different positionality of several types of lifestyle migrants regarding prices and the revaluation of the Spanish housing market has had two important outcomes. On the one hand, all available reports and our own interviews point out that the purchasing power of Swedish homebuyers is increasing, presumably as since 2019 only

those Swedes with high purchasing power can easily afford to acquire a property in Spain (Almoguera, 2022). On the other hand, as housing prices have increased, some of the favourite coastal spots for lifestyle migrants such as Majorca or Marbella are perceived to be too expensive for most of the interviewees. The average price of a housing transaction in Palma surpassed in 2018 the average price of housing prices in Sweden and the average price paid by Swedes in acquiring properties in Spain (Consejo General del Notariado, 2022; Registradores de España, 2022; SCB, 2022). In this regard, several of our interviewees who have recently considered acquiring a property in Majorca have not done so due to the unaffordable prices: 'We have friends in Majorca as well and we were interested in going there initially. But the prices were quite obnoxious in Majorca, compared to the mainland' (interviewee 2). Similar constraints were recorded in some of the spots in Costa del Sol. For instance, a lifestyle migrant that acquired a property in 2019 told us that he chose to acquire a property in Benalmadena and not in Marbella (a notoriously exclusive city in Costa del Sol) due to price constraints: 'We have been around Marbella and the apartment we have here would be twice as much in Marbella' (interviewee 14). The position of lifestyle migrants in the housing market is sometimes constrained by prices, and such constraint is shaped by the position of such lifestyle migrants in the relations of production.

The price situation intersects, in the case of Majorca and particularly Palma, with the relatively strict *regulations regarding short-term rentals*. Short-term rentals are perceived by a minority of our interviewees (those with less income and therefore in less privileged positions in the relations of production) as an effective way to pay off mortgage loans, especially in Majorca. As a lady from Gothenburg who relocated to Majorca told us, 'It was very good because you do not earn that much money, so we could rent out our property in Majorca while we were in Sweden so yeah, it is a bit of a shame that they removed the possibility' (interview 21). However, most of our interviewees, who have a more privileged position in the relations of production than the Gothenburg lady, simply do not care at all about short-term regulations: they want their Spanish property in Spain just for leisure, and do not need to resort to short-term letting to pay off their mortgages (in case that they used a mortgage to pay off their homes).

The social differences between lifestyle migrants are blurred when dealing with the *tax system*. Interviewees see the Swedish taxation system as a system that they trust and as a more advantageous one for them. As one Swedish widow that lives between Fuengirola and Öland told us: 'I only pay tax in Sweden. I do not exist in Spain besides that I am registered in the *padrón*, just so the municipality can include me in their census. I pay property tax and garbage in Spain, but I pay income tax in Sweden, even if I only earn my pension'. Moreover, the Swedish taxation regime represents a great advantage for Swedish lifestyle migrants, as they deduct taxes from renovating their acquired properties in Spain. Indeed, there is a deduction in taxes paid by homeowners in those Swedish properties that are renovated—the *rotavdrag*—(Svenska Dagbladet, 2022). However, the average Swedish lifestyle migrant and specially the highly

advantaged groups perceive constraints and/or disadvantages in the taxation system in Spain that lifestyle migrants from less advantaged social background do not perceive. As a wealthy lifestyle migrant told us, 'At the moment we think that is, too much taxation in Spain. But I do not really know if that is true. I have not investigated it properly, but they have taxes on wealth, heritage, gifts and so on. Things that could be bad for us' (interviewee 3).

Shifts in prices, taxation regimes or short-term letting regulations impact on the trajectories of Swedish lifestyle migrants in the Spanish housing market. But the extent of the privileged position -or not- of lifestyle migrants in the relations of production is carefully measured by banks as they negotiate lending a mortgage loan to Swedish nationals so that the latter can acquire a property in Spain. Banks attitudes towards lifestyle migrants requesting a mortgage loan is yet another key element that denotes the economic position of these lifestyle migrants. Not all the interviewees are granted a loan in Spain and/or in Sweden, and some of them must turn to their parents and/or use their parents' assets as a guarantee to be able to access a mortgage. The way lifestyle migrants negotiate their way to mortgage loans denotes that the advantage in the relations of production is to a substantial extent mediated by age, gender and family status, as the next lines will illustrate.

5.2 | Intersecting (dis)advantages: When the position in the relations of production intersects with gender, age and civil status

Lifestyle migrants are far from a homogeneous category, yet there have been too few attempts to distinguish between different categories of lifestyle migrants. Huete and Mantecón (2009, 167) made a distinction between permanent residents who fully relocated to Spain, temporary residents who live in a home that they do not own (usually it is rented or owned by relatives or friends), and second-home owners; that is, international citizens who own a home but are not registered in the Spanish population register. Molina Caminero & McGarrigle (2023) examined the differences amongst lifestyle migrants in London based on their motivations and their own reflections. Molina Caminero & McGarrigle (2023) and Huete and Mantecón's (2009) reflections based on motivations, mobility and forms of housing tenancy needs to be complemented with Wright's (1980) approach insofar as the social differences amongst lifestyle migrants is ultimately shaped by individuals' positions within the relations of production. Specifically, banks' individualized scrutiny of Swedish clients' profile when the latter request a mortgage loan to acquire a dwelling in Spain is illustrative of the latter' privileged position -or not- in the relations of production.

Following our interviewees' experience with banks to acquire mortgage loans for lifestyle purposes, we have identified three main groups of Swedish lifestyle migrants. First, those lifestyle migrants having difficulties in access mortgages, who are young, living in most cases full time in Spain and working for Swedish companies in Spain and/or Spanish companies. The relative economic privileges of this

group vis-à-vis locals are scarce. The second and by far the most common interviewees profiles are the ones who did not mention any difficulties in getting a mortgage loan, who are usually above 50 years old who spend some months in Sweden and some in Spain. They are either employees in Sweden or retired individuals who earn a pension from the Swedish system. The individuals belonging to this group have a stronger relative advantage compared to the local population. A third, small group is formed by those Swedish employers who did not need of a mortgage loan to acquire properties in Spain. These individuals already came from very advantageous positions within the Swedish social ladder, and therefore have a very strong position when operating in the Spanish housing market.

5.3 | Less-privileged lifestyle migrants: Intersecting (dis)advantages

The first group that we identified are those lifestyle migrants with less economic advantages vis-à-vis average Spanish citizens. These are individuals that aim to start a new professional and personal life in Spain and getting a house is the necessary first step towards fulfilling this agenda. In some cases, the first step is not to buy a house in Spain, but to rent it. This is for instance the case of a Swedish lady in her late thirties who moved to the Foners neighbourhood in Palma. She first lived in a rented dwelling, only to acquire a property after 1 year. In her case, she lives full time in Palma and works remotely as an online psychologist for a Swedish company. Some of the lifestyle migrants with a less privileged position live full time in Spain and work for Swedish companies operating in Spain, but the working conditions and salaries of these individuals are closer to the Spanish standards, and therefore the relative advantage of these migrants vis-à-vis residents in terms of purchasing power is minimal.

Not surprisingly, there is a heavy reliance of this group on mortgage loans. Getting such mortgage loans is, for this social group, a challenging task. A married Swedish teacher in his forties working in Sweden could get a mortgage loan from a Spanish bank, but not from a Swedish one: 'We didn't have any money, totally crazy really, but that we felt it, that there was nothing that should be allowed to limit us, there was no Swedish bank that wanted to lend us 1.8 million. You are more generous in Spain precisely because you want to attract people and invest in the country' (interviewee 13). Spanish banks' policy may be more generous compared to Swedish banks regarding the total amount that is lent, but other interviewees complaint about the higher interest rates and worse lending conditions in Spanish banks compared to Swedish ones. Only those who are in less privileged positions in the relations of production in Sweden resort to Spanish banks as is their only possible choice.

The case of the single Swedish woman living in Palma also illustrates the lack of privileges of some Swede lifestyle migrants when it comes to acquiring a mortgage. Initially, she was not granted a loan from Spanish bank nor Swedish ones but could finally get a loan from a Swedish bank, using her parents' assets as a guarantee for the loan: 'I almost took for granted that I would be eligible for a loan

here [in Spain] since I thought that my salary is all right and I would be able to get a loan through my bank. But I didn't. Other banks might have been able to award me a loan but to very high interest rates so in the end, I contacted my bank in Sweden, and they proposed that my parents would go in as a guarantee and received a loan in Sweden for my apartment here' (interviewee 20). This is a very similar story to Spaniards who used their family networks to get guarantees to pay off loans (García-Lamarca & Kaika, 2016). In the same fashion as Spanish youngsters, some less advantaged Swedish lifestyle migrants are relying on their parents to cope with the mortgage loan burden.

For the very few lifestyle migrants that we found -two interviewees- that relocated full time to Spain, housing has exclusively a residential purpose: they acquire a house to live in it. But for these less advantaged Swedish migrants who split their time between Sweden and Spain, acquiring a house to lend represents an extra source of liquidity, as it often is the case with the Spanish middle classes who use it private properties to generate rent revenues from their properties (Yrigoy et al., 2022). This is the case of the Stockholmer teacher who acquired a house in Manilva (a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Marbella). He considered his dwelling acquisition in Spain as an investment: 'From the beginning, it was intended that we would only have it as a holiday home and rent it out. This aspect of the business is present all the time. If you can earn some extra money in some good way, we will make sure to do it'. (interviewee 13). For these lifestyle migrants, touristic subletting does represent a way to get an additional source of income: 'it was from the beginning that we thought to rent it out. That, it helps a lot, especially during high season, to pay off the bank loan' (interviewee 13).

Age is clearly a limiting factor to shape the relative advantage of Swede lifestyle migrants relocating in Spain. All the interviewees which were in this relatively precarious position were below 40 and still struggling to scale up their position in the Spanish and/or Swedish job market. Interestingly, the (lack of) privilege of Swedish lifestyle migrants is not only shaped by age constraints, but also, by the civil status and gender. Two salaries make it easier to acquire a dwelling in Spain, but in case of women who are not in a conventional relationship and thus cannot rely on two salaries, the advantaged position in the Spanish housing market disappears almost entirely. The lack of economic privilege reinforces hardships based on gender and nationality clichés. A Swedish divorced woman in her forties living in Majorca explained to us how her situation changed when her relationship ended: 'When we decided to split up, I didn't have any money. I asked my parents in Sweden, and they increased their mortgage on their house, and I have a debt to them. So, I have a mortgage in Sweden with a Swedish interest rate. Here [Spain], the rate is much higher. But for me, it was much cheaper to do it that way, compared to renting. If I were to rent, I would end up in a slum, a ghetto, and I didn't want that as a blonde living alone with two small kids' (interviewee 23). The lack of economic advantage was seen by this woman as a threat to her social status in Spain, and that is why she used the family network to strengthen her position. Yet the experience of middle-aged women (and men) in a conventional relationship and with stable income is completely different.

5.4 | Privileged lifestyle migrants

Indeed, most of the Swedes that acquired a property in Spain do have an advantageous position in the Spanish housing market. Two thirds of our respondents used a mortgage to acquire a dwelling in Spain, but unlike the less privileged social group, mortgage is granted to privileged lifestyle migrants by Swedish banks. Swedish banks have higher solvency requirements than Spanish banks but also lower interest rates than the latter banks. In most of the cases we encountered, Swedish lifestyle migrants do not apply to a new loan, but rather, they do get an extension from an existing loan and fund with such extension the purchase of a property in Spain. For instance, one middle-aged woman working as a manager in Landskrona told us that she could afford acquiring a property in Villamartín (Torrevecija) by increasing the loan she has with a Swedish bank on her first home in Landskrona. Unlike less advantaged migrants, the extension of the loan amongst advantaged migrants is not on their parents' property, but on their own home. Age is also a key factor explaining the privileged position of most Swedish lifestyle migrants: all the advantaged migrants we encountered were above 50 and had reached the top in their job careers or were retired. Their position in the relations of production was one of more privilege than less advantaged and younger Swedish migrants.

Contrary to some of the less privileged migrants, advantaged migrants usually show no interest whatsoever in renting out their properties, even if these properties are not occupied for months. In fact, most of our interviewees emphatically pointed out their lack of interest in renting their properties. In some of the cases when privileged lifestyle migrants do decide to extract rent from properties, this decision is mediated by inequalities based on gender and civil status. One widowed (and retired) Swedish woman told us that her 'husband became an agent for a company that sold properties in Spain. It was a lot of new development; it was a proper Klondike. A lot of people bought 10 apartments'. Clearly, the lady had been in a very privileged position for most of her life, particularly when she relocated to Spain. But such an advantaged status had been threatened since she widowed: that is why she started renting one of their properties in Fuengirola before her husband passed away. The income obtained from the short-term and long-term letting of the apartment was mainly used by the lady to maintain her lifestyle, and ultimately, her social status. In a similar way as the younger divorced woman living in Majorca, not having a stable male partner represents a challenge to the lifestyle status of privileged female lifestyle migrants without a male partner.

5.5 | Super privileged lifestyle migrants

A minority of the interviewees have a very advantaged position within the structural relations of production in Sweden, and as a result, within the Spanish housing market. We are dealing here with, to put it in Wright's (1980) jargon, with individuals who are the owners of the means of production, that is, employers. Indeed, not only wage-earners acquire properties in Spain, but employers

themselves are also lifestyle migrants. This is for instance the case of one CEO who gradually escalated up his position within the Swedish job market: 'I had a typical work trajectory for my generation: Graduate, work for ABB and then start your own business because you think the salary is too low. And then I was a coowner and CEO for a consultancy with 55 employees for a while' (interviewee 3). This interviewee acquired two apartments at the same time in the Trinidad neighbourhood in Málaga. He was not planning to acquire two properties beforehand but realized that it was more practical for his family to acquire two properties instead of one: 'we have two apartments, one with four bedrooms and one with one bedroom and a large rooftop terrace. It was the terrace we fell in love with, but we wanted to house children and friends, so we bought the apartment below as well' (interviewee 3).

The financial strategies used by those individuals located in the upper part of the echelon in the relations of production to acquire properties in Spain is substantially different to the strategies used by other social groups. To start with, these individuals do not need to negotiate with banks for the acquisition of property, and thus, their lifestyle choices. Indeed, interviewee 3 did not need to resort to mortgage loans as most Swedish lifestyle migrants, but he on his savings and sold shares: 'We sold stocks. And paid cash. No loans. I was coowner in a company once and received quite a lot when we sold it. So that money has been lying around and waiting to be spent on something fun' (interviewee 3). Another well-off housewife told us that she could afford buying a property in the outskirts of Palma due to her 'husband company doing great' (interviewee 18). These super privileged individuals are not seeking to extract rents or to wait for a revaluation of the property, but they think of the property as an opportunity for lifestyle experiences and as a symbol of their social status.

Note here also, the unequal constraints faced by the different group of migrants: whereas less-advantaged face multiple challenges in acquiring a property in Spain, the only challenge that is faced by the super advantaged lifestyle migrants is not economic but rather social. Those super-privileged migrants who care about integration do not feel integrated (and in some cases, not welcomed by locals), a feeling that shrinks advantaged migrants' feeling of belonging to a privileged part of society.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The article has demonstrated the deep asymmetries in the positions of lifestyle migrants within the relations of production. Unveiling such asymmetries illustrates that even if most lifestyle migrants are key actors in transnational-led process of gentrification, as Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020) or Jover and Díaz-Parra (2020) have illustrated, this is not the case of all individuals that fall in the category of lifestyle migrants. For instance, those Swedes with less or no advantages vis-à-vis locals have not a meaningful impact on the local dynamics of population mobility: they essentially face the same challenges, and constraints as the average local population.

More importantly, the article has shown how lifestyle migrants' privilege is not only shaped by class asymmetries, but by gender, age and civil status. As the positions in class, civil status and age vary rapidly, lifestyle migrants' position as less advantaged, advantaged or as super advantaged is highly mobile. There are however some important social differences in the mobility of positions within the relations of production: changing such positions is mediated by gender roles, as women have more difficulty to escalate their position and they are more likely to get stuck in less privileged positions due to the stereotyped roles of different genders within the job market (McDowell et al., 2007).

Such asymmetries amongst lifestyle migrants are also key to grasp how and why lifestyle migrants look at their properties in different ways. The dichotomy between the use value and the exchange value of housing is also present in lifestyle migrants' use of housing. The lower in the relations of production individuals are located, the more tend to look at their properties not only for leisure but also for purely economic reasons. In the case of less advantaged lifestyle migrants who do not move full time to Spain, acquiring a house in Spain represents a source of liquidity to be able to pay off the mortgages used to fulfil the lifestyle dreams. In other words, extracting rents from their own properties is, for less privileged and even some privileged lifestyle migrants, a requirement to enable and sustain their lifestyle mobility, as Adkins et al. (2021) have pointed out. However, using their properties to extracting liquidity is sometimes difficult: some Spanish cities like Palma have heavily restricted short time letting; other lifestyle migrants that live full time in their properties do not have an additional room to sublet. Simply put, the temporality of the stay also influences how less privileged lifestyle migrants develop their economic strategies to acquire properties: those that relocate for full time cannot rely on generating rents from their homes to pay off the debts generated when acquiring their properties. In the case of middle-class advantaged migrants, they do not tend to portray their properties as a source of rent to pay mortgages, but to store wealth. Unlike less advantaged migrants, middle class advantaged migrants do not need to use their acquired property to pay the mortgages, but still seek to get a monetary yield from their properties once they are sold. This potential yield factor into their willingness to pay prices which are increasingly above the Swedish average. The super privileged lifestyle migrants do not have these economic calculations in mind when they acquire their properties: they acquire their property for its use value, unlike other super wealthy investors in New York or London (Fernandez et al., 2016). Unlike less privileged and even some privileged lifestyle migrants, in the case of super privileged lifestyle migrants the ultimate source of wealth does not reside in generating revenues from their properties, but from the income they receive as owners and/or CEOs of corporations. Therefore, these individuals do not depend on the economic performance of their properties to be able to carry out their lifestyle experience. The higher up individuals are in the relations of production, the less relevant is the exchange value of the property. The lower the individuals are in the relations of production, the more relevant is the exchange value of the property.

Furthermore, research must be conducted to unveil how *different* types of lifestyle migration trigger *different* types of impacts amongst the

local population, particularly in a context where there is a heated debate in case studies such as Mallorca to prohibit property acquisitions by international lifestyle-oriented homeowners (Bohórquez & Galindo, 2023). Insofar as demand by lifestyle-oriented international homeowners is one of the key factors triggering a speculative increase in prices and thus, greatly hampers residents' access to housing, there is an urgent need to constraint and restrict such acquisitions. Yet, weighing lifestyle migrants' impacts on local societies is not an easy task. In fact, precisely for this very reason, dissecting the differences amongst lifestyle migrants is of paramount importance. The more logical reasoning would be to think that 'super advantaged' lifestyle migrants would be the ones impacting more on local societies in terms of price increase and triggering displacement of local population. But the interviews revealed to us that the relation between degree of advantage of lifestyle migrants and their impacts on local societies and housing markets is more complex. Super advantaged Swedes often acquire properties in highly exclusive communities where their relative advantage is also diluted as they have a similar purchasing power as Spaniards or other expats acquiring properties in the same neighbourhoods. When impacts on local population exist hand by hand with accelerated processes of gentrification and displacement is when super advantaged and specially, advantaged Swedes start to acquire properties in neighbourhoods where the inhabitants are local people with not many economic resources (e.g., neighbourhoods with a low average income).

To the extent that privileged Swedes relocating to city centre neighbourhoods continues, important policy challenges arise. If lifestyle migrants continue to acquire properties in non-touristic and residential neighbourhoods, regulations that put a limit on purchase price in €/sq.m and that place a heavy taxation on individuals that acquire a second home must be enforced so that lifestyle migration unfolds in socially sustainable ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the editor, the reviewers and Brett Christophers for their useful comments and smooth editing process. This research was funded by the Swedish Research Council on Sustainability (grant number 2019-01432).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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How to cite this article: Yrigoy, I., Lidmark, H., & Bergman, A. (2024). Unpacking the unequal privileges within transnational lifestyle relocation: Swedish lifestyle migrants' advantages and challenges in the Spanish housing market. *Population, Space and Place*, 30, e2726. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2726>