

When elderly mobility is linked to lifecourse. The European retired moving to Spain

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Introduction Being a person, who migrates or moves, as he or she gets older, does not fit in the theoretical framework of traditional migration. The people usually involved, the patterns of behaviour followed by the migrants or movers, or the consequences generated in the destination areas differ substantially. While economic migrants base their reasons given for migrating on the quest for economic welfare, as being 'elements' of a production structure, what the others are looking for, above all, is to enjoy their leisure time in a consumption (Hall and Williams, 2002) or a lifestyle model (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). In recent years the retirement migration has been classified as a specific international migration in different geographical contexts (King, 2002; King et al., 2004).

One has to go further back in time, to the last decades of the 20th century, to find a justification for this migration based on behaviour models, linked to population ageing and life course as reference aids (Litwak and Longino's model). Migration would be but one of the elderly population's possible residential relocations that emerge as they age. Its subsequent development has in turn brought out other interesting approaches.

Numerous literature review studies have explored the geographic components of retiree migration to highlight flows, places of origin and destination, the migrant population's characteristics and different consequences, especially in destination areas as some analysed (Walter, 2002, Northcott and Petruik, 2011). However, within this realm and due to its current strength, it is worth highlighting, not only figures or flows, but the role that the 'place attachment' concept plays as a mechanism for attracting retirees in the decision-making process both in a geographical (Torkington, 2012; Mendoza and Moren-Alegret, 2013) and psychological sense (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). This is especially true among those who are able to choose the destination in line with their personal and contextual characteristics, needs, demands and cultural and spatial preferences (Gustafson, 2006; Niedomysl, 2010), to generate strong emotional ties in the migrants (Bradley and Longino, 2009). It is not usually a process that occurs immediately, close to the time of retirement, but instead takes the shape of patterns of behaviour followed over the life course, broken down into different paths (residential, work, family, health, etc.) (Hayward, 2004).

The migration decision-making process tends to form part of the life course and the different components that have been outlined in the scientific literature. This paper seeks, as its main objective, to study the mobility times of European retirees in Spain, which are combined to identify types of retired migrants depending on the pattern of relocation to Spain. A second objective will be to identify the factors that condition the mobility patterns of retirees in Spain in connection with the main dimensions covered in Project MIRE3I.

Data and methods

A representative, large-scale, multi-method research project, MIRE3i, *International Retirement Migration in Spain: Identity, Impacts, Integration*, was carried out by the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) together with seven Spanish universities to investigate the multiple facets of European retirement migration to Spain. Covering the most important regions and provinces for the retirement migration to settle in Spain (Andalusia, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Murcia and Valencia, 9 provinces in total), basic data provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) are analysed first. Then, a standardised face-to-face survey questionnaire addressed to 720 foreign European retirees (pensioners aged 50 years or over) of 16 countries (those of the EU-15, except Spain, plus those from Norway and Switzerland) living in Spain between three and twelve months a year was conducted between April 2010 and February 2011. Sampling was performed in three stages with stratification of the first-stage units (municipalities with at least 15% of the European population in total municipal inhabitants). The second and third stage units were census tracts within the municipality and a sample of retired residents in each tract. The total amount of participants followed a quota distribution by age (50-59, 60-69 and 70 years and over), sex and country of origin (British, Germans, the others national groups under consideration).

Three main questions were asked to obtain information about the elderly mobility timing. The year when they *formally decided to move to Spain*, the decision-making year refer to the personal thoughts about mobility were formed. The second moment was defined as the year when people interviewed *declared to have moved* to Spain and the third was the *retirement year*, which is expected to have occurred either before or after arriving in Spain. When the three moments are combined, certain situations arise to generate six groups of European elderly retired, which are further aggregated for analytical purpose into three to explain the basic behaviour: a) the elderly living in Spain who have considered moving after a previous 'period' of serious considerations of situations and possible alternatives, b) the elderly migrants who decided quickly to move after previous formal thoughts and after retiring, and c) those who have retired after having moved to live in Spain form the third group.

The analysis has been conducted in several phases. Firstly, a descriptive study of the surveyed population's main features was completed to define the three types of retired migrants in Spain. In a second phase, a bivariate analysis, through X^2 , validates the statistical meaning of the independent variables in relation to the three groups. Finally, categorical regression and ANOVA contrast were used to identify a general model for the mobility timing of European retirees in Spain.

Some initial results

A general picture can be outlined: the retired European population in Spain generally fit a very common demographic profile as they were relatively young at the time of the survey (just over 66 years old), and more than 41% were aged under 65. There is a slightly predominance of men (51%), over 68% are married or living with someone (in addition, 25% are divorced or widowed), values similar to the situation of living together, since nearly 28% live alone and only 5% in households of 3 or more members. As expected, more than 44% come from the United Kingdom and another 25% from Germany. Their educational level is medium-high, since over 55% of respondents reported having secondary or vocational studies and almost 20% went to university. Over 45% were working before coming to Spain, this being the commonest situation,

almost on a par with people who claimed to have already left the job market, either because they were retired, or were pensioners or people of independent means. While they were working, most (60%) claimed to have been a salaried worker, and 25% had been a businessperson with or without employed workers. Almost 40% said that their monthly household income was between €1,500 and €3,000, but without forgetting that more than one third reported receiving less than €1,500 and 16% over €5,000.¹

Almost 70% reported they lived in Spain permanently, or almost so (more than 10 months a year) and over 86% having visited Spain, before living there, twice or more, and 61% of these had visited previously the country 5 times or more. After moving to Spain, more than a quarter said they did not visit their country of origin in 2009, while 43% had done so twice or more. More than 40% spent a month in their country. In turn, almost 23% said they did not receive visits from relatives or friends from their country in 2009. Over 42% said they do not retain a house now in their country.

The distribution of elderly retired individuals in terms of the relation between the 3 years analysed is statistically significant (X^2 : 6.582; df: 2; sig.: 0,037), being most (68%) movers to Spain in the same year in which they decided to do so and 37% (N=173) of them had retired that year. Almost 38% said they had retired after moving to live in Spain and 62% of them had decided to live in Spain at the time they arrived (N=161), when they were still working. Of the 17 independent variables analysed, only 8 show statistically significant relationships with the defined groups of movers (X^2 with significance of <0.05), especially those defining socio-demographic characteristics of retired migrants, which, in order, are the situation prior to coming to Spain (worker vs. retired/pensioner), country of birth (British vs. German), age (under 65 years vs. over 65), educational level (university education vs. the rest) and marital status (single, widowed, divorced vs. married and couples). The other significant variables are the year that they decided to come to Spain (before 2000 vs. later), interest in political issues (interest vs. disinterest), and retaining their home in their country (yes vs. non).

Finally, when the categorical regression model is carried out, only five variables have definitely entered, namely and by order of statistical significance, the year that they decided to come to Spain, their situation before the move, age, educational level and interest in political issues. Although the number of cases has fallen 5% in the regression, regarding previous univariate or bivariate analysis, the model fits well and manages to explain 32% of the dependent variable, the three groups according the mobility timing of European retirees in Spain. The ANOVA contrast also serves to show the statistical adequacy of the model defined.

In short, there are two profiles of retirees in Spain. The model more closely suited to decision-making based on an assessment of the circumstances and factors surrounding the life course in the years prior to retirement would be that of those retirees who may have prepared the move to Spain before it occurred, with retirement most likely acting as a trigger mechanism. These are the 'ready' retirees who began to prepare the conditions for the move even before the Nineties, still relatively young and active, and have a higher education background. Their interest in political issues in general may be the sign of a positive spirit that, along with the rest of the above features, make this the

¹ Although the non-response rate might be low, more than 10% of the respondents did not answer this question.

'ideal' type of amenity migration in retirement. The second model consists in retirees who migrate almost at the same time that they make the decision, either they retire at that time or after having been living in Spain before retiring. In both cases the decision making-process may not have been as closely thought through as in the previous case, or the circumstances related to the life course might not have been decisive. The decision is conditioned by the fact that they are older people who were already retired or in the process of doing so; their educational level is lower than in the previous case and they have a general disinterest in politics or, at most, they are interested in Spanish political affairs, especially those migrants retired once they were in Spain.