

THEMATIC ARTICLES – EXPERIENCES OF MIGRATION

Belonging out of Context: the Intersection of Place, Networks and Ethnic Identity among Retired British Migrants Living in the Costa

Blanca

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Abstract. Intra-European migration is now a well-documented phenomenon among older people and for UK retirees, Spain is the most popular choice. ‘Belonging’ is particularly important when attempting to understand experiences of migration since often people become aware that they need to belong precisely when they realise that they do not. However, although belonging is a recurrent theme in identity and migration discourse it is rarely defined. This paper explores the concept of belonging in relation to the experiences of a group of retired women living in the Costa Blanca in Spain and considers its multiple and overlapping representations. The myriad forms of belonging that these ‘lifestyle migrants’ construct through narrative in relation to place, networks and ethnic identity and the central intersecting role of language are considered and discussed.

Keywords: *retirement migration, belonging, place, networks, ethnic identity, language, narrative*

Introduction

‘The ability of people to move within the EU has caused new social and economic circumstances that can either test traditional notions of belonging or revitalise a sense of group identity in the face of a new and unfamiliar ‘other’ (Marsh et al 2007 p. 21).

It is estimated that 5.6 million British nationals live abroad permanently, with a further half a million living abroad for part of the year (Finch et al 2010), significantly outnumbering the 2.9 million foreign nationals living in the UK (Srisankarajah and Drew 2006). Although in the UK, the political and media focus

has always been on the impacts of immigration and particularly the lack of integration of minority ethnic groups, there is evidence that retired British migrants do not integrate well into the countries they move to (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006; Hardill 2006). Belonging is a recurrent theme in identity and migration discourse (Marsh et al 2007; Tamang 2010). It is particularly important when attempting to understand experiences of migration since often people become aware that they need to belong precisely when they realise that they do not (Anthias 2006).

However, although the concept of belonging is often used, it is rarely defined¹: as Anthias (2006) states, 'Belonging and identity are words overused and under-theorised in the context of population movements' (Anthias 2006 p. 19). This paper explores the concept of belonging in relation to the experiences of a group of retired women living in the Costa Blanca in Spain and considers its multiple and overlapping representations through place, social networks and ethnic identity. The central role of language is also considered in terms of how it reflects and sustains ethnic identity out of context and how it underpins and links these different forms of belonging. The paper begins by contextualising UK retirement migration to Spain and then outlines the method and methodological rationale for the study. It then goes on to further discuss the importance of belonging when attempting to understand migration experiences, or being out of context. Finally, findings and analysis from narrative interviews conducted in Spain are presented and discussed in relation to the central role of language for belonging and the intersection of place, networks and ethnic identity.

Contextualising UK retirement migration to Spain

'Displacement has become the most powerful imagery for the modern world' (Anthias 2006 p. 17).

Intra-European migration is now a well-documented phenomenon among older people. (King et al 2000; Ackers and Dwyer 2002; Stalker 2008;

¹ See for example, Smith's (2005) study of children's sense of belonging in the UK. Jayaweera and Choudry (2008), although highlight that migrants to the UK say discrimination undermines 'belonging', do not define what belonging is. O'Reilly (2003, 2007a) refers to belonging in relation to experiences of belonging to social contacts and friendships in the Costa del Sol but she also does not define it

Gustafson 2009; Casado Diaz 2009). In Europe, retirement migration has been mainly movement from north to south – usually not for economic reasons - although lower cost of living is an issue, but for leisure opportunities and quality of life issues such as an equitable climate and availability of amenities. Often migrants have spent time in the place and are familiar with the lifestyle (Casado Diaz 2006). For UK migrants, Spain is the most popular choice for retirees. Born during the mid 20th century, this demographic group – often referred to as ‘baby boomers’² - would have benefited from the increased opportunities associated with growing up in a time of post-war affluence and being in good health. They also experienced a mass consumer revolution; benefits from capital accrued from owner-occupation and the opportunity to retire early (Phillipson et al 2008). People born at this point in time were also the first generation to experience the benefits of foreign travel and cheap air fares. Spain would have been a popular holiday destination from the 1960s and previous experiences of tourism shaped retirement options in later life since ‘Migrants develop a taste for a particular way of life while on holiday in an area and subsequently they decide to migrate, encouraged by their imaginings of the place as offering a better lifestyle’ (Benson and O’Reilly 2009 pp. 613-614).

Migration to the Costa Blanca on the South East coast of Spain has a relatively short history compared to migration to the Costa del Sol (see O’Reilly 2000, 2003, 2007), spanning the last twenty years (Ackers and Dwyer 2002; Casado Diaz 2006, 2010, Hardill 2006)). This migration has been facilitated by the speculative private development of *urbanizaciones de turistica* which are effectively purpose built residential areas for northern European migrants or ‘residential tourists’ (O’Reilly 2003). Some of these properties are purchased as second homes while others become permanent residences. In the main these *urbanizaciones* are on the outskirts of established settlements and are marketed by international estate agents to different European countries which create concentrations of nationalities in particular areas. This study focuses on an area on the outskirts of the Town of Torrevieja³.

O’Reilly (2007b) describes the operation of a mobility enclosure dialectic for intra-European migrants. This denotes both freedom of movement

² The term ‘baby boomers’ generally refers to people born during the mid 20th century in affluent Western countries.

³ This was based on a study undertaken for a doctoral thesis in 2010.

within the EU and the continued significance of nation state borders in terms of access to health care and other services which can make national identity ambiguous. The central focus of this paper however, is on a different kind of physical enclosure within isolated communities remote from the host population and how this shapes experiences and constructions of belonging.

Methods and methodology

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken during 2003 and early 2004 and narrative interviews were conducted with a sample of retired British women in the Costa Blanca in Spain. I had access to a group of women through pre-existing contacts in the area; therefore this was a convenience sample which effectively ‘snowballed’ when people became aware of my study. In this sense the research was in part inspired by my personal experience as a visitor to the area. However, it was also timely since it resonated with wider social trends and themes as migration to Spain had reached unprecedented levels as I suggested earlier. I had met several of the women I interviewed in social situations before engaging them in the research and the sample embodied a range of theoretically appropriate characteristics as follows: living in Spain full or part-time; migrating alone or with partners; and intending to remain in Spain or return to the UK.

Table 1: list of research participants (names are pseudonyms)

Research participant	With partner or alone	Age ⁴	Length of time in Spain ⁵	Education	Employment before retirement
Celia	Married	58	3 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Cynthia	Married	54	5 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Vera	In a couple with Deidre	59	2 years	Higher Education	Professional
Deidre	In a couple With Vera	62	2 years	Further Education	Professional
Phyllis	Married	77	2 years	Secondary school	Retail industry

⁴ This denotes the women’s ages on the date of interview.

⁵ This denotes time lived in Spain on the date of interview

Research participant	With partner or alone	Age ⁴	Length of time in Spain ⁵	Education	Employment before retirement
Mabel	Widowed	83	1 year	Higher Education	Professional
Agnes	Married	69	2 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Agatha	Married	60	Years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Olive	Divorced	57	2 years	Further Education	Retail industry
Myra	Divorced	60	6 months	Secondary school	Retail industry
Margot	Divorced	60	1 year	Secondary school	Retail industry
Lillian	Married	61	2 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Joy	Married	54	5 years	Secondary school	Homemaker
Jenny	Married	56	3 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Viv	Married	54	3 years	Did not finish secondary school	Homemaker
Bernice	Married	62	3 years	Secondary school	Retail industry
Enid	Married	57	2 years	Higher Education	Professional

Although all of the women were retired, their ages ranged from between 53 and 83 with the average being just under 62 years. Since this work is qualitative, representative sampling or sampling as ‘synecdoche’ (Becker 1998) was not necessary. Instead, my sampling strategy was governed by selecting respondents who would maximise theoretical development (Gilbert 1997). My approach was by necessity partially ad hoc and opportunistic but there was a rationale for this: key characteristics were selected within the identified context and my decisions were guided by a combination of theoretical and empirical logic rather than claims of direct representation of the wider population. There is however an issue concerning how I can make claims from the sample I have chosen. The data

generated from my interviews with the women in Spain has wider application or 'generalisability', the findings from my research can be applied to settings other than Costa Blanca or Spain. The underlying goal of both qualitative and quantitative research is to develop and modify theory and transfer knowledge, although the means of determining this is different for each approach (Morse 1999). While in qualitative inquiry the samples are usually small as indicated above, they are selected purposively for the contribution that they can make to emerging theory. Although there will be statements I cannot make since I do not have the profile in my sample, any knowledge generated is relevant beyond the sample regardless of its demographic profile because: 'The knowledge gained is not limited to demographic variables...it is the knowledge that is generalized' (Morse 1999 p. 5).

As I explained above, I carried out research with women partly because I had access to a group of women through my contacts in Spain; therefore this was a convenience sample. However, for the purposes of my research I focused on their lives and experiences of migration as recounted through narrative rather than looking specifically at their gender. The quote below from Stanley and Wise (1990) is useful to explicate my position: 'A defining assumption of feminism is that 'woman' is a necessary and valid category because all women share, by virtue of being women, a set of common experiences. These shared experiences derive, not causally from supposed 'biological facts' but women's common experience of oppression. That is, 'woman' is a socially and politically constructed category, the ontological basis of which lies in a set of experiences rooted in the material world. However, to say that women share 'experiences of oppression' is not to say we share the same experiences' (Stanley and Wise 1990 p. 21.)

Although gender specific migration experiences are important since migration is not gender neutral (Boyd and Grieco 2003), this is not the focus of my research⁶. Women do not constitute a homogeneous group: there are divisions within gender and gender itself also intersects with other social divisions, for example ethnicity (Anthias and Cederberg 2006). Although being a woman was part of what my participants discussed, my study shows that different aspects were privileged in their narratives. I now discuss the value of a narrative approach to gaining knowledge of people's experience of belonging while out of their original country of origin.

⁶ There is a large body of literature on the topic of gender and migration (see Bokert et al 2006, Zlotnick 2003, Anthias and Cederberg 2006, Ryan and Webster 2008).

Narrative is described as constructing identities and opening up a plurality of stories (Wood 1981) Temple (2008) argues that: 'In constructing who we are, we also construct who is 'other' to us' (2008 p. 3). Narratives simultaneously reflect and construct belonging and examining women's narratives was useful to understand how retirees made sense of their lived experiences, particularly in relation to belonging (Anthias 2002 and Riessman 2008). Moreover, how people construct belonging through narrative illuminates how they see themselves in relation to place, networks and ethnic identity. Women's narrative identity therefore, is their construction and presentation of their experiences and themselves through their narratives. Narrative analysis is suited to looking at the presentation of identity since 'When we narrate we both describe and construct who we are: we produce and present identities' (Temple 2008 p. 3). Although there are numerous 'identities' which one could feel and think one is, ethnic identity was privileged for these migrants, gender was not something that was focused on in their accounts. This suggests that out of context this aspect of identity is the most important and that needs to be negotiated (Healy 2010). It is worth noting however, that this type of 'lifestyle migrant' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009) is not a persecuted or disadvantaged minority although arguably, retirees are still struggling to survive in marginalised circumstances. Throughout this paper the term 'British' is used as to denote the women's ethnic identity. Women in the study used the term English and British simultaneously, although 'ambiguity often characterises the boundaries between an English and a British identity' (Cohen 1994 p. 7). It is not within the remit of this discussion to engage with the debate surrounding the intricacies of Britishness and Englishness⁷. Instead, the focus is on ethnicity as a representation of identity and form of belonging.

Belonging out of context

Anthias (2006) is one of few writers who articulate what belonging means, defining it as 'the sense of being accepted or being a full member' (2006 p. 19). Another way of understanding belonging is to conceive of it as 'a sense of intimacy with the world' (Boym 2001 p 251). Yuval Davis (2006) defines belonging as being 'about feeling 'at home' and ...about feeling 'safe'' (2006, p. 2). Marsh et al (2007) refer to 'a sense of belonging' (2007 p. 7) and argue that 'The idea of belonging is

⁷ See Baucom 1999

central to our understanding of how people give meaning to their lives'. Therefore belonging is often multi-dimensional, particularly if those people are displaced, since: 'Immigrants form groups on the basis of common ethnicity and settlement experience, but also according to place of origin, spiritual adherence, cultural and social differentiation and enhanced social capital.' (Lalich 2008, p. 52). Sometimes dislocation is used as a contrasting concept to belonging (Davidson and Khun-Eng 2008) and for migrants, being out of their original context – or dis-located – on the margins can mean an ambivalent status in the host country (O'Reilly 2007b).

Belonging also 'Involves an important affective dimension relating to social bonds and ties' (Anthias 2006 p. 21). This can be understood to relate to networks. Marsh et al (2007) assert that 'social identity' (2007, p. 4) is important since it provides an indicator of social change, that is, of different permutations of belonging. What people feel to be a sense of belonging at a particular time says something about how they see themselves in relation to the immediate - or micro - and wider – macro - contexts in which they are placed in the world. For the purposes of this study social identity relates to 'ethnic identity'. Further, 'Ethnic categories are forms of social organisation, postulating boundaries with identity markers' (Anthias 2002, p. 498) and 'ambiguity often characterises the boundaries between an English and a British identity' (Cohen 1994, p. 7).

The concept of boundaries is frequently discussed in conjunction with belonging (Cohen 1985; Yuval Davis 2006), in that boundaries symbolically mark beginnings and endings. In terms of physical location and boundaries, there is a geographical finiteness to place, both in terms of shared country of origin and shared current environment in Spain; for networks, those involved in them mark this boundary by who is included (identifying insiders and outsiders); and for shared ethnic identity, there are characteristics (real or imagined) which demarcate self and other (see Hall 2000). However, often these different forms of belonging overlap, and are difficult to discuss in isolation from one another as I address below.

The role of language

Language as human agency constructs and sustains the social world (Gergen, 2001, Riessman 1993, 2008 and Temple 1997) and for women in the Costa

Blanca, speaking the English language reinforced similarity with their own ethnic group and difference from other groups. In many ways, white British people have effectively been 'de-racialised' in discussions of ethnicity, while visible⁸ minority ethnic groups have been 'over-racialised' (Nayak 2003). The women in this study were part of an isolated expatriate community which bonded due to outside forces, and not speaking the language of their hosts compounded their isolation. The fact that these migrants were retired reinforced their segregation, since there was little opportunity, and indeed reason, to integrate with Spanish people, which highlights the links between place, networks and ethnic identity. The concept of a British identity embodying a de-racialised norm was most apparent around the issue of language where there was an expectation, although acknowledged to be unrealistic, that other nationalities would (or should) speak English as the examples below illustrate.

Deidre for example, was unable to speak Spanish and expected others to speak English. She cast speaking English as the norm as in her talk, and when asked whether she had any contact with Spanish people she replied: "No, no not really because there are only three families that live nearby; one next door and these two over here and basically they speak no English whatsoever". Here the subtext was that rather than feeling that she should learn how to speak Spanish, the expectation was that 'others' – the Spanish - should speak English. Vera also presented her ethnic identity as a norm but demonstrated an awareness of the contradictory nature of the label foreign by saying: "What I call foreigners - the non English - but that's the wrong word to use is foreign, because we're all foreigners here". All other ethnic groups or nationalities were therefore positioned as 'foreign'. This is also reflected in the language used by the Spanish Government and estate agents when marketing properties in Spain since Europeans are often described as residential tourists, while non-Europeans are described as immigrants (O'Reilly 2003).

It was clear that being able to speak Spanish was regarded as important by the research participants and there were pragmatic and moral reasons for doing so. However, the majority of retirees in the Costa Blanca did not learn the language and were unable to use even basic conversational phrases. Arguably, they had limited contact with Spanish people, therefore few opportunities to practise. However, there was also a reticence to learn Spanish and the research participants

⁸ This refers to 'non-white' ethnic groups

put forward a number of reasons to explain this. There were a number of complex factors which contributed to migrants not learning Spanish (see Hamberger 2009). It was evident that some of the women lacked confidence and perhaps the aptitude to learn the language since the majority had not been educated beyond secondary school. Some were unwilling, apathetic or thwarted by obstacles, while others appeared relieved that they did not have to learn since it was possible to speak only English in the areas in which they lived. Some women experienced difficulty in accessing lessons and age was also put forward as a prohibiting factor. It was also suggested that Spanish was a difficult language to learn and that the education system in the UK was to blame since it inadequately prepared people to learn other languages. It was clear that many of these women expected to pick up the language by virtue of simply living in Spain, but the language skills of Spanish people thwarted them as Bernice suggests: “When you try and speak Spanish here they answer you back in English”.

Britain’s ‘imperial legacy’ was seen by some as an obstacle to learning other languages as Cynthia posited “We think because we had the empire that everyone should speak English”.

To some degree, the research participants seemed embarrassed about their lack of language. It is worth noting that the Spanish supermarkets and restaurants servicing the areas where these people lived usually had English speaking staff in them, and that there were a number of British owned shops, restaurants and bars. Being unable to speak Spanish also operated as a limiting factor, perpetuating migrants’ confinement to English speaking areas of Spain as Bernice illustrates: “Most people round this area, you can get by, they understand a bit of English but if you go out, stopping off in different places, you know it’s really really Spanish and nobody could speak any English, and you do need it then”. Here, ‘getting by’ was predicated on Spanish people being able to speak English rather than British people speaking Spanish and ‘they’ were the Spanish and ‘most people’ and ‘you’, representing a substitute for the first person were British. This reinforces the link between place - that is where the British lived in the Costa Blanca -, the networks they belonged to, and which ethnic groups were included. Here, the importance of language in terms of identity for defining us and others is also apparent. However, not all women were sanguine about this. Vera acknowledged the British legacy of only speaking English but also expressed surprise and disappointment that British people had not made more effort to speak Spanish

when living in Spain. She emphasised her discomfort that British people did not speak other languages by saying: “The English are notoriously lazy at learning languages. We, we’re absolutely shocking, the worst on the planet, but by virtue of the fact that we’re actually living in another country, I thought actually, people might make an effort here”.

Speaking English therefore, re-constructed a British ethnic identity. This illuminates the dual role of language, both in terms of constructing belonging to an ethnic group, and also how shared language is part of belonging and ethnicity. Further, women’s reluctance to change language could also be related to maintaining their ethnic identity since ‘Which language people speak and the act of changing language can ...be important in how people see themselves’ (Temple 2008 p. 5). The group in this study largely demonstrate ‘a classic scenario’ (Smallwood 2007 p. 129) where they arrive in the receiving country, full of good intentions to learn the language but then find that they can live the lifestyle without actually mixing with their hosts. Retirees in the Costa Blanca were not integrated into Spanish society, living on the margins as a result of their retired status and this compounded their isolation and reinforced the mono-cultural nature of their social networks as I now discuss further.

The intersection of place, networks and ethnic identity

Networks emerged as being central to women’s experiences of belonging in Spain and individuals’ interaction with others can sometimes be better understood in the context of social, rather than physical environments (Gilchrist 2000; Clark 2007). A sense of belonging through networks could engender a feeling of safety away from home, or out of context. Although both belonging and safety were both intangible and elusive – or imagined - they were also simultaneously experienced as ‘real’ and used pragmatically when necessary as Vera’s quote illustrates: “We all need a feeling of safety and security. The sense of belonging, that safety net aspect of it, the feeling of being part of something, or the feeling that maybe there’s something there, even if you don’t need to use it all the time”. Social contact was almost exclusively with other migrants from the UK and although it was evident that this was disappointing, there were structural as well as personal reasons for this. As indicated above, the location and design of the urbanisation were seen as the main cause since migrants from the UK lived on the

margins and were not part of Spanish society. Very few Spanish people lived in the urbanisations and only a very small number used them as holiday homes and so contact tended to be on a very superficial level due to language issues. Social capital (Putnam 2000) is now commonly used to understand connections between individuals. There are three types of social capital: bonding, which involves ties between people in similar situations; bridging social capital which involves making links outside of the immediate group and linking social capital (Woolcock 2001) which relates to much more distant ties. Women in this study primarily used bonding social capital since they were limited by their language skills.

In such diasporic circumstances, it was pragmatic to seek out and create social networks. Since women in Spain were away from family and networks in the UK there was a shared experience of being out of context and Celia articulated this view by saying: “We’re all here with no family and the people we meet are either like, going to be be friends and I think then, and feel that we’re in the same boat being here. And you get to meet people and you might need people and you have to get on with it. You don’t know when you’re going to need any help”. Celia’s metaphorical use of ‘the same boat’ referred to retirees in the Costa Blanca sharing the same circumstances and needing to develop social networks. To a degree then, social contact in Spain can be understood to be directed by necessity rather than choice as there were limited options available to migrants since they tended only to speak English. Vera’s quote illustrates this further: “In Spain your social contacts tend to be really on the basis of necessity rather than choice. Some of the people you meet in Spain, you wouldn’t necessarily be friends with in England”. Therefore, it appeared that these women had social contact with other migrants from the UK by default and there was an assumption that they were friends due to shared language and culture, although not the same values (Sherlock 2002).

For the women in this study, further evidence of belonging to networks being determined by ethnic group is exemplified by Joy’s comment: “I feel part of a small expat community, but that’s it”. Belonging to networks reinforced ethnic identity and ethnic background and speaking English shaped the kinds of networks people were part of. Being away from the UK meant that migrants from the UK tended to gravitate towards their own ethnic group. This in turn reinforced their ethnic identity and cultural practices. Joy’s comment about the kind of community she felt a part of in Spain betrayed the fact that social contact was limited to ‘her own kind’ that is, other migrants from the UK with whom she socialised and whom

she related to due to shared language and background. Celia was also disappointed that she did not live a more Spanish life or interact with Spanish people as this quote illustrates: “Well that’s the sad thing, it I really did think, that’s another thing, when I came to live here, that I thought I would be living in such an English community. Yes I really hoped that ...there would be Spanish people...I suppose, we could be back in the UK”.

Migrants from the UK were a minority and not part of the mainstream, living parallel lives to their hosts in ghetto like urbanisations. Although the term ‘ghetto’ was historically applied to describe disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with high levels of minority ethnic groups, some women in this study applied this term to where they lived. Vera, for example, referred to the areas where UK migrants lived in Spain as ‘ghettos’ since they were segregated along ethnic lines saying: “We do live in ghettos, there’s no doubt about it. Therefore, migrants from the UK continued to live a ‘British’ life in the Costa Blanca, in fact ‘It seems the British cannot escape their Britishness’ (O’Reilly 2007b p. 288). There were a number of reasons for this. First, the location of the urbanisations, away from established areas populated by the Spanish was significant. Second, the way that the properties were marketed and sold to Northern European migrants perpetuated such segregation; and third, the inability of the women to speak Spanish compounded this.

Being able to engage with culturally familiar customs, habits and those of the same ethnic grouping was presented as a positive aspect of life in Spain by some participants and by others as a disappointment. However, overall there was an acceptance of this. For some, for example Myra celebrated the fact that she was among compatriots, and felt safer and more at home because of the familiarity that this brought. She did not see anything wrong with this and when she says below ‘I don’t mind’ in relation to mixing with Spanish people she was conceding that it was their country. However, the fact that the area she lived in is so heavily populated with Britons allowed her to almost disregard this. She referred to English culture being imported by the English – in this part of Spain the British were the dominant group, this was apparent in terms of cuisine, provisions, culture and language. Myra talked about this as a positive thing whereas some of the others did not. Her use of ‘England in Spain’ below suggests that Britons had ‘claimed’ this part of Spain: “Out here it’s an English environment. I chose where I live because I thought there was [sic] English people around which would be more, well, you feel you’re a

bit safer. Not that I don't want to mix with the Spanish, I don't mind, it's their country, but it is England in Spain here really it is". Vera was less happy about this when she commented: "I think what I do is lead an English life in Spain...it's not for me the ideal thing. That's not the ideal. I wanted to be more integrated if you like with the Spanish. That's the way that people live, it's like with like tend to be happier with your own culture. We do tend to mix with English people, just because a lot of English people tend to have retired over here as yet". By saying 'that's the way that people live', she appeared critical of the 'Brits abroad' stereotype and wanted to disassociate herself from it.

Retired migrants living in the Costa Blanca constructed belonging to networks to provide a social context to their lives, although networks cannot be separated from place and ethnic identity. Women shared a sense of belonging with other people from the same ethnic group and they used their social capital to bond rather than bridge outside English speaking UK migrant networks. Networks are further connected with identity and place since location is significant in shaping group and individual identity. This in turn influences those groups and individuals with whom a sense of belonging is shared (Brah 1996; Temple 1995). Belonging to social networks therefore operates in multiple ways *out of one's context*. Women in Spain lived in an isolated diasporic community and ethnicity and language were all significant in structuring access to and engagement with networks.

Conclusion

Women who moved to the Costa Blanca benefited from fluid movement across national borders in the EU since 1992; that is mobility. However, once they settled in Spain, they found that they were effectively living in bounded settlements, almost exclusively with people from their own ethnic group. This 'enclosure' was compounded for these women by the fact that they lived in urbanisations which were marketed for specific nationalities. Their ethnic identity was effectively reinforced by their dislocation from their hosts, their inability to speak Spanish, and their diasporic status (Temple 1999, Anthias 2002). Significantly, retirement migration is different from migration among people of working age in two significant ways. First, since retirees are no longer working, their opportunities for participation in the host country are limited. Further, as noted previously, these women used bonding social capital which compounded this (Putnam 2000). They

were unable to 'bridge' to people outside of their ethnic group, unless they spoke English.

The women in this study were unable to assimilate with their hosts. They lived on the margins of Spanish society which maintained boundaries and influenced their sense of belonging. They generally did not perceive themselves as being foreign or as immigrants, but rather as the 'norm' and other nationalities and languages as 'other'. This demonstrates a high priority being placed on being British out of context and belonging represented as ethnic identity. A further complexity here was how the women talked of their status as 'foreign'. Many of the women talked of the Spanish as being the foreigners, even though they were the host population and in this sense being from the UK and speaking English was often positioned as an overarching norm, sometimes used to minimise the issues associated with not speaking Spanish.

The women in my study can be described as 'transmigrants' (Cronin 2006; O'Reilly 2000, 2003, 2007a) since they were from one place and of another. They reconstructed their ethnic identity in Spain, in part through networks with other migrants from the UK. Further, their isolation from the host population reinforced their British ethnic identity. This group are also a diaspora, which can be understood as an alternative way of thinking about transnational migration since the condition of 'diasporicity' is being *from* one place and *of* another (Anthias 1998). Within the concept of diaspora, ethnic bonds are a central, primary defining element, although identity formation is fluid and related to relationships with country of origin and individual and group consciousness (Ngan 2008). Although they were not forced to leave their homes, they were influenced still by the push and pull models of migration. They occupy spaces which are often separate from the host population and tend to network with their compatriots.

Being situated in 'diaspora space' (Brah 1996) on the margins in Spain highlights the significance of location in shaping any group and individual identity (Temple 1999) and provides further evidence of the links between place, networks and ethnic identity. Given that 'a sense of or concern with, belonging becomes activated most strongly when there is a sense of exclusion' (Anthias 2006 p. 21), focusing on how people experience belonging to places, networks and ethnic group can illuminate how they achieve intimacy with the world in the absence of that intimacy when they are out of context. Belonging therefore can be understood to represent being or feeling *a part of rather than apart from* which reflects both

intimacy and distance and encompasses places, networks and ethnic group. This denotes the multi-dimensional, complex and overlapping nature of different forms of belonging.

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