

*2nd International Workshop on Lifestyle Migration and Residential Tourism
Madrid: March 23-25, 2011*

**Contested Spatialities of Lifestyle Migration
Public policies, local democracy and global market forces**

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ABSTRACT

Place making and belonging in the retirement destination of Torrox Costa

Current research about the motivation of retirement migrants for moving to amenity areas in Spain, like Andalusia or the Costa Blanca region, revealed aspects like mild winter climates or landscape diversity as most important attraction factors. Such stimuli just have been abstract issues and, at a first glance, the choice of a concrete destination might have been arbitrarily and by pure chance. Corresponding with areas of (residential) tourism, retirement destinations are frequently located in urbanized areas, where the built environment often does not provide symbolic points of interest or meaningful places.

Leaving their familiar surroundings in Northern or Central Europe for three to twelve months a year and facing insecurities due to their age, retirement migrants are striving for places to belong within their new residences. If the built environment does not offer them, they tend to charge former non-places with meanings. The presented data is embedded within a case study, carried out in Torrox Costa, Province of Málaga, a homogenous tourist and retirement destination, which was mainly developed, built and promoted by a German company in the 1980s. Apart from concrete toponymes, which are mainly day-trip destinations for German retirees, quantitative data reveal absence of concrete meaningful places on a smaller scale, i.e. in the municipality of residence, Torrox Costa. Even qualitative interviews affirm this assumption at first glance, yet it shows how narratives are inscribed into non-places. Place making acts are predominantly associated with communicative actions and partly detached from patterns of the built environment.

Often discussed in terms of "place identity", this phenomenon has got several more aspects to be captured. Apart from solidarity to place, the concept of "belonging" takes territorial aspects into consideration, without neglecting the importance of social and communicative acts. Providing community and encouraging mutuality and solidarity, "belonging" makes a contribution to satisfaction with the migrants' lives in Spain, even if conflicts due to multiple belongings might become obvious in postmodern times. Whilst debates about integration mainly focus on essential adaptations, receiving societies demand to implement, the

concept of belonging is highlighting the diversity of migrants' personality and explains, how retirement migrants are socially embedded. Enhancing the framework, the paper will provide a constructive point of view, to point out, how belonging occurs within concrete spheres of daily life.

Quantitative and qualitative data reveal both, the existence of *non-places* and how they are transformed into meaningful places by social interactions and the paper finally shows the nexus of "place making" and "belonging".



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Department of Political Science & International Relations, Autonomous University of Madrid*