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Follow the sun – Retirees motorhomes' movements, meanings and practices during winter season in the Algarve.

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Abstract:

This paper explores movements, meanings and practices of retiree motorhomers and the importance and value of mobility during winter season in the Algarve. Although drive tourism has captured little interest among academics (Hardy, 2006; Connell & Page, 2008; Prideaux & Carson, 2010), the research suggests that the broader self-drive tourism market is non-homogenous, consisting of people with varying behavioural characteristics, who are undertaking journeys beyond the traditional access routes, with differing spatial configuration patterns (Lue et al. 1993; Prideaux et al., 2001; Muller & O' Cass, 2003; Hardy et al. 2005; Hardy et al, 2012; 2013). We argue that mobility studies need to engage in an ontological discussion regarding the similarities and differences between various *motilities* and reflect on drive tourism and ageing tendencies. Our sense is that better awareness of movements, meanings and experiences (Cresswell, 2006, 2010) of travel by motorhome grey movers will be of value, if the motorhome community, policies that impact on the governance of the Algarve as a destination related with the motorhome phenomenon and motorhome parks (ASAs – Algarve Service Areas) and campgrounds are all oriented in the same direction. We conclude by using an analytical framework intended to gather an overview of the phenomenon through different perspectives which we illustrate through an empirical example regarding the mobility of motorhomers during winter season in the Algarve.

Keywords: drive tourism, motorhomes, mobility, retirement, winter seasonal, Algarve.

1. Introduction

Tourism is often studied as if it was static. Yet mobility constitutes an important part of the tourism system (Zillinger, 2007). As Cresswell argued and observed, increased levels of mobility, new forms of mobility where bodies combine with information and different patterns of mobility for instance – combine with ways of thinking and theorizing that foreground mobility (of people, of ideas, of things) (Cresswell, 2010). Tourists are travelling according to an individual travel rhythm, which can be defined as a travel pattern that tourists relate to, independent of the tourist sites visited.

Western Europe is the second largest regional destination for recreational transportation exports (ITA, 2016). The motorhome is a recreation vehicle rapidly growing in popularity in Europe (see Table 1) and particularly used by third-age or young-old-age travellers enjoying the winter season (Brooker & Joppe, 2013). As Lorentzein (2015) describes, a motorhome is a vehicle constructed for recreation, merging accommodation and transportation together, thereby enhancing the possibility for people to go wherever they want, whenever they want. The European region has some of the highest levels of leisure time, middle-class consumers and income outside the United States (International Trade Administration – ITA, 2016) and Europe is the second largest global recreation vehicle market after United States (ITA). In addition, Western Europe has some of the best infrastructure for recreational transportation with many rivers, lakes and waterways and a large and dense highway and roadway system making recreation easy for consumers. Europe is the second largest global RV user after the United States: in 2016 Germany had the largest motorhome market segment with 535 428, followed by France (402 671), Italy (217 327), Great Britain (204 792), the Netherlands (88 724) and Sweden (78 799). The number of seniors involved in this kind of migratory movement has grown considerably in the last 20 years; an increase in mass tourism is one explanation, but this may also be the result of generally stronger finances among the age group (Blaakilde & Nilsson, 2013) and also, and not least, the constantly growing number of retirees in Western Europe. The term 'mobilities' refers not just to movement but to this broader investigation of establishing a 'movement-driven' social science in which movement or blocked movement, as well as voluntary/temporary immobilities, practices of dwelling and 'nomadic' place-making are all

viewed as constitutive of economic, social and political relations (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Thus mobilities need to be examined in their fluid interdependence and not in their separate spheres (such as driving, travelling virtually, writing letters, flying, and walking) (Sheller & Urry, 2006). As Cresswell (2016) argues, and we agree, by mobility we mean not only geographical movement but also the potential for undertaking movements – *motility* as it is lived and experienced. In this investigation, we provide data related to movements, meanings and experiences that, together, help produce the practice of driving motorhomes in the Algarve during winter season.

Reality is in a continuous state of flux, leading to changes and relations where mobility intersects. It is crucial that tourism researchers open multiple versions of relationality. Authors (Kakihara & Sørensen, 2001; Hall, 2005; Jóhannesson & Ren, 2016) proclaim the need for a stronger and more nuanced engagement with the relationality of tourism. Impending tourism as a bundle of lines that may engage or disengage with co-existing trajectories of other things indeed blurs the figure of tourism as conventionally framed. This essay aims to remind us that travelling by motorhome, an alternative form of mobility, can be more than a means of transport; it can be more than a movement.

Table 1 - Registration of new Motorhomes

	Until 2013	2014	2015	2016	(Δ Var %) 2013/2016
Germany	450 000	25 746	28 348	535 428	19.0
France	353 000	15 444	17 414	402 671	14.1
Italy	206 500	3 446	3 693	217 327	5.2
Great Britain	175 000	8 733	10 572	204 792	17.0
Netherlands	85 000	1 129	1 252	88 724	4.4
Sweden	66 000	3 967	4 034	78 799	19.4
Finland	48 000	932	1 044	51 022	6.3
Belgium	42 000	2 889	3 404	41 785	23.3
Switzerland	34 000	3 141	3 636	44 303	30.3
Spain	29 500	1 022	1 745	34 442	16.8
Austria	22 000	1 124	1 244	25 409	15.5
Denmark	16 000	130	165	16 508	3.2
Others	10 000	1 730	1 723	14 879	48.8
Portugal	10 000	78	80	10 223	2.2
Norway	5 700	2 527	2 772	13 658	139.6
Slovenia	4 100	126	118	4 451	8.6
Total	1 556 800	72 163	81 244	1 794 421	15.3

Source: ECF - European Caravan Federation, 2016 new motor caravans (motorhomes) registries

1.2. Research Questions

Throughout this article the crucial intention was to obtain a better understanding of the following questions:

- i) Who is the tourist travelling by motorhome to the Algarve during winter season?
- ii) How do motorhome users who visited the Algarve during winter season experience the destination? Where and how did they stay overnight?
- iii) How do motorhome users ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism?
- iv) What is the level of awareness of spontaneous and stimulated of ASAs and campgrounds in the Algarve?

This article will be presented in six sections, including the introduction. The second part provides a review of literature related to mobility, from drive tourism to motorhomes and European retirement mobility patterns and gives a sum of previous studies on grey movers. The third part offers an overview of the study area (Algarve) and also outlines the variety of physical conditions of the south of Europe which attract the elderly population, particularly in winter season. The methodologies used in this article are outlined in the fourth section, definitions used are discussed and the methods applied for the selection of motorhomes are presented. The last section presents

the results regarding the level of travel motivation and planning from field surveys on movements, experiences and meanings based on grey movers surveyed in the Algarve. And also exposes the main themes discussed based on results obtained primarily from field interviews and researcher observations. To achieve a better understanding, we will apply Cresswell's holistic mobility concept (Cresswell, 2006) to our data and authors' observations. Furthermore, length of stay, type of movements, type of activities, distances, roads and destination preferences are a few examples that will be addressed in the research questions of this study.

2.1 Mobility

The deep transformations associated with the current phase of globalization have prompted scholars to search for new conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to make sense of contemporary social (re)configurations (Söderström & Crot, 2010). The proclaimed 'new mobilities paradigm' (Büscher et al, 2010; Hannam et al, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007; Sheller, 2014; Cresswell, 2016) constitutes the most eloquent instance of this phenomenon, but several influential approaches in contemporary social theory are built on more or less explicit assumptions about rising and diversifying types of mobility and their role in shaping society.

Mobility is more than mappable and calculable movement; it also, it is argued, reflects meaning (Cresswell, 2010), and Cresswell adds that research on mobilities tends to link across different scales of moving including humans, ideas and objects. Mobility is also considered in relation to forms of place, stopping, stillness and relative immobility (Adey, 2006; Bissell & Fuller, 2010; Hannam et al., 2006). A focus on empirical mobilities necessitates both mobile theorization and mobile methodologies, and it is crucial not to be supported on boundedness and sedentary approaches. It also gathers new empirical sensitivities, analytical orientations, methods and motivations to examine important social and material phenomena and folds social science insight into responses (Büscher & Urry, 2009). The rise of mobilities in the social sciences has raised interest in a diverse range of mobile practices. Various studies have reflected on walking (Middleton, 2009), running (Cook et al, 2015), cycling (Spinney, 2009), driving (Laurier 2004; Ladin, 2015) and flying (Adey, 2004), among others, from a variety of angles. The term 'mobilities' refers not just to movement but to this broader project of establishing a 'movement-driven' social science in which movement, potential movement and blocked movement, as well as voluntary/temporary immobilities, practices of dwelling and 'nomadic' place-making are all viewed as constitutive of economic, social and political relations. Mobility is a sum of movements, meanings and practices. Understanding mobility holistically means paying attention to all three of these aspects (Cresswell, 2008).

Thus movement, in short, is getting from one place to another, which is described as physical movement. We reach meaning through discourses, narratives and stories related to movement. Mobility has been figured as freedom, as it is so often related with this touristic way of experiencing it, and finally the experience and embodied practice of movement, walking, driving, flying and sailing are a few examples of these mobile practices. Driving a motorhome can be a liberating or stressful experience. Whether we have chosen to be mobile and how we feel about doing it affects our experience of it. Getting from A to B can be very different depending on which mobile practice we use. Driving caravans, motorhomes or any recreation vehicle has played an important role, and freedom and mobility are long standing key elements of American culture (Ladin, 2015). For those who choose these vehicles as their home and subscribe to a mobile lifestyle, it comes with a new community, a new set of ideals, a new shared habitus and even new kinds of cities (Bourdieu, 1990).

2.2 From drive tourism to motorhome tourism

The drive market represents visitors who use some form of vehicular transport as a mode of transport to reach their destination, where their main purpose of visit is leisure, including day trips and overnight trips to one or multiple destinations. The drive tourism market derives from the network of interrelated institutions developed to support it (Scott, 2002). Drive tourism is a

complex phenomenon, with decisions about whether to drive, what to drive, and what role the vehicle plays in the travel experiences being influenced by a range of factors (Prideaux & Carson, 2010). While the resulting multiplicity of experiences enriches tourist consumption, itineraries also offer particular rewards in the promotion of tourism as a spatial development strategy. Many recent researches into drive tourism have shown that the drive market is large but not homogeneous (Hardy, 2003; Olsen, 2003; Shih, 2006). In essence, this encompasses forms of recreation involving at least one overnight stay away from home, typically with some form of transport incorporating accommodation, to an outdoor recreational destination. In Europe one in six of all overnight stays were spent on a campground (Eurostat, 2012). This “outdoors hospitality” appears to be particularly attractive to Europeans, North Americans, Australians and New Zealanders, though there is said to be growing interest in China (Mao-Ying & Pearce, 2014) and India (Brooker & Joppe, 2013). The recreational vehicle sector has been reported as growing rapidly (Counts & Counts, 2004; Onyx & Leonard, 2005; Tourism Australia 2012; Hardy & Gretzel, 2013).

The range of road-based travel encompassed by the description of drive tourism includes day trips and overnight travel in a family car or a rental car, travel in four-wheel-drive vehicles (4WD), caravanning, travel in recreational vehicles (RVs) and touring by motorcycle (Prideaux & Carson, 2010). The motorhome is an example of a recreation vehicle and it is linked to “itinerant tourism”, which has presented truly remarkable growth figures (CIVD - Caravanning Industry Association, 2016). In Portugal, the phenomenon does not have the dimensions of other European countries (like France, Norway and Germany) although the number of supporters and practitioners has been experiencing remarkable growth (Dias & Domingues, 2016). In 2015, new registrations of recreational vehicles in Europe totalled 151,293, representing a 10 percent increase over 2014 (EFC, 2015). The Motorhome market is growing, the tendency being shaped by Australia (Apostolidis et al., 2009), USA (RVIA - Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, 2015), and others countries in Europe such as Norway (Lorentzen, 2015). However, there are countries in which, for different reasons, this type of tourism doesn’t grow, Taiwan (Cheng and Chen, 2012) for instance (RV costs; parking is a critical issue in Taiwan, as is learning to drive a large vehicle on crowded Taiwanese roads). It is therefore necessary to meet several conditions for this type of tourism to develop and grow in harmony with the other versions of practising tourism.

Within the academic literature, there is a consensus that recreational vehicle users (RVers) are a group of highly mobile travellers who are motivated by a desire to experience freedom and escape the constraints of routine home life (Counts & Counts, 2004; Hardy & Gretzel, 2011; Mings & McHugh, 1995; Onyx & Leonard, 2005). Pearce (1999) examined the self-drive market in particular and notes that this form of travel is ideal for older Australians for ease of access, as a purposeful, shared activity providing a reflective experience. Therefore, today the motorhome as a form of self-drive tourism is experiencing a boom due to two of its main characteristics: freedom and autonomy. The motorhomers who visit the Algarve during the winter seasonal are not only mobile, but in some ways are really avant-garde – they represent new ways of living in a global world with increasing opportunities for mobility, as Anne Leonora Blaakilde and Gabriella Nilsson argued in their book in 2013. Travelling means the utmost free activity; travelling by motorhome allows this behaviour and supports this philosophy – but it doesn’t mean that motorhomers practise it genuinely. Tourism carried out with motorhomes gives a sense of freedom and independence that is consentaneous with larger tourist expectations. Automobility thus produces a desire for flexibility that, so far, only the car is able to satisfy (Urry, 2004). A motorhome is a vehicle constructed for recreation, merging accommodation and transportation together, thereby enhancing the possibility for people to go wherever they want, whenever they want. The motorhome is a hybrid phenomenon that embodies conflicting ideals: total freedom of movement and the reinvention of the self at the other extreme. It is both individualistic and community-based, and its urban forms are highly adaptable to societal changes, mirroring society’s development as well as the changing landscape it inhabits. Without aiming to give hermetic classification to the motorhomer typology, figure 1 will sum up all the segments that we have identified throughout this investigation, considering the amount of time they spend in motorhomes. We are aware that this segmentation is

not static and that it will depend on the life cycle of motorhomes and other exogenous factors (climate changes, such as hurricanes, oil prices, etc.) which will influence this suggested typology.

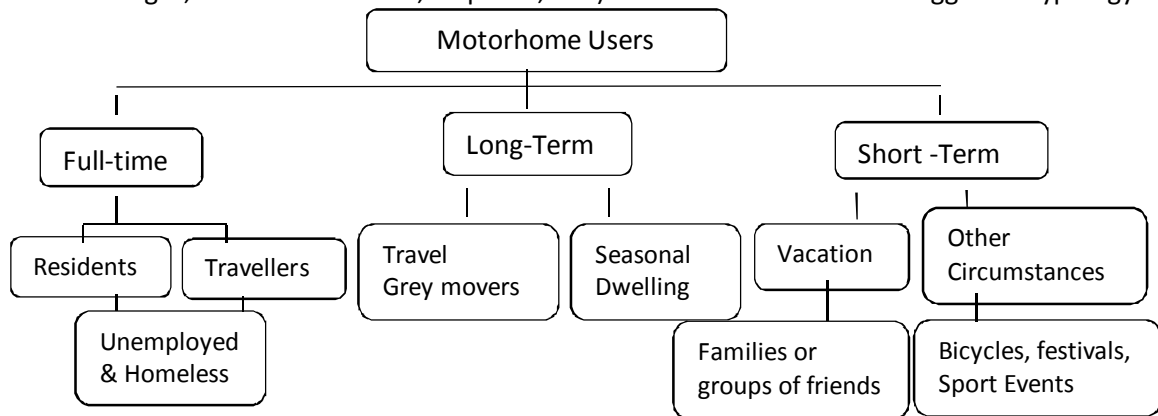


Figure 1 – Motorhomer typology, adapted (Brooker and Joppe, 2013).

The three key segments identified are full-timers, short- and long-term users (figure 1). The full-timers cover travellers who live permanently in their motorhome (Hartwigsen & Null, 1991, Brooker & Joppe, 2013) or permanent residents who decide to live year-round in a motorhome (Counts & Counts, 1992) often perceived as eccentric or mystical, and in the Algarve with a low presence. Indeed in the latter option, due to the stress resulting from economic and political crises in the various corners of the world, this type of vehicles are being used as a form of budget accommodation for the homeless and poor (Lashley, 2015), particularly in countries where RVs were most present. Long-term occupancy includes the movers that follow the warm and sunny weather. This occurs in Australia, namely the *grey nomads* (Mings, 1997; HOLLOWAY, Green, & Holloway, 2011; Oyx & Leonard, 2005; Cridland, 2008; Mahadevan, 2014), in the United States usually called *snowbirds* (Patters & Pegg, 2011; Hardy, Hanson & Gretzel, 2012) and Western Europe (Breuner, 2005; Prideaux, Wei, & Rys, 2001; Haug et al. 2007; O'Reilly 2000; Viallon, 2012), South Africa or Canada (Patterson, Pegg & Lister, 2011). Long-term motorhoming also occurs during the summer months, but with less intensity, where individuals park their motorhome on a particular site and return to that site annually for vacations and weekends (Brooker & Joppe, 2013; CCDRA, 2008; MacTavish et al., 2006; Sheng et al., 2014). The last section that was identified was the short-term segment which corresponds to short periods of time, resulting in periodic travel on vacations or weekends. Spanish and Portuguese families that enjoy summer vacations during the summer or school holidays (such as Christmas, New Year's Eve, Carnival and Easter) in the Algarve are good examples of these practices (figure 2). Sports events such bicycle riding (Gibson et al., 2003; CCDRA - Algarve Regional Development and Coordination Commission, 2016), rallies (Van Heerden & Van Heerden, 2008; Wu & Pearce, 2016), music festivals (Fox & Black, 2010) and other similar circumstances are responsible for this option. The three types are not watertight, and do not dismiss other possibilities: it is only a suggestion considering the time of use of the equipment. So it cannot be excluded that there would be a coexistence of typologies among our motorhome grey movers.

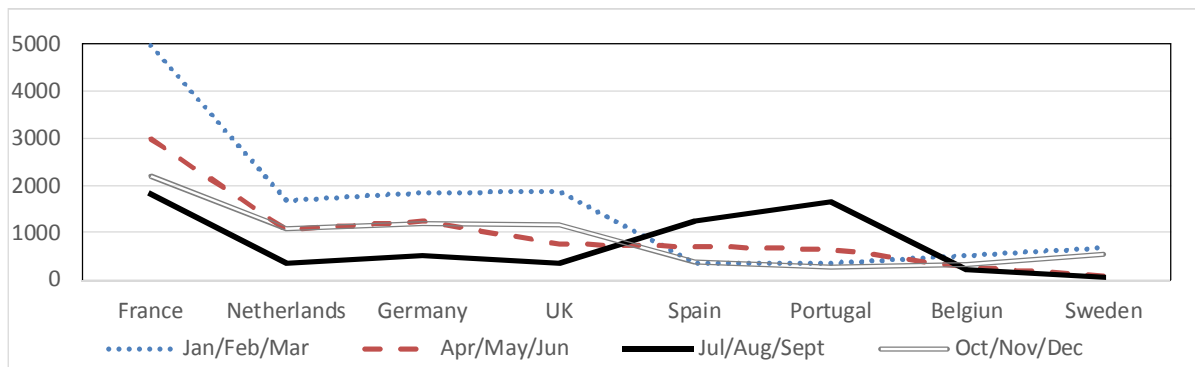


Figure 2 – Algarve Motorhome travellers by nationality during 2015 (CCDRA, 2015)

2.3 Grey movers

Retirees as tourists is an area which has been carefully examined over the last twenty years in either case-study format or as a general phenomenon by North American and European experts (Viallon, 2012). Climate is the main cause of this movement, warm weather being particularly appreciated by elderly people. Demographic changes in the EU are likely to be of considerable importance in the coming decades as the vast majority of models concerning future population trends suggest that the EU's population will continue to age, due to consistently low fertility levels and extended longevity (Eurostat, 2016). Grey nomads are different, because they are generally time rich, are free to choose whether to work or not, and generally do not have many of the burdens that limit the holidays and journeys of others in society (Leonard & Onyx, 2005). John Mcleish (1976) coined the term "*Ulyssean adult*" to identify individuals who continue to seek new adventures and opportunities in their later years. The individuals who participated in our study enter the *Ulyssean* world. The term "grey movers" is not a strict characterization and has a narrow definition. However, tourism researchers have generally defined senior travellers as those who are 55 and older, and older adults have also been defined according to the retirement age of 65 or older (Patterson, 2006). Retiree travellers are becoming one of the largest travel segments globally (Smith & MacKay, 2001; Hsu & Kang, 2009; Ye, 2015). Examples of studies on senior tourism can be found, among others, in Lawson (1991), Oppermann (1995), Hong et al. (1999), Dann (2002) and more recently Reece (2004), Ashworth & Tunbridge (2005), Patterson (2006), Moschis & Unal (2008), Nyaupane et al. (2008), Patterson et al., (2011), Hillman (2013), Wu & Pearce (2014), Chen & Shoemaker (2014) and Wu & Pearce (2016). Nevertheless, even though seniors move less than any other age group according to statistics, over the last decades a gradual increase of both national and international retirement migration has become evident, especially among recent retirees (Walters, 2000; Andersson, 2002; Abramsson & Andersson, 2012; Blaakilde & Nilsson, 2013). The literature on European intra-national seasonal movement amongst the elderly is limited and mostly focuses on the short-term holiday market (Cridland, 2008). However, the majority of retirees migrate permanently and seasonally from northern to southern Europe (Cridland, 2008). Understanding mobility holistically means paying attention to the sum of movements, meanings and practices, in the context of the *Ulyssean* lifestyle.

3. The Algarve

The Algarve region, located in the extreme southwest of Europe and along the south of Portugal, enjoys a pleasant climate with warm winters and mild summers, and has year-round light and sunshine. Algarve has, on average, 259 days with sunshine per year, a warm temperature and has excellent quality of light Algarve Tourism Board (RTA, 2016). The Algarve is known for its proximity to the ocean and mountain ranges, cultural and natural richness, such as beaches and gastronomy, among other local customs. In 2015, Faro Airport had its busiest year since it opened in 1965, with 6.4 million passengers passing through the airport (ANA - ANA Portugal Airports, 2016). Tourists who come to the Algarve annually are from various international markets, particularly those located in Europe, especially the UK, Germany, Spain, France and the Netherlands and others which

together accounted in 2015 for over 70% of total tourists visiting the region (ANA, 2016). These nationality profiles are also similarly shaped in motorhome tourism in the Algarve and, moreover, Europe is the second largest global recreation vehicle market after United States (ITA-International Trade Administration). It is favourable to this situation that Western Europe has some of the best infrastructure for recreational transportation with many rivers, lakes and waterways and broad highway and roadway systems, making it easy for consumers to partake in recreation, and the south of Portugal is no exception. The motorhome network is the result of growth of this means of visiting the Algarve (CCDRA, INE, 2015) and also in response to the needs identified in the market whether from the point of view of demand or from the point of view of supply.

3.1 The Algarve Motorhome Support Network

Acknowledging the importance of motorhome travel tourism to the Algarve, regional development and land management, environment and tourist authorities, in cooperation with local municipalities, created the Algarve Motorhome Support Network (RAARA) (figure 3). The project stems from a cooperation agreement between the Algarve Regional Development and Coordination Commission (CCDRA), the Algarve Inter-municipal Community (AMAL), the Algarve Tourism Board (RTA) and the Algarve Tourism Association (ATA). Formally established in January 2015, the network includes Camping and Caravan Sites, Rural Camping and Caravan Sites and Motorhome Service Areas, created and included in the new juridical regime for tourist facilities - DL 39/2008, 7th March; Portaria 1320/2008, 17th November – according to the proposal made by CCDR Algarve). The main goal of the creation of this network is to promote legal accommodation to stop and spend the night in the setting of quality, comfort and safety which motorhome tourists demand. As part of regional strategy for welcoming motorhome tourists and defined in accordance with good principles of land planning and respect for environmental values, in the future, the network (see figure 2) will integrate the units that meet the necessary criteria and which help improve the tourist offer in the region. This research essentially seeks to reflect the state of this phenomenon and gather information that may be useful for proceeding with actions to support and leverage future strategies to improve the performance and thus the satisfaction of the motorhomer. There are few or no studies applied to this topic in the Algarve, or indeed Portugal.



Figure 3 - The Algarve Motorhome Support Network - RAARA

4. Methodology

This study was situated within an interpretive theoretical approach in which experiences and meanings were viewed as personally and socially constructed. The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (multiple realities), a subjective epistemology (the researcher and the study participants create an understanding together through communication and interpretation) and uses a grounded theory methodology, including qualitative procedures such as interviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Charmaz, 2000). This study was grounded in constructivist assumptions (Bruner,

1990; Driscoll, 2000; Schwandt, 1994; Charmaz, 2008). Individuals and groups socially construct reality and shared experiences, language, and meanings that create a basis for knowledge and understanding of long-term motorhomers who visited the Algarve during the winter months and the data sample reveals that they are mainly senior foreigners. The analysis is based on a convenience sample of 160 motorhome users from five countries which habitually visit the Algarve (France, UK, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden), The empirical material is based on a semi-structured survey, which was conducted and applied during January and February 2016. The surveys were conducted and carried out by four interviewers and were applied along the Castro Marim border accompanied by the Republican National Guard (Guarda Nacional Republicana, GNR). Whenever any motorhome passed on the border, it was stopped with the support of the GNR and the interviewers applied the survey. The sample collected totalled 160 valid anonymous questionnaires; the sample was determined by the cost containment CCDRA. The choice of research methods should, ideally, be determined by the research question; however, factors such as time, money and personnel must also be considered. Since our target audience was senior with available time and due to the qualitative nature of some of the research questions and that little is known about the phenomenon under consideration, it would be natural to opt for a purely qualitative approach, and we use the in-depth interview as a method of data collection. The interviewers were often invited into the motorhome, while a few German motorhomers refused to answer the questionnaire, mostly referring to their ignorance of the English language. Our questionnaire consisted of 52 questions, 30 closed and 22 open questions. The results were entered into an SPSS database. In-depth interviewing of key informants identified through the screening process also occurred as the opportunity arose. From this instrument reasons for travelling by motorhomes, why they chose the Algarve and information related with the motorhomes network were analysed, such as material resources, future plans and understanding interactions with others (host communities and other motorhome users). Altogether, 15 motorhome users were interviewed (mostly represented by couples but single informants were also invited to participated). The interviews were conducted with the help of a written interview guide. All Interviews were transcribed, analysed and examined recursively by the researchers, and patterns were noted.

Although not guaranteeing “full representativeness”, the results were compared to the distributions of the same variables in the Algarve results or factual information from INE and CCDRA data. A similar pattern was observed between the two. The salient dimensions explored in these surveys are the main characteristics of the motorhome users, such as their place perceptions (affect and meaning attributed to place, activities practices and afforded by the place and awareness of the social interactions associated with place and among the motorhome community). The new *mobilities* paradigm must be brought to bear not only on questions of globalization, identities, and belonging, but more fundamentally on questions of what the appropriate subjects and objects of social inquiry are (Ye, 2015). During their stay, the respondents are also responsible for the performance and behaviour of their peers, such that the length period of stay (3 months is the average) gives an opportunity for the motorhomers to influence others motorhomers through their suggestions, actions and behaviours. The investigation focused mainly on who the tourists are and how they project their Algarve trip and what have they did as motorhome users in the Algarve on their last visit. It explores how tourists perform in a vehicle built for home comfort, trying to understand motorhome tourism as a phenomenon. The goal is not to provide reliable evidence about a large sample of data but rather to understand some of the “participants’ categories” (Silverman, 1993, p. 19), i.e. mobility, meaning and practices related to Algarve experiences using motorhomes. Indeed, gathering an “authentic understanding” (Silverman, 1993, p. 10) of people’s experiences rather than aiming at reliability is the issue at hand. Therefore, this study functions as an entry point in order to understand what these motorhomers are describing and making salient in their Algarve experience.

5. Results

The findings of this section are organized based on the research questions of this study:
Profiling the tourists who travel in a motorhome in the Algarve during winter season.

Table 1 - Profiling sample characteristics

		Frequencies			Frequencies
Origins	France	40%	Algarve degree of fidelity	1 - 5 years	74%
	UK	19%		6 - 15 years	17%
	Germany	15%		> 15 years	9%
	Netherlands	10%	Education	Primary school	12%
	Sweden	4%		High school	58%
	Spain	2%		Higher education	30%
	Portugal	1%	Visit	First Visit	33%
Age	Age > 61 years	80%		Repeated Visit	67%
Statute	Couple/Married	88%	Algarve Stay	Average days	39 days

The contextually rich information based on surveys allows researchers to understand the main profile characteristics (see table 1). It was found that the majority of motorhomers who visit the Algarve during winter season were mostly foreign. France was the most represented country and also the largest contributor to the share of new visitors to the Algarve destination, with the UK and Germany following well behind France. The results are consistent with official statistics (figure 2 and table 1). In addition, this study suggests the majority of travellers are *Ulyssean adults*, individuals who continue to seek new adventures and opportunities in their later years, and the vast majority are married. The data reveals those couples are not *conventional* couples since they are both drivers (64%). Of those surveyed, only 7% reported being employed, most (93%) having already retired, an expected result considering the average age of the population interviewed. For these reasons we name them grey movers and since they choose to drive to follow the sun during winter months it does not seem abusive to classify them as a tourists who drive for the long term presented in figure 1. Concerning tourist destination choice and from the results, it seems that the Algarve destination is relatively new for 74%, and 33% of participants were visiting the Algarve for the first time. Both these results are consistent with the growth in recent years of this practice in the Algarve destination: from 2014 till 2015, overnight stays in motorhomes grew by 19% (CCDRA, 2016). As for the level of education, 88% have secondary education or higher education and the average stay in the Algarve destination is around 39 days.

Algarve Motorhome Network Awareness

According to the results obtained from the surveys, the campground of Olhão is one that registers the highest level of spontaneous knowledge (20%), followed immediately by the Muralha-VRSA ASA (19%) and Albufeira Campground (16%). In terms of spontaneous memorization these were the three places most mentioned spontaneously. After viewing the brochure and the names of campgrounds and ASAs of the 24 establishments named during the period of fieldwork (January and February 2016) and the total number of total references, we highlighted Olhão, VRSA and Albufeira, with high references also associated with the Manta Rota campground (32%), Fuseta (28%) and Orbitur, Sagres (27%). There is still much work to do on several fronts, such as dissemination, communication and with the support of different actors in the public and private sphere, related to the Algarve motorhome network. As far as the existence of the network goes, it is necessary for it to be transferred from hard copy to digital format, but more importantly it is perceived as an important and added value for all (residents and tourists) and public and private decision-makers, so future work must be done related to this “baby action”.

How do motorhome grey movers reach the Algarve during winter season?

Understanding mobility holistically means paying attention to all three of these aspects: movement, meaning and practices. Mobility entails a displacement – the act of moving between locations.

These may be towns or cities, and the choice of whether or not to move would be the result of so called push and pull factors in A to B, respectively. We will try to fill and explore the content that links A to B, based on our data. The findings offer a better understanding of consumer pursuit of multiple goals in the retirement travel context, where not all motorhome circuits are equally salient:

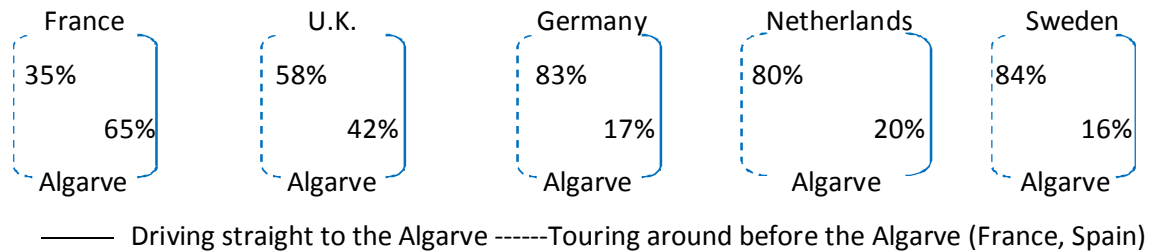


Figure 4 - Travel strategies of drive travellers for reaching the Algarve

All movements are dynamic: the motorhomers depart from their home city/country and they all intend to reach the Algarve. Constant movement does not favour the development of normal relationships between citizens and community (Cresswell, 2006) so we characterize the trip from departure to the Algarve based on that assumption that this information would help to construct the movement in a deep way. The large majority (65%) of French motorhome users drive directly to the Algarve. Part of them were identified as those who were visiting the Algarve for the first time. The French motorhome users mentioned the abandonment of Morocco as a tourist destination several times – for many years the French used to drive to Morocco (Villon, 2012). Some of them stated:

We no longer felt safe in Morocco, the nights were “too long” and the feeling of insecurity was always present. The Moroccan community ceased to be hospitable, even to be rude in some specific situations. (informant, France)

Morocco as a destination is no longer a safe place for the French. (informant, France)

In recent years, problems related mostly to safety particularly in Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey and others result in the lost image of peaceful tourist destinations. Drivers from Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden seem to preferred touring around spending several nights in different places. However they opt for the Algarve when they decide to make a long stay.

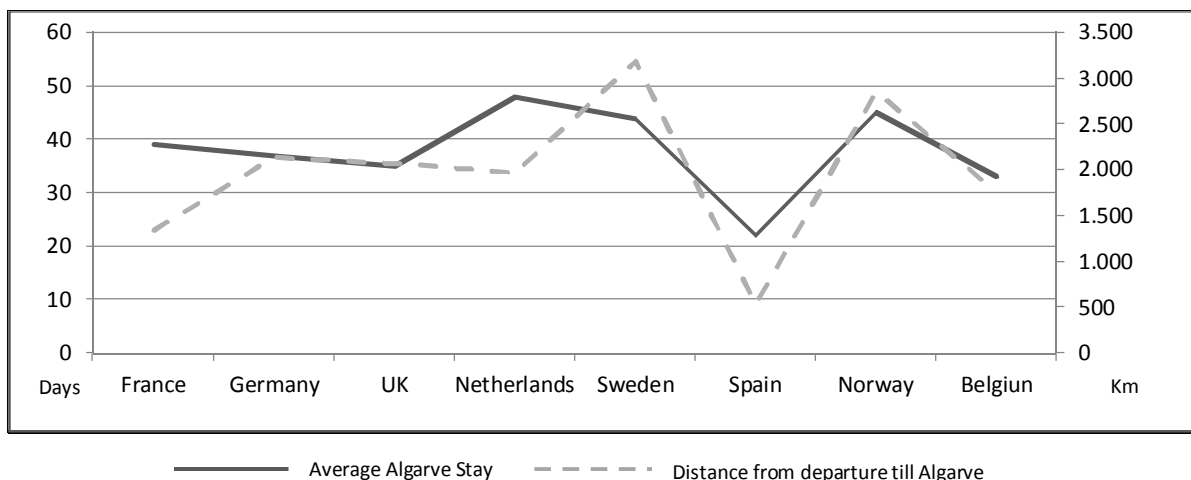


Figure 5 - Stay in the Algarve versus provenance of Motorhome travellers

It is interesting to see in figure 5 that the average stay in the Algarve by nationality of motorhome users changes depending on the proximity of the country. The Spanish, our neighbours, are those who stayed less time in the Algarve, just as the Swedes, Norwegians and Dutch, from more distant countries, were those who declared they remained longer in the Algarve. We don't know if they are simply fleeing hard winters or if other reasons could be involved.

Ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of motorhome tourism in the Algarve during winter season

We explore meanings related to travelling by motorhome. The most common associated meanings were: experiencing nature; self-esteem; freedom; relaxation; social interaction; adventure/challenge; escape and culture/knowledge seeking.

Experiencing nature

In addition to natural features being a relevant topic of motorhome practices, experiencing nature was also a considerable meaning. This idea was symbolized by natural aesthetic beauty. A few motorhome users expressed this:

If we stay the winter period at home, we don't have the opportunity to have contact with nature so often, to see such beautiful scenery, and go for walks (informant France; informant, Netherlands). This is our sanctuary.... (informant, Germany).

The sea view, the rocks, the mountains.... I used to live near the sea (informant France). Because it is beautiful, just quiet with the silence of nature....(informant, UK)

I love flowers, birds and it is fantastic to walk with William (dog) (informant, UK)

The amazing Algarve light, and the unforgettable sunsets, the winter feels like spring (informant, Sweden).

It is fabulous to benefit from the calm of quieter winter months and at the same time enjoy the walks on the golden sand... (informant, Netherlands).

Freedom/Escape

Most motorhome users describe their motorhome option as a lifestyle, much more than a vehicle to reach destination(s). We could not compare it with a plane, bus or even a car, but as technological change has impacted the world, bringing access to many options for travel, the extent of current motorhome or other Recreational Vehicle (RV) availability continues to be viewed as a "key to escape" or a symbol of gaining independent freedom:

When I am in my motorhome, I feel free, relaxed, on the open road... (informant France)

I decide when and where we go after, there is flexibility, you can move to wherever you want ... (informant, Sweden)

I am able to choose silence or not, more freedom, plus choices... (informant, Germany)

As long as I can, I will be in my motorhome till I die... (informant, France)

It's a way to escape the harsh environment where I live, many refugees are being hosted in my city, I'm still getting used to the idea... (informant, Germany)

The retirement is paradise, before my day to day executive, I was always in stress, with schedules for everything, many trips, airports, always with dead line ...

traveling by motorhome is tranquility, there are no scheduling requirements, we can enjoy the day ...(informant, France)

The mobile motorhome users' lifestyle allows for fluidity and 56% of our participants decided to travel and visit other places before reaching the Algarve while the rest of them preferred to drive directly to the Algarve. From the results, the majority of our participants were long-term tourists who drive for two or three months once or twice a year. The freedom or escape can be understood as a way of being young again (Patterson & Pegg, 2009), with no obligations, no rules and no dates. It is a state of being autonomous that it seems our grey movers appreciate and wish to preserve and maintain. Home represents security, tradition and stagnation, quite the opposite of courage, mobility and freedom (Lindqvist, 1996; Blaakilde & Nilsson, 2013). However, there are a few motorhome users who behave as if they were at home, so being a motorhome user is not a synonym for a freedom state of mind. We will come back to this question later.

Relaxation

Multiple references to the terms relax and rest were made by participants in surveys and interviews. Relaxing and resting appears to be the main activity which is most often mentioned by the grey movers. Enjoying retirement is also tied to the ability to rest and relax. There is no obligation to perform tasks or work but the desire for rest and relaxation could not be the intrinsic motivation as the possibility of rest and relaxation is guaranteed; however, at this age they require days of peace and tranquillity. One participant explained the importance of relaxing and resting among grey movers. Driving for months in a motorhome with one's partner could be difficult, so sleep and rest is crucial to avoid bad moods.

We just drive during the daylight, never at night, because we have got plenty of time, so things could be done in a slow and relaxed way ... (informant, France)

Now it's possible to enjoy the day – we have spare time during the day... (informant, Germany)

Social Interaction

Interaction with others seems to be often mentioned by the motorhome users that we interviewed. It is part of the travel experience although contact with local community is briefly referred to, and the most of the contact described is related with practical episodes (shopping, the vet, the police, petrol stations, repair cars). It appeared that the majority of interactions occur at motorhome ASAs, line-ups and diverse stops. It also appeared that much of the conversation shared by motorhome users is an exchange of tips or suggestions.

It is an opportunity to meet people. I tend to look at their license plate – usually when we decide to park it is important to see the nationality of our neighbour, if I want silence I never park near by a Spanish or Italian couple – they usually talk loud... (informant, Germany)

Although we have a habit of travelling with a small group of friends, we are happy to meet new people, one of the pleasures of travelling around Europe was meeting new people with similar interests and lifestyle... (informant, France)

I do not aim to know anyone else, just me, my wife and our dog (informant, UK)

Drive Challenge/Adventure

Travelling by motorhome is an adventure – it can be different every day and motorhome users may have a trip planning strategy or a vague idea of where to stay overnight. The challenge of driving

the motorhome and being independent is good for the grey movers' self esteem. In Canada, Australia or the USA, where drive tourism and RV practice is active, many studies were done in different contexts – domestic tourism and drive tourism; all of those countries are significantly different and the tourists who seek this kind of tourism are not the same or even similar. For instances, the movements could vary or not, and they could stay for two or three months at the same place. Our participant couples, based on their average age, do not have a conventional profile as women and men both drive. In the results obtained, only 41% remain in the Algarve region and the remaining 59% visited the Algarve and other regions. Lisbon, Porto and Alentejo are the places that received most interest for a visit. There is also obvious attention to the northern region and this result is consistent with the growing interest in this area shown by the statistics during the last decade (INE, 2005-2015).

We like to drive/travel in the off season when in south of Europe it's cooler, the accommodation rates are cheaper, where roads and highways are quieter and [there is] less traffic... (informant, Sweden)

I want do drive my motorhome until my last days...(informant, UK)

Rather than being organized or structured, the grey movers prefer instead to do their own thing and seek out experiences that serve to offer a sense of freedom and adventure in their retirement years (Mings, 1997; Onyx & Leonard, 2005).

Culture/knowledge seeking

Most grey movers that participated in our study expressed interest in an indirect way when referring to the taste for birds, culture, local history, geography, markets, gastronomy and other points of interest cited by them.

We usually visit all the markets, Olhão, Loulé ... (informant, Germany)

The churches of Tavira are charming ... (informant, France)

Silves Castle is very well preserved and has also a gothic style cathedral... (informant, Sweden)

Exploring the Algarve experience using motorhomes during winter season

One research question explored the relevant factors of travelling with a motorhome and its experiences/practices. It is regarded as a relevant factor by the researchers and was mentioned several times, repeatedly or related to some important aspect of motorhome performance. Travelling with a motorhome allows a more direct and easier contact with nature, even when motorhome users opt for ASAs (motorhome parking) or campgrounds. There are several activities based on nature such as swimming, biking, walking, fishing, bird watching, sailing and others which motorhome grey movers mentioned. Walking and biking were the activities most quoted (40% and 37%, respectively). This was not a surprising standard, based on the average age of our informants and is consistent with their profile: 36% of the participants have a dog and 56% own a bicycle.

Social interactions (such as telling jokes and stories, playing cards and bingo) are good examples of what they describe as usual days, and sending emails or Skyping, either to contact home or other friends (on the road or not) are practices that many motorhome users perform in their regular day when they are away from home, particularly those who are grey tourists (PhocusWright, 2016). New communication technologies make the virtual co-presence of family and friends possible, allowing everyday relationships to continue while touring. The use of a caravan or motorhome facilitates the establishment and continuance of many domestic routines (Holloway, 2009). To reinforce these our informants mentioned that with low cost offers it is easy and not expensive to

fly home and return to the Algarve in a few days. They don't miss any family birthdays, medical appointments or other commitments.

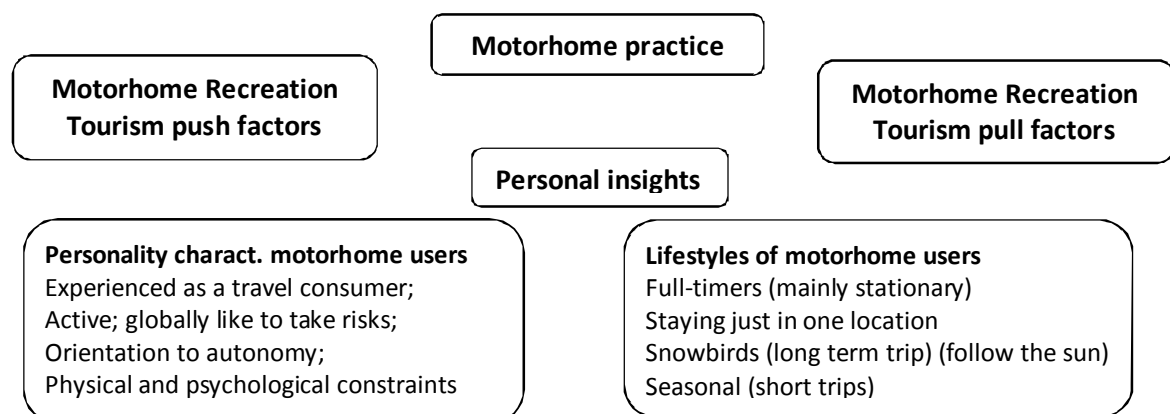
We also focus in this section on how motorhome users share informal and formal spaces. The outcome of these performances has different approach, and based on results of our research:

Table 2 - Space share by Motorhome users

	Frequencies	
Stay overnight just in informal (places)		10%
Campground & ASAs	26%	47%
Just Campground	13%	
Just ASAs	8%	
Stay overnight both ways Informal + Formal (places)		43%

In terms of tourist accommodation, each territory has to meet specific challenges inherent to its geographical location, topographical features and its rate of frequenting. The focus is on the key points to know in order to optimize the arriving motorhome drivers on the coast, in the mountains, the countryside and the city.

Of those who participated in the survey, 10% claimed to overnight just informally (never in campgrounds or ASAs), 47% preferred to overnight in formal parks (campground and/or ASAs) and the rest stated that they sometimes chose to stay overnight informally and other times in campgrounds or ASAs. Of those who preferred to stay overnight on campgrounds, security (51%) and services (48%) were the factors most often cited by motorhome users. Services globally were referred to by 50% of those who choose to stay overnight in ASAs and security is important but seems to have less importance (35%). Water is the resource more appreciated in both places (25%) and electricity, changing cassettes and comfort (in general) were others aspects also mentioned with very little difference between the two. The results suggest, that actually, the perception of price is better on ASAs than in campgrounds, the fact that a few ASAs are near cities is an advantage mentioned by some; however, the opportunity to discover different interior places is often related to those who choose this infrastructure in the Algarve. It is largely through these traveller networks that word-of-mouth information is passed on. For example, this is the best source of information concerning the best places to stay, and in particular the location of good, free camping places, often not advertised in any way whatsoever. From the questionnaire response, it appears that 45% of people learned about their current campsite from other travellers, 49% learned from brochures or private maps, while only 11% learned of it through an information centre (allowing for multiple information sources). Certainly our own information while travelling, and certainly the most enjoyable stays were learned from other travellers. On several occasions, word of the research project had passed ahead to areas later visited several hundred kilometres away. We conclude by using an analytical framework intended to gather an overview of the phenomenon through different perspectives which we illustrate through an empirical example regarding the mobility of motorhomes during winter season in the Algarve. Figure 6 draws and identifies the main tourism factors (push and pull) for motorhome practice. Other elements are interlinked with motivation to influence motorhome users, such as the personal insights like personality characteristics and lifestyles, as well as emotional states:



Motorhome tourism participation – Drivers

Tourism push factors

Escapism; independence; freedom; security & peace;
Personal development; socialization vs. escape, isolation
Open to new adversity and mobile living experience
Social Network users; constrained by healthy conditions,
saving, desire to collect; value of frugality
Online Motorhome destination community

Tourism pull factors

Tourism marketing stimuli; Destinations;
Promotion/advertising ASAs & Camping Parks
Fuel, ASAs /camping & motorhome prices
Services offers with mobility constraints

Emotional states experienced travelling by motorhome

The motorhome is a mobile living experience, the motorhome users activate word of mouth on the road;
Dissimilarity emotions; Nostalgic & desirable states are expectable; family focus of past; freedom spirits

Figure 6 - Drivers of motorhome tourism participation, practices and emotional states; analytical framework adapted from Pomfret, 2006.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The results from qualitative research are viewed as micro research; therefore, one should be careful not to generalize the findings to a population as results are often viewed as lacking reliability and validity (Ryen, 2006). The explorative nature of this paper aims to capture the individual's point of view with its exploration of a particular phenomenon in a particular reality (Charmaz, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In terms of credibility and originality, the results give a good illustration of how movements, meanings and practices (Cressweell, 2006) can be applied to point out and give more visibility to the motorhome phenomenon in the Algarve during winter season. New insights from the results offer interpretations that can be used by tourism managers and guides when interacting with motorhome users. However, public interest in the subject is still not enough, and there will have to be greater openness and monitoring so that this way of practising tourism can grow in a balanced way. Tourism as described by Hall and Lew (2009) is a complex adaptive system composed by interactive agents and elements so with the aim of capturing this complexity we applied multiple methods in the studies, which have therefore resulted in more valid and reliable results (Kim & Richardson, 2003).

A group of motorhome users parking in an Algarve park near the sea is not the same if this park is empty and without cars because it is winter and nobody goes to the beach. So places are about relationships, about the placing of people, materials, images, and systems of difference that they perform (Sheller & Urry, 2006). At the same time as places are dynamic, they are also about proximities, about bodily co-presence of people who happen to be in that place at that time, doing activities together, moments of physical proximity between people that make travel desirable or even obligatory for some (Sheller & Urry, 2006). New mobilities are bringing into being surprising new combinations of presence and absence as the new century chaotically unfolds. Methods and theories will need to be constantly on the move to keep up with these new forms of mobilities: new systems of scheduling and monitoring, as an example system of tourism satellite accounts, urgently need an update towards the needs of emerging senior tourist markets. One of the consequences of the 'age of migration' is also a rapid rise in international tourism (see, e.g., Gheasi, 2015). Long-term seasonal senior tourism is on the rise, so the need for destination competitiveness prompts the supply of client-oriented facilities for senior tourists (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016). However, caution is required to avoid favouring a unique motorhome user profile because they are diverse throughout the year and with a different sense of time. Motorhome grey movers and summer motorhome users are both important to the co-production of Algarve destination.

With regard to the nationality of motorhome users, there is an almost absolute dominance of foreign nationals during winter season. They are almost all European retirees, driving from north of Portugal and following the sun, which is the main motivation of their trip. They usually drive mostly on secondary roads or unpaid highways. Some prefer drive from home to the Algarve destination and others like to visit other countries (especially along the coast of the Mediterranean). The majority of expenditure patterns mentioned are: fuel, accommodation (campground or ASAs) and meals (restaurants or local markets and supermarkets). Previous word of mouth from friends or others motorhomers is one of the most used vehicles for information in this community and they also search for specific information on blogs and web pages focused on this theme. So digital tools and networks are not actions they avoid and the grey movers actually have plenty of time and nearly all the participants that we interviewed were equipped with gadgets. This profile has also been identified in another investigation (PhocusWright, 2016). Our grey movers value information roads, communications, shopping, motorhome repair and equipment, campground and ASA locations as well as descriptions.

Doing tourism with a motorhome it is not synonymous with a desire to be alone, independent or with no links to homeland, as Lorentzen (2015) refers. You could do “Motor-‘home’-tourism, you are ‘home’ but you are tourists”. Based on grey movers that we analysed, freedom and independency were pointed out but in a sense that gave them security, self-esteem, life extension and above all freedom of choice. These meanings were in accord with their everyday attitude; the motorhome users who visit the Algarve during winter season neither park nor drive alone. The results suggest that grey movers don’t travel to escape life, but so that life doesn’t escape them. Cresswell (2008) outlines a notion of constellations of mobility that entails considering the historical existence of fragile senses of movement, meaning and practice, which each entail forms of mobility politics and regulation. All the ASAs and illegal campgrounds located in the Algarve destination are excellent examples of this concept. Their permanence and existence without sanctions reflects the weak power of the regulatory application and a dishonest business environment when compared with their legal competitors. In a future study we would like to reflect and discuss this phenomenon and understand why it stills exists. It is necessary to analyse the damage resulting from the reception of the deregulated motorhomers against their prohibition and sanction, especially in a country that claims to be and continues to be a top European tourist destination.

The drive (motorhome) tourism market is a rapidly growing tourism phenomenon and is the focus of research. If the elderly western population perceive the Algarve as a secure destination and the RV industry offers different options particularly related with improvement and developed with the energy sources for the mobility of these vehicles (diesel, electricity), there is no doubt that drive tourism will grow. However, research is needed to fully understand why people choose to take holidays of this type, how they choose their destinations and how they behave and interact whilst on holiday. Moreover, the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts of this rapidly growing sector are yet to be fully realized. Via the results it seems that drive travellers’ “life cycle” exists, since long stays are mostly present in grey movers in a short and brief literature review. We do not agree with the notion that the drive tourism market is non-homogeneous and different needs should be fulfilled. Are the needs of summer motorhome users similar to the winter motorhome users? Likewise, are the needs of the summer Spanish and Portuguese family motorhome users similar to the grey movers that visit us during the winter season? So when considering mobility, or more specifically societal mobilization of human interaction, we need to deal with contextual as well as spatial and temporal and more specifically, *mobilized situatedness of interaction* in particular contexts and relations as a state (Kakihara & Sørensen, 2001).

This research is an unfinished work, allowing us to encourage various players with new proposals and research for the future. We know that study is the first step in protecting heritage. Thus, with regard to future investigations, we think it is important to deepen the knowledge of this subject, always trying to integrate it in this territory and in wider areas. Regarding the territory under study, we highlight the Falésia Park as an example of excellence, and would go so far as to identify it as an

anchor product of the existing host network. This perception is consistent with the numbers/quotas (CCDRA, 2016) of overnight stays and assessments mentioned by motorhome users of this facility.

Suggestions:

Sensitize policy makers to the importance of promoting the practice of motorhoming and promoting ASAs and campgrounds.

From the established contact with motorhomers and their overall average age, we draw one suggestion: whenever we analyse objectively we undergo contain qualitative questions, and the characteristics of the target (ages, difficulty in reading and fill inquiries, among other factors) in the in-depth interview should be taken into account. If the nature of the issue is clearly quantitative, it should be short and easy to read, if the survey is self-applied.

The payment system on the highway “Via do Infante” which crosses the Algarve should be much clearer and easier to understand how to pay. During our fieldwork we were often questioned about the way motorhome users could pay or use the highway.

There should be more cooperation between stakeholders (campgrounds and ASAs all over the Algarve) in a specific region or between regions, public and private, including products and destination linkages. In the in-depth interviews, French informants gave a few examples of local exchange experiences in agriculture and wine during their tour.

Definitions of the type of involvement including regulations, investments and subsidies are urgent at the level of the public sector (local, state or national). This definition will be directly related to economic impacts and the private sector will also gain with this proposal of work, at least to guide towards better decisions. Limitations:

In particular, the understanding of how motorhome seasonal users are perceived by local communities and how the motorhome market impacts upon communities, the environment and regional communities are of primary importance.

Over the last decade there has been progress at the legislative level, which boosted and simplified the development of the phenomenon in terms of an effort for legalization, standardization of rules and implementing them at the service areas and campgrounds. There is still much work to do, including awareness-raising for the non-development of informal concentrations of motorhomes, avoiding potential conflicts between motorhome users and residents in different surrounding areas where they choose good parking for longer seasons.

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