

International retirees at the polls: Spanish local elections 2015¹

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Abstract: Ageing, European integration and human mobility beyond national frontiers are three intertwined processes shaping Spain as an international retirement place. Insofar as the quality of democracy has to do with citizens' political involvement, the aim of this paper is to analyse to what extent foreign EU retirees residing in Spain are using their right to vote in the local elections. Interestingly, the last local elections, held in 2015, were part of a substantial change of the Spanish party system throughout the Great Recession. However, gerontomigrants' mobilization has not been addressed up to this moment. This empirical study focuses on the characteristics and intensity in which foreign elderly citizens mobilized in the last Spanish local elections, with special attention to EU seniors. The previous elections, held in 2011, will be examined from a comparative perspective. Main data to be analysed will mostly be provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute – both the electoral register and the population census. They will be complemented with the MIRE53i survey, which, in 2011, addressed 720 foreign European retirees (pensioners aged 50 years and over) of 16 nationalities (those of the EU-15 plus those coming from Norway and Switzerland) living in Spain.

Keywords: international retirement migration, gerontomigration, local elections, electoral mobilization, Spain, European Union

Resumen: *El envejecimiento de la población, la integración europea y las migraciones transfronterizas son tres procesos interconectados que hacen de España un lugar internacional de retiro. Toda vez que la calidad de la democracia tiene que ver con la implicación política de los ciudadanos, el objeto de este artículo es analizar la medida en que los retirados extranjeros de la Unión que residen en España están ejerciendo su derecho al voto en las elecciones municipales. El tema es tanto más relevante habida cuenta de que las últimas, celebradas en 2015, han sido parte del cambio sustancial del sistema de partidos que ha tenido lugar en España en el contexto de la Gran Recesión. Con todo, la movilización electoral de los gerontoinmigrantes no ha sido abordada hasta el momento. Este estudio empírico se centra en las características e intensidad con las que los mayores extranjeros se movilizaron en los últimos comicios locales celebrados hasta la fecha, con especial atención a los retirados de la Unión. Las elecciones anteriores, de 2011, son atendidas en términos comparados. Los datos fundamentales de la investigación proceden del Instituto Nacional de Estadística (tanto el censo electoral como el padrón de habitantes). Se complementan con la encuesta MIRE53i, realizada a 720 pensionistas de 16 nacionalidades residentes en España.*

Palabras clave: *migración internacional de retirados, gerontomigración, elecciones municipales, movilización electoral, España, Unión Europea*

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1. Introduction

Following the formalisation of European citizenship and the freedom of movement and residence within the European Union (EU) for the citizens of the Member States, the EU has been transformed into a trans-national zone criss-crossed not only by tourists, but also by students, workers and patients, as well as retirees seeking a better quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Throughout Europe, new areas of retirement settlement have emerged as a result. Spain encompasses some of the largest and most important territories in Europe receiving people in retirement age or close to it from other countries. Most international retirement migrants (Rodríguez 2005; Warnes 2004; King et al. 2000; Williams et al. 1997) or gerontomigrants (Echezarreta 2005) come from Northern and Central European countries. And most of them come from the fifteen older eu Member States (hereafter referred to as 'EU-15', Spain excluded) and to a lesser extent from both the rest of EU Member States² and non-EU countries.

Whether traditional migrants or transnational migrants (see Favell 2009; Gustafson 2008 and 2004), and relocating either permanently or temporarily, they are certainly practicing the European rights both to move and reside within the Union. Along with them, European citizens have also been conferred the right at the core of democracy – the right to vote and stand as candidates in the Member State of residence, concretely, in both European and local elections. Thus, they become part of the political community. They are more than just foreign residents and consumers (see Janoschka and Durán 2014; Huete and Mantecón 2012; Janoschka 2010a and 2010b). This paper analyses the political engagement of elderly migrants to Spain at the local level by focusing upon their electoral mobilization.

Foreign European citizens living in Spain were made eligible to vote for the first time in 1999 and exercised this right for the fifth and last time by now, together with other foreign residents, in May 2015. To what extent? Scholars have observed that cosmopolitan European elite migrants – whom Favell (2009) refers to as “Eurostars” – seem to be fairly detached from local politics (see also Huete and Mantecón 2012; Collard 2010; Durán 2005).³ Scholars also derive from their empirical studies that political turnout in local elections among immigrants and foreign-born nationals is often quite low (Bird et al. 2011; Messina 2007; see also Morales and Giugni 2011),

2. The EU-15 comprises Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (UK). Following the collapse of their regimes in 1989, many former communist countries from central and eastern Europe became EU members in two waves, between 2004 and 2007. In 2013, Croatia became the 28th country to join.

3. For an analysis of the low level of political participation of EU citizens at European Parliament elections held in their host countries, see Vintila (2016).

and that it is even lower in districts with a predominance of immigrants (Siemiatycki 2006; Jones-Correa 2005). Messina (2007) has also concluded that foreign-born voters tend to support and vote for traditional parties on the left (see Bird et al. 2011, and Pérez-Nievas et al. 2014). Do foreign seniors with voting rights in Spain follow this pattern? Has there been any change as a result of the Great Recession or for any other reason? What factors help explaining such findings?

In trying to answer such questions, it is worth taking into account that the elderly's turnout rates use to be the highest by age-group. Even more, Binstock has found that in the USA, though the electoral participation for all groups fell off in 1976 (perhaps as a reaction to the Watergate scandal), since then only the rate for citizens over the age of 65 years has recovered and increased (2000; see also Turner et al., 2001, and Bhatti and Hansen, 2012). On the other hand, ageing stands out as a factor increasing the likelihood of a Conservative vote substantially (Tilley and Evans, 2014). Even though it is not an issue to be addressed in this paper, researches on Europe have also confirmed that older adults have a higher inclination to vote than to engage in political activities between elections, and that the latter engagement is more diversified than one could expect (Nygård and Jakobsson, 2013; see also Goerres, 2009; Ares, 2018, and Zuberó, 2018).

Being our case study the Spanish local elections held in 2015, the research draws upon basic data provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute, responsible for the electoral census and the population register. Once the Spanish electoral system is summarized, specially attending to the main characteristics that affect foreigners' participation and representation, the following section will deal with their distribution and concentration throughout the territory at the national, regional and local level. Then we will describe and analyse electoral mobilization by attending to a number of possible explaining factors – age, identity community, relative size of fellow migrants' community, and population size of the localities where they have settled. Institutional and political variables will previously be addressed as would-be explanations of an unusually high level of inscription on the electoral roll.

In order to better understand seniors' electoral practice of European citizenship abroad, we will address voter-turnout with regard to socio-demographic and political features such as gender, nationality, school level, income, time of residence in Spain both per year and as live time, amongst others. Data will come from the MIRE3i survey. In 2008, the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spanish National Research Council) together with seven Spanish universities started a representative, large scale, multi-method research project called MIRE3i (International Retirement Migration in Spain: Identity, Impacts, Integration) investigating the multiple facets of European retirement migration to Spain. The interdisciplinary

research was carried out in the most important regions of retirement migration in Spain (Andalusia, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Murcia and Valencia) by means of a standardised questionnaire addressed to 720 foreign European retirees (pensioners aged 50 years old and over) of 16 nationalities (those of the EU-15 plus those coming from Norway and Switzerland) living in Spain more than three months per year. The face-to-face questionnaire survey was conducted between April 2010 and February 2011. It is the first European survey national in scope addressing to such a multinational population (see also Casado et al. 2004).

2. Spanish electoral system and data gathering

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) formally introduced for the first time in the European integration process the idea of a political union. European citizenship as a principle was formalized, and full-age European citizens residing in a Member State of which they are non-nationals were granted both voting rights and eligibility as candidates in local and European elections. Complementarily, Norwegians have had council election voting rights in Spain on a reciprocal basis since 1991. Suffrage right was also granted to nationals of six American countries (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru) plus those of Cape Verde, Iceland and New Zealand for the 2011 local elections (see Rodríguez 2016; Durán and Martín 2008; Shaw 2011 and 2007; Messina 2007: ch.7; Earnest 2006). The right has been extended to nationals from the American Trinidad and Tobago and from the Asian Republic of Korea since the 2015 local elections.

In order to vote, registration in the electoral census is essential. Unlike Spaniards, the rest of EU nationals and other foreigners with voting rights aged 18 and older must previously communicate their desire to vote in the municipal elections, once registered on the population roll.⁴ Non-EU citizens are required a minimum of five years' legal residence (three years in the case of Norwegians) in order to be able to exercise their suffrage rights.⁵ The number of councillors to be elected in each municipality is determined, from a minimum of five, by the number of inhabitants of all ages (both natives and foreigners) registered on the local census of population.

4. Squire, Wolfinger and Glass (1987) have concluded that, even amongst fellow-nationals (they study the case of the USA), the requirement that citizens must register after their change in residence constitutes the key stumbling block in the trip to the polls. For an insight into institutional constraints on both electoral participation and representation, see Pérez-Nievas et al. (2014), Bloemraad and Schönwälder (2013), and Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst (2011).

5. To be more accurate, the amount of time required is three years for citizens of Norway and five years for the rest of non-eu residents at the time of application, and all of them have to be both registered in the municipal census of inhabitants and in possession of a residence permit.

Seats are given according to the electoral D'Hondt formula. Candidate lists need to receive at least five per cent of the valid vote to be represented in town halls. The office-holders are drawn from each list using the exact ordering in which the candidates were listed.⁶

Foreign citizens that fill in the appropriate form stating their intention to vote are registered on the electoral roll. It is important to take this into account, insofar as there exists no official data collection of electoral participation either by age or by nationality. Absolute and relative data include both Spaniards and non-Spaniards.⁷ Therefore, social scientists find themselves obliged to draw participation figures from the electoral register. That is the reason why we will mostly refer to 'electoral mobilization,' instead of 'electoral participation' or 'turnout'. It is also worth noting that, unlike non-EU residents,⁸ foreign EU citizens settled in Spain have only to express their will to vote on the first occasion. However, although it can be assumed that an immigrant who is entitled to vote will exercise his/her right on this first occasion, registration and voting should not be confused. The probability that foreign EU residents will vote will not necessarily be the same regarding the first election after registering as in the following ones. The MIRE3i survey helps to partially fill this lack of knowledge (see below).

3. Spanish geography of the foreign seniors' settlement

After being a country of emigration throughout most of the 20th century, Spain has evolved into a country of immigration. Foreigners amounted in 1996 to fewer than 550,000 (1.4 per cent of the total population). There were more than 5,7 million foreigners registered on the 2011 population census, thus reaching the highest proportion (12.2%) and increasing more than tenfold in a decade and a half.⁹ Spain's migratory balance has become negative as a result of the Great Recession. Nonetheless, there were still more than 4,73 million foreigners registered on the 2015 census (see table 1), amounting to 10.1% of the total population.¹⁰ Almost 2 million of them are

6. Lists are closed and blocked, thus there is no scope for the expression of preferences amongst different candidates of either the same or different parties.

7. The electoral census distinguishes neither between Spaniards and foreigners nor, among the former, between native-born and naturalised or foreign-born citizens.

8. Non-EU residents have to apply for inscription on occasion of each election. It is consequently an additional institutional constraint that increases the cost of voting.

9. Data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute. They are always actualised by 1 January each year. The number of foreigners registered on the 2017 population census has dropped to 4,549,858 (9.8%).

10. 2015 is the year when the last local elections were held. The electoral census was not set up on January 1, but some weeks later. As a result, there are some municipalities with more citizens registered on the electoral roll than on the population census. In order to avoid misleading percentages, population data have been fit to electoral inscription in such cases in this paper.

European Union citizens or nationals from Norway or Island (hereinafter referred to as ‘EU+ni’).¹¹

Table 1

Population and 15EU+ni seniors’ electoral mobilization. 2015 Spanish municipal election by Autonomous Communities with the highest rate of immigrants

	Population census						Electoral census (15EU+ni seniors)
	Population	Immigrant population	15EU+ni elderly citizens				
	Total	Total	%	Total	%*	%**	
Andalusia	8,399,318	636,480	7.6	89,466	47.2	72.6	47.1%
Balearic Islands	1,104,479	192,518	17.4	21,426	29.2	69.0	48.4%
Canary Islands	2,100,306	253,107	12.1	46,372	36.7	77.0	35.0%
Catalonia	7,508,129	1,028,092	13.7	29,699	19.1	32.9	48.5%
Madrid	6,436,998	811,130	12.6	11,327	14.7	16.2	61.5%
Murcia	1,467,288	208,359	14.2	15,336	56.3	59.7	51.0%
Valencia	4,980,723	700,245	14.1	117,329	56.3	73.5	50.2%
7SAC***	31,997,245	3,829,931	12.0	330,955	38.6	59.1	47.4%
Spain	46,625,056	4,730,318	10.1	351,833	36.8	55.4	47.4%

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (<http://www.ine.es>).

* Percentage of EU-15 citizens (plus Icelandics and Norwegians) aged 55 and over with regard to the whole community of those nationalities residing in each territory.

** Percentage of EU-15 citizens (plus Icelandics and Norwegians) aged 55 and over with regard to the total population of foreign residents of that group age in each territory.

*** The seven Spanish Autonomous Communities where foreign retirees mostly settle (see below)."

According to Eurostat, the foreign population is younger than the national population for the EU as a whole. The distribution by age of foreigners shows, compared with nationals, a greater proportion of relatively young working-age adults. On 1

11. There is a community of values among foreign EU-15 citizens and nationals from both Iceland and Norway. As stated above, the latter have also been granted council election voting rights while residing in Spain. Grouping those nationals under a single label is also justified because the host population has a common perception of all of them as a whole (vis-à-vis the rest of non-European immigrants, and even vis-à-vis EU-13 residents). Anyway, they amount to a small number – 9,120 Norwegians and 249 Icelandics, both of them aged 55 and older on the 2015 population census. On the other hand, while the former reside in just 378 localities (4.7%), the latter are settled in 61 of the whole 8,119.

January 2016, the median age of the national population in the Union was 44 years, while the median age of non-nationals was 36 years.¹² Spain appears as the European country receiving the highest amount of elderly foreign new residents throughout the last decade.¹³

Whilst 13.4 per cent of immigrants age 55 years old and above, the proportion almost doubles it, rising to 21.6 per cent among EU+ni. The elderly are even more, in relative terms, among the nationals of the EU15+ni. Insofar as 36.8 per cent of this population are 55 and older, it is obvious we are dealing with an aged community. In fact, that figure is even higher than the percentage rate of this age group as a proportion of the overall population, Spaniards included (30.2%).

The settlement of retirees is particularly concentrated in seven of the nineteen Spanish Autonomous Communities (Ceuta and Melilla included): Andalusia, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Madrid, Murcia and Valencia (hereinafter, '7SAC'). All of them are coastal (except Madrid) and Mediterranean regions (except Madrid and the Canary Islands). 81.0 per cent of registered migrants of all ages have settled in the 7SAC territory. The concentration of elderly foreign residents is even larger – 88.2 per cent of over-55 migrants living in Spain have settled in the 7SACS, and the proportion reaches 92.2 per cent among the over-65 immigrant population.

With regard to the origins of immigration flows, 22.4 per cent of 7SAC foreign residents are 15EU+ni citizens, and 18.9 per cent come from the EU-13 Member States of the last three enlargements.¹⁴ Those proportions change substantially when considering age. As it can be seen in table 2, almost 60 per cent of 7SAC over-55 immigrants are nationals of a EU15+ni country, and the proportion rises to three quarters among over-65s. Thus, it makes sense talking about Spain as a place in the sun (King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000; Williams et al. 1997) or for lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; cfr. Huete et al. 2013).

Spain should certainly to be labelled as a European retirement place, but not only for EU-15 citizens. Actually, there is a growing population of migrants who have already retired or are approaching the age of retirement after having worked in Spain (see Paredes and Redobrán 2017, and Parreño-Castellano and Domínguez-Mújica

12. Eurostat, "Migration and migrant population statistics" (Statistics Explained). Retrieved June 21, 2017, from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/>

13. Eurostat, "Immigration by age group, sex and citizenship", Dataset, Product code: migr_imm1ctz, updated on June 15, 2017. Retrieved June 21, 2017, from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_imm1ctz&lang=en.

14. The EU has expanded a number of times throughout its history by way of the accession of new member states to the Union (see fn.1). Eight Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), plus two Mediterranean ones (Malta and Cyprus) joined the Union in 2004. Romania and Bulgaria acceded in 2007. The latest member state to integrate has been Croatia, which joined in 2013.

2016). There is also older people coming to Spain via family reunification. Most of those three types are EU-13 nationals, but there are also non-EU nationals, either with or without voting rights.

Table 2
Foreign residents with local voting rights
(2015 population register)*

		55 years old and over			65 years old and over		
		15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur
Spain	Total	351,833	73,386	48,071	221,899	13,378	14,582
	(%)	55.4%	11.6%	7.6%	72.6%	4.4%	4.8%
7sac	Total	330,955	53,414	39,515	212,800	9,928	11,827
	(%)	59.1%	9.5%	7.1%	75.6%	3.5%	4.2%

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the Spanish National Statistics Institute (<http://www.ine.es>).

* Percentages by file and group-of-age. They sum up to 100% by adding the proportion of foreign residents without voting rights.

The relevant territory from an electoral point of view is the municipality. Immigrants at large –and older ones in particular – are distributed throughout the entire country. Foreign citizens both entitled to vote and aged 65 and over are registered in 81.4 per cent of the 2,641 7sac localities. The figure rises up to 89.7 per cent when considering over-55s. 15EU+ni citizens aged 55 and above represent at least 20 per cent of the population of that age (Spaniards included) in 149 localities, all of them 7sacs. In 39 localities, they even make up more than 50 per cent of such a population, that is, they are localities where EU seniors outnumber even host nationals of the same age. The figures are higher if we focus upon the over-65-age group – those European elderly migrants represent at least 20 per cent of the whole population of that age in 158 localities and at least half of that population in 42 of them. They amount to 164 towns and villages, and pertain to Valencia (70 of them), Andalusia (49), the Canary Islands (18), Catalonia (13), the Balearic Islands (11), and Murcia (2).¹⁵ Such a setting is a unique situation in the European Union, and it has political implications.

15. Madrid is not a region with a high concentration of elderly EU-15 residents at the local level. That is the reason why it did not form part of the MIRE3i survey sample.

On that regard, the EU has decided that some Member States may face electoral polarization between lists of national and non-national candidates when the proportion of non-national citizens of the Union of voting-age exceeds 20 per cent of the total number of citizens of the Union of voting-age who reside there. Member States over that threshold may restrict those citizens' electoral rights.¹⁶ Based upon that argument, map 1 shows 7SAC localities around the 20-percent threshold. To be sure, the map visualises the 256 7SAC municipalities with full-age foreigners with voting-rights over 15 per cent of total full-age population with right to vote (the four shades of grey). 144 of those localities are above the 20-percent threshold, even though grouping together EU and non-EU foreigners. 132 of those localities are above the specific threshold (accounting just for EUs), and there are even 55 municipalities (coloured in the darkest grey) where EU-15 foreigners aged 55-and-above surpass the EU threshold. Neither EU-13 nor non-EU seniors surpass the threshold by themselves in any municipality.

4. Elderly foreign residents' electoral mobilization: nation-wide and local-level data

As we have seen, suffrage has been extended in Spain to European and non-European residents for municipal elections. After the incorporation of Croatia to the Union in 2013, and once residents from Iceland can vote together with Norwegians, European citizens of twenty-nine foreign nationalities can go to local polls. Full-age citizens from ten additional non-European countries (Latin American most of them) have also been entitled to participate. More than 2,2 million immigrants with voting rights were registered ageing 18 years old and above in the 2015 national population census. 81.3 per cent of these immigrants live in the 7SAC. In other words, 7.9 per cent of the 7SAC's potential electors are foreigners.

There is no official data regarding foreigners' participation in Spanish local elections. However, we do know how many of them have registered to be able to exercise this right. As stated above, that is why we better talk about 'electoral mobilization', instead of 'participation'. According to national statistics, about one-fifth (21.0%) of full-age foreign residents entitled to vote registered on the electoral census for the 2015 local elections (see table 3). Insofar as most immigrants reside in the 7SAC, the electoral mobilization is about the same in those regions. Even if most of the registered immigrants finally voted, it can be confirmed that the foreign turnout in Spanish local elections is quite low, as it is in other democracies (Bird, Saalfeld and Wüst

16. Council Directive 94/80/EC of 19 December 1994.

2011; Messina 2007). Nonetheless, as the table 3 shows as well, whatever the final turnout, the rate of inscription in the electoral census among full-age inhabitants is lower than it is among foreigners aged 55 and over, which is also lower than among over-65s.

Table 3
Electoral mobilization of foreign residents
(2015 Spanish local electoral register)

		Full-age citizens	55 years old and over			65 years old and over				
			Total	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur	Total	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur
Spain	Total*	464,064	186,298	166,880	16,292	3,126	117,857	114,381	2,779	697
	(%)**	21.0%	39.4%	47.4%	22.2%	6.5%	41.6%	51.5%	20.8%	4.8%
	Mean***	30.9%	42.4%	55.6%	27.4%	8.3%	40.2	58.3%	24.5%	5.4%
75AC	Total*	393,965	171,508	156,851	12,156	2,501	112,213	109,507	2,166	540
	(%)**	21.9%	40.5%	47.4%	22.8%	6.3%	42.8%	51.5%	21.8%	4.6%
	Mean***	31.9%	45.4	56.1%	27.2%	7.5%	44.2%	58.3%	25.0%	4.8%

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the 2015 population census (Spanish National Statistics Institute) and from the 2015 Census of Resident Foreigners in Spain for municipal elections (Electoral Census Office), both available at <http://www.ine.es>.

* Full-age foreign residents registered on the electoral census for the 2015 Spanish local elections

** Percentages of foreigners with voting-rights that registered on the electoral census (nation-wide data)

*** Mean of local percentages of foreigners with voting-rights that registered on the electoral census

Thus, the age appears as a relevant variable affecting electoral mobilization, in accordance with its explanatory capacity regarding voter turnout *at home*. It is also the case of the identity community – no matter whether over-18, over-55 or over-65, electoral registration is higher among 15EU+ni citizens than among EU-13s, who at the same time register higher than non-Europeans.¹⁷ The percentages among 15EU+ni citizens (see table 3) are closer to the national turnout (64.8%) than ever in Spanish local elections. It is so even more if we take into account the mean of electoral mobilization. According to the MIRE3i survey, 21 per cent of retirees over 55 who settled before 2004 exercised their right to vote in the 2003 local elections. The figure rises up to 34

17. Other reasons apart, it is worth remembering (see above) that, while most non-Europeans are Latin Americans, and thus sharing mother tongue with the host society, official requirements constrain inscription to a larger extent than among foreign EU citizens.

per cent with regard to the following local elections, held in 2007. Registering in the electoral census changed from 34 per cent among EU-15 seniors aged 55 and above in 2003 to 37 per cent in 2007 (see Durán 2010 and 2005).¹⁸ Electoral mobilization fell to 33.4 per cent in 2011, being 35.2 per cent among 15EU+ni retirees.¹⁹

I

Even though a more sophisticated examination could be an area for future research, four reasons of a different nature may explain the high rate of electoral mobilization in 2015, particularly among 15EU+ni seniors. Firstly, the European Commission pointed out is good practice for Spain to be “the only Member State, among those who have adopted a non-automatic system of registration, to send an individual letter containing information on the electoral proceedings to all EU non-national citizens”.²⁰ Actually, and nonetheless the institutional constraints on voting referred to above, a similar letter is also sent to non-EU residents with voting rights.

Secondly, interest in politics has risen in Spain throughout the Great Recession nonetheless both the falling support for parties that traditionally dominated national and local politics, and the increasing dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working (see Ruiz-Rufino and Alonso 2017; Armingeon and Guthmann 2014). As a result of both the people’s political distrust and mobilization, new parties have emerged and entered the parliaments, firstly the European Parliament (elections held in 2014), then the local and regional ones (2015), and finally the Lower House and the Senate (2015 and 2016; see Orriols and Cordero 2016). Closely related to that reasoning, a comparison between the 2003 and the 2007 Spanish local elections reaches to the conclusion that resentment against corruption scandals resulted in higher electoral mobilization on the part of the elderly EU-15 residents (Durán 2010). It makes sense them to have played an influencing role in the new scenario.

The other reasons are not related to electoral mobilization as an act of will, but to a reduction of the population roll, no matter whether residents have really left the country or not. The population census is being checked since 2009 in such a way that, with effect since 2013 onwards, EU citizens who are no longer (officially)

18. As to the total population of foreign residents entitle to vote, an estimated 24 per cent registered to do so in 1999. The percentage was only one point higher in 2007, following the last round of EU enlargement (Bird et al. 2011: 56).

19. Data from the 2011 population census (Spanish National Statistics Institute) and from the 2011 Census of Resident Foreigners in Spain for local elections (Electoral Census Office).

20. European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of Directive 94/80/EC on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals* (COM(2012) 99 final), Brussels, 9 March, 2012, p. 7.

residing in Spain are deleted from the census, as non-EU nationals were before. Consequently, the decrease in the population roll has been higher than in the electoral one,²¹ so the proportion of citizens registered to exercise local suffrage has automatically increased. On the other hand, there are foreign residents who have opted for not being registered on the population roll. One reason for such under-registration is that a number of foreign residents (mostly pensioners) do not want to be registered to avoid having to declare all their assets in accordance with the regulation introduced by the Spanish tax authorities on foreign residents in 2013. For sure, this reason applies more the less the years of residence in Spain and the less the months per year they use to spend abroad.

A final reason has to do with electoral participation, even though in the British arena. British citizens aged 55 and above amount to 44.0 per cent of 15EU+ni seniors settled in Spain, and the proportion rises up to 46.6 per cent among over-65s. Britons may apply for a UK postal vote, but they are eligible only by virtue of having been registered to vote in their country within the previous 15 years. Those who have (officially) lived abroad for a longer time are automatically disenfranchised. The automatic exclusion rule has even been submitted to judicial review, and the Conservative government promised to give all UK citizens the right to vote in parliamentary elections. However, neither they were entitled to vote in the 2016 EU-membership referendum – the Brexit referendum – nor in the previous general elections, as they have not been enfranchised for the June 2017 snap ones. It is worth studying the extent to which a number of Britons have avoided registering in Spain to have his/her say in the in-out referendum, which was promised by the prime minister, Cameron, in 2013 and held in June 2016, once he was re-elected in May 2015.

II

What about electoral mobilization at the municipal level? Foreign seniors over 55 with voting rights registered to vote in the 2015 local elections in 78.9 per cent out of the 5,522 municipalities where they officially reside. Inscription in the electoral census by 15EU+ni seniors affected 83.8 per cent out of their 4,474 adopted places of residence. There are no more than 13 older foreign residents in each of the localities without them on the electoral register, and none of those localities are higher in size than 20,000 inhabitants. Actually, 83.5 per cent of such constituencies have a population smaller than 2,500. Is there any relationship between inscription and either community size or population size, either in absolute or in relative terms?

21. 478,982 in the 2011 electoral census vis-à-vis 464,058 in 2015. It implies a reduction of 3.1 per cent, while the population census (full-age foreigners with voting rights) has experienced a 25.75-percent decline.

It was pointed out above that scholars have observed that political turnout among foreign-born citizens in local elections²² is even lower in districts with a predominance of immigrants. As it can be seen in table 1, it cannot be categorically stated that electoral mobilization among retirement migrants is related to their concentration at the aggregate level. There is no consistent relation, firstly, between the inscription in the electoral roll and the proportion of 15EU+ni elderly citizens residing in a given region. Thus, it is either with regard to the total population of 15EU+ni residents (third column on the right of table 1) or with regard to the total population of the same age in that territory (second column on the right). Secondly, the electoral mobilization is neither higher or lower the higher or lower the rate of immigrants.

Table 4 shows that electoral mobilization is higher the higher the proportion of foreign residents in localities over 5 per cent. It is the case among the 7sac municipalities only with an immigrant population over 11 per cent. However, in differentiating between groups of nationalities, that logic is so clear only among EU-13 seniors. It cannot be stated thus that electoral mobilization is related to the concentration of immigrants at the local level. It is confirmed, nonetheless, that mobilization depends both upon the community – whether 15EU+ni, EU-13 or non-European one – and upon the age group. As it is observed in table 3 as well, electoral inscription is higher among the 15EU+ni aged 65-and-above than among over-55s. In the case of the other communities, to the contrary, the registration is lower in almost all the groups of constituencies among the over-65s.

The proportion of each own community with regard to the total population does not appear as an explaining factor of electoral mobilization either (see table 5). Again, 1) inscription on the roll is always higher among 15EU+ni seniors than among EU-13s and even higher than among non-Europeans, and 2) it is higher among 15EU+ni over-65s than among over-55s, being just the opposite among non-Europeans (except in those 10 municipalities where they amount to at least 7.6 per cent of the whole population). There is no relationship between the age group and the EU-13s' electoral mobilization when taking into account their concentration as identity community, that is, there is not a consistent pattern behind differences between age groups given different proportions. However, it is the only community whose mobilization is affected by such a concentration – electoral mobilization of EU-13 seniors is higher the higher their predominance in localities over one per cent, and the relationship appears stronger among over-55s than among over-65s.

22. Researchers use to focus upon naturalized residents.

Table 4
Electoral mobilization of foreign seniors by proportion of registered foreigners
(Spanish municipalities, 2015)

Foreign population in each locality	Territory	Number of localities	Inscription of citizens aged 55 and over on the electoral roll (%)				Inscription of citizens aged 65 and over on the electoral roll (%)			
			Total	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur	Total	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur
0% thru 2,5%	Spain	2,810	46.1	55.9	27.8	7.9	44.1	58.8	28.3	4.7
	7SAC	476	46.3	56.7	33.7	8.0	42.0	58.4	32.7	5.6
2,6% thru 5%	Spain	1,871	37.1	48.2	19.6	6.2	36.2	52.1	19.2	4.4
	7SAC	562	40.8	49.1	22.1	5.4	40.2	52.2	18.2	3.4
6% thru 10%	Spain	1,166	34.7	49.8	21.0	6.9	33.6	53.4	19.0	5.7
	7SAC	687	38.6	50.4	22.0	6.8	38.4	53.3	22.0	5.5
11% thru 25%	Spain	1,378	35.7	48.4	22.6	6.4	35.7	52.6	21.2	4.6
	7SAC	717	36.3	48.5	22.6	6.3	36.2	52.7	21.7	4.5
26% thru 50%	Spain	180	43.2	44.8	24.0	6.2	47.5	49.0	22.4	3.8
	7SAC	129	43.3	44.8	23.4	6.2	47.5	49.0	22.1	3.9
51% and over	Spain	17	49.4	49.6	32.1	10.3	54.7	54.9	27.5	8.7
	7SAC	14	49.4	49.6	29.5	10.3	54.7	54.9	24.6	8.7

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the 2015 population census (Spanish National Statistics Institute) and from the 2015 Census of Resident Foreigners in Spain for municipal elections (Electoral Census Office), both available at <http://www.ine.es>.

As it is showed in table 6, population size emerges as a clear explaining factor of electoral mobilization – both among the three identity communities and among the two age groups, inscription on the electoral census is higher the smaller the number of inhabitants of Spanish localities, with minor exceptions among EU-13 and non-European seniors living in cities between 20,001 and 50,000 residents. Among 15EU+ni seniors, political engagement in localities up to 2,500 inhabitants is over 61 per cent (citizens aged 55 and above), and it surpasses 66 per cent among retirement residents over 65. It is worth adding that such localities amount to three quarters of 8,119 Spanish localities (75.4%) and to more than half of 2,641 7SAC ones (54.8%). With regard to the EU 20-percent threshold, 15EU+ni seniors over 55 surpass it in 55 localities. 27 out of them are smaller in size than 2,500 inhabitants. The proportion amounts to 72.7 per cent in localities up to 5,000 inhabitants.

Table 5

Electoral mobilization of foreign residents by proportion of their own community vis-à-vis the total population (Spanish municipalities, 2015)

Each community as a proportion of total population	Territory	Inscription of citizens aged 55-and-over on the electoral roll (%)			Inscription of citizens aged 65-and-over on the electoral roll (%)		
		15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur
0% thru 0.5%	Spain	52.0	19.9	7.9	56.0	19.4	5.5
	7SAC	51.3	20.1	7.3	54.0	20.5	5.0
0.6% thru 1%	Spain	46.5	18.4	6.5	50.1	17.4	4.9
	7SAC	45.8	17.1	6.3	48.7	15.4	4.8
1.1% thru 1.5%	Spain	52.8	17.6	6.9	56.8	17.9	5.0
	7SAC	55.3	17.7	6.7	59.1	18.6	4.5
1.6% thru 2%	Spain	49.0	20.0	6.1	51.3	20.7	5.0
	7SAC	48.4	20.3	5.7	51.3	21.2	4.8
2.1% thru 3.5%	Spain	46.5	18.4	6.1	50.3	18.1	4.3
	7SAC	46.8	18.7	6.1	50.3	19.3	4.3
3.6% thru 7.5%	Spain	50.0	23.2	7.4	54.4	20.6	5.1
	7SAC	50.2	24.1	7.3	54.5	22.6	5.0
7.6% and over	Spain	46.5	27.8	7.0	50.9	26.3	8.7
	7SAC	46.4	28.6	7.1	50.9	27.3	8.7

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the 2015 population census (Spanish National Statistics Institute) and from the 2015 Census of Resident Foreigners in Spain for municipal elections (Electoral Census Office), both available at <http://www.ine.es>.

Thus, it may be concluded, firstly, that seniors mobilize more than the rest of voting-age foreigners. Secondly, that, while 15EU+ni seniors (the largest group of elderly foreigners) do not make more use of their voting power in relative terms either the more their community concentrate or the higher the proportion of immigrants at large, their electoral mobilization has a relevant political effect – they outnumber other communities of nationals (EU-13s and non-Europeans), they engage to a larger extent than the latter, and they do it to the largest extent right in the most numerous localities, that is, the smallest in size. Due to the small size of their population, such constituencies are those in which it is easier a small number of voters to have a great effect in terms of elected councillors. As Janoschka has pointed out, “although

lifestyle migration can be evaluated as an individual and rather apolitical expression of a politically intended mobility within the European Union, it may seriously alter political life within destinations” (2010b: 270), and not in a *polarised* way.²³

In the case of Andalusian Alcaucín, a Málaga city of less than 2,500 inhabitants on occasion of the 2015 local elections (2,375 to be sure), the electoral mobilization of 15EU+ni lifestyle migrants was over 75 per cent, and the Belgian Mario Jean Baptist Blancke (the first candidate on the list of the socio-liberal Ciudadanos) was elected its Mayor as a result.

Table 6
Electoral mobilization of foreign residents by population size
(Spanish municipalities, 2015)

Size of population	Number of localities	Territory	Inscription of full-age foreign 15EU+ni citizens on the electoral roll (%)	Inscription of foreign citizens aged 55 and over on the electoral roll (%)			Inscription of foreign citizens aged 65 and over on the electoral roll (%)		
				15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur	15EU+ni	EU-13	non-Eur
Up to 2,500 inhabitants	6,118	Spain	49.4	61.2	31.8	9.2	66.8	30.6	5.9
	1,446	7sac	51.6	61.6	33.5	8.3	67.1	31.3	3.8
2,501 thru 5,000	701	Spain	34.5	53.6	28.5	8.7	58.9	24.3	5.8
	357	7sac	34.9	53.6	31.7	8.1	58.9	30.7	4.5
5,001 thru 20,000	899	Spain	37.7	48.9	22.8	7.1	53.3	19.2	4.8
	538	7sac	39.0	49.2	24.8	7.0	53.6	21.7	4.7
20,001 thru 50,000	255	Spain	31.9	46.7	22.8	7.4	51.5	21.7	5.6
	199	7sac	32.5	46.8	23.9	7.5	51.6	23.1	5.6
More than 50,000	144	Spain	30.0	42.9	19.8	6.1	45.7	19.4	4.5
	101	7sac	30.0	42.8	20.6	6.0	45.5	20.5	4.4

Source: Own elaboration. Data from the 2015 population census (Spanish National Statistics Institute) and from the 2015 Census of Resident Foreigners in Spain for municipal elections (Electoral Census Office), both available at <http://www.ine.es>.

Interestingly, foreign citizens on the parties' lists are an additional factor explaining electoral mobilization and even participation. The MIRE3i survey indicates that 15.5 per cent of the 15-EU retirees in Spain would have not voted in the next, 2011,

23. For an analysis of the political effects that could have derived from the antagonistic identitarian or communitarian vs. integration votes in the 2007 and the 2011 Spanish local elections, see Durán (2016).

local elections. 68.7 per cent considered the participation of foreigners as positive for the municipality. Among those who would have voted, 28 per cent opted for a nationwide party. The proportion of retirement migrants whose ballot would go for local candidate-lists rose to 34 per cent. One third (31.5%) of those who would vote for national parties conditioned their vote on the presence of foreign candidates on the party's ticket. Even though less than four per cent of the foreign elderly would vote for a local party founded by foreign residents (actually, 72.3 per cent were against political parties founded and directed by foreigners), more than half (52.0%) of those who would vote for a local party conditioned their vote on the presence of foreign candidates on the party's list.

There is still no official data available on the 2015 local elections so as to know where and how many foreigners stood as candidates, and how many of them were finally elected. As a matter of fact, host parties have incorporated immigrant candidates for political representation into their own lists in return for votes coming from their compatriots in particular and from their fellow foreign neighbours in general. It significantly happened for the first time in the 2007 elections (Durán 2010) and again in the 2011 ones (Durán 2016; Pérez-Nievas et al. 2014). As expected, it mostly took place in those towns and villages where immigrants with voting rights were sufficiently present at the local level so as to have a say in the election of local officials and even Mayors. Thus, more in tune with the USA case than with the French and British ones (Schain 2012), non-Spanish fellow neighbours are not appearing mainly as an issue to talk about throughout the electoral campaigns (an object), but as an active player (a subject).

5. Socio-demographic and political characteristics: the MIRE53i survey on gerontomigrants' voting

Some additional factors may help understanding and even explaining both electoral mobilization and actual turnout. The MIRE53i survey is useful in that sense. Even though women represent 49 per cent of the sample (N=720), they amount to 53 per cent of those who say to have voted in 2007 (N=197). When looking at nationality, 30 per cent of UK seniors said they voted in 2007, three points more than the Germans, the second community in size. Both of them were followed by the rest (4-point gap). Evidence also shows that retirement migrants with middle school level are more likely to vote than those with elementary school level, if any. And the latter vote more than foreign 15-EU seniors with university degree. According to our survey, fewer than 10 per cent of the retired European newcomers have the lowest level of education (no graduation at all), and 76 per cent have a graduation level higher than primary school. While 29 per cent of citizens with secondary school level voted in 2007,

the rate is two points lower in the case of elementary school at most, and the gap is of another two points with regard to college degree. None of those three variables (sex, nationality and study level) are statistically significant.²⁴

It is not the case with age. There is only one point gap between those aged 65 to 74 on the one hand and over-75s on the other (30% of the latter voted in 2007) according to our survey. Nonetheless, if 31 per cent of citizens between 65 and 74 went to the polls,²⁵ only 22 per cent among those retirees between 50 and 64 say to have voted.²⁶ As to income, the statistical relationship is not significant,²⁷ but the closer to middle levels the higher the voter-turnout. Most retirees worked as skill employees (60%) or as self-employed business owners (25%) before retiring, and 65 per cent have a net monthly income higher than 1.500 euros. Electoral participation rised up to 34 per cent in 2007 among those who got a monthly income between 1,500 and 3,000 euros, whilst the rate dropped to 29 per cent in the case of those who earned either more or less.

As might be expected, the longer residents live in Spain, the more likely they are to vote. Significant from a statistical point of view, 9 per cent of those who lived in Spain in 2009 between three and six months voted in 2007.²⁸ Among retirees living between seven and nine months that same year the turnout rises up to 18 per cent.²⁹ Finally, electoral participation reaches a rate of 34.5 per cent when living more than nine months per year.³⁰ Thus, being tourists excluded from the survey, it can be concluded foreign retirees to vote more in number the less cross-border movers they are.

Time residence as a variable defining senior voters' profile has not only to do with months per year, but also with years themselves. 15.5 per cent of interviewed retirees (N=109) lived in Spain before 1991, 26 per cent (N=181) settled between 1991 and 2000, 31 per cent (N=217) in the 2011-2005 period, and 27.5 per cent (N=192) between 2006 and 2010. The majority of each period's citizens have never voted in Spain. Nonetheless, we can clearly differentiate between those who established before 1991 (45% voter turnout in 2007)³¹ and those who settled either between 1991 and 2000 (34% voter turnout) or between 2001 and 2005 (34% voter turnout). In view of that similar electoral participation no matter whether citizens change their residence

24. Corrected typified residues < 2.0.

25. Corrected typified residues = 2.1.

26. Corrected typified residues = -2.5.

27. Corrected typified residues < 2.0.

28. Corrected typified residues = -6.1.

29. The relationship between both variables is still negative, but not significant (corrected typified residues = -1.6).

30. Corrected typified residues = 6.5.

31. Corrected typified residues = 3.9.

before or after 2000, it cannot be concluded turnout to be higher the more years them to reside in the host country.

Both years of residence and months of residence per year may be related to feelings of belonging. Our survey includes a question on the residents' self-image in Spain. No matter whether they feel themselves as a tourist (6%), an immigrant (4%), a foreigner (12%), a European (45,5%), a Spaniard (10%), or an expatriate (16%), the most of them, always above 50 per cent, do not vote, that is, they had not voted up until then or had intention to vote in the 2011 elections. Nonetheless, abstention was higher among those who felt themselves as expats (69%), tourists (61%) or foreigners (60%).

Before proceeding into the mapping of foreign senior voters' ideology and partisan preferences, it is worth stating that the MIRE3i survey also shows that ideology has no capacity to predict their electoral participation either. Elderly 15EU residents were asked whether they feel close to, far from, or neither close to nor far from six ideologies – conservatism, ecologism, liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and social-democracy. More than 50 per cent of each of those eighteen options or groups of persons have not voted in any council poll in Spain, even though they were formally allowed to do it at the moment because of nationality and year of residence. Beyond that, there is a positive relationship between voting in 2007 elections and feeling very close to either conservatism,³² socialism,³³ or social-democracy.³⁴ Thus, voting does not appear to be determined by ideology but the probability to vote is higher the closer a citizen is to one of those three ideologies.

Whatever the turnout rate of immigrants within a given country and whatever the capacity of ideology to predict it, a prevalent pattern among foreign-born voters is to support and vote for traditional parties on the left,³⁵ even though in Canada, for instance, and nonetheless regional variations, immigrants and visible minorities have traditionally been supporters of the centrist Liberal Party (Bird 2011). The MIRE3i survey allows us to know whether lifestyle immigrants (most of them seniors) follow that pattern. On the contrary, political parties themselves tend to think, at the local level, foreign elderly residents are conservative in their political views.

Most of those European citizens (64%) do not feel close to socialism (positions 0 to 3 on a 0-10 scale), and, if only nationalism is less endorsed by them (having the same amount of rejection), no more than 17 per cent feel close to social-democracy

32. Corrected typified residues = 2.3.

33. Corrected typified residues = 2.2.

34. Corrected typified residues = 2.2.

35. As to the policy positions of left and right parties regarding immigration, see Alonso and Claro da Fonseca (2011).

(positions 7 to 10). It is the same percentage that when they are asked about liberalism. Liberalism and social-democracy almost get the same percentage of people feeling less close to each of them (47% and 46%, respectively). Conservatism gets higher support – while 38.5 per cent of respondents do not feel close to it, 30 per cent do. Conservatism is the second ideology less rejected and the second one more endorsed. The first one on both regards is ecologism – 31 per cent of European gerontomigrants feel close to it, while 35 per cent do not. It can hardly be expected that these immigrants will vote for traditional left-wing parties. But it is neither obvious for them to be right-wing oriented. Even less if we further take into account, firstly, that there are more people rejecting each of the different ideologies than positioning in the middle of the scale regarding the same ideology. Secondly, that there are also more people in that position than endorsing the ideology at stake, no matter which of the six ones under consideration.

Only one-third of survey respondents say to have voted in the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, either in Spain or in his/her country of origin. With 41 per cent of the sample not answering the question about the list of his/her option, 32 per cent of them affirmed that they opted for conservative or Christian-democratic parties, followed by social-democratic lists (15%) and ecologist choices (6%). The picture is different to some extent with regard to their local voting, but not in a significant way – while 43 out of each 100 of valid respondents³⁶ affirmed them to have voted for the conservative Partido Popular (PP) in the last municipal elections they participated (hold in 2007), 21 per cent electors that voted did it for the social-democratic PSOE, seven for a local party, four for an ecological list, three for a regional one, and less than two for leftist Izquierda Unida. Overall – and taking into account that 20 per cent of the valid respondents did not answer the question – our data show a preference for the PP among senior eu immigrants, while other survey studies conclude that the preference is for the PSOE among full-age extra-European immigrants, being them or having been labour migrants (Pérez-Nievas et al. 2014; Bird et al. 2011: 53-57; Morales and San Martín 2011). Thus, it is reasonable EU gerontomigrants to have been part of the resounding victory across Spain for the PP in the elections hold in 2011.³⁷ But there are also reasons to expect them to have changed their vote in 2015, apart from having voted to a larger extent.

36. N=203 (28% of the sample).

37. PSOE and PP got 70.5 per cent of the valid vote in 2007 local elections. The social-democratic party won 24,029 councillors, 681 town-hall seats more than the conservative list. In 2011, with 26,507 council seats, PP got 4,741 councilmen more than PSOE. Each party won less than 23,000 representatives in 2015 local elections, amounting to 52.1 per cent of the valid vote.

6. Conclusions

Spain is one of the leading countries home to international retirement migrants. Most of them come from EU-15 Member States. Spain is a European retirement place, both in absolute and in relative terms. With 37 per cent of 15EU+ni residents ageing 55 and older, it's obvious we are dealing with an aged community. In fact, that figure is more than six points higher than the percentage rate of this age group as a proportion of the total population.

They have an impact on economic, social, cultural, environmental and other dimensions, largely but not exclusively at the local level. That being said, there is a growing population of foreign residents coming to an age of retirement or retired after having worked in Spain, as well as there are elderly people coming to it via family reunification. Most of them are EU-13 citizens, but there are also non-EU nationals. Politics is another dimension affected by foreign neighbours. This paper has analysed the political engagement of gerontomigrants settled in Spain by focusing upon their electoral mobilization at the local level.

The Spanish municipal elections in 2015 is a case study that confirms, firstly, that migrants with voting rights engage to quite a lesser extent than host fellow-residents. Secondly, it has also been observed that, whatever the final turnout, the rate of inscription in the electoral census among full-age migrants with voting rights is lower than it is among the elderly. Actually, seniors' electoral mobilization in 2015 has been unusually high, closer to the national turnout than ever in Spain amongst EU-15 gerontomigrants.

In accordance with the literature on senior voter turnout, and nonetheless residence abroad, age certainly appears as a relevant variable affecting electoral mobilization – full-age foreigners' rate of inscription is lower than foreigners aged 55 and over, whilst the latter's mobilization is also lower than among over-65s. Identity community helps explaining engagement as well, insofar as, no matter whether over-18, over-55 or over-65, electoral registration is higher among 15EU+ni citizens than among EU-13s, which at the same time register higher than non-Europeans. Regarding age and community, it is worth noting that general numbers are affected by 15EU+ni residents being so many. In fact, while their mobilization is higher among the over-65s than among the over-55s, the contrary happens for EU-13s and non-Europeans. Institutional constraints may explain the latter's low turnout, but that is not the case of EU-13s. Future researches will have to address possible explaining factors, such as political culture and migratory reasons (i.e., push and pull factors).

The largest group of elderly migrants (15EU+ni seniors) do not make more use of their voting power in relative terms either the more their community concentrate at the local level or the higher the migratory density there. They are neither

explaining factors behind EU-13s (except the first one) or non-Europeans. Nonetheless, 15EU+ni seniors' electoral mobilization has a relevant political effect – they outnumber other communities of non-Spaniards, they engage to a larger extent than such communities, and they do it to the largest extent right in the most numerous localities, that is, the smallest in population size. Due to their small size, they are constituencies in which it is easier a small number of voters to have a great impact on elected representatives, i.e., on the representatives finally elected. Nonetheless the majoritarian bias of the electoral system, so it is more the shorter the difference between competing lists of candidates.

Maybe they engage more because they see politics closer, namely, because they feel themselves able to have a say and/or because they feel they belong to the community they are part of, no matter what his/her nationality. In that sense, foreign candidates (not necessarily fellow-nationals) appear as an additional factor favouring voice versus exit, as well as it is a way for Spanish parties to opt for foreigners' political integration in practice. On that regard, insofar as gerontomigrants are few in numbers to successfully opt for communitarian candidates, there is room for favouring the integration vote. Democracy has not only to do with rules, but also with how actors play that game.

Time will say whether electoral mobilization in 2015 is part of a new pattern or has been a conjunctural situation. Arguments have been offered in this paper of a mostly short-term nature. Regarding the Great Recession and insofar as it is over, it is up to the new councillors – whether Spaniards or foreigners – to make citizens confident in their authorities and institutions and in themselves as part of the *polis*. We have also addressed Brexit as a factor affecting inscription on the electoral roll for the 2015 elections. There are no reasons to think of it as an outstanding factor. But it may be in the near future – Britons are the largest nationality of foreign seniors living in Spain and the community voting in the highest numbers, both in absolute and relative terms. Think of the above-mentioned Mayor Blancke – in Alcaucín, 381 Britons aged 55 and above (71.5% of those on the population census) formalised their will to vote. No party won more than 353 votes in 2015 local elections, and the difference between the first and the third lists was as shorter as 31 votes. UK gerontomigrants, amounting to 54.5 per cent of their fellow nationals, are who really may affect electoral outcomes in the Spanish localities where they mostly live. And it is still to be known whether they will enjoy the right to vote and to stand as candidates in the next and following local elections in Spain and other Member States, as it is still to be known whether, in such a case, they will enjoy suffrage with or without institutional constraints.

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