

- *Transnational retirement migration – Tourism – Second homes – Canary Islands*

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Retirement Migration or rather Second-Home Tourism? German Senior Citizens on the Canary Islands

*Altersmigration oder eher Zweitwohnungstourismus?
Deutsche Senioren auf den Kanarischen Inseln*

Dedicated to Jürgen Bähr on his 65th birthday
Jürgen Bähr zum 65. Geburtstag

With 7 Figures and 4 Tables

Business transactions for property abroad are booming. Market analyses by German building societies promise enormous growth in the demand for privately used residences located in tourist destinations throughout Europe. This increase in demand is caused primarily by interested persons over age 50. This phenomenon is also fascinating from a scientific perspective: are we now experiencing a new form of amenity-seeking retirement migration in Europe too? What is it that makes middle-class senior citizens move to a foreign country in Europe in spite of linguistic and cultural barriers, not to mention mature social ties to their home country? Are the so-called "best agers" perhaps protagonists of a new European awareness? In individual instances this must surely be the case. If we take a closer look, however, we see that the foreign residence is frequently only used as a second home on a seasonal basis. In this case the new mobility should be seen more as a variation on international tourism than as a permanent move. The characteristics and behaviour patterns of senior German residents on the Canary Islands provide revealing details for this scientific research.

1. The Question

The question arose as the result of a case study of European north-south retirement migration. The empirical investigations thus far performed on retirement migration in Europe assume a definite medium- to long-term migration. This theory

was initially not questioned in the relevant research on migration, possibly because the researchers had been led astray by formal characteristics such as moving house, purchasing estates abroad etc. Yet the first quantitative case studies on international retirement migration have shown that between 14 % (King et al. 1998) and

30 % (Rodriguez et al. 1998a) of senior citizens living abroad use their retirement residences regularly for only up to 6 months a year. They were assessed as a minority variant within the entire spectrum of retirement migration, occasionally with reference to their assumed (but frequently not proven) high socioeconomic status.

The empirical findings on the Canary Islands query the assumptions that have been made up to now; there are many arguments in favour of the assumption that a considerable proportion of the senior migrants in foreign countries on the European continent are deliberately using their second homes only on a seasonal basis. In the following paper the differences between senior German migrants with permanent residence patterns and those with seasonal residence patterns will be presented. The aim is to demonstrate the basic principles for a causal structure in the relationships linking the duration of use, the residential situation and socioeconomic characteristics, and the behaviour patterns, and then to discuss the phenomenon of transnational second-home tourism on the basis of these results.

2. The State of Research

Research into international retirement migration (IRM) was initiated in Europe by *F. Cribier* (1979; 1980) who mainly focussed on internal moves within France. *Warnes, King and Williams* (*Williams et al. 1997; King et al. 1998; Warnes et al. 1999*) extended this initial idea with that of international retirement migration in the direction of southern Europe from northern and western Europe. In the meantime a series of case studies has been carried out on this subject, which vary with regard to both the countries of origin and the destination countries, but which all permit the conclusion to be drawn that IRM in Europe will continue to increase in significance in the future (*O'Reilly 1995, 2000; Vera-Rebollo 1997; Rodriguez et al. 2001; Rodriguez*

2000; Casado-Díaz 1999; Salvà-Tomás 2002; Kaiser and Friedrich 2002; Breuer 2003).

There are plainly many parallels to the retirement migration process in North America, so it seemed obvious to adopt the theoretical concepts which have been developed there. In the sense of US-American nomenclature, European retirement migration is also amenity-seeking, i.e. it is not influenced by the direct economical, practical necessities of working life but must instead be interpreted as a strategy for coming to terms with the transition from professional life to retirement.

On the other hand, however, the structural differences between European and North American retirement migration are considerable, to mention here merely the linguistic and cultural differences within Europe. Given these differences, a retirement migrant in Europe generally selects a cultural region as his retirement home which is foreign to him and whose language he frequently does not speak well, if at all. The problems resulting from this are to a great extent responsible for the fact that the differences between European and North American retirement migration are greater than the factors they have in common (*Friedrich and Warnes 2000; Friedrich and Kaiser 2001*).

The phenomenon of second homes has been investigated extensively in both German and international geographical research. Up to the beginning of the 1990s problems of spatial planning associated with second homes developments and aspects of the sustainable use of resources were among the central research questions (*Ruppert 1973; Maier et al. 1973; Grimm and Albrecht 1990; Baumhackl 1991*).

Since the 1990s this subject has been receiving renewed scientific attention as a phenomenon of international significance because of an increase in purchases of second homes in foreign countries on the European continent (*Barke 1991; Odermatt and Elsasser 1991; Buller and Hoggart*

1994; Flognfeldt 2002; Müller 2002). The above-mentioned papers on European retirement migration have also contributed important ideas here. Significant reasons for the international use of a second home abroad include a growing, readily available income, as well as a higher level of experience in other countries gained through professional and/or tourist endeavours. The presumed influence of the gradual extension of the EU and the resulting legal situation for international second-home tourism has not yet been proven in a quantitatively useful way.

The problem of definitions is not going to be discussed here in detail: it is specifically mentioned in the most recent edition of Bähr's textbook (Bähr 2004: 249ff.). Suffice it to say that a long-term change in one's place of residence is required as one of the constituent characteristics of migration. Tourism, on the other hand, is defined as a temporary visit away from one's permanent place of residence without a work-orientated purpose. The definitions used here in the title break up this superficially unambiguous scheme in several different ways: "retirement migration" cannot be explained using neoclassical theoretical conceptions, according to which migrations are defined by economic considerations. As a general rule, all other motives are secondary to the motivation complex of gainful employment, however this factor is no longer valid for migration which takes place after people are retired.

Second homes are, after all, attributes of an industry- and service-orientated society which must or would like to use more than one (main) residence for professional just as much as for leisure purposes. Accordingly, Ruppert (1994: 580) distinguishes second homes with either a professional or a leisure function.

The expression "second-home tourism" leads us on to very familiar problems of definition: Tourism is defined by mobility not forced by motives of gainful employment; it implies a tem-

porary visit away from one's regular place of residence and is linked to the point of view of recreation or leisure. "Residential tourism" therefore contains an intrinsic contradiction.

However, it is not difficult to solve this problem of definition: Social changes in the post-Fordist societies have produced new lifestyles which have made the classical definitions become obsolete. In the context of tourism, Williams and Hall (2000) refer to the use of several residences as a "peripatetic lifestyle". Retirement migration does not need to be triggered off by either economically measurable push-pull factors or individually effective "constraints". It can be explained by both "amenity" and "disengagement" theories.

For pragmatic reasons the entirety of the target group under investigation will be defined as senior migrants or (in the destination area) as "senior residents". Depending on the length of use of the retirement residence in the course of time, this group will then be split up further, as will be seen.

3. The Empirical Case Study

In the empirical investigation, German or German-speaking senior citizens were interviewed on 4 different islands of the Canaries between spring 2001 and spring 2002; a standardised questionnaire was used. For the sample interviewees were selected who were at least 55 years old, no longer employed full-time (senior citizens) and who used a residence on the Canary Islands (either a rented apartment or an apartment of their own) regularly for at least 3 months a year. In the end, the sample consisted of 316 usable questionnaires. This makes it comparable in size with other relevant case studies (Rodríguez et al. 1998a: n = 300; Kaiser 2001: n = 303; Williams et al. 1997, King et al. 1998: n = 949).

It cannot be determined in how far the sample is representative because the respective total popu-

Fig. 1 Population of German senior citizens on the Canary Islands (2001)
Deutsche Senioren-Wohnbevölkerung auf den Kanarischen Inseln (2001)

lation is unknown due to the entry regulations in Spain as the result of the Schengen Convention and also due to the inability of Spain to enforce the registration regulations. The official population census of 2001 registered 6,540 Germans (residential population) aged 55+ in the autonomous region of the Canary Islands. The experts in the Delphi group estimate the actual number of German residents of this age group (with their own residence on the Canaries) at 54,000, while the German consulate in Las Palmas assumes that there are approximately 60,000. (In comparison: in the whole of Spain a total of 77,732 Germans were registered as residential population in 2001). The number of Germans residing in Spain without being registered is therefore considerable.

However, the spatial distribution pattern for the German residential population in Spain can be elaborated from the figures officially published by the Spanish authorities. A comparison of the sample with the data from the cities' registration offices demonstrates the spatial congruence. According to this, the German senior residents are concentrated in those coastal areas of the Canary Islands which are also preferred by international tourism (Fig. 1). These findings agree with the results of the case studies by Williams et al. (1997), King et al. (1998) and Rodriguez et al. (1998a, 1998b). The vast majority of the people interviewed on the Canaries come from the West German federal states. So far, the former East German states have not yet played any part worth mentioning as areas of origin (cp. Figs. 1 and 2 in Breuer 2004). This difference was not expected in such clarity.

The questionnaire on which this study was based follows the questions developed by King, Warnes, Williams and Rodriguez to a great extent, for reasons of compatibility. The questions

were asked by interviewers who gave the interviewees the written questionnaires and, as a general rule, entered the replies on the questionnaires themselves, in the presence of the interviewees. In contrast to British senior citizens in southern Europe, German senior citizens clearly avoid national associations such as societies, clubs etc., with the result that it was unexpectedly difficult to gain access to the persons questioned. It was therefore necessary to organise extensive campaigns in the local German-speaking media (press information, radio interviews) in order to gain a minimum of confidence for the interviews. Success was achieved by means of access through church organisations and also through associations of apartment-owners, and in individual instances even through doctors' surgeries (waiting-rooms) and public libraries. In order to maintain the anonymity of the persons questioned, the interviews were not carried out in their apartments. A lack of representativeness of the sample may be conceivable among those senior citizens who live scattered over a wide area and at a distance from the municipal and touristic centres as also among those elderly people whose movements are restricted, who have hardly any social contacts and could therefore not be approached (the few existing old people's homes and nursing homes on the Canaries were however visited for the interviews). According to the facts known up to now these two sub-groups can be regarded as minorities.

In addition to the quantitative investigation, qualitative interviews, supported by guidelines and tape-recorded, were carried out with representatives of the target-group. Here a distinction was made between permanent residents and seasonal residents. The interviews (n = 27) were recorded with the agreement of the interviewees in their home surroundings, transcribed afterwards and evaluated, using ATLAS.ti.

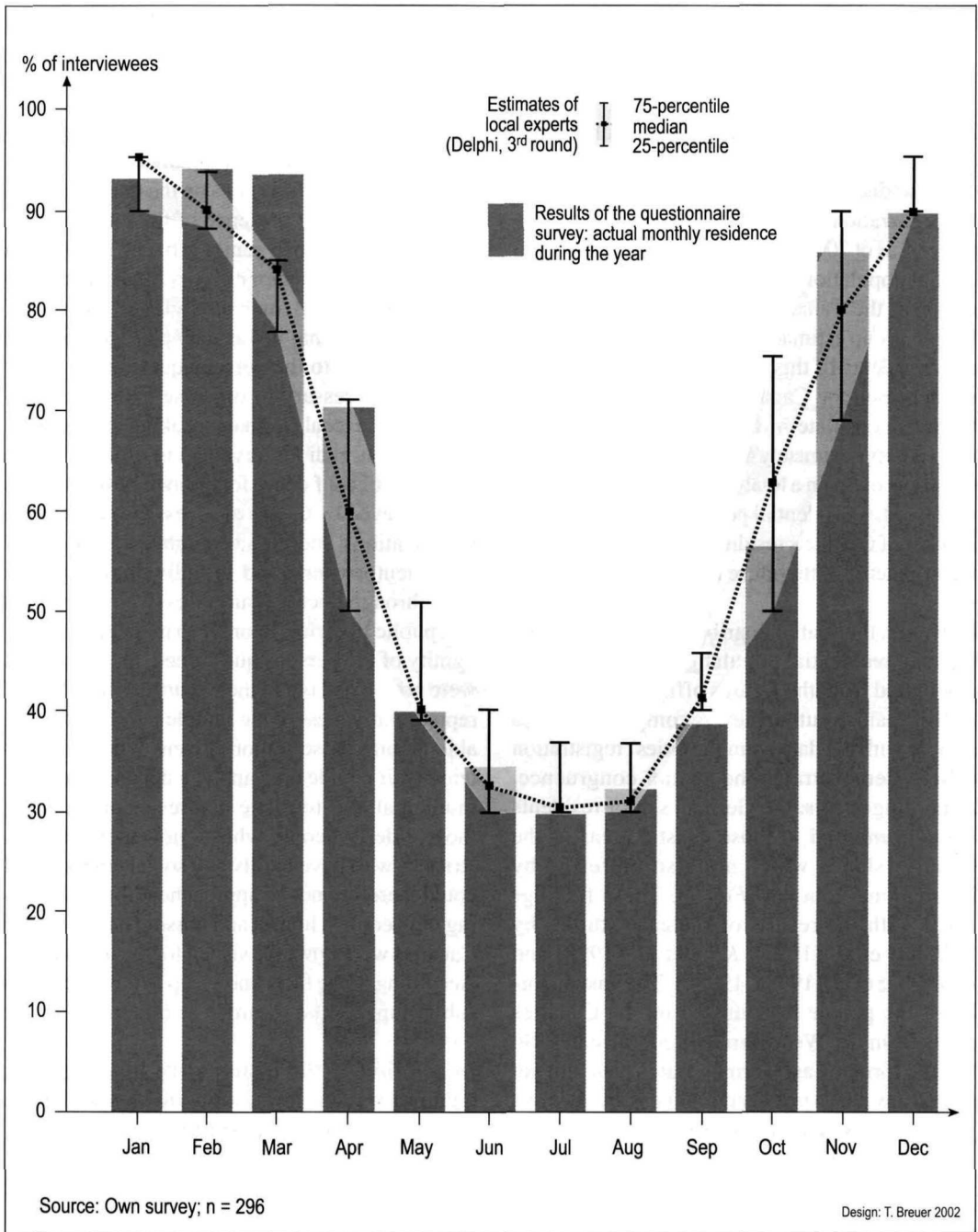


Fig. 2 Senior citizens' monthly residential presence on the Canary Islands
Monatliches Nutzungsmuster von Alterswohnsitzen auf den Kanarischen Inseln

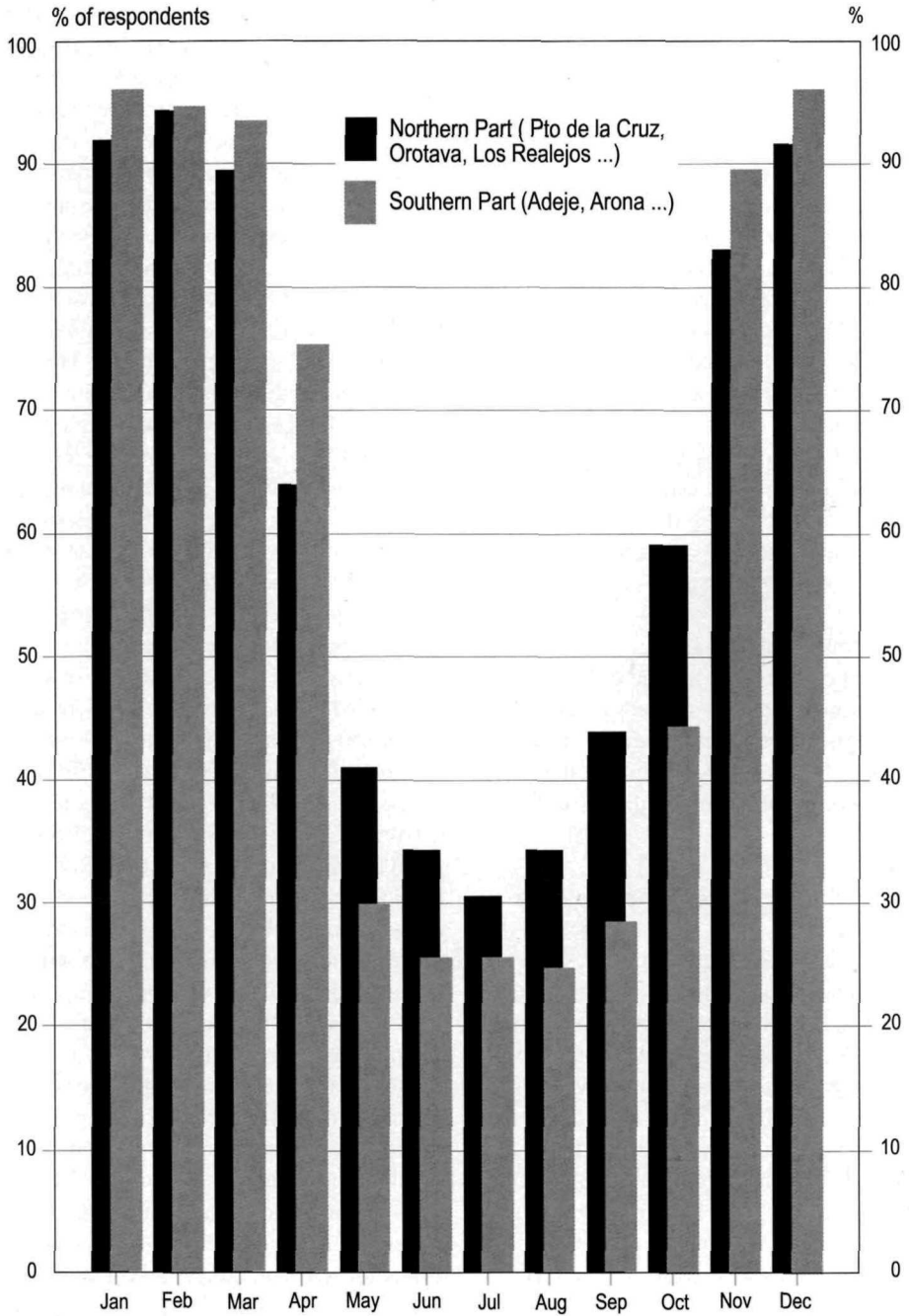
The fieldwork was rounded off by a Delphi study involving local experts, German church representatives, doctors, teachers, medical attendants, representatives of the German press and employees at the German consulate, who have to deal with the target-group of German senior residents on the Canary Islands in their professional work. Three rounds of interviews were carried out (1st round: $n = 17$; 3rd round: $n = 14$). The fundamental (and well-known) criticism of the Delphi technique (Häder and Häder 2000) also applies in this present case, i.e. the delicate question of classification of the interview partners as “experts”. These “experts” are anything but a homogeneous group; they interact with the target group from very different perspectives so that each expert has a highly selective perception of the situation. In addition, they are migrants themselves, though for professional reasons and frequently for a limited period of time. There is no solution to this contradiction.

However, in spite of all the (necessary) criticism of the method, it can nevertheless be assumed that the combination of methods applied guarantees a minimum degree of representativeness of the results obtained. This is also confirmed by the comparison with comparable empirical case studies.

4. The Findings: Patterns of Seasonal Use

The duration of the use of the retirement residences during the course of the year shows a marked seasonal pattern of behaviour. In February and March more than 93 % of all the senior citizens interviewed can be found in their retirement homes, whereas in July it is only just 30 % (Fig. 2). If we compare the findings with the corresponding estimates of the Delphi experts (expressed without knowing the results of the sample), they offer impressive evidence of the representativeness of the sample. It is possible that March and April are a little over-represented in the sample because the majority of the interviews of the senior citizens took place in exactly these months. Apparently the Canary Is-

lands have a special status in this respect which can be explained as follows: The subtropical climate of the Canaries cannot be found on the South European mainland nor on the islands of the Mediterranean. Senior residents find the frost-free mild winters particularly attractive, with their average temperatures of at least 15°C, in the coastal regions close to the ocean. The bi-polar seasonality in the use of the retirement home, with a maximum presence in the winter months and a minimum presence in summer is therefore the result of a very deliberate reaction to the average regional climatic conditions in the destination area. The extent to which regional differences in the climate are perceived can be seen in the example of the island of Tenerife: On islands with a higher relief energy, the difference between luff versus leeward side of the north-eastern trade winds creates a division in the climate between those areas that are exposed to the north or the south respectively. Admittedly, it is only in Tenerife that there are large tourist settlements in both the north and the south. This can be explained on the one hand by the leading role this island has played in the construction of hotel resorts and holiday-home settlements, which were built for a market of western European consumers (Riedel 1971; Breuer 1988), and on the other hand by the subsequent move of the international airport from the north (Los Rodeos) to the south (Reina Sofia). With a corresponding north-south differentiation of the seasonal pattern of use by the test persons, many revealing differences can be seen in detail: The south, on average hotter and drier (around Playa de las Americas or Los Cristianos), is given preference in the winter months (compared to the north). The north around Puerto de la Cruz, which is altogether slightly more humid, attracts more retired residents in the hot months of high summer, in contrast. The behaviour pattern in the transitional seasons is correspondingly asymmetrical: The south maintains its hold of the senior residents longer as winter comes to an end, and as the summer heat dies away the senior citizens return earlier in the course of the year to their homes in the north of Tenerife (Fig. 3).



Source: Own Survey; n = 188

Design: T. Breuer 2002

Fig. 3 Different patterns of German senior citizens' monthly residential presence in the northern and southern parts of Tenerife / *Unterschiedliche zeitliche Nutzungsmuster von Altersresidenten im Norden und Süden Teneriffas*

A simple categorisation of the senior residents according to the duration of their use of the residence on the Canary Islands produces a clear picture: 50.5 % of the German senior citizens use their apartments on the Canary Islands for 3 to 6 months a year, and this exclusively during the winter months (cp. *Fig. 2*). Only 30.6 % stay there for 10 months and longer. A mere 18.9 % of the persons questioned said they had a regular period of presence of between 7 and 9 months. The conclusion is that at the most 30.6 % of the sample may be regarded as "permanent residents" (in the broader sense). All others use their retirement homes purely on a seasonal basis; 50.5 % of the sample must be described as "seasonal residents" (i.e. with a regular presence of a maximum of 6 months).

It was possible to support the result of the unexpectedly large number of "seasonal residents" with further statements: 65 % said that they had a residence in Germany (as owner-occupiers), and 71.3 % expressed that they stayed in their own apartment (either rented or owned) when they visited their home country. Only 20.7 % no longer have any other residence apart from the one on the Canary Islands. In this respect the results of this case study differ fundamentally from comparable studies in the Mediterranean region, where the proportion of seasonal residents to permanent residents is almost the reverse in some target areas (*Casado-Díaz et al. 2004*).

5. Characteristics and Behaviour Patterns of Seasonal and Permanent Residents

However, the German senior residents questioned differ not only with regard to the duration in which they use their residence abroad. It is instead possible to identify a whole series of significant differ-

ences in the characteristics and behaviour of the test persons, depending on the length of their annual period of use. The following statements emphasize the difference between the "seasonal residents" on the one hand and the "permanent residents" on the other. The midway category between these two basic types is given only marginal attention owing to a profile-sharpening comparison.

The two groups differ for example in their different residential preferences. As a rule, the seasonal residents still own an apartment in their home country. For this reason, when they stay on the Canary Islands they are satisfied with a smaller residence with an average of 66 m²; as many as 70 % of them live in apartments or blocks of flats. Only 40.4 % of the permanent residents live in this type of accommodation, whilst 36.5 % live in detached houses (seasonal residents: 11.3 %). Correspondingly, their residential floorspace per person of approx. 100 m² (on the average) is much larger than that of the seasonal residents. Concerning the furnishings of the residence, a garage for their car is apparently more important for the permanent than for the seasonal residents, but with swimming-pools the reverse is the case (cp. *Fig. 4*). On the other hand, contrary to our expectations, no significant differences could be discerned as far as the ownership of the residence on the Canary Islands is concerned (78.8 % of the seasonal residents are owners, as against 74 % of the permanent residents).

Of the test persons questioned, 71.6 % live in so-called "urbanisations", in other words in resorts planned for tourists which have been developed and built with private capital. In the Spanish destination areas of international tourism they became a characteristic aspect of the tourist infrastructure as long ago as the early 1960s (cp. *Zahn 1975*). An initial hypothesis states that owing to the tourist-orientated plan-

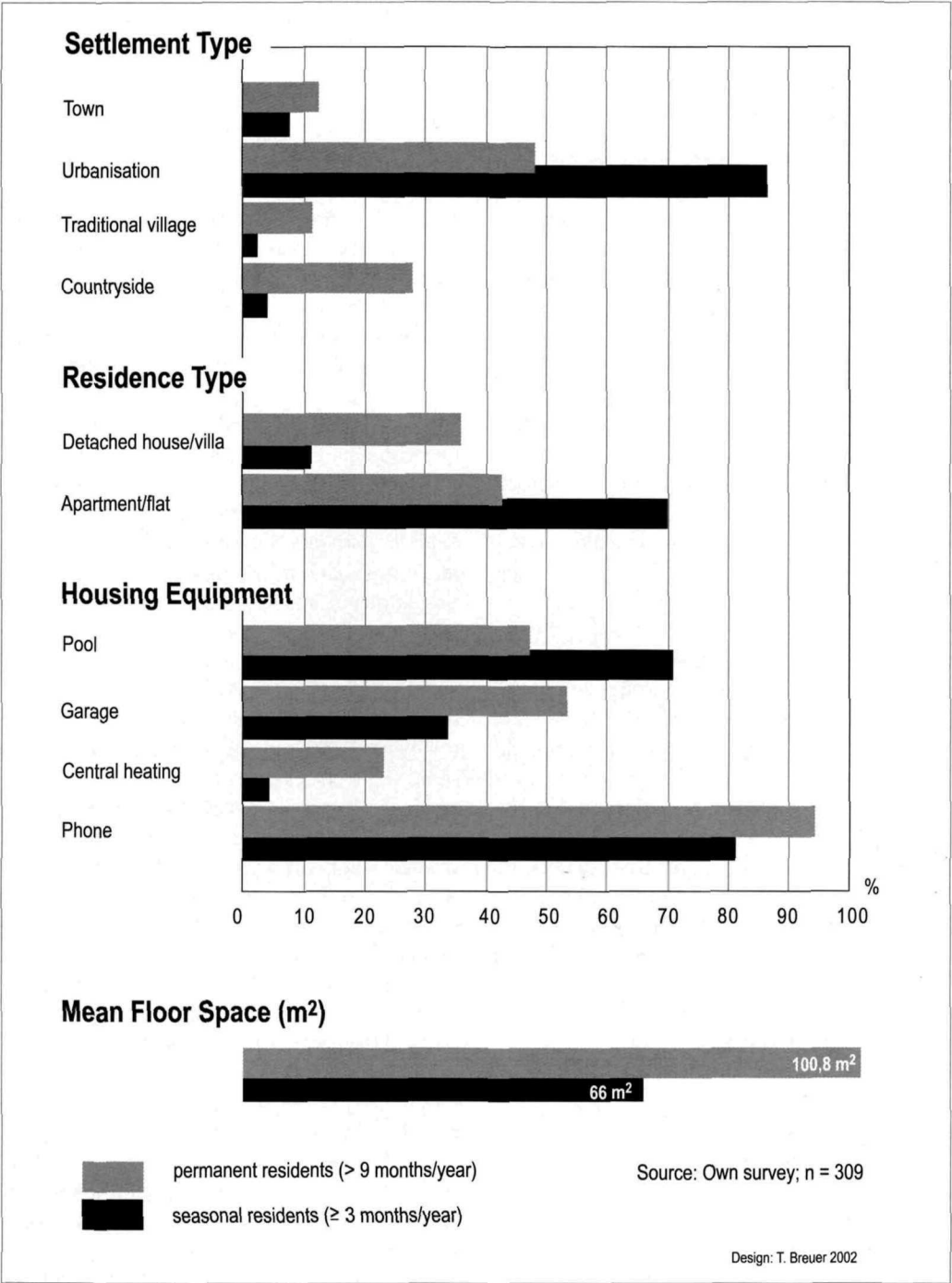


Fig. 4 Annual residential presence and housing conditions / Jährlicher Wohnaufenthalt und Wohnbedingungen

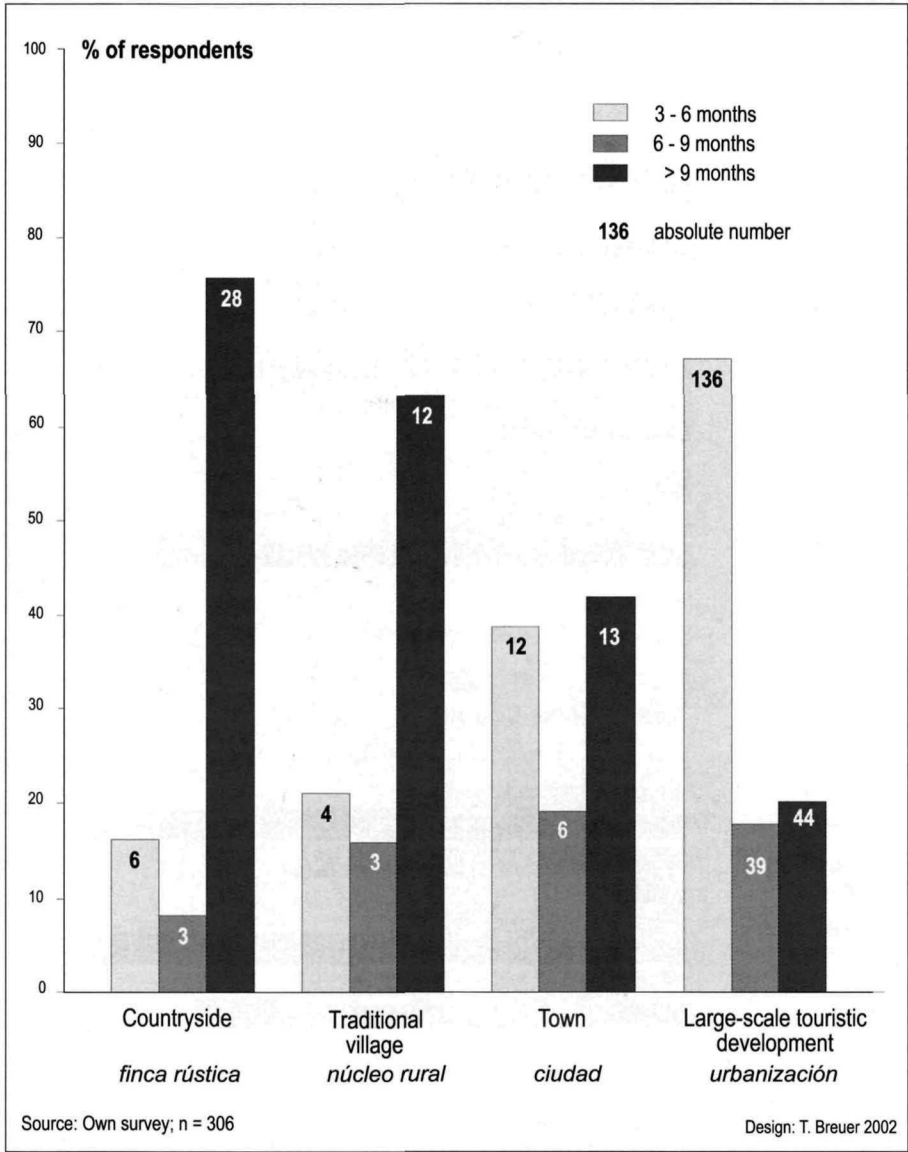


Fig. 5 Annual presence in retirement residence by type of location
Zusammenhang zwischen jährlichem Wohnaufenthalt und Wohnumgebung

ning concept these “urbanisations” were not designed for the needs of elderly inhabitants residing there permanently (Breuer 2000). This hypothesis must be revised to a certain extent now as it has been shown that the residential surroundings

in the urbanisations can also meet the requirements of elderly inhabitants in certain respects: Urbanisations are characterised by the fact that the apartments are very easily accessed by public transport (87.1 % of the test persons expressed this), which

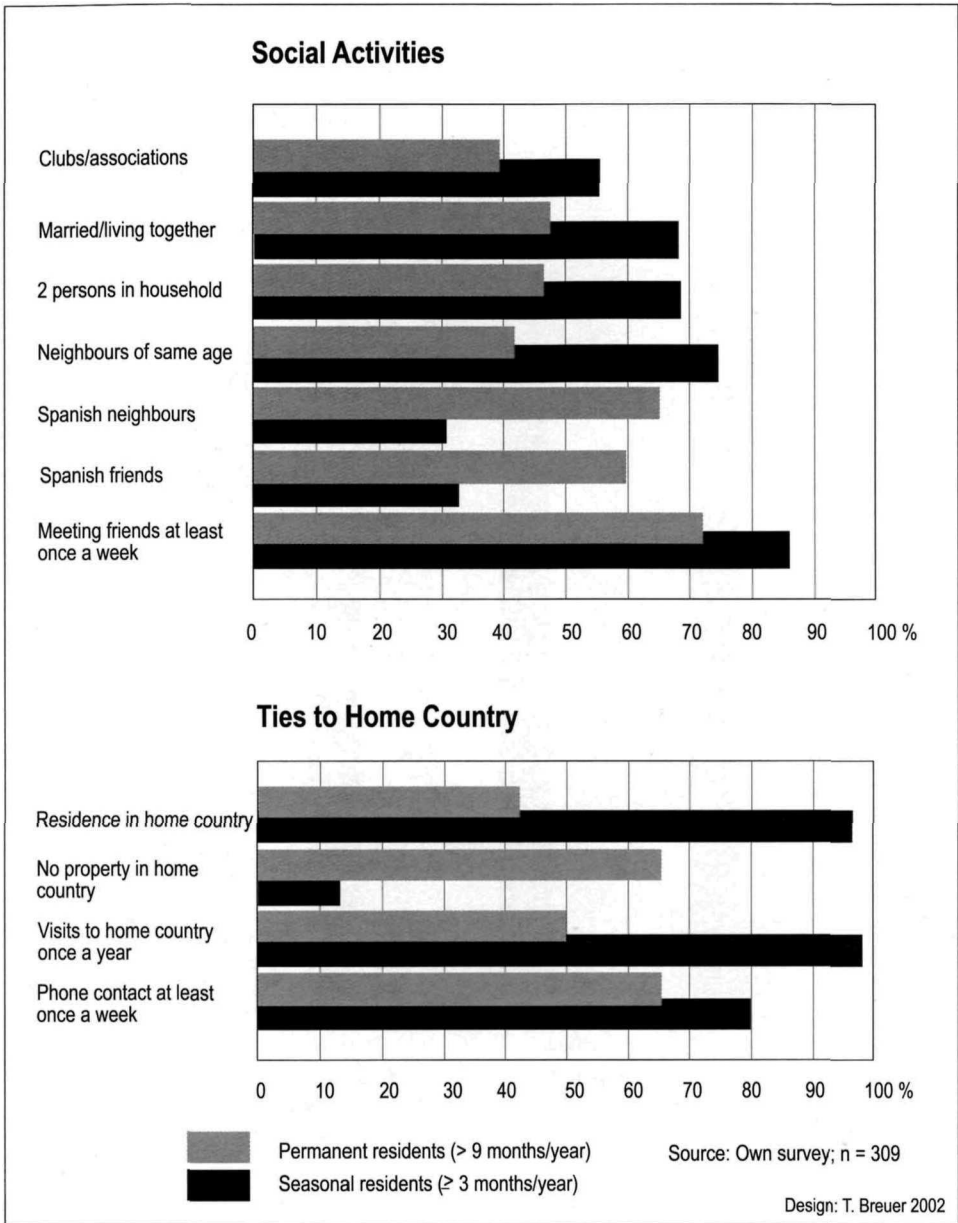


Fig. 6 Annual presence and social activities / Jährlicher Wohnaufenthalt und soziales Umfeld

compares well with the accessibility of the town (100 %) and of traditional village centres (89.5 %). In scattered settlements in rural districts the bus

service is markedly worse (57.5 %). The urbanisations also show advantages as far as easy direct access to the apartment door is concerned.

Tab. 1 Motivation for moving – differences between seasonal and permanent residents
Motivationen für den Umzug – Unterschiede zwischen Saisonresidenten und Dauerresidenten

	Motive “very significant” for the move	
	Seasonal residents (%)	Permanent residents (%)
Climate	85.6	68.0
Health problems	52.5	42.3
Easy access by air	40.5	28.9
Crucial event in life (“trigger” effect)	22.0	41.4
Cost of living	7.0	25.8
Children / family	2.0	11.7

If we consider the fact that it is primarily seasonal residents and not even half of the permanent residents who live in such urbanisations the initial hypothesis loses its explanatory power even more because seasonal residents can compensate – at least for a period of some months – for any possible difficulties in the surroundings of their apartments which are not appropriate for the elderly.

To summarise, we must note here that in urbanisations the seasonal residents are very much in the majority. Here the permanent residents are only a minority. In the rural districts it is exactly the reverse: Given a much smaller number of cases altogether, it is only in exceptional circumstances that seasonal residents live in a *finca*, in isolation, i.e. in scattered settlements in rural districts, while these residential surroundings are preferred by permanent residents. This relation can also be seen in the average monthly length of the visits: in the country it is 9.77 months/year, and in urbanisations, on the other hand, only 7.03 months/year (cp. Fig. 5).

The basic principles of the motivation structures for the selection of a retirement residence in southern Europe are sufficiently well-known: cli-

mate (to state it more explicitly: light and warmth) and also health (as precautionary health measures and/or for the relief of already existing illnesses) are the factors which are most frequently given as the reasons that trigger off the establishment of a retirement residence (cp. Fig. 6). In detail, however, the reasons stated for moving to the Canary Islands vary according to the length of the senior citizens’ annual visit (cp. Tab. 1). The seasonal residents show a distinctive tourist mentality. They rate such factors as climate, health and easy access higher than the permanent residents. As they can use at least two homes, they are generally financially secure. For this reason, in contrast to the permanent residents, they do not attribute any particular significance to the partially lower cost of living (no heating expenses; no winter clothes etc.).

For the permanent residents, on the other hand, the so-called “trigger” effect plays a remarkably important role: Over 40 % of the permanent residents interviewed gave a “crucial personal event in their lives” as a significant motivation for the decision to move, while this aspect was only ticked by 22 % of the seasonal residents. Earlier case studies have apparently not paid sufficient atten-

Tab. 2 Links with the home country – differences between seasonal and permanent residents
Verbundenheit mit dem Heimatland – Unterschiede zwischen Saisonresidenten und Dauerresidenten

	Links with the home country	
	Seasonal residents (%)	Permanent residents (%)
Telephone contact at least once a week	80.1	66.0
"Journey home" at least once a year	98.0	50.5
No home in Germany any longer	14.2	66.0
Residence in Germany	90.3	42.7

tion to this "trigger" effect, which in extreme instances can result in a headlong departure and the truncation of all links to one's home country. The qualitative interviews illustrate the complexity of this effect in more detail: The spectrum of the real "triggers" extends from early retirement due to illness to serious personal disruptions such as a divorce or the death of one's lifetime companion.

Other differences are to be seen in the senior residents' social sphere of action. Contact

with their home country, for example, is made in a converse ratio to the length of the annual visit; in other words, the shorter the period of time in which the retirement home on the Canary Islands is used, the more frequent the telephone contacts (cp. Tab. 2). The majority of the permanent residents no longer possess a house or a home in Germany. After all, 14.8 % of the permanent residents stated that they "never" go to their home country (0.6 % of the seasonal residents).

Tab. 3 Social contacts – differences between seasonal and permanent residents
Soziale Kontakte – Unterschiede zwischen Saisonresidenten und Dauerresidenten

	Social contacts	
	Seasonal residents (%)	Permanent residents (%)
No friends	10.0	12.5
Spanish friends	32.6	60.0
Meet up with friends at least once a week	86.0	72.8
Spanish neighbours	30.6	65.3
Neighbours of similar age	74.5	41.8
Married / living together	68.1	47.4
Active in clubs	55.6	39.2

Tab. 4 Perception of disadvantages and suggestions for improvement – differences between seasonal and permanent residents / Wahrnehmung von Nachteilen und Verbesserungsvorschlägen – Unterschiede zwischen Saisonresidenzen und Dauerresidenzen

	Disadvantages and suggestions for improvement confirmed by:	
	seasonal residents (%)	permanent residents (%)
Rising cost of living: not a disadvantage	31.8	46.4
Separation from the family: not a disadvantage	47.2	60.8
Authorities / bureaucracy in Spain: not a disadvantage	24.8	35.1
Quality of roads: improvement urgently needed	35.8	22.1
Safety: improvement urgently needed	13.9	9.7
Protection from more constructional development: improvement urgently needed	41.9	37.9

Considerably more seasonal residents than permanent residents live with a lifetime partner in a two-person household. Permanent residents tend to live alone and participate less in circles of people with the same kind of interests. Apparently some seasonal residents decide not to make the annual winter trip to the sunny south any longer after the death of their lifetime companion. These findings are supported by the statements by local experts and also by the test persons themselves: In various return scenarios a significantly greater number of permanent residents than seasonal residents say that they want to keep their present retirement home in the Canaries in the event of their partner needing medical care or dying.

Other differences can be seen in problem awareness and the corresponding problem-solving strategies. When asked about the biggest disadvantages of life in the Canary Islands, the Spaniards' lack of environmental awareness (in particular their attitude to rubbish and its disposal) is named most frequently as an "enormous disadvantage". Contrary to expectations, complaints

about disturbances by holiday tourism (or the noise it causes) were made relatively rarely by German senior citizens in the quantitative interviews. Personal problems and dissatisfaction with the surroundings of the residence, on the other hand, were mentioned much more often in the qualitative interviews, and then usually only after the questions were repeated (cp. Breuer 2003). This is a well-known socio-psychological phenomenon. The decision to take up a retirement residence abroad results in a certain self-selected need for justification towards a third party (Romeiß-Stracke 1998), which becomes apparent in interviews in the form of rose-tinted statements. These must be interpreted with the appropriate care.

In spite of these reservations, there are clear differences between the permanent and the seasonal residents: The seasonal residents are more aware of the everyday problems and disadvantages which life on the Canary Islands brings about, and they say so. Analogous to this, they also speak out more frequently about urgently necessary improvement measures (cp. Table 4). With the permanent residents there is a greater readiness to tolerate or to

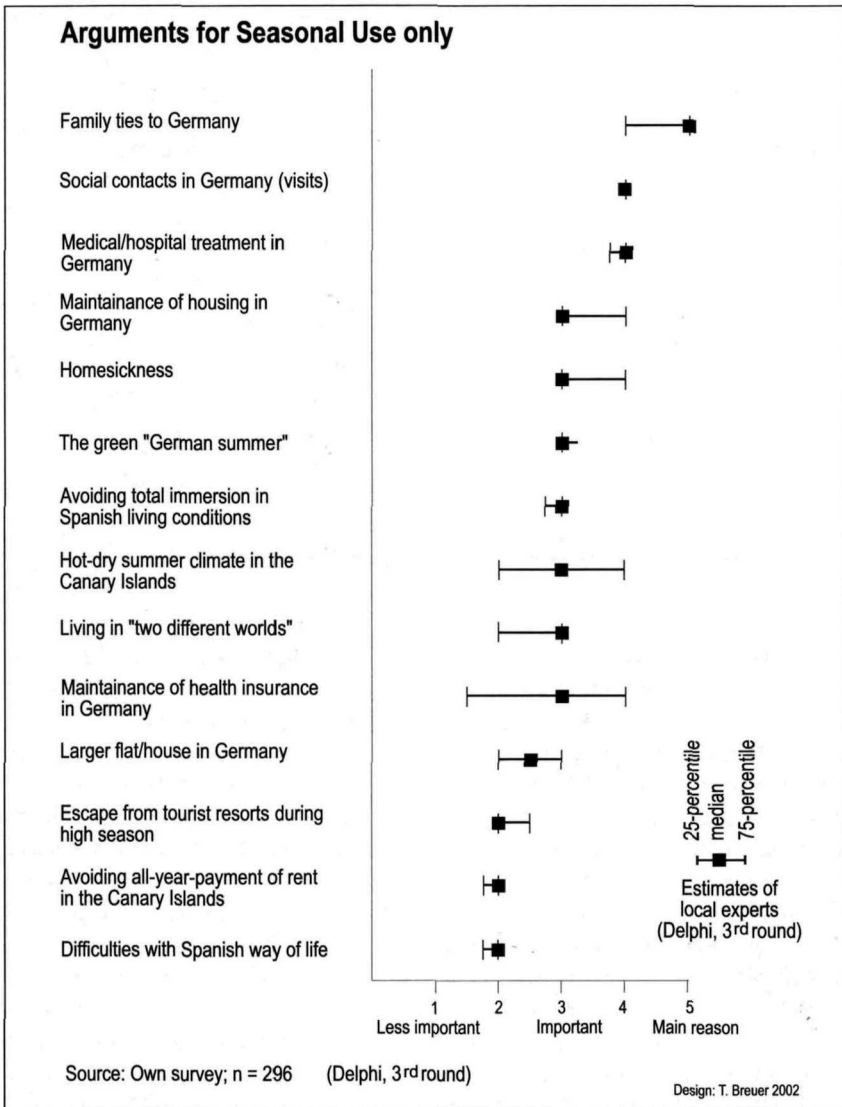


Fig. 7 Retirement homes in the Canary Islands: arguments for seasonal use only
Gründe für die nur saisonale Nutzung eines Alterswohnsitzes auf den Kanaren

accept the negative side of their retirement homes (or the surroundings of the homes).

The explanation of these differences is plain: Both groups of senior residents very clearly recognise the obvious everyday problems and disadvan-

tages of their retirement homes. The seasonal residents, however, can more readily tolerate certain shortcomings or avoid serious problems (such as a planned hospitalisation) for the length of their time-restricted visit by returning to Germany. This possibility is not available to many

of the permanent residents (whether subjectively or objectively is not relevant). For this reason they seem to come to an arrangement with themselves mentally with regard to certain disadvantages of their retirement homes in Spain.

6. Discussion of the Findings

The seasonal residents clearly prefer the winter half-year for their stay. They can therefore be described as “overwinterers” (*Breuer* 2004), analogous to the American “snowbirds”. A more extensive explanation for the unexpectedly great extent of the merely seasonal use of retirement homes in the Canaries is provided only to a very restricted extent by the statements of the target group in the standardised interviews: During their visits to their home country the senior citizens, above all, cultivate contacts to their families and friends, and go to the doctor. Homesickness and the desire to see the “green German summer” were named as subsidiary reasons for the seasonal visit to Germany. These results are confirmed by the Delphi experts, who in particular quote the family ties to Germany as the most important reason for the seasonal use of second homes (cp. *Fig. 7*). More extensive explanations are provided by the qualitative interviews: Obviously, the unusual territorial situation of the Canary Islands must not be underestimated; it is only here that senior citizens find a well-balanced, pleasant winter climate without having to leave the economic region of the EU and European culture. This latter aspect, for example, was mentioned by the interviewees in a direct comparison with other potential destination areas in Turkey or the American state of Florida.

We can therefore definitely say that the so-called retirement migration can at best be classified primarily formally as transnational migration. From the functional point of view, the seasonal forms, in particular of the use of a second home, do not

represent migration. And even the assignment to the category of “permanent residents” (with an average regular length of use of the second home of more than 9 months) is worth further discussion. There are still a great many instances in this group of test persons who own a home in Germany. Even if the rational explanation for keeping up the residence in the permanent residents’ home country is an economical one, it can if necessary be used as a “stepping-stone” (*Williams et al.* 2004) for a possible return home. From that point of view, even 30 % may be exaggerated as the percentage of permanent residents.

European retirement migration lacks nearly all the characteristics which have been observed in the more recent migration research on transnational migration. The papers from *Pries* (1998 and 2001) through *Bürkner* (2000) to *Müller-Mahn* (2002) are concerned with working migrants. Also, the aspect of the social networks, which was first written about in ethno-sociology (*Schweizer* 1996), is at best only partially relevant in the case of the amenity-seeking seasonal retirement migrants. The seasonal use of a retirement residence has an exclusively consumer-type character. The aspect of “social integration”, for example, is thereby of secondary importance or – in the individual instance – irrelevant.

It can without doubt be said of the “overwinterers” that they are trying, apparently successfully, to combine “the best of both worlds” (*Rodríguez* 2000) by the deliberate use of different residences in complementary natural regions. For this reason the behaviour of the senior citizen second-home users can be described as “touristic”. Consequently, the seasonal use of second homes must therefore be seen as a circulation rather than as a migration. In this context, the seasonal use of second homes is not a segment in a continuum which begins with a short-term tourist holiday visit and ends with the permanent retirement residence, but instead it represents a final state which is regarded as optimal by more than half of the German

senior residents in the Canaries. By doing this they are putting into practice a "peripatetic" lifestyle in the sense of *Williams* and *Hall* (2000). The use of a second home is thereby the expression of a lifestyle which was practised in many instances before the retirement age was attained.

It is well-known, however, that the traditional social class-formations are not of much help when registering lifestyles. Since there is as yet no "generally acknowledged theory of lifestyles ... the processes of the evolution of lifestyles must be examined in its interaction with the spatial environment" (*Helbrecht* 1997: 13).

In this case of the age group of senior citizens, the seasonal use of second homes may perhaps be interpreted as a strategy for "successful ageing" (*Breuer* 2004). In the context of the identification and, more importantly, the scientific registration of lifestyles, the phenomenon of second homes has as yet hardly been taken into account. Here, the terminological framework must first of all be improved. Does the expression "second home" merely describe a second residence in a neutral sense or does it contain an indication of rank? In the case study presented here the interviewees usually see the focal point of their life in their home country, and the second home abroad is used in a complementary way. The opposite is not simply possible, but in fact actually occurs in a number of cases, where a second home in Germany is only used for occasional visits. In other words, the primarily simple identification of a second home (not conditioned by a work context) with a holiday residence has also in reality already been replaced by dissimilar, more complex forms of use inside and outside one's working life.

In conclusion, it can be said that the expression "retirement migration" is inaccurate and misleading in many instances in the European context. In addition, the expression "second-home tourism", too, describes the actual situation unsatisfactorily. If we regard the circulation of sen-

ior citizens, who use their second homes on a seasonal basis, as the expression of an independent lifestyle, we are still left with the problem of scientifically measuring the term "lifestyle", and also with the task of documenting in an operational way the spatially effective consequences of exactly this "peripatetic" lifestyle.

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Summary: Retirement Migration or rather Second-Home Tourism? German Senior Citizens on the Canary Islands

The subjects of this field study are retired German citizens aged 55 and older with residences on the Canary Islands. Within the study sample, more than half of the persons interviewed only use their retirement residences on a seasonal basis. There are considerable differences between seasonal and permanent residents. These differences are demonstrated by the formal characteristics of the residence or the environment of the residence, and by specific preferred patterns of behaviour. The present article reaches the conclusion that the basic reason for "retirement migration" is frequently not a long-term relocation of one's residence but rather a second-home tourism which can be regarded as a variation on a strategy for "successful ageing".

Zusammenfassung: Altersmigration oder eher Zweitwohnungstourismus? Deutsche Senioren auf den Kanarischen Inseln

Gegenstand der empirischen Untersuchung sind deutsche Rentner-Residenten im Alter von 55 und mehr Jahren, die auf den Kanarischen Inseln eine eigene Wohnung besitzen. In der Stichprobe nutzt mehr als die Hälfte der Befragten den Alterswohnsitz nur saisonal. Zwischen saisonalen und permanenten Residenten gibt es beachtliche Unterschiede. Sie sind an formalen Merkmalen der Wohnung bzw. der Wohnumgebung ebenso zu belegen wie an bestimmten Verhaltenspräferenzen. Der Artikel kommt zu dem Schluss, dass hinter der so genannten

„Altersmigration“ häufig keine dauerhafte Wohnsitzverlagerung steht, sondern ein Zweitwohnungstourismus, der sich als Variante einer Strategie zum „erfolgreichen Altern“ deuten lässt.

Résumé: Migration des retraités ou plutôt tourisme résidentiel? Les retraités allemands aux Iles Canaries

L'objet de cette étude empirique est constitué par des résidents allemands à la retraite âgés de 55 ans et plus, propriétaires d'un logement aux Iles Canaries. Dans l'échantillon, plus de la moitié des personnes interrogées n'habite ce domicile, acheté pour la retraite, que de façon saisonnière. Entre résidents saisonniers et permanents, on observe des différences notables. Celles-ci concernent les caractéristiques formelles du logement ou de l'environnement du lieu de résidence, de même que la préférence accordée à certains comportements. L'article en arrive à la conclusion que bien souvent, ce qu'on appelle « migration des retraités » ne recouvre pas une mobilité résidentielle durable, mais plutôt une forme de tourisme, ayant pour destination une résidence secondaire et pouvant être interprétée comme variante d'une stratégie pour réussir sa retraite.

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