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***HOW NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS ARE INFLUENTIAL ON
IMMIGRATION IN PERIPHERAL AREAS? EXPLORING
EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION IN ALENTEJO LITORAL
(PORTUGAL) AND ALT EMPORDÀ (SPAIN)***

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Abstract

The so-called “natural” environment is often an important pull factor for migration related to quality of life. This paper offers new international and comparative insights on immigration from EU-15 countries settled in South-western Alentejo (Portugal) and North-eastern Catalonia (Spain). The main aims are to provide information about the characteristics of EU-15 migrants settled there (i.e. migrants coming from relatively wealthy countries) and to analyse the influence that the natural environment and the protected areas may have on their destination choice and their settlement process. This paper is mainly based on the analysis of original interviews with a variety of fifty-five foreign residents as well as population censuses, local publications and reports. Among other findings, the paper concludes that, despite the fact the natural environment is an important attraction factor for the studied migrants, the protected status of those areas is generally overlooked. Additionally, an original explanation of the diffuse limit between lifestyle and economic migration is offered.

Keywords: Environmental migration, European migration, Iberian Peninsula, Natural Protected Areas, Settlement processes

Resum. *Com els espais naturals protegits són influents en la immigració cap a àrees perifèriques? Explorant la immigració europea a l'Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) i l'Alt Empordà (Espanya)*

L'entorn “natural” és sovint un important factor d'atracció per la migració vinculada a la qualitat de vida. Aquest article ofereix noves perspectives internacionals i comparatives sobre immigració procedent de la UE-15 establerta a l'Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) i a l'Alt Empordà (Espanya). L'objectiu és proporcionar informació sobre les característiques dels migrants UE-15 (i.e. migrants procedents de països relativament rics) i analitzar la influència que l'entorn natural i els espais protegits tenen en l'elecció del seu destí i el seu procés d'assentament. El treball es fonamenta bàsicament en l'anàlisi d'entrevistes originals realitzades amb 55 residents de nacionalitat estrangera, així com en dades estadístiques i informes i publicacions locals. Entre d'altres resultats, se sosté que malgrat l'entorn natural és un factor important d'atracció pels migrants estudiats, l'estatus de protecció d'aquestes àrees acostuma a passar-se per alt. A més, s'aporta una explicació original del difús límit entre migració econòmica i per estil de vida.

Paraules clau: Migració mediambiental, migració europea, península Ibèrica, espais naturals protegits, processos d'assentament

Resumen: *¿Cómo los espacios naturales protegidos son influyentes en la inmigración hacia áreas periféricas? Explorando la inmigración europea en el Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) y el Alt Empordà (España)*

El entorno “natural” es a menudo un importante factor de atracción para la migración vinculada a la calidad de vida. Este artículo ofrece nuevas perspectivas internacionales y comparativas sobre inmigración procedente de la UE-15 establecida en el Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) y el Alt Empordà (España). El objetivo es proporcionar información sobre las características de estos migrantes (i.e. migrantes procedentes de países relativamente ricos) y analizar la influencia que el entorno natural y los espacios protegidos tienen en la elección de su destino. El trabajo se fundamenta básicamente en el análisis de entrevistas originales realizadas con 55 residentes de nacionalidad extranjera, así como en datos estadísticos e informes y publicaciones locales. Entre otros resultados se sostiene que a pesar de que el entorno natural es un factor importante de atracción para los migrantes estudiados, el estatus de protección de estas áreas suele ser pasado por alto. Además, se aporta una explicación original del difuso límite entre migración económica y por estilo de vida.

Palabras clave: Migración medioambiental, migración europea, península Ibérica, espacios naturales protegidos, procesos de asentamiento

Résumé : *Quelle influence des espaces naturelles protégées sur l’immigration vers les zones périphériques ? Exploration de l’immigration européenne à l’Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) et à l’Alt Empordà (Espagne).*

Les parages “naturels” représentent fréquemment un facteur d’attraction important dans les migrations liées à la recherche d’une meilleure qualité de vie. L’article propose de nouvelles perspectives internationales et comparatives sur l’immigration provenant de l’UE-15 et établie dans l’Alentejo Litoral (Portugal) et le Alt Empordà (Espagne). L’objectif consiste à proportionner des données sur les caractéristiques de ces migrants particuliers (provenant de pays relativement prospères) et à analyser l’influence sur le choix de leur destination exercée par le cadre naturel et les aires naturelles protégées. L’étude est construite principalement à partir d’entretiens originaux réalisés avec 55 résidents étrangers ainsi qu’à partir de données statistiques, de rapports et de publications locales. Comme principaux résultats l’article soutient que bien que le milieu naturel soit un facteur d’attraction important pour les migrants étudiés, la figure de protection des espaces concernés n’est guère relevant. Une explication originale sur la limite diffuse entre migration économique et migration motivée par le style de vie est également avancée.

Mots clé: Migration environnementale, migration européenne, péninsule ibérique, espaces naturels protégés, processus d’établissement

1. Introduction

In the European Union (EU), there is an increasing recognition of natural protected areas (NPAs), including the consolidation of Natura 2000 as one of the EU's 'outstanding achievements' (Doeser, 2014). In this context, 'natural' areas are an important pull factor for environmental migration motivated by the search for a better quality of life (e.g. Kaplan and Austin, 2004; McGranahan, 2008; Prados, 2009). In particular, NPAs and their surroundings are territories where natural elements are notably present and they are therefore appropriate for conducting research that targets the awareness of this type of migration¹.

A review of contributions made on migration related to environmental preferences (Mas-Palacios, 2014) was useful to highlight what might be called the historical basis for their study. As pointed out by Robinson (1996), after a period when the overall economic rationality of migrants (an argument based on neoclassical economic theory) was widely accepted, doubts soon appeared in the geography involved in this idea. In 1954 Ullman placed the search for improved quality of life behind the rapid population increase of California and Florida during the 1930s and '40s, highlighting the importance of climate, scenic beauty and coastal locations (Robinson 1996).

Later, Svart (1976) argued that, although the general thesis presented by Ullman was not new, as Ravenstein had referred to the issue in late nineteenth century (Ravenstein, 1889), Ullman's is considered the first comprehensive discussion of this issue. Even faced with the scepticism of economists, Svart upheld the idea that, despite the little attention they had received, environmental preference factors have an undeniable role in migration flows, and, at the centre of these factors, he placed the issue of quality of life. This marks the beginning of the real importance attached to this subject in geography in particular, and in the social sciences in general.

In relation to the environmental migration linked to quality of life improvement we have already mentioned, it could be useful here to deal briefly with the concept of counterurbanization. This was described from the mid-1970s as the result of de-concentration of population from cities to peripheral areas, as is the case of some rural areas (e.g. Beale, 1975; Berry, 1976). Although counterurbanization was then mainly conceived as an internal

¹ The International Union for Conservation of Nature (www.iucn.org) offers in its website a widely-used definition of NPA: 'a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values'.

migration phenomenon, authors like Buller and Hoggart (1994), and more recently Keith Halfacree (2008), have addressed the issue from an international perspective.

In line with this, this paper explores the role played by the natural environment in the arrival of immigrants from other relatively developed countries in territories with NPAs, immigrants who, because of their characteristics, can be placed within what has been defined as lifestyle migration (e.g. Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) or as amenity migration (e.g. Moss, 1994, 2006; Glorioso and Moss, 2007; Borsdorf *et al.*, 2012). However, even considering that the working life of individuals has a lot to do with their quality of life, in this paper the focus is on migratory motivations linked to quality of life with reference to the natural and landscape values of the study areas.

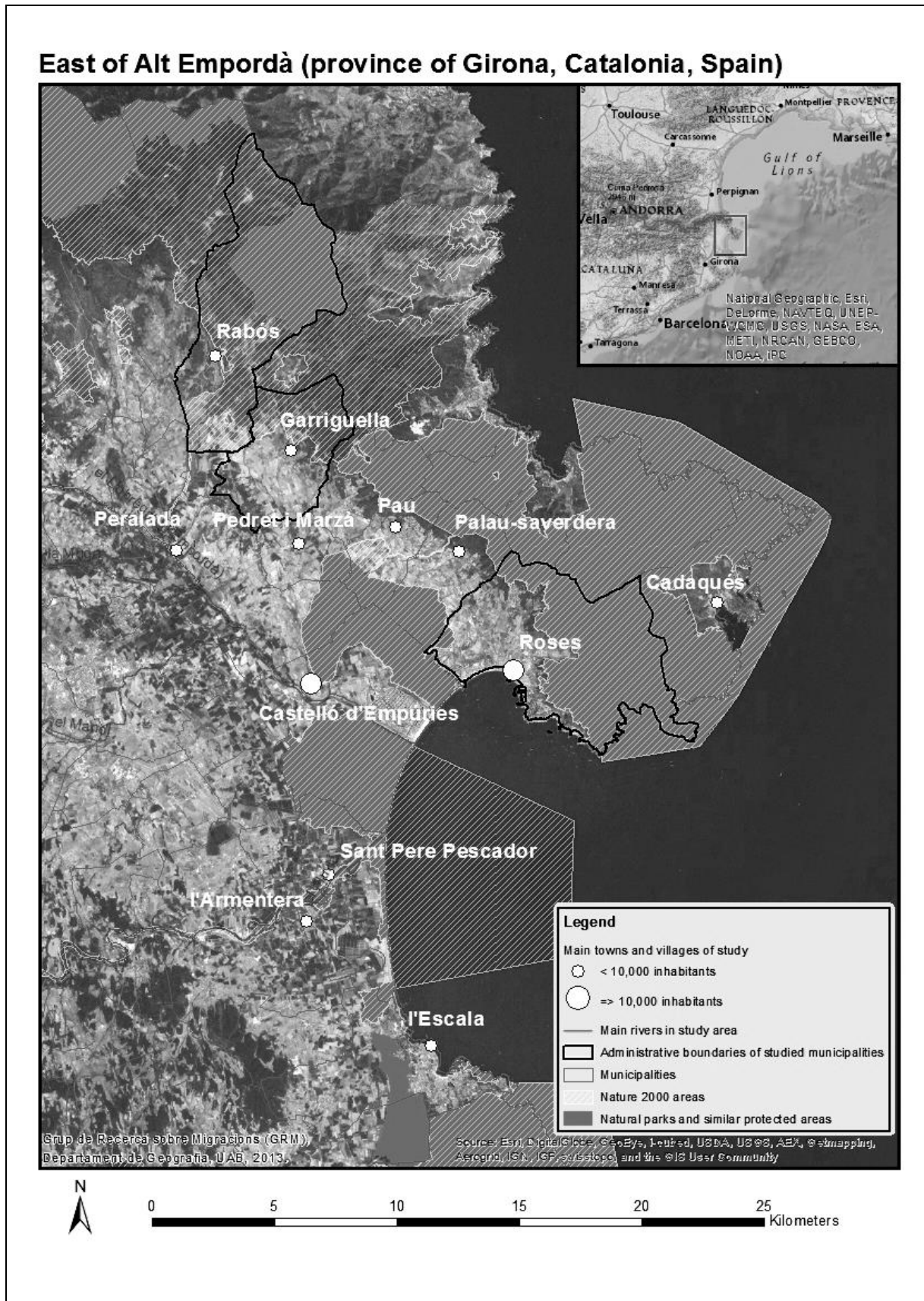
This paper focuses on two distant areas within the Iberian Peninsula and, in particular, on migration from other countries that have belonged to the European Union (EU) before the enlargement of 2004 (i.e. EU-15). The main aims are to provide original data and information about the characteristics of EU-15 migrants settled in the study areas and to respond to the following key question: how the natural environment and the protected areas are influential (or not) on their migration destination choice? These results may be useful in order to carry out further research in other similar areas in Europe and beyond.

Specifically, based on a compilation of quantitative and qualitative data, this article offers new insights on migration related to quality of life from countries of the EU-15, exploring some municipalities in Girona province (Catalonia, Spain) and Alentejo Litoral (Portugal). Since the free movement of individuals within the EU was introduced in early 1990s, intra-EU mobility has increased notably (Favell, 2008; O'Reilly, 2007). Among the nationalities with a relevant presence in the study areas, EU-15 foreign residents are especially interesting for this article because of their relatively affluent socioeconomic status. Although always bearing in mind the heterogeneity of the EU-15 category, in many cases EU-15 migrants settled in Spain and Portugal can be directly or indirectly linked to lifestyle and amenity migration (e.g. Sampaio, 2011; Lardiés, 1999). In the next section the study areas and some method remarks are presented and, after some statistical analysis, in another section some results of the qualitative analysis of 55 semi-structured interviews are offered. In the conclusion, the main results are summarised and some additional reflections for further research are suggested.

2. Case study areas and method

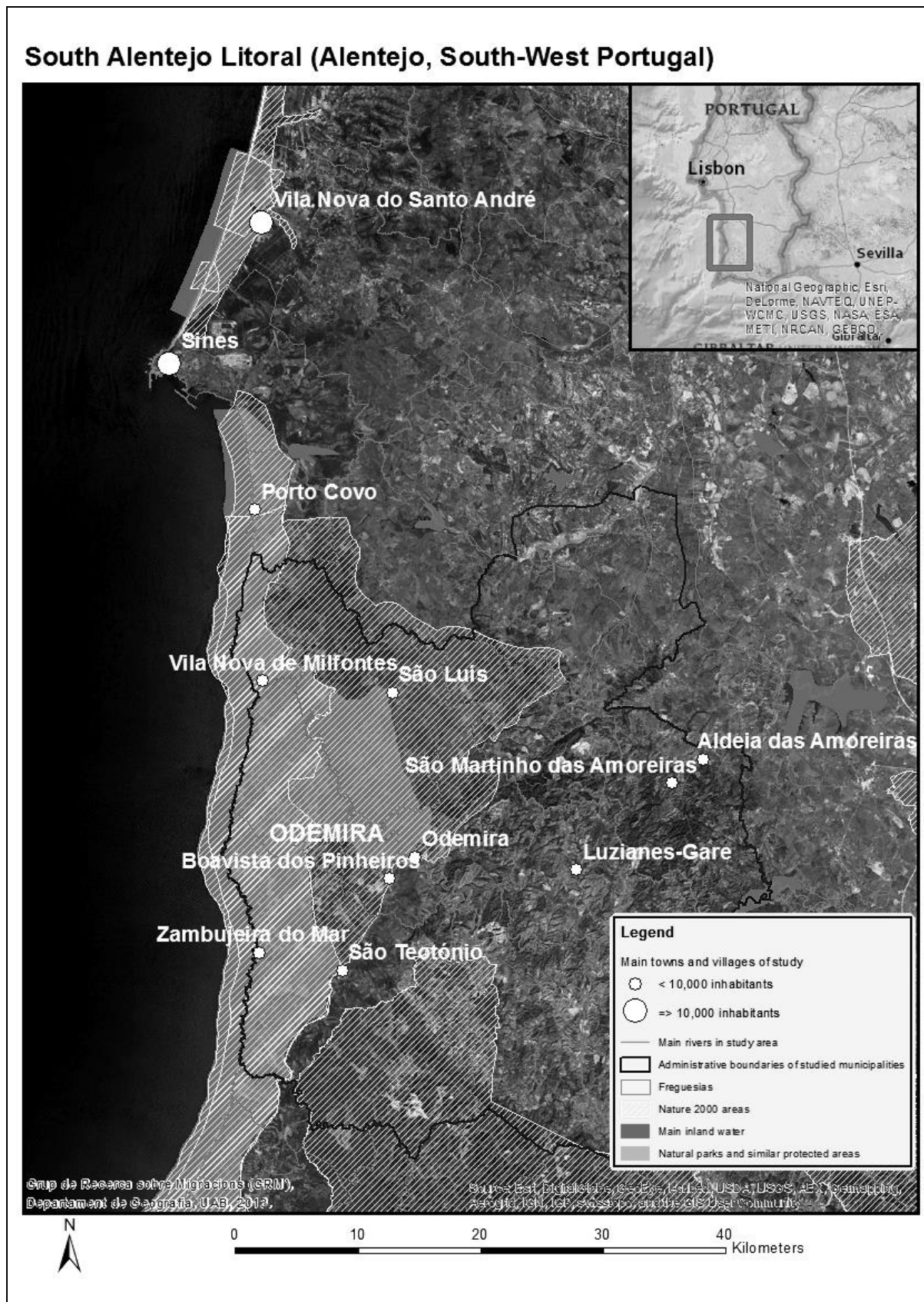
This paper compares an area in Alt Empordà county, Spain, and Odemira's *concelho*, Portugal. Regarding the Spanish study area, according to the local census (*Padrón municipal*) (IDESCAT, 2013), in 2011, Roses had 19,731 registered inhabitants and a population density of 429.8 inhabitants/km². By contrast, Garriguella (863 residents and 41.1 inhabitants/km²) and Rabós (196 residents and 4.35 inhabitants/km²) are less populated. Thus, that study area can be divided into two sub-areas: Roses with part of its territory belonging to *Parc Natural del Cap de Creus* and to *Parc Natural dels Aiguamolls de l'Empordà*, and Garriguella and Rabós, with part of their territories belonging to the *PNIN-EIN de l'Albera* (see Figure 1). These natural protected areas are included in the EU-wide *Natura 2000* network. Roses has 62.75% of its 4,590ha under protection; Garriguella, 40.6% of its 2,100ha, and Rabós 90.6% of its 4,510ha. The coastal municipality of Roses has increased its population, mainly due to the great importance of the tourism and construction sectors, from 2,720 inhabitants in 1950 to 10,303 in 1991 and 19,731 in 2011. However, its floating population-high during summer is around 100,000 people. On the other hand, Garriguella and Rabós, a few kilometres inland, had been losing inhabitants throughout the 20th century until the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, there has been a stabilisation of the population and a slight recovery. Agriculture, especially wine and olive oil production, has traditionally been the main economic activity in both localities. In Garriguella, tourism has increased over the last few years.

Figure 1: Map of the Spanish study area



Odemira is the largest municipality in Portugal but is also one of the least densely populated. The *Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina (PNSACV)* altogether with *Natura 2000* network, protects 43,8% of the 1,720.2 km² of the municipality (see Figure 2). Odemira municipality suffered severe population loss during the last four decades of the 20th century, going from 43,999 inhabitants in 1960 to 26,106 in 2001. However, between 1991 and 2001 the population decline was rather small, at only -1.2%, and, between 2001 and 2011, the resident population was quite stable, which may show a trend for stabilization or even slight demographic recovery in the future. The strong trend towards an ageing population and the low levels of formal education are also characteristics of the area. Agriculture, civil construction and tourism are the main economic activities in the municipality (CLASO, 2005). However, there are notable variations within the territory and one of the biggest contrasts is between the mountainous inland areas and the lowland coastal areas.

Figure 2: Map of the Portuguese study area



This paper is based on a variety of information sources, including documentary, statistical and interview data, in line with some recent geographical studies on migration (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2013). The quantitative data analysed in the following pages was based on information from INE and IDESCAT (Spain) and INE and SEFSTAT (Portugal). In addition, from July 2011 to August 2012, 30 foreign informants were interviewed in Alt Empordà (11 of them from EU-15), while, in Odemira, 25 foreign informants were interviewed (11 of them with EU-15 nationalities). All interviewees were adults with at least one year of residence in the study areas, and a roughly balanced distribution between men and women and between people older and younger than 50 years old were achieved.

People interviewed were contacted by appointment (mainly in the case of associations or institutions), spontaneously or following the “snowballing” technique. The interviews were audio-recorded and carried out in Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese, English and French. The interviews lasted an average of 35-40 minutes. In addition to issues related to migratory process and migratory motivations, several questions were posed to the interviewees in order to find out about their knowledge of the area and, particularly, its natural and landscape values.

3. Immigration in the county of Alt Empordà and Odemira: some background

In 2011, the study areas had a percentage of foreign population considerably higher than those of their respective countries and regions as a whole (see Figure 3). In both cases, it can also be argued that nationalities which, *a priori*, are often associated with migratory motivations linked to quality of life and residential tourism live side by side with labour migrants, attracted by the job opportunities partly induced by the consumption patterns of the former groups (Sampaio, 2011; Salvà-Tomàs, 2002) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Total population, percentage of foreign population and main nationalities (2011)

	Total population	% Foreign pop.	Main nationalities (% from foreigners)
SPAIN	47,190,493	12.19%	UE-27 (41,65); UE-15 (21,12%); Romania (15,05%); Morocco (13,46%); UK (6,80%); Ecuador (6,27%); Colombia (4,75%)
Roses	19,731	34.82%	UE-27 (42.98%); UE-15 (38.8%); Morocco (35.18); France (17.22%); Romania (6.51%); Germany (5.5%)
Garriguella	863	19.47%	UE-27 (50.60%); UE-15 (34.52%); Morocco (29.76%); France (14.88%); Romania (13.69%); UK (9.52%)
Rabós	196	22.45%	UE-27 (93.18%); UE-15 (86.36%); France (29.54%); UK (27.27%); Netherlands (11.36%); Italy (9.09%)
PORTUGAL	10,562,178	3.41%	UE-27 (22,86%); UE-15 (14,61%); Brazil (28,33%); Cape Verde (10,30%); Angola (6,87%); Romania (6,34%); Guinea-Bissau (4,34%)
Odemira	26,066	8.77%	UE-27 (70.31%); UE-15 (35.90%); Bulgaria (29.55%); Germany (19.02%); Brazil (7.69%); Thailand (6.69%); UK (5.68%)

Own elaboration based on INE (Spain), IDESCAT (Catalonia, Spain) and INE (Portugal).

Following Findlay and Stockdale (2003), one has to be aware of risks related to categorising migrants and migrant motivations based on statistical data coming from analysis of census or survey data. As they noted, such categorizations of migration are not neutral and they separate the act of migration from its wider context. It could be said that we would be using ‘predefined causal categories’ related to and derived from a statistical analysis (labour-economic as opposed to quality of life). Rather than categorising migrants, this paper merely wants to note a general perception about the distinction between immigrants’ nationalities. Because of this, we use the words ‘nationalities to which, *a priori*, labour or no labour motivations are generally assigned’. Moreover, one of the objectives of the qualitative analysis of this study is to explore the (sometimes) diffuse boundary between labour-economic migration and lifestyle migration or amenity migration.

In the next section, some data is provided regarding the migratory motivations of foreigners living in the study areas, specifically EU-15 foreigners, in order to try to shed some light on the role that “nature” and protected natural areas might play in these migratory movements and the settlement processes.

4. Exploring migration motivations: a qualitative analysis

Along these lines, the proposal of Halfacree and Boyle (1993) to adopt a ‘biographical approach’ for the conceptualization of migration is particularly relevant. These authors underline the importance of taking into account the ‘multiple currents’ involved in migration (especially those concerning migrants’ biographies) and suggest that one must expect to find several reasons for migration explained by the subjects, ‘some relatively fully-formed, other much more indefinite’ (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993: 339). These ideas are similarly upheld by other authors (e.g. Findlay and Stockdale, 2003) and are linked to Giddens’ concept of ‘practical consciousness’ (Giddens, 1984). In the following sections, some results of the qualitative data analysis carried out bearing those ideas in mind are offered.

4.1. “Nature” as an attraction for settlement...

Different authors have argued that an attractive physical environment produces well-being and notably raises citizens’ quality of life (e.g. Corraliza *et al.*, 2002; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Nogué, 2005; Stolton and Dudley, 2010). This idea is directly linked to the biophilia hypothesis, a concept popularised by E.O. Wilson (1984) in order to describe the bond that exists between human beings and other forms of life, and explains that contact with nature produces health benefits and contributes to general well-being. In most of the interviews undertaken during the fieldwork, various opinions linked to a greater or lesser extent to these ideas can be identified and, in some of these explanations, landscape and the natural environment elements are given by the interviewees as very important factors for migrating and settling in the study areas.

For instance, we find the case of a Frenchman who has lived in the Alt Empordà for more than 13 years who emphasizes that he was ‘enchanted’ by ‘nature’ in the area, highlighting its vegetation ‘with magical places between sea and mountains’. He also underlined the importance of protecting the natural areas of the region. For the Portuguese study area different explanations placing the natural and landscape values among the main factors for migrating and settling there were also found. For example, a Frenchman aged 66 highlights the preservation of the natural environment among his reasons for settling in Odemira. This person positively and explicitly values the natural park as an attraction factor as long as this protection can help to preserve the natural and landscape characteristics of the

area. These cases can be directly linked to what has been described by Velez de Castro (2013) as environmental-seekers and landscape-seekers.

An element that appears as quite relevant in the case of the Portuguese study area is the low population density and the relative isolation of Odemira, a factor directly related by some interviewees to the maintenance of natural and landscape values. Additionally, in Odemira, different groups of foreign residents labelled by some interviewees as people ‘with an alternative lifestyle’, similar to the ones described by authors like D’Andrea (2007), can be found. These were also happy with the relative isolation of some places within the municipality.

4.2. But living near “nature” also brings difficulties...

All interviewees for the two study areas with EU-15 nationalities value living in a place with natural and scenic values like the ones to be found in the areas in question to a lesser or greater extent. Despite this, there are foreigners who have left these municipalities because they were not sufficiently comfortable in them. This is in line with previous research on ruralphilia and ruralphobia (Morén-Alegret, 2008), two concepts, together with urbophilia and urbophobia, that are useful to express the existence in some people of a feeling of attraction and love, or alternatively a feeling of aversion and fear, towards the urban or the rural worlds respectively. Regarding Alt Empordà, this issue was noted by a Frenchman who stated that two years is the testing period for someone who migrates there. After that period, they either return home or begin to become integrated and feel good in the new place. Regarding Odemira, an interviewee who has been living there for more than 20 years stated: ‘There’s no middle ground. Either you come and love it, or you cannot stand it. That’s just how it is.... I think some people are what I call urbano-depressive. If they are outside the city, they just..., they need to have McDonald’s, they need to have the confusion’ (Man from Belgium, 49, Belgian-Portuguese nationalities, Odemira).

Other studies, for example those focused on British retirement to the Mediterranean (King *et al.*, 2000), have noted the presence of some groups of migrants who valued their integration in the local host communities as an important objective of their migration process. This kind of attitude was also found in our study areas during various interviews. In some cases the difficulties arising in achieving those objectives provoked doubts about remaining in the area. For instance, a British retired couple who were around 65 years old and had

settled in a small locality of Odemira municipality ruled out returning to Great Britain despite difficulties and disappointments. Obviously, living close to nature sometimes implies living in a small and relatively isolated village, where not speaking the local language can be a big barrier, although not the only one, to social integration (O'Reilly, 2007).

This kind of case reminds us of the importance of taking into account some difficulties affecting studies like this. For example, King *et al.* (2000) refer to three potential problems: firstly, the problem of *post hoc* rationalisation (see also Halfacree and Boyle, 1993) induces subjects who have migrated to convince themselves that migrating was the right decision. Secondly, a considerably proportion of the subjects with bad experiences have probably returned to their countries of origin, or, if they have remained, they will be more difficult to interview. Thirdly and related to the two previous points, the 'burnt bridges syndrome', induces the subjects to 'make the best of a problematic situation given that there is no turning back (or that to turn back would be to admit failure)' (King *et al.*, 2000:117). Additionally, in tune with Halfacree and Rivera (2012) suggestions and directly linked to the aforementioned concepts of ruralphilia and ruralphobia, different interviewees expressed a wide range of experiences and representations that may be influential in immigrants' decision to stay or to emigrate elsewhere. This includes the sometimes important difference between the imagined and the actually lived landscape (Benson, 2012).

4.3. 'Come to work and see an eagle'. Job search or setting up businesses on "natural" foundations

As has been noted by Prados and Del Valle (2010:437), protected areas are territories whose natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes hold a unique beauty and, at the same time, are places where processes of territorial development, rural multifunctionality and job creation can take place. These processes of territorial development and job creation, can, in some cases, be linked to the arrival of new population to territories with NPA like the ones analysed in this paper. Thus, the presence of a natural area (whether or not it is protected) can be seen as an indirect factor of attraction. In this sense, McGranahan (2008) highlights the need to go beyond the explanation that places landscape as a direct attraction factor by itself, exploring possible indirect associations between landscape, the economy and migration.

Regarding our fieldwork, different interviewees explanations fit well with what has been mentioned above. An instance is a German woman who is starting an outdoor sports business

in the area, her migratory process was guided by that objective and the presence of natural and landscape values in the area have played a major role in it. Specifically the presence of a natural park is very much related to her settling there, because, for her, the presence of this NPA can be seen as an attraction and as security for the conservation of those values – values needed for businesses based on nature tourism. In this sense, this interviewee could also be considered as an environmental or landscape seeker (Velez de Castro, 2013).

It is at this point that we must reflect on the line that separates quality-of-life migrations from those associated with economic motivations, and particularly reflect on this division when is based on the nationality of immigrants. In studies on other southern European areas, several authors have found professional and job changes among the motives exposed by “quality-of-life migrants” (e.g. Benson, 2010; Lardiés, 1999; Stone and Stubbs, 2007). Similarly, during fieldwork in Alt Empordà and Odemira, people who by their nationalities might generally be related to migratory motives linked to quality-of-life preferences were interviewed, but, in their explanations, they gave as the main reasons for their migration processes elements that might be considered as employment-related or economic. These cases are particularly clear in Odemira, where the business opportunities in the agriculture sector have attracted many investors, companies and their managers, and qualified personnel, all of them from different foreign nationalities.

Examples related to this profile are relatively numerous and varied. For instance, a man who was born in Belgium and has lived in Odemira since 1989, working in the horticultural sector, after talking about job and business reasons, states: ‘That’s the other point. Of course. It is also quality of life’. Talking about the natural park, he says he greatly values living surrounded by nature and knowing that ‘during the next 5 years you won’t get a big industry coming there, or a huge apartment building, or a thing like that’.

One of the major issues in Odemira is the conflict that has been created around the natural park, a conflict in which foreign horticulture companies are directly involved. Leaving aside this problem, which we cannot include in this paper, it is worth mentioning one issue related to it: the type of immigrant who can be labelled “business opportunity immigrants” in the case of Portugal, on one hand, they see the natural park as a source of problems for their businesses because it means restrictions and more bureaucracy, but, at the same time, they see it as a positive factor for their personal lives and as having potential for their businesses too. Partly under the premise of ‘if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em’, and partly

with a conciliatory spirit, but always with their business in mind, they argue that the natural park can add value to agricultural products.

In addition, another profile that goes hand in hand with the one shown above and that is particularly present in Odemira covers the relatives of foreign immigrants who arrived thanks to job and/or investment opportunities. In the cases of spouses, mainly women, motivations relating to the natural landscape, as well as socio-cultural ones, may play a more important role than in other cases, because unlike their partners, they usually do not have professional incentives to settle in the host location. Regarding Alt Empordà, job and business opportunities are to be found more in the services sector (or construction) and less in agriculture. Among the EU-15 foreign interviewees there are some who have set up businesses like restaurants, clothes shops or hairdressers, and interviewees working in hotels, real estate agencies, travel agencies or as masseuses. However, despite differences regarding the economic sectors, similar opinions and experiences emerge in both Spain and Portugal. In other words, despite their labour migratory motivations and the fact that sometimes their jobs or businesses are somehow linked to the natural characteristics of the area, some of these interviewees clearly also value these characteristics.

4.4. Living from other incomes “naturally”

Another group of migratory motivations are related to incomes or pensions that allow immigrants to live in good conditions in their host countries, especially when compared to the country of origin where the cost of living is higher. Climate and property opportunities are factors that often appear linked to this one. King *et al.* (2000) have noted that rising incomes and wealth in old age has been ‘a key influence on the growth of retirement migration’ (King *et al.*, 2000: 14). The same authors, following different studies, have noted that the importance of cost differentials can be classified as the main attraction of southern European countries to retired migrants. That is followed by the climate and, thirdly, by ‘cultures, landscapes and ways of life’, especially in particular areas like Tuscany, Provence and the inland parts of Andalusia and the Algarve (King *et al.*, 2000: 33).

Arguments linked to this group of motivations have been found in many cases mixed with others, and their presence varies considerably from the explanations of one interviewee to another, but the natural values of the area are always given some degree of importance. It may be interesting to mention the case of a Dutch in Odemira living outside the boundary of

the natural park. Interviewees living some kilometres outside the limits of protected areas, highlighted living in an area with remarkable natural and landscape values as an element of attraction. This is an added argument for reinforcing the importance of natural elements in migratory motivations independently from the protected areas.

In some cases, the importance of the natural and landscape elements of the study areas appear to be relevant, largely supporting our working hypothesis. Another example in this sense is a 47-year-old British man who runs his businesses in Great Britain from Alt Empordà, or an Austrian man, aged 58, living in the same study area.

Although it is not an issue linked only to residents living off pensions or other incomes, we have found numerous interviewees in both areas who give importance to property opportunities in the explanation of their migratory and settlement process. These findings are in line with those of authors like Benson (2010) in the case of British people living in Southern France. Other authors have noted the importance of paying attention to the property market (housing availability and costs) as an element that can influence the role played by the landscape alone on the arrival of migrants to areas with landscape values (McGranaham, 2008). Different interviewees see property prices as an important element in the decision to settle. At the same time, the characteristics of these properties being close to or surrounded by nature play at least an equally important role. These residential and property preferences are also in tune with previous studies on internal migration into rural areas (e.g. Williams and Jobes, 1990; Paniagua, 2005).

4.5. Lovers, friends and other “natural” attractions

Although a large majority of interviewees mix different factors and elements when explain their reasons for migrating, this mixture is especially noticeable in some of the subjects. A variety of personal and individual stories have led these individuals to settle in the areas of study. From stories of couples to family inheritances, children, craft and trades apprenticeships, past friendships, holidays, etc. through references to random coincidences. Among all these explanations, the ones related to couples and marriages require special attention because they are a major migratory factor in intra-EU mobility (Santacreu *et al.* 2008) and general international migration into rural areas (Morén-Alegret, 2011). Despite the variety of profiles to be found in these couples and marriages (Gaspar, 2012), this kind of factor is very important in the migratory motivations of the interviewees who refer to it.

But what is relevant here is that, in the background of all these immigrants' stories, to a greater or lesser extent, factors related to the natural and scenic features of the study areas can be found. It is difficult to determine the importance of each of these factors in personal choices, but "natural" elements of the local landscape emerge during their narratives. In some cases, these elements acquire importance in the explanations of those interviewed, while in others they appear to a lesser extent, but their presence also somewhat reinforces the initial hypothesis. An illustrative instance is a British woman resident in Alt Empordà since the early 1990s: 'Obviously, the landscape is influential. If the place is ugly, of course I would not go there. I would have gone somewhere else [laughs], maybe in Italy, in Tuscany. However, these things are relevant, but the element of chance is very present too' (British woman aged 51, Alt Empordà).

She highlights the role played by chance factors and unconscious decisions in her arrival in the municipality where she lives. In spite of that, she considers landscape and natural values as key elements in the migration process.

5. Conclusions

The main objectives of this paper were to provide original data and information about the characteristics of EU-15 migrants settled in the two study areas and to analyse the influence that the natural environment and protected areas may have on their destination choice and settlement processes responding to the following key question: how the natural environment and the protected areas are influential (or not) on their migration destination choice?

Bearing this in mind, the research conducted in the two study areas shows that landscape and natural elements are a pull factor for an important number of EU-15 foreign immigrants in order to migrate and settle there. Building on this and before pointing out several questions around this idea, a tentative typology of international migration in territories with natural protected areas is presented below. One of the aims of the article was that the results obtained could be extrapolated to other areas, so this typology could be tested (and improved) in future studies to be carried out in other areas in Europe and beyond.

a) Residents with predominantly labour/economic migratory motivations, mainly unskilled jobs and non-OECD nationalities.

- b) Economically active residents but without their own business. Several migratory motivations being important both the labour factor and the natural elements and landscape of the area. European OECD nationalities (mainly EU-15).
- c) Economically active residents without labour migratory motivations. Attracted by several elements, including the natural and landscape features of the area and a notable importance of the couple-sentimental factor. Mainly European OECD nationalities (and EU-15).
- d) Business owners or high-skilled staff in businesses established or managed in/from the study areas. European OECD nationalities (mainly EU-15), including different subgroups: among them, residents with business directly linked to presence of the natural areas. Natural characteristics of the area are valued both from a professional and a personal point of view.
- e) Retired immigrant residents attracted by different elements, among which up to a greater or lesser extent there are the natural and landscape features of the area. Mainly EU-15 nationalities.
- f) 'Alternative' immigrant residents or with ideologies and lifestyles relatively away from the mainstream standards within the European capitalist society. Mainly EU-15 nationalities.

From the elaboration of the presented typology and the analysis of its different groups in the two study areas, we want to highlight a number of points. These points try to put more light on the answer of the aforementioned key question of the article.

- The presence of outstanding natural and scenic elements in the study areas should be seen as one of the main pull factors among EU-15 immigrants. There are significant variations in the roles played by the natural elements in their migration and settlement processes. A wide variety of 'multiple currents' (Halfacree and Boyle, 1993; Findlay and Stockdale, 2003) were acknowledged: climate, labour or business opportunities, love or friendship relations, ancestors' roots or youth experiences and holidays, the cost of living and property opportunities. However, they were always hand in hand with the natural characteristics of the study areas.
- The forms of environmental protection found in the study areas (e.g. natural park), with some exceptions, in general play a minor role in the explicit narratives regarding the migratory motivations of the EU-15 foreign residents. Other factors sometimes related to the idea of the 'rural idyll' (often linked to the presence of the NPA's) emerge more clearly in these explicit narratives. In spite of that, a significant number of informants value the NPAs

as a way of guaranteeing future preservation of the natural-landscape values, in line with the environmental or landscape seekers (Velez de Castro, 2013).

- It should be noted that the existence of NPAs could be seen as a symptom or as a consequence of the outstanding presence of these values, and at the same time as one of the causes of the preservation of those values. Thus, it can be argued that the existence of these forms of environmental protection should be considered as an element linked to the attraction of foreign immigrant population.

- The relationship with the protection form (e.g. natural park) appears more clearly (and at the same time more instrumental) when these protection forms are seen as a necessary or an added value to the businesses run by these residents (e.g. ecotourism, organic agriculture).

- The boundary between quality of life and economic motivations (or between labour migrants and lifestyle or amenity migrants) can be put into question. This is especially true when such differentiation is based on the nationality of immigrants. Some EU-15 residents expressed motives that might be considered as labour-related or economic-related. At the same time, professional and job changes can be found among the motives given by residents who could be labelled as quality-of-life migrants. All these findings are in tune with previous researches (e.g. Benson, 2010; Lardiés, 1999; Stone and Stubbs, 2007).

- The interviewees who expressed that natural characteristics of their residence area are at the forefront of their migratory motivations do not, as a group, correspond to a specific profile in terms of age, sex or education level or nationality. Retired EU-15 immigrants can be identified as the most relevant collective positively valuing these characteristics as an attraction factor, but this is not the only group and there are important differences among its members.

- The knowledge on NPAs is clearly higher among OECD migrants (mainly EU-15). This must be seen as a result of their socioeconomic position (and cultural background). Some non-EU-15 residents also mention migratory motivations linked to the natural environment. In these cases, shared social class and lifestyles emerge as elements that bring these interviewees closer to the ones coming from EU-15.

Regarding the differences between the two areas in relation to the migratory and settlement motivations, they are mainly linked to the different economic and infrastructure characteristics of the two areas. On the one hand, the importance of some economic sectors (mass tourism vs. horticulture sector) can be placed at the base of the differences. On the other hand, there are differences regarding local-regional characteristics. In the case of Alt

Empordà, a number of interviewees noted the importance of both the area's natural character and, on the other hand, its relative proximity to urban areas, railways, airports, motorways, beaches, mountains, services, France and, at last but not least, rural-agricultural spots. This is in tune with the idea of a Greek-Roman classical Mediterranean landscape and its combination of natural-rural beauty and practical developments, such as transport connections. In contrast, in the case of Odemira, a number of interviewees noted the relevance of the area's natural character and its remoteness, the isolation from big urban centres and mass tourism resorts and its sort of "wildness". This is in line with the idea of *finisterre* sometimes associated with Portugal. These differences between the two study areas, add considerable interest in extrapolating the results to other possible study areas with relatively similar characteristics.

Last but not least, it is worth highlighting the fact that immigration plays an important role in the demography, territorial characteristics and the economy of the study areas (Fonseca, 2007, 2008). The diversity of immigrants living in Odemira and Alt Empordà, not just in terms of geographical origin, but also regarding social profile and migration motives, is a valuable resource that must be taken into account in local development strategies and policy-making. At the same time, the natural and landscape values of the study areas must be seen as a key value. Consequently, both population diversity and natural values must be seen as a resource and as a potentiality that should be properly managed thinking in the mid and long term future of the areas.

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