

The US citizens Retirement Migration to Los Cabos, Mexico. Profile and Social Effects

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Abstract

Today, in several Latin American countries, such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil, and principally Mexico, we are witnessing a migratory movement from Canada and the United States. These migrants have the common characteristics of time and economic resources, since most of them are retired. This international immigration has had serious effects on the host communities in several areas:

- a) Economic: because their purchasing power is higher than that of the local population. Real estate prices have increased as well the cost of the services, principally in some urban areas, provoking a reclassification of the urban space;*
- b) Socio-demographic: Within the migration process in some cases of the local women or men through marriage;*
- c) Cultural: In many of the cases, the American immigrants keep their culture and lifestyle at the retirement destinations; as a result they create cultural isolation from the local people.*
- d) Environmental: because they demand spaces near to the coast and places where the biodiversity is endangered.*

In this article we analyze the migratory process of the American citizens to a popular tourist destination located in the northwest of Mexico: Los Cabos, Baja California Sur. The social and environmental impacts in this region are examined.

Key words: Retirement, Migration, Los Cabos, Baby Boom, Social Effects.

Introduction

International Retirement Migration (IRM) has become one of the most important features of social and demographic change in developed countries. It is a clear indicator of changes in migratory patterns that register new types of human mobility; this kind of movement experienced a significant increase since the last decade of the twentieth century. This is a migration model based on consumption, not production (Salvá, 2005).

This movement is also surprising because it does not represent the criteria of other classical migrations: such as an economic crisis or political reasons forcing people to leave their country of origin.

These are migrants seeking a better life, not only for economic reasons, but for environmental reasons, tranquility, proximity to the ocean, et al. (Almada, 2006). This type of migration is not always permanent and is often difficult to separate it from tourism and has thus not yet received much attention from scholars.

International Retirement Migration can be observed in different regions of the world. In the case of the European continent, the retirees from the Nordic countries move to the Mediterranean region, highlighting destinations like Portugal, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Hungary and Spain (King et al., 1998). In Oceania, Australia and New Zealand also are popular among the retirees from northern Europe and East Asia (Shinozaky, 2006). In the American hemisphere, the countries of Central and South America such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, but especially Mexico are attractive to retirees from the United States and Canada (Puga, 2001; MPI, 2006).

Today this flow is becoming more important for the government of host countries, investors and academics because we are witnessing a mass retirement of members of the generation called "Baby Boomers". This is the generation born after the war, between 1946 and 1964, which now accounts for two thirds of the global population of 6.5 billion and in the U.S. 76 million of it's citizens fall into this demographic (Dailey, 2005).

Mexico historically has been a destination for North American migrants, some places such as San Miguel de Allende and Ajijic have been popular among US citizens since the sixties, with painters, musicians, sculptors and hippies looking for a place distant from their home and to live on a low income.

Recently, the socio-economic and demographic profile of the American immigrants in Mexico has changed. Now, many have better retirement benefits and higher incomes than previous expatriates. U.S.-Mexico migration, particularly to Los Cabos, has had important economic, social, environmental, political and cultural effects on the host society. Most have a purchasing power far beyond that of the locals and socio-cultural and economic differences have had a significant impact on the local community.

For this research, we conducted a survey of expatriates in Los Cabos. We took as a guide the population registered at the National Migration Institute (Instituto Nacional de Migración), in order to get the “official” data of the number of US nationals residing in the city. The number of US nationals registered in this institute is 6,123. Using this baseline number and taking a maximum error of 5% and 85% confidence as representative, the sample size in the survey was 201 questionnaires. The survey was applied to addresses where we had access, but a large part of this population live in gated communities and were thus inaccessible. We administered the surveys in public meeting and commercial centers, churches, and via e-mail as well. The survey allowed us to assess the socio-demographic features such as gender, age, marital status, place of origin, work experience, health issues, income and expenses, but also the reasons why they decided to migrate. In addition to the surveys, we also conducted some lengthier interviews with US citizens in the region.

US immigration to Mexico and Los Cabos

The Migration Policy Institute of the United States identified the Mexican states that receive the most elderly immigrants, these are: Jalisco, Guanajuato, Baja California, Baja California Sur and Nuevo Leon. Followed by all other states closer to the northern border such as Sinaloa, Durango, Zacatecas and Tamaulipas (MPI, 2006). The same document identified ten destinations, or poles of attraction for immigrants such as Guadalajara and Chapala, Jalisco, Leon and San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Tijuana, Mexicali, Rosarito and Ensenada, Baja California and Los Cabos in Baja California Sur.

Based on data provided by each of the the National Migration Institute’s regional offices, we found that there are a total of 108,052 registered Americans living in Mexico. It must be said that this number of Americans only includes those that are registered under the migration forms FM2 and FM3; nonimmigrant and immigrant, respectively (see chart 1). It is important to note that the state of Baja California Sur, currently ranks second in the country in terms of the highest rate of immigration from the United States. We do not have the exact number of Americans that live in Mexico under the (FM1) tourist visa, but these people can reside for up to six months of the year in Mexico. The

Migration Policy Institute quoting the US Department of State estimated that a total of 1,036,300 American citizens are living in Mexico (MPI, 2006).

Chart 1. The US Population in Mexico by State.

State	Number of Americans
Aguascalientes	160
Baja California	22,137
Baja California Sur	13,905
Campeche	2,069
Chiapas	429
Chihuahua	11,605
Coahuila	2,482
Colima	1,110
Distrito Federal	5,858
Durango	156
Edo. De México	462
Guanajuato	9,992
Guerrero	1,121
Hidalgo	89
Jalisco	11,527
Michoacán	886
Morelos	500
Nayarit	2,357
Nuevo León	1,743
Oaxaca	1,791
Puebla	1,473
Querétaro	2,030
Quintana Roo	2,487
San Luis Potosí	487
Sinaloa	4,385
Sonora	3,500
Tabasco	108
Tamaulipas	572
Tlaxcala	76
Veracruz	1,816
Yucatán	590
Zacatecas	149
Total	108,052

Source: National Migration Institute (2009).

Los Cabos is the destination examined in this research and it is particularly interesting because of the large number of US citizens who reside there and the accelerated increase in recent years. According to the Migration Policy Institute of the United States, there was an exorbitant increase in the American immigration to Mexico

during the years 1990-2000. For example, during this time the number of US citizens in Los Cabos increased a 308% (MPI, 2006). This is not to suggest that immigration to other destinations has slowed. Indeed, migration to Ajijic, Jalisco increased 581%, and San Miguel de Allende 47.7% during this same time period (MPI, 2006). Mazatlán is also becoming increasingly popular showing a 95% increase between the years 2004-2006 (Lizárraga, 2006).

The so-called real estate boom in Mexico is linked to this influx. According to Greg Redderman, who owns the real estate agency Re/Max of Cabo San Lucas, there are homes near the mountains with prices ranging between US\$300,000 and US\$600,000 and others on the beach are between US\$600,000 and US\$1.2 million. There are even some more luxurious properties with price tags in the US\$8-10 million range. Greg also tells us that the housing boom in Los Cabos began around 2002 and the principal buyers are from California (Redderman, Greg, 10/04/08).

The National Migration Institute (INM), reported in January of 2009 that 13,905 Americans lived in the state of Baja California Sur. According to the same institution 7,704 are men and 5,283 women, of whom 7,486 are renters who live on resources brought from abroad; most do not work and are dedicated completely to rest. Also, there are 5,501 who have permission to engage in income-generating activities. According to this Institute, in the municipality of Los Cabos there are a total of 6,123 Americans, accounting for 47% of the U.S. population in the state (National Institute of Migration, 2009). US citizens in the area of Los Cabos are concentrated in the towns of: Buena Vista, Los Barriles, Todos Santos, San José del Cabo, and Cabo San Lucas, but the majority (80%) are in the latter two.

Taking into account that the population of Los Cabos in the census of 2005 was 164,162 people, American immigrants comprise 3.72% of the total population of the municipality. However, the number of Americans increases if we take into account those who enter the country with a tourist visa who, as we said before, can stay up to six months in Mexico and have the right acquire properties. This is why it is difficult to precisely determine the number of foreign-born residents living there at any given time.

Socio-economic and demographic profile of the US citizens in Los Cabos

The survey results revealed that the vast majority (88%) first visited the Los Cabos area as tourists. A pleasant experience is often the key motivator for them to choose this place for retirement years later. The results also showed that these people are mostly from California, followed by Washington State, Colorado, Oregon, and the border states of Texas and Arizona.

As to their age, the highest proportion (45%) is between 45 and 63 years old, in other words, they fall into the category of “baby boomers”. It must be said that these people do not yet enjoy all the benefits of retirement, i.e. Social Security, but most can easily live here off of their pension from former jobs, savings, or are still engaged in some lucrative activity. The Americans captured in the survey who are over 64 years old and eligible to receive this government benefit represents 34% of the population. And thirdly, there is a sizable population who are under 44 years (21%). We found that this group is predominantly medium-high to high income; business owners, salesmen, managers or real estate agents, but also includes some teachers, doctors, military, etc.

The monthly average income is highly diverse. There is a 25% of people who receive between US\$2,400 and US\$5,000 a month. A smaller percentage (5%) receives between US\$5,100 and US\$6,000 but a higher percentage (20%) receives more than US\$6,000 per month. It must be said that we also captured a significant number who receive between US\$1,000 and \$2,300 monthly (22%).

In Los Cabos, where the principal economic activity is tourism, the average wage for locals is not nearly this high and a secondary migration from within Mexico is occurring to find employment in construction and other low-skill, low-wage jobs. The result is great wage disparity between most of the US nationals and the local people.

Most of the migrants surveyed (64%) are married. Although there are also those who made the movement alone, arriving: divorced (18%), single (12%) or widowed (4%). It should be noted that there are also a good number of Americans who have married local people, mostly US men marrying local women. In fact, there are strategic advantages to these marriages because it allows them to buy property without the expense of the trust that must be paid by foreigners to own property in Mexico. In this case, he may put the property in his wife's name convincing her to sign an absolute power of

attorney on the property as a form of protection, the local term for this is “*prestanombre*”. Secondly, from a cultural perspective, many US men consider Mexican women to be much more “manageable” than US women and therefore feel greater security with their property, as well as for company and personal care (Almada, 2006).

A total of 8% of the American men surveyed are married to Mexican women, meanwhile only 3% of the American women are married to a Mexican man. From our perspective, these intercultural marriages, besides the physical attraction, are the result of three factors: a) the economic security that the Mexican women finds with a US husband; b) the added security that Americans receive on their financial investments in Mexico; and c) The social ascension experienced by Mexican women marrying a foreigner with a higher income and educational status.

According to the survey, 67% live in the region of Los Cabos under the FM2 or FM3 migratory forms, 20% with a tourist visa and 11% are citizens. According to the INM there are 5,501 people who can legally engage in money making activities, but it should be mentioned that this number of Americans increases if we take into account those who simply carry on illegally under their tourist status.

In general, these immigrants have a high level of education: 53% have a university/Bachelor’s degree, 11% a Master’s degree and 5% have a doctoral degree. Only 1% of our sample does not have a university degree at all. If we compare this with the Mexican average, it is obvious that they these US citizens are much more educated. In the year 2000, of the 97 million Mexicans, only 3 million of the students in the country were in the preparatory (i.e. Bachelors degree) level and only 1.6 million on the upper (i.e. Masters or higher) level (INEGI, 2000).

When asked about their homeownership status in Los Cabos, 61% of Americans own their home, 23% pay rent, and the remainder lives at the home of a friend (6%), or with relatives (3%). This high percentage of home ownership has obviously economic benefits for the real estate business.

When asked about the value of their homes, a large number of people chose not to answer this question; however, the average value of the houses was evaluated by this author at US\$350,000 or more and relatively few who live in a house worth less than 50 thousand dollars

The majority of those in the medium-high to high social class live in gated communities near the beach. The four areas that are most popular among U.S. citizens are: Cabo Bello, El Pedregal, El Tezal and Las Ventanas. It is also important to mention that some respondents were from the colonies such as the popular neighborhood Magisterial.

When asked why they chose Los Cabos as a retirement destination, the reason most often repeated was the climate of the locality, followed by lifestyle, the people, economy, beaches, et al. In the case of Los Cabos, the climate is undoubtedly the main reason why Americans choose this place as a retirement destination. Most do not have any economic difficulties and little interest interacting with the local society. This fieldwork also included email surveys of Americans living in the city. We drew attention in particular to the response of Gary Morton who says: *"Dear sir, I can not help you because I do not trust on the Mexican government, just on (like) mine. I moved here just for the weather and I want to be out of pressures. I would appreciate it if you keep it that way"* (Morton, Gary, 23/03/09).

However, a considerable percentage of respondents said they had migrated to the region because of the local people and the lifestyle. In this regard, Marcos Sparh (interviewed by Almada, 2006), says that he came looking for the Mexican culture that he met with some neighbors as a child: the *mariachis*, food, joy of life, but especially the family. Mr. Sparh comments with sadness that currently he no longer sees this place in the same manner, and deplored the arrival of his countrymen, because he did not want to live with foreigners, he wanted to live with Mexicans.

The third important reason for migrating to the place is the economy. Teresa Sorohuet, a local woman married to an American (interviewed by Almada, 2006), said that here, although her husband's economic capital was enough to buy a house for more than a million pesos, go on their honeymoon to Europe, and have recent model cars, that this same money in the United States would just be enough to survive, so that's why her husband, a Vietnam veteran, decided to change his residence to Baja California Sur.

The American citizens in Los Cabos spend two thousand dollars a month in average, money spent on taxes, recreation, medical services, consumption of all kinds, domestic helpers, etc. This has an important economic impact on the region because they

spend more money than the average of the Mexicans inhabitants. We can identify two kinds of American immigrants, the ones who try to improve their quality of life spending less money than in the United States, and the ones who are looking for a better climate and leisure at any price. In fact, there is a ten percent of Americans that spend more than 6,500 dollars a month, these are people used to a high quality of life.

Social and Environmental effects of US Immigration to Los Cabos

The US immigration constitutes 90% of total international immigration into the region and has therefore become an important element in the social and economic life throughout the state. The Los Cabos corridor in particular has been radically transformed by the increasing presence of Americans (Cabral, 2006). This extends even to the architecture of the houses which now include large fences and walls protecting their space.

Many residents of the village have sold their land for a few thousand U.S. dollars, which was subsequently transformed and developed dramatically increasing the value of the property to the benefit of foreigners. The buying and selling of land has become an important economic activity. Tulio Ortiz (in Cabral, 2007) identified nearly a hundred real estate companies in the south of the state, of which about sixty are affiliated with headquarters in United States. As Ortiz said, it is now difficult to know which land belongs to Americans and which does not.

The relatively low prices in real estate and the region's attractiveness as a whole, are driving many Americans to buy a second home in Los Cabos and this trend is expected to continue. This was confirmed by the Secretary of Tourism of Baja California, Oscar Escobedo in the newspaper *La Opinión*: "So far the demographically dominant group is made up of people with full mobility and without need of special care, but soon we hope we will become the destination for many elders, including those who need help in their daily lives" (Arenales, 2008).

This tourism-related industry development has resulted in many social problems, migration and settlement of immigrants in fringe colonies that appear in impressive speed. Up to three thousand people arrive in the region in just three months, people who demand all kinds of services and immediately begin to apply for water, electricity and

schools (Cabral, 2007).

Environmental Concerns

Needless to say, this process of urban development also entails a series of environmental impacts, that now threaten to degrade a wide range of natural, historical and cultural resources within the community. Throughout the area, it is common to see housing developments built on the beaches and on the dunes that has caused deterioration in the quality of peoples' lives as it has damaged the landscape and ecology of the area. When observing the natural environment as a whole, it becomes obvious that it can not support the massive tourist model that has been implemented over the past twenty-five years, given that its ecological equilibrium is extremely fragile (López, et al, 2006).

To reinforce this idea, it is sufficient to say that together with the massive arrival of visitors to the region, the aridity of the environment has necessitated the overexploitation of the aquifers which, in turn, has led to the penetration of sea water inland and the salinization of the water supply in the region. To this can be added the extreme levels of urbanization in the corridor that have caused deforestation of the xerophytic vegetation which, in turn, has led to a greater propensity for erosion of the soils (López, et al, 2006).

The most serious environmental problem posed by the presence of so many Americans in Los Cabos has to do with the occupation of land, in particular the beaches. Virtually the entire peninsula is included within the so-called forbidden zone established by Article 27 of the Constitution which prohibits foreigners from acquiring property within 50 kilometers of the coast and one hundred miles of the border, but here, it is virtually ignored. There are two ways to do so legally. Since 1973, foreigners can acquire a trust (*Fideicomiso*) that does not require any permission from Foreign Affairs and is now virtually renewable indefinitely (Bringas, 1989). Since 1989, one can also acquire these lands by registering a company with an address in Mexico (Cabral, 2007). The trust is a more common way to acquire property. They were created to bring in tourists and tourist development and ideally, local people would be beneficiaries.

Nora Bringas (1993) notes that reality has shown that not only did local people not benefit but that the foreigners have taken large swaths of land and created no

alternatives for survival, hence many of the locals have had to work in domestic services or construction. As a result, there are increasing inequalities in lifestyle and income, where foreigners occupy the best coastal land with increasing privacy and exclusivity and living the American way of life. This problem is evident in the Tijuana-Ensenada corridor. Here, the *ejidos* have been transformed for tourist development and many of the villagers have been displaced from their lands and have been incorporated as the working force in the resorts (Bringas, 1993).

In Los Cabos, there is another problem with the real estate has emerged. According to Maria Luisa Cabral (2006), among the few potential benefits from the sale of these properties are the taxes, but many have now learned how to reduce or eliminate paying them thanks to advice from their real estate brokers.

According to Antonio Diaz (in Guido, 2007), on the Pacific coast, in the San Jose del Cabo to Cabo San Lucas corridor there are obvious changes in the landscape, one of them because of the construction of golf courses and the sale of large tracts of land to build housing developments, which has altered the road facing the beach so that local people no longer have access to those areas.

Throughout the municipality of Los Cabos there is an inordinate abuse of the existing sand dunes, caused largely by the constant use of trailers that damaging the local flora and fauna. For Ana Salazar (2009), the desert areas of northwest Mexico are places of biodiversity threatened by global capitalist greed.

In the area facing the Pacific Ocean, from Los Cabos to the village of Todos Santos, as well as the Gulf of California side, there are mega projects with hotels, golf courses and residential areas being developed on the dunes. Other areas such as Los Cerritos located south of Todos Santos, a former farming community, has been sold to Americans and having the same fate (Guido, 2007).

Currently, the trend of development throughout the region is not the construction of major hotels, but the construction and sale of residential properties such as villas, condos, and houses. This transformation is radically changing the concept of place from a popular tourist site to a social space where the purchase of a property requires all of the services needed for permanent residents.

Just as the entire peninsula of Baja California is experiencing major changes as a

result of rapid real estate development, the rest of the state is awaiting the same fate, as there is a strong trend to sell large tracts of former *ejido* lands for tourism projects, many of which are in isolated spaces, as large investors prefer sites with small populations, with new opportunities at very low cost.

For example, in the complex named Loreto Bay and Punta Chivato, many irregularities were found by the inspectors from the Federal Environment Protection Council (Procuraduria Federal de Proteccion al Ambiente, PROFEPA), these developers built on beaches without any permission. Also north of Loreto, on the beach “El Mangle”, 500 acres were sold for residential development (Guido, 2007).

In general, land tenure is one of the major factors of change in the region as *ejidos* have acquired full rights to sell tracts of hundreds or thousands of acres. Buyers then speculate and sometimes sell them several hundred percentage points higher than their purchase price, generating huge profits, mostly to foreigners.

In the region, there are two extreme positions: those who dream that the government will make the decision to expel the foreigners and return the villages to their ancestors, and those entrepreneurs who want to become part of the tourism development with large chains of hotels and casinos (Almada, 2006).

Isolation and social polarization

A phenomenon that we see in Los Cabos is real estate/residential development on the outskirts of urban centers and in desert areas. These new colonies of varying size are usually beyond the urban centers and in environmentally sensitive areas. Generally, these developments are initiated by a single developer who buys the land and transforms it through a series of legal activities. This transformation enables an investor to garner the necessary infrastructure to develop the land and then they can sell or develop the land themselves. These developments are not classified as urban or semi-urban, but as Andreas Huber (2005) calls them ex-urban areas, because although they are close to the villages, they are not really part of them. As Huber (2005) claims: "These places are often without all the facilities, lack local references and are defined internally. That is, those are colonized spaces that may appear in the same way in different places" (p. 101).

As we can see, the real estate business has become an important economic activity

for the region, considering that most Americans who live here, do so in their own house. A similar trend occurred in the Tijuana-Ensenada corridor in the eighties: "The jobs generated are insufficient, the beneficiaries in this type of immigration have been the realtors, as they have split up the coast and sale the land and homes" (Bringas, 1989).

This economic polarization between Americans and local society has brought a hierarchy of social classes. Rossana Almada (2006:220) mentions that the presence of this community has increased the workforce, but as Americans pay with dollars, the Mexicans no longer want to work for other Mexicans. This conflict produced transformations in the region and has also displaced the local elite, as American immigrants not only are currently occupying their houses, but also their place in the social hierarchy.

A related social problem that occurs is due to the supply of labor for the construction for tourism developments, as nearly 400 daily workers are joining the local population, who require housing and this in turn, basic municipal services, so it is completely overrun by a planning in a short or medium term (Guido, 2007).

Because of this widespread development, residential tourism (and International Retirement Migration) has an impact on the shape of cities. The model adopted in Playas de Rosarito, Ensenada, Loreto and Los Cabos, is clearly a *defensive urbanism*. The condominiums are gated for security and the coastal areas are privatized, the public space is being restricted as is access to the beaches (Enriquez, 2008). The physical impact of defensive urbanism (Enriquez, 2008) represented by real estate and hotel developments is significant. Adversely it affects the coastal environment, entails a precarious and disarticulated urbanization of settlements, privatizes the public space and fragments the land and provokes a social segregation.

The American community is a numerical minority that seeks to subjugate the local majority, because the Americans have enough economic resources to participate in negotiations, thus accentuating the asymmetry in social and political relations. In this way, they objectify their inequality by appropriating and transforming physical space, so that it reflects their social position in space. The Americans have also prompted some strategies to keep their distance from the nationals, since they have been placed in the center of the social space due to their economic power. They put fences around their

homes higher than those typically used by local people and many refuse to speak Spanish (Almada, 2006). As we mentioned before, because US citizens distrust the local society they are often reluctant to have relationships with locals. This distrust is reflected in the construction that isolates them from the rest of the general society. Larger walls, bigger fences, security cameras and guards, announcements and aggressive signs on their houses are now commonplace throughout the area. Also the high density of real estate development on the coast has led to the closure or restricted access to the beaches for the general population; i.e. the privatization of formerly public spaces.

According to Almada (2006), even the young people who work in a business managed by Americans have an attitude of superiority over the rest of their countrymen since with American bosses they receive better wages. We don't know the exact number of Mexican people who work for American capital business, but undoubtedly it is considerable taking into account that there are 5,501 American citizens that have permission to engage in economic activities in Los Cabos. However, even though there may be economic arrangements, it seems many Americans have little interest in assimilating with the local society.

In the region there is also an unfair distribution of basic resources such as water. At the beginning of the new millennium, it is important to recognize that one of the most abused resources is water, vital and indispensable element for economic and social development, and of course, for human existence itself. But the waste of this resource characterizes the current consumer society (Ramirez, 2006). Being a desert area, water in Baja California Sur is even more precious. As noted earlier, hotels and residential areas are the most privileged recipients of this resource meanwhile inhabitants of the lower-income colonies often have limited access and supply. While the locals are forced to store water in containers for domestic use, in residential neighborhoods they have pools and large gardens with a disproportionate use of water, due to their economic power they enjoy.

There are five golf courses in Los Cabos totaling 678 hectares and that number is likely to grow rapidly as more expatriates arrive. This figure is quoted with pride and triumph by the government as well as transnational investors; however, the magnitude of the problem related to the lack of water has still not been valued in its entirety. A

significant portion of the water used to irrigate these fields is either sewage water or recycled by the tourist complexes themselves, but it is known that this does not cover the total demand and, therefore, water is extracted from the San José basin. In the tourist corridor of Los Cabos there are 40 hotel developments and only six treat their sewage water. Four use the water afterwards and nineteen know neither the quantity supplied nor the volume of sewage created. This gives an idea of how water, on the one hand, is being extracted without control or normative conditions, and on the other, how its use is not being optimized as it should be. This is even more alarming when it is realized that 15 percent of the population of the corridor does not have potable water in their homes (López et al. 2006).

Precariousness and social exclusion are common as well as shortages of clean water, electricity and drainage. Colonies form a habitat defined by material and social deprivation where people have difficulty with the weather extremes of both the summer and winter. The poor materials and galvanized sheets used in construction of houses complicate the situation. Los Cabos, as in Puerto Peñasco (Enríquez, 2008) is divided in two, on one side there is the beach side complete with a high level of services and infrastructure, complete with exclusive and on the other side is an overcrowded community characterized by streets of sand, lack of drainage and high social polarization.

For Salazar (2009), in Los Cabos where the needs are quite demanding and depend mostly from abroad, poses a political problem and affects the national sovereignty over the ownership of the Mexican coasts. It also creates an imaginary boundary that discriminates against domestic tourists, residents and service providers. This population growth combined with poverty and social inequality, uneven patterns of access to and use of natural resources, as well as patterns of production and current consumption, all to impose a heavy burden and irreversible damage to the social and natural environment in the fragile ecosystem of Los Cabos. It can deplete the natural resources and threaten the sustainability of development (Ramirez, 2006). According to Mike Davis, these centers in Baja California had been "silently invaded by the baby boomers", is just the latest sign of a new Manifest Destiny (Davis, 2006).

Conclusions

From this research we can conclude that International Retirement Migration is itself a kind of movement that is caused by the imbalance on the hierarchical structure of the global economic system. In the American case, the weakening of the welfare state combined with the current high cost of housing and health insurance are some of the main reasons to move to the south side of the border, where the added value of their pensions and the moderate cost of living prevailing in the region has led them to settle permanently. A good number of them can not access these services at their places of origin in United States, while in Mexico they have the benefits of good quality at low prices while enjoying a warm climate.

The number of retired US citizens in Los Cabos will continue to grow rapidly in coming years due to: a) the mass retirement of baby boomers, many of whom will seek alternative places of residence outside of the country; b) the geographical, economic, social and cultural attraction in the northwest of Mexico compared to other localities; c) an increasing number of Americans have prior contacts with compatriots, so the social networks become more important in the migratory process; d) Since these immigrants generally have a good image of the region, they do not see the transformation of the area and are satisfied with their situation.

The American immigration to Los Cabos, has led to many social and environmental problems but local governments need to consider how this flow can be converted into a factor for regional development. We refer not only for the economic income generated but the high level of human capital that is also present. In this research we adopted a critical stance about the immigration of American retirees in Mexico, this does not mean we are against it, but we do feel that this migration should be controlled and above all, organized. Only with a comprehensive planning will this migration be a lever for local development in the main destinations for retirees in Mexico.

A feature of the baby boomers in retirement age is that they do not want to be removed from society, some of them start new careers, businesses, some learn a new discipline, have a part-time job, and/or engage in philanthropic activities. They have a high sense of social organization. The baby boomers are the most highly educated population in the entire history of humankind. A good number of those who immigrate to Los Cabos have a high educational profile: teachers, engineers, doctors, administrators,

business people, men and women with great experience and intellectual knowledge which can still be used. In some cases they do it even voluntarily with the sole purpose of being useful to their host society.

In the region of Los Cabos, models of residence can be built for immigrants trying to make a fair division of territory, while enabling them to live in relationship with people of all ages. This has been implemented in France, United Kingdom, Sweden or Italy.

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