LIVEABOARDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: LUXURY OR MARGINALITY? – ETHNOGRAPHIC REFLECTIONS ON MARITIME LIFESTYLE MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Liveaboards[1] in the Mediterranean: Luxury or Marginality? – Ethnographic Reflections on Maritime Lifestyle Migrations

As a result of the opening of internal borders in the EU and the rapid development of affordable navigation technology, there is a constantly increasing number of people from Western Europe in the Mediterranean who have adopted a lifestyle that revolves around living working and travelling on boats. Through ethnography we will reflect on 1) different forms of the liveaboard phenomenon; and 2) contextualize the phenomenon within lifestyle migration theory and discuss overlapping, interweaving and dispersing between cases.

KEY WORDS: lifestyle migration, mobility, liveaboards, Mediterranean Sea

IZVLEČEK

Živeti na barki v Mediteranu: Luksuz ali marginalnost? – Etnografska refleksija pomorskih življenjsko-stilskih migracij

Z odprtjem notranjih meja v Evropski uniji in s hitrim razvojem lahko dostopne navigacijske tehnologije v Mediteranu narašča število ljudi iz Zahodne Evrope, ki so razvili poseben življenjski stil – na barki združujejo delo, potovanje in vsakdanje življenje. S pomočjo etnografije bomo osvetlili 1) različne oblike življenjskih stilov, povezanih z življenjem na barki in 2) pojav kontekstualizirali s teorijo migracije kot življenjskim stilom s ciljem oblikovanja diskusije o sovpadanju, prepletanju in razhajanju med obravnavanimi primeri.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: migracija kot življenjski stil, mobilnost, barkarji, Mediteransko morje

INTRODUCTION

The book *Sell Up and Sail* by Bill and Laurel Cooper, which has become a bible for long-term cruisers (one can find it on many liveaboard boats, on book-swap shelves in marina toilets and club rooms) begins with the following story:

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1 The word liveaboards is frequently used to refer to people who live on sailboats for extended periods. The word is also widespread on internet blogs and forums and is recognised within the sailing community as well. The expression boat people is more commonly applied to people living on riverboats while the word liveabaords is used mainly in connection with people living on the sea on sailboats.

> In 1976 we sold our house, waved goodbye to the family, and took to the sea in a boat we had built ourselves. We became long-distance, liveaboard cruisers […]. Abandoning brick walls and gardens, property taxes, and interference from authorities who continually tried to order what we might or might not do, we took on the less comfortable but much more invigorating life of responsibility for our own actions, health, welfare and safety (Cooper, Cooper 1994: 11).

Although the liveaboard phenomenon is a highly diversified – touching on several forms of migration such as IRM (International Retirement Migration), long term (sabbatical) travel, tourism, lifestyle migration and marginal mobility[2] – most long term liveaboard cruisers begin their stories with words similar to those of the Coopers. In-depth ethnographic research reveals various forms of overlapping, interweaving and dispersing within the phenomenon.

In the Mediterranean, the *sell up and sail* syndrome is a relatively recent phenomenon connected with the opening of internal borders within the EU, the rapid development of affordable navigation technology, the rapid expansion of boat charter industries that introduced *pleasure cruising*, and several recent socio-political contexts within Europe which vary from increased standards of living to the recession and disillusionment with the national state system based dominant norms of the society marked by neo-liberal[3] global capitalism (cf. Bousiou 2008; Clark 1997; D'Andrea 2006, 2007; Dearling 1998; Korpela 2009; Martin 1998, 2002; Oliver 2007). As early as 1980 it was estimated that there were four thousand such boats in the Mediterranean (Copper 1994: 7). While there are no up-to-date estimates of the current situation, the phenomenon at present is undoubtedly widely present not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Caribbean and the South Pacific.

Apart from recent developments, the phenomenon also has its roots in broader cultural narratives and historical contexts such as the lure of the sea (Corbin 1994), the Robinsonian quest of looking for *elsewherelands* (Löfgren 1999), the Grand Tour, adventure travel, the hippy movement and the development of the culture of travel in general. Although these are important frameworks for understanding the liveaboard phenomenon, in this article we will focus on the ethnographic details of liveaboards in the Mediterranean, contextualizing them within lifestyle migration theory, which I claim is the most suitable theoretical framework for understanding the phenomenon.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK: LIVEABOARDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN[4]

The majority of liveaboards in the Mediterranean hold European passports, lived in urban settlements before migrating, represent different social strata and age groups, have widely varying sailing experience (from none to sailing instructors and competitors) and their break from their sedentary life in the

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2 For an in-depth treatment of marginal mobility see Juntunen et al. (2013). The article focuses on highly mobile subjects whose movement cannot be grasped by conventional conceptualizations of mobility. Their travel practices differ essentially from those of economic and asylum migrants who move along more or less fixed routes. Nor do they resemble those people for whom mobility is a strictly temporary experience such as tourists. The social world of these new mobile subjects is marked by constant and loosely patterned nomadic travel, yet the surrounding context of their lives is that of global modernity. The authors conceptualize these emergent mobile lifestyles as marginal mobilities.

3 By neo-liberalism I refer to the political, economic and moral system governed by globalized financial markets that decouples labour and capital, disconnects social and the political rights and undermines the possibility of a true foundation for citizenship (Raulet 2011).

4 The data for the ethnography here presented were collected between 2006 and 2012 in Ionian Greece (Igoumenitsa and Levkas regions), along the Peloponnesian coast and on Crete.

West occurred in a variety of ways. Most of them are couples but there are also families and single men.[5] Liveaboards interact frequently in official and unofficial marinas and city peers, sharing information about good anchorages and vital resources such as water, electricity, prices, weather, the political situation in the Mediterranean and maritime regulations. Information is also spread through the internet on blogs, forums and e-mails. Above all, German, French and English liveaboards maintain contacts with their fellow citizens on land. This network is important for assistance and information concerning social and political conditions, market prices and health care services in the places they visit.

The liveaboards' travel routes are often the outcomes of spontaneous decision making. Destinations keep changing along the travel trajectory largely depending on the social, political, economic and climatic conditions in the localities traversed. Many claim that Greece is one of the few countries in the Mediterranean where conditions are suitable and life is affordable for them. However, their mobility is often seasonally patterned. They usually follow work and weather conditions in the Mediterranean (six months on the move and three to six months wintering in place). Those who do not have a regular income (such as a pension, state support or salaries) earn their money "on the way" and most commonly engage in seasonal or periodic work in the spring-summer-autumn months (mostly in tourism and boatyards). For those who work in tourism, winters are largely devoted to leisure and boat repair.

A unifying feature for all liveaboards is that they have made a conscious decision to take up a mobile life. Ethnographic details show that the balance between the choice and necessity has to be taken into consideration when talking about the reasons for adopting this kind of life. Redundancy, health problems, blocked career choices and individual crises are not rare among liveaboards. There are various personal reasons for choosing this way of life, such as: having no time for a family, themselves and their community, because they want to live a healthier life, to avoid the rat race, because they felt violated, because they had a lack of control over their lives, because they like nature, the sea and travelling, because they think there is a lot of freedom in this kind of life, and almost all say that living on a boat is the most economical way to travel (and live).[6]

Some liveaboards (mostly retired people) have regular incomes or savings, while others have to resort to various flexible economic strategies: temporary work in marinas and construction sites, sailing and diving schools during summer or offering various services to charter companies (cleaning charter boats, sail repair etc.) and long-distance work over the internet (computer programming, translation, writing etc.). The problematic aspect of this kind of economic life is often expressed through remarks about the inflexibility of the sedentary-lifestyle oriented national state. Entitlement to various social statuses, state supports, rights and benefits, and obtaining personal documents, certificates and licenses, all require a permanent address. The same holds true for participation in official economic life through the banking system. For this reason many liveaboards maintain fake permanent addresses in order to avoid problems.

One sea many faces

According to my ethnographic data there are three predominant groups of liveaboards, which can be described as IRM (International Retirement Migration) liveaboards, sabbatical liveaboards and peri-

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5 Even though mobility and especially maritime mobility is historically grounded in masculine subjectivites, the ethnography presented here does not discuss gender issues. The freedom of movement and the gender production of space within maritime lifestyle migration is a specific topic that should be discussed in a separate article. This article is a general presentation of the liveaboard phenomenon, since the phenomenon is underresearched within the social sciences and humanities with the exception of few articles such as: Lusby, Anderson (2008) and Macbeth (1992).

6 The average monthly budget for a couple in the Mediterranean is approximately 1200 euros including boat expenses.

patetic liveaboards. This differentiation is made mainly according to their economic strategies. Even though the categories often overlap, transform from one to another, and form new sub-groups, I will use those three categories as descriptors in this article.

IRM liveaboards

> You know what we usually talk about when we go to these excursions? We talk about our children and grand-children. One woman said to me that her children are accusing her because she ran away. She feels bad, you know. […] And there is all this stuff about how we should live and how we should not live. But I think children must give freedom to their parents to do what they want with their life. I think I will live longer if I take my life into my own hands.

Retired people living and travelling on boats are often among the better off liveaboards in economic terms; they have regular incomes, their boats are more expensive, they usually stay in marinas for longer periods and their travel plans are more fixed. In-depth ethnographic research reveals that many of the liveaboards did not leave when officially retired but when they were still of working age. Many of those were redundant workers pushed to choose this kind of life in their mid 50s or they deliberately decided to leave work "before getting too old". Usually they sold their apartments and houses, bought a boat and are living partly on savings until they reach the age when they are entitled to a state pension.

The specific reasons for this kind of life among IRM liveaboards are most commonly to improve health or to stay healthy, a passion for travel and sailing and to avoid the burden of the feeling of use-lessness produced within their home society. As the Coopers (1994: 3) stated in their book: "When we get very old we get patronized, nannied and grannied, and swept onto the scrapheap." Many of them share the opinion that they were marginalized back home or they express a fear of being marginalized, so they left before that happened. Usually, their children approve their parents' choice to take control over their lives. In spite of that many of them feel guilty for abandoning their grandchildren and some were even accused by their children of being *runaway grannies*.

Sabbatical liveaboards

> Of course I like to travel. Even before, when I was a backpacker, it was important to me. And this was the first reason I told you when you asked me why... But then I was thinking… maybe I have to tell you more… We have met a lot of people when we sailed around the world. Always… maybe not always but many times something happens before their travel, you know... Maybe a divorce, maybe they were ill, maybe an accident… For me it was the same. I got divorced, I was seriously ill and my son had an accident. He died… After I survived all this it was easier for me to decide. It is strange to say that but now I have no fears and I do just things that I like. I am more focused. I do not pay attention to things that are really not important for me. […] But what is really interesting question is what will we do when we finish our voyage? I still do not know…

Among liveaboards we also find long term (sabbatical) travellers: those who have been travelling extensively all their life (for example as backpackers) or those who engage in *travel projects* such as a *year around the world*, *crossing the ocean* or just *living on the boat for a year*. For those liveaboards the mobile life is a strictly temporary experience which in some cases can transform into a settled way of life at sea. Usually they live on savings and do not engage in economic activities, with the exception of those who prolong their travel to three or more years. Although the first reasons for adopting this kind of live among sabbatical liveaboards are a passion for travelling and nature, in-depth ethnography shows that serious health problems, divorces or tragic events in the family often precede the decision to take up this kind of life.

Peripatetic liveaboards

> My husband worked on a boat when he was younger. The sea was always his passion. But then he got serious heart problems and nobody wants to employ a sick man in Germany. I was working as a social worker and you know how it is… We did not earn enough money for urban life and besides… now we are living so much better. […] In future we want to live in an ecological sustainable community. I want to grow food for myself. We have friends in Sweden that invited us to come. It is possible that we will join them. Maybe we go with the boat.

The third category of liveaboards can be described as peripatetic[7] liveaboards and can be understood within the theory of marginal mobility.[8] They can be distinguished from other liveaboards by several criteria, even though the overlapping between the categories presented here is of course very common. First, they decided or were forced to leave their professional careers behind while still of working age (between 25 and 50). Second, being without a regular income means they have to rely on state support and/or flexible economic strategies such as long distance IT-based work, occasional jobs in marinas and construction sites or in tourism. Third, their mobile life, their nomadism constitutes a *settled way of life* (many children of liveaboards do not know any other home). Fourth, they usually anchor outside of official marinas for economic reasons, and interact intensively with their peers but also with local fishermen in sharing information on how to gain access to water, electricity and good anchorages. Fifth, they typically do not form large groups, nor do they form formal organizations that forward their common interests. Public political invisibility may also be a strategy to avoid potential conflicts and problems with locals, local authorities and with sedentary oriented state rules back home which are not compatible with their highly mobile lifestyles. Sixth, marginal liveaboards rarely make fixed future plans, and their travel trajectories often seem spontaneous or chaotic. Many for example have reached the West Indies and even the South Pacific during their years at sea or dream to reach these remote places in the future; others stay in the Eastern Mediterranean or other cheaper places and rarely leave the area, circulating among Greece, Turkey and North Africa. Seventh, the balance between choice and necessity is more important when we talk about their reasons for choosing a nomadic way of life at sea. Here we deal with cases (such as the German family presented above) that can be related to Zygmunt Bauman's (1998: 92) vagabonds who "are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – spiritually uprooted from a place that holds no promise." Finally, one can notice bits of eco-spiritual enlightenment coming from the late 1960s among peripatetic liveaboards. Many of them dream of ecological farms and ecological houses, some have experiences with ecological villages and their critiques are directed towards the neoliberal system that in the opinion of one of my interlocutors is an "ecological, moral and social disaster". He continued: "Life is too short to be spent on constructing elevators for business buildings."

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7 This group of liveaboards moves from one place to another in search of work (tourism, boatyards, construction work and agriculture) or they work on the way via IT as writers, translators or computer programmers. Although there are socio-economic and educational differences between them they can be categorised as peripatetic liveaboards according to their economic strategies. I also chose this term because I argue together with Joseph C. Berland and Matt Salo (1986) that the term peripatetic is semantically more neutral and broad in comparison with terms such as service nomads (Heyden 1979), commercial nomads (Acton 1981), or non-food producing nomads (Rao 1982). The term peripatetic is useful for liveaboards as it refers to a socio-economic niche stressing the exploitation of social rather than natural resources. Even the managing of state supports such as child benefits, unemployment benefits and disability benefits could also be listed under exploitation of social resources.

8 See footnote 3.

THE THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK: LIVEABOARDS AND LIFESTYLE MIGRATION

Lifestyle migration (LM) has been recognized as a growing and disparate phenomenon with important implications for individuals, societies (Benson, O'Reilly 2009a, 2009b) and places (Hoey 2010). Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly (2009b: 612) defined LM in a broad, working definition as spatial mobility of "relatively affluent individuals of all ages 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". The liveaboard phenomenon shares many similarities with cases discussed within the field of LM, yet there are certain points where alternative perspectives can be added. Below I will discuss the characteristics of LM and will compare them with ethnography of liveaboards in the Mediterranean. In doing so I will develop the discussion in relation to several topics such as the boundary between migration, tourism and lifestyle migration, the contemporary context of mobility, geographies of meaning and freedom of choice.

Fuzzy boundaries

LM studies focus on a particular form of contemporary migration which raises the question of the fuzzy boundaries between migration and tourism. For Kate Torkington (2010), LM differs from tourism in the sense of time and behaviour, but also in the sense of spatiality and activities. Less effort has been made in comparing LM with migration, and it may appear as if the boundary between migration and LM is clear and unproblematic. Mari Korpela (2009: 19) states that the tendency to distinguish between poor migrants and affluent lifestyle migrants is deeply rooted in people's thinking. She states: "While it is complicated to distinguish between migrants and lifestyle migrants, it is even more difficult to distinguish between lifestyle migrants and tourists (Korpela 2009: 19)." The ethnography of liveaboards as well as some other studies that seek to understand irregular migrants and other mobile subjects within the context of late capitalism (Juntunen et al. 2013; Clark 1997; Korpela 2009) can contribute to this debate by equating the complication of comparison on both sides. In their attempt to conceptualize different emergent mobile lifestyles that remain largely unaddressed in the academic discourses, Juntunen et al. developed the concept of marginal mobility (Juntunen et al. 2013). Observing cases of irregular Moroccan migrants and Western neo-nomads and following common peculiarities of these strikingly different mobile subjects such as similar trajectories, feelings of uprootedness and dispossession, lack of a politicized public sphere, economic practices and their relation to sedentary norms, they challenge the notion of the immigrant-other that has up to the present muted a critical public debate on the relation between human mobility and neoliberal economic policies. They conclude that the common cultural ethos of their movement as well as the striking inequality between Western and non-Western mobile subjects can only be grasped against the background of global late capitalism (ibid). In this context the stereotyped image of the immigrant-other as well as the fact that social cohesion and national loyalties of citizens are increasingly fragile – because of the social and economic adjustments the nation states make in order to position their economies better – must be taken into consideration when discussing the boundaries between contemporary mobile subjects. The following story illustrates the question of fuzzy boundaries, speaks of the emergence of new researchable entities and challenges the traditional entities and boundaries between migrants/tourists/lifestyle migrants.[9]

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9 In their book *The Trouble with Community*, Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002) point out that on one hand anthropologists have been increasingly willing to accept the loss of place as a dominant metaphor for culture but on the other the concept of collectivity has become an even more crucial anchor for the efforts of anthro-

Liz and Bob are a childless couple in their early fifties. They came to Crete on their homemade sailboat where they arrived from the Suez Canal. They have been on the move for about 30 years, developing various mobile economies since their mid 20s. They are not consumption-led migrants, they are not tourists, they are not economic or political migrants, nor do they resemble traditional nomads. They could be called maritime lifestyle migrants, characterized by constant mobility on the sea which brings a certain peculiarity to this kind of lifestyle. Although their mobility is constant, their *stays* in certain countries can be up to one year long; they circulate along loosely defined trajectories; they are statistically invisible (as they do not have a permanent or temporary address, nor are they registered as tourists); they use IT technologies for their work, they are occasionally involved in education as English teachers in the developing world, as well as taking up periodic labour in the very same unregulated economic niches as traditional migrants; namely in agriculture, construction and services; their social world is marked by uprootedness (social contacts are situational and instant); and they are in a constant process of negotiation with the state bureaucracies that impose sedentary norms on their lives.

Mobility, the ongoing quest and the sea

In comparison with the liveaboard phenomenon, LM studies do not focus so much on movement itself, as they encapsulate this form of migration within the term lifestyle and shift the focus from movement to lifestyle itself. For maritime lifestyle migrants, mobility is central as they develop a lifestyle *on the move*. Their mobility is stimulated by various reasons. Bob and Liz for example move on because "we are fed up with the place, we might find a better job/life somewhere else, because we want to travel, because we belong nowhere, because we do not want to live in a rat race, because we are used to moving, because boats can be untied." Constant mobility and mobile economic practices – although interspersed with periods of sedentarism – are deeply incorporated in their way of life and constitute their everyday reality. Although the constant mobility is not the main characteristics of LM, the ongoing quest and the constant search for a better life is well documented within LM studies (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Korpela 2009; Benson 2009). For lifestyle migrants, migration is usually not a one-off move to a permanent destination, but rather more of a constant search for *elsewherelands* where life is good or at least better. As O'Reilly and Benson observed, the ongoing quest for a better way of life explains the ambivalence that many migrants feel, while at the same time indicating that the initial destination may not be the final one. In this way they seek to live in utopia, yet this is always just out of reach (2009a: 10).

Both liveaboards and lifestyle migrants narrate their migration in terms of trajectories away from negative lifestyles towards a fuller, more meaningful and healthier way of life, but the perpetuity of moving is accentuated when one chooses to live on a boat. This life can be seen as an extreme case of the ongoing quest and many claim to have chosen this way of life because of the freedom of movement. One of my interlocutors compared his way of life with that of expatriates in Greece in the following way:

> What I like about this life is the freedom. If you do not like the place anymore you are free to go! All these people that bought houses here… they are bound to places. What will happen if Greece is no longer part of the EU? With the boat you care less about these problems!

For liveaboards the sea functions as a place of ultimate freedom and also as a place where ongoing mobility is not questionable. The ongoing quest is normalized to the point that some people never stop

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pologists attempting to locate transnational or multi-sited ethnographic fields. They said that: "In anthropology's dogged search for new delocalized 'peoples' the discipline seems in danger of reproducing the fictitiously integrated fields that were once derived from an association between place and culture" (ibid. 2002: 3).

circumnavigating. The ongoing mobility on the sea is an aim, an end in itself and the fulfilment of a dream. In this sense the sea is the embodiment of the movement – the place itself becomes movement; movement becomes place.[10] To close the circle: liveaboards do develop lifestyle in mobility but the place still plays a central role in their migration. As for many other lifestyle migrants the place is important for their personhood. It is not a coincidence that ideas of freedom can be materialized right there on the sea, which from a cultural historical perspective is marked by freedom imagery (Corbin 1994). As Brian Hoey (2010: 256) concluded about lifestyle migrants' narratives of relocation, "they show us how embodied experience gives them meaningful, personally constitutive connections to place, the physical landscape, and an intangible spirit of history that resides in particular places or local characters". For liveaboards the sea is an important element in their narratives and they connect it with health, with a place where one can become a better person, with freedom, with personal memories of their childhood, with a virus (once you experience the sea you are infected), and certainly with something greater then themselves that gives meaning to their life.

Freedom(s), privilege(s), and escape(s)

As Benson and O'Reilly observe, the phenomenon of moving for a better life has been researched under different umbrellas such as retirement migration, leisure migration, counter-urbanization, second home ownership, amenity seeking, seasonal migration and residential tourism, inter alia (2009b: 2). Many of these studies find the term LM useful in explaining and labelling their cases (Torkington 2010; Hoey 2010; Korpela 2009; Nudrali, O'Reilly 2009). In LM studies we find typologies such as residential tourism, the rural idyll and bourgeois bohemians to explain different types of lifestyle migrants according to destination (Benson, O'Reilly 2009b:4) or family migrants, retirement migrants and mid-life migrants (Benson 2009). Even though these cases have many similarities (LM as a comparable project, following dreams, self-realization narratives etc.) the common denominator of all these cases can blur the crucial differences between subjects and can hide important backgrounds connected with the reason for LM. In this context, cases such as peripatetic liveaboards and rural idyll migrants can be interpreted in different ways, showing alternative perspectives on the phenomenon. It can be seen as a quest for authenticity, as a form of lower-middle-class angst and bourgeois subjectivity which seeks to improve a life which is already perfect, or it can be interpreted as a strategy to negotiate tensions, as a strategy to escape from the immoral meaning of life from feelings such as being torn down, disoriented and violated even if we speak of so-called privileged persons (Hoey 2010). As one of my interlocutors explained:

> I worked as a fisherman back home. I worked hard and I liked my job. But then I got serious health problems with my back… and then this quota system appeared. It is not just… Some guys they had two or more boats and they had employees, not employees but more like slaves, you know, working for them. […] This is not fishing anymore for me. I was thinking how I would organize… the world. I think one man one boat would be the best solution. If it is not like that I do not play this game anymore.

Such ethnographic examples may as well be an indicative of wider shifts and social transformations that do not speak of subjects that are a priori unwilling to participate fully in society but are aiming towards alternative solutions in a period of a widespread adrift. By unifying various cases with different backgrounds under the LM umbrella it might also be suggested that LM studies could fall into the trap of moving towards "decorative sociology" (Rojek, Turner 2000) which is too theoretical and depoliticized.

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10 Deleuze and Guattari made a distinction between smooth and striated space (1988: 304). As Jake Phelan wrote, the sea is the epitome of smooth place, being without definite borders and characterised by the movement and fluidity of the sea and those who travel upon it (2007: 12–13).

Following the analysis of LM ethnographies, the explanation of the background for LM often resembles the thesis of privileged self-realization projects that was enabled by the general development of transport, and a rise of European standards of living (Torkington 2010; Hetherington 2000, 1992, 1998). Authors such as Brian Hoey and Greg Martin offer slightly different explanations, Hoey (2010) referring to counter-urbanization migration and Martin (2002) explaining contemporary Travellers in Britain. The people that Hoey (2010: 241) observes talk about the wish for a slower pace and a simple environment, but they also stress the feeling of being violated, torn down, without time for family or themselves, disconnected, and Hoey concludes that these examples must be understood within the broader framework of late capitalism which produces a mass scale existential crisis by creating a tension between personal experiences with material demand and the moral meaning of the good life (ibid.). Martin takes the explanation a step further, reflecting on Kevin Hetherington's (2000) explanations of English Travellers and his own ethnography. He concludes that the idea that Travellers have chosen to adopt this lifestyle can be used in two ways: to celebrate their freedom, demonstrate their unwillingness to participate fully in the society, and see them in the light of the middle-class bourgeois quest for authenticity, or to see political connotations in this stress on individual freedom. For Martin (2002) it is extremely important to dig further and to detect the wider socio-historical context which enables and promotes "escape".[11]

One of the peculiarities of lifestyle migrants has been the relative freedom of choice which has also been discussed and challenged also within LM studies in the context of the more general social changes over the late 20th Century (more flexible social roles, social differentiation less dependent on fixed social hierarchy, individuals less constrained by social structures and categories, process of individualization) (Torkington 2010; Beck 1992). This view has been challenged by the idea that the process of individualization is not necessarily connected with the free will of individuals but is required by the system. As Anthony Giddens (1994: 75) stated, modern subjects face the burden and the liberation of constructing their own identities in the sense that we have no choice but to choose. The other challenge in observing freedom of choice within LM comes from taking into account Bourdieu's theory of the importance of the individual's habitus, which limits individual choices and possibilities (Benson, O'Reilly 2009b; Bourdieu 1984). In this view LM is a result of particular material circumstances and specific class habitus. Lifestyle choices are thus a direct outcome of our embodied class culture. Bourdieu's theory has been criticized for being too deterministic (Jenkins 2000), but Bourdieu himself emphasized that habitus is a generative structure with the potential of incorporating changes and whose "limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (Bourdieu 1990: 55). Many authors (Margolis 1999; Sweetman 2003) have questioned and further explored the theoretical potentials of habitus in the context of global modernity with questions such as: What happens if the habitus and structure no longer match? Is reflexivity on this discrepancy only possible in a time of crisis? Are we in a time of mass-scale existential crisis, as Hoey (2010) puts it, where individuals with different habitus experience the same tension? As O'Reilly and Benson (2009b: 12) observe, the quest for utopia has persisted for centuries, while the recent increase in this phenomenon implies that it emerges partly as a reflexive assessment of opportunities (whether life will be better here or there). Following these arguments one can conclude that individualized lifestyle migration projects also have their limits set by late modernity, where individuals from various backgrounds are pushed to search for alternative solutions and lifestyles yet their possibilities are still set within the framework of their habitus.

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11 The word escape itself has a negative connotation of *escaping from responsibility* but for many authors it also carries the massage of an individual crisis where escape is an act of negotiating a tension between the moral meaning of life and personal experience with material demand (Hoey 2010).

CONCLUSION: MARGINALITY OR LUXURY?

I have attempted to present an ethnography of liveaboards in the Mediterranean, to explore overlaps and discrepancies with lifestyle migration studies and to place maritime lifestyle migration in a context of increased mobility and late capitalism. My understanding came out of talking and living with liveaboards who articulated how and why they choose this way of life. Their personal experiences vary to a great extent from luxury to marginality, yet the surrounding context of their lives is the commonnes of global modernity, which produces new researchable entities demanding fresh theoretical and methodological reflection. A central paradox of these emerging lifestyles is that they spring from the commonalities of our era, but their action subverts this very same reality. The common denominator for these emergent forms of mobile lives is that they are closely related to time- and space-compressing communication technology (Urry 2004), yet people choose this way of life in order to enlarge the space and to make time irrelevant. The emergence of these new researchable entities also challenges the traditional boundaries between migrants/tourists/lifestyle migrants (Amit, Rapport 2002) and brings to the fore the fact observed also by Juntunen et al. (2013) that the notion of the immigrant-other has up to the present muted a critical debate on the relation between human mobility and neoliberal economic policies. Together with John Urry and Mimi Sheller (2006), I also argue that although mobility is a historical phenomenon and not a unique characteristic of the modern world, today we are moving and living, as Sheller (2011: 1) states: "differently and in more dynamic, complex and trackable ways as ever before". We are also living in a world of pluralized opportunities and mass information that force people to choose and reflect on their lives and their positions. We are being bombarded with stories of success and the good life, yet we face a different sort of reality, a reality which is many times incompatible with the promises of the advertisements. All this produces tension, individual crisis and reflection on our choices.

The story of liveaboards has to be understood in this context and seen from two angles. To be a liveaboard is a luxury; Westerners enjoy great freedom of global mobility and remain outside of public debates on migration, mobility and citizenship, whereas people from outside the West are perceived as the central constituents of the immigration problem (cf. Juntunen et al. 2013); liveaboards use the symbolic capital connected to the nautical tourism and the sea; and they hold passports that entitle them to many benefits. However, to understand the liveaboard phenomenon fully we also have to take into account marginality. It is a story of people who chose to be mobile because they want to be old and active instead of treated with disdain, they want to be parents with time for their children, they do not want to feel useless, redundant or immoral in their everyday work or they just want to find moorings to their sense of self. Paradoxically they search for it in perpetual mobility on the wide open sea. Even though their social world is marked by *disorder* – by constant and loosely patterned nomadic travel at sea – their problems, wishes, chances, choices and solutions are set within the *normality* of global modernity, where the subversive has become an everyday necessity.

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