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### Doing research on ageing migrants

#### A methodological discussion on limitations and implications of studying ageing migrants

Dr. Ruxandra Oana Ciobanu

University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland and

University of Geneva

E-mail: oana.ciobanu@hesge.ch

#### Long abstract

This paper discusses a population that has started to attract the attention of researchers and policy makers only in the past two decades at most. Traditionally migrants have been considered to be a young population. However, with the immigration flows to Europe after WWII, the opening of borders within the European Union, and recent flows of retirement migration towards Southern Europe and beyond; there is an increasing awareness that parts of the migrant population is ageing.

The paper has three main axes that discuss the ageing migrant heterogeneous population: First, it proposes a taxonomy of ageing migrants based on the existing literature<sup>1</sup> and qualitative fieldwork research conducted by the author in Portugal and in Switzerland in two different projects from 2010 to 2013. There are proposed four categories of ageing migrants based on characteristics such as duration of stay at the destination, frequency of mobility between the origin and the destination, place where the migrants have worked and paid taxes and place where they spend their retirement as well as regular status.

The four categories of ageing migrants are:

#### 1. Migrants ageing in place

The first category brings together the large group of persons who arrived in the country of destination when young and have aged in place. Throughout Europe there are different migrants who fall in this category. In Switzerland, Germany and Austria are the migrants who

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1 Warnes, A.M., Friedrich, K., Kellaher, L., & Torres, S. (2004). The diversity and welfare of older migrants in Europe. *Ageing and society*, 24(3), 307–326. DOI 10.1017/S0144686X04002296.

arrived after WWII mainly from Italy, Spain, Turkey and Portugal. In Portugal and the UK are the migrants who arrived after decolonization from India, Pakistan or the former colonies of Portugal<sup>2</sup>. When one goes deeper in the fieldwork, the migrants from the PALOP countries, for example, do not form a homogeneous group either. There are different sub-groups within this category. There can be distinguished between the ones who migrated from Africa to flee the war and civil unrest and those who migrated looking for a job in Portugal. One should also bear in mind the different hierarchies that exist between them. These hierarchies emerged during the colonisation period when Cape Verdeans acted as bureaucratic representatives of the Portuguese empire in the other colonies. Following the existing literature on the migration from India and Pakistan to the UK, the author will explore if there also exist such hierarchies.

Another group among the migrants ageing in place, and which has received almost no attention are the ageing refugees, particularly from the former communist block who arrived in Western Europe and North America in the 1970s, 1980s.

## **2. Multiple migrations**

A second category refers to those who experienced multiple migrations. In this category enter three sub-groups. First there are the so-called “twice migrants” who migrated in their youth, and afterwards to a second country. This term was initially used to name migrants of Indian ancestry coming to Europe (Portugal and the UK) after East African countries (Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and others) gained independence. Second, there are people who migrated – from Italy, Portugal, Spain or Turkey – to Western Europe, lived part of their lives abroad and later on decided to move back to the countries of origin. They often lead transnational<sup>3</sup> lives, as they go back and forth to visit their children and grandchildren who settled in their former country of destination.

## **3. “0 Generation”**

A third category refers to those who become migrants only recently to help their children who are labour migrants or just to be closer to their family. This is called the “0 Generation”<sup>4</sup>. They migrate to take care of their grandchildren and also in order to be closer to their adult children. This is the case of grandparents from Eastern Europe – Romania, Ukraine or Moldova – and sometimes from Africa who help their children and sometimes

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as PALOP countries, that stands for African countries of Portuguese language. These are Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe.

<sup>3</sup> The term “transnationalism” names the practices of people that cross borders and unite the origin to the destination. The people who have a house in both places, who keep in touch with their kin and friends, send home remittances or are very active in the home community and living to a certain extent in both the origin and the destination.

<sup>4</sup> Nedelcu, M. (2009). La génération zéro: du sédentaire à l’acteur circulant. Effets de mobilité sur la génération des parents des migrants roumains hautement qualifiés à Toronto à l’ère du numérique. In G. Cortes & L. Faret (eds.), Les circulations transnationales. Lire les turbulences migratoires contemporaines (pp. 187–198). Paris: Armand Colin.

work to supplement the family income. Sometimes, these migrants come to the destination based on family reunification, and sometimes they benefit of free movement agreements within the European Union.

#### **4. International retirement migrants**

A fourth group captures the so-called “sunset migration”<sup>5</sup> or retirement migration. This refers to those who become migrants after retirement. In this category are to be found mainly persons from Germany, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries or the UK who have migrated to Southern Europe, initially Italy and France, and later Spain and Portugal, and recently Turkey.

Second, there will be done a review of the literature in order to identify the groups of ageing migrants that are studied by the literature, the themes that are studied in relation to this population, and the research methodologies that are employed. The review of the literature is going to cover a large area of disciplines as well as interdisciplinary work from anthropology, demography, education sciences, geography, medical sciences, psychology, political sciences, social psychology social policy, social work, sociology, urbanism, as well as ethnicities, international migration, gender studies and so on.

The literature will be grouped based on the following categories:

- Theme of study,
- Group of ageing migrants,
- Country of origin and of destination,
- Definitions that are used.

Third, the paper will do an overview of the research methodologies used in studying ageing migrants; i.e. quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. There are a series of limitations when studying ageing. Many of the studies are qualitative in nature particularly because of the limitations of doing quantitative analysis. For example, some of the ageing migrants do not appear in statistics due to change in citizenship – e.g. the migrants ageing in place who have lived for over thirty years at the destination and have acquired the citizenship of the country of destination disappear from the national statistics. Simultaneously, the “0 generation” who have a short and medium time stays in the country of destination pose problems of measurement of stocks and flows. The multiple migrants are also difficult to capture in quantitative data due to their transnational migration and sometimes the possession of dual citizenship. Similarly, international retirement migrants are not well captured in quantitative data due to the back and forth movement and sometimes seasonal character of their movement. All these make it that many studies on ageing migrants are

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<sup>5</sup> King, R., Warnes, T. and Williams, A. (2000), *Sunset Lives. British Retirement Migration to the Mediterranean*, Oxford: Berg Publishers.

qualitative, or quantitative, nonetheless on small samples, limited to one country, and lacking an international comparison.

This analysis of the literature in relation to categories of migrants and employed research methodologies gives us the possibility to discuss the methodological implications of studying ageing migrants, the areas that are little explored, work towards elaborating indicators to generate comparable datasets, and draw lines for further study.