



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

CODEN: IJRSFP (USA)

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 8, Issue, 6, pp. 17585-17594, June, 2017

**International Journal of
Recent Scientific
Research**

DOI: 10.24327/IJRSR

Research Article

IMPACTS OF US RESIDENTIAL TOURISM IN THREE NORTHWEST MEXICAN COASTAL DESTINATIONS: MAZATLÁN, SINALOA; CABO SAN LUCAS, BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR AND PUERTO PEÑASCO, SONORA

Omar Lizarraga

Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2017.0806.0386>

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 17th March, 2017

Received in revised form 21st

April, 2017

Accepted 05th May, 2017

Published online 28th June, 2017

Key Words:

Residential Tourism, Mexico, US citizens,
Social Impacts, Environmental impacts.

ABSTRACT

Several countries in Latin America are receiving Residential Tourism from United States and Canada. This residential displacement of people from the global north to the south, for longer than traditional tourists, has brought economic growth for some regions but also it has caused some social and environmental effects, given the economic asymmetry between the host population and the new residents.

Social: Given the economic polarization between tourists and local residents, there is gentrification in the urban space and a displacement of the local elite.

Environmental: In many cases these tourists demand spaces near the coast and places where biodiversity is very fragile.

In this paper the objectives were to analyze some impacts of residential tourism from United States in three coastal destinations in northwest Mexico: Mazatlan, Sinaloa; Puerto Penasco, Sonora and Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur. Using a non-participant observation methodology we describe the social and environmental impacts in the region. Using a quantitative methodology (survey) and relying on data provided by the National Migration Institute in each of the three entities, we also describe the demographic composition of these residential tourists.

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INTRODUCTION

For Huete (2008) the term "Residential Tourism" was incorporated into the academic debate by Francisco Jurdao in his 1979 book "España en venta: compra de suelo por extranjeros y colonización de campesinos en la Costa del Sol". In the following years the term *residential tourism* has been used by different researchers to refer to a diverse set of processes difficult to delimit, in which the intense economic activity around the real estate business with specific aspects of tourism, and these, with some forms of the new immigration forms and residential nature.

This type of mobility in search of amenity spaces for longer seasons than traditional tourists in European and American literature has been called: Amenity Migration (Janoschka, 2008), Privileged Migration (Croucher, 2009) North-South Migration (Balslev, 2008; Bozic, 2006), Retirement Migration (Gustafson, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), Consumption-Led Mobility (Huber, 2005) and the most common: Residential Tourism (Bielza and Bohl 2009; Huete, 2008; Cañada, 2013).

This mobility known since the fifties and sixties, on the early twenty-first century has been increasing rapidly to various Latin American countries such as Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Argentina, but especially to Mexico. Population from United States in this country living permanently or temporarily represents the most significant residential tourist and migratory flow with 56,906 US citizens officially registered at the National Migration Institute (2016).

In the citizenry of the most economically advanced societies has emerged nostalgia for landscapes and lifestyles difficult to find in their usual environment, which has contributed to the emergence of these new forms of residential mobility (Mazon *et al*, 2009). This permanent and semi-permanent mobility has become one of the most important characteristics of demographic and social change in developed countries. It is a clear indication of the new types of human mobility, which experience a major intensification since the last decades of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

The main question that guided this research was, What are the social and environmental impacts of residential tourism in host

communities? In this paper we proposed to answer this question. One argument put forward by different researchers, is that this mobility is practiced largely by people of advanced age (Croucher, 2009; Gustafson, 2008 and Janoschka, 2008). In this context, an additional question was ¿What is the demographic profile of residential tourists in Mexico? This information will help to better know the demographic and socioeconomic profile of people who practice this residential modality in Mexico.

RESIDENTIAL TOURISM: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Tomás Mazón and Antonio Aledo (2005) after carrying out a review of the literature, since the perspective of the economic production, they define Residential Tourism as:

"The economic activity that is dedicated to the urbanization, construction and sale of houses that make up the extra-hotel sector, whose users use them as accommodation for long periods or to reside, permanently or semi-permanently, outside their places of habitual residence, and which respond to new forms of mobility of advanced societies" (pp. 18-19).

Cañada (2013:71) defines it as "the phenomenon in which people settles temporarily or permanently in a tourist destination and buys a house, apartment or land. These are often people of European or American origin who move to the south in search of a more relaxed lifestyle, lower cost of living, better weather, etc".

Two pioneer studies of residential tourism were made in Spain in the seventies. They were made by the teachers of the University of Alicante, Mario Gaviria (1974 and 1976) and Francisco Jurdao (1979 and 1990). Since those years these researchers had a critical approach to this social phenomenon. According to Mario Gaviria (1974), cheap and exploited immigration is the result of residential tourism. Tourism Braceros, he called them; given the temporary nature of the jobs offered by this industry.

During the sixties, the hotels and tour operators, but also the villas and apartments were driven by Spanish entrepreneurs, but in the early seventies foreign capital was quickly replacing the Spanish capital, taking control of the hospitality industry, performing a figure that Gaviria defined as a *neocolonialism of quality space*. "The natural spaces within Europe, are increasingly scarce, and in a first stage were used as an invasion by the inhabitants from European advanced industrial societies such as the Netherlands, England or Germany" (Gaviria et al 1974: 89).

For the first time, Gaviria made a critical study of the real estate business in the residential tourism sector. He addressed social, economic and environmental impacts in this work: economic and social polarization, land speculation, exploitation of labor, etc. What was considered an income from tourism; it was actually income for selling territory, Gaviria argued (Gaviria, 1974).

Two years later (Gaviria, 1976), wrote another sociological reflection of the phenomenon, he coordinated the work entitled "El Turismo de invierno y el asentamiento de extranjeros en la provincia de Alicante" (The winter tourism and the settlement of foreigners in the province of Alicante), in which he used for

the first time the term *residential tourist*. That paper highlights that the province of Alicante was the second most visited for foreign residents in Spain, surpassing in cosmopolitanism to Madrid or Barcelona. Gaviria, also highlighted in this study the social and economic inequality of domestic immigrants and residential tourists from United Kingdom. At first, they migrated to work in hospitals, cementeries, restaurants, while the latter were coming in search of leisure spaces.

On the other hand, Francisco Jurdao (1979 and 1990), another pioneer in the study of Residential Tourism in Spain, in his work, he focuses on analyzing the phenomenon particularly in the town of Mijas, and it distinguishes the phenomenon to traditional or itinerant tourism. He speaks of an "Alternate Migration" (Jurdao, 1979: 14) its participants travel regularly between their residence in Spain and their residence in their country of origin". In this paper the author analyzed the negative impacts that caused the arrival of foreigners to the Spanish coast. He deeped into the problem of urban corruption manifested in property speculation. This tangible problem adds to the difficulty of communication that complicates the social relationship with the local population. The author concludes that "economic miracle that accompanied the Spanish hotel tourism, has been replaced by the apocalyptic vision of a residential tourism: foreign retirees who have a political priority over the local people locked in their reserves on Mediterranean coast of Spain" (p.27).

Recently the residential tourism is still seen from a critical perspective by sociologists such as Ernest Cañada (2007 and 2013), who includes the main impacts of residential tourism in three blocks: environmental, economic and social. The first, derived from the substantial increase in energy needs, overexploitation, the change in use of land, and the destruction of resources and ecosystems, as well as waste generation. Economically, creating precarious jobs and destroying traditional economic activities, causing an increase in prices of essential goods and repatriating the capital towards the global center. Social impacts arise from asymmetric relations between the tourism and local population, the erosion of human and intangible values, and the alteration of social structures in the destinations.

Since the 1950s, and at the same time as tourism was developing, a powerful artisanal fishing based economy that generated employment for thousands of workers was gradually disappearing in Spain. Tourism also triggered prices for land and housing, especially those closer to the sea, which are now destined for tourism infrastructures and second residences (Gascon and Cañada, 2016).

Several scholars have documented Residential Tourism in Spain and Brazil (Demajorovic, et al., 2011; Chile (Hidalgo and Zunino, 2011); Mexico (Lizarraga, 2012; Hiernaux, 2005); But overall in Spain (Huete and Mantecón, 2012; Mazón, Huete, and Mantecón, 2011; Huete, Mantecón, and Mazón, 2008), explaining its expansion and impacts in both, developed and developing countries.

In the case of the spanish coasts, where the associated changes have been shown with greater intensity, residential tourism activity has been an important accelerator in the process of social change in the country. This phenomenon, due to its

characteristic of migratory processes, has caused important changes in the demographic composition of the localities and a very important transformation in the landscape. It has also led to the disappearance of traditional activities, and local culture has been replaced by a new cosmopolitan and global culture, leading also to fragmented communities and new forms of social interaction (Aledo, 2008, Aledo, García, and Ortiz, 2010).

The real estate construction has been benefited more widely, however, soil consumption creates problems due to collision with other productive uses of the land (Serrano, 2003). It has boosted economic growth in some communities; it has even been a major agent of social and cultural change in these regions, but this model of tourism development is not exempt of problems and limitations (Aledo and Mazón, 2004).

Dada and method

To answer the research questions, at first it required a review of the main theoretical approaches outlined by the Social Sciences to explain the tourist and residential mobility. Subsequently we conducted a review and analysis of bibliographical, documentary and hemerographic material in the three locations studied.

To know the social and environmental impacts, a non participating observation was conducted in the three destinations during the period between 2012 and 2016. The official data of the Environment and Natural Resources Ministry (Semarnat, for the initials in Spanish) was also consulted; particularly we analyzed the Environmental Impact Manifestations of real estate developments in the areas in question, since these real estate developments are mostly owned by foreigners in the three destinations analyzed. The literature on the impacts of residential tourism was also consulted.

To know the demographic composition of residential tourists of US origin in the three places, we rely on data provided by the Migration National Institute (INM, 2016) until December of 2015. A survey in each of the destinations was also applied; we took a sample of 200 questionnaires in each place. The criteria in selecting people for the implementation of the survey was: Being a person of U.S. nationality, and living for long periods continuously or intermittently in these places.

The application of the survey was face-to-face, between the months of December and March of 2012 and 2013. The survey was conducted in: 1. The meeting places of their organizations, 2. in their churches, 3. in supermarkets, 4. in their homes, and 5. through e-mail.

Mazatlán, Los Cabos and Puerto Peñasco, México

This study was geographically delimited to these three Mexican locations because they are the most important tourist destinations of three states that according to the National Migration Institute are among the most populated by US citizens in the northwestern region of Mexico.

These are three coastal tourist destinations which have their peculiar characteristics. Mazatlan is a traditional destination that boomed in the seventies and, currently in a phase of slow growth compared with other tourist destinations, however, it has gained the preference of the US citizens, especially retirees,

as a permanent and semi-permanent residence. Los Cabos is a strategically planned tourist destination, relatively new, which for its urban planning, geographic characteristics and promotion, is the most visited by US tourists in Mexico. Puerto Peñasco is a tourist destination close to the US border (100 kms.), which geographical location has attracted Americans seeking a second home in Mexico. Social and environmental impacts generated by these tourist-migration flows vary in the three places, because the dynamics with the local community and the environment is different.

The city of Mazatlan is the second largest in the state of Sinaloa. Tourism and fishing are the main economic activities. It is one of the main tourist coastal destinations in the country and has the second largest fishing fleet in Mexico. The INM recorded until the end of 2015 to 1.931 US citizens who lived in the state of Sinaloa¹, of which, 90% of them lived in Mazatlan (INM, 2016).

According to a survey carried out in 2012-2013 in this city, in terms of age, the majority (57%) were born before 1945, ie in 2015, are aged 70 or older. Most of them (75%) are people arriving in marriage. Although there are some who make the movement lonely, being divorced (11%), single (9%) or widow (5%). They generally have a high level of education, 49% have a college degree, 12% a master's study, and 8% have a PhD. Only 1% of our sample don't have any studies.

Most of them are American middle class; professionals in management positions, teachers, civil engineers, doctors, vendors or government employees who have an average income between 1,600 to 3,500 dollars a month. According to the same survey, they live in medium-high socioeconomic level located north of the city.

On the other hand, Los Cabos is a turistic corridor, whose length is 33 kilometers and is located at the southern of Baja California Sur. In this state, the National Migration Institute, recorded in the same period of 2015, to 6.270 US citizens who lived in the state of Baja California Sur (INM, 2016). According to this institute, in Los Cabos is concentrated the 88% of the American population of the state. Baja California Sur is the third Mexican state with the largest population from the United States, only after Jalisco and Baja California.

According to our survey, the largest proportion (45%) is occupied by the range of between 45 and 63 years old; those born between 1945 and 1964, ie, Baby boomers. 34% are over 64 years old, and 21% are under 45. The majority (64%) are people who migrate in marriage. Although there are those who make the movement being divorced (18%), single (12%) or widow (4%). Here they also have a high level of education, 53% have a college degree, 11% a master's study, and 5% have a doctorate degree. As in Mazatlan, only 1% of our sample don't have any studies.

We found that the dominant social class is medium-high and high; business owners, salesmen, managers of companies, or real estate agents. But we also surveyed middle-class professionals; teachers, doctors, military, etc. Their average income in Los Cabos is \$ 3.500 per month. However, we found

¹This US population is registered under the migration modalities of "Residente Temporal" and "Residente Permanente". Foreigners can live legally in Mexico also with a tourist visa which lasts six months and can be renewed immediately.

a good number of people receiving more than \$ 6,000 monthly. Their residences are mostly located in the high socioeconomic level areas of Cabo San Lucas; private and located near the beaches.

The city of Puerto Peñasco in Sonora is another destination in which the most important economic sector is related to real estate and services. In recent years tourism was developed as an important activity that affected the community and the economy devoted to fishing, to become one of the fastest growing cities in northwest Mexico. National and state public policy and private investment focused on making Puerto Peñasco in a residential destination aimed to the population from the US southwest (Enriquez, 2008).

The state of Sonora has the record of 3,670 US citizens, of which 32% of them lies in the municipality of Puerto Peñasco (INM, 2016). In terms of age, the largest proportion (62%) is occupied by the range between 46 and 65 years old. 25% of them are over 65 years old and 13% under 46 years. Most of them (73%) are people who migrate in marriage, 11% are divorced, 8% are single and 8% are widow. They also have a high level of education, 46% have a college degree, 24% High school studies, 13% study a master's degree, and 4% have a doctorate degree. 1% of our sample don't have any studies. Their average monthly income is \$ 2,000 dollars (43% of our respondents) and their residences are located, as well as in Mazatlan and Los Cabos, at the high level areas near the sea. In the three destinations the social networks play an important role in choosing the place, because about half of US citizens surveyed had friends or relatives in the destination before the mobility.

Impacts of residential tourism in northwest Mexico

The mass media highlights the economic benefits that represent the arrival of this type of tourism, which is true, but little is said about the negative impacts it has on the regions of destination. This section will discuss the impacts generated in the region of northwest Mexico.

Tourism is an economic activity that has experienced strong global growth, contributing to development of many regions and countries. But usually in developing countries, this activity provides an overview of irreconcilable extremes; it combines two polarized social spheres and interdependent physical spaces. It also support practices that undermine natural resources, dissolves cohesion of ties in local societies, and distribute wealth based on a pattern that deepens social inequalities (Méndez, 2008).

In this case, we detect some important effects of the development of second homes of foreigners: Social polarization and hoarding of resources. Environmentally it represents erosion and pollution of beaches.

Social impacts

Social polarization

The residential-tourism destinations today show a marked process of physical transformation of the territory and landscape, establishing a clear case of spatial duality between sectors of "winners" and "losers" (Enriquez, 2008). In Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, the coastal zone established a curtain of

hotels and condominiums in front to the beach with superior urban services and facilities, infrastructure for entertainment, golf and spas. It is a tourist activity directed essentially to the North American public.

Second, Puerto Peñasco is actually in a process of rapid transformation. As we observed during the field work, the differences are prominent in terms of the provision of clearly inferior services and urban infrastructure with respect to the hotels zone. The old town center where fishers live is being displaced by the business and tourism-related services. Spaces used for selling crafts, food and nightlife predominate. The adjacent area to the city center, north and east, is the residence of employees in commerce and urban services, with a low level of urbanization, these are the new sections of the town recently created by the flow of immigrants employed in the construction and tourism services, is contrasting with respect to coastal area. Precariousness and social exclusion are common as well as the lack of potable water, electricity and drainage. Poor neighborhoods form a habitat defined by the material and social hardship, people has to endure the extreme weather of summer and winter in the Sonora Desert. Cardboard materials and galvanized steel used in the construction of housing complicate the situation (Enriquez, 2008).

Martinez (2008), mentions that the original urban core reports worrying indicators such as: segregation, mass migration, explosive growth, lack of basic services, demand for land, water and energy, depletion of local ecosystems, social vulnerability, and predominance of vertical forms of urban management that limit social participation. Puerto Peñasco as a touristic destination is divided into two, on one side the beach strip with hotels and residential condominiums, high level of equipment and urban infrastructure and social exclusiveness; on the other hand, the rapidly growing city, sandy streets, poor drainage and high social polarization.

The new development of houses along the coast of Puerto Peñasco, constitute a separate urban city, and foreigners unwilling to integrate to its local residents. Predominates US citizens, who only required local people for domestic work and occasional supplies. The sectors in Puerto Peñasco where the residential tourists live, are poorly connected with the city, both, socially and urban. They represent a model that tends to dispersion and fragmentation of the territory as in the case of La Choya and Las Conchas, these are small isolated towns and not very linked to the city (Enriquez, 2009).

In Puerto Peñasco there are developments and condominium towers on the coast, which prevent entry of people to the beach, even when under the national law, the free entry is a right of all citizens. The closure to the exterior is an important element for the sale of tourist residences, since the marketing on safety is based on the exclusive privacy with respect to the city as a whole and social differentiation. But despite the advantages that the model represents for homeowners, it imposes new forms of peaceful coexistence; on the one hand in the urban context it is difficult the free movement around the city. The privatized neighborhoods are inserted into the landscape, breaking the urban continuity and forcing people to surround these small fortresses, marking differences between those inside and those outside (Carrasco, 2008).

The strip of hotels and condominium complexes are carefully kept separated from the city, the distance is not only physical but also social. Territorially, construction activity has formed a prohibitory space for locals. Houses and condominiums and upscale hotels are protected by security systems that insulate and protect the comfort and pleasure of the foreigner's social imaginaries (Enriquez, 2009).

The displacement and segregation that is manifested in the fishing community of Puerto Peñasco has occurred largely because real estate development of the town has displaced fishermen from areas that had been traditionally held for their activity, to now be filled by new residents in spaces for recreation and relaxation.

Another study of two touristic destinations in Sonora (Enriquez and León, 2015) points out the same problems than Puerto Peñasco: 1. the rapid transformation of the natural environment and its replacement by hotel buildings and second homes, and 2. the social and functional segregation of the territory, dividing the tourist development zones of the rest of the village.

In the case of Mazatlan, a similar situation occurs with jobs, a large volume of temporary employment is generated during the time of construction and consolidation of the architectural projects, it encourages important migrations, once completed real estate developments, they become a conglomerate of population demanding services and employment in the tourist destination (González and Santana, 2009).

Bringas (1997) notes that in tourist destinations, the consumer expectations generated from the most economically advanced societies, imitation processes are emphasized especially in young people; in fashion, in music, values, among others; subjecting the local people by visitors. Similarly, many of the goods and services consumed by local residents increases because of tourists high demand, this arises an inequality of domestic economy. In the eyes of the host society, the tourism brings wealth, and tourists receive the best food, services, spaces, best beaches; processes that can generate antipathy or rejection of the visitor by the poorer population.

The transformations of tourism also produces spatial segregation in places where it occurs, that is, exclusiveness to the tourist areas is created. Often this organization of space has its origin from the expropriation of agricultural land, which has led to the expulsion of the original inhabitants. The expropriation of these lands in Mexico, usually justified on the argument that the native population will be participant in the economic benefits that tourism generates, in most cases they do not.

In Mazatlan, it is also occurring this duality or social polarization. On one side, there are the enclaves where the exaltation of consumption and expensive lifestyle for residential tourists. In contrast, exclusion and segmentation of the territory among the local population that shows the hardness of inequality, social segregation and marginalization. Urbanism expressed by *resort cities* for residential tourism results from the spatial reorganization of the exclusion. In defense of security and the desire of tranquility, barriers are erected to physically separate the other disadvantaged groups.

In the case of Los Cabos, Cabral (2007) argues that the growing tourist development has brought serious social problems due to the economic polarization. Many of the indicators of marginalization that occur among the rural population in agricultural fields, are also present in the peripheral neighborhoods of Cabo San Lucas, including problems such as child prostitution. The local authority speaks of more than 100,000 people in vulnerable conditions in the state, especially in rural areas, but also notes that this condition of vulnerability increases in the municipality of Los Cabos.

The growth of tourism developments in this region results in many social problems, domestic migration and settlement of immigrants in poor neighborhoods that appear rapidly without any services and immediately begin to demand water, electricity and schools (Cabral, 2007).

Until 2016, many of the jobs required by the municipality of Los Cabos are low-skilled, easily absorbing regional workers from traditional productive sectors, so that when it happens, the local social structure becomes more complex with the emergence of an immigrant population often marginalized that comes to a new one, but with less job security, longer working hours, labor flexibility and lower quality of life.

Usually, the way to solve the demand for skilled workers that the activity requires is by hiring immigrants from abroad, usually from United States, while the unskilled workers come from the south of Mexico. Unskilled labor in tourism is characterized by low wages, the abundance of temporary contracts, long working hours and poor safety conditions (Canada, 2007). These migrations from southern Mexico, in contrast to the north, are concentrated in Los Cabos, they highlight the social and economic polarization in the region. In the case of Mazatlan, has been documented before (Lizarraga, 2014: 69) that most of the local inhabitants see the arrival of foreigners to their community positively, since they perceive benevolent qualities of the Anglo-Saxon culture, and in many cases, a source of employment. But there are also critical positions, particularly from the perspective of people of middle and high socioeconomic status. On the other hand, the US citizens describe Mexicans as kind, hard-working, friendly and helpful, but also unpunctual and noisy. These differences in lifestyle often lead to minor conflicts.

Grabbing resources

Wastage and hoarding of resources such as water, is visible in residential developments in the northwestern region of Mexico, even though this is a public good, it has been privatized by the administration of desalination plants. These plants were financed with public capital, while its operation was concessioned to a Spanish company Inima, a subsidiary of OHL (the largest Spanish construction company), which has taken control of the operation of this public service. This has caused many conflicts of law and constitutional order. This has led to severe structural contradictions and policies that involve multiple instances of the federal government and public officials in service. A statistical projection states that in these resorts for every hotel room is attracted an average of more than 19 labor immigrants who require work and services (Salazar, 2009).

In Mazatlan providing basic resources such as water has become a serious problem. For Ramirez (2006), the water in our nation has become a topic of national security, due to its increasing scarcity, its availability has fallen alarmingly, thus the development of some regions is in risk, and even there are risks of international conflicts to the limited availability. For this author, in Mazatlan due to population growth, demand, climatic factors, overexploitation, pollution and its waste as common practices, the risk of scarcity is present.

Due to high economic resources of US citizens in Mazatlán, they live in the best residential developments, and of course, they are the first to be provided of water. Is common to see in their houses pools and large gardens, while much of the local population is often limited to this vital resource.

Tourism and real estate business in Mazatlan has reached a very rapid growth that covers large areas of coast strip. Such development causes the hotels, to compensate the water deficit, digging artisan's holes which chemical property is of a high salt content (Ramirez, 2006).

Ramirez (2006) displays a very critical future, if the constant increase in demand for water continues in the city, will cause drastically a reduction of water levels in the aquifers. This extraction encourages the overexploitation and intrusion of saline sea water that contaminates the aquifer, so the social, economic and environmental damage to the city will be incalculable.

Today, local authorities highlight the economic benefits the residential tourism brings to the region, however, they ignore the fact that the benefits are just for some investors, and the impacts are for the local population, and even they are threatening the development of the cities.

In Puerto Penasco and Los Cabos, being desert areas, the water becomes an important value. Hotels and residential areas of highest value are the privileged, while the inhabitants of poor neighborhoods are often limited. As we noticed in multiple field visits, the local people is often forced to store water in containers for domestic use, while in the residential complexes residents have pools and large gardens making an excessive use of water.

Environmental effects

Use of land

In Mazatlan this mobility has represented an economic benefit and a source of employment for an important sector of the local population. However it has resulted in hoarding of historic buildings, a change of labor activities for certain segments of the population, land speculation, change in use of land, and economic inflation. The Historic Center of this city is one of the most inhabited areas by US citizens. Even though the Federal Law on Monuments and Archaeological, Artistic and Historic Zones, points the obligations of owners of historic buildings, some Americans ignore the law. The director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH by the initials in Spanish) said that "at least seven buildings in the Historic Center have been, or are being changed without authorization of the institute. In particular he points out the case of the US citizen Thomas who has made unauthorized

changes to the building. The remodeling was suspended with labels, but the work continued. INAH has even called for the deportation of Thomas. He continues: "We struggled mainly with *gringos* who do changes and trample our national heritage, they do not listen, we have left notifications and they continue to work" (Contreras, 2009).

The use of space and particularly of the territory is of great importance in the assessment of the effects generated by the real estate development. Puerto Penasco with this urban and population growth, recreation of local residents has been modified for the enjoyment of new residents and tourists, generating a process of gradual displacement from the coast, which observation had always been one of the basic features of their lifestyle. As a result the coast is experiencing a drastic transformation of the landscape formed by sand dunes, desert flora, mangroves and wetlands, establishing in their place artificial and exotic landscapes. But also the high density of hotel developments and condominium towers on the coast allowed the privatization, restricting access to the beach for the Mexican population.

Since the mid-1990s, the beach first line becomes land of consumption for leisure, transforming the local scenery with a curtain of buildings on the sea front, while the urban periphery expands occupied by a wide swath of poor neighborhoods (Méndez, 2008).

The central argument of many authorities that promote this kind of development is to generate taxes. This is partially true, but construction permissions are disbursed only once, and federal taxes are rarely returned in full to the host society; however, municipal spending on maintenance and provision of infrastructure and facilities are an ongoing expense for municipal governments, not to mention other processes such as cultural influence (Hiernaux, 2009).

In the municipality of Los Cabos it has radically transformed the social, cultural, economic and even political life of the community (Cabral, 2006). The residential flow from the United States has impact in the transformation of South Californian society. Many residents of the city have sold their land to US citizens for a few thousand dollars and they multiply these properties after their performance for the benefit of foreigners. There is an important activity of sale of land. Tulio Ortiz (in Cabral, 2007) identifies nearly one hundred real estate companies in the south of the state, of which about sixty subsidiaries are headquartered in the United States.

Lower and attractive real estate prices are driving US citizens to buy a second home in Los Cabos. So in the coming years it will become home of many US retirees. That is what the secretary of Tourism of Baja California Sur, Oscar Escobedo Carignan stated for the American newspaper *La Opinion*: "Until now the demographically dominant group consists of people with full mobility without special care, but soon we hope will become the destination of many pensioners, including those who need help in their daily lives" (Arenales 2008).

The most serious problem by the presence of so many foreigners in Los Cabos has to do with the occupation of the territory, including of course the beaches. Virtually, the entire

peninsula is located within the so-called forbidden zone established by Article 27 of the Constitution. The constitutional prohibition for foreigners, states that they cannot own property within 50 kilometers from the coast and one hundred kilometers from the border, but this is practically ignored. There are two ways they can do it legally, from 1994 through the acquisition of a trust that no longer require any permission from Foreign Affairs, and now virtually renewable indefinitely (Bringas, 1989). The other way is to register a company in Mexico (Cabral, 2007).

The indefinite renewal of the trust is the most worrying aspect, this way, foreigners are allowed to acquire permanent rights of territory and further violate the constitutional ban. For Cabral (2006), this situation is particularly serious in the case of Baja California Sur, because its geographical position, its proximity to the United States and its isolation from the rest of the country, makes its sovereignty very vulnerable.

About this, Ignacio Ramirez (in Cabral, 2007) conducted a special report in which he shows that "Americans and Canadians speculators have grabbed the best beaches and grounds of national heritage. In Baja California Sur, a lot of beaches and coastlines are in hands of foreign businessmen, who have become exclusive places without access to Mexican citizens, there are fences, gates, barbed wire and chains to avoid accesses. There are other inaccessible places, hotels and settlements of foreigners who can be reached only by sea or by air. In addition, large real estate companies ignore the General Law of National Assets, so they exploit national heritage. Along the peninsula of Baja California Sur, many foreigners have illegally appropriated land, ranches and houses offered in Mexico, USA and Canada.

Erosion and pollution of beaches

The real estate developments that respond to the demand for this segment of tourism are set in coastal areas of the region causing beach-sand erosion, by the carelessness of those who design the projects. There is little attention to integrating landscape and is common to see these large towers that break the harmony of the environment. In addition, the water discharged into the sea without being properly treated, creates problems of pollution and damaging the ecosystem of the inhabitants and the economy of some fishermen.

The federal government is allowing all building projects in the region, with little or poor verification before the constructions. A high percentage of development projects are initiated without the authorization of the Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection. It is taken by common agreement the decision these residential projects are priority to job creation.

The environmental sector has a weak presence in the three destinations analyzed in this paper; local governments have a policy of economic development, not considering compliance with environmental regulations. For Salazar (2009), the residential demanding needs in Los Cabos are very important; this poses a political problem because it affects the sovereignty over the ownership of national coasts and shorelines. Also creates an imaginary boundary that discriminates national tourists, local service providers, and indigenous populations. Around the corridor of Los Cabos, it has become an excessive abuse of existing sand dunes, causing the destruction of these

by the constant use of trailers, which is damaging the flora and the fauna of the region. For Salazar (2009), these desert areas of northwest Mexico are biodiversity reserves that are endangered by capitalist greed.

Since residential tourists demand amenity areas and panoramic views, in all the three cases, the buildings most demanded by them are located in dunes near the beach. Real estate developers for these constructions dig the mountains causing an obvious impact on the flora and fauna of the region.

In these territories there are nature reserves and marine areas protected where local people is prohibited to fish. Many of them have been imprisoned actually (Heras, in Salazar, 2009), while the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing ignores large vessels exploding tons of marine resources for international markets (Caccavari, in Salazar, 2009).

Tourism and immigration brings urban settlements with high demand of water, and therefore, the little water in the desert has lowered and increased saltwater intrusion. Mangrove areas are razed to lift hotels and condominiums, golf courses replace the sand dunes, and motorized type entertainment ends with the desert flora (Enriquez, 2008).

The coastal tourist development facilitates the rapid deterioration of the natural environment; the desert landscape is replaced by scenarios breaking with the flora and fauna of the region. The architecture is an oasis of stereotypical representation of Mexico or the US-led consumption.

In Puerto Penasco what is significant is that the environment is used by the hotel and real estate business as mere rhetoric of sustainable projects, given the location of Puerto Penasco between two areas of ecological reserve (Biosphere of the High Gulf of California and Pinacate). The discourse of sustainable and environmental care is set as the background of public policy, but the negative effects on the environment are:

- Predation of desert landscape and the appearance of golf courses and hotels instead,
- The increase in per capita consumption of water, despite the progressive lowering of the few aquifers in areas with less percentage of annual rainfall in North America,
- High consumption of electrical energy in the maintenance of artificial environments in an area of the most extreme climate of North America (Enriquez, 2008).

Mexican tourism promotion in the international market transformed the region in northwest Mexico, by attracting large numbers of international visitors. The balance is a full scene of major structural, cultural and environmental conflicts (Salazar, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

The demographic profile of residential tourists in the three destinations studied in this paper tends to be shaped by older US citizens, usually retirees. They are people of medium-high socioeconomic levels, looking for amenity spaces in a country that provides economic and legal facilities; just as argued by authors in cases of other destinations in Southern Europe and Latin America. The knowledge of demographic profiles in

residential tourism improves to establish a framework for future studies of causes and impacts of this mobility.

According to previous studies, as well as the observation during the field work of the author, the arrival of mature age population to Mazatlán, Los Cabos and Puerto Peñasco has been a source of income and employment for local people by construction projects and daily consumption and services. But their arrival has had serious social and environmental impacts on host communities. In the three locations studied, inequality and social polarization is observed. The change in use of land and resources grabbing is alarming. Also real estate developments have caused beach erosion, and in the case of Puerto Peñasco and Los Cabos, in the dunes. These developments have also led to increased pollution problems, damaging the ecosystem, and the economy of some fishermen.

The urbanism of residential tourism cities tend to be defensive, ie, physically have barriers that keep isolated to internal residents from local population. In the case of Puerto Peñasco and Los Cabos there are a greater number of US citizens who inhabit these defensive urban complexes than in Mazatlán. This may change in Mazatlán by the recent construction of several condominium towers located near the sea. These residential complexes in the three destinations usually burst with the image and the harmony of the environment.

The appearance of buildings has affected employment for local people engaged in unskilled labor. However most of the profit is in hands of foreign investors and transnational real estate agencies.

The biggest problem we see in this investigation is the occupation of the territory and social polarization in the three locations studied. By their economic power, residential tourists have access to the best residential areas near the beaches, even privatizing them. And in the case of Mazatlán, hogging the historic buildings. Moreover, there is a local population impoverished and often lacking basic resources such as water. In Puerto Peñasco and Los Cabos is more noticeable this economic and social duality. Residential tourists have also built invisible barriers, such as distrust, that somehow isolated them from the local population.

Our approach in this paper is critical, but we are not against the residential tourism, we believe it should be regulated and above all organized. Local governments of the three destinations can turn this mobility into an important lever for regional development. We refer not only to the economic benefit, but also to the human capital. As seen in this research, we talk about highly educated persons, often retirees and willing to share their knowledge with the host society. An example of this use of human capital is San Miguel de Allende, México, where US citizens teach languages and other occupations.

This paper has intended to arouse the reader's interest and the attention of those interested in the study of tourism, pointing out some of the salient features, but research should continue to deepen in future trends.

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How to cite this article:

Omar Lizarraga.2017, Impacts of us Residential Tourism In Three Northwest Mexican Coastal Destinations: Mazatlán, Sinaloa; Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur And Puerto Peñasco, Sonora. *Int J Recent Sci Res.* 8(6), pp. 17585-17594.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2017.0806.0386>
