



## Linking Tourism, Retirement Migration and Social Capital

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## LINKING TOURISM, RETIREMENT MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

ABSTRACT A general trend in the study of international retirement migration has been the increased attention paid to the social contacts and network connections of the migrants in both the destination and origin areas. These studies have examined the extent to which migrants build social relationships with their neighbours and the host society while also maintaining social links with their countries of origin, addressing the central role that leisure travel plays in sustaining increasingly dispersed social networks and maintaining the social capital of these networks and of the individuals involved in them. This paper explores the relevance of transnational social networks in the context of international retirement migration providing an in-depth analysis of the nature, meaning and extent of these transnational social networks. Building on the concept of social capital and Putnam's (2000) distinction of bonding and bridging social, we propose a framework for the analysis of the migrants' international social networks. The results of a study conducted among 365 British retirees living in the coast of Alicante (Spain) show both the strength of the retirees' international bonding social capital and the role of 'visiting friends and relatives' travel and communication technologies in sustaining the migrants' transnational social practices and, ultimately, their international social capital. It also evidences the reinforcing links between tourism-related mobility and amenity-seeking migration in later life.

KEY WORDS: International retirement migration, tourism, social capital, Spain

## Introduction

An emerging thread of research on tourism geographies relates to lifestyle migration and the quest for a better life elsewhere (for a review see Benson and O'Reilly 2009b). The concept of lifestyle migration encapsulates the implications and varied manifestations of leisure mobility in contemporary societies. Among lifestyle migration, international retirement migration (hereafter IRM) has been one of the most widely researched forms of leisure/lifestyle mobility. In Europe, the study of IRM has traditionally focused on the analysis of flows from northern to southern regions, the nexus between tourism-related mobility and migration in later life and the impacts of such population flows at the destination level (for a review see Casado-Díaz 2011). Despite the increasing number of studies centred in the analysis of the experiences of IRM migrants in their new destinations (O'Reilly 2000; King et al. 2000; Huber and O'Reilly 2004; Oliver 2007; Gustafson 2008 and 2009; Casado-Díaz 2009), the nature and intensity of the social ties maintained by the migrants in their home countries, both for practical and emotional reasons, remains under-researched.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to contribute to our understanding of the nature and meaning of contemporary mobility in the context of IRM. Using the concept of social capital as a theoretical framework, this paper examines the migrants' interpersonal relationships and transnational network connections with their country of origin. For the purpose of this study, and following Portes (1998), social capital is defined as a social resource that is derived from the formal and informal relationships that exist between the members of a community. It is argued that retired migrants possess, to different degrees, both local and international social capital: they bring with them their 'existing' social capital and then create 'new' social capital in their new place of residence (Casado-Díaz 2009).

In this paper we focus on the analysis of the international component of social capital. Specifically, we consider two aspects of the migrants' social lives as indicators of their international social capital: the intensity of bidirectional VFR tourism flows (i.e., participating in and hosting friends and relatives visits), and the social contacts with friends and/or family living in the UK. Then, we analyse how migrants' international social capital may differ when taking into account different 'explanatory' variables that include socio-demographic characteristics (age and gender), and what we might consider 'bridging' related variables (knowledge of the local language and length of residence in the local area), and 'bonding' related variables (ownership of property in the home country).

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3 The paper is divided in four sections. The first discusses recent developments within the  
4 field of lifestyle migration, and particularly of IRM. The second addresses the usefulness of  
5 the concept of social capital as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the migrants'  
6 social ties and networks 'back home'. The third and fourth sections reports the data,  
7 methodology and results derived from our study of British retirement migration to Spain  
8 based on questionnaire responses from 365 British retirees living in the Costa Blanca, Spain.  
9 The final section presents the main conclusions and discusses the implications and the  
10 relevance of the strong social ties that these lifestyle older migrants have maintained with  
11 their country of origin.  
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### 20 **Tourism and lifestyle migration: searching for the good life**

21 Tourism has significantly influenced the mapping of potential destinations for different forms  
22 of leisure-oriented mobility, such as second home ownership, amenity-seeking seasonal  
23 migration or international retirement migration, and has also contributed to the intensification  
24 and diversification of contemporary mobility in recent decades (King et al. 2000; Williams  
25 and Hall 2000, Williams et al. 2000; Rodriguez 2001; Gustafson 2002). Research in this field  
26 has recently focused on the concept of lifestyle migration, which considers the implications  
27 and varied manifestations of leisure-oriented mobility in contemporary societies. As noted by  
28 Benson and O'Reilly (2009a: 621) lifestyle migration can be conceptualised as the migration  
29 of 'relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or  
30 temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely  
31 defined as quality of life'. While geographers have focused predominantly on the analysis of  
32 the spatial distribution and scale of these flows of migrants, the characteristics of the  
33 destinations, the links between tourism and seasonal or permanent migration and the physical  
34 impacts at the local level, sociologists and anthropologists have turned their attention to the  
35 trajectories, everyday lives, lifestyle choices, and experiences of these older migrants and  
36 explored the implications for host and home communities. The importance of issues of  
37 gender, age, place, identity, class, nation and community among these amenity-seeking  
38 migrants has also been central to researchers in this field (see Benson and O'Reilly 2009b).  
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51 Within lifestyle migration, international retirement migration (IRM) has been one of the  
52 most widely researched forms of lifestyle mobility. In Europe, amenity seeking migration in  
53 later life has typically originated in northern and central countries (mainly the United  
54 Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands) favouring southern  
55 Mediterranean regions and Atlantic island and coastal regions with climatic and lower cost-  
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3 of-living advantages. These groups of older people have above-average opportunities for  
4 international travel. They have the financial resources, are no longer restricted by  
5 employment obligations, and the majority have neither dependent children nor parents in  
6 need of daily personal care. These amenity-led migrants are primarily motivated by the desire  
7 to engage in a more satisfying way of life and in order to do so they search for new spaces  
8 that will provide them with more opportunities to enjoy their post-retirement lives. Many  
9 studies reported previous tourist visits as the main connection to the area prior to the move  
10 (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004) and the purchase of second homes as a stepping stone towards  
11 international retirement migration (Muller 2002; Hall and Muller 2004). Indeed, the  
12 development of mass tourism in southern Europe widened the opportunities for international  
13 leisure travel and provided the necessary services and amenities that made these regions  
14 attractive for international tourists, second-home owners and future migrants (Gustafson  
15 2002; Rodriguez 2001; Williams et al. 2000). Likewise, the different forms of consumption-  
16 led mobility generated significant reciprocal flows of visiting friends and relatives  
17 highlighting the important nexus between tourism and migration (Williams and Hall 2000;  
18 Illés and Michalkó 2008; Gustafson 2008). A series of historical developments and material  
19 conditions have enabled growing numbers of lifestyle migrants to participate in these forms  
20 of contemporary mobility. They include increased life expectancy, higher incomes and  
21 greater affluence, the initial relatively lower cost of living and cost of properties in southern  
22 Mediterranean countries and the familiarity of travelling, working and owning a second home  
23 abroad (King et al. 2000). Likewise, the rapid development of communication and  
24 transportation technologies has made possible for greater numbers of migrants to engage in  
25 'transnational lifestyles' while sustaining links with their home countries (King et al. 1998;  
26 Gustafson 2001; Bozic 2006; Casado-Díaz 2009). As argued by Warnes (2009: 359), 'the  
27 ease and low cost of international travel is allowing many older people to exploit, maintain  
28 and continue to develop residential opportunities, social networks and welfare entitlements in  
29 more than one country'.  
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#### 49 **A research framework for the study of international retirement migration**

50 Pahl (2000) suggests that the term social capital can be seen as an umbrella for explaining the  
51 nature of personal communities, social networks and other forms and styles of social  
52 connectedness in contemporary societies. The role of migrant networks in the formation of  
53 social capital has been much discussed in recent migration studies (Castells and Miller 2003;  
54 Ryan et al. 2008; Anthias 2007). Social networks might provide different types and level of  
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3 social support and, for migrants, these forms of support very often cross national boundaries  
4 allowing for their transnational links to still play a supportive role even after migration (Ryan  
5 et al. 2008; Iorio and Corsale 2012). However, as argued by Anthias (2007), not all social  
6 networks and social bonds can be referred to as social capital. It is the ability to ‘mobilise’  
7 these resources for the pursuit of advantage, or the mitigation of disadvantage, that gives  
8 them value as ‘capital’ and make the concept of social capital meaningful (Anthias 2007:  
9 788). It is both, the personal relationships that individuals accumulate when they interact with  
10 each other over time, formally and informally, and the amount and quality of the resources  
11 derived from those social relationships, what constitute the essence of social capital  
12 (Bourdieu 1986).

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20 Recent research on IRM has explored how retired migrants build social networks in their  
21 new communities of residence and the strategies adopted to also retain close ties with their  
22 relatives and long-standing friends in their home countries (Huber and O’Reilly 2004;  
23 Casado-Díaz 2009; Gustafson 2008 and 2009). However, one question that arises in relation  
24 to the communities that retired migrants form is the types of social capital generated. As  
25 noted by Putnam (2000), different types of networks give rise to different forms of social  
26 capital. Particularly relevant to this study is his distinction between bonding social capital and  
27 bridging social capital. He argues that bonding types of social capital refer to close social  
28 connections between people and is characterised by strong bonds among family members,  
29 close friends, neighbours or among members of the same ethnic group. Bonding social capital  
30 might also arise within a particular social group bound together by shared identities, interests  
31 and place of residence (Healy 2003). This type of social capital, based on close family and  
32 friendship ties, is said to be beneficial to the self-interest of the individual or small groups,  
33 and generally good for “getting by” in life (Putnam 2000: 22). Bridging capital, on the other  
34 hand, tends to be inclusive, encompassing people across different social groups and  
35 backgrounds, thus encouraging the formation of broader identities and collectivities and,  
36 ultimately, social cohesion (Parker and Song 2006: 180). This type of social capital is based  
37 on common interest rather than personal closeness or common identification. If bonding  
38 capital was good for “getting by”, bridging types of social capital are supposed to be crucial  
39 for helping individuals to “get ahead” in life (Putnam 2000: 19).

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53 It is argued that retired migrants possess, to different degrees, both local and international  
54 social capital: they bring with them their ‘existing’ social capital and then create ‘new’ social  
55 capital in their new place of residence (Casado-Díaz 2009). In this paper we focus on the  
56 analysis of the international component of social capital. In this respect, a compelling aspect  
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3 within the framework of IRM is to examine the migrants' interpersonal relationships and  
4 transnational network connections that is, their international social capital, and the effect that  
5 different types of social capital may exert on it. So, after relocating to the new home, have  
6 migrants' ties with their homeland weakened or have the migrants succeeded in keeping up  
7 such relationships? Which factors have influenced this behaviour? In order to investigate  
8 these questions, the study analyses migrants' mobility patterns (reciprocal visits by friends  
9 and relatives) and their contacts (by phone, internet, etc) to ascertain the strength of the  
10 migrants' bonds with their home country and, ultimately, the strength of their international  
11 social capital.  
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20 *International social capital: transnational mobility patterns and social contacts*

21 Retired migrants might establish ways of keeping the links with their long-time friends and  
22 relatives back in their countries, such as participating (and reciprocating) in VFR tourism and  
23 through long-distance (virtual) communication (regularity of social contact with others, such  
24 as speaking, writing, emailing, etc.). This interplay between physical travel and other ways of  
25 communicating and maintaining social ties 'at a distance' (Urry 2007, cited in Gustafson  
26 2009:83) enable the migrants to sustain the international social ties and networks, and the  
27 resources derived from these. Communication technology has greatly enabled the  
28 development of dense social, cultural and economic networks among transnational  
29 communities in which mobility has become the norm (Duval 2004). But while  
30 telecommunication may facilitate on-going emotional support among migrant communities  
31 (Ryan et al. 2009) individuals also rely on physical mobility for the maintenance of  
32 geographically expanded and increasingly disperse social networks (Larsen et al. 2006).  
33 Leisure scholars have noted the role of leisure in the development of social capital and the  
34 strengthening of social ties (Glover et al. 2005; Glover and Hemingway 2005; Rojek 2005).  
35 Research has shown how leisure might provide individuals with a sense of belonging, support  
36 and social interactions, hence assisting them in forming community networks and bonds that  
37 are important for social cohesion (Bush and Baum 2001). Similarly, it has been argued that  
38 leisure travel, such as visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism, plays an important role in  
39 sustaining geographically disperse social networks (Lew and Wong 2002) and maintaining  
40 the social capital of these networks and of the individuals involved in them (Larsen et al.  
41 2006; Larsen 2008). Leisure (travel) can thus act as a social lubricant for social capital  
42 generation (Glover et al. 2005). In the context of IRM leisure has certainly facilitated both  
43 informal and formal relationships among the members of communities of older northern  
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3 Europeans and the nature of many of these clubs and associations reveals a strong leisure  
4 component (O'Reilly, 2000; Casado-Díaz 2006; Gustafson 2008). It has been argued that  
5 these newly formed networks of relationships provide the retirees with an informal communal  
6 system of self-help and reciprocity and give them a strong sense of community (Casado-Díaz  
7 2009).

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11 Previous work has also discussed the strength of bonding types of social capital among  
12 British retirees living in the Costa Blanca, Spain, and the lack of bridging social capital,  
13 specifically in terms of social ties with members of the Spanish local community (Casado-  
14 Diaz 2009). This study found very limited bridging forms of social capital among this  
15 community of retired British migrants, a community bonded by their shared nationality,  
16 language, class and interests. Although there were some links with other nationalities and  
17 with the host community, the social networks the respondents belonged to were  
18 predominantly British. The findings suggested that the lack of contact with the surrounding  
19 society was mostly associated to the retirees' lack of knowledge of the Spanish language.  
20 The migrants' inability to communicate in Spanish was clearly detrimental for fostering  
21 bridging types of social capital at the local level while at the same time reinforced their need  
22 for 'bonding' with other members of the British community. As noted by Ryan et al.  
23 'migrants' ability to mobilise social capital and successfully engaged in bridging may depend  
24 upon the cultural capital (language, skills and educational qualifications) at their disposal'  
25 (2008: 677). The general lack of contact with the Spanish local community (a source for  
26 acquiring social capital of the 'bridging' type) was not an isolated feature of British  
27 retirement migration to Spain. Similar results were found for the Swiss and Swedish retirees  
28 who had relocated on a seasonal or permanent basis to this country (see Huber and O'Reilly  
29 2004 and Gustafson 2009). Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that migrants' lack of  
30 knowledge of the local language might reinforce bonds with the country of origin. Therefore,  
31 we propose that the migrants' international social capital may differ depending on their  
32 ability in the local language.

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36 Although the process of migration may weaken family and kinship networks depleting  
37 migrants from a crucial form of social capital (Coleman 1990; Portes 1998) it might also  
38 encourage migrants to develop strategies to keep their existing international social capital (in  
39 their home countries) somehow "alive". One way to maintain bonding networks with their  
40 homelands and reaffirm social belonging may rely on having another home in their country of  
41 origin (Iorio and Corsale 2012: 25). However, this must be seen with caution because as  
42 noted by Williams et al. (2000:37), although the retention of a home in the UK is an  
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3 important facilitator of a peripatetic life style is not necessarily a sign of attachment to it.  
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5 There may be many circumstances for this, such as market conditions for selling or individual  
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7 financial strategies (i.e., it may be viewed as an investment), or the fact that they did not own  
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9 homes at the time they retired. Therefore, we propose that another factor that might influence  
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11 the ability of the migrants to mobilise the resources attached to their international social ties  
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13 might be the ownership (or lack) of property in the UK.

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15 Research on IRM has also highlighted the role that age and gender might play in  
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17 explaining differences in migrants' social practices (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Casado-Díaz  
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19 2006). Along with age, we examine the effect of 'length of time resident in the local area' in  
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21 the migrants' transnational practices in order to further explore the 'time' effect on the  
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23 variables analyzed.

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**Methodology**

In order to explore the proposed framework, a survey was conducted among British retirees living in the Costa Blanca, Spain. The questionnaire was administered to British retirees aged 50 or more years who lived in Spain for at least four months a year. As no sampling frame of immigrants exists, and due to the high levels of participation in associations reported among retirees in previous studies (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004), access to respondents was sought through the University of the Third Age (U3A), a non profit organisation run by older British volunteers and with local branches in the UK and abroad. Although each U3A organises their own social and cultural activities independently, many of the branches located in the Costa Blanca hosted similar leisure-oriented groups based around sports, arts and hobbies or more "casual" leisure (such as dining at home). The ethos of the U3A is to draw upon the knowledge and skills of their own members for the setting up of interest groups. At the time of the research, there were more than 3,000 U3A members on the Costa Blanca area, making them the largest British social group in the region. The survey used self-completion questionnaires distributed through the branches of the U3A on the Costa Blanca. Three hundred and sixty nine questionnaires were collected via attendance of social meetings held at the several branches of the U3A in the Costa Blanca, where the self-administered questionnaires were distributed and collected. Four questionnaires were unusable due to incomplete responses, leaving a total sample size of 365.

In order to investigate the migrants' social capital, this research framework considers two aspects of their social lives: the intensity of bidirectional VFR tourism flows (i.e., participating in and hosting friends and relatives visits), and the social contacts with friends

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3 and/or family living in the UK. Mobility patterns were examined by using two main  
4 indicators: return visits to the UK and visits from friends and relatives. 'Return visits to the  
5 UK' was measured with four items: two metric scales, 'number of visits to the UK last year'  
6 and 'number of weeks spent in UK last year', and two non-metric (nominal) scales, 'reasons  
7 for visit UK' (visit friends, visit relatives, leisure, work/business, to access medical services,  
8 other) and 'accommodation used in UK' (own, rented, paid, friends or relatives, other).  
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10 'Visits from friends and relatives' was measured with three non-metric items: 'visitors from  
11 UK' (Are you ever visited in Spain by relatives/friends from your country of origin?), 'people  
12 from UK visiting last year' (children and/or grandchildren, other adult relatives, friends or  
13 acquaintances), and 'number of weeks spend by people from UK during their visit'. The  
14 questionnaire also included a variable measuring the reasons for not having received visits in  
15 the previous year. Transnational social contacts were examined by means of two non-metric  
16 scales: 'contacts with UK through phone, fax and/or mobile' and 'contacts with UK through  
17 Internet' (daily, every week, several times a month, once a month, at least once a year,  
18 never). Finally, we consider age and gender, the 'length of time resident in Spain' (number of  
19 years) and 'knowledge of the local language' (none, some knowledge, quite fluent, fluent).  
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30 Table 1 summarises the social and educational characteristics of the sample of British  
31 retirees interviewed for this study. The average age of the respondents was 65 years with a  
32 slight predominance of women among the sample. This might be explained by the fact that  
33 many of the social activities organized by members of the U3A in the Costa Blanca were  
34 usually led and supported by women and since the questionnaires were distributed and  
35 collected in these social gatherings there was a slight over representation of females in the  
36 sample. Most of the respondents were married or lived with their partner (80%) and half of  
37 them had completed a university or college qualification. Prior to their move to Spain, 60%  
38 of the respondents had no experience of living abroad, and in terms of their previous  
39 employment, there was a predominance of professional (41.6%) and managerial and technical  
40 (24.9%) occupations. At the time of completion, 97% of those interviewed stated their current  
41 occupation as "retired". The majority considered themselves full-time residents (77.8%) and  
42 owned their homes in Spain (83.6%). In general, the socio-demographic characteristics of the  
43 respondents were in line of previous studies examining foreign retirement migration in  
44 Europe (e.g., Casado-Díaz et al. 2004).  
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*Take in Table 1*

## Results

This section presents two sets of data related to the migrants' transnational network connections: VFR tourism (return visits to the UK and visits by friends and family), and strategies for maintaining the social ties with their country of origin. The analysis of the survey results combines descriptive statistics and analyses of variance (ANOVA) in order to identify significant differences amongst the main variables. Note that in ANOVA analyses, VFR tourism is limited to the 'Return visits to the UK' variable, measured by the item 'number of weeks spent in UK last year'. This item is believed to better measure the degree of contact with the country of origin given that it reflects the total amount of time spent in UK independent of the number of visits taken. ANOVA analyses were not conducted for the remaining items due to their qualitative nature. Regarding social contacts we employ both measures: 'contacts with UK through phone, fax and/or mobile' and 'contacts with UK through Internet'. For the purpose of the analysis, age is coded into three categories: the youngest group (YG) includes those respondents aged 59 years or less, the medium group (MG) includes those respondents aged between 60 and 69 years, and the oldest group (OG) includes those respondents age 70 years or more. Length of time resident in Spain is coded into four categories: 0-3 years (LR1), 3-6 years (LR2), 6-9 years (LR3), and 10 or more years (LR4). Knowledge of the local language is coded into four categories: a few words/none (KNW1), some knowledge (KNW2), quite fluent (KNW3) and fluent (KNW4). Finally, type of accommodation used when visiting UK is considered a proxy of ownership of property back in the country of origin (a bonding type of social capital) for further analyses and is coded into three categories: own accommodation (ACC1), with friends/relatives (ACC2) and paid accommodation (ACC3). The level of satisfaction showed by those interviewed with regard to these social contacts/social ties with the friends and family back in the UK is also discussed.

### *Transnational mobility patterns: VFR tourism to and from country of origin*

In order to analyse the strength of the migrants' international social networks, the proposed research framework considers in the first place, the intensity of VFR tourism, both to and from their country of origin.

Table 2 summarizes the retirees' mobility patterns regarding return visits to UK. The frequency of return visits to the UK is a powerful indicator of the strength of the social ties kept by the retirees with their communities of origin. The questionnaire results showed that most of the retirees visited the UK regularly in the previous year in order to see their family

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3 and friends. Approximately a third of the retirees had travelled to the UK at least once in the  
4 previous year but an ever higher proportion had taken two or more trips (62%) suggesting  
5 very strong links with friends and relatives in their country of origin. When asked about the  
6 reasons for those visits, the respondents stated that they were primarily for the purpose of  
7 visiting family (78%) and friends (44%), a fact that was also reflected in their preferred  
8 choice of accommodation (54% stayed with friends or family) and the length of the visit,  
9 between 1 and 6 weeks in 61.6% of the cases. Only a minority (10%) of those interviewed  
10 stated that they had not traveled to the UK in the past year.  
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*Take in Table 2*

20 Additionally, Table 3 shows that, as well as being participants in these tourism flows, most  
21 respondents became recipients of VFR travel. The majority (98.1%) hosted visitors from the  
22 UK during the past year with most visits lasting between one and two weeks. The most  
23 frequent visitors were children and/or grandchildren (76.4%), although the number of other  
24 adult relatives that travel to Spain to see them was also important (50%). The strong kinship  
25 networks maintained in the UK were also evident by the high proportion of respondents that  
26 had also hosted visits by friends (66.8%). The scarce number of respondents (1.6%) that did  
27 not receive visits from the UK during the previous year believed that the main reasons for  
28 this could be the increasing cost of international travel and the fact that they might not have  
29 sufficient room to lodge them, not because they might have lost contact with them.  
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*Take in Table 3*

41 These results exemplify the significance of VFR tourism to international retirement  
42 destinations and suggest that the respondents have managed to retain close ties with their  
43 relatives and long-standing friends in their home countries through both participating and  
44 hosting visits from friends and relatives, as stated in previous studies on IRM (Williams et al.,  
45 2000; Huber and O'Reilly 2004; Gustafson 2008; Casado-Díaz 2009). The amount of visits  
46 (frequency of contacts) evidences the fact that these retirees still rely heavily on existing  
47 social networks in their home countries. These results are relatively surprising and reflect that  
48 these set of migrants are not drifting away the longer they spend in Spain. One possible  
49 explanation might be on the personal circumstances of these set of migrants, where many of  
50 them are well educated and resourceful, and they are aware of the importance of maintaining  
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3 their 'international bonding social capital' for emotional as well as instrumental reasons (e.g.,  
4 possible return, onset of illness).

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6 To shed some light on these results, we ran Anova tests in order to explore the existence of  
7 significant differences amongst the main variables. Regarding sociodemographic  
8 characteristics, our findings show that there are no gender differences for the variable  
9 'number of weeks spent in UK' ( $t=0.06, p>0.05$ ). However, there are some significant  
10 differences regarding age. The ANOVA test evidences that the older the respondents the least  
11 number of visits they took to the UK ( $F=4,418, p<0.05$ ), with the oldest group showing a  
12 significant different (lower) mean (that is, less weeks spent in UK) in comparison to the  
13 medium group (Mean difference: MG-OG=0.463,  $p<0.05$ ). Results also indicate that there are  
14 no differences regarding 'length of time resident in the local area' in terms of the 'number of  
15 weeks spent in UK' ( $F=0.687, p>0.05$ ) but there are regarding 'knowledge of the local  
16 language' ( $F=4.14, p<0.01$ ). Specifically, we observe that the less knowledge of the local  
17 language declared the more weeks spent in UK. The two groups that state they have a poor  
18 knowledge of Spanish spend more weeks in UK than the other two groups (Mean differences:  
19 KNW1-KNW4=1.25,  $p<0.01$ ; KNW1-KNW3=0.81,  $p<0.01$ ; KNW2-KNW4=1.02,  $p<0.01$ ;  
20 KNW2-KNW3=0.58,  $p<0.01$ ). Also, as expected, 'ownership of property in the UK' has an  
21 effect in the number of weeks spent in UK. Those who still own properties in the UK spend  
22 more weeks on average than those who do not (Mean differences: ACC1-ACC2=1.16,  
23  $p<0.01$ ; ACC1-ACC3=1.38,  $p<0.01$ ).

### 34 35 36 37 38 *Transnational social contacts: keeping in touch 'at a distance'*

39 As well as visiting (and being visited by) long-term friends and family in their country of  
40 origin, most respondents kept in touch with them by regularly phoning and/or emailing them.  
41 Table 4 shows the intensity of the respondents' contacts with friends and family back in the  
42 UK. A large proportion of the respondents (73%) have contact with the UK on a daily/weekly  
43 basis through phone, fax and/or mobile, and around 55% of the sample used the internet to  
44 communicate with friends and/or family back in the UK also on a daily or weekly basis. The  
45 majority of the respondents also 'felt' they had kept close relations with their friends and  
46 relatives in the UK (see Table 5). Most of them 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed somewhat' to the  
47 following statements 'I regularly keep in touch with friends/relatives in the UK' (93%);  
48 'Back in the UK I have close friends who I could always turn to for help' (80%); 'I keep  
49 close personal relations with friends back in the UK' (70%). These results evidence the  
50 intensity of the contacts and also the importance of communication technologies, particularly  
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3 the internet, for the maintenance of their kinship and friendship networks and the resources  
4 derived from them, which is their transnational social capital.  
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8 *Take in Table 4*

9 *Take in Table 5*  
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13 The survey also included a number of questions designed to ascertain the level of  
14 satisfaction of the respondents with a series of statements related to the frequency and  
15 intensity of those contacts with friends and family back in the UK (Table 6). Most of the  
16 respondents were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘somewhat satisfied’ with the contacts maintained  
17 with family and friends in the UK (82%), the frequency of visits by friends and family (72%)  
18 and the frequency of their visits to the UK (65%). Again, these results confirm the presence  
19 of high levels of international social capital for the sample analyzed (in terms of VFR tourism  
20 and social contacts).  
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28 *Take in Table 6*  
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32 Anova tests were used to explore the existence of significant differences for the  
33 explanatory variables. No significant differences are found between men and women in terms  
34 of ‘frequency of contacts with UK through Internet’ ( $t=-0.41, p>0.05$ ) and ‘frequency of  
35 contacts with UK through phone/fax/mobiles’ ( $t=-0.39, p>0.05$ ). Regarding age, no  
36 significant differences are found for the variable ‘frequency of contacts with UK through  
37 phone/fax/mobiles’ ( $F=0.51, p>0.05$ ) but they arise for the variable ‘frequency of contacts  
38 with UK through Internet’ ( $F=11.10, p<0.01$ ). Specifically, we find that the older the  
39 respondents the least frequency of Internet-based contacts with people back in the UK (Mean  
40 differences: YG-OG=1.26,  $p<0.01$ ; MG-OG=0.71,  $p<0.01$ ; YG-MG=0.55,  $p<0.05$ ). Results  
41 also show differences regarding ‘length of time resident in the local area’ in terms of the  
42 ‘frequency of contacts with UK through phone/fax/mobiles’ ( $F=2.81, p<0.01$ ) and also for  
43 ‘frequency of contacts with UK through Internet’ ( $F=9.15, p<0.01$ ). Those migrants that have  
44 lived in Spain for longer have fewer contacts than the ‘youngest’ group (those living less than  
45 3 years in Spain). This has been observed for ‘frequency of contacts with UK through  
46 phone/fax/mobiles’ (Mean differences: LR1-LR4=0.41,  $p<0.05$ ) and for ‘frequency of  
47 contacts with UK through Internet’ (Mean differences: LR1-LR4=1.29,  $p<0.01$ ; LR2-  
48 LR4=1.09,  $p<0.01$ ). No significant differences are found for the factor ‘knowledge of the  
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3 local language', nor for 'frequency of contacts with UK through phone/fax/mobiles' ( $F=0.71$ ,  
4  $p>0.05$ ) or 'frequency of contacts with UK through Internet' ( $F=0.77$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Lastly,  
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6 'ownership of property in the UK' has no effect in the frequency of contacts with UK for  
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8 both 'frequency of contacts with UK through phone/fax/mobiles' ( $F=1.76$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and  
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10 'frequency of contacts with UK through Internet' ( $F=2.40$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).  
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### 12 13 **Conclusions**

14 This paper has contributed to recent developments in the study of IRM by exploring the  
15 relevance of transnational social networks and the role that leisure travel, particularly VFR  
16 tourism, plays in maintaining these social ties and, ultimately, in sustaining the migrants'  
17 transnational social capital. We have argued the potential of the concept of social capital and  
18 Putnam's (2000) typology of bridging and bonding forms of social capital for the analysis of  
19 the local and transnational social practices of international retired migrants. Results show  
20 that, as well as creating (local) bonding social capital in Spain, British retirees have  
21 succeeded in maintaining their international bonding social capital by regularly keeping in  
22 touch and visiting (and being visited by) their families and friends back in their home  
23 country. More specifically, the analysis of the data reveals both the strength of the retirees'  
24 international bonding social capital and the role of VFR travel and communication  
25 technologies in sustaining these transnational social practices and, ultimately, these  
26 'transnational lifestyles' among amenity-seeking older migrants. These findings are in line  
27 with previous research on the importance of VFR tourism to international retirement  
28 destinations (Williams et al. 2000; Huber and O'Reilly 2004; Gustafson 2008; Casado-Díaz  
29 2009). The analysis suggests that the older the respondents the fewer number of visits they  
30 took to the UK and that those with less knowledge of Spanish spent more weeks in their  
31 home country (that was also the case for those who still maintained a property in the UK).  
32 These results might indicate that knowledge of the local language acts as a 'bridge' for  
33 contact with the local community hence reducing the frequency of the visits to the home  
34 country. Similarly, the migrants' social ties with the UK do not necessarily weaken over time,  
35 as might be expected with international migrants, and this is reflected in the results regarding  
36 age, except when the migrants have reached a high level of 'integration' in the local  
37 community as a result of their ability to speak Spanish. To this effect, British retirees seem to  
38 be participants of an ongoing migration process by which they are successfully maintaining a  
39 varying degree of attachment to both their home countries and their new places of residence.  
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3 As for transnational social contacts, a large proportion of the respondents stated that they  
4 were regularly in touch with friends and/or family back in the UK. They also felt that they  
5 had successfully maintained 'close personal relations with friends back in the UK' and  
6 expressed a high degree of satisfaction with these personal relationships 'at a distance'. These  
7 results suggest a deliberate effort of 'keeping up' their international bonding social capital  
8 and, as argued by Ryan et al., their 'transnational sources of emotional support' (2008: 673).  
9 The analysis of the data suggests that these social contacts are independent of gender or age,  
10 except for the use of internet that is lower in the oldest group. Additionally, results show that  
11 those migrants that have lived in Spain for longer have fewer social contacts with UK than  
12 the 'youngest' group (those living less than 3 years in Spain).  
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16 Similarly to the findings reported by Portes (1998:14), it would seem that British retirees  
17 have compensated for the absence of bridging forms of social capital at the local level by  
18 putting an emphasis on kin and friendship ties as a source of social support, one of the basic  
19 functions of social capital. While previous studies have noted the salience of friendship  
20 among international retired migrants, particularly for the creation of bonding types of social  
21 capital in their new communities of residence (Casado-Díaz 2009), the results from this study  
22 acknowledge the relevance of the migrants' social ties 'back home'. As argued by Gustafson  
23 (2009) the seasonal mobility of the retirees gives an additional meaning to the concept of  
24 lifestyle migration since their recurrent migration becomes part of their lifestyle in an attempt  
25 to achieve the best of both worlds. Migration thus should be seen as an ongoing process rather  
26 than a one-time permanent move (Gustafson, 2008) with the regular (and reciprocal) visits  
27 enabling migrants to sustain and reinforce their existing international bonding social capital, a  
28 capital derived from their existing strong kinship and friendship ties 'back home' and the  
29 social resources attached to them.  
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33 It is also important to bear in mind that those interviewed through the U3A meetings are  
34 prone to report higher levels of sociability than others who might not belong to similar  
35 leisure-based associations. Future studies will need to widen sampling frames in order to  
36 include not only those migrants that are members of leisure-based associations but also those  
37 who might not. Similarly, this study has not focused on other groups of older European  
38 migrants with fewer resources and who might not have been so successful in their search for  
39 a better lifestyle (O'Reilly 2007). Another area of comparative research that will require  
40 further consideration is the extent to which international retired migrants have succeeded in  
41 getting "the best of both worlds", that is, whether they have both managed to create new  
42 social ties in the destination country (local social capital) and maintained the existing ones in  
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3 their country of origin (international social capital) and how this is reflected in their overall  
4 level of satisfaction with their new post-retirement lifestyle abroad. Migrants might access  
5 social support through a combination of established and newly formed networks involving a  
6 mixture of contacts in both the countries of origin and destination (Ryan et al. 2008: 673) so  
7 much research is needed into the ways in which the social networks established by the  
8 migrants, both locally and transnationally, and the resources attached to them, will evolve in  
9 the future. Similarly, the impacts of IRM in the receiving communities remain significantly  
10 under researched. The ways in which the spatial concentration of large (and highly mobile)  
11 communities of retired EU migrants might alter economic, social, political and demographic  
12 structures at the destination level together with the demands that they might impose on local  
13 state services (particularly health and welfare services due to the migrants' old age) are issues  
14 that merit further attention.  
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Table 1. Sample characteristics of respondents

	Frequency	%
Age group (years)		
40-55	21	5.8
56-65	182	49.9
66-75	129	35.3
76-89	30	8.2
Average age: 65		
Gender		
Male	151	41.4
Female	214	58.6
Household size		
Single person	66	18.1
Two persons	240	65.8
Three or more persons	52	14.2
Highest educational level		
Primary school	6	1.6
Secondary school	177	48.5
University	179	49
Other	3	0.8
Marital status		
Single	5	1.4
Married/with partner	292	80
Widow/er	45	12.3
Divorcee/separated	23	6.3
Former occupation		
Professional	152	41.6
Managerial and technical	91	24.9
Skilled	70	19.2
Semi-skilled	19	5.2
Armed forces	1	0.3
Never worked	2	0.5
Other	24	6.6
Current occupation		
Self-employed	12	3.3
Retired	332	92.7
In paid employment part-time	4	1.1
In paid employment full-time	2	0.5
Unemployed	9	2.5
Looking after family or home	12	3.3
Long term sick or disabled	2	0.5
Unpaid voluntary work	28	7.7
Other	3	0.8
Experience living abroad		
Yes	146	40
No	219	60

**Table 2.** Mobility patterns (1): Return visits to the UK

	Frequency	%
Number of visits to the UK		
None	37	10.1
One	101	27.7
Two	98	26.8
Three	55	15.1
Four	42	11.5
More than four	29	7.9
Reasons for visit UK <sup>12</sup>		
Visit friends	162	44.4
Visit relatives	286	78.4
Leisure	56	15.3
Work/business	30	8.2
To access medical services	31	8.5
Other	24	6.6
Accommodation used in UK <sup>1</sup>		
Own	73	20.0
Rented	2	0.5
Paid (hotel, etc.)	47	12.9
Friends or relatives	197	54.0
Other	2	0.5
Number of weeks spend in UK <sup>1</sup>		
Average 7.31		
1-3	134	36.7
4-6	91	24.9
7-9	27	7.4
10-12	19	5.2
More than 12	46	12.6

*Notes:* Percentages are of the total sample, including non-respondents to a question.

<sup>1</sup>Responses based on 332 individuals answering they visited UK previous year at least once.

<sup>2</sup>Question with multiple answers possible (per cent calculated over 365).

Table 3. Mobility patterns (2): Visits from friends and relatives

	Frequency	%
Visitors from UK		
Yes	358	98.1
No	6	1.6
People from UK visiting last year <sup>2</sup>		
Children and/or grandchildren	279	76.4
Other adult relatives	183	50.1
Friends or acquaintances	244	66.8
Visits by children <sup>12</sup>		
1 week	83	22.7
2 weeks	101	27.7
Between 2 and 4 weeks	70	19.2
One month or more	25	6.8
Visits by other adult relatives <sup>12</sup>		
1 week	79	21.6
2 weeks	73	20.0
Between 2 and 4 weeks	24	6.6
One month or more	7	1.9
Visits by friends or acquaintances <sup>12</sup>		
1 week	122	33.4
2 weeks	81	22.2
Between 2 and 4 weeks	24	6.6
One month or more	17	4.7
Reasons for not having visits <sup>2</sup>		
Family problems	9	2.5
Distance	16	4.4
Insufficient room in my home to lodge them	18	4.9
High cost of getting here	26	7.1
Lost touch with them	6	1.6
Other	21	5.8

Notes: Percentages are of the total sample, including non-respondents to a question.

<sup>1</sup>Responses based on 362 individuals answering they received visits from UK last year.

<sup>2</sup>Question with multiple answers possible (per cent calculated over 365).



Table 4. Transnational social contacts

	Frequency	%
Contacts with UK through phone, fax and/or mobile		
Daily	47	12.9
Every week (not every day)	217	59.5
Several times a month (not every week)	64	17.5
Once a month	16	4.4
At least once a year (less than once a month)	16	4.4
Never	2	0.5
Contacts with UK through Internet		
Daily	92	25.2
Every week (not every day)	112	30.7
Several times a month (not every week)	60	16.4
Once a month	22	6.0
At least once a year (less than once a month)	13	3.6
Never	59	16.2

Notes: Percentages are of the total sample, including non-respondents to a question.

**Table 5.** Social contacts with UK: agreement with following statements (percentages in brackets)

	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree somewhat	Strongly disagree
'I regularly keep in touch with friends/relatives in the UK'	242 (66.3)	98 (26.8)	11 (3.0)	7 (1.9)	2 (0.5)
'Back in the UK I have close friends who I could always turn to for help'	227 (62.2)	71 (19.5)	31 (8.5)	20 (5.5)	12 (3.3)
'I keep close personal relations with friends back in the UK'	147 (40.3)	107 (29.3)	61 (16.7)	29 (7.9)	12 (3.3)

*Notes:* Percentages are of the total sample, including non-respondents to a question.

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**Table 6.** Level of satisfaction with their contacts with the UK (percentages in brackets)

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Frequency of visits to UK	129 (35.3)	109 (29.9)	100 (27.4)	11 (3.0)	6 (1.6)
Frequency of contacts with friends/relatives in UK	159 (43.6)	145 (39.7)	46 (12.6)	9 (2.5)	1 (0.3)
Frequency of visits from friends/relatives in UK	112 (30.7)	151 (41.4)	74 (20.3)	20 (5.5)	3 (0.8)

*Notes:* Percentages are of the total sample, including non-respondents to a question.

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