

# WORKERS AND RETIREES. THE FLEXIBLE CONDITION OF NORTHERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS IN SPANISH TOURIST DESTINATIONS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourist environments are dynamic sceneries that combine human mobility and tourists' activity. However, few studies have related the tourism labour market, the professional careers of the migrants and the retired employees. We aim at linking these topics in the context of Spanish different tourist destinations. We defend that the great activity of the sector in the Mediterranean provinces and in the Balearic and Canary archipelagos has generated an important migration flow from Northern and Western Europe. This has eventually contributed to a large number of migrant workers retiring in tourist destinations, diluting the limits between workers and retirees and redefining the phenomenon of residential tourism in Spain.

## II. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

For our research, we have utilized sources of different kind. On the one hand, the demographic data of the National Statistical Institute (INE), coming from the official register of the Continuous Census and the Residential Variations Statistics. On the other hand, the information of the workers registered in the Spanish Social Security and especially from the Continuous Sample of Working Lives. The last resource has allowed us to undertake a longitudinal analysis of the professional careers of those retirees from Northern and Western Europe, who currently reside in the Mediterranean coast or in the Spanish islands and receive a pension for their previous work in Spain.

### **III. HUMAN MOBILITY IN TOURIST DESTINATIONS**

Since the 1990s and especially in the last decade, the research on human mobility has gone through very different groups, including the so-called older migrants, retired migrants, pensioner tourists or foreign retired residents. The references about this topic are large, even though there is no homogenization in their study – some authors define the processes as some sort of migration, others consider it just tourism. At the same time, the tourist and retirement migrant flows diversify mobility and are reinforced by each other, generating in time certain social networks dependent on tourism. These can produce a variety of situations that blur the limits between tourists and migrant-residents.

From an economic point of view, the processes of internationalization of the tourist sector have accelerated and intensified in the Post-Fordism. There has been segmentation and a development of the flexible production techniques, through specialized operators making joint ventures in hospitality, transportation or network distribution. This has required a flexible labour market (functional for qualified workers, numeric for non-qualified), which has also promoted a diverse and complex human mobility. Consequently, the condition of the migrant changes and makes more difficult the differentiation between active and retired workers.

### **IV. THE LABOUR MARKET IN SPANISH TOURIST AREAS**

Tourism activity has historically mobilized workers from the countries that finance or promote the industry. In the case of the Spanish tourism destinations, we notice investors, agents, specialized employees, technicians, etc. from Northern and Western Europe, from the very first stage of development. In 2009, there were around 130.000 migrants working in the Mediterranean region and in the islands, coming from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Austria, Greece, and especially – an estimated 80%, from the United Kingdom and Germany.

According to a sample of the working lives of these workers, a great part of them were admin staff and officials of first and second category in hospitality (24.3%), admin (13.3%) and trade (13.2%). Within the first group almost three quarters corresponded to restaurants, while the admin jobs were mainly referred to support to tourists (25.8%) and to travel agencies and tour operators (21.4%). Rental services, especially those of vehicles, accounted for 18.7% of the movements. As per the main tourist destinations, these were Balearic and Canary Islands, Alicante, Malaga and Barcelona. Among the migrants, there were 111 men every 100 women and the average age was 41 years old.

### **V. NORTHERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN RETIRED MIGRANTS IN THE SPANISH TOURIST DESTINATIONS**

The Continuous Census data informs that in 2009 the residents above 65 years old represented a 20% of the total migrants coming from the before mentioned countries, and this figure was higher in municipalities of Alicante (Costa Blanca), Malaga (Costa del Sol) and

Balearic and Canary Islands. Overall, the retired residents of Mediterranean provinces and of the islands were more than 90% of the total figure in Spain.

The geographic concentration of the retired Europeans is related to the real estate policies in coastal destinations, where tourists can become residents given the consolidated tourist infrastructure and the permanent group of foreign residents. But should not we take into consideration the labour or entrepreneurial activity carried out by them in these locations prior to their retiring?

## **VI. TOURISM AND LABOUR MARKET: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CAREERS**

According to the Continuous Sample of Working Lives of the Social Security, migrants from Northern and Western Europe who were pensioners in the mentioned areas were mainly Germans (38.3%) and British (24.1%). Almost 70% of the pensioners were men and had contributed on average 5.3 years to the Spanish Social Security, with values ranking from just 1 year to 27 years. Only 41% of these were living with their couple or in family structures, meaning a greater degree of establishment. Preferences in terms of location are clear: Canary and Balearic Islands (more than a third of the total), and Barcelona, Alicante and Malaga (13% each, approx.).

These pensioners generally worked in middle and high qualification categories, especially in hospitality (26%) and services admin (14%). The companies they had worked for were usually in the same province they were receiving the pension in. This proves that tourism itself links and at the same time blurs the distinction between labour migrants and retired migrants throughout the years.

A 70% of these workers contributed in the general regime and a 23% were autonomous, a higher percentage than among local population. This along with their mobility proves that the migrants were entrepreneurs and dynamic workers across different tourist activities and businesses.

## **VII. CONCLUSIONS**

Human mobility is a necessary condition and at the same time, a consequence of tourism development. Therefore the attraction for certain tourist destinations affects both workers and retirees. The analysis of the professional careers of the migrants gives us a new perspective that links the activity with the retirement, as some retired migrants were previously working in tourism or active people above 65 years old.

The longitudinal perspective that offers us the Continuous Sample of the Working Lives of the Social Security gives us an opportunity to connect labour migration and the presence of foreign retirees in certain Spanish tourist destinations. Hence, we can affirm that the tourism activity generates a human mobility in which the limits among workers, tourists and retirees become blurred. We should then study them from a flexible and dynamic perspective: from tourists to retirees, from tourists to workers and from workers to tourists-retirees; and even as labour migrant and retired migrants simultaneously.

