‘Placing’ Space: exploring the socio-spatial impacts of cosmopolitan place-marketing approaches on British migrants in Spain

Abstract

This article explores the socio-spatial underpinnings of cosmopolitan place-marketing narratives and their impacts on British migrants living in Sitges, an affluent tourist town in Spain. Sitges’ place-marketing suggests that moving there automatically fosters a cosmopolitan identity. For British migrants in Sitges, this was understood to be exemplified through integration into the local community. Yet the vast majority found such integration impossible, not least because this conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism overlooked the subjectivity of locals themselves, by whom they were most often rejected. It is argued that this mismatch between British migrants’ experiences and Sitges’ cosmopolitan place-marketing occurs because it relies on an understanding of subjective identity as generated locationally, enacted via movement to a specific 'type' of place that incorporates particular understandings of space, place and culture in relation to that identity. This overrides the necessity of relationality, undermining the ideal of reflexive identity-making on which cosmopolitan place-marketing narratives rely.

Keywords

British / Class / Cosmopolitanism / Place-Marketing / Spain

Introduction

From the mid 1990's onwards across the social sciences, narratives of the 'network society' and 'knowledge economy', attempted to describe the significant socio-economic shifts that the contemporary restructuring of global capital had precipitated (Castells, 1996a; Drucker, 1993). A key feature in the understanding of this shift towards a networked, knowledge-based economy was a renewed emphasis given to cities, positioned as the interconnected loci that global capital flowed between (Castells, 1996b, 2000). As urban centres have attempted to reposition themselves in response to this economic restructuring, they have been forced into increasing competition with one another and as a result, 'place-marketing' has become central to both national and regional strategies of urban regeneration and tourism development (Bærenholdt & Haldrup, 2006; Frey, 2009; Richards, 2014).

As place-marketing strategies developed, they soon became amalgamated with ideas of cosmopolitanism - a concept that was also undergoing a resurgence across the social sciences - becoming an idea at the front and centre of place-marketing discourses (Maitland, 2007). Initially this was concentrated around an understanding of the cosmopolite as an elite 'citizen of the world', able to move across and between borders freely, unconstrained by structurally prescribed, normatively territorialised identities like nationality or social class (Author A; Breckenridge, 2002; Hannerz, 1990; Nussbaum, 1994; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). In a sense then, the elite cosmopolite offered an archetype and the cosmopolitan places that they moved both within and between, operated in this formula as contingent places that could enable opportunities for exactly the kinds of new and distinct relations between the social and the spatial that the cosmopolite supposedly desired.

As these concepts have evolved within academia and the results of the practical implementation of such ideas within public policy strategies have begun to be identified, critiques and counter critiques have emerged. In particular, it has been forcefully argued that this approach to urban development often emphasises property-based regeneration, which

ultimately ends up becoming a process of gentrification through its concentration in particular parts of a city (usually the centres), to the direct exclusion of others (Atkinson & Easthope, 2009; Vanolo, 2008). This in turn, can create exactly the kinds of social marginalisation that such policies had originally set out to resolve (Atkinson & Easthope, 2009; Vanolo, 2008).

On a broader scale, as ideas of cosmopolitanism have become embedded within place-marketing narratives across the world, in a very real sense, this has simultaneously meant losing the very distinction they had set out to create, precisely because cities adopt *the same* strategies of (especially tourism) development (Richards, 2014, p. 119). In addition, cosmopolitanism itself has been increasingly challenged, as academics have sought to complicate the concept's elitist underpinnings, through the explication of examples of 'vernacular', 'subaltern', 'already-existing' cosmopolitan*isms* instead (See: Kothari, 2008; Nava, 2002; Werbner, 2006). Yet despite this, there is still little research that has focused on 'mapping the process of becoming' cosmopolitan and less still, in relation to the very specific construction of the relationship between space, place, culture and identity that this process relies upon (Kothari, 2008, p. 512. See: Author A).

It is to these points that the article speaks, adding to the understanding of both cosmopolitanism and the material impacts of its use within creativity-based place-marketing discourses, through exploring the first-hand experiences of elite British migrants living in the affluent coastal tourist town of Sitges, in Spain. To do so, British migrants' experiences are investigated through literature that has focused on cosmopolitanism (Appiah 1998; Kothari 2008; Nava, 2002; Werbner 2006, p. 497), alongside that which has sought to complicate the way that both space and places are theorised, through a particular emphasis on relationality (LeFebvre, 1991; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Massey, 2005). This allows two key questions to be posed; firstly it asks what practical impact cosmopolitan place-marketing discourses can have on people's everyday lived experiences and secondly, it considers how such impacts might in turn, provide an insight into the theorisation of spatiality that underpins those

discourses, and which has to-date, been somewhat overlooked.

Drawing on the direct experiences of elite British migrants in Sitges, it is argued that - and as British migrants soon discover - a cosmopolitan place does not automatically make the people there cosmopolitan; nor do cosmopolitan people, necessarily, a cosmopolitan place, make. The two are not synonymous, even though that is the promise that Sitges' place-marketing narrative makes. It is suggested instead that part of the mismatch between expectation and experience is precisely because Sitges' cosmopolitan place-marketing discourse is informed by an understanding of subjective identity as generated locationally, enacted via movement to a specific 'type' of place, which incorporates contextually-specific understandings of space, place and culture in relation to that identity, in a way that operates as a micro-level form of 'methodological nationalism' (Beck, 2005). This overrides the necessity of relationality, long deemed imperative to identity-formation, and in so doing, undermines the very sense of reflexive identity making on which cosmopolitan/creativity-based place-marketing narratives so fundamentally rely.

The Context of Research

Sitges is one of the most important and popular tourist resorts on the North-Eastern coast of Spain, in the (mainly Catalan) region known as the *Costa Dorada*. Around 30 kilometres South of Barcelona, Sitges is renowned for being an affluent town that has maintained a sense of artistic and cultural tradition, not least by having avoided the kinds of mass-market tourist development common in other parts of Spain. It has been able to do so, by drawing explicitly on its heritage and in particular, its prominent position in the 19th century as a key location within the Catalan *Modernisme* movement (Binkhorst, 2008; Boone, 2007). During this time, Sitges attracted a large contingent of famous artists ranging from Lorca and Santiago Rusiñol, to G.K. Chesterton and Salvador Dali. Their presence there during this period is seen to have created a legacy of 'authentic' bohemianism, which lies at the heart of Sitges' contemporary cosmopolitan place-marketing discourse (Binkhorst, 2008, p. 132; Boone, 2007, p. 176). It is a

discourse that is enhanced further, by the fact that out of the approximately 28,000 people who live there, just over 26% are made up of migrants who have moved to Sitges from other countries, making the overall population markedly diverse in terms of nationality (Foro-Ciudad, 2018). Within this group of migrants, there are around 700 British people amongst whom over twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork was undertaken, on which this article is based.

The fieldwork included participation in a wide variety of aspects of British migrants' lives including informal socialisation in bars, restaurants and cafes, joining social activities such as tennis, poker and sailing, and attending the town's many cultural events. It also included slightly more formal participation, such as working in a bar during the town's first ever Gay Pride event, and helping backstage at a multilingual pantomime. This participant observation was recorded in extensive daily field-notes and supplemented by just over 100 unstructured interviews with Brits met individually, and those that I was then later introduced to, via word-of-mouth. In the course of the year I had some form of contact with approximately 200 British people out of whom all, apart from one family (who described themselves as 'British –Asian'), were white British.

Barcelona, Sitges and Cosmopolitanism

As the demographic statistics highlight, Sitges is an extremely popular destination for migrants from a wide range of countries across the world and particularly for Brits, who at almost 10 percent, represent the largest national contingent within the migrant population in the town (Foro-Ciudad, 2018). There is little doubt that the town's cosmopolitan reputation plays a key role in its enduring popularity, and it is a vital part of the way that Sitges is marketed, as the following holiday websites demonstrate:

"The **cosmopolitan** town of Sitges, an hour east of Cambrils, is a favourite of the arts, party and gay crowds…" (First Choice Holidays, 2016)

“Sitges has been, for many years, one of the most exciting and dynamic towns on the Mediterranean coast. Because of its **cosmopolitan** character, its extraordinary leisure, dining and cultural offer and its lively night life, Sitges has become one of the most popular destinations on the Catalan coast. (BlauSitges, 2016)

“Cosy, **cosmopolitan** and with an open-minded population, Sitges is an idyllic town for visitors...” (Sitges-Rentals, 2016)

The positioning of cosmopolitanism as a key aspect of Sitges’ locational identity is one that has been explicitly and highly successfully constructed, in large part through the efforts of the town's local council. And they have been able to do so not least, due to the proximity of Sitges to Barcelona, a city which in the last few decades has itself undergone a significant transformation. In fact, in terms of culture-led regeneration, Barcelona is often held up as *the* ultimate example of how to transform a city into a global player (Balibrea, 2004; Degen, 2004; Marshall, 2004). So much so, that urban planners and developers talk specifically about the 'Barcelona model' as one that other cities should seek to follow (Balibrea, 2004, p. 107; Degen, 2004, p. 131-133; Marshall, 2004, p. 1). Yet it was a hard fought success, coming off the back of years of decline, alongside a combination of being exactly the right ‘place’, at exactly the right time.

During the reign of Franco, Barcelona was to a certain extent purposefully neglected – Franco's 'forgotten city' – because it had been a centre of (especially Anarchist) opposition to the regime (Degen 2004, p. 141). After Franco's death in 1975, there was a move in some quarters to re-assert a Catalan identity, part of which built on ideas of progressiveness that were often defined in opposition to the supposedly 'traditional' identity of Spain more generally; the identity that had been constructed as the foundation upon which its attractiveness as a tourist destination was marketed in the 1960's (Vincent, 2007, p. 231). Vincent in particular, has suggested that the Post-Franco devolution of regions into *autonomias,* allied to the increasing

liberalisation of the economy, 'meant that more choices could now be catered for; identities were expressed that fell far outside the narrow range admitted by the regime' and as a result, 'subaltern identities assumed a new vitality' (Vincent 2007, p. 186. See: Conversi, 1997; Graham & Labanyi, 1995). This coincided with new opportunities that EU integration began to afford to 'stateless nations' leading to the sense that a 'European identity was in many ways seen as constitutive of Catalan identity thereby firmly established as an inclusive, pluralist, "civic" nationalism' (Vincent, 2007, p. 23).

From the outset then, contemporary Catalan nationalism had its roots in a pluralism that would go on to be especially evinced in cultural production. This tied into discourses surrounding Europeanisation, allowing space for the particularity of Barcelona as a centre of cultural (and counter-cultural) production, to offer a form of *cosmopolitan* social capital to the rest of Catalunya and through it, to Spain itself. The sense of integrative nationalism that has since remained vital to contemporary Catalunya, provided the foundation for a planned political project that sought to put Barcelona on the world map (Borja, 2004, p. 205). Spain then found itself uniquely positioned to take advantage of the drive towards integration, alongside the renewed emphasis on particularity, which broader global capitalism had precipitated. The combination of which since, has allowed it to - almost without equal amongst other urban locations - encapsulate the type of cosmopolitan cultural capital that has proved so vital to contemporary creativity-based place-marketing.

There is little doubt that Sitges has benefitted greatly from the increase in Barcelona's popularity (Binkhorst, 2007, p. 135). The 1992 Barcelona Olympics especially marked a turning point in its history, not least, because the Games led to the development of direct transportation links between the two places, most notably a high-speed and frequent train service complemented by a toll-road. It was now easier than ever before to commute and Sitges with its stunning coastlines, consistently beautiful weather and 'laid-back' atmosphere was marketed to offer all of the virtues of the bigger city, but in microcosm. As a result, Sitges

was able to build on its very particular historical development, quickly becoming incorporated into Barcelona's renaissance and as a result, able to take advantage of the major shifts referred to above, in relation to the rise of cosmopolitan-based 'place marketing' (Rushbrook, 2002, p. 187).

The Rise of Cosmopolitan Place-Marketing

The recognisable shift towards marketing urban locations through the explicit integration of ideas of 'cosmopolitanism' would go on to become particularly important to places not previously recognised as being centres of international trade and globalised finance, such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Frankfurt Toronto, and so on (Binnie, Holloway, Millington & Young, 2006, p. 3). Key to their success was creating a perception of being cities in which diversity prospered. Staking a claim of cosmopolitanism subsequently became a short-hand way to represent a place as being one in which tolerance towards ethnic and cultural difference was explicitly fostered, in order to attract ' "global talent", financial capital and tourism' (Glick Schiller, Darieva & Gruner-Domic, 2011, p. 402. See: Binnie et al 2006, p28; Rushbrook 2002, p. 183; Szersynski and Urry, 2002; Young, Diep & Drabble, 2006, p. 1687).

This created an expectation that the ideal-typical cosmopolites would openly desire to experience 'difference', would want to live amongst (but crucially within this formula not explicitly constitute) ethnic and cultural diversity. This was underpinned by a sense of reciprocity, so that the cosmopolitan 'ability to adapt, to be open to innovation and novelty operated not only at the level of…relating-individuals, but subsequently therefore, at the level of (socio)economic production too' (Author A. See: Binnie et al 2006, p. 2). Competition between cities became fought on the basis of which location could promote itself as best able to facilitate 'exciting encounters with difference' that such cosmopolites supposedly actively sought (Young et al 2006, p. 1687, 1689; Binnie et al, 2006, p. 3, 24). The idea of the 'cosmopolitan city' has subsequently entered mainstream parlance, as cosmopolitanism itself has become both a mode and a means of identity-based consumption (Beck, 2004, p. 150).

Yet as cosmopolitanism has become embedded within place-marketing discourses, the concept of cosmopolitanism itself has been increasingly challenged, become filled with distinct 'nuances and meanings' (Harvey, 2000, p. 529). Broadly speaking, these discussions have tended to fall into two camps; those who see cosmopolitanism as an intellectual pursuit and/or an 'aesthetic way of being' (Hannerz 1990, p. 239. See: Beck, 2004; Hannerz, 1990; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002), and those who argue instead that this articulation of cosmopolitanism is an elitist concept, one that is both Euro- and andro-centric, as well as being underpinned by specific understandings of social class, which obscure what have been defined as 'vernacular', 'subaltern', or already-existing 'cosmopolitanisms' (See: Appiah 1998; Kothari 2008; Nava, 2002; Werbner 2006, p. 497)[1].

The latter authors, those who have sought to challenge the idea of cosmopolitanism as the (inherently privileged) individual's ability (and desire) to negotiate cultural difference, have done so in two main ways. Firstly, it has been argued that elitist articulations of cosmopolitanism contain assumptions about who has 'the potential to be cosmopolitan and the characteristics that constitute a cosmopolitan sensibility' (Kothari, 2008, p. 500. See: Binnie et al, 2006). They rely, in other words, on markers of difference, 'both for those that embody them and those who are marked as different' (Binnie et al, 2006, p6), which are rooted in the construction of an opposition between (cosmopolitan) 'self' and (non-cosmopolitan) 'other' that reproduces hierarchical relationships between 'First' and 'Third' world / coloniser and colonised (Kothari, 2008, p. 502). Secondly, it has been suggested that cosmopolitanism is more than a 'perspective, a state of mind or...a mode of managing meaning' (Hannerz, 1990, p. 238), but is often equally also 'pragmatic, strategic' and driven by 'daily necessity' (Kothari, 2008, p. 512. See: Pécoud, 2004, p. 14).

[1] For authors who discuss the cosmopolitan identities of non 'First-World' migrants, see: Diouf, 2002; Englund, 2004; Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003.

These are of course, vital interventions that have helped to highlight some of the complexities involved in the way that the concept has been used both within and outside of academia. Yet, the growing recognition of these two points has meant that pragmatic or practice-based cosmopolitanism has subsequently been overwhelmingly explored in relation to the perspective of people described as inhabiting subaltern positions already, those defined as 'vulnerable individuals and groups struggling to make a living in an environment characterised by discrimination and insecurity' (Kothari, 2008, p. 502). In some senses this ultimately reinforces the very distinction that it sets out to challenge, not least because it implies through contradistinction that elitist cosmopolitanism, based on openness towards difference and/or aesthetic ways of being embodied in the 'Western educated traveller' exists, *ipso facto*. Yet this tells us little about 'the kinds of agency required, and the sorts of spaces and activities that can nurture the development of a cosmopolitan identity' generally, and less in relation to that elite conceptualisation more specifically (Kothari, 2008, p. 512).

This was one of the key points that I aimed to explore when beginning my research in Sitges, that is, what exactly did 'elite' cosmopolitanism look like in practice? How did it play out amongst people who had moved countries to enable them to perform a particular way of living, one that specifically sought to highlight their practical negotiation of cultural difference and to incorporate it into their everyday lives more fully? In fact, British migrants found it almost impossible to do so successfully, and as outlined below, they were unsuccessful despite having been drawn to Sitges on the basis of cosmopolitan place-marketing discourses that promised otherwise. In fact, their attempts to live what they understood to be cosmopolitan lifestyles ultimately resulted in the opposite and instead, they became locked into representing the very stereotypes of British people living abroad, that they simultaneously held in such disdain.

It's not Benidorm!" - Stereotypes and 'Brits Abroad'

One of the key tropes through which Brits articulated the cosmopolitanism of Sitges and through it, of themselves, was to define the town in direct opposition to heavily stereotyped discourses and conceptualisations of 'Benidorm'. Amongst the people with whom I worked, Benidorm and the Brits who would choose live there were used to evoke defiantly non-cosmopolitan people, living in a distinctly non-cosmopolitan place:

> 'Sitges hasn't been allowed to become somewhere like Benidorm. You just don't get the same kind of people here, the kind of lower class people who drink lots and eat bacon and eggs and spend a fortune on Heinz beans! They go there and just go for the sun and to, you know, have a good time. They don't want to learn about the culture, they're not that type, not like here. All of the people who live here are open to learning about new cultures, to meeting new people, accepting different people. It's a real melting pot, all types of people live here, it's very cosmopolitan' Helena, independently wealthy.

This specific conceptualisation of 'Benidorm' was as Helena remarked, explicitly classist – Benidorm was for the 'lower class' who sought out warm weather and a 'good time'. This understanding is one that was intrinsic both to the way that participants described Sitges and subsequently, to who they saw themselves as being. As Geoff, a small-business owner, put it:

> 'In places like Benidorm, people retire into the sun. They've maybe had a holiday there for years, they move there, they don't want the locals at all, they've totally taken over. They say things like, "If it wasn't for the sun, you wouldn't even know that you were abroad!" like that's a benefit! It doesn't happen here and I think it's because we're a different type of person in Sitges, the type who wants to enjoy Spain and the Spanish, and Catalan culture. I wouldn't *dream* of living in Benidorm!'

As the quotes above suggest then, Brits in Sitges defined their own identities via negation, in contrast that is, to a group of people imagined through the classic stereotype of 'Brits abroad' (Haynes & Jones, 2012). 'Brits abroad' are defined, in a Bourdeusian sense, as being precisely the opposite of cosmopolitan through their refusal to learn Spanish, their adherence to stereotypical British food, the rejection of any other attempts at integration, and by choosing instead to live alcohol-fuelled, life-long holidays (O'Reilly 2000, p. 21 See: Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010). Seen to be intent on recreating a 'little England in the sun', they are deemed 'not to have learnt the language and the lessons of multiculturalism', encoded here as evidence of bearing a 'colonial mentality' (O'Reilly 2000, p. 21). Brits in Benidorm are seen as being 'other' to those who have migrated to Sitges, simply by virtue of the fact that they are living in (or would choose to visit) Benidorm in the first place. As Helena added, moving to Sitges is instead, an intellectual pursuit, including 'learning about culture,' rather than having a - lower class version of - a good time. This definitively class-based narrative was shared almost universally by Brits in Sitges.

As a result, the vast majority of participants ended up socialising amongst small groups of Brits with whom they were deemed to have the most in common instead. This was at least partly because the historically contingent emergence of the individualised individual (Guignon, 2007; Taylor, 1994, p. 77) within this cosmopolitan discourse overemphasised the self as disembedded from sociality when ultimately, as participants' experiences emphasised, fully embodying a cosmopolitan identity relied on it being validated in and through interactions with other people. It relied for Brits in Sitges ideally, that is, on the formation of social relations with non-Brits in order to externalise and make legible an authentic, 'non-Brits abroad', cosmopolitan self, subsequently recognised and acknowledged by others as such.

Participants were prevented from forming those relations in part, because the definitive recognition they received within Sitges' cosmopolitan discourse – that is, functioning as a visible part of the international diversity - which the town council marketed so heavily, was

based on their Britishness. But it was a Britishness that within this context, had very specific connotations. Participants were stuck with a representation of themselves that appeared to be agentive, but actually operated as precisely the opposite; it operated, in other words, to heavily circumscribe and delimit their social interactions, so that they remained stuck in their own sub-groups of Brits.

In addition, this meant that even when they sought to integrate and interact with locals, to showcase their openness to other cultures, particularly by attempting to learn Spanish and/or Catalan, Brits in Sitges found themselves locked out of the local culture. Crucially, this inability to integrate within the local community or establish relationships with locals, whose subjective desires were of course, overlooked, was completely disregarded in their understanding of what migration would mean. Participants had assumed, in other words, that Sitgetans would automatically want to enter into social relationships with them, when most often in reality, this was simply not the case. Somewhat ironically as a result, Brits fell back on applying the stereotypical 'Brit in Benidorm' denomination to make class-based distinctions between themselves, in reaction to their inability to become socially embedded, instead.

Space, Place, Culture and Identity

There is, I think, a crucial paradox at work here. On the one hand, this belief clearly chimes with the idea that 'the self as a rule is something made in public space' so that migration represents in effect, an attempt to take on a different identity by virtue of being in a *different* public space (Guignon 2007, p. 73). Yet in this particular instance, it simultaneously represented migration to a place where locationally-determined identity was not supposed to matter, which nonetheless only became meaningless *via* movement to a different 'place' – change the 'public space' in other words, change the 'self'. But I am suggesting that movement thus conceived, constitutes both a denial *and* a re-assertion that place is inscribed on to an assumed abstract, value-free space, as well as being both a denial *and* re-assertion that this same understanding of 'place' contains or thereby allows the articulation of particular

subjective identities. It is an idea that also highlights what passes as ‘common sense’ understandings of the relationship between space, place and identity throughout many Euro-American societies, which sees ‘place’ figured as the cultural elaboration of a thereby abstract and neutralised ‘space’ (LeFebvre, 1991, p. 4; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003, p. 13; Kaplan, 1996; Malkki, 1992, p. 24; Massey, 2005, p. 6).

One of the most important characteristics of this (definitively Modernist) conception of space is, the assumption of an ‘isomorphism between space/place on the one hand and society/culture on the other’, which has the effect of ‘places’ being seen as ‘bounded, with their own internally generated authenticities, and defined by their difference from other places which [lie] outside, beyond their borders’ (Massey 2005, p. 64). In other words, when space itself is conceived of as being semiologically barren, as signifying nothing, it thereby becomes the implicitly homogeneous basis upon which a concatenation of different concepts, (and indeed, upon which conceptualisations of difference themselves) can be built, as it becomes transformed through the supposed inscription of ‘culture’ into ‘place’.

It is an understanding of the relationship between identity, culture, space and place that has, of course, been heavily critiqued, not least in relation to its continued naturalisation within social theory that Ulrich Beck (2005) has termed ‘methodological nationalism’; that is, seeing 'the world as a series of discrete, physically discontinuous spatial units where each represents a “nation” with a defined territory', which then forges an intractable relationship with its population, each metonymically conflated (Malkki, 1992, p. 26). The consequences of metaphorically territorialising identity in this way reiterate the notion that such identity is directly related to *literal* fixity in space/place, producing an (analytically normalised) sedentarism.

Within a Westernised discourse, this holds certain moral implications wherein those who cannot link their identity to a physical location become pathologised as what Liisa Malkii has

termed 'categorically aberrant' (Malkki, 1992, p. 26). Inherent within this formula, is the idea that movement represents both metaphorical and literal displacement and as such, a change in subjective identity that can only be off-set through a (therefore necessary) process of re-territorialisation. This understanding of spatial segmentation not only operates on a macro, 'national' (and concomitantly supra-national) level but, as Lisa Malkki has also suggested, is implicitly built into understandings of cultural diversity on a sub-national level too (Malkki, 1992, p. 28; See also: Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 9).

For Brits in Sitges, a similar belief seemed to hold. Migration to a cosmopolitan location was understood to automatically precipitate (what they assumed would be) an authentic cosmopolitan identity, emerging directly from the context of Sitges. In one sense then, this suggested a belief that identity was determined by a territorially-bound, culturally-inscribed place. But this denial of any agency beyond the fact of instigating movement from one place to another in relation to identity-formation was clearly at odds with the project**,** as Brits lamented time and again:

> "So many people just come here and whinge! They moan about the food, they moan about the weather, they moan about the language, they moan about the Catalans; there's definitely a certain type...like that. I think they expect *El Dorado* and they brag about a connection to Spanish culture, but then whinge about everything else! They're probably the type of people who whinge when they're at home too, anyway. They think moving will make this big change, they'll change who they are, but then that's the thing isn't it? You realise you have to bring yourself with you!" Stephen, TEFL teacher.

Clearly then, many participants experienced the fact that that their migration to Sitges had not substantially transformed their subjective selves – they had 'brought themselves with them' too. But not only do you have to bring yourself with you, of course, you also have to be with

other people too, which raises a second point; if 'being authentic involves having a personal "take" on reality that is "Other" to the social, a deeper reality that is masked by social customs', then in effect, this means that at 'some level to be authentic is already to be asocial'; all things social get downgraded (Guignon, 2007, p. 40. See: Trilling, 1972, p. 11).

What quickly became apparent for participants post-relocation, however, was the fact that their own identities, their own projects of self-realisation, were in fact fundamentally dependent upon their interactions - and crucially also here their *inability* to interact - with particular other people. For Brits in Sitges, it was not migration from one place to another that was key, but instead, it was the undeniable fact that identity – of both people *and* locations that is - is always, everywhere, ultimately dependent on social relations, which would prove to be the most important factor in the contradiction between their prior expectations of what migration would precipitate, and their subsequent experiences, post-relocation - a gap that was constantly and explicitly articulated.

Conclusion

In conclusion then, British migrants believed that simply moving to Sitges – understood to be a cosmopolitan place – would automatically lead to a transformation in their subjective selves. In moving there, they assumed that they would become cosmopolitan people living cosmopolitan lives, in a way that they felt they could not do within Britain. This belief, that movement to a different place would result in acute self-transformation, was built upon a conceptualisation of 'place' that operated as a kind of geographically-bound container of different types of culture, which then allowed the possibility – or more correctly perhaps in this instance, a*utomatically resulted in* – the articulation of specific types of subjective identities emerging directly from that place-based culture. This understanding of place held implicit within it a (definitively modernist) concept of space as abstract and empty, on which such culturally-defined 'place' had been inscribed (LeFebvre, 1991, p. 4; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003, p. 13; Kaplan, 1996; Malkki, 1992, p. 24; Massey 2005, p. 6).

In essence, this was to completely overlook the crucial import of sociality; both ignored the role of people, overlooked the necessity of social relationships, in other words, to the formation of personal *and* locational identity. Participants soon discovered that migration to Sitges was not in and of itself enough to result in the self-transformative embodiment of a cosmopolitan identity that so many, so desired. This was not least, because the transformation participants sought, relied on being able to form relationships with non-British 'Others' – in this context, particularly local Sitgetans. These were locals, however, who had their own subjective desires, which for the most part did not include the desire to establish social relationships with British migrants. This was undoubtedly a factor that had been overlooked, taken for granted, or ignored, by participants prior to migration itself.

This oversight also, perhaps, resonates more widely, pointing towards the continued proliferation of such conceptions of space, place, culture and identity throughout Euro-American culture. In so doing, it perhaps also shows why despite being so heavily critiqued, these ideas may well see a continued naturalisation within social theory. Just as 'ideas from the academy enter the popular domain', then without a doubt 'theoretical concepts developed in the academy are directly influenced by ideas and assumptions prevalent outside it'; such ideas that is, do not come to exist in separate and purified vacuums, but can work to reinforce and concretise one another instead (Moore, 2004, p. 74).

Recognising the socio-spatial implications of such cosmopolitan place-marketing discourses can re-inform their practical implementation, so that through refining the theorisation, this can feed back in to the way that public policy is implemented. This is particularly important in relation to cosmopolitan place-marketing, where public policy has clearly been influenced by academic theory. In other words, if people’s actual experiences can change the way that the relationship between space, place, culture and society in conceptualised and understood, then that re-theorisation can impact the way that place-marketing discourses inform public policy,

to benefit both our academic understanding and the way that this impacts people's everyday lived experiences. The way that the former informs the latter is crucial, because it is only by creating a feedback loop between the theoretical underpinnings and the way that such creativity-based, cosmopolitan policies are practically implemented that will give such policies the best possible chance of achieving the original aims that they set out to.

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