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Contested Spatialities of Lifestyle Migration Public policies, local democracy and global market forces

Raquel Huete & Alejandro Mantecón
Universidad de Alicante
E-Mail: [r.huete\[at\]ua.es](mailto:r.huete@ua.es)

ABSTRACT

Spanish *urbanizaciones*: residential tourism places

The process of modernisation that began on Spain's Mediterranean coast in the 1960s is a paradigmatic example of urban planning and tourism development focus on the production of urban land demanded by both the national and international real estate markets. The evolution from farming and fishing societies to societies whose economic development is based on the property-related activities has concurred with new social processes, such as the growth of international residential tourism, and intra-European lifestyle migration from central and northern Europe towards the Mediterranean region.

In Spain's Mediterranean region, this framework of new mobility forms and multi-residential lifestyles has been incorporated into an urbanisation process based on the construction of second homes on a massive scale in environments with potential tourist appeal. The geographical manifestation of these dynamics has produced new urban enclaves detached from the traditional urban centres. The distance between such settings alludes to both the irregular distribution of social groups on the territory, and the lack of relationship between these groups.

Our first goal is to approach the matter from a quantitative perspective that may allow us to identify the extent of these trends towards the concentration of people with distinct socio-demographic characteristics, in housing estates socially and spatially away from the traditional urban centres on Spain's Mediterranean coast. Second, we aim to understand, from a qualitative perspective, the circumstances of the European citizens living in those *urbanizaciones*.

Through the analysis of quantitative data from Spain's Office for National Statistics we can appreciate how the convergence of the tourism function of the second homes with the migration of northern European retirees to coastal areas in southern Spain has generated configurations of the territory, in which new forms of geographical and social distance can be identified. We have identified trends towards the development of apparent parallel societies with their

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*Centre of Human and Social Sciences, Spanish National Research Council
Department of Political Science & International Relations, Autonomous University of Madrid*



own cultural features as a result of the concentration of people of the same nationality in a space away from other areas where most of the residents are Spaniards.

The qualitative research explains how British nationals that decided to purchase a property in these areas seek to go back to the local human scale in sunny scenery. In a way, they are trying to recreate a pleasant rural community life on the Mediterranean. The British common culture and a similar socio-demographic profile facilitate the development of a framework of shared expectations about the relationships in the neighbourhood. The fact that the housing estate is geographically 'isolated' reinforces the tendency towards homogeneity. Our analysis shows the discontent of foreign residents with the problems of the housing estates. The intensification of such state of affairs may lead to conflicts of interests because the residents of these housing estates demand services that often differ from those demanded by the residents of the traditional urban centre. Thus, a national minority whose common denominator is a shared cultural tradition establishes ties that become increasingly stronger. Then they realise that they share the same economic and political interests.