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Made in Swedish: diasporisation and lifestyle orientation among Swedish migrant networks in Southern Spain

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ABSTRACT

The article demonstrates how large social associations are operating at the locus of a community-making related to the networks of Swedish migrants in Southern Spain. The associations are selectively targeting relatively wealthy older (ethnic) Swedish individuals, offering them a home-like social arena with access to a club equipped with well-known facilities and activities from the Swedish tradition. In addition, these associations offers valuable information and services that ensure their members a comfortable lifestyle in Spain but also facilitates a life with close connection to the Swedish society. In this social space, the Swedish migrants meet, socialise and to some extent, consume, rather than making efforts to participate and becoming integrated in Spanish society. It is also obvious how this environment becomes a hub for maintaining links and societal life with the Swedish society. The article argues that the practices used by the social associations in their mobilisation, are becoming part of a 'diasporisation' of Swedes in Southern Spain. It is also argued that these practices are both reflecting assumed needs and requests from the individuals in the migrant networks as well as orientating them into a lifestyle that promotes comfort and transnational links with their country of origin.

Introduction

Lifestyle migration is commonly represented in the scientific literature as the mobility of 'relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 621). When we speak of lifestyle migrants, we usually think of upper- or middle-class people from developed countries who engage in the self-fulfilling project of seeking a better life. However, lifestyle migration is not a homogeneous kind of mobility. Migrants who initially moved for lifestyle reasons may settle in the new countries and live there as 'tourists', but this is far from always the case as the conditions may change in unexpected directions. Instead of seeing this kind of migration as a one-off act, we suggest approaching the processes

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that constitute migration in terms of for instance transnational relations and community formation (Faist, 2000, 2010) and argue that there is no reason to exclude lifestyle migrants from such approaches (cf. Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014; O'Reilly, 2000; O'Reilly & Benson, 2009; Benson & O'Reilly, 2016).

In this article, we will focus on the community-formation processes among the networks of Swedish migrants who (mostly) moved to Spain for lifestyle reasons and settled in the coastal villages along the Costa Blanca and Costa del Sol.[1] Like other international migrant networks in these and other Mediterranean destinations, the Swedish ones have a large proportion of amenity-seeking older individuals. Similar to other cases of lifestyle migration, the Swedes mostly live segregated from the local Spanish communities in a 'touristic' style. However, these networks also include people who moved to these areas for other reasons, such as work or to establish a business. Others have health or family reasons for moving. With respect to social diversity, the networks include people of very different social origins in terms of professional background, class, religion, ethnicity, family status, etc. and are more heterogeneous and diverse than probably expected by most observers. This article focuses on how these fragmented networks of Swedish migrants are gathered, and to some extent also represented, and mobilised as a Swedish community in Spain. The article also accounts for how this mobilisation through networks constructs and constitutes the pattern of life that is expected from lifestyle migrants.

Arguably, social mobilisations needs its agents who take the initiative and implement practices (cf. Sökefeld, 2006). The most influential actors within the Swedish networks in these areas are some of the larger Scandinavian social associations, which have operated as social clubs in both the Costa Blanca and the Costa del Sol since the 1960s. Our interest lies in the way these associations have established themselves in this leading position by implementing practices that mobilise mainly Swedish migrants. We will account for a case where the practices these social associations implement not only 'organise' the networks but also orientate them in some directions more than others. We argue that the associations are undertaking a mobilisation that takes its starting point in the expected 'lifestyle' qualities and needs of the network population and orients the migrants in this direction, irrespective of the motives behind their migration projects or other possible needs they may have. One of our aims is to see whether these practices overlap with similar mobilisations of communities as developed by the migrant networks that often are classified as diasporas (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). With this discussion, we try to nuance the image of similar migrant communities by suggesting a link between the formation of lifestyle-based communities and processes of community formation that diasporas are known for (Sökefeld, 2006; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999).

The following section – *Studying lifestyle networks as diasporisations* – contains a brief presentation of the point of departure for this study with method, empirical data and theoretical approach. The analytical lens employs the notion of 'orientation', from a phenomenological point of view, to approach mobilisation in action and to understand the construction of communities with diasporic as well as lifestyle qualities. In the section *Swedish migrants in Southern Spain,* we paint the scene for the Swedish lifestyle migrants in Southern Spain. The central issues here are the possibilities to live as Swedish migrants or residential tourists in Spain as well as the role and function of a community. After this general introduction to the situation of Swedish migrants in Southern Spain, we turn our focus towards the community practices implemented by the Swedish (or Scandinavian)

associations in these areas. Drawing on our empirical observations, we will in the following sections demonstrate how the associations assume a kind of responsibility for the individuals in the networks, whether these revolve around the social relations and requests for clubs or around the need for service or information. In our account, we will highlight the aspect of orientation in this mobilisation meaning that the agents design their practices to fit the needs of some segments in the networks but disregard others. In the final section, we conclude our discussion by returning to some of the observations made in the article and discuss both the community-formation aspect and the orientation dimension in these. In this study, Brubaker's (2005) definition of 'diaspora' as a 'category of practice' becomes a useful tool. Shifting the empirical and analytical focus from the social groups or units themselves towards the practices that mobilise and construct fragmented networks as communities will show that lifestyle migration is not something completely different from other forms of migration. In this perspective, the 'lifestyle-style' qualities belong to the requisites that agents exploit in order to construct communities in migration contexts.

Studying lifestyle networks as diasporisations

The article draws on several periods of ethnographic fieldwork (during 2010–2017) on the Costa Blanca and Costa del Sol in Southern Spain. Fieldwork was comprised of informal visits, observations and attendance at meetings and activities at various social clubs, recorded interviews with 55 individuals and more frequent contacts with ten 'key informants'.[2] Most of them were volunteers and board members of Swedish associations and organisations, while others were known entrepreneurs or individuals in Swedish networks. In other words, not only 'community-making' individuals who were volunteering with setting up activities but also those taking initiatives and providing advice to the associations. One aspect of their narratives concerned implicit assumptions about who they – as community activists and leaders – were representing, what practices they were trying to install among the Swedish networks of migrants in Spain, and in which direction they wanted to take these. The ethnography and the interviews are our entrance into the clubs' activity agendas; they will provide insights into the direction and management of the clubs. Another source for this kind of information we found on websites, in magazines and other published materials of the associations. These sources of information are treated as an ongoing communication in the wider sense of the word 'discourse' (here understood as an expression of boundaries, content and direction) in which the clubs are positioning themselves as representatives of the Swedish networks and as guides for migrants in Spain. This discourse is the associations' window to the outside world and tells the people in the networks which interests they are representing and what they intend to do for various segments of the networks. The assumptions made in this discourse prompt a number of questions, which revert the relationship between 'the people' in the networks and the organisations that claim to represent them as Swedish.

Our empirical observations clearly show that the associations in question have the ambition to take a leading role in the gathering of the quite fragmented social networks of Swedish migrants in Southern Spain. Generally speaking the success of this kind of mobilisation requires a successful translation of needs and expectations into social activities. However, while the practices implemented for this purpose are likely to attract the attention and engagement of individuals in the networks, it is at the same time obvious that the

arrangements will be a matter of promoting a certain type of social interaction and lifestyle. The associations need to 'listen' to their potential members when designing activities, but they also selectively decide which activities to set up in their repertoire (Olsson, 2018). Moreover, in the implementation of practices it is likely that the agents will impose certain routines, behavioural codes, cultures, etc., that will orientate the members in a certain direction.

This begs the question of what we mean by the notion of orientation and becoming orientated. Following phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Sara Ahmed, orientation is the subject's relation to the world and the objects that are manifest in this space (Ahmed, 2006). To be oriented is fundamentally to know where you are in the world and where you are heading. In other words, the term orientation has a spatial connotation that turns the focus towards the subject's position in space. The 'world' as perceived by the subject is a world made out of objects (and human beings) which, in its assembled form, sets the point from which the subject can extend him- or herself. When extending him- or herself in the world, the subject finds his or her orientation by engaging with the surrounding set-up of objects and individuals (Ahmed, 2006). This orientation is never neutral: following Husserl's understanding of 'intentionality' (Husserl, 2004), the subject always experiences something relative to something else, which also has consequences for how the world is perceived. Where one orientation draws one set of practices towards it, it pushes others aside.

Our focus on the social associations and their different moves at the locus of Swedish migrant networks in Southern Spain is linking this study to a theoretical position in which diaspora is 'a category of practice' (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12) rather than a referent to expatriate minority communities in the form of realised groups. Seeing the implemented practices as a 'way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population' (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12) implies that diasporic communities become the 'desired goal' of such claims and relocates the analytical lens to the 'collective vehicles' that are utilised as 'mobilising structures and practices' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 269). Regarding these mobilising practices as 'a common framework of interpretation and representation' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 270) suggests that they also have a potential of creating an image of being a dispersed people with imaginary or 'real' relations with a 'homeland' (cf. Faist, 2010). Similarly, this quality will differentiate one group from other groups in a society, not least the host population. Practices that seem to possess these qualities then are the main vehicles for 'diasporisation' (Olsson, 2009; Van Hear, 1998), and often the most salient agents in such processes are the 'associations, parties or community institutions' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 275) that are selecting projects and activities that constitute such mobilising practices. This suggests a combination of the diaspora (as practice) approach with the 'orientation' insights from phenomenology. In doing this, we also suggest a sensitivity to the way people are mobilised and how they are 'constructed'. In the case of lifestyle migrants, it is clear that certain 'social attributes' (such as age, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) and living patterns (as represented by the 'lifestyle' qualities of amenity, leisure, consumption, etc.) become both pre-requisites and outcomes of this mobilisation.

Swedish migrants in Southern Spain

Swedish migration to Southern Spain has its origins in the marketing of charter holidays and mass tourism in the 1960s. In subsequent years, the Costa Blanca and the Costa del

Sol became favourite coastal destinations for Swedes who were looking for a seasonal or permanent residence there. This migration has continued uninterrupted and estate agencies still report a booming market. Both of these coastal areas have similar 'types' of Swedish settlements living there as seasonal inhabitants or visiting the areas as 'long-term' tourists (Gustafson, 2009; Olsson, 2018). Living in these parts of Spain means that Swedes, as migrants, will come across agencies, neighbourhood associations, service providers, bars and restaurants that, although located in Spain, have a more international than a 'Spanish' flavour (O'Reilly, 2000).

Similar to many other lifestyle migrants, most of these Swedish migrants in Southern Spain are seeking a better life (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014; O'Reilly & Benson, 2009; O'Reilly, 2000) but maintain Swedish cultural practices, speak Swedish and are still in contact with Sweden. This has become much easier thanks to improved travel facilities and new information technology, and because Spain and Sweden are member states of the EU and Schengen with more or less free mobility between the countries. Increasingly, Swedish citizens in Spain are living most of their life there while maintaining social and living arrangements in Sweden (cf. Gustafson, 2009; Olsson, 2017, 2018; Woube, 2014, 2020). However, despite their privileged situation in their new settlement the migrants often find themselves in a position where they are without the necessary skills or support from the authorities to negotiate their everyday reality. The reality of their situation may be one important reason why so many Swedish migrants in Spain seem to enjoy the company of other Swedes and seek opportunities to socialise in situations where they can speak entirely in Swedish. However, it seems that their 'segregation' often takes these migrants into a more uncertain world of language problems. For this reason, there is a significant civic engagement within the networks with volunteers, church organisations and individual entrepreneurs that offer support and self-help with daily care and interpretation (Gavanas, 2017; Olsson, 2018). Having access to this safe harbour of supportive Swedish mates and actors will however require some kind of reorientation of individuals to the dominating standards and norms within these contexts (Gavanas, 2017; Lundström, 2014; Olsson, 2017, 2018). An interesting question in the continued discussion here concerns how the associations relate to this aspect of the network members' reality while attempting to make a Swedish community of them.

The 'Swedish' social association

Some of the Scandinavian social associations in these coastal areas have been active as clubs since the early 1960s. Most small-scale associations and networks were initiatives set up by committed individuals in response to requests from different networks of friends and families, and a few of these have developed into much larger units with several hundreds or even thousands of members. Their ambition to become important players in the networks is very clear and this section will discuss the practices of these large associations as examples of social mobilisation. In addition, we will look deeper into the way the implemented practices will orient the networks toward both lifestyle and 'cultural' attributes. It is likely that many within the Swedish migrant networks feel that the large associations are not for everyone and many are indifferent to what these are trying to do. Even if Spain in this context becomes a place to which individuals migrate in order to reinvent themselves and discover something new, the associations

seem to promote segregation not only along national lines but also, as we will show, age, ethnic and 'class' lines.

Social and responsible

When associations grow in size, they also take on a much broader responsibility. They often need to expand their repertoire to a greater range of activities and there are stricter requirements regarding public registration, forms of management, economic accounting, auditing, etc. With growing budgets and an increasing number of activities, the board must take on quite extensive duties and responsibilities. Some of the Scandinavian associations have been able to convert their income from membership fees and sponsorship – mainly by Swedish entrepreneurs in the area – into power and influence. Hans, who at the time of our fieldwork was the chair of one of the large Scandinavian associations, expressed his concern about this issue in the following way:

> When I was elected as the chair [of the association], I made it clear that we should combine the useful with the pleasurable. The useful stuff has to do with healthcare, finding apartments, dealing with housing, and so on. We are mediating contacts and providing interpretation services. Then we have the pleasurable stuff (of course)! We hold good conversations and allow people to experience more culture.

The representatives of the associations need strategies that attract their potential members by providing an interesting agenda and envisioning further progression. This is a well-known and classic example of how community leaders act in situations of mobilisation. However, in the current case there have also been other examples of how networks can be organised. For example, the largest association for Swedes in Spain established itself in the form of a 'top-down' initiative by a housing agency. Our informant Gustav, a well-known entrepreneur in the Costa Blanca area, recalled the days when many of the Swedish customers (as he saw it) bought their houses without access to proper information and without much forward planning. Gustav told us that the housing agency 'became more like a social office than an estate agency' by being involved in the everyday practicalities of the buyers. As a response to this, the agency created a kind of association that 'could help in taking care of the newcomers, for a small fee' which later developed into a members-only social association for *all* Swedes and Scandinavians in general. Other entrepreneurs in the area expressed a similar interest in supporting the Swedes on community issues and it is clear that this interest often overlapped with their business interests (cf. Börestam, 2011).

The 'social club'

For a long time, the clubhouses of the larger associations have been meeting places in which visitors have access to a cafeteria where they can have coffee and a light meal with friends – often in the Swedish style – and visit a library with literature and newspapers in Swedish (and, to some extent, other Scandinavian languages). Internet access is free of charge and the visitors get news and information about social events and upcoming activities. The clubhouses are filled with magazines and advertisements of different offers while, for instance, service providers and restaurants are making these venues hubs for consumption interests within the networks. There clearly are expectations among the

people in the Swedish networks that the associations should act as clubs for their social life and our informants often mentioned this need. For this reason, the associations tried to provide their visitors with a familiar and home-like environment that may bridge the gap between their Spanish residence and Swedish society (cf. Jeppson Grassman & Taghizadeh Larsson, 2012; Miller, 2019; Oliver, 2020; Olsson, 2017; O'Reilly, 2000).

However, for obvious reasons the associations are not prepared to satisfy all possible requests from their members. Our informants gave frequent examples of why the association sometimes needed to decide on what they should offer to their members. They also admitted that their offers sometimes were coloured by their own motivation to receive support and enthusiasm from a large number of individuals. Several declared that everyone was welcome to participate (as long as they pay for their membership fee) in the activities and the board members denied having any criteria for including or excluding members. Although this is the official policy of these associations, there are implicit messages that make people feel that certain activities are not for them. This is obvious in the planning, selection and implementation of activities. When looking closer at the agendas of these associations, we noted that many of the events were not arranged to fit with those who have commitments during the day, such as for instance those who are working or studying.

The most popular events put on by the associations are probably the parties, pub evenings and celebrations of traditional Swedish festivities. Next in popularity are the recurring social games such as bridge, chess and bingo. Other examples of popular activities with a similar social function are excursions to both distant and neighbouring attractions in Spain (often accompanied by a guide), visits to a local *bodega* or a theatre, and classes – in particular classes in Spanish – and various types of leisure activities. Two remarkably popular activities in the Swedish networks seem to be golf and *petanca* (bowls). The large associations even have special sections for these activities and try to obtain discounts for their members on the costly green fees.

The organised festivities are a good illustration of how the associations create an image of themselves as carriers of Swedish traditions or interests. For some popular festivities, the clubs normally release a limited number of tickets that, for a fixed price, include a seat at a table, a meal and drinks. These kinds of festivities are extremely popular, with much raising of glasses in toast and singing of traditional Swedish folk and drinking songs. However, although often framed as a traditional celebration, these events have been adapted to local circumstances. One example is the party celebrating the seasonal start of the tradition of cray-fishing (*kräftpremiär*) which is set in early August in Sweden, a time when the associations often close for the summer. Another example is the *surströmmingspremiär* which is a party following the annual release of new boxes of fermented herring (normally in late August), a tradition in which a somewhat exclusive dinner – because of the strong smell for which the dish is famous – will be limited to private companies and mostly associated with inhabitants from Northern Sweden. These traditions become somewhat exotic in the Spanish context, which may be *why* their celebration in Spain is so popular (cf. Tallgren, 1999).

These popular and 'traditional Swedish' celebrations are part of a 'festive culture' (Conzen, 1989) that engages migrants in a social context where the sense of being Swedish *abroad* is the focus. The events include at least some elements of an imagined Swedish tradition that reminds the participants of 'who we [they] are' (cf. Fortier, 2006).

Seen in the context of the mobilisation of Swedish networks, the use of traditional 'Swedish culture' and nostalgia expresses an almost classic way of creating feelings of familiarity and community based on the ethnic origin of the participants (e.g. Ahmed, 2011; Gans, 1979; Miller, 2019; O'Reilly, 2000; Sanjek, 1992; Sollors, 1989). However, it is also clear that these festivities have a bias in a certain age segment of the networks. Irrespective of what younger people think about these 'traditional' celebrations and cultural content, these practices are mainly addressing the older generation. Similarly, there is an ethnonational dimension built into these practices as they, first, mainly address Swedish participants (and not Scandinavians in general) and, second, may exclude individuals who are immigrants to Sweden (including those from other Nordic countries).

The associations' offering of a familiar social space to their members – the embodiment of the function of being a social club – is an example not only of mobilisation but also of orientation. The Swedish visitor is supposed to feel at home in these places due to the invocation of all that is familiar in the homeland while staying in these Southern Spanish settings. This is a home-making that appears as a well-known component of most diasporas (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999) but, as previously mentioned, the repertoire and nature of the implemented activities and events were some of the reasons why the clubs became so popular among the senior citizens.

The guide

Although lifestyle migration normally is a phenomenon associated with privilege and pleasure, this does not mean that the sun is always shining. There are almost certainly challenges and insecurities that come with being a foreigner – especially in situations where the individual is in need of social support or health assistance. There is a good market of service providers who offer their products and services in a familiar language (e.g. Swedish or English) in these areas (e.g. Börestam, 2011; Gavanas, 2017; O'Reilly, 2000, 2017; Stone & Stubbs, 2007). However, when asked about them, many of our informants compared finding those services to navigating in a jungle. It is clear from our field data that many associations took this situation seriously. While offering services to their members with information and support to facilitate their daily lives, they were able to reinvent themselves as important players in the networks.

In this spirit, the associations intend to provide their members with useful information and mediate the services that they expected to request. For instance, two of the largest Scandinavian social associations on the Costa Blanca publish magazines containing articles, columns, association news and facts as well as briefings and notices about Spanish society and the Swedish space in the region. In each issue, readers also find useful information on practical matters such as the Spanish tax system or the rules governing property ownership. As also observed by Casado-Diaz (2009) for British retirees in Spain, the associations are, in a sense, offering their members (and prospective members) a 'guide' to living a comfortable life in Spain (Olsson, 2017). However, a look at the publications of the associations shows pages with advertisements placed mostly by companies operating in the Scandinavian space. Those who are looking for a particular establishment or product may of course find this useful, but there are ulterior motives behind the service. The publication and distribution of these magazines is expensive and, like most other publishers, the associations are dependent on the patronage of

advertisers and sponsors. One of these magazines is a giant, with each edition sent out to more than 15,000 members and to addresses in Scandinavian countries. This analysis of this magazine paints a clear picture of the consequences of sponsorships. The estate and legal agencies advertise frequently in it and occasionally they are the authors of informative articles (e.g. legal consultants writing about a new tax regulation). In this way, the associations and business enterprises seem to be an integral part of each other, and this close collaboration expands into the articles published in the magazines.

The larger associations regularly organise information events for their members. These occasions are often relaxed and the associations' invite experts or representatives of companies to give lectures, seminars or just information briefs. The invited speakers are normally reputed to have good knowledge of Spanish society, such as journalists or academics, or someone who could present facts about fiscal issues or a topic that the organisers think would be of interest. For example, during fieldwork we participated in four events that were concerned with Spanish and transnational regulations regarding tax declarations and other fiscal issues, and also two events about the possibilities of receiving elderly care as a foreign citizen in Spain. The associations' websites are their social window and contain much useful information about for instance tax regulations, pension rules for those living in Spain with pensions from their active time in Sweden, as well as healthcare and practical information believed to be useful for Swedish residents in Spain. In these cases, the associations mediate services, information and activities that are relevant mainly to certain types of migrants from Sweden living in Spain: those who have an interest in economic transactions and those who are seniors with an interest in staying in Spain (Olsson, 2017, 2018).

Engaging in the mediation of services and information has given the associations new opportunities to recruit new members. This is becoming an increasingly important component in the collective mobilisation of the Swedish community in Spain. According to representatives for one of the largest associations for Swedes, they managed to increase its membership with more than 100% within just a few years. This occurred after the new management of the association intensified the efforts of finding sponsorships and could offer good bargains for their golf-playing members. These examples also demonstrate that these arrangements in some sense become both 'collective vehicles' (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 269) *and* orientation devices (Ahmed, 2006) within the larger associations' mobilisations. In their efforts to provide information and services, the associations are clearly targeting wealthy individuals of an older age (or at least with corresponding needs).

While undertaking this service-function, it is clear how the associations are collaborating with the different entrepreneurs operating in the Swedish space. Although this is a way for the associations to attract as many members as possible, it is also clear that 'money talks'. Entrepreneurs have been active as individual members in these associations since the 1960s and have often served in the board. At a time when 'consumption' and service become important arguments for membership, it becomes obvious how this will shape the associations' repertoires of activities. The potential members are of course paying members and the repertoire is to some extent negotiated to suit their requests. However, at the same time, the members will be consumers of the services and products that are available and delivered by the entrepreneurs. 'Wealthy' older individuals with transnational links to Sweden become the natural object to recruit as members and as consumers, as these are relatively wealthy and ready to pay for their services. In this

way, there are obvious entanglements between the interests of installing activities in the associations and the economic interests of the entrepreneurs (Olsson, 2018). In the next section, we will show how the associations in the same spirit also expect their members to be of Swedish nationality.

The 'Swedish' association

In previous subsections, we have described some of the boundary-making aspects of the implementation of these practices. Our field data offers very few examples of initiatives to 'integrate' with Spanish society in terms of performing as one association among other civic or interest associations in Spain. There were some rare exceptions when the associations envisioned doing something together with local Spanish actors, but these seem to be sporadic and were not met with much enthusiasm by the members. Lena, who was one of the leading individuals behind a large network of Swedes on the Costa Blanca, recounted one initiative to organise an excursion jointly with a local Spanish association for senior citizens. However, this attempt failed completely, she said, as 'the Spaniards were sitting on one side of the bus, speaking intensively with each other and the Swedes sitting on the other'.

Similarly, even though their names are using the 'Nordic' connotation, the associations also seem to be uninterested in inviting other Nordic citizens to their activities. Other nationalities – such as Swedish-speaking Finns and, to some extent, Norwegians and Danes – are, of course, able to understand information and participate in events, but the firm grounding of these activities in (imagined) Swedish traditions and nostalgia, as in the case of festivities, implies otherwise. In the same manner, the articles and information about pensions and other legal issues mostly address Swedish individuals in the Swedish language, who in reality also are Swedes by origin and culture. One clear example appears on the website of one of the large associations, seen in their ambition to offer useful information for their potential members. Under the rubric *Ambassad och konsulat i Spanien* (Embassy and consulate in Spain), all retirees are advised (in Swedish) to contact the consulate and obtain a certificate confirming that they are alive (!). The reason is that those 'living outside Sweden and receiving age-related pensions, sickness- or activity compensation, survivors' pensions or occupational injury annuities from *Försäkringskassan* (the Swedish Social Insurance Agency) must prove each year that they are alive'. On the same website, the readers are advised to renew their passports in *Sweden*, as trying to do this in Spain is considered to be very complicated.

Most information of this kind is probably useful for the *Swedish* citizens that are living in Spain but do not speak Spanish. However, it is probably of considerably less value for citizens of other countries. This is remarkable as the association in the example, according to its statutes and its name, carries a clear pan-Nordic connection. When we questioned this nationality bias, the respondents in most cases explained that it related to their situation as 'Swedes in Spain' with limited knowledge of Spanish. Correspondingly, there were similar examples of Scandinavian associations that mainly addressed people of Norwegian or Finnish origin.

The emphasis on Swedish *origins* and language in the activity repertoires of the observed associations, signals to whom the associations are addressing their invitation cards (Fortier, 2006; Olsson, 2017). The setting-up of activities clearly had a Swedish

audience in mind and the information was mostly irrelevant for non-Swedish readers. In the previous subsection, we observed that the associations were concerned with mediating services on practical issues such as Spanish bureaucracy and tax regulations when having engagements in two countries (i.e. Spain and Sweden). A seminar arranged by one of our associations under the rubric 'Seminar with tapas and wine', clearly demonstrated a similar concern. For this seminar a financial business representative was invited to give a presentation on 'interesting investment opportunities'. In the advertising text, the company presented itself (in Swedish) as a management agency specialising in 'independent financial consulting for wealthy private individuals, businessmen and institutions but with a focus on Swedes and Nordics who regularly live in Spain and Sweden'. Again, this shows that the association and the company behind this event shared an interest in those who are wealthy and live in Sweden as well as Spain. With this presentation and by announcing Swedish as the seminar language, this event clearly addressed those with Swedish affiliations and not the ones with for instance Norwegian ones. Similarly, the associations' discourses normatively departed from the situation of some segments of the Swedish networks without reflecting on other needs or relating to a more general agenda of 'integrating' into Spanish society.

The references to the immigrant situation and the shared Swedish language are seemingly strong discursive arguments that may appeal to the Swedes in the networks. However, this did not to a larger extent result in initiatives that facilitated an everyday life with regular contacts with the local Spanish society. The associations did not have much interaction with the local Spanish society, except for some rare occasions where their representatives tried to push their interests at the municipality or negotiated for discounts at different facilities or establishments. Instead, their activities mainly offered services that maintained their segregation but facilitated the possibilities of finding amenities and everyday services with the help of service providers. This is a consequence of the entangled interests of the associations and ethnically profiled companies and entrepreneurs. Both are benefiting from access to a lively network of people in their capacity as consumers and members of a community. The associations try to appeal to the interest of their members by reinventing themselves as service mediators, but in order to succeed with this prospect they need the collaboration with business interests. Hence, the focus on the Swedish nationality has an economic dimension that involves an interest in maintaining their connection with Swedish society and performing like Swedish nationals in Spain.

Conclusion: diasporisation and lifestyle orientation

The discussion in this article revolves around the large Scandinavian social associations and their key position in mobilising the Swedish migrant networks in Southern Spain. The article demonstrates how this mobilisation is building a space where Swedish migrants can meet, socialise and, to some extent, consume, rather than participate or attempt to integrate into Spanish society. Since the implemented practices have a clear 'ethnic' and 'homeland-oriented' profile, we believe that this study offers good arguments for comparing the current mobilisations with other cases of mobilisations of migrant diasporic populations and networks. In this case, the associations emerge as the 'agents of diasporic imagination' (Sökefeld, 2006, pp. 275–276) and the practices implemented by

these not only 'organise' the networks but also orientate them in some ways more than others. With this discussion, we have tried to nuance the image of lifestyle migration by looking at the community formation among these networks and by suggesting a link with mobilisation processes of that diasporas are known for (Sökefeld, 2006; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). One of the crucial findings in this study is that this diasporisation is not only a matter of recruiting and organising individuals of migrant background, but also a matter of constructing fragmented networks as communities. We account for a case where 'lifestyle-style' qualities – for instance amenity, comfort in life-situation and transnationality – belong to the requisites that agents exploit in order to construct the community. The arguments for these general conclusions we derive from the following three empirical observations.

The first observation is that the large associations exploit the 'classic' function of being 'clubs' and social arenas for their potential members, to some extent reminding and reflecting a bounded 'we' in the association (Fortier, 2006). This means that the associations offer a home-like environment with extensive possibilities for a social life in which Swedish is the standard language and the consumption of Swedish brands (such as food or beverages) and culture is the norm. These clubs also offer their members a range of activities and events that in many cases have (imagined) Swedish connotations, such as festivities and music performances, but also activities that appeal to the potential members' interests or 'needs', the latter with respect to their age and situation.

The second observation is that the associations increasingly reinvent themselves by assuming responsibility for practical matters in migrants' daily lives. This partly implies that the clubs will organise different cultural and informational activities, circulate information and provide services which are assumed to be of interest to their members and which will, in other ways, promote a 'good life' for the Swedish migrants in Spain. It is noteworthy that the implementation of these practices will facilitate the 'homeland' connections by mediating services and providing means of communication with Swedish authorities and society. The immediate rationale behind this expanded engagement is the pragmatic goal of increasing the number of members in the association that is a guarantee to maintain their positions as important players in the Swedish networks. On this point, the associations have overlapping interests with many of the entrepreneurs who are targeting the Scandinavian networks in Spain for commercial purposes while at the same time trying to build them as communities (Börestam, 2011).

The third observation is concerned with the 'profiling' of the practices of these associations. However, the targeting of potential members on behalf of the associations also sets the norm for the kind of people the club is representing. It is, for instance, apparent how the clubs make a particular effort to provide information and services that are of interest to potential members who are senior and who have social or financial commitments in both Spain and Sweden, but not for instance families with young children or those with a poor financial situation. The associations are less engaged in other issues that are potentially important in the life of Swedish migrants. Since the associations are mainly using Swedish in their communication with their members and normatively design activities that relate to the 'Swedish' part in the Scandinavian networks, they also take a clear 'ethnic' position in this mobilisation. Hence, in focus for this mobilisation are age and expected lifestyle and transnational qualities, rather than a community which has a firm ground in for instance a 'political' movement or a 'religious' segment of the population

(cf. Cohen, 1997). However, this profiling also implies furnishing the association with objects from the homeland and a repertoire of activities that fits well with the expected audience (cf. Ahmed, 2006). The implication is that the observed mobilisation is not solely a matter of gathering people and implementing engagement in a network of migrants, but also that the 'making' and orientating of the 'population' are important aspects in these processes.

There have been social associations operating among the networks of Swedes in Southern Spain since the early 1960s (Olsson, 2018). Although the intensity and scale have differed, the associations seem to succeed in attracting individuals in the networks by pragmatically reinventing themselves as agents and mediators of diasporic feelings and sociality. This study demonstrates how these diasporic agents approach the Scandinavian networks as if they were composed of individuals with quite similar interests and attributes and how they design practices to promote a comfortable life in the native language of the association. This will orientate the desired community in the direction of being – sometimes even becoming – Swedes abroad while having their shoes firmly anchored on Swedish soil.

In connection to our general conclusion, we here understand these practices of the large associations as the centre-point of a broader 'infrastructure' (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014) of practices that are converging in the diasporisation of the relatively diverse and fragmented 'Swedish' migrant networks in Southern Spain. We believe that seeing diaspora as a 'category of practice' (Brubaker, 2005, p. 11) will give important insights into the process of mobilisation that accounts for the qualities of community-making in terms of profiling and orientation. The central mechanism in diasporisations, like all group-formations, is the creation of boundaries to other similar types of communities (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991). Hence, in this case, when the ambition of providing a comfortable life for the members overlaps with economic interests, 'segregation' become a more powerful type of practice than 'integration'. However, this community formation of Swedes in Southern Spain should *not* be confused with diasporas performing as expatriate social minority communities in the more static form of this notion. In line with the critique of the essentialising tendencies in diaspora studies (e.g. Anthias, 1998, 2001; Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Kalra et al., 2005), we do not imply that individuals with a Swedish migrant background automatically will join this mobilisation of a Swedish community in Southern Spain. Although our observation partly corresponds well with the stereotype of lifestyle migrants – people who, at least partly, live comfortably segregated from the local communities in their new setting – not all Swedish migrants in Southern Spain have adapted this way of life (Gavanas, 2017; Olsson, 2018; Woube, 2014). In some cases, the consumption patterns and life worlds of these settings are not even anything they looked for in their search for a better life.

Notes

1. It is obvious that the official statistics on the population in Spain (see www.ine.es) do not include all residents and semi-residents of foreign origin. Many do not register their stay in Spain but could legally stay up to six months during a year and continue doing this for a longer period. An inquiry made by the lobbying organization Swedes Worldwide estimates the actual population to be around 90,000 (SVIV, 2015). It should be mentioned that

Swedish migrants are scattered all over Spain and do not live exclusively in 'tourist' destinations.
2. The names of all interviewees cited in this article are pseudonyms.

Disclosure statement

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