REFLECTIONS ON MARGINAL MOBILE LIFESTYLES:

New European nomads, liveaboards and sha´bi Moroccan men

Abstract

This article focuses on mobile people who are largely overlooked in the contemporary studies of migration and mobility. Today, a rather limited but constantly growing number of people from Global North and Global South are wandering along transnational trajectories, without extended settlement anywhere in particular. They remain mobile because of inability to make the living they hoped for in the place of their origin, or because of being dissatisfied with the values or way of living in home society. Based on our fieldworks among Western liveaboards in the Mediterranean, new European nomads who engage in a mobile life between Europe and Africa, and popular class (sha'bi)1 Moroccan men in the transnational space between Morocco and Spain, we demonstrate the central characteristic of these lifestyles that we prefer to conceptualise as "*marginal mobilities*": they are highly mobile, not entirely forced nor voluntary lifestyles, which occur along loosely defined travel trajectories; they generally lack politicised public spheres; and they are marked by the sentiments of marginality, liminality and constant negotiation with the sedentary norm of the nation state.

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1   Introduction

This article draws from an exchange of e-mails, Skype calls and meetings among three anthropologists who share a fascination with mobile people. As all anthropologists, we compared the unexpected shifts and turns we faced while in the field and began to see interesting similarities in our field data. Nataša Rogelja, who has been engaged for several years in the lives of "liveaboards"[2] i.e. Westerners[3] who travel and live in boats in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, revealed an unexpected detail for the rest of us. Many of her Western interlocutors were far from privileged people living in spotless sailing boats. They often expressed a deep embitterment towards their background societies and adopted mobile lifestyle because of the existential and/or economic crisis resulting from the blocked career opportunities, the loss of employment and at times unemployment due to health problems. Many worked occasionally in the service sector, construction sites and agriculture − in European niches conventionally understood as the domains of migrants from the Global South.

As Marko Juntunen and Špela Kalčić reflected on their experiences in the street markets of Morocco and elsewhere in West Africa, they agreed that among the traders there were two newly emerged mobile categories: new European nomads (NEN), the majority of whom are "housetruckers",[4] and Western-Africans with EU passports, in most cases from Morocco, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. Due to their legal status in EU they were able to widen their sphere of transnational mobility in order to improve their economic situation, burdened by the financial crisis beginning in 2008. Our observations were clearly connected with the fact that more than 12 million people are currently facing the threat of falling under poverty line in the EU.[5] In many areas across Western Europe, the crisis had struck hard on the youth and elders regardless of their ethnic backgrounds (cf. Erlanger 2012), generating wide disillusionment with surrounding social and economic conditions.

In all three cases, we found that there was a weak sense of groupness among our interlocutors. These people conveyed the image of situational solidarity and had great readiness to try out how life would work elsewhere. Many European nomads informed Špela Kalčić that mobility had become a strategy of survival due to economic problems and feelings of futurelessness with sedentary life in Europe. They seemed to challenge the deeply rooted academic convention to separate analytically the mobilities of the people from the Global

North from those of the Global South. Many of Špela's interlocutors displayed similarity in their mobile practices and survival strategies with the economically marginal and transnationally mobile Moroccan men with EU passports studied by Marko Juntunen. In fact, Špela's interlocutors talked about how they interact with the transnational street vendors of the African origin from whom they learn about local markets, attractive items for sale and possible business partners working in their target destinations on the Moroccan Mauritanian border, in Nouakchott (Mauritania), Bamako (Mali), Niamey (Niger), Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso).

Gradually, we began to compare our cases in more detailed manner: the liveaboards in the Mediterranean, the NEN in and out of West Africa, and the *sha'bi* Moroccan men who arrived in Spain as irregular migrants in the 1990s. After extended engagement with contemporary migration and mobility studies, we realised that the kinds of people we were studying have largely remained unaddressed by ethnographers. The key feature for these people is their apparent dislocation from everywhere, the location that they have left and the places where they are going to. They have no particular aimed destination and as a result the movement, rather than settlement in a specific destination, characterises distinctively the lifestyle of these people.

2   Unorthodox comparisons

We were fully aware of the fact that comparison of mobile lives of people whose travel trajectories overlap, but who are positioned in different terms in the global order, is in many ways unorthodox. In fact, we were criticised by a colleague who stressed that our comparative approach disregards the institutional inequalities between the white Westerners and non-Western/Moroccan mobile people, their unequal class statuses and positions in the migrant regimes, the systems of surveillance and the racist and xenophobic practices and discourses. In short, we learned that there was no room for telling the story with our protagonists – the mobile Westerners and the mobile Moroccans. Yet, we stubbornly wanted to push our discussion forward. The fact that presently more and more Spanish and French citizens are introduced to the African labour market in search of employment, and the Portuguese are migrating by thousands to Brazil and Mozambique, served us as a signal that we should continue our discussion. Our aim was to demonstrate that increasing number of people not only migrate to another destination, but take up highly mobile life; and in the current era marked by the global financial crisis it is, in fact, increasingly problematic to draw conventional conceptual distinctions between the kinds of people we study. Comparative approach to our data, however, does not mean that we are blind to our interlocutors' clearly unequal subject positions in the structures of global power relations.

After reviewing literature on global nomadism and lifestyle migration (e.g. D'Andrea 2007; Benson & O'Reilly 2009a, 2009b; Richards & Wilson 2009), we found that these literatures are predominantly focusing on people from the Global North who finance their travel or residence in various locations by pensions or by working periodically in the Global North. In contrast, many of our Western interlocutors are constantly on the move – they either use mobile lifestyle to "muddle through" the period of unemployment till they obtain the pension, or alternatively, they work and use several income making strategies while on the move. Among the Westerners there are a considerable number of people who resort to peripatetic[6] survival strategies i.e. nomadism that exploit social rather than natural

resources (Berland & Salo 1986). Their economic strategies are highly comparable with the Moroccan *sha´bi* men with EU passports who move along transnational trajectories between Morocco and Spain. Our interlocutors revealed that not only mobility and economic strategies but also conceptions concerning reasons to be mobile, relations with background society and spaces they traverse share similar features upon which we could build our comparative analysis.

Moreover, we were particularly interested in the fluid and instant nature of the social relationships in which these people engage. Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002: 4) provided us with an inspiring idea by remarking that many individuals experience cross border movement without simultaneously participating in transnational collectives or attributing a new social identity to the experience of mobility. Central constituents for their mobility are the notions of disjunction and escape. We believed that by comparing our cases, we could open new perspectives for delving deeper into the cultural logic of such mobile lifestyles.

In this article, we first review briefly the common denominators of contemporary mobile lifestyles and demonstrate the challenges the contemporary era poses for the conventional conceptualisations of mobility. We then propose that the multifaceted notion of marginality provides a helpful analytical prism for understanding our field data. Finally, we present our ethnographic material and point out that our data can be compared according to five unifying characteristics which are further discussed in detail.

3   Contextualising mobile lives

The number of social analysts who take mobility seriously and highlight the fact that social lives in the 21st century are characteristically mobile has steadily expanded since the 1990s (cf. Cresswell 2010: 551; Sheller 2011: 1; Sheller & Urry 2006: 207; Urry 2007). Lives spent on the move are everywhere outcomes of peoples' responses to social, economic, political and environmental factors that can occur on multiple levels of association from global to local (Bauman 1998). The common denominator for these mobile lives is that they are related to the time and space compressing communication technology (Urry 2004). People are more aware of their relative position within the increasingly interconnected and networked global reality and capable of imagining their lives elsewhere. Air travel is an opportunity available for an increasing number of people, which is widening the sphere of experience and enabling the maintenance of long distance social relations. Images of success and achievement but also poverty and need are circulated, not only by media, but also by mobile subjects who expose others to the widening sets of meaning (Sheller & Urry 2006).

Mobility has become a nearly compulsive part of the career building for the educated professionals across the globe, but being on the move has also become a vehicle to adopt an alternative life project, critical of the dominant norms of the society marked by neo-liberal global capitalism (cf. Bousiou 2008; D'Andrea 2007; Hetherington 2000; Korpela 2009; Martin 2002). However, while some take up mobility as a means to acquiring a more fulfilling life, for others movement is not necessarily a desired mode of being, but rather it is about the search for more secure economically as well as socially sustainable life.

Amit and Rapport (2002: 34, 35) remind us that anthropologists have displayed an increasing interest towards mobility, yet the economic globalisation has changed the nature of the human mobility and blurred the conventional distinctions between moving subjects.

Currently, many areas are crisscrossed by the travel trajectories of people, whose movement challenges academic conceptualisations of mobility. The travel trajectories of our interlocutors differ from migratory movements (economic, asylum, returning and circular migrants) that occur typically along more or less fixed routes. Neither do they resemble temporary movements (usually taking place in a limited number of places), such as movement of lifestyle migrants, tourists or backpackers (cf. Bell & Ward 2000; Geoffroy & Sibley 2007; Korpela 2009; Benson & O'Reilly 2009a; Richards & Wilson 2009). The people we encountered while in the field seem to blur existing concepts resembling at times tourists and lifestyle migrants, but at other times economic migrants and circular migrants. They are involved in constant and loosely patterned travel much like traditional peripatetic nomads, yet the surrounding context of their lifestyles is that of global modernity.

In the Mediterranean and North and West African settings that we have observed, these mobile people are predominantly Africans (often with Spanish, French and Italian passports) who engage in peripatetic trade between African and European continents, but there are also increasing numbers of Westerners who adopt similar kinds of nomadic lifestyles (Bousiou 2008; D'Andrea 2006, 2007; Kalčić 2012; Rogelja 2012).

Before offering detailed insights into our ethnographic data, it is essential to explore the notion "marginality" in detail in order to understand the cultural logic of the mobile lives that we observed.

4   Marginality and mobility

In the social sciences and humanities, marginality generally refers to the outer limits of society and social acceptability as well as to a lack of social influence, often accompanied by stigmatisation and disqualification by dominant social groups. In other words, the notion involves two frameworks, societal and spatial (Gurung & Kollmair 2005: 10), evoking the ideas of social inequality and the (outer) boundaries of society. Many authors, particularly in geography, have established a strong link among marginality, poverty and vulnerability, lack of civil liberties, weak political representation, and uncertain future (Coudouel et al. 2004; Gerster 2000; Gurung & Kollmair 2005). This kind of understanding of marginality is undoubtedly relevant in many different social contexts, yet detailed ethnographic case studies may bring to the forefront serious challenges.

Sarah Green among others has pointed out that marginality implies a difficult and ambivalent relation to the "heart of the things" (2005: 2). In her ethnographic study of the Pogoni region (Greek-Albanian border), marginality can be understood as the lack of particularity (2005: 13). In other contemporary ethnographic accounts of the Mediterranean region (e.g. Gilsenan 1996; Herzfeld 1997; Serematakis 1991; Vale de Almeida 1996), marginality has been closely associated with accentuated otherness, resistance and social critique, together with claims to empowerment. Another option is to approach marginality as a position in-between rather than at the boundaries or peripheries (Boon 1999 in Green 2005). For Boon, the essence of marginality lies in its un-identifiability. Such a view brings the concept of marginality close to Victor Turner's understanding of liminality as a "position between positions" (1974: 237). Green (2005) further develops these ideas highlighting the fact that in-betweenness and ambiguity are associated with inventiveness and the possibilities of making something new out of making things uncertain (ibid: 4).

All these various aspects of the concept − marginality as accentuated otherness and difference manifested in the form of resistance, in-betweenness, inventiveness and being nothing particular – are especially useful when we engage in a comparison of our three cases of mobile lifestyles. They all communicate about the world of fluidity, ambiguity and uncertainty, but also about subversive inventiveness, i.e. the possibility of making something new, enabled by in-betweenness.

In the national, supranational and international regimes of mobility and scenarios of development, certain forms of mobilities are characterised by being legal, privileged and even desired – such as tourism and the movement of skilled professionals, while other forms of human mobilities are marginalised, as they simply remain invisible in these schemes or alternatively they are perceived as undesired or irregular.

The mobilities we study are marginal in multiple ways. First, as noted earlier, as social and cultural phenomena they have received only marginal interest among social science and humanities scholars. Second, the administrative and political debates on mobilities disregard the fact that neo-liberal states undergoing financial crisis "push" people, both from the Global North and South, to adopt *mobile* lifestyles. While much has been written about EU citizens who currently *migrate* to different areas because of the shock effect of unemployment, reduced social benefits and services and overburdening housing costs, there are very few contemporary accounts that focus on the fact that many people engage in peripatetic economic strategies that involve nomadic movement in transnational space (e.g. Kalčić 2013; Rogelja 2013). A similar argument can be raised with regard to non-Europeans in the EU countries, Moroccans among them (cf. Juntunen 2013). Those tens of thousands of Moroccans who left Western Europe because of the unemployment and economic difficulties[7] are usually conceptualised as *returnees* to their countries of origin and their actual mobile practices that occur along shifting circuits of transnational movement are left largely unexplored. Third, these people express being marginalised by their background societies. Moreover, economic inventiveness and social capital by which they attempt to make the best out of their unrecognised and marginal position are important features of their lifestyle.

Our ethnographic cases stand in complex relation with recognised and unrecognised forms of mobility. They overlap significantly with recognised forms of mobilities such as asylum, economic and circular migrations, international retirement migration, sabbatical tourism, travelling and traditional peripatetic nomadism. However, we argue that there are numerous criteria which allow us to talk about them as representatives of largely overlooked contemporary mobilities, namely, that they are characterised by marginality, as well as inventiveness and peripatetic economic strategies.

5   Engaging in transnational mobility

Over the past two decades, an increasing number of Westerners have adopted a mobile lifestyle of living and travelling by vehicles and boats along loosely defined trajectories. Opening of the internal borders within the EU and rapid development of satellite navigation (GPS), communication and information (ICT) technology also enabled mobile lifestyles in extreme environments such as desert and the sea, previously reserved only for skilful navigators and connoisseurs of remote areas. Even in 1980, the existence of 4000 liveaboards in the Mediterranean alone was estimated (Cooper & Cooper 1994: 7). Presently, the phenomenon is widely spread in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Equally, the number of people travelling by and living in various kinds of motor

homes between Western Europe, West Africa and various other localities of the Global South has increased. There are presently several tens of thousands of such people in France alone (Angeras 2011; Hetherington 2000; Martin 2002).

As mentioned, the liveaboards and the NEN are highly heterogeneous people whose lifestyles in many cases resemble international retirement migrants, sabbatical travellers and traditional peripatetic nomads. The vast majority hold West European passports. They represent different social strata and age groups and their break off with the sedentary life in the West occurred in a variety of ways. The majority are under 60 years of age and among them French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German and Dutch predominate. They travel with their spouses and are mostly without children, as according to them, mobile life with children requires more economic resources and complex arrangements regarding education, planning and security. While some travel in pairs of friends, during our fieldwork we also interacted with many single men on the road or at the seas. Being without regular income, these Westerners have to resort to flexible economic strategies: temporary work in marinas, construction sites and services in tourist resorts, periodic work in agriculture, long distance work through the Internet, and especially among the NEN, transnational trade of second hand vehicles, car parts and consumer goods.

In Morocco, the social effects of increasingly restrictive European border and mobility policy became apparent particularly in the 1990s (Fortier 2006; de Haas 2006). Paradoxically, the attempts to prevent people's international mobility gave rise to new nomadic lifestyles. The unofficial migration market was further invigorated by the high youth unemployment rate, the sharp price increases of basic consumption goods and the rapid urbanisation. The majority of transnationally mobile people in the North of Morocco were single *sha´bi* men from the urban lower and middle segments of the social strata who were introduced to transnational circuits by irregular migration to Europe. The traditional sector of migrant labour in Europe – industrial work – no longer took in these newcomers and they took up periodic labour in the very same unregulated economic niches as the liveaboards and the NEN, namely, in agriculture, construction and services. Despite the fact that the *sha´bi* men we studied had gained permanent residence in Spain by 2005, after the recession of 2008 they were forced to broaden the spectrum of their movement and the majority of them are currently engaged in second hand trade activities that demand constant mobility across the continents.

6   Marginal mobilities

As our previous insights indicate, the liveaboards, NEN and *sha´bi* Moroccan men resemble each other in terms of the patterns of movement, and the overarching cultural ethos of being on the move. According to our understanding, these mobile people share the following five basic characteristics:

  • Their lifestyles are highly mobile[8] and their movement occurs along loosely defined trajectories;
  • their mobility is not entirely voluntary nor forced;
  • their social world is marked by uprootedness and liminality;
  • they lack politicised public space;
  • they are in a constant process of negotiation with the state bureaucracies that make an effort to impose "sedentary norm" (i.e. rules and regulations which require a degree of sedentariness from the citizens) onto them.

As the contemporary analytical language of migration and mobility studies lacks an appropriate term for such mobile lifestyles, we prefer to conceptualise them as *marginal mobilities*. In short, marginal mobility refers to growing number of highly mobile people from Global North and South who are wandering along loosely defined transnational trajectories, without extended settlement anywhere in particular and rely on peripatetic nomadism as an economic strategy. Their social world is marked by marginality, but also subversive inventiveness, which is in function of better social navigation through precarious everyday life. Let us elaborate these common characteristics of marginal mobilities in the following sections.

6.1   Trajectories

The marginally mobile people whom we have studied do not follow fixed travel trajectories nor does their mobility occur between a limited number of sending and receiving communities of more or less extended dwelling (cf. Peraldi 2005; Yaghmaian 2006). These are, in fact, the key characteristics that distinguish our cases from contemporary migrations.[9] Our interlocutors, unlike contemporary migrants, are most of the time on the move (cf. Bousiou 2008; D'Andrea 2007), circulating along loosely defined trajectories and sharing similar relation with space as traditional peripatetic nomads (cf. Berland & Rao 2004); yet, the cultural ethos of their movement can only be grasped against the global late capitalism.

The liveaboards' travel routes are often 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 and on the availability of the work. However, the mobility is often seasonally patterned.

Our data indicate that many NEN usually spend the summer months in Europe because of the availability of temporary jobs in agriculture, tourism and services. They begin their journeys towards south along the Atlantic coast of Morocco and Western Sahara in the late autumn as the European climate gets colder. There are many, however, who extend their journeys to various localities in Sub-Saharan Africa and others who do not follow such seasonal travel routes but stay extended periods in Africa, travel across the continent and often look for possibilities to board a boat to South America. Some literally live on the road; they circulate between the continents while engaging in second hand marketing of vehicles and domestic appliances. At the other extreme are those who stop for extended periods and use their vehicles for housing and for moving between winter and summer camps.

While engaging in periodic work during the summer months, the liveaboards tend to stay close to Mediterranean tourist centres. Some search for manual work from shipyards and marinas while others clean and paint boats owned by chartering companies. Those with a sufficient level of expertise are employed by chartering companies, diving and sailing schools as skippers or instructors or host charter tourists in their boats. During the winter months many economise, rely on savings and stay most of the time outside of the official and unofficial spheres of labour. Other options include helping fishermen in their work, looking after the yachts of wealthier people who use their boats merely for short term vacations and working around the globe for a few months on large yachts as mariners. There are furthermore those who prefer travelling to European towns and winter resorts for periodic work. It is not uncommon that some liveaboards extend their trips to Caribbean, and even further to the Pacific islands in search

for work or better living conditions. Many liveaboards whom we met stated that the political unrest in the North Africa and the Horn of Africa, as well as the price increases of basic goods in many regions, have greatly reduced the number of appropriate areas for liveaboard lifestyle. They claim that after the recession of 2008, Greece is one of the few remaining places within the Mediterranean region where the conditions are suitable and life is affordable for them.

The ways in which the mobile Moroccan men were introduced to the transnational circuits of mobility can only be grasped against the unofficial "migration market" (Juntunen 2002). In the transnational space between Morocco and Spain, this economic space grew rapidly throughout the 1990s and included three interconnected and overlapping contexts. First, there was the practical sphere of transporting irregular migrants to EU territory, particularly to Spain (on open boats, cargo boats, passenger buses, lorries and private cars). Second, it involved the commerce and bribery related to the obtaining of official or counterfeit documents (travel documents, work contracts in Spain, birth certificates, criminal records, educational or professional certificates, marriage contracts and any kind of document that increased the possibilities for the international mobility of the prospective migrant). Finally, it involved the commercialisation of numerous social relations and arrangements that could improve the candidate's chances to embark on a journey north (marriages of convenience, lending of EU passports to similar looking friends or family members in exchange of economic compensation, etc.). This new mobility was largely detached from the destinations and the logic of movement of earlier generations of Moroccans in Western Europe.

Instead of targeting France, Germany, the Netherlands or Belgium, namely, all popular destinations among the labour and chain migrants of the 1960s and 1970s, these migrant men considered Spain with its booming construction and agricultural sectors as a preferable destination from the mid-1990s onwards. Citrus farms in Alicante and Murcia, greenhouses of Almeria and construction sites of Catalonia attracted thousands of Moroccans, particularly from the North of the country. In Spain, the chances of the migrant men reaching their desired destination depended largely on their social relations with fellow Moroccans in Spain. After reaching the Spanish territory people begun to arrange their travel to other locations. Those with better resources had managed to set costly "package deals" already in Morocco and after reaching the Spanish coast they were transported further by Moroccan smugglers. Others contacted relatives and friends in Spain immediately after the arrival and were often picked up by private cars from the roadside along the southern coastal areas. The first years in Spain are marked by fear of deportation, stress and suffering, constant mobility in search of work and attempts to regularise one's residential status. Those who managed to legalise their status prior to the economic recession experienced periods of more sedentary life in Spain with frequent returns to Morocco. Many of the more successful men returned for marriage to Morocco and established a family in Spain. The personal histories of many men conveyed an image of a relatively secure, but also a highly mobile labour market position in agriculture and construction. The men had to remain mobile in order to support wives and children who led far more sedentary lives than the men in areas with low cost housing in Spain. The recession, however, forced the men to broaden their sphere of movement. Women with young children often returned to Morocco while the husbands begun to search for job opportunities and engaged in the cross border trade of second hand goods.

As noted earlier, our interlocutors − both Westerners and Moroccans − engage in highly similar economic strategies in

the unregulated economic spheres in Europe: in tourism related services, construction sites and in agriculture.[10] Both groups engage in trade with second hand vehicles and domestic appliances in Africa; the Moroccans predominantly in Morocco, whereas the Westerners and Sub-Saharan Africans usually make their deals on the Moroccan Mauritanian border, in Bamako (Mali), Niamey (Niger), Bobo Dioulasso or Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). Many Westerners rely entirely on this kind of transcontinental trade, making up to seven annual trips between Europe and Africa.

6.2 Mobility of the uprooted and liminal

Many among liveaboards and NEN have a history of a relatively secure economic position. However, they expressed in interviews having been overstressed and exhausted in their careers. Particularly, those from younger age groups perceive being deceived by the promises of the neoliberal Western state as they had experienced unemployment, blocked careers and a precarious labour market position. The Moroccan *sha'bi* men display equally critical and embittered relation with the political and social order of their home society. Many perceive being completely disregarded and silenced by the official society. They commonly stated as having "no other choice" than to depart from Morocco. Particularly those with education and professional skills and thus legitimate claims for a decent social position portrayed Morocco as a corrupt and morally rotten society run by an elite circle that controls the key political, military and economic institutions. In Spain, following the recession of 2008, they experienced that they were the ones who were the first to suffer from the deteriorating labour market conditions and increasing xenophobia. They routinely conceptualised their sentiments of in-betweenness by the notion *ghurba*. The term literally means "place of exile" but in the *sha´bi* men's practical usage it also points to a state of "alienation" or "being a stranger to one's concrete social surrounding", which emerges anywhere – in Morocco or in a foreign country.

Highly common among our interlocutors is also the criticism towards the dominant norms of their background society. The NEN and liveaboards informed being dissatisfied with rapid pace and hastiness of life and its consumption orientation. Many also talked about personal experiences of emotional emptiness resulting from meaningless materialism that is perceived as destructive to the environment as well as for the society. Given their uncertain and scarce economic resources, life on the road and at sea is for them the only affordable context in their search of emotionally meaningful and harmonious life, but also economically, morally and socially more sustainable existence. The disappointment towards European late capitalism was expressed frequently not only in the abstract sense but also through lived experiences as the citizens of the EU member states. Existential crisis involving the tension between interlocutors' subjective moral values and the perceived immorality of the social and economic policies within the EU member states was expressed in many personal histories that we heard. Moroccan interlocutors, on the other hand, nearly unanimously expressed a sense of "double absence" (Sayad 1999). Spain had no longer anything to offer for them and in Morocco they expressed undergoing feelings of humiliation and lack of personal dignity. They were not willing to put up life in a society run by a "lobby of thoroughly corrupted elite of thieves" where "laws exist only for the poor" as our interlocutors routinely expressed.

For those from more prosperous Western background, constant movement was often portrayed as a positive experience and a

conscious choice. However, it should be noted that with time the romantic and idealised visions of the mobile life tend to fade and people become more critical of the fact that mobile life includes compromising many comforts, secure routines and repetitive social rhythms of sedentary life. Vered Amit sees that researchers tend to over-privilege coherent personhood in their attempts to understand patterns and conceptions of movement. This focus in turn shifts the attention from important aspects of mobility such as personal contradictions and costs of separation (2002a: 37). Our ethnographic data are in harmony with this idea; uprootedness and dispossession may at times appear for Westerners as side products of the mobile lifestyle. In the case of the Moroccan men, the majority rarely see constant movement as a desired way of being. To them, life on the road is a reaction to economic constraints, migration regimes and to the marginalisation they experience in the labour market.

The conventional classification of mobilities as either voluntary mobilities (tourism, lifestyle migration, business travel) or forced mobilities (asylum migration or economic migrants in search of employment or improved economic position) bears hardly any relevance to marginal mobilities. The people that we have encountered in our ethnographic fieldworks are characteristically neither entirely free nor forced to adopt life on the road. Rather, marginal mobile people typically conceive themselves as being pushed from behind in a variety of ways and marginalised by the background society. Among the *sha´bi* men, one of the key concepts with regard to international mobility is *l-harg*, "the burning", referring to clandestine departure from Morocco individually or via more or less organised networks transporting irregular migrants. *L-harg* derives from the Arabic verb *haraqa* "to burn". It relates to a vast range of cultural imaginaries; on one hand to "burned' life" – an escape from physically and culturally enclosed life; departure from urban quarters perceived as uninhabitable; movement towards a brighter horizon, self-creation, personal liberation from political, economic and sexual repression *kebt*; and experimentation drawing on an imaginary of the elsewhere and of exile, but it has an adventurous dimension as well. Among NEN and liveaboards, the decision of engaging in nomadism is most often taken amidst unfortunate or unsatisfactory circumstances; in most cases involving crisis with family, personal frustrations such as unsatisfactory professional situation, economic difficulties or general personal disharmony with the dominant values of the consumption oriented background society. Most of our NEN and liveaboard interlocutors come from the middle or lower economic strata of their background societies and had previously suffered from precarious positions in the labour and housing market. Experiences of unemployment, redundancy at the age of fifty, miserable pensions, blocked careers; a precarious labour market position and homelessness together with sharp criticism towards the dominant norms of the background society marked by neoliberal capitalism are widely shared.

6.3   Lack of the politicised public sphere

Unlike many contemporary migrants, our interlocutors cannot be perceived as individuals pertaining to any kind of durable community with politicised identities and politicised public spheres. Marginal mobilities emerge out of actions of individuals who are most of the time on the move. The social relations of these people have a fleeting and situational character; social weightlessness marks their relation with the social spaces they traverse. The Moroccan *sha´bi* men surviving within the sectors of unregulated greenhouse agriculture

in Spain for example work largely on daily oral contracts. They often live in periodic make shift camps in abandoned greenhouses without electricity and clean water. Due to racism and xenophobia, most recreational public spaces such as bars and cafes are in practice closed from them in the communities surrounding the greenhouses. The individualistic kind of peripatetic nomadism practiced by NEN and liveaboards is also marked by "position between positions" (Turner 1974: 237): our interlocutors simultaneously participate in many worlds while they do not belong to any of them. Their social connections and networks are in contrast to the traditional peripatetic nomads not connected with rootedness to the particular territory (Reyniers 1995: 49). The traditional peripatetics depend on complex networks of alliances which organise their mobility as well as connect with territoriality. However, the central constituents of mobility of NEN are the notions of disjunction, escape, ambiguity and uncertainty. The absence of any kind of network of assistance marks their transnational social world.

Each of our three ethnographic cases conveys an image of person(s) with a high readiness to test how life would work elsewhere. Such identity processes have been explored by several scholars who propose that the period of "liquid modernity" (Bauman 2000), marked by accentuated and all-embracing mobility (Sheller & Urry 2006), provides opportunities for new kinds of group formations based on shared elements which may be activities, interests, beliefs or lifestyles (Amit 2002a, 2002b; Amit & Rapport 2002; Bauman 2001; Delanty 2003). These formations are the outcomes of practices of people who are merely "conceptually connected" (see Amit & Rapport 2002). They do not necessarily imagine their personal commonalities in ongoing and ascribed collective identities (ibid.).

Individuality plays a significant role in the construction of the temporary groupings we have studied. They arise out of individuals' search for identity and personal fulfilment through collective participation (cf. Amit 2002a: 16; Delanty 2003: 120–2). As shown in detail in our ethnographic cases (Juntunen 2013; Kalčić 2013; Rogelja 2013), these social formations are characteristically situational, fluid and composed by people with multiple and simultaneous attachments in several such groupings (Amit 2002b: 16; Delanty 2003: 131).

In all of our ethnographic cases, people create distinctively fleeting trans- and multi-national social formations that are played out during "temporary rests" (cf. Urry 2003: 126). They engage in a shared lifestyle on the move and exchange experience, information and solidarity. These mobile lifestyles arise out of global modernity which promotes, enables and generates an escape to an alternative modus vivendi and experimentation with new communal relations.

The liveaboards interact frequently in unofficial marinas, sharing information on proper anchorages, and vital resources such as water and electricity as well as news about job opportunities. Some uphold contacts with their fellow citizens on land; however, these relations are occasional and fragile. For example, they consult their fellow citizens in order to find shopping facilities and medical care, yet usually these contacts are not maintained after their departure from the area. Our field data indicate that the liveaboards are perceived by their fellow citizens on land with great admiration – as brave sailors – but also with suspicion, because of their alternative life style. Social interactions among the NEN, on the other hand, take place in shifting and occasional small groupings that simply happen to stop for a few days in the same places. The sporadic gatherings often involve fixing the vehicles and the exchange of nomadic experiences and information on travel routes. People clearly display solidarity and readiness for reciprocal help, but the solidarities among them are first and foremost purely circumstantial. Some encounters develop

beyond the pragmatic mutual help and exchange of travel information and experiences, yet it is not unusual that lasting friendships are formed during the stopovers. As the journeys continue after a few days, very few make immediate plans for future meetings; however, some nomadic friendships are maintained through e-mails and Facebook. In short, in our fieldworks we encountered Western individuals who are linked through the same ethos and motives of being mobile; they are largely delocalised from the background social world and highly critical of much of its values, and their place within it. Adventure and freedom to shape one's future by stepping out of the background system constitute the central drives in their lives.

Among the *sha´bi* men, we also found a high reliance on individual rather than group effort for countering the economic realities of everyday life. This idea is linked with the network-centred social world and the understanding of respect as the result of individual action. Our Moroccan interlocutors for example tend to avoid establishing enterprises, economic alliances and joint investments because economic cooperation in general is considered to be occasional and when it occurs, alliances among men are shifting in nature (see Juntunen 2002: 97–110). Furthermore, the *sha´bi* men routinely perceive Moroccan labour and civil organisations in Spain as clienteist structures dominated by economically affluent and socially privileged Moroccans and prefer to stay outside of their activities.

While it is true that among the *sha´bi* men family and kin based social networks are extremely central in facilitating international mobility by providing economic possibilities, shelter and vital information concerning life in Spain, there are no fixed patterns in these forms of aid and assistance. Family and kin in this context are, as well, domains loaded with tensions, expectations of material and immaterial help, opposing interests and competition for economic and symbolic capital. The predominant social formation consists of individuals who interact and get together, yet they are only linked through the fact that they share similar motives of being mobile (cf. Peraldi 2005).

6.4   Challenging the sedentary norm

The state expects a degree of sedentariness from its citizens. The entitlement to many social statuses' rights and benefits, and access to personal documents, certificates and licenses, all require a permanent address. The same holds true with participation in the official economic life through the banking system. Our interlocutors constantly balance their lives between two ends: it is, on the one hand, often beneficial to minimise the contacts with the bureaucratic institutions of the state; on the other hand, maximising the benefits granted by the citizenship and legal residence requires that one has to be within a reach of the authorities. For these reasons, our interlocutors device various inventive strategies (enabled by their marginality/in-betweenness) in order to convince the state authorities that they have a permanent address and are thus are available to the authorities when needed.

Together with indirect constraints on nomadic life, in many EU countries the legislation directly delimits possibilities for mobility by setting restrictions on camping and mooring. As mooring and camping in official sites can cost several thousands of Euros annually, the liveaboards and housetruckers usually stop in areas known for their relaxed bureaucracy, low fares or complete lack of attention of local authorities regarding their stay.

In Europe, the vehicles and boats used for housing are required to fulfil strictly defined qualifications regarding fuel usage, water reserves, hygienic standards and insurance policies. While the United Kingdom, for example, is known as a considerably lax country in relation to motor homes, in other areas people are obliged to improvise in order to bypass bureaucratic rules. Most housetruckers attempt to register their vans, trucks and lorries as ordinary vehicles, and hide the fact that they actually live in them. Furthermore, it is common practice to drive vehicles or operate boat engines with heating diesel – an extremely affordable strategy, but prohibited by law in the EU member states.

In West Africa, the housetruckers face a much more relaxed bureaucratic culture than in Europe and they rarely report being troubled by the police and other authorities. However, many African states require a personal entry visa from EU citizens, a country specific car insurance, and a temporary "pass through permit" for the vehicle. As many housetruckers have extremely limited budgets they are highly motivated in learning how bureaucratic requirements can be loop-holed in a cost effective way. Many for example manipulate technical or administrative information concerning the vehicle to cut down insurance costs.

When challenging the sedentary norm, the *sha´bi* men largely conceptualise their practices in terms of social arrangement, *dabbar.* The concept refers to a wide array of practices from arranging, manipulating and managing social relations to the ability of discovering new informal economic spheres. *Dabbar* is a particularly important resource for the socially marginal in poor urban quarters in Morocco (see Juntunen 2002: 101–106).

Because of the stricter entry and residence policy in Europe together with the vulnerable housing and labour market position in Spain, the *sha´bi* men rely heavily on the cultural repertoires of *dabbar* in their encounters with the Spanish bureaucratic system. For the these men, the process of legalising one's residency in Spain is an extended practice of *dabbar* involving encounters with the Moroccan middlemen providing access to documents (official or forged) required in the *Proceso de Regularisation* [Regularisation of unauthorised migrants] such as tenancy agreements, work contracts and documents proving the date of entry of entry in Spain.

By 2004 and 2005, most all our Moroccan interlocutors had gained legal residency in Spain and despite the fact that they were most of the time on the move in and outside of Spain many were beneficiaries of unemployment and housing benefits. They often maintained only nominal permanent addresses at the premises of more settled Moroccan friends and relatives and made periodic returns in these locations in order to renew official documents, social security status and status as officially unemployed.

7   Conclusions

At present, nation states face increasing challenges when attempting to control their economies and the conditions of their labour market. The recent media reports from many parts of north Africa but also from EU member states reveal similar developments; states face severe problems of nationalising and disciplining their populations who openly demonstrate their frustration and device various strategies for adapting to the uncertainty of the political future, the instability of markets, unexpected capital flows, price and tax increases and reduced welfare benefits and services.

While growing readiness to migrate has been reported in the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, the EU policies have largely followed old positions regarding migration with emphasis on the control of external borders of Europe (Fargues & Fandrich

2012). The mobile subject from the Global South remains largely the sole object and challenge for EU migration policy.

In this article, we examined the opportunities that comparison of people on the move can offer for conceptualising forms of highly mobile and marginal lifestyles. Based on our extended fieldworks among Moroccan *sha´bi* men, Western liveaboards and NEN, we demonstrated the central characteristic of these mobilities: they are neither entirely forced nor voluntary mobile lifestyles that occur along loosely defined travel trajectories. They generally lack politicised public spheres and are marked by sentiments of in-betweenness, marginality, liminality and constant and highly inventive negotiation against the sedentary norm of the nation state. In the media representations, political debates and academic discourses on migration and mobility, these forms of mobility have been treated as separate phenomena – while the mobile Westerners are usually seen as lifestyle migrants, the mobile Moroccans/Africans are usually conceptualised as circular and returning migrants.

In this article, we propose that these kinds of mobilities in fact can be seen as a single social and cultural phenomenon which we conceptualise as *marginal mobilities*. Our intention is not to suggest a strict and all-encompassing definition of marginal mobility, but rather to use it as an analytical prism that opens new possibilities for understanding contemporary mobilities. We understand the concept of marginal mobility as a heuristic tool that enables a comparative study of mobilities in the contemporary globalised world regardless of their ethnic, national or geographic provenance and not as the only possible theoretical framework through which different contemporary mobilities can be analysed and explained.

Our interlocutors may at the surface level seem like contrasting cases: mobile Westerners in search of emotional fulfilment and Moroccan men who broaden their transnational movement in search of survival, yet, in fact, they construct their mobile lives in highly comparable manner. The experiences of the people we studied are marked by a strong sense of the psychic uncertainty and feelings of deception from the part of the neo-liberal state. In short, marginal mobile lives can be interpreted as the indications of the ways in which political economy of the free market and privatisation inform individual subjectivities.

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Notes

1. The translation of the term *sha´b* as popular class is borrowed from Diane Singerman's (1996) work on the social networks and their political impact in Cairo. In Northern Morocco in its most general usage, the term is attached to people without official income or steady wage labour. In its adjectival form (sha'bi), the term refers to a whole variety of cultural practices, notions of socio-economic conditions, including work, social relations in highly populated quarters, the quality of social networks and forms of behaviour (cf. Juntunen 2002).
2. The term "liveaboards" is used here as a descriptor referring to the people who have adopted a lifestyle that revolves around living, working and travelling on boats. According to ethnographic material (Rogelja 2012), there are three predominant groups of liveaboards that can be described as IRM (International Retirement Migration) liveaboards, sabbatical liveaboards and peripatetic liveaboards. The article focuses on the peripatetic group, but for the sake of readability we address them here simply as "liveaboards".
3. We use the term "Westerner" as a loosely defined category that commonly refers to people from the more affluent countries of Western Europe, and from the countries with firm historical, cultural and ethnic ties to Western Europe such as The United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.
4. The term "housetruckers" is a descriptor referring to the new European nomads (NEN) travelling and living in cars, jeeps, vans, caravans, buses or trucks converted into mobile homes (Kalčić 2012). The emic term that some of "housetruckers" use to describe their lifestyle is "nomads".
5. According to EUROSTAT, the highest percentages of population at the risk of poverty threshold in the Euro-area in 2011 were in Spain (21.8%), Greece (21.4%) and Portugal (18.0%) (EUROSTAT 2012).
6. The term peripatetic derives from the Greek terms peri, "around" and patein, "to walk". In the Greek philosophy, it refers to Aristotle's habit of walking about the grove while lecturing his students in Lyceum, his Athenian school. Aristotle's students became known as peripatetics. Berland and Salo (1986) borrowed the term to describe the kind of nomadism which does not exploit natural resources (pastoral nomads, hunters and gatherers). This kind of nomadism has been conceptualised also as service nomadism (Hayden 1979), commercial nomadism (Acton 1981), non-food producing nomadism (Rao 1982) and symbiotic nomadism (Misra 1982).
7. According to Colectivo Ioé – a social sciences research centre in Spain – in the year 2011, some 63,000 Moroccans returned to Morocco from Spain. In 2012, the unemployment rate for Moroccans in Spain was 50.7%. Available in the Internet at http://www.colectivoioe.org/ [last accessed 11.9.2013].
8. By the attribute "highly mobile", we do not mean these people move without ever stopping. Rather, we want to stress their

enhanced mobility. For most nomadic populations, relative levels of mobility and/or sedentarity are not viewed as opposites. The states of being relatively mobile or static are perceived as particular strategies to be utilised as opportunities warrant and depend on specific conditions (cf. Berland & Salo 1986: 4–5). This holds true also for the people we have studied.

9. For example, earlier generations of internationally mobile North Africans were engaged in industrial work and manufacture in Western Europe. Their movement took place between the home community and the host community and followed strictly seasonal pattern. See Sayad (1999) and Nielissen and Buijs (2000), among others.

10. Our intention is not to deny the fact that the Western and the non-Western workers stand on highly unequal footing in many of these economic niches characterised by racialised labour hierarchies and open discrimination against workers from the Global South.

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