Between mobility and mobilization – lifestyle migration and the practice of European identity in political struggles

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Abstract: Lifestyle migration, such as the temporary or permanent movement of European citizens to coastal areas in Southern Europe, widely responds to the freedom of movement that EU citizenship provides to all its members. Although this migration can be evaluated as an individual and rather apolitical expression of a politically intended mobility within the European Union, it may seriously alter political life within destinations. The following article presents a case study about the political mobilization of lifestyle migrants living on the Spanish Mediterranean coast. It is based on empirical research and explores narrative interviews with members of a transnationally active political pressure group that campaigns against misapplications of local and regional land use policies. The central aim of the text consists of evaluating how central actors draw on European identity within conflict negotiations that traverse diverse scales including the European level. Referring to this, the article engages with key issues in contemporary sociological debates addressed in this monograph, namely the question of how sociologists approach the study of the political in general and how imaginations of Europe and European identity are strategically appropriated within political debates.

Introduction

Lifestyle migration and leisure-oriented mobilities – conceived as (temporary or permanent) spatial mobilities of relatively affluent persons of all ages moving between meaningful places with an imagined and collectively perceived potential to provide a better quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009: 2) – have, in recent years, been undertaken by an increasing number of people moving to and from places all around the world. The emergence of this social phenomenon as a topic of academic enquiry has resulted in a lively and multifaceted discussion in interdisciplinary fields such as Social Anthropology, Sociology, Tourism Studies, Human Geography and Urban Planning (Croucher, 2009; Hall, 2005; Jackiewicz and Craine, 2010; Janoschka, 2009; Korpela, 2009; McIntyre, 2009; Moss, 2006; Oliver, 2007; O'Reilly and Benson, 2009; Warnes, 2009).

Much attention is paid to exploring the motivations, the mobility paths, transnational experiences and social capital of such mobile citizens, especially in the European case (Benson, 2010; Casado-Díaz, 2009; Gustafson, 2008; King *et al.*, 2000; Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010; O'Reilly, 2000, 2009; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2004; Williams and Hall, 2002). Within the European Union, lifestyle migration can be interpreted as a practice reflecting the freedom of movement that EU citizenship provides to its members (Schriewer and Berg, 2007). At first glance, this appears to be primarily an apolitical expression of a politically intended mobility within the European Union. Although they bring important invest-ment to an area and their preference includes a long-term commitment to the place (Hall *et al.*, 2009), lifestyle migrants may be considered as outsiders and even invaders by local inhabitants and politicians. As a result there is the potential for them to be resented by members of the native population (McWatters, 2008), with the consequence of being at least symbolically deprived of the access to participate in political questions (Hall and Müller, 2004). However, as this article argues, if they achieve political participation within the destinations, they have the potential to seriously alter political life. The right of EU citizens to vote and stand as candidates in local elections even if they do not hold citizenship of their country of residence, creates the space for such intra-European migrants to establish distinctive social relations, instigate claims and challenge established political regimes (Durán, 2010; Janoschka, 2010). Such a commitment proves to be of theoretical interest, especially as it contra-dicts the predominant image of intra-European migrants as individuals devoid of major political concern in respect to their chosen place of residence (Favell, 2008).

This article provides an analysis of the political mobilization of lifestyle migrants living on the Spanish Mediterranean coast. It is based on empirical research carried out in the province of Alicante, Spain (also known as the *Costa Blanca*) and explores the discursive strategies of a pressure group who have been campaigning against serious misapplications of local and regional land use poli-cies. In a geographical setting that is the destination of the largest number of lifestyle migrants from across Europe (Huete, 2009; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2010), a group of alarmed expatriates protest to challenge the regional planning legisla-tion (LRAU, in spanish *Ley Reguladora de la Actividad Urbanística*, enforced since 1995) that permits alleged abuses.

Theoretical considerations

An emergent strategy has been the attempt to de-localize the conflict by making use of supranational European institutions (eg, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Human Rights). Additionally, activists refer to themselves strategically, drawing on a collectively shared idea of 'Europe' and meanings ascribed to 'European identity'. In this regard, a

central aim of this article consists of evaluating how actors centrally involved in protesting against the abuse of particular regulatory mechanisms assume European identity as they engage in a struggle that traverses diverse scales, including the European level. It is of major conceptual interest to analyse whether such negotiations, with a strategic reference to social constructions of European identity, can be interpreted as an embodiment of European citizenship. Hence, this article questions what the politics of identity and difference can reveal about contentious politics and political mobilization in lifestyle migration destinations.

To address this question, two assumptions will be initially clarified: First, following Leitner *et al.*, (2008: 157), 'contentious politics' will be used here as a term to 'describe the phenomenon of organized social resistance to hegemonic norms [. . .] in which differently positioned participants come together to challenge dominant systems of authority, in order to promote and enact alternative imaginaries'. In this regard, it is interesting to analyse how the conflict that my respondents in Spain take part in, 'inhabit[s] a political space outside of formal national politics [. . .] and address[es] a range of institutions across a variety of geographic scales' (Routledge, 2008: 336). Recognizing the centrality of politics of identity and difference in this conflict allows such an analysis to become apparent.

The term 'politics of identity' initially emerged from the experiences of new social movements within Western capitalist societies (Benhabib, 1999) and refers to identity as a power-laden construct that enables individuals to engage in collective political action. Identity is considered to be an invention that is expressed in and through practices and relations. But it also includes non-relations, absences, interstices and other continuous, more or less self-conscious positions in the social world (Calhoun, 1993). This means that identity is always established in relation to a series of differences – an idea that also applies to European identity, another highly disputed term addressed in Sociology and Political Science (Bruter, 2005; Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Delanty, 1995; Delanty and Rumford, 2005; Herrmann and Brewer, 2004; Rumford, 2009; White, 2010).

Identities, including European identity, are rarely defined in a satisfactory way. In this regard, this article primarily presents some constitutive elements of what European identity refers to in this specific and paradigmatic political conflict that has an array of European dimensions. My argument will be developed in three central sections: first, a short discussion of the research methodologies, widely based on qualitative approaches. This will be followed by an empirical analysis of political mobilization in eastern Spain, including the strategic reference to politics of identity and European identity. Finally, I will introduce a conceptual framework for understanding how European identity can provide an inspiring perspective for the analysis of politics of identity. In this regard, key issues in contemporary sociological debates addressed in this monograph will be discussed, namely the questions of how sociologists approach

the study of the political in general and how imaginings of Europe and European identity are strategically appropriated within political debates.

Research methodology

This article provides a contribution to the extensive debates regarding European identity, as it reconstructs and interprets the constructions and ascriptions of European identity in a political protest amongst lifestyle migrants in eastern Spain. Hence, it follows a perspective that evaluates the situated practice and discourse in the conflict as key for the understanding of politics of identity. Such empirical research that reconstructs individual and collective meanings of European identity and refers to subject-bound practices as a main analytical category should concentrate on interpretative methodological approaches.

In the course of this study, more than 90 narrative interviews were conducted with a total of 64 politically engaged persons, a vast majority of them lifestyle migrants living in Spain. These interviews were held in three languages (English, Spanish and German) and carried out with representatives belonging to Canadian and nine European nationalities. Interviewees were not chosen for belonging to specific age groups, status, nationality or other socio-demographic characteristics, but in regard to active involvement in local political issues. Many interviewees were directly suffering the consequences of the application of the land use law LRAU and participated actively in the mentioned protest. Although the age of respondents ranged from 36 to 84, a vast majority of the informants were older individuals who live permanently in Spain.

Some of the interviewees have lived in Spain since the late 1970s, while others moved during the last decade. It is important to consider that the people interviewed are not a representative sample, but belong to a minority: lifestyle migrants who are politically active. As a consequence, the subsequent analysis primarily reflects identity expressions in the political field, which can vary substantially from identity constructions and feelings of belonging articulated in other circumstances of daily life (Huber and O'Reilly, 2004; Oliver, 2007).

Although the narrative interviews were intended to focus on individual biographies (Rosenthal, 2004), many of the interviewed activists were so concerned about the land use law that they immediately narrated their involvement in the protest movement, relegating biographical issues to a later stage of the interview. In addition, 15 problem-centred interviews were carried out with central actors including representatives of different European embassies and the regional government. Interviews were transcribed and analysed with MAXQdA software to permit the application of hermeneutic and reconstructive analytical methods (Rosenthal, 2004). Furthermore, internal protest meetings were attended to get an insight into the protest movement and its internal debates. Additionally, official documents and parliamentary debates as well as media covering the conflicts were studied.

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Lifestyle migration and real estate development – the emergence and configuration of a political conflict

During the decade preceding the financial and economic crisis triggered by the 2008 credit crunch, Spain experienced an economic boom that was determined through an over-alignment to the construction industry: by late 2007, more than 2.7 million persons were employed in this sector – an eighth of all occupied workers countrywide (INE, 2010). In certain areas such as the province of Alicante, a region that combines investment in mass tourism and residential building, this focus was even stronger. Amongst others, this extraordinary real estate boom was nourished by European lifestyle migrants: for instance, more than 90,000 Britons moved to this area, known colloquially as the *Costa Blanca*, between 2001 and 2008, with the consequence that many formerly remote rural areas were transformed into literally 'vibrant' and urbanized areas, doubling their population in less than a decade. As O'Reilly (2007) stresses, retirement is not the only source of lifestyle migration to Spain; it is increasingly the case that there are a rising number of younger people, families and other individuals of working age that recently moved from Britain, Germany or Scandinavian countries to Spain in search of a better life. Rodriguez *et al.* (2010) shows that hardly one third of these EU-15 free movers in Spain are aged 55 or more.

Indeed, one can find a variety of wide-reaching explanations for such a frenetic urbanization process. For example, global capitalism and the financial industry imply major social transformations and challenge certain viewpoints about the role of the individual in postmodern and ageing societies. Lifestyle migration widely responds to the freedom of movement within the European Union and the possibility to settle, work and purchase properties in any part of the common market. However, Korpela (2010), in line with O'Reilly and Benson (2009), points out that this mobility also means an escape from the hectic and consumer-oriented lifestyles in Western and Northern Europe. Additionally to such broader trends, the disproportionately high account of lifestyle migrants moving to the *Costa Blanca* might also be associated with specific regional policies related to urban development. For instance, in other destinations such as coastal areas in Costa Rica, the establishment of a development regime was reported (Janoschka, 2009), and in eastern Spain politicians, state-owned saving banks and real estate entrepreneurs also laid the foundations for and promoted frenetic real estate development. The basic legal framework for this regime was the enforcement of the regional land use legislation named LRAU (adopted in 1995) and the legislative update LUV (dating from late 2005). Both laws regulate social practice in the field of urban politics within this region, especially the development of new residential estates. In summary, the law enables local authorities to change the zoning plan of the municipality whenever a developer presents a new plan for urbanization. This means that, aside from protected landscape and technically irreclaimable land, real estate development is allowed anywhere in a municipality. Additionally, it can be

implemented against the will of the owners (Soriano and Romero, 2004). The original purpose of the law was to give municipalities the legal authority to force (unwilling) landowners to cede portions of their property, with the aim of providing space for affordable housing (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2003). However, it has become increasingly evident that the municipalities have widely mishandled the expropriation power of this law.

The consequences of the LRAU law remain barely comprehensible at a first sight: one problem is that the law refers not only to agricultural land but also to semi-urbanized and consolidated areas with detached houses. In this regard, it is surprising that the promoters do not necessarily have to buy the land they want to urbanize. A system of forced concessions implements a situation where the private owner has to pay all costs deriving from urbanization and infrastructure to the investor. Additionally, he must concede up to two thirds of the total area to the developer (Soriano and Romero, 2004). For example, Alfred T., a German pensioner who has lived in the region since 1983, lost his appeal when his property became part of a development plan intended to densify an area with ten pre-existing villas that would be complemented with more than 60 new houses. He did not agree to the application of the law and appealed – but after six years of legal conflict, he was ordered to cede more than 1,000 square metres of his property and to pay 65,000 euro to the investor. This case is only one of several thousand cases that have occurred since 1995.

The application of such a law infringes the individual property rights guaranteed in the Spanish constitution, the EC Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. In 2002, some of the supposed victims of the land law decided to fight for their rights in a different way and founded an NGO named '*Abusos Urbanísticos No*' (No to Urbanistic Abuses) with the aim of achieving a moratorium for similar development plans in several municipalities via the establishment of political pressure. As local and regional authorities did not respond to their claims, they decided to de-localize the conflict and organized petitions addressed to the European Parliament and the European Court of Human Rights. The embeddedness of several members of the NGO in transnational political networks led to success, and the activists were able to convince several delegations from the European Union of the failures of the law. By vote of the Euro-Parliament on December 13, 2005, infringement proceedings against Spain were opened, and consequently a new law (LUV) replaced LRAU legislation by the end of December 2005. Although small changes were implemented, similar abuses followed under the new law. According to the reports of the EU institutions dating from June 2007 and March 2009, the planning legislation established an 'endemic form of corruption' that makes citizens suffer an 'abuse of rights and obligations enshrined in the EC Treaty, in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in the ECHR and in the relevant EU Directives, as well as in other conventions to which the EU is a party' (European Parliament, 2009). The case drew major national and international media attention, and the British government issued official warnings to its citizens against buying properties in

the region and regularly updates the online information that they provide about property-related issues in Spain (British Embassy Madrid, 2010). At the same time, the regional government accused the NGO of 'damaging the image of the region in Europe', claiming that 'European lobbies likely want to decide our future' (Corts Valencianes, 2005). Such a reaction may respond to the hardened front-lines between the movement and the regional government at a crucial moment – the day after the decision of the European Commission to open infringement proceedings against Spain in the LRAU cause. Nevertheless, it is a good example of how certain imaginings relating to the social construction of Europe were central to the negotiation of this conflict. Furthermore, the statement also reminds us that the recourse to European institutions to resolve a locally embedded political conflict is an unconventional method of contestation that, in this case, attacks the hegemonic way of conceiving urban development politics. I will come back to this argument, but at first a brief look into the extremely important consolidation process of the NGO '*Abusos Urbanísticos No*' will be provided.

Collective memory and the consolidation of a political movement through politics of identity

Social practice that is embedded in historical and symbolical meanings ascribed to imagined communities has commonly been approached through the discussion of the social construction and invention of modern nation-states (Anderson 2006 [1983]). Preceding this, Emile Durkheim's descendant Maurice Halbwachs had developed a framework that refers to traditions originated in families, within a class specific habitus or any other coherently originated group: the collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992). The development of collective memory takes place via two intertwined and mutually enforcing aspects. First, the 'rule of division' means that a common history can be duplicated at different specific places. Second, the 'rule of accumulation and concentration' implies that different meanings can be ascribed to a specific place or occurrence. Both aspects occurred during the early phase of the protest movement in question and led to the mutually reinforcing establishment of a coherent founding myth of the NGO. The movement started its trajectory when a Canadian-Swedish couple became affected by a development plan. Unlike many other individuals, they understood from early on that taking legal steps would not provide them any guarantee of winning the struggle for their own land. However, this couple not only questioned the legal Spanish instances; they also possessed the social capital to articulate their objection and were fortunate enough to live in an environment with people who shared their ideas. In such a social field they were able to set up the initiative, pursuing legal advice from novel actors such as the embassies of different European countries. In retrospect, this sounds like quite an easy issue – but at that time, it proved to be a completely different approach to handling the LRAU problem.

With regard to the collective memory of the movement, the founder himself and his initial movements play an important role, a point confirmed by many of the interviewees. But it is additionally interesting that in the course of their narratives many of the interviewees placed themselves very close to the founder, reinforcing the initially mentioned 'rule of division'. The following two examples state this issue:

> *Abusos Urbanísticos* is really the best example of how to make a grassroots organization. It works perfectly now, so we do not have to help. We only organized in the very beginning and told them who they could call. It would not have been possible without Chuck [the founder of the NGO], whose life was managing this kind of thing. This is the elite living there; every one of them knows important people in London, Brussels, Washington, everywhere, and they can activate them with one call. So only under these circumstances could Chuck do this, just because there are so many people with power.
>
> (Interview with a representative of the British consular service in Spain)

> Nowadays many people say they helped *Abusos Urbanísticos* in the very beginning. But it was here, in this office, that a man came in and asked me to assist him with regard to the urban abuses. And I explained to him how to found the NGO. This was the very beginning of *Abusos Urbanísticos No*.
>
> (Interview with a representative of the German consular service in Spain)

Independently of the concrete circumstances of the foundation itself, there is a symbolical founding myth of the NGO, namely, the first public consultation carried out in the convention room of a restaurant in late 2002. Many interviewees, especially those affected by development plans, recognize this afternoon as a crucial moment:

> There were so many people there, there were people standing, there were people in the corridor, there were people, who couldn't even get in the door. They reckoned that there were 700 people at that meeting. And that was really the start of the whole movement of *Abusos No* and their support for people like us basically.
>
> (Tessa D., affected property owner)

Following the conceptualization of the collective memory carried out by Halbwachs (2003), only those incidents that at the same time represent a lesson and a future model of attitude are remembered. In the case of this protest, the establishment of a coherent founding myth enabled the group to develop a specific 'movement habitus' (Crossley, 2005) and subsequently facilitated the symbolically important reference to a collectively shared political identity. In this regard, a second aspect of the meeting mentioned is important: one of the official representatives invited to the presentation was the British ambassador. As a spontaneous reaction to the apparently shocking complaints reported, he expressed diplomatic assistance and announced an initiative of all embassies of the EU-15 states in Spain, to be carried out within the following weeks. By this time and through this initial European dimension, the movement

originated under an expanded attachment to politics of identity that refers to 'Europe'.

European identity as an analytical tool for conflict analysis – an empirical discussion

It is important to consider that the establishment of the protest movement raises concern in questions referring to the field of identity – and this happens among both adversaries. In this regard, the original economic problems of the property owners are brought forward strategically to a culturally-interpreted sphere that relates to politics of identity. It is explicitly the fading out of internal differences on the basis of identity constructions that empowers the actors to set up an effective support for such political action. Politics of identity reproduce and reify alleged cultural boundaries between artificially constructed groups (eg, 'affected foreigners' vs. 'Spanish politicians and avaricious promoters') and refer to constructions of 'Europe' and 'European identity'. This context is interesting as the founder of the NGO, a Canadian national, and the activists made important efforts to include initially passive Spaniards who are also affected. Given the nature of a conflict that refers to EU institutions and that is backed by 15 ambassadors and several EU parliamentarians from different countries, the reference to questions of European identity seems to be a winning strategy to express and unify the political claims amongst a group of activists that gained more than 10,000 members from different nationalities in a few months. This is especially the case as the founders – initially two dozen foreign senior residents from a handful of European countries and Canada – 'invented', in the words of Stuart Hall (1997), the spectacle to refer to discursive constructions of European identity. Given the non-European nature of the founder and president of the protest movement and the subsequent implication of more and more Spanish activists, such an effort deserves special interest. During their struggle, the participants established a complex relation of identities and differences that referred not only to individual and collective experiences in the political struggle, but also to a political invention named 'Europe'. How can this be explained?

First, it is of major interest that many participants of the political movement were used to occupying positions of social power during their former professional trajectories. These experiences make them well-prepared for challenging the *modus operandi* of local development politics commonly regarded as incomprehensible and unjustified. Furthermore, as many of them have been active in political issues on different hierarchical levels and in different social and geographical environments for many years, they have the know-how to trigger emotions in reference to the addressed target group and to apply politics of identity strategically. In interviews, public appearances and official media releases, as well as through the website of the NGO, reference to a constructed abyss between a 'Spanish' or 'Valencian' reality and 'European' norms, beliefs and ways of political and juridical action was permanently reified. Such politics

of identity establish discursive contexts that enable collective political action through temporary fixations of social constructions regarding Europe. This strategic use of identity and difference aims at a depreciation of the political opponent: any positive construction of one's own reference group is inevitably entangled with negative attributes regarding the other.

Such politics of identity have been widely discussed in other contexts and, as Penrose and Mole (2008) state, any construction of such a self-related identity ('me' and 'us') implies at least a tacit knowledge of the 'other' ('you' and 'them') that does not form part of oneself and one's 'own' reference group. This means that identity is always established in relation to a series of differences – it requires this difference and converts it into otherness to secure its own self-certainty (Connolly, 2002). The acceptance of the relational character of identity and its internal multiplicities implies an interesting perspective for the analysis of political movements that constantly 'play' with changing ascriptions and challenge established scales (Massey, 2004). Nevertheless, this strategic use of identity in political contexts does not mean that 'essentialist' representations and ascriptions do not exist. Quite the contrary, the necessity to position one's 'own' (subject, group, idea, practice, act) against 'other' (subjects, groups, ideas, practices, acts) in a political conflict at least temporarily requires, for instance, 'fragile' fixations of the meanings (Glasze, 2007). As a consequence, politics of identity conceived as representations of social and spatial meanings, provide a basis for action. As Nicholls (2009) discusses, identities are projected by the actors involved in political struggles and resistance, in order to legitimate claims and silence internal differences. This is clearly evident in the case of the described political involvement of lifestyle migrants: the activists play efficiently with identity and difference to set up a political movement against the legal abuses they are supposed to have suffered in Spain. But how can one conceive of this context with reference to European identities?

For this purpose, it is important to think about the chosen political embedding of the protest which gives rise to semantic strategies that refer to Europe. The petition process at the European institutions helps to establish a coherent identity construct, based on the successfully defended assumption that the political adversaries permanently infringe supposed 'European' principles. But it is now of interest which content and discursive ascriptions are applied to refer to European identity versus the alleged 'otherness' of the political opponents. The analysis of the empirical data highlights the strategic application of four central social constructions:

– *First*, the political activists interpret Europe as a 'community of values' and demand the compliance of basic civic principles such as democracy, human rights, tolerance and freedom – ethical values that are interpreted as a substantial element of European identity. The argument also asserts that due to the application of the planning law, promoters and the regional political elite repeatedly disregard these basic assumptions of the European community. By means of such an argument, the political sphere is discursively devalued

and charged with 'otherness' – for the activists it is clear that their opponents do not share the 'European' community of values. The following example shows how this argument is enforced in a common discourse:

> If you want to explain this to someone and say, you don't have any rights here – they do not believe you. I just received a visit from Hungary, they told me: 'This cannot be true!' – They thought we were crazy, they told us: 'This did not happen even in communism.' And it is strange that there is no property protection in a democratic country, especially after the Spaniards signing the European constitution that explicitly says that property rights, human rights are defended in Europe.

> (Günter, local activist)

– *Second*, Europe is evaluated as a 'community of modernity'. This dimension responds to the legal and moral empowerment the group receives through the European institutions. Amongst other points, the activists refer to the legal certainty modern states guarantee their citizens. With regard to this aspect, the imagining and construction of Spain as a non-modern society – a profoundly embedded assumption among lifestyle migrants – is tied to the political sphere and thus reinforced politically. The activists claim to introduce a 'European' way of modern thought via the recourse to European institutions. The following argument exemplifies the dialectical method for establishing otherness and political identity when Spain and Europe are contrasted:

> It seems the spirit of the conquistador is still alive, but in reverse. Rather than brigands sailing to their victims in other lands, the casualties now are many of those of us who have brought their life savings to Spain's fair shores. And the abuses under the laws have truly become, in their turn, 'weapons of mass construction'. Is it for us to cry out? Yes, because those we speak for should not suffer the denial of rights and privileges modern Europe is supposed to offer. Grateful though we may be to live in Spain, there are limits to what is acceptable.

> (Charles S., former president of the NGO, at a petition committee meeting in Brussels)

– *Third*, the protest group refers to a discursive field that embeds Europe as a 'community of communication'. This signifies that European identity is constructed among the common basis of a shared economic, political and juridical system. Many discourses of the protest movement refer to issues of democracy – not as a superior ideal but as practical assumptions of how current debates are structured in a public sphere. Hence, local and regional politics in Spain are described as underdeveloped, thus fixing the otherness of the political opponent.
– *Fourth*, the political activists also refer to an aspect which is related to a framing originated from the category 'Christendom'. This argument needs further explanation as Spain is a country rooted in Catholic tradition and holds bishops and other religious leaders who tend to bias public debates. The members of the movement claim that the application of the land use regulation violates basic Christian values and the human rights underlying

these values. The infringement of constitutional aspects of European values such as questions of burglary and the status of property unifies the political identity of the activists and sets up recognizable lines of conflict. It portrays the coalition between politicians and real estate developers as 'the fall of man' that may only be redeemed by a superior moral institution, which is embodied in this case by the European Union. As the following two examples show, this powerful moral reference is used both in common communication and official statements of the initiative.

> Worse yet, for a nominally Catholic country, at least two of the Commandments of God Almighty, those which state 'thou shalt not steal' and 'thou shalt not covet thy neighbours's property, nor shall be false witness against him' appear to fail into sinful disregard with regularity as the Report suggests. A sunny country with so many shady dealings, so some say.

> (Charles S., former president of the NGO, at a petition committee meeting in Brussels)

> One of the affected owners was literally 'crucified'. They planned a road junction, and on the map you see a cross on his property. He would have to cross the street to go from his house to the garden, to cross the street to use his pool.

> (Günter K., local activist)

These four basic principles represent a distillation of the empirical data gathered in many interviews and expressed in official statements. Although these dimensions of European identity remain here analytically separated, individual political statements usually entangle several of them at a time. The empirically observed references to European identity thus establish antagonistic categories of identity and difference, of inclusion and exclusion, that permanently frame and reframe one's 'own' reference group as well as the constitutive 'other'. It is of major interest that Spain is discursively excluded from such constructions of European identity. In order to gain strength and establish coherent collective political identities in the battle against the land use law, the entangled notions of European identity are permanently reified among the members, while other possible identifications with Europe are largely faded out. This can be explained by the need for establishing a coherent and unifying frame to actors who are widely rooted in different reference systems within Spain, Europe and non-European countries. Several theoretical threats emerge from this case study, and we will address them in the following article against the background of debates regarding the social construct of European identity.

Political mobilization of lifestyle migrants and European identity – a conceptual framework

The increasing proliferation of lifestyle migration in a European context is one facet of major social trends in the course of individualization and a growing

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desire for self-realization (O'Reilly and Benson, 2009). In this regard, lifestyle migrants embody a challenge for conceptions regarding migration, tourism, home, community and identity that are predominantly constituted on the presumption that people only have one residential place. One aspect belongs to the reconfiguration of the political life in places shaped by lifestyle-oriented mobility. As discussed in different contexts, this may happen through participation in structures of representative democracy at the local level such as municipal parliaments (Collard, 2010; Durán, 2010; Janoschka, 2010). However, given its prototypical situation, it is especially the political protest outside the representative political system that can be evaluated as a major force of social innovation. The empirical discussion shows how intra-European migrants, who have the privilege of freedom of movement within Europe, are capable of challenging a local and regional political regime in at least one specific area. Collective action and contentious politics that contest hegemonic norms respond in this case to alternative imaginings of territorial development and to questions of the implementation of a constitutional state and the rule of law at a specific spatial setting in the European Union. Such a challenge stirs strong emotions among the individuals affected and thus proves an interesting subject for the discussion of politics of identity and difference – and the debate about European identity.

Although the concepts of identity and European identity are not easy to deal with, they provide both analytical and conceptual interest. Politics of identity as a research perspective recognizes the possible transformations, mobility and flows inherent to a conceptualization of identity as a powerful and meaningful social construction that is constantly destabilized and reinvented. As the empirical discussion reflected, politics of identity and the reference to European identity can be a powerful discursive mechanism within political struggles. But in the meantime, scientific discourse acknowledges that European identity, as well as the imaginations and meanings ascribed to Europe, are widely disputed concepts. This is in the nature of a term which is used in different frameworks, ie, in economic, political and philosophical debates. Hence, any attempt fully to discuss and reproduce the discourse on Europe and European identity does not suit the wider scope of this article. In consequence, the following conceptual ideas will focus on only three central aspects that are relevant to the discussion of European identity among lifestyle migrants and might give new insights into the practical uses of European identity in political conflicts.

First, in very different contexts, empirical and theoretical debates, Europe is considered a useful example for exploring the nature of 'cosmopolitan realism' (Pichler, 2008: 1110). Cosmopolitan realism responds to a conceptualization of European identity as a cosmopolitan project, a vision that is defended by an array of key theorist (Beck and Grande, 2007; Calhoun, 2009; Rumford, 2007; Stevenson, 2005). This correlates with the proposition of Delanty and Rumford (2005: 54 f) that we should think of European identity in constitutive cultural terms instead of following the traditional division between individual and collective identities. At the same time, this perspective also enables the viewpoint that EU institutions and EU law promote a European identity that is being

fulfilled and expressed by officers in the heart of the EU administration (Herrmann and Brewer, 2004; Laffan, 2004; Wodak, 2004). This idea is rejected and criticized by different authors, as if European identity was an exclusively top-down process steered by European institutions (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Mayer and Palmowski, 2004), suggesting an engagement with the articulations and negotiations of European identity. As proposed in this article, politics of identity may have a meaningful importance within collective political action, responding to both the complex accounts of space and the contexts included in dynamic and often unstable constructions of contested European identities when applied to political disputes. In consequence, if political cosmopolitanism is understood as an expression of multiple affiliations, attitudes and dispositions, practices and competences (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), the political engagement of lifestyle migrants can be considered as a practical experience of cosmopolitanism that focuses on symbols, 'material practices and identities associated with border crossings, nationalisms, hybridity, and the connections between travelling and locatedness' (Mitchell, 2007: 707). Such a conceptualization of cosmopolitanism goes hand in hand with the array of studies regarding transnationalism and transnational social formations in post-modern societies (Appadurai, 2008; Faist, 2008), providing a framework for the political consequences that cosmopolitan individuals and transnational elites evoke in global cities and European centres of political and administrative command and control (Beaverstock, 2005; Favell, 2008).

Second, discussions about European identity should reflect on methodological approaches for gauging the existence (or non-existence) and the character of European identity. For instance, much emphasis is drawn to the transformations of national identities by 'European' values and beliefs (Blokker, 2008; Eder, 2006; Kantner, 2006). This kind of research is often, although not exclusively framed by quantitative studies that analyse, amongst others, cross-country surveys such as the *Eurobarometer* (Grundy and Jamieson, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Kohli, 2000; Pichler, 2009). Such studies tend to simplify European identity and thus might fail to attend to the shape and significance of its discursive and symbolical dimensions (Bruter, 2009). In contrast, the central aim of this article responds to the question of how imaginings of Europe and European identity are strategically appropriated within political debates.

The empirical discussion presented in this article has provided much-needed evidence of the strategic use and appropriation of European identity in political conflicts, which is a different issue from the weak and fragile European attachment and identity observed among lifestyle migrants in daily life (Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010). This goes hand-in-hand with findings regarding the everyday meanings ascribed to Europe among 18–24 year-old residents in Edinburgh, Scotland, carried out by Grundy and Jamieson (2007). They report rather low levels of European attachment, and that feelings of being European were only shared by a small proportion of the young population. Additionally, Grundy and Jamieson stress that even those individuals who have an explicit interest in European topics do not automatically develop an attachment to European

identity. This poses the question of whether such an attachment is a necessary precondition when a politics of identity referring to Europe is strategically established. As the empirical data presented here shows, the claiming of European identity for political purposes, concrete experiences, emotions and meaningful (political) communication can be considered of greater importance than expressions of European identity in other fields of daily life.

Third, returning to conceptual concerns, it is important to mention that the references to European identities follow the same constructions that characterize all politics of identity, namely the principle of establishing discursively antagonistic categories of inclusion and exclusion that establish the 'own' and the constitutive 'other'. Such an approach is compatible with the aforementioned idea that European identity is one possible attachment among multifaceted strategies of identification (Bruter, 2005). In this rendering, the conceptualization of European identities can be thought of as a dynamic and contested negotiation process that, lacking a hegemonic narrative, permits a range of disputed and sometimes contradictory interpretations of Europe. As a consequence, it is explicitly a conflict over meaning and the condition of indeterminacy that can be evaluated as a constitutive element of all identities regarding a Europe that is ambiguous and a mere expression of the development from unity through diversity (which is another highly disputed 'idea' see for example: Delanty, 1995; Kraus, 2008; Pinxten *et al.*, 2007).

While it is theoretically inspiring that European identities can be nourished and constructed in many ways, however, in daily practices of politics of identity they are seemingly only applied within evocative and meaningful situations. Hence, a starting point for the analysis of European identity can again be the conceptual difference between 'us' and 'them' and the ways group definitions are accomplished with reference to Europe. In the case of lifestyle migrants in Spain, many people define themselves as 'European residents', which is a political statement expressed independently of national origin. To a certain degree, this responds to the unconscious necessity lifestyle migrants feel to avoid defining themselves with categories such as 'immigrants' (Croucher, 2009; Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010; O'Reilly, 2007). However it also shows that for these individuals whose everyday life is bound to a variety of different identification processes, Europe is one of various identities that they cling to with certain attachment. Additionally, in political conflicts the indeterminacy of European identity can provide a framework for an active application of this category.

Responding to the elusiveness of European identity, different authors advocate a definition of the contents European identity may include. For instance, Mikkeli (1998) introduces a semantic field that includes aspects such as democracy, civilization, Christendom, freedom, white skin or the 'west' as constitutive constructs for European identity. In an antagonistic way, these concepts are contrasted with a semantic field of 'otherness' which centres on terms such as barbarism, despotism, slavery, non-white skin or the 'Orient'. Based on similar differentiations and the acknowledgement of the constitutive idea of identity-difference as a semantic couple, Quenzel (2005) introduces a perspective that

distinguishes two different degrees of otherness for European identity: internal and external others. External otherness reflects the conceptual efforts to differentiate Europe from something else that is 'not Europe'. By contrast, internal otherness represents and inscribes the manifold differentiations included within European identity constructions, for example the ascriptions related to the slogan 'unity in diversity'. In cases where identity is negotiated against an external subject, such internal otherness is usually suspended. However, internal otherness becomes the dominant construction if internal queries are negotiated. If such a conceptualization is carried over to the political struggle in southern Spain, interesting insights into the politics of identity can be gained.

The politics of identity applied by the protest movement target two aspects: first, the establishment of a coherent group and second, the discursive exclusion of all opponents from this group. As the opponents definitely remain European, such a process happens thus through the negotiation and expression of internal otherness. Such otherness was generated with the help of a coherent founding myth of the movement and its permanent re-inscription in the collective memory of its members. Additionally, through the concept of internal otherness we may also explain why the members made use of four categories of identification: Europe as a community of values, Europe as a community of communication, Europe as a community of modernity and Europe as a community with a common idea of man based on the Christian faith. These categories simultaneously express the most striking differences between themselves and political opponents – and much equivalence between themselves and some of the constitutive ideas of Europe. The case study bears in mind that a vague idea such as European identity can easily be re-framed, transformed and filled with significance – at least if essential issues such as individual property and with it one's life savings are endangered.

Concluding comments

Lifestyle migration, conceptualized here as an inherently intra-European mobility, can be considered to shed light on the practical consequences of the European unification process. Many such citizens move out of their country for the first time in their life, while for others migration and mobility have developed as one of the constant concomitants of their daily life. Although such mobility is common within the European Union, different studies pronounce rather critical conclusions regarding the evolution of a commonly shared European attachment or identity even among these free movers (Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010) – transnationalism is often strictly reduced to a transnational mobility (Gustafson, 2008).

This issue gains a different meaning, however, if we analyse political mobilization among mobile citizens such as in the case against the LRAU legislation. Within this political conflict, the practical use of EU citizenship rights such as

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the possibility of presenting petitions and requesting legal action and support from European institutions is entangled with a discourse referring to Europe and European identity. Indeed, the political field of contention presents specific circumstances that, for instance, radicalize certain habitus dispositions or even entail the suppression of habitus (Janoschka, forthcoming). It enables the practical use of identity and in this case, the discursive appropriation of European identity, conceived as an expression of politics of identity that aim at destabilizing hegemonic relations.

One of the key elements aimed at inscribing differential identity constructions was to combine cultural and national identities with the authoritative framework the European Union offers in order to establish a coherent identity discourse that serves for the daily practice of political contention. However, the case of European identity provides further insights into the evolving spatialities of Europe. If mobility and flux is stressed in detriment to stability and permanence, European identities can be conceptualized as relational, multiple and mobile (Sassatelli, 2010). This responds to a political sociology of mobility as demanded by Aradau *et al.* (2010) with reference to new accounts towards European citizenship. The practical use of European identity in political contest reveals that the Union is strategically appropriated and filled with significance by its inhabitants, when European identity is thought of as a practical experience and meaningful communication. Such expressions of practising European identity and enacting European citizenship demonstrate that the political may contribute and promote novel expressions and imaginations of Europe and European identity for which lifestyle migrants can be conceptual precursors.

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