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# A Sustainable Touristic Place in Times of Crisis? The Case of Empuriabrava—A Superdiverse Mediterranean Resort

Dawid Wladyka and Ricard Morén-Alegret

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## Abstract

Empuriabrava is a cosmopolitan neighborhood located in Costa Brava and one of the world's largest residential marinas. About sixty-five percent of Empuriabrava's population are foreign residents from dozens of nationalities. Their profile constitutes an intersection of religions, languages, socio-economic statuses, and migratory histories. Previous research rooted in conflict and contact theories as well as studies based on the superdiversity paradigm underscored the contradictory effect that diversity may have on the sustainable development of local communities. This paper analyzes Empuriabrava's population daily life and community sustainability. The analysis is based on interviews with local key informants, both natives and immigrants, as well as analysis of statistical and documental sources. The results suggest that while superdiversity provides vast possibilities to empower sustainable development, a perceived lack of local authorities' involvement diminishes this positive effect. The economic downturn has been observed as enhancing conflict and limiting collaborative initiatives. However, the efficient management of superdiversity in tourism-oriented neighborhoods has been found to be a key asset, which may help to experience rejuvenation instead of decline in the resort life cycle model. In this sense, this paper shows practical sustainability lessons to be learnt from Empuriabrava recent history and present situation.

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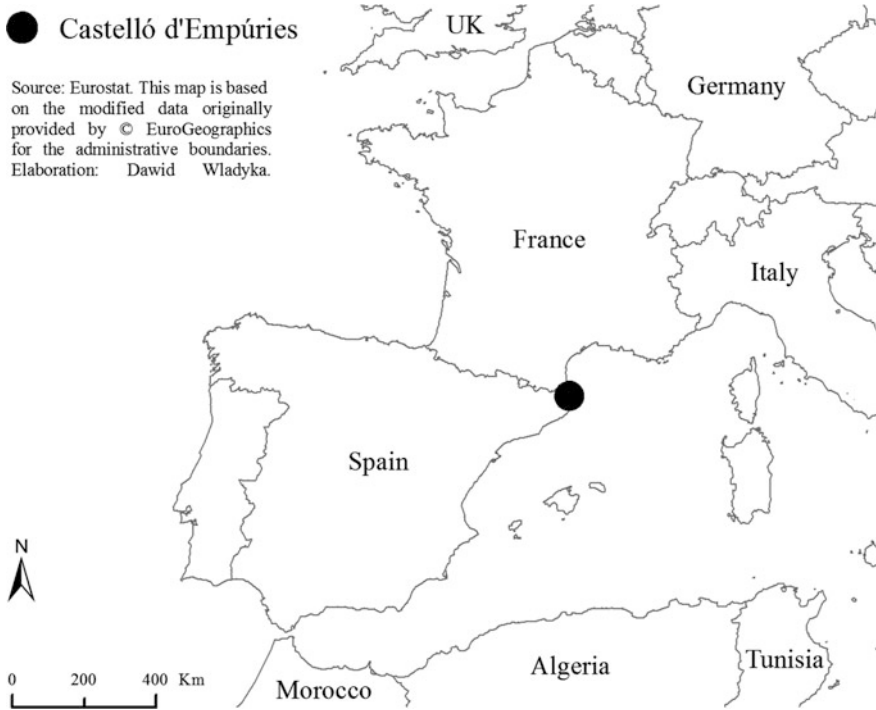
Sustainability · Diversity · Crisis · Resort · Immigration · Spain

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**1 Introduction**

Empuriabrava neighborhood lies within the boundaries of Castelló d'Empúries municipality. The municipality was inhabited by 11,794 residents in 2012 (INE 2012) and is one of the most important tourist destinations of North Catalonia, Spain (Fig. 1). The historic town center has mainly medieval origins and over two thirds of the municipality surface belong to natural protected areas (Generalitat de Catalunya 2010). Empuriabrava was constructed in 1967 as a large residential marina intersected by a network of navigable channels, and experienced intensive development empowered by North-Western European sun-seekers in the 1970s and 80s (Castelló d'Empúries 2010a). The arising urbanization was a leisure retreat with holiday homes offering Mediterranean climate combined with attractive beaches. This trend slightly changed in the 1990s when some developments were converted into permanent residencies. Today, with its 30 km of water channels, five thousand moorings and a sport airport, Empuriabrava is considered by the local authorities as one of the World's most significant and largest residential marinas (Castelló d'Empúries 2007, 2014). Additionally, it is known as a water-sports center and a destination for foreigners who look for an enjoyable place for retirement or investment. Still, the emergence of a larger number of permanent residents in the 1990s brought to life complexities of all-year public spaces maintenance and assurance of facilities (Castelló d'Empúries 2010a, b).

The development of the new neighborhood altered both the local economy and demography. Although the presence of various ethnic groups in Castelló d'Empúries has been noted from the Middle Ages, the new marina brought more attention to such a diverse population (Compte Freixanet 1976; Colls i Comas 2002). According to the 1986 municipal census, immigrants constituted 18% of the Castelló d'Empúries residents. At that time, 69% of the foreign residents in the Costa Brava region came from the European Economic Community countries, and about 25% came mainly from Morocco, Gambia and South America (Paunero i Amigo 1988). Since then, immigration from Africa and America has increased. The town experienced an intensive population growth especially from 1991 to 2001 (INE 2001). Many foreigners established their residences in Empuriabrava and immigration processes tripled municipal population (Cuadrado Ciuraneta et al. 2006). Between the years 2000 and 2007 the number of the town's residents born outside of Catalonia doubled to 4980 foreign residents in 2007. Most of them were from the EU, followed by immigrants from Africa, South America, non-EU European countries, Asia, Oceania, North and Central America (Castello d'Empúries 2010a). Nowadays, about 65% of registered residents in Empuriabrava are



**Fig. 1** Castelló d'Empúries within the Spanish, European and Mediterranean contexts. *Source* Eurostat. This map was elaborated by Dawid Wladyka and based on the modified data originally provided by © EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries

foreign immigrants from dozens of national origins and various continents (see Table 1). Their profile constitutes an intersection of various religions, languages, cultures, socio-economic standings and migratory stories. Additionally, the native population is culturally and linguistically diverse, including presence of two co-official languages, Catalan and Spanish.

In order to understand how those groups live together, this study attempts to look at the neighborhood from the superdiversity paradigm perspective and gather various experiences and opinions among multiple actors present in the area (Vertovec 2007). This paradigm, originally, reflected a change in thinking about ethnic minorities in the UK. It not only captured the new waves of immigrants (e.g. Central and Eastern Europeans) that increased the UK's ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, but also highlighted that, within all of the immigrants groups, there is a mosaic of individuals characterized by distinct gender, socio-economic statuses, experiences, patterns, motives for migration, etc. Thinking about super-diverse societies promptly spread among the immigration researchers within and beyond the UK. Still, recent studies suggest that superdiversity should be taken more seriously, especially by local policymakers. For instance, analyzing

**Table 1** The population of Empuriabrava by principal nationalities, 1st January 2011 (INE 2011)

Nationality	Number of Residents
<b>Total population</b>	<b>7873</b>
Spaniards	2771
<b>Total foreigners</b>	<b>5102</b>
<b>Total EU</b>	<b>3072</b>
Germany	854
France	1092
Italy	135
Poland	73
United Kingdom	157
Romania	385
<b>Total Non-EU Europe</b>	<b>479</b>
Russia	306
Ukraine	74
<b>Total Africa</b>	<b>1094</b>
Morocco	984
<b>Total America</b>	<b>375</b>
Argentina	75
<b>Total Asia</b>	<b>80</b>
China	45

immigrant entrepreneurship, Ram et al. (2013), highlight that some immigrants attempt to be self-sufficient and seek funding sources (e.g. development programs or bank credits) in order to start their own businesses, exactly as natives do. On the other hand, Blommaert and Rampton (2011) underline that, although the ongoing review of ideas about languages, speakers, and communication related to superdiversity take place in the academia setting, the world of commerce is still engaged in the traditional, somehow stiffer way of thinking about language and communication.

On the other hand, recent research more frequently includes a diverse range of spaces and relationships going beyond the issue of urban ethnic enclaves, which were formerly approached by the geography of ethnic relations (Jackson 2008). Additionally, researchers like Morén-Alegret (2005, 2008); Kasimis (2009); Jentsch and Simard (2009) have put emphasis on analyzing diversity in rural areas and small towns. Building on previous findings, this paper analyzes the effect that a superdiverse immigrant population might have on social and economic sustainability in a Euro-Mediterranean small town's neighborhood. The manuscript focuses on the contemporary interactions among diverse groups (e.g. immigrants and the native population). The analysis is mainly based on original semi-structured interviews with local key informants, both natives and immigrants, but it is also supplemented with analysis of various statistical and documental sources. The focus on a neighborhood as a research location allowed us not only to include the micro level spatial elements, but also to grasp the tensions between Empuriabrava and the

historic center of the Castelló d'Empúries. This aspect of the study is crucial as previous research indicates that full time employment or economic stability are not sufficient to achieve sustainability. The factors analyzed below, like quality of the neighborhood, logistics, social support, and the welfare system are among the highlighted requirements that allow a territory to achieve sustainable communities (Hawkins 2005; Kates et al. 2005). In particular, the analyzed topics—based on previous research as well as on themes and patterns that have emerged during research process—have been congregated into five major issues that are discussed in the following sections: Tourist Paradise in Decline or Rejuvenation?; Underdevelopment Rooted in Residential Patterns; Intergroup Rifts and Synergies in Economic Development; Turbulent Linguistic Diversity; Social and Economic Sustainability Through Participation.

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## 2 Methodology

Together with relevant documental and statistical information, this study presents original data mainly collected during fieldwork carried out during 2011 and 2012 in Castelló d'Empúries, as well as some posterior updates. In particular, insights gleaned from 38 interviews with native (both Catalan and Spanish speaking) and foreign immigrant (e.g. Belgian, German, Hungarian, Moroccan, Polish and Russian) key informants are offered. In the next paragraphs, a selection of the most illustrative interviewees'quotes is presented. The codes next to the citations provide some self-reported information about the interviewees: nationality-gender-age. The interviews were audio-recorded and the average duration was approximately one hour.

The interviewees were primarily selected on the basis of a previously prepared background report on Castelló d'Empúries. Subsequent interviewees were accessed using a snowballing technique. The interviews were previously scheduled or the contact was undertaken on site. Nevertheless, certain criteria were applied when making the decision about who would be the most relevant persons to be interviewed, including: their relative importance in the studied area, the need for variety, the need to recreate the structure of the neighbourhood's social fabric, gender, nationality and age. In general, the following dimensions of town's development were tackled during the interviews: economy, social tissue, environment and territory, culture and education, governance, corporate and global responsibility. The interviewed key informants are not fully representative of the resident population, rather the focus was given to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders at the local and regional levels were identified and engaged into the study. That lack of representation can be highlighted as a problem by positivists, but may be considered as irrelevant by other researchers because the aim of this paper is to promote an understanding of socio-spatial experiences (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret 2013).

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Tourist Paradise in Decline or Rejuvenation?

If the resort life-cycle model suggested by Richard W. Butler is taken into account (Butler 1980; Crang 2009), today Empuriabrava seems to be in a typical turning point linked to the consolidation/stagnation phase. Following that model, the fifth phase can be rejuvenation or decline. Several native and immigrant interviewees positively evaluated the construction of the neighborhood crossed by navigation channels in this location. The Neighbors' Association secretary (*Spanish-Female-57*) remembers that when she first arrived here, back in 1959, Castelló d'Empúries was a small farmers' town with barely any sewage system, and landlords were the wealthiest people in town. The Neighbors' Association president (*Spanish-Male-54*) also thinks that the construction of the marina was a turning point in town's contemporary development: "*Castelló was a cow's town. They have paved all the streets, and these houses currently cost a lot of money*". According to various key informants, the coastline and water channels are considered to be the Empuriabrava's pull factors for tourists (including second-home owners) as well as for wealthy immigrants searching for new homes (e.g. retirees and investors). The location of the neighborhood in the midst of the appealing and natural environment is often considered as an advantage of Empuriabrava by interviewees. Additionally, unpolluted air and surrounding natural parks are mentioned by some as additional pull factors.

Nowadays, as much as the interviewees appreciate the idea of the neighborhood's construction, they are not pleased with the current development policies provided by the local authorities. Similarly, several interviewed politicians express negative opinions on the current state and development of Empuriabrava. This problem appeared during the 2011 municipal elections and resulted with the foundation of UDEM, a relatively new neighborhood-based political party that obtained substantial voters support and 3 seats in the municipal council during the local elections held in May 2011 (and kept representation again in May 2015):

Empuriabrava is about tourism, but [...] I do not believe that hotels may attract customers without investing in quality [...] since twenty or thirty years [ago]. There were no new formulas to attract people, to bring affluent tourists. Only cheap and massive tourism was promoted (Spanish-Male-30)

There are zones in Empuriabrava which are really problematic. In small flats there are huge families living together (Spanish-Female-64)

There is no library in Empuriabrava. There is one in Castelló. If a family does not have a car they have to walk to library (Moroccan-Male-35)

The school drop-out rate rose significantly. We remain with an important volume of young people who do not study, who do not work, and moreover they have no means of transport. They search for work but lack of motivation is visible, some have told me it 'if my father does not work, how I can work?' (Spanish-Male-30).

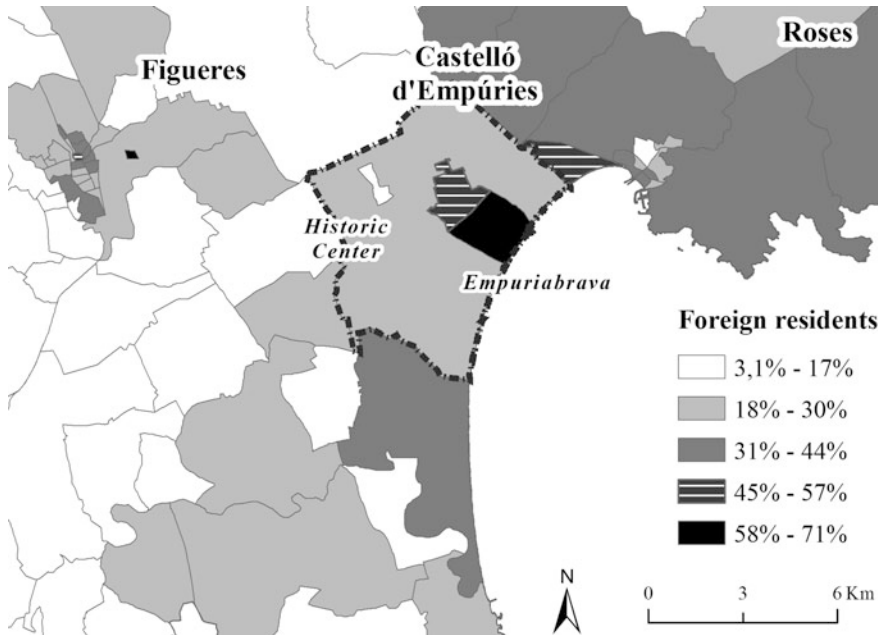
All the interviewees see tourism as the municipality's most important income source. While the key informants related to the local government attempt to underline some economic diversity, the nautical companies or agriculture enterprises are considered to provide only a small share of the income. Some developments in that area seem to be hampered by the economic crisis. According to the Town Hall's coordinator of economic promotion, tourism and trade (*Spanish-Male-45*) the organic agriculture and small organic market places are impeded because of the price-oriented (and not quality-oriented) shopping behaviors related to the economic recession. On the other hand, recently, an international company based in Dubai announced that it was going to invest in the Empuriabrava airfield, a fact that may help in a potential rejuvenation process since the Empuriabrava parachuting school is one of the best in Europe (La Vanguardia 2013).

### 3.2 Underdevelopment Rooted in Residential Patterns

The interviewees noticed that instead of investments into the development of the marina, the local authorities overlook the neighborhood and allocate the resources in the Castelló d'Empúries historic center. Some of the immigrant interviewees explain budget-planning anomalies as caused by the ethnic patterns of residency (Fig. 2). According to their narrative, since the historic neighborhood is mostly inhabited by native Catalan-speaking people from whose ranks are drawn many of the local authorities, the municipality's budget has been designed to develop more the old town than Empuriabrava neighborhood. For some, the latter is believed to be treated by local authorities as nothing more than a lure for tourists, where the majority of inhabitants are immigrants/expats that do not have or do not exercise political control during the elections. Interestingly, residential patterns of the natives and foreign immigrants confirm the vast disproportion between natives and immigrants ratio in Empuriabrava and historic center. According to official data, the marina remains the residence for the 90% of the EU and 100% of Asian immigrants registered in Castelló d'Empúries. Although the majority of Africans and people from the Americas registered in Castelló d'Empúries also reside in Empuriabrava, a significant percentage of them (23% and 28% respectively) live in the old town. The residential trends of Spaniards are more balanced: 47% of them reside in Empuriabrava and 53% of them reside in the old town (INE 2010).

The native key informants related to Empuriabrava do not talk about ethnically driven political discrimination of the neighborhood in such a straightforward way. Still, some claim that parts of Empuriabrava have been converted into ghetto-like spaces due to flawed local investments that resulted in the vicious circle of increasing housing prices by constantly improving the historic center's infrastructure and converting apartments into one-family houses. The infrastructure improvements focused exclusively on the historic neighborhood and conversion of apartments into single family residences were indicated as the reasons for which the working class inhabitants (mainly economic immigrants) settled in some parts of Empuriabrava, which offers poorer quality apartments. In this way, in





**Fig. 2** Percentage of foreign registered residents at census section level in Castelló d'Empúries and nearby, 1st January 2012. Georeferenced data: ICC, IGN. Population data: INE (2012). Elaboration: Dawid Wladyka

Empuriabrava one can find both poor and wealthy immigrants living nearby. Some foreign key informants (e.g. *German-Female-47* and *Moroccan-Male-35*) claim that lack of investment balance is provoked by political disempowerment of the Empuriabrava inhabitants (e.g., insufficient knowledge of Catalan, administrative procedures, or no voting rights as non-EU immigrants). Some of the immigrants (and very few natives) expressed also a support for the separation of Empuriabrava from the historic center so it could have its own authorities. Still, the majority of the interviewees' calls for better representation instead of separation.

“[In Empuriabrava] we do not have minimal urban infrastructure and we are paying luxury taxes. [...] Our waste waters are going to the beach [...] The Town Hall was doing everything in their power to avoid the separation. [...] They were not using ‘Empuriabrava’. They tried to erase this name, using ‘marina of Castelló’ [instead]” (*Spanish-Male-54*). Following this discourse, several interviewees focused on the neighborhood's scarce and degraded infrastructure. In this sense, after the May 2015 elections, when UDEM joined the new town council government coalition (with a woman as Mayor for the first time, Assumpció Brossa), their priority was to improve public spaces in Empuriabrava (Testart 2016). However, that new local government and the ephemeral governmental participation of UDEM just lasted a few months. In April 2016 a previous Mayor, Salvi Güell (2007–2011), returned to power after various political movements (Fuentes 2016).

The library and the health center are located in the historic part of the municipality and are very difficult to use on a daily basis without a car. Some complaints of economically disadvantaged immigrants address the lack of efficient public transport. The lack of well-planned bus service between the Empuriabrava coastline and the historic center make using the library and other facilities difficult, especially for the youth. The interviewed immigrants and natives frequently mention that car is needed to carry a regular life in Empuriabrava. Any positive opinions are usually related to a particular socio-economic status and life style. Therefore, the strongly positive comments about the public transportation were heard only from those interviewees that commonly drive a car, have stable employment and few or no interactions with residents of lower economic status. In light of the various opinions gathered during fieldwork, the slightly ironic comment of the Neighbors' Association president (*Spanish-Male-54*) is worth highlighting: "*Empuriabrava is a very large site, and it is created as an American city, and then here, a car is necessary*". That point of view is shared by other interviews with different walks of life:

If there is good weather, you can go to the beach. But if it is cold and windy, there is nowhere to go, especially for a mom with kids. [...] There is a bowling, but it is too expensive. There are no leisure activities. There is no cinema, no theatre (*Polish-Female-30*).

The transport between Castelló historic center and Empuriabrava is poor and the communication between Castelló and Figueres is not frequent enough. Immigrants use the bus more [than natives], some of them use a bicycle, and some make the trip on foot (*Spanish-Female-31*).

The public transport is well. There are buses to Figueres o Girona. There are no issues. I drive a car. I do not use public transport. It is very important to drive a car here. I do not know a person that uses public transport on a daily basis. Some use it to get to schools, the children have a school bus (*German-Female-47*).

However, since the May 2015 elections some changes occurred and new social infrastructure was set up in Empuriabrava, e.g. a civic center (Castelló d'Empúries 2016).

### 3.3 Intergroup Rifts and Synergies in Economic Development

The lack of improvements in Empuriabrava's infrastructure and the post-2008 economic recession were noted as reasons for the downfall of the job market. Interviewees observed a decrease of tourist visiting the Empuriabrava that led to closures of establishments and more unemployment. Furthermore, in some cases, return migration or emigration elsewhere is visible:

Here the job profile is very seasonal, the statistical data of the past year showed that 80% were seasonal workers. [...] Five, six years ago, the season was beginning in May/April to about the end of October. Nowadays it is reduced to July, August, September. I suppose

that it is because of less tourism and crisis. There are people working the whole season, but the seasonal-contract employment period perhaps is shorter (Spanish-Male-30).

Those are two worlds. A lot of people are in the tourist sector, with private stores, they evidently noticed the crisis, but their economic situation is quite good as it was good during many years. [...] Still, with the crisis, some of them abandoned their shops and returned to their countries. [...] And then there is a part that is suffering with the crisis, there are numerous families with tremendous problems. There were a lot of people who were living thanks to unemployment benefits. [...] That has come to an end (Spanish-Male-54).

Native employers are believed to be in decay. The interviewees observed that mainly French and German investors are still active since their countries did not experience such a severe recession. Some immigrants, like Poles, emphasize the German purchasing power. They believe that previous collaboration (often due to some German language knowledge by Poles) allows them to still receive contracts, but other mention that the importance of Germans declines. The French are seen as the ones who currently take over the real-estate and tourist inflow. Similarly to Germans, they are seen as the investors, small-business owners, retired sun-seekers, employees, tourists, and lastly, those who are most visible in the bars and restaurants. The immigrants of the two abovementioned nationalities are considered the most numerous and important for the socio-economic life of the neighborhood. These perceived trends could be tracked while looking at registered resident population statistical data series (see Table 2).

Among other often mentioned European immigrants are: English, Dutch, Swiss, Austrians, Russians, Ukrainians and those described as having recently influenced the neighborhood life: Romanians. The English are described rather as permanent residents and retired sun-seekers. The Russians are mostly seen as rich tourists or temporary residents. Nevertheless, there is a small Russian community of economic

**Table 2** German and French registered resident population in Castelló d'Empúries, 2000–2012 series (IDESCAT 2012)

	Total <sup>(1)</sup>	Foreign pop.	Germans	% of (1)	French	% of (1)
<b>2012</b>	11,794	5910	<b>911</b>	7.72	<b>1.193</b>	1012
<b>2011</b>	11,885	5941	<b>907</b>	7.63	<b>1.198</b>	1008
<b>2010</b>	12,220	6222	<b>1020</b>	8.35	<b>1.250</b>	1023
<b>2009</b>	12,111	6164	<b>1026</b>	8.47	<b>1.213</b>	1002
<b>2008</b>	11,653	5818	<b>984</b>	8.44	<b>1.129</b>	969
<b>2007</b>	10,629	4980	<b>897</b>	8.44	<b>962</b>	905
<b>2006</b>	10,021	4569	<b>828</b>	8.26	<b>719</b>	717
<b>2005</b>	9167	3932	<b>750</b>	8.18	<b>529</b>	577
<b>2004</b>	7777	2829	<b>535</b>	6.88	<b>323</b>	415
<b>2003</b>	8165	3385	<b>956</b>	11.71	<b>498</b>	61
<b>2002</b>	7530	3013	<b>920</b>	12.22	<b>458</b>	608
<b>2001</b>	6883	2479	<b>809</b>	11.75	<b>381</b>	554
<b>2000</b>	6266	1967	<b>658</b>	10.50	<b>285</b>	455

immigrants established in the neighborhood. Ukrainian immigrants are mentioned altogether with the aforementioned group of Russians:

There are two different types of immigration. The Europeans are people with purchasing power. They come here to retire, they spend money here. Immigration from Africa is a labor force, mainly in construction or in agriculture. They do jobs that would not be done by the locals (Spanish-Male-49).

The informal economy and welfare abuse, according to several immigrant and native interviewees, appear to be important sources of local conflicts. The Romanian newcomers are frequently mentioned in the context of their illegal employment, but also beggary, robberies, procurement and prostitution. Their influence on the informal economy has also been mentioned by the former Castelló d'Empúries Mayor (1995–2007 and 2011–2015) Xavier M. Sanllehí i Brunet (*Spanish-Male-49*) in the following words: “*There are illegal groups of immigrants working in construction. They work with no permissions and propose dumping prices. They are mainly Romanians. We want to create official workplaces.*” However, the reality is more complex than that and the fieldwork allowed us to meet a number of Romanians working in the formal economy of Castelló d'Empúries.

Similarly, the Moroccan immigrants are depicted as the supposed authors of burglaries, thefts and drug dealers. Interviewees repeat that Moroccans have numerous offspring and/or regroup with immigrating relatives. The latter was also indicated by the Town Hall's Housing Technician (*Spanish-Female-30*) as affecting the living conditions. Moroccan females are perceived by some as taking advantage of the welfare funds while being stay-at-home moms. The overload of the local welfare system is frequently mentioned as the Moroccans' incidence on Empuriabrava's economy. Also, the unemployment statistics seems to confirm the high number of the Maghreb immigrants' welfare claims in comparison to other groups (Observatori d'Empresa i Ocupació 2010). Paradoxically, at the same time, Moroccan men are sometimes described as those who spoil the labor market by working for substandard wages. They are portrayed as those who are employed in most locally funded public works. Additionally, an Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) representative (*Moroccan-Male-35*) claims that Moroccan and Romanian immigrants accept every possible job. Furthermore, he is skeptical regarding financial help for the unemployed. He considers that nowadays it is harder to obtain any assistance, and that the job market during the crisis prefers natives. In his eyes, the financial difficulties caused by the crisis are the source of the public safety deterioration, especially robberies. Still, he indirectly shares the perceptions of some Romanians and Moroccans as being among the responsible ones: “*If one does not work and have nothing to eat, the first thing he does is to steal. Recently, there are lots of complaints. Most of the perpetrators are the people who do not work, Romanians and Moroccans, they say. Those that complain are in turn the wealthy people*”. Again, reality is more complex than that and during fieldwork several Moroccan immigrants who run local shops and are part of local formal economy were also found.

### 3.4 Turbulent Linguistic Diversity

Most interviewed immigrants consider that some knowledge of languages like German, French, English, or Russian is needed to find employment in Empuriabrava. They claim that Spanish (and/or Catalan) is necessary in some jobs, but they would rather disagree with local employment office that it is essential. In fact, some interviewed immigrants mention that over a dozen years ago German was a vehicular language in Empuriabrava. This changed since the increase in number of French and other immigrants. Interestingly, although the Spanish language is perceived as growing in importance in everyday life it is still not considered as prevailing. Quite the contrary, it is English that is frequently regarded as a *lingua franca* and interviewed immigrants seem to appreciate that one can communicate in the Town Hall (with more or less success) in languages like French, German or English. On the other hand, they believe that any multilingual posters and leaflets are addressed to tourists only and that local authorities should develop communication in languages other than Catalan:

There are two [local] magazines: ‘Amigos’ and ‘Arena’. They publish in the main languages. [...] The posters are only in Catalan. We make an effort to speak Spanish and they answer us in Catalan. And I think it is a problem. The more languages the better (German-Female-45).

The information here is often only in Catalan. It is not good, but... Those who came here and do not know the language. I did not know any Spanish. I learned in one year, but then they spoke to me in Catalan and I did not understand. At the end I learned. This is difficult for foreigners. They learn some Spanish, then they get a document in Catalan and they do not understand (Belgian-Female-45).

In fact, recent formal political discourse indicates that Castelló d’Empúries attempts to recognize its “unusual” demography. At the beginning of the year 2010, the Mayor of Castelló d’Empúries, Salvi Güell explained that the municipality dealt with immigration for a very long time, but nowadays the situation changed along with the changes in immigrant’s diversity. There are no longer only EU citizens, but also immigrants from North Africa, Eastern European countries and South America. According to him, the new immigrants are “treated in the same way as the other ones”. The goal is to integrate the newcomers, “as soon as possible”. For example, there is also special agent for integration for immigrants from Maghreb: “We have been adapting to the new circumstances”—concluded Güell (Europa Press 2010). While a tendency to acknowledge Empuriabrava’s specific identity and concomitantly ethnic diversity seems to break through the politicians’ discourse, the interviewed Town Hall’s Integration Technician (*Spanish-Female-30*) suggested that Town Hall should communicate with local inhabitants only in Catalan. In fact, this informant points out the growing diversity of immigrants as the practical reason for why there would be no point in multilingual communication: “According to the last statistics [...] there are seventy various nationalities [in Castelló], so if we would like to cover all the seventy nationalities, how many leaflets should we prepare?” (*Spanish-Female-30*).

### 3.5 Social and Economic Sustainability Through Participation

The possibilities for political activity in the neighborhood-based UDEM and other local parties were mentioned by some interviewees. Germans underline grassroots movements related to controversies caused by the former Spanish Coastal Law that would expropriate the land adjacent to water channels (Cerrillo 2011; Castedo 2011; Méndez 2012; BOE 2013). Furthermore, a Moroccan interviewee (*Moroccan-Male-35*) highlighted an *ad hoc* social movement that made demands related to the school bus funding. The religious gatherings are frequently considered one of the social-spaces that provide new immigrants with patterns of permanent socio-spatially fixed interactions (Wilson 1980). This is visible in interviewees' comments about either German or Polish Sunday masses in Castelló d'Empúries church or Moroccans participations in ICC based orations and activities:

People come to the Islamic Center to pray. Children study Arabic language. We also have teachers who teach the Catalan language. There are also some lessons about integration. The local people help a little. The Town Hall gives us lessons sometimes in order to organize meetings (...) about integration. The private companies do not help (Moroccan-Male-35).

There are associations, like the Islamic Center, that already for several years [...] invited us to some activities and they want people from outside to visit them, but they have their own dynamic, and the majority [of immigrants] do not participate in other associations, like theater or to Catalan traditional dancing, these are two worlds a little apart. And European people neither [participate in other groups activities] (Spanish-Female-40).

It appears however that, following Wilson (1980), there might be a spatial distinction between these two examples of religious participation. In general, the space of individual's activity may be expanded as a result of commuting to work, school, religious activity, leisure, etc. On one hand, the participation of Polish and German immigrants' in masses located in Castelló d'Empúries historical center fits into that scheme and therefore appear to extend their socio-spatial patterns of interactions. On the other, the Moroccans' activities in the ICC located in the Empuriabrava's Puigmal sector highly inhabited by Moroccan immigrants do not expand their space of activity. Thus, in this spatial sense, for a number of residents, the organization fulfills the basic needs of individuals, but does not provide new stimuli. However, from a different perspective, a variety of activities provided by the ICC and its everyday activity is mostly possible because of its location. In a perspective of deficient public transport activists gain an easy access to their gathering space. That feature is crucial, especially taking into account other studies (e.g. Butler Flora and Flora 2013) that highlight the input that immigrants organizations in low-density ethnically diverse areas can have. Their presence may lead to further individual participation in previously established local organizations and development of community. In Empuriabrava, the presence of the ICC already brought some valuable synergies to the town. According to the ICC representative (*Moroccan-Male-35*), besides the majority of Moroccan immigrants, there are also

some Senegalese and Gambians regularly visiting the facility. Still, those activities should be supported by the local authorities, but according to the multiple interviews, that was not the case in Castelló d'Empuries. Looking at the issue from more holistic perspective, the development of collaboration between Town Hall and immigrants organizations might produce economic gain for the town (Lanceen and Dronkers 2011). This was indeed the case when tourist skydivers from Qatar took advantage of the local airfield. One of the reasons why those wealthy tourists choose Empuriabrava was because there was a consolidated ICC that could provide an easily accessible Muslim oratory (Domènech and Escobar 2010).

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## 4 Conclusion and Discussion

Whether Empuriabrava's future is analyzed from the perspective of rejuvenation/decline (Butler 1980), permanent maturation (Getz 1992), or reorientation (Agarwal 1994) it is crucial to underline that its development would be linked to how neighborhood's superdiversity is managed. In this sense, the sustainability of a superdiverse resort would not rely exclusively on visitors' needs, attractions' deterioration, settlement patterns and environmental perceptions. In fact, the public and private managers' actions in this case should be more related to social cohesion than tourism, and aim to promote cooperation while taming inter-group conflicts (compare Butler 1980; Cooper and Jackson 1989; Meyer-Arendt 1985). This study showed that cooperation and/or conflict in a superdiverse resort has a direct effect on all aspects of its sustainable development regardless if it is economic growth or environmental challenges. The international linkages of residents provided feasible gains to the neighborhood, a fact that has recently been highlighted by some media, e.g. regarding the international parachuting school (Oller 2015). The economic relations between employees and contractors of distinct nationalities were highlighted as fostering inter-group acquaintances. Also, a multi-ethnic work environment was related to further political engagement in local grass-root movements. Still, it should be remembered that ethnographic fieldwork revealed several challenges local authorities encountered while managing the aforementioned synergies. Some groups were scarcely represented in local political movements. Also, some negative comments about the presence of Moroccan and Rumanian immigrants might be driven by symbolic and economic threats (Stephan and Renfro 2002). In case of some nationalities (e.g. Poles), the negative attitudes toward Romanian and Moroccan immigrants could be enhanced by high vulnerability in context of economic recession (Pardos-Prado 2011) and perceived inequality of status (Pettigrew et al. 2011). The intersection of micro-geography with infrastructural (under)development appeared to play a major role in the accessibility of participative activities for residents that undergo economic hardship and therefore hampered inter-group synergies (Hickman et al. 2008). In this sense, local policies should take into account the presence of private and public interaction spaces, but also appropriate transport infrastructure while

considering sustainability (compare Leal Filho et al. 2015). Those findings are in tune with previous works that call for interdisciplinary and/or neighborhood level approaches to socio-spatial features in analysis of sustainability and development in (super)diverse communities (Bergamaschi and Ponzo 2011; Fonseca 2012; Wilson 2011). In other words, in Empuriabrava rejuvenation and sustainability are linked to internationalization and diversity management in a geopolitically and economically complex context. Thus it would be important to pay attention to the evolution of the institutional participatory process that is paving the way to the 50 Anniversary of Empuriabrava in 2017 (Punti 2016). Interestingly, the ad hoc official website set up by the town council in order to gather proposals and opinions is displayed in five languages: Catalan, Spanish, French, English and German (Castelló d'Empúries 2016b). At last but not least, national and international criminal networks looking for a haven among the Empuriabrava canals (Oller 2017) deserve also attention in future studies on this superdiverse neighbourhood.

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## **Annex. Summary of Interviews Script**

### **A. Economic Dimension**

A.1. Main current economic challenges for this town. A.2. (a) Proposals for overcoming the current financial and economic crises and/or local economic conflicts; (b) Good practices already being implemented in the town. A.3. Views about the current: (a) diversification; (b) seasonality; and (c) internationalisation of the local economy.

### **B. Social Dimension**

B.1. Main current social and demographic challenges for the social cohesion and integration of this town. B.2. (a) Proposals for overcoming current social conflicts; (b) Good practices already being implemented. B.3. Views about: (a) Migration movements in town (in past, present and future); (b) Human diversity (or super-diversity) in town; (c) Evolution of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations; (d) Languages spoken in town.

### **C. Environmental-Territorial Dimension**

C.1. Main current environmental and territorial planning challenges in this town. Advantages and disadvantages of being a small town if compared both to large cities and small rural villages. C.2. (a) Proposals for overcoming current



environmental and territorial conflicts; (b) Good practices already being implemented in the town. C.3. Views about the: (a) Relevance of Protected Natural Areas within the boundaries of the municipality and around it; (b) Importance given to adaptation to climate change at local level; (c) Perceptions about the transport infrastructures in town and region.

#### D. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

D1. Good practices already being implemented in this town regarding CSR. Particularly on: (a) Eco-labelling; (b) Responsible social investment; and (c) EMAS Environmental Management Systems.

#### E. Cultural Dimension

E.1. Main current cultural and education challenges in this town. E.2. (a) Proposals for overcoming current conflicts regarding culture and education; (b) Good practices already being implemented in town.

#### F. Governance

F.1. Main current challenges for democracy and social participation in this town. F.2. (a) Proposals for overcoming current political conflicts at the local level; (b) Good practices already being implemented in the town. F.3. Views about the: (a) Implementation of **Local Agendas 21**; (b) Availability/access to local government/administration; (c) Participation in local associations and in elections.

#### G. Global Responsibility

G.1. Good practices already being implemented in this town regarding: (a) Official and Non-Official Development Aid; (b) Sustainable Development. G.2. Do you think that this town is sustainable in the mid and long terms? Why

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