CHAPTER 6

Multiplex Migration and Aspects of Precarisation: Swedish Retirement Migrants to Spain and their Service Providers

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Introduction

In Swedish public discourse, retirees born in the 1940s are represented as a growing cohort of relatively wealthy consumers, with more cosmopolitan preferences and habits compared to previous generations. They are part of a growing number of Northern Europeans who migrate to Southern Europe to retire in the sun. From a relational approach, the authors examine conditions of Swedish retirement migrants in Spain and of their service providers. Social networks, intermediaries and subcontractors are crucial to the organisation of migration as well as for the provision of work and services in retirement migrant destinations. This chapter especially investigates: how do recent trends towards individualisation and internationalisation of job trajectories as well as informalisation and precarisation of labour impact the conditions of service providers? And further: how do the strategies for care and services of Swedish retirees interplay with the characteristics of labour and welfare systems along a North–south EU axis?

We use the term International Retirement Migrants (IRM) (King et al. 2000, 1) to refer to Swedish retirees who currently reside seasonally as well as permanently in Spain, including both those who have migrated before and after retirement. They could also be labelled ‘residential tourists’ or ‘lifestyle movers’, but we use the term IRM in order to place the wide set of actors in our study within a field of internationalisation and mobility, where the term ‘migrant’ is not reserved for labour migrants and asylum seekers.

The social context of our study – i.e. the destination zones where IRMs and service providers meet – is conceived as an encounter of two sets of transnational actors with widely different socio-economic backgrounds and

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socio-spatial situatedness: (1) IRMs, most of whom have (officially) left the labour market and have a background in an industrial class structure and Swedish Welfare State society (Thelin 2013); (2) service providers who operate formally and informally on a Spanish labour market, with relatively low welfare provision and a service economy characterised by a high level of informalization and precariousness. Apart from adding a relational dimension to studies on retirement migration, this field exemplifies the gap between Northern and Southern Europe in terms of work and welfare, and our results can be used to reflect about inequalities in labour and welfare rights among citizens of different EU countries as well as third country migrants from outside the EU.

Below, after a brief theoretical and methodological introduction, we first describe the varied social and economic conditions of Swedish IRMs in Spain and how their strategies influence the relations they establish with service providers. As part of this panorama, we analyse three key cases that provide contrasting insights to aspects of precarisation and mobility across a North–south axis: low-income and working IRMs, Swedish entrepreneurs and migrant workers in jobs with low skill requirements. In this chapter we differentiate the workers and entrepreneurs that provide services to IRMs along two main axes: (1) one the one hand, we differentiate between those that have a salaried contract, and those that either work self-employed or own a company. For the self-employed, we mention if they work formally (they are registered as self-employed workers and pay the required taxes and social security contributions) or informally (they are not registered and do not pay taxes). (2) On the other hand, we differentiate between Spanish workers and those that are originally from another country, either an EU state or a 3rd country. The three sub-categories of actors in IRM fields highlighted here exemplify different degrees and aspects of precarity and illuminate the asymmetric options at work for different types of citizens in IRM destination zones. We examine the interplay between labour market conditions and actors’ (lack of) access to public care provision in Spain, shaping the strategies that IRMs as well as workers/entrepreneurs develop when they reach dependency on extensive elderly

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2 Legally speaking, the difference between being self-employed and owning a company has to do with the administrative procedures to be followed, and with the economic obligations in case of bankruptcy. I.e. self-employed workers can own a company without having to hire any worker. However, we decided to distinguish between self-employed workers that do not hire or subcontract the work of others (that we name “self-employed”), and those that do have employees or subcontract work (that we name “entrepreneurs”). This distinction proves to be more important for the lives of our interviewees than the fact of having or not a registered company.