

British Expats Real Estate Market. The unknowns of “Brexit”

*Mercado inmobiliario de los emigrados británicos.
Las incertidumbres del “Brexit”*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to investigate the forms of access that the British in Spain have to housing, the modes of obtaining property, any problems in relation to housing, and to look at any possible consequences of Brexit. To this end, a qualitative study of British residents in Spain was undertaken, including some fieldwork in the United Kingdom. In fact, there are many uncertainties regarding possible consequences of Brexit -which can only be resolved after the UK's departure from the EU- with severe impacts for the expatriate community and for any British citizens who desire to spend their final years in Spain.

Key words: British Housing, British Community, Spain.

JEL Classification: R21.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es profundizar las formas de acceso a la vivienda de los británicos en España, las formas de acceso a la propiedad, los problemas de vivienda y estudiar las posibles consecuencias de Brexit. Con este fin se desarrolló la investigación cualitativa sobre los residentes británicos en España, y también el trabajo de campo en el Reino Unido. En realidad, hay muchas incertidumbres con respecto a las consecuencias de Brexit -que serán resueltas sólo después de la salida- con fuertes consecuencias para la comunidad expatriada y para aquellos británicos que desean vivir sus últimos años en España.

Palabras clave: Viviendas de los británicos, Comunidad Británica, España

Clasificación JEL: R21.

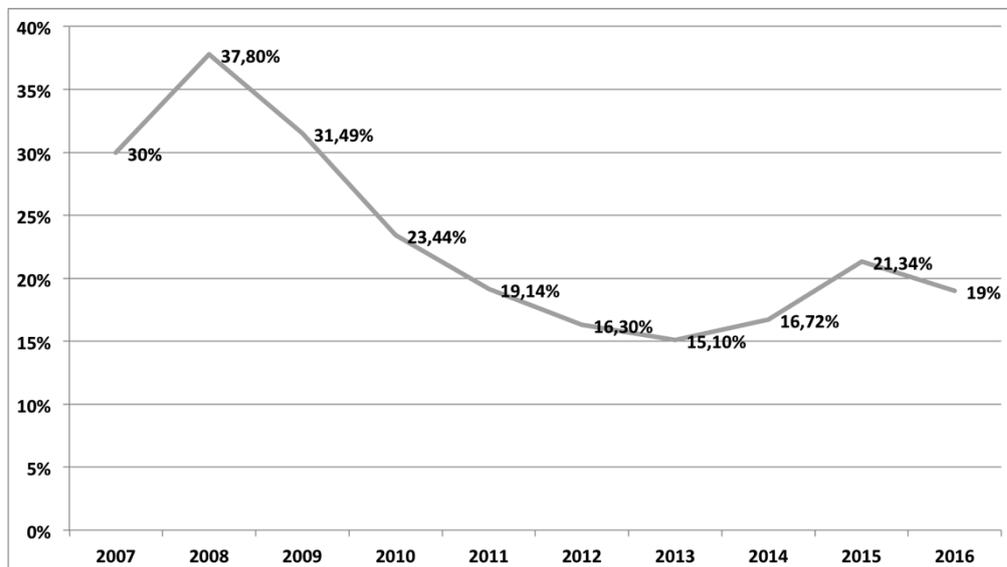


1. INTRODUCTION

There are approximately two hundred and fifty thousand British nationals living in Spain who are awaiting the fallout from the materialization of "Brexit". Many questions have arisen as a result of the impending "Brexit" during the time. We intend to analyse the housing characteristics of the British Community, addressing their patterns of residence, especially as the way they live will determine the consequences of "Brexit" on their daily lives¹. Much is being said about what will happen to immigrants living in the UK, while the situation for British exiles seems to remain unaddressed. This issue is significant given the number of “Brits” living abroad, especially in Spain, -with a large percentage of this community having lived since the second half of the twentieth century², but with consistent growth from the nineties. Before the announcement of Brexit, British people were the largest property-buying group in Spain. Of the total foreign investment, the British are by far the leading nationality for real estate investment.

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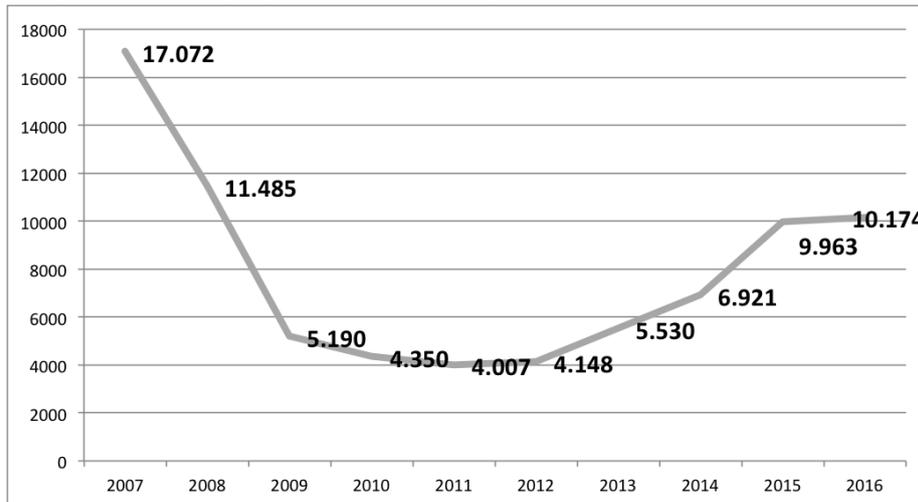
Graph. 1 Percentage of Britons across the total number of foreign purchasers of real estate in Spain.



Source. Registers of Property Association. Spain.

It is possible to affirm that during the most crucial times of the economic crisis, the British bought less property in Spain. From 2012, they had begun to buy more, but at the time of the Brexit referendum, the British once again began to purchase less property in Spain, regardless of the fact that UK TV programs continued to promote Spanish properties.

Graph. 2 British property buyers in Spain



Source. Own elaboration. Registers of Property Association. Spain

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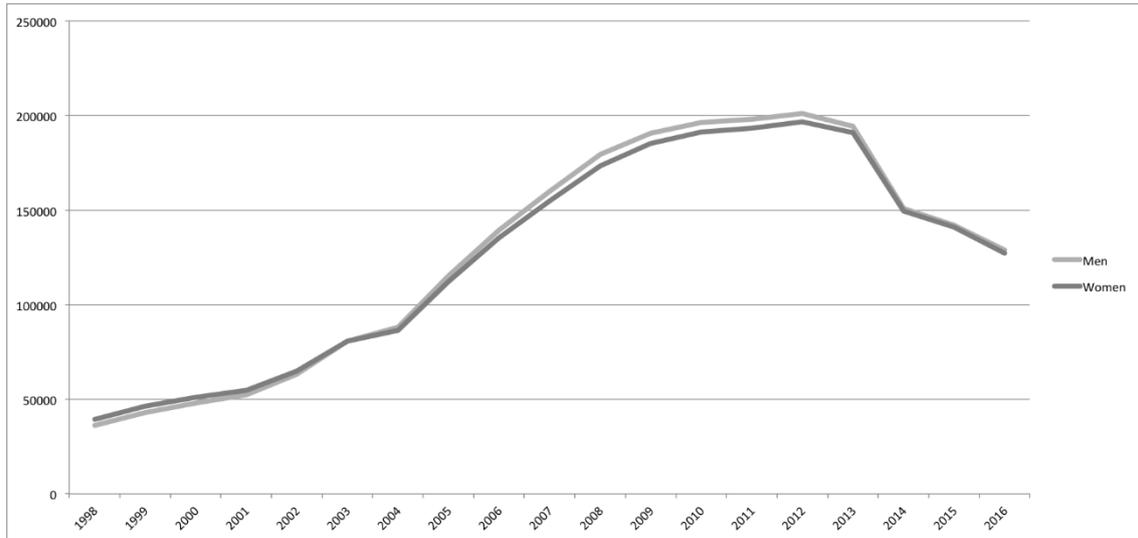
In relation to the population, the British (expat) community are equal in regard to the breakdown of gender - this being one of the big differences with other nationalities. During our research, we found that the majority of expats emigrate together with their partners and live together from the outset. They were the “first” immigrants to arrive in Spain to settle in this country. With the onset of the economic crisis, just as for many of the immigrants from other countries, a lot of them returned to their native country for a number of different reasons; for example, because their children were suffering the consequences of the crisis in the United Kingdom.

It is likely that the execution of Brexit it may be more difficult to emigrate from the United Kingdom to the countries in the European Union. But it does seem who are in Spain are going to maintain their rights (e.g., healthcare, although there are a lot of unknowns about this process)³.

In relation to the locations, they generally live on the Coast (the Community of Valencia, the Community of Andalusia and the Balearic Islands), and in some cases, they make up for a high percentage of British population within their municipalities. Contrary to what one may think, the United Kingdom is a context with strong emigration – a great many Britons leave to live in other countries. In 2009, it was estimated that one in ten Britons resided abroad, with many of these people living in Spain, making it one of the preferred destinations of this population.



Graph 3. British in Spain by gender. 1998-2016



Source. Own elaboration. Register of residents, Spain. National Institute of Statistics.

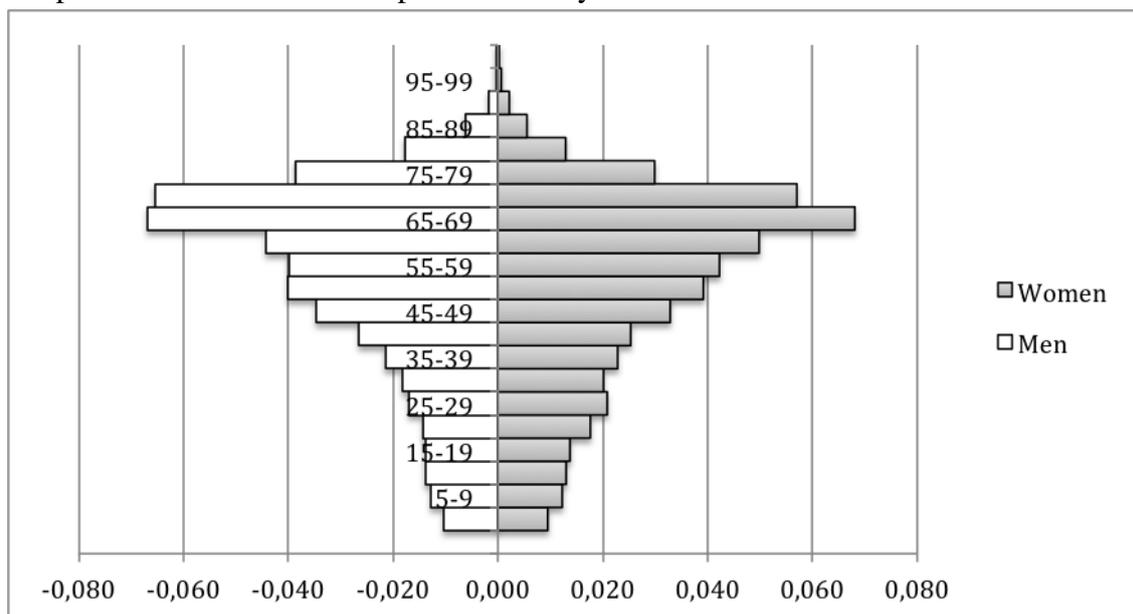
In addition, the truth is that notions of the British Community residing in Spain bring to mind images of great luxury and grand residences, people who have no problems and who are living a life of abundance, with no cares of where they are (a group on a seemingly endless vacation). However, there is nothing further from the truth - or at least the phenomenon is much more complex than this. The majority of these people are middle or working class with a dream⁴. And, also, many of them are employees with problems because they only can work for the British Community, and not all of them are happy about this situation.

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The next pyramid represents British people in Spain. They are into the elderly age range as a result, more vulnerable; but also they need more assistance because the majority do not speak Spanish. For this reason they find themselves needing to contract private insurance, and also they hire their own lawyers, gardeners, dentists, etc., because they require private assistance for “everything”⁵.

It was not always like that, at the beginning of the nineties, the age groups on the pyramid were much younger, it was generally middle-aged people who arrived to work within the tourism sector. But over the few last years, “with the democratization of the phenomenon”, it has become more popular to leave the United Kingdom to live out one’s final remaining years (not only to Spain, of course). It’s not a privilege of the upper class but a “universal” right.

Graph 4. British residents in Spain. 1 January 2016



Source. Own elaboration. National institute of Statistics (Spain).

Because of the age structure and the way of life of the British in Spain, some research refers to this group as “permanent tourists”; but this is not unanimous across the international research community (García Andreu, 2005:)⁶. Identifying the difference between a migrant and a tourist has been a concern for the scientific community, in turn leading to discussions about whether to label this group tourists or immigrants (O’Reilly, 2003).

From our perspective, as well as from the perspective of other researchers (including as O’Reilly and Benson, for example), they are 'lifestyle migrants'. This movement has become particularly relevant over the last few years and emphasizes the pursuit of a lifestyle that is different from the one they had previously (Benson and O’Reilly, 2009)⁷; and because they have higher expectations of migration than of being a tourist, they expect to have a wonderful “final few years” or retirement. But they are not exactly at the end of their lives, as O’Reilly mentions, and a great many of them work, and are looking for a peaceful life in a place with great weather.

There are a number of factors that have led to the British leaving their country (the weather, the way of life, cheap housing, “exotic places”, the beach, and rest, among others), but the fact remains that they are residing in Spain nearing their retirement age or are retirees already. This could be due to a number of reasons, for example, the "de-structuring" of the traditional family unit or the relocation of children across the territory - factors that could influence their feelings of liberation to leave their homes and establish themselves abroad (Huges and O’Reilly, 2004)⁸. Another factor may well lie in a search for the "exotic", represented by countries like Spain⁹, or perhaps the cost



of housing (O'Reilly, 2000); and of course, there is Spain's warm climate, and all only a cheap two-hour flight from the United Kingdom¹⁰.

Another catalyst was the growing "Europeanization" and along with it, the ease of movement between the countries that form part of the EU; and this presents an issue that is yet to be answered - what will happen to these people after “Brexit”? The enlargement of the European Union (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaner and Torres, 2003) and the ease of travel aided by the low-cost airlines have been attracting new visitors, and along with them, potential migrants (Dobruszkes, 2006; King, Warnes and William, 2000). What will happen as a result of the Brexit process in regard to this is still to be seen, and it seems that for now British people are leaving Spain rather than arriving.

When we began our investigation, the main objective was to understand the social processes linked to British people in Spain, especially concerning their properties and Brexit. Our focus was centred on contexts where the British population accounted for about 30% of the total population, as generally happens in a large number of rural municipalities within the province of Alicante, with special focus on the consequences of Brexit in relation to the property market.

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2. METHODOLOGY

In order to develop our objective as much as possible, the methodological process followed the guidelines of the ethno-sociological approach¹¹ as Bertraux (2005)¹² understands it, or as Bourdieu did, one of the first sociologists who operated from this perspective.

The techniques used in socio-ethnographic research can be very diverse, just as for case studies. Moreover, the research focuses not only on the situation of the social group of foreigners, but also tries to understand the opinions of the native population¹³.

Thus, to understand the reality of the British population residing in Spain, the investigation focused not only on Alicante -because of the sheer concentration of foreigners within the province-, but also in the UK. The research included interviews with Britons and Spaniards, and observations and learning taken from the context (between 2011 to 2016).

In addition to this, fieldwork at origin was also undertaken, in order to understand the image that existed in the UK about Spain, as well as to gain a more in-depth understanding of the real estate market. In line with the intention to include as much information as possible, the research has also involved interviews with other social groups that coexist with British emigrants in the municipalities (both in the country of origin with the fieldwork undertaken, and in the destination country). These interviews were carried out developed over ten months.

In this way, the result is an attempt to capture the social reality of all the locations involved, trying to include all voices and configuring a *dense description* (Velasco and Rada, 1997) to understand the structure underlying that social reality (Bourdieu, 2004)¹⁴, giving voice to the people¹⁵.

Audio-visual materials of various kinds were used, for example, TV shows including British series and programs that talk about Spain, such as the popular *A Place in the Sun: Home or Away?*, and *Benidorm*¹⁶, in order to expand on pre-existing images of both groups. It would also be worth noting the high audience levels of these types of British series and programs, as is evident with *Benidorm*¹⁷, which relates the holiday atmosphere of this city in Alicante, a favoured destination for many UK citizens¹⁸. The reality is that in the UK, Spain is “ever-present” in the TV and Media.

Other documentary sources included books, like Chris Stewart’s, in which he speaks of his experience as an expatriate living in the region of Alpujarra, in Granada¹⁹; or the books in the *Shock Cultural* series, which touch on the different cultures of those countries that are possible emigration destinations; as well as travel books²⁰ because they also describe Spanish society (Graff, 2009)²¹. In Alicante, interviews were not only conducted with British nationals but also with people from Alicante, key agents (people who work in supermarkets, libraries, etc.), as well as those interviews carried out at the country of origin, where interviewees were questioned in regard to what they thought about life in Spain. Interviews were also carried out in other municipalities within the Region of Valencia, where there seemed to be unique issues with their properties as a consequence of political corruption.

Finally, with regard to the collection of testimonies (as semi-structured interviews), which is a core part of the socio-ethnographic study; the following interviews were carried out. During our research, we carried out more than fifty interviews with Britons residing in Spain, public agents, key agents in the municipalities (parish priest, social worker, etc.), and Spaniards.

Regarding the timeframe, the observation component was generally contained to nine months in 2013, but we subsequently returned to the municipalities in 2014 and 2017 to contrast some of the data regarding the effects of the crisis and Brexit.

We have also developed participant observation to better understand the context. The “observations” consisted of attending various activities organized by the British Community, as well as visits to their main social outlets: restaurants, English pubs, social clubs (such as retired people’s associations, golf clubs), food stores, etc.



3. CAUGHT IN PARALLEL REALITY, HOUSING CONDITIONS OF THE BRITISH COMMUNITY

The British in Spain, like other foreigners, decided to buy their houses here with the intention of settling indefinitely, or this was their first plan. This not only rooted them to the territory, but also meant they had less flexibility to move throughout Spain and return to their countries of origin²². This will result in a problem when the global economic crisis explodes, and they decide that is time to go back to the UK, but with Brexit issues ahead, returning to their native country becomes quite difficult.

In the case of the British Community, we found three groups identified in regard to housing, their current housing type, and their arrival in Spain: the first being the *prudent type* - those who rented and sought accommodation for a time in the municipality and in several locations before making a purchase. Whether it be municipalities or urbanizations, the only thing that was clear to them was that they wanted to buy in Spain or within the Valencian Community; then there is the *projective type* -those who bought their houses while they were still in the planning stage, with properties bought off the plan. Sometimes this type of purchase goes well, but on other occasions, they have not ensured that the property meets all their requirements²³; and thirdly, the *televised or impulsive type* - those that have bought their house without being in the country, sometimes having barely seen it, and at the most only having visited the house once before purchasing it²⁴. It is possible summarize the categories in the table 1.

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In relation to the third type, we did not find anybody who was at this situation, but the press and various advertisements give the impression that this would be the best option. However, many housing fairs and conferences stress the importance of living in a place for one year prior to buying there to gain first-hand knowledge about, for example, the weather because, contrary to popular belief, Spain does not have 365 days of sunshine a year.

In relation to the “prudent” type, this category is made up of those families that visited and researched properties themselves first before purchasing a house. Some of them had even spent time understanding where was better to purchase a house in Spain or another country to live. They were moving from one municipality to another in order to identify the best fit for them. Many in this category had spent a time in Spain in their youth as a tourist:

“We weren't sure whether to go to Spain, France or Italy, we just knew that we wanted to go, but didn't know exactly where” (B.5)

“I stayed at my sister's house for some time” (B.1)

“I had spent some time there as a tourist” (B.3)

Table 1. Summary of the various types of relationship with properties

	Methods used to find housing	Previous decisions	Properties in England	Analysis of the property before purchasing it
Prudent	Close attention paid to the place to live	Previously resided in the area and social context the house is located	Sometimes don't buy their property in England	Take into account the location, condition and social context of the property
Projective	Visit the location before the property is constructed	Don't take into account the type of property or the location	Sometimes don't buy their property in England	Don't take into account the condition of the property
Televisual	Bought over the Internet, a form of media or TV	Purchase influenced by media	Sometimes don't buy their properties in England	Don't take in account the condition, location or social context of the property

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Source. Own elaboration based on fieldwork data

Another type of buyer would be those prospective buyers that searched for properties through adverts in the newspapers, only after they had visited the area. The "prospective" type selects the house after more research, but without the house being at complete lock up stage:

“First, we looked through newspapers. We looked at every aspect possible. We knew an agency, and we decided to spend a lot of money on all the paperwork and procedures. There are some people who don't look or think and do it themselves. That is a mistake; you should pay for proper professionals to avoid any problems” (B.18)

However, sometimes, those who did not wait to buy a completed dwelling sometimes found problems later on, because in Spain there were many cases of corruption related to the construction of houses:

“You have no idea how long we have been living like this, and we are going to court so this can be fixed. We have really expensive utility bills, and in winter it is even worse” (B.2)

In some municipalities, where the research about British citizens first began, we found houses without electricity, paying high gas bills consequently because the houses were illegal, and they had been sold like that:



“It is not just the English; there are people from everywhere, even Spaniards. Why would you think the whole estate is illegal, this is a nightmare, the judge needs a translator, it is not the same as being able to explain things for yourself” (B.3)

The British are also in a bad situation. They were fighting for their homes to be declared legal. But it was not easy as during the trial, even though there was a registered Spanish translator present during the procedure, they manifested in our investigation that they could not explain the situation correctly because they were not in their own country, and the reasons why they felt in a helpless situation and trapped²⁵. With the impending Brexit comes a lot of questions, and the situation of those British citizens living or looking to emigrate to Spain could well become an issue given that many of the implications of Brexit remain unknown.

“Was difficult to explain the situation, but we have translator. And our friend helps us with this” (B.17)

“We are trapped here”. (B.19)

As far as “Brexit” is concerned, it is possible that the international real estate market in Europe is suffering in the UK, with all the loss that this entails. It is important to stress this because without taking into account the real estate market, it is not possible to understand British migration in Spain. The resident’s location is key to understanding the entire migratory system for British citizens, since these conditions both the social relationships that they are able to establish and their mobility.

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Regarding the sale of properties, as we have said previously, in the UK there are television programs dedicated to publicizing “amazing experiences” about living and retiring in exotic places: one of these is *A Place in the Sun*. This program enjoys some popularity in the UK and presents a large range of houses to buy or to rent²⁶. Each of the program’s episodes feature either the sale or rental of a new property. They come to show the advantage offered by certain municipalities where the number of Britons is rather reduced²⁷. Brexit raises another issue – that it may be harder for British citizens to move anywhere in the EU after Brexit, but this is currently just speculation and it is still too early to know. The promotion of amazing stories featured in TV shows like these have unexpected consequences for buyers, more so if you are not European. For example, bureaucracy is more complicated if you are from a third country.

The fact is that some of these people prefer to live in smaller villages. In Spain, foreigners do not usually constitute closed communities, except for those aspects related to lifestyle, and we can say that ghettos do not really exist in Spain. This is the fundamental difference between lifestyle migration (represented by the British or other European nationalities) and labour migrants (also including Eastern nationalities), because the first group is generally territorially concentrated in urbanizations. The

British population has settled outside the urban framework, following the model of 'counter-urbanisation'²⁸.

They live in areas where many of the dwellings are second homes, and so by living there are exposed to worse infrastructure than those living within urban areas (Alcalde, Lurbe and Moreno, 2006). What might first appear to be an advantage is not so in the end, since living in housing developments means that British citizens became, to some extent, more vulnerable, especially once they have reached an age in which they find it difficult to drive.

"We need to use the car for everything, everything" (B.5)²⁹.

During the investigation, it came to light that to gain access to many of the houses, one was required to practice adventure sports since there is hardly a pathway available that would permit vehicle access (even if traveling in a small car).

Secondly, nobody thinks that there will be problems in paradise, but this is not true. As for the interviews undertaken, we have noticed that a new movement is upon us with a move further inland, in an attempt to flee those areas in which the majority of the residents are foreigners from other European countries. What the fallout from this reshuffle is in regard to the population is still to be seen, since this can be a double-edged sword, as they then move to places where the native population does not speak English and where the specialized services found in coastal locations do not exist.

"First, we went to look around Morella, but access is difficult, so then we decided to switch areas" (B.4).

That the British reside in housing developments is a generalized fact. Several research studies have shown (O'Really, 2004; Casado-Díez, 1999) that the majority of the British population has settled in *urbanizaciones*³⁰. Casado-Díez (1999) notes that these housing developments, because of the way they have been planned, are under-resourced in regard to services and amenities. This is actually one of the problems they have encountered, as well as solitude, because the neighbours live in these houses intermittently (summers and holidays) or on weekends.

The "British urbanisation ideal model" is dominated by single-family homes with a small outdoor area, and a bus stop on practically every corner. Perhaps they thought that it would be the same in Spain and that the housing estates would be well communicated, but nothing can be further from reality;

"There is not even a bus stop. In England, the buses drop you at your doorstep. We didn't think about this and now we have to use the car to go anywhere" (B.9)
This need to use the car at all times means that many return to their country of origin when they reach a certain age. Those who do not return, move to more accessible places:



“A lot of people are leaving for example to go to Altea, to the villas that are closer, because when they get older they can no longer drive, and they have to stay in their houses” (B.2)

“I am very lucky to live in the village, because I go everywhere on foot, otherwise you have to drive, and we are no longer fit for that” (B.1)

This geographic dispersion has led them to considerations of buying a dwelling in an urban area so that they have a better quality of life when they are older. They now consider Spain to be their home:

“We have put our house on the market but now is not a good time to sell. We want to live near the town so everything is closer” (B.5)

In relation to the more serious problems, these cases are still open, and a large number of Britons are still in the dark about their houses and the state of them. There are cases involving the deception of town mayors where some real estate agents sold illegal houses, with provisional electricity and water supplies to mainly English and German citizens, some years ago. These people lived with a provisional system for utilities, powered by natural gas, so the bills are exorbitant. This has led to a feeling of total helplessness amongst those living in these houses, who, especially because they sold their properties in their countries of origin, cannot return to their homeland:

“We cannot leave, we want this to be resolved, we are paying for these houses and we live in a disaster of a property, they have deceived us” (M.3).

According to some authors, the housing costs were a fundamental factor to the purchasing of a dwelling in Spain compared to other markets (Rodríguez, Fernández and Rojo, 1998; Huete, Mantecón and Estévez). In this way, we are seeing that the majority of the Britons residing in the town own their own properties³¹:

“We bought the house because it was cheap, we sold the other one we had” (B.19)

With the onset of the crisis, people were fearful of the future of their houses, especially with the bursting of the real estate bubble. In this sense, in the case of the British, the crisis implies the impossibility of moving house or returning to England, as we have detected that the British do not have a mortgage on their properties but instead have sold their properties in the UK to buy in Spain.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The first conclusion is that the British have traditionally been seen as a source of income, and their welfare has not really been taken into account. They have been sold properties at any cost; regardless of whether these were even legal dwellings³². It is

important to understand what will happen to British migrants, but they seem to be the forgotten group.

They had problems with their properties in Spain because of corruption and were vulnerable because they did not speak Spanish. During the trial, they had translators, but they could not understand the process first-hand.

Thus, a housing market has centred on the British Community, as they mobilize a great deal of resources to this end. For example, *A Place in the Sun: Home or Away?*, is a British television program, dedicated exclusively to the sale of properties outside the UK, and just as the program's title suggests, is clearly focused on promoting a place in the sun; sales that, in the case of the British, are now causing great concern for those who are now worried about what the consequences the Brexit process may bring in regard to housing market values. And the Spanish market is sourcing outside the British frontiers, such as for example Russia and China, as substitutes to the British market.

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The foreign property market in the United Kingdom mobilises a great deal of resources, so not only are there television programs dedicated to the sale of properties, but, in addition, there are a variety of strategies offered to help one find a home. British real estate agencies in Spain also mobilise resources and employ real estate consultants and technicians specifically working for those who wish to move abroad, as well as a number of other services for these people, all of whom could become the collateral damage of Brexit, especially as so many people are likely to lose their jobs.

In relation to the economic crisis, it has had many consequences for the British Community, but the main consequence is that for many, it means the impossibility of moving home or returning to Britain, because of the loss of value of their homes; or as we observed, they are not able to move closer to the centre of town because of the decrease in value and higher process in the centre, at least at the beginning of the crisis. It seems that those expats living in Spain are going to keep their rights, but it remains unknown as to what is going to happen with the next people that want to move to Spain or another European Country. Because the requirements for the British may become the same as for third-country nationals outside the European context, with the added disadvantages that citizens from these countries experience, and so this may be the end of "a place in the sun", but only time will tell.

Finally, one of the problems encountered by expats is that the expectations of emigrating to Spain have been so high that they were unlikely to be met, and that these expectations have been truncated not only by the reality of the situation, but also by the economic crisis and the imminence of "Brexit", a process that, at the moment, has served only to raise many uncertainties.



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¹ Principally in regard to the influence Real Estate market.

² Regardless of the crisis in 2013, 13,000 Britons arrived in Spain. The next time round, we are going to better understand the effects of the “Brexit” (Eurostat).

³ In the context of the crisis, the Spanish government approved a Visa that granted a residence permits to people who met certain investment requirements in Spain (such as the purchasing of a house), but the majority of Britons that emigrate to Spain are generally middle class. The law is: Law 14/2013, of 27 September, on support for entrepreneurs and their internationalization http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/unidadgrandesempresas/ley14_2013/tripticos/triptico-invertir-INGLES.pdf

⁴ We have found this throughout our research.

⁵ These “satellite workers” (because they work around British Community) are going to have problems if the British Community leaves, because their work depends on them, and they do not work for natives because of their insufficient language skills.

⁶ It is important to note that emigration for reasons of environmental conditions or the cost of living are recurrent features in the sociology of migration. In his book, Ravestein already spoke of the possibility that people migrated for a better climate or because of the cost-of-living (Ravestein, 1885).

⁷ Other authors call it “late-life migration” (Sunil, Rojas y Bardley al, 2004). We are not particularly fond of this title because, as we will see, many people take early retirement and still have time to do many things. In addition, longer life expectancy means that there are still a great many years left to enjoy life after retirement. This type of migration occurs mainly, as far as we have been able to understand, between North-South Europe, but it is sometimes difficult to discern “retirement migration” from “lifestyle migration” because the differences are subtle. What does seem clear is that research that analyses other migratory movements, such as in the case of US citizens to Mexico, does not refer to this group as “lifestyle migrants”, but directly as *retirees* (Truly, 2004; Sunil, Rojas and Bradley, 2004).

⁸ In our fieldwork, many of them have their children outside the United Kingdom.

⁹ This image is one of the reasons people were attracted to the area and began to arrive in the 1950’s looking for an exotic rural world that no longer existed in the rest of Europe. We have found experiences like that of Frazer, who in his work *The People* (1973) narrates this feeling close to that of Heimat that we are describing, as does the work of Gerald Brennan (1954), based in the Alpujarra, to cite some other examples. As we shall see later, Spain has been considered an exotic place for people from northern Europe from times as far back as the nineteenth century (Sánchez-Sánchez, 2001).

¹⁰ Solana (2008) added the fact that the British and Northern-European population have felt attracted by the country's rural aspect for centuries, and thanks also to travel literature, as even Jaans Christian Andersen made several trips to Spain, and wrote a book about it (Andersen, 2005).

¹¹ Sociologists at the Chicago school were interested in these methods, since they have been fundamental to sociological research of 20th century, changing the research practices that were carried out within sociology until then (Gruber, 2005). As Giddens (1993) states, reality is not pre-coded and is built through people's social relationships, hence the importance of the use of such methods for understanding

people's behaviours. Sociologists have to understand social reality - that is their objective. For authors such as Giddens, this approach is important because it is in the logic of the subjects and their discourse that research should be based. (Santoro, 2001).

¹² Ethno-sociology is moving away from ethnology, insofar as sociologists have begun to make the research technique their own, as standard practice.

¹³ According to Giddens (1993), the only way to understand reality is to become "immersed" in the culture of others, just as anthropologists would do, though not as a native citizen, but as an observer. As we shall see, this technique has been used by prestigious sociologists such as Bourdieu.

¹⁴ Wacquant makes an approximation to the qualitative texts from the author (2004).

¹⁵ In addition to the interviews and fieldwork, a virtual press digest was undertaken in order to uncover articles and press news to inform the social image of both. This process was important, because it is these types of materials that shape public opinion.

¹⁶ Benidorm is considered to be the tourist destination for the British working class, because of the low costs associated with the city and the types of activities being promoted (Casey, 2013).

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¹⁷ This is a series that has been broadcast in the UK on the British channel iTV since 2007; it tells the stories of families who spend time in Benidorm. It has more than eight million viewers in the UK, and many Britons are attracted to visiting the city to see the show's locations and sets (Muñoz- Alonso, 2013).

¹⁸ Various UK programs focus on other aspects of the city's social life. Thus, we find a series such as *Benidorm ER*, which documents the incidents at a healthcare centre in the city in which all kinds of emergencies are dealt with (portal.benidorm.org).

¹⁹ *Entre limones* (2006), The Almond Blossom Appreciation Society (2006b), A parrot on the Pepper tree (2009); Three Ways to Capsize a Boat: An Optimist Afloat (2011), and Last Days of the Bus Club (2014).

²⁰ For more information on this subject you can read Pedro Jesús Martínez Alonso's thesis, *Libros de viajes de Alemanes e ingleses en España (German and English travel books in Spain)* (2003, UCM).

²¹ This is a collection of books that describe the cultures of the countries British citizens migrate to, aimed at helping readers to understand the culture of destination countries.

²² Britons are the leading buyers of property in Spain

²³ There have been many housing problems because of this oversight, though there are many Spaniards who have also fallen victim to these types of frauds.

²⁴ It should be mentioned that throughout this study, we have not found any Britons that fall into this category.

²⁵ They were helped by an English woman who had been living in Spain for many years, and who spoke Spanish fluently, besides the Spanish translator appointed by the court.

²⁶ <http://www.aplaceinthesun.com>



²⁷ Although on programs about labour migration, the life of the migrants themselves is treated as the main theme, or the example of programs such as “Españoles por el mundo” (“Spaniards around the world”), which relates success stories, this type of program can contribute to idealised images of the destination country, in which those who leave their country of origin are immensely happy. Therefore, an idyllic space to retire or live is built based on housing.

²⁸ We are referring to the fact that they have settled in residential areas that are not integrated within the municipalities, both in urban and in rural areas, hence the name of the process against urbanization 'counter-urbanisation' (Arroyo, 2001), a process that has consequences on the environment in which they are built, not only from a social perspective, but also from a urbanistic one (Montosa and Corpas, 2005); others see it as a way of innovating the territory (Vidal-Koppmann, 2000).

²⁹ In fact, for the realization of the interviews, they preferred to meet at their houses so as not to have to literally *descend* to the Town. They live in for example in urbanizations like Cumbres del Sol (which means Peaks in the Sun), a place that sits atop a hill.

³⁰ Some authors show that the housing developments are the places of residence of foreign residential tourists (Rodríguez Rodríguez, Casado Díez and Huber, 2006). Although in some specific cases, such as that of Huete (2010), it is seen that at least 16% of the European population resides within the urban fabric of the municipality of San Miguel de Salinas.

³¹ Research on this community shows that they own their homes, for example in a study conducted in San Miguel de Salinas, 92% of those surveyed owned their homes (Huete, 2010).

³² British television programs selling houses ask them to be prudent and purchase only from reputable sources (OP. 11/03/2011).

