



Research Article

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## Migration and Spanish Citizenship Abroad: Recent Scenarios from the Cuban Context<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Carmen Ascanio Sánchez

Dr. Sara García Cuesta

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of La Laguna, Spain  
Research Group: "Migration, Gender and Identities: Policy Analysis and Assessment" (MIGEID)*

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### Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to explore recent scenarios observed in migration and Spanish citizenship abroad, using Cuba as a case study. This project's innovative contribution lies in its multimethod approach, which considers both normative and demographic factors while also including a qualitative and participatory dimension. Spanish migration to Cuba is a particularly interesting case, given the differences observed here as compared to other Latin American contexts, in terms of both the social policies involved and the Spanish migrants' profiles and respective family strategies. We analyze migrant groups from the three regions of Spain that saw the greatest emigration to this Caribbean island: Asturias, the Canary Islands and Galicia. The results show the effects of Spanish social and migratory policies on migrants to Cuba and their families from the 1990s onward, in particular with respect to the law governing citizenship known as the "Grandchildren's Act" ("Ley de Nietos," 2007-2011). We discuss the different strategies and practices, both individual and collective, that arose from the new resources created by these policies. To conclude, we sketch out the repercussions of these new practices on intergenerational relationships, access to citizenship rights, and the reshaping of collective identities.*

**Keyword:** Migrations, External citizenship, Cuba-Spain, Social policies, Collective identities.

### 1. Introduction

As Alejandro Portes has stated (2012), it is inconceivable that there could be a comprehensive theory of migratory processes today, as the concept encompasses so many areas that any such theory would have to be extremely abstract. This is why we will focus on specific aspects of these processes, framed in recent research on external citizenship (Ciomei, 2012) and related to social policies for migrants, citizenship, and the transmission thereof from one generation to the next. Here, it is important to consider the concept of transnational citizenship (Bauböck, 2009), an innovative approach that questions the construction of citizenship based solely on one's country of origin, and rethinks aspects related to national borders and democratic rights in the building of citizenship and identities (Barry, 2006).

Recent developments in policies and regulations targeting Spanish migrants to the American continent stand out for their novelty and the resulting interest generated around them in Europe. We will look in particular at the effect of social and migratory policies directed at Spanish citizens in Cuba. Our approach focuses on analyzing the social discourses and practices, perceptions, explanations, and entitlements to be found in the personal and collective biographies of this group, in terms of the personal, social, and symbolic strategies applied (Ascanio Sánchez & Martín Fernández, 2013 a). Migration is seen as a personal and collective dynamic where subjects actively interact with their local and global contexts based on their own life courses.

<sup>1</sup> Research project entitled "Social policies and senior citizens: profile, resources and diagnostics of the case of Spanish citizens in Cuba" (Políticas sociales y tercera edad: perfil, recursos y diagnóstico del caso de los españoles en Cuba, code: A/024243/09). Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

## 2. Methodology

The aims of this proposal require the use of a multimethod approach based on historiographical analysis, consultation of official sociodemographic statistics (2008-2016), and qualitative fieldwork, involving participant observation and 78 semi-structured interviews (2009-2010). This fieldwork was completed in Havana and supported by a number of collaborating associations and bodies.

The sociodemographic and biographical data obtained through this approach allowed us to link the macro and micro dimensions, as well as the diachronic and synchronic logics of the migration, while considering the social, historical, and political context and the migratory trajectories and strategies observed. The secondary sources of sociodemographic data sketched out the broad brushstrokes of the migratory processes, whilst the various types of qualitative data collected lent the project considerable depth and ensured great predictive value.

A total of 78 interviews were carried out, in three formats: a) six open interviews with qualified key informants, selected for their role in associations or in the management of migratory policies; b) sixty-six in-depth, "life story"-type interviews with elderly Spanish nationals contacted through the associations and selected on the basis of their geographical origin (Asturias, Canary Islands, and Galicia) and sex: overall, there were 23 Galicians, 22 Canary Islanders, and 21 Asturians, of whom 36 were female and 30 were male, with ages ranging from 65 to 98; c) six international interviews with seniors who had participated in the filming of a documentary (Ascanio Sánchez & Martín Fernández, 2013 b<sup>2</sup>). The audiovisual testimonials and photographic materials offer a narrative of life experiences and events, showing celebrations at associations, visits from the authorities, and recordings of the life stories mentioned above.

The qualitative work also included informal meetings and interviews with members of Spanish associations in Havana and central and eastern Cuba, held on the sidelines of association events and activities. Association involvement was essential in facilitating the project methodology. We will refer specifically to the various methodological procedures followed in the sections where we present the results of the research.

## 3. Contextual Scenarios of Spanish Migration to Cuba: Social and Migratory Policies

Four waves of transatlantic movement define the generations making up the current Spanish migrant population in Cuba: a) Most of the oldest migrants left Spain as children in the 1930s, a period marked by a drop in the previously large numbers of migrants to the American continent spurred by the global crisis. b) The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) produced the next wave of emigrants, forced into exile by violence and hardship; this wave included those known as the "war children" ("*Niños de la Guerra*", a term applied to those who left Spain under the age of 24, which was the age of majority at the time). c) The number of emigrants crossing the Atlantic remained high from 1945 through to the mid-1960s, with a peak in the 1950s; this wave included migrants of varying ages fleeing repression and poverty who hoped to reunite one day with family members. d) These family reunifications took place in Cuba a few short years later, thus concluding a period of intense migratory activity.

The Cuban Revolution later attracted young Spaniards who identified with the politics involved. These young people have been joined of late by migrants with new motivations – based on culture, ideology, marriage, or business interests – who may be either native or naturalized Spaniards residing in Cuba. What is most at play today are the migratory strategies of naturalized Cuban-Spanish citizens, descendants of Spanish nationals, who see dual citizenship as an opportunity for migration away from the Caribbean isle.

Since the 1990s, social policies for Spanish citizens in Cuba have conditioned the experience of the various groups and generations living there, in particular senior citizens in vulnerable situations. Many of these individuals have spent much of their lives on the island and are completely integrated. Forms of social assistance from Spain are incorporated into the various financial strategies employed by Cuban families. They also help meet emigrants' express desire to maintain ties with the Spanish homeland, and in particular with the regions (Autonomous Communities). But it is above all family and community networks that would appear to be the mainstay of support for Spanish nationals struggling with the challenges of living as a senior citizen in Cuba. This is the context in which public assistance is received, whether it be from the Cuban state or take the form of pensions and financial assistance from the Spanish state and its regions (Oiarzabal, Uzcanga, & Bartolomé, 2015).

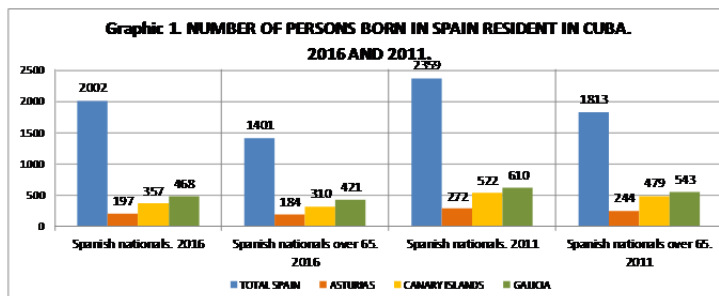
These forms of financial assistance from Spain are a specific, not insignificant source of support for these elderly people and their families, and prove especially useful for those in vulnerable situations or with special needs. They are

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<sup>2</sup> Awarded the University of Havana's prize for best audiovisual documentary, 2010.

meant to cover needs relating to work, finances, healthcare, housing, education, and culture (Franco Suarez, 2010), although these distinctions will vary depending on what specific needs are not otherwise met in each territory. For example, in Cuba, *healthcare* is guaranteed for senior citizens through the public health service, and so any support coming from Spain is considered to be complementary to that. That said, *benefits and pensions* to Spanish migrants are much needed, as is *funding of nursing homes and associations*, as well as *leisure and travel policies* that allow expatriates to restore ties with their home country. Associations manage these assistance programs, thus helping delimit the scope of actions coming from Spain. These associations, in turn, are more aware of emigrants' needs on the ground and can design initiatives accordingly.

The social policies thus applied affect all of the generations involved in the migratory processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Ascanio Sánchez, 2008). The first formal forms of social assistance were meant to help the "war children", who were granted certain specific benefits (García Cuesta, Martín Fernández, & Perera Pérez, 2013). But the population of Spanish citizens currently residing in the island is more heterogeneous in terms of age, origin, motivation, and life situation: the proportion of this population that is actually made up of elderly Spanish nationals with strong links to the benefits policies can be more or less deduced from the statistics<sup>3</sup>. In addition, in recent years the Official Census Record of Spanish Residents Abroad (*Padrón de Españoles Residentes en el Exterior*, PERE) has brought to light the existence of more Spanish residents, given the current interest shown by emigrants and their descendants in registering at consulates to qualify for financial assistance from Spain<sup>4</sup>. The number of Spanish citizens registered in Cuba has thus gone up considerably, although the number of those who were actually born in Spain has dropped sharply, given the effect of mortality on members of this age group, 70% of whom are over 65<sup>5</sup>.



Source: INE, PERE 2011 and 2016. Compiled by authors.

We can observe an initial, older profile, comprising the recipients of the social benefits granted under the Statute of Spanish Citizenship Abroad (*Estatuto de la ciudadanía española en el exterior*) since 2006<sup>6</sup>. This Statute highlights the need to strengthen the network of services and activities targeting general welfare, and to support financially the associations and centers providing assistance (Art. 20), giving priority to dependent seniors who lack the necessary resources (Art. 17). In Cuba, some of these forms of financial assistance are quite substantial, as shall be explained in the following.

First, there is the *old-age pension supplement for returnees*, which is granted in countries where the state

<sup>3</sup> Overall, 81.2% were over 65, and of these, 81% (1500 individuals) were over 90. Life expectancy is very high, as reflected in figures on pensions received from Spain: 42 pensioners were between 100 and 104, and 13 were even over 104 years old (data from the Labor and Immigration Department of the Consulate General of Spain in Havana, March 2011).

<sup>4</sup> As of 1 January 2015, the PERE had identified 119,662 Spanish nationals resident in Cuba: this was the second largest increase in the Spanish population abroad observed in recent years, after Argentina (total population in the PERE in 2015: 2,183,043). Spanish residents in Cuba represent 5.5% of the country's total population.

<sup>5</sup> In 2011, the PERE identified 2359 Spanish nationals in Cuba, 54% of whom were women. By 2016, this number had gone down to 2002 (Spanish National Statistics Institute [INE]: PERE, 2011 and 2016). In terms of ageing, in 2011, Spanish nationals over 65 comprised 76.8% of the total. By 2016, the number of these seniors identified by the PERE had gone down to 70% of the total, with most being women (57%).

<sup>6</sup> Law 40/2006 dated 14 December 2006, Statute of Spanish Citizenship Abroad. Section II. Social rights and benefits: right to healthcare protection, social security and needs-based benefits, social services for the elderly, and employment and occupational rights. [author's own translation]

protection systems are precarious enough to justify it. There are also *old-age pensions and supplements*, which constitute a much-appreciated form of assistance to senior citizens and their families. A full 68.6% of the 1097 Spanish nationals who received senior citizens' benefits in Cuba in 2013 were over 80 years old; this age group accounted for over half of the native Spanish population of the island. The average payment to these individuals is €227, a not insignificant amount in a country where average monthly wages have hovered around €20 to €40 in recent years<sup>7</sup>. This notwithstanding, the interviews revealed that there are certain incompatibilities between the different benefits offered by the central Spanish state and the Autonomous Communities that may be affecting the welfare of these senior citizens' households, particularly the most vulnerable among them. Logic would dictate that the most sensitive situations should be assessed to permit the two forms of assistance to co-exist.

A second form of benefits are those targeting *housing*, which play a less prominent role in the narratives than the previous category, although the interviews did reveal the hardships suffered in these households – a phenomenon also observed amongst seniors in Spain (Alfama, Cruels, & Ezquerro, 2014). In some cases, the interviewees stated that they were able to carry out certain repairs on their homes thanks to the benefits they received, in particular the non-contributory pensions and other forms of external assistance. However, we were able to observe how some of these seniors' mobility – a key contributor to quality of life – was limited by the poor physical access to their homes.

Third, there are the *healthcare, education, and social services policies*, which are governed by the criterion of inclusive, universal access<sup>8</sup>, although residence abroad throws up certain additional considerations. In Cuba, these policies take the form of financial assistance that is complementary to the resources provided through the Cuban healthcare system. Interviewees were more likely to mention local services as having an impact on their health and daily life, although there were a few specific forms of external assistance that they highlighted, i.e., one-off payments, travel grants, and assistance to centers and associations.

Looking at the *regular payments*, special reference was made to non-contributory pensions, disability pensions, and benefits targeting the "war children" (Law 3/2005)<sup>9</sup>, as well as to the various types of assistance provided by the Autonomous Communities. The Grandchildren's Act (*Ley de nietos*<sup>10</sup>) is also perceived as an advantage associated with Spanish seniors, in that it allows their descendants to claim Spanish citizenship. The first figures, reflecting the three years following the law's adoption and its later extension (2008-2011), were impressive, with 400,000 applications for citizenship submitted by children and grandchildren of those who had gone into exile during the Spanish Civil War and under the Franco dictatorship. In Cuba alone, there were no fewer than 180,000 applicants. The 100,000 naturalized Spanish citizens awaiting the resolution of their file will thus join a Spanish population in Cuba that numbered around 28,000 before the law was passed<sup>11</sup>. This constitutes a veritable phenomenon in Cuban society, reflecting the impact of past, present, and future migratory processes linking Spain and Cuba. *Travel grants* are another topic frequently raised by informants, in particular those offered by the Spanish Government's Institute for Senior Citizens and Social Services (*Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales*, IMSERSO), which help people take holidays in Spain, as well as the travel subsidies offered by the Autonomous Communities, which facilitate reunions with family members. Finally, interviewees also mentioned the support provided by Spain to *nursing homes* for Spanish nationals without family support.

However, interviewees tended to lack awareness of where exactly this financial assistance is coming from. They were more likely to relate these forms of support to the associations that manage them than with the actual sources in Spain; these associations act as intermediaries in administering the assistance, and also receive grants to maintain infrastructure and purchase food. Associations manage donations, distribute Christmas hampers (*jabas navideñas*), and coordinate one-off payments for medications or housing renovations. Interviewees also spoke of the "Societies" (*Sociedades*) that manage home-based care and maintain burial vaults in cemeteries. The interviews also revealed that some elderly Spanish nationals – including a number of "war children" – were not aware of certain forms of assistance that they should have been informed of. It is also possible that the incompatibilities between the forms of assistance, or

<sup>7</sup> 2013 Yearbook of the Spanish Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

<sup>8</sup> Referring to public social services offered to senior citizens in Spain: home-based care, homes and clubs, day centers, residences for senior citizens and dependents, supervised housing, and family placement.

<sup>9</sup> Law 3/2005 dated 18 March 2005, which grants financial assistance to citizens of Spanish origin who moved abroad as children as a result of the Spanish Civil War and have spent most of their lives outside of Spain.

<sup>10</sup> "Seventh additional provision 1. Persons whose father or mother was originally Spanish may acquire Spanish citizenship if they formally submit their claim within two years of entry into force of the present additional provision (...) This right shall also be granted to the grandchildren of those persons who lost or were forced to forfeit their Spanish citizenship as a consequence of the exile" (Law of Historical Memory 52/2007, published in the Official Journal of Spain on 27 December 2007).

<sup>11</sup> 2013 Yearbook of the Portal for Spanish Citizens Abroad (*Portal de la Ciudadanía Española en el Exterior*). Data from the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

even the mere fear of losing them, leads to mistrust and a resulting unwillingness to speak openly about them; after all, these regular payments are one of the main ways in which these elderly individuals can help improve their family's lives, and they recognize them as a key factor in their welfare.

#### 4. Normative and Social Scenarios of Migratory Strategies

##### 4.1 *The impact of the Grandchildren's Act*

The Spanish Law of Historical Memory (*Ley para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*<sup>12</sup>), while not in itself intended to set migratory policy objectives, gave rise to a new phase of migratory strategies in Cuba (Izquierdo Escribano, 2011). The aim of this law was to recognize and extend the rights of those who had suffered persecution or violence during the Spanish Civil War and under the Franco dictatorship. The seventh additional provision of this law, which has come to be known as the "Grandchildren's Act", sets out the conditions for acquiring Spanish citizenship and has had great impact in countries, such as Cuba, that took in Spanish immigrants during the period in question. By virtue of this provision, citizenship rights are granted to first- and second-generation descendants of Spanish nationals exiled between 18 July 1936 and 31 December 1955. This provision remained in force until 27 December 2011, following a one-year extension of the original deadline. In the four years that it was in force (2008-2011), a total of 400,000 persons around the world applied for citizenship, with the consulate in Cuba receiving the greatest number of applications. As previously explained, the effects of this measure can be seen in the number of descendants naturalized since its adoption.

Spain's institutions were not expecting such a response, given the slowdown in migration flows, the progressive reduction in the population of Spanish exiles, the large number of exogamous marriages in Cuba, and – last but not least – the growing distance between the two countries as a result of the Franco dictatorship and, later, the Cuban Revolution of 1959. However, the emergence of an identification with Spain and its regions observed in the past decade has shown that dormant memories can be revived, and that these can find their expression in shared wishes, needs, and sentiments.

In recent decades, the Cuban context has been characterized by problematic external mobility and great internal complexity (Fresneda Camacho & Delgado Wise, 2013). Migration is a common strategy employed to improve living conditions for individuals and, more often than not, their families. Acquiring another citizenship is one possible way to improve these conditions and even open up the possibility of moving abroad. All this explains the gap between government forecasts and a reality that has seen Cuba produce the greatest number of applicants under the LHM. With all this in mind, it is also logical that 97% of all applications received in this country made use of only one of the many possible routes to citizenship offered by the law: that of persons whose father or mother had originally been Spanish (Golias Pérez, 2004).

All this is reflected clearly in the stories collected for this study, the interviews for which were held precisely at the time in which the Grandchildren's Act was in force; interviewees shared their medium- and long-term expectations with respect to this law's provisions.

The interviews conducted with elderly people in Cuba showed that both "war children" (exiled migrants) and other emigrants play similar roles in their families' economic and migratory strategies. These individuals open the door to naturalization processes and constitute key forms of support for their families, thanks to the financial benefits they receive from Spain. However, the two groups' discourses differ in other respects: for instance, the population in exile has long played a leadership role in the migrant association culture, while other migrant groups only joined the association sector at a later stage, following the appearance of government assistance managed in large part by these networks. Also, exiled migrants would appear to feel less connected to the context of their native country. Their discourse is marked by many expressions of nostalgia and pain, as well as emotional blockages related to childhood memories. Indeed, their narratives tend to repeat the idea that it is their family members' needs – not their own – that constitute the main reason for drawing on the forms of financial assistance recently made available by Spain. For the other migrants, contacts with Spanish associations tend to serve the purpose of obtaining guidance on how to apply for assistance and how to manage all the documentation required for passing on citizenship.

This latter migrant profile illustrates how contacts with family members in the country of origin, which may have been lost over time due to the barriers of distance and poor communications, can be restored and even strengthened. Migrants in this group tell of how, starting with the crisis that Cuba went through in the 1990s known as the "Special Period" (*Período Especial*), they began to timidly activate some of their closer networks, just as social policies were starting to be developed in Spain. The continued offering of benefits, pensions, and grants for travel to Spain resulted in a

<sup>12</sup> Hereinafter LHM.



greater reactivation of ties across the Atlantic. In this group, the naturalization of descendants has one clear objective: to permit international mobility, with a clear focus on the second and third generations.

For all these reasons, the shaping of the Cuban-Spanish identity, in the case of the two migrant profiles identified above, is linked to both the migrants' initial motivation for migration and their life courses in their new country. There is, of course, a clear difference between the two groups – those forced into exile on the one hand, and the other group, which includes naturalized Spanish citizens, on the other – in terms of the initial motivation for migration. For the former, the fact that they were forced to flee their native country is a key part of their identity; for the latter, the roots of migration lie in their search for better financial circumstances and a better life for their families. This reconstruction of migratory and identity discourses is important for socialization within the domestic groups, which are determined by family type and can be ethnically endogamous or exogamous. The fact is, all this ends up influencing family decision-making, as family members are affected by the new opportunities for mobility brought in by the LHM, as we shall see in the following section.

#### 4.2 *Association practices and intergenerational relations*

Bhabha (1994) posits that the construction of identity is best understood through metaphorical concepts such as what he calls the "in-between spaces" created when narratives, meanings, and choices are allowed to flow between territories of origin and those of destination. The motivations underlying migration, one's life course in the recipient society, and recently applied group strategies thus give shape to emerging identities and new subjectivities.

In the case of Cuba, we will first analyze the role of migrant associations and recent transformations in this sector; then, we will examine the most relevant profiles contributing to migratory and identity discourses. Finally, we will describe the relations between generations, family strategies, transnational networks, and new opportunities for mobility.

Following Cuba's independence (in 1898), associations of all types were strengthened as a means of organizing the changes that were occurring and consolidating those aspects considered to be defining elements of Spanish cultural origins. Historically, migrant associations and regional centers have played an important role in building both the Spanish identity and identities related to the country's various regions, by passing down aspects of the home culture, building economic, political, and other networks, and, as is currently the case, facilitating the implementation of social and identity policies coming from the places of origin.

A number of phases can be identified in relations between Spain and Cuba. We will begin with the period following the Cuban Revolution (after 1959), when links between the two countries weakened. Contacts were reestablished starting in the 1980s, under the new democracy in Spain, leading to a renewed rise in the association culture and new opportunities for exchange with migrants' native regions. As the various Autonomous Communities were established in Spain, the influence of these regions within these migrant associations grew, and relations with the governments and societies of these native regions expanded. With the advent of the financial crisis in Cuba in the 1990s, many emigrants and their descendants began to promote associations as a bridge between their adopted home and the national and regional governments in Spain. A decade later, with the adoption of the LHM, many children of Spanish nationals took their parents' citizenship and adopted their roots and cultural worldviews, which had not been lost over the years. Indeed, the association sector grew quite rapidly in this period, as did the assistance coming from Spain's national and regional governments. Recent typologies of this association sector and of its organizational structure and aims show this evolution over the past thirty years.

Simply put, the broad-based analysis conducted for this project showed that there are two main types of associations: the four existing federations on the one hand, and all the other associations, which go by different names, on the other. In 2010, there were 98 associations in the latter group, representing ten Autonomous Communities and working mostly for migrants or their descendants from three regions: Asturias, Galicia, and the Canary Islands.

The aims of these associations have remained unchanged over the years: to meet charitable, cultural, and recreational objectives, offer health care, preserve cultural elements, provide spaces for leisure activities, etc. Membership numbers have gone up in recent years, growing from a few hundred in the smallest associations to thousands in the largest groupings and those that are distributed across the country.

Many of the informants and interviewees for this study stated that these associations act as bridges that provide networks, channel demands, and manage grants and forms of assistance of various types. Interviews and questionnaires completed with association directors showed that not only has membership gone up, but most members these days also hold Spanish citizenship. Spanish-born members have become few and far between, given the advanced age of this group (all are over 60). It is really their descendants who make up the body of the association culture. Some one-fifth of these individuals were able to become naturalized through the LHM (Fernández, Martín Fernández & Perera Pérez, 2013).

Within the framework of the two general profiles described above, we see new profiles emerge that depend on migrants' individual life courses and their respective migratory and identity discourses. The first profile covers migrants who emigrated for financial reasons, hoping for a better life. The second profile includes those migrants who moved for family reasons: family reunification, kinship networks, or building new families. The third profile covers the "war children," whose political viewpoints led them to see Cuba as a platform for expression: many joined the socialist cause in their new country. The latter were often the ones responsible for promoting new relations between Cuba and Spain, through the association sector. A major difference between this third group and the other two groups is that the war children have benefited from specific, quite substantial financial assistance, a resource not available to other Spanish citizens resident in Cuba.

Another, fourth profile covers those who were naturalized at different points in history for different reasons; this group includes the most recent wave of new Spanish citizens who acquired citizenship through the LHM, who are essentially second- and third-generation descendants. This last profile is the most heterogeneous of them all, as the individuals it englobes differ greatly both in terms of the typologies of their family roots and due to the fact that they are Cuban by birth. This is also the group that identifies most with the new family mobility strategies. In Cuba, unlike in other Latin American contexts, this generation of children and grandchildren tends to have a higher educational and professional profile; they therefore also have higher expectations of migratory success. Indeed, this is the group responsible for reestablishing links with Spain and with family networks abroad during the Cuban financial crisis.

It is in this phase that we see the process of identity rebuilding begin, with increased contact with the society of origin, including money transfers, tourism, and family visits. One of the main aims behind applying for citizenship is the territorial mobility that comes with it, although there may be politically-motivated discourses and sentiments expressed as well, depending on whether the individuals involved belong to a family network motivated by economic migration or exile.

All the above explains the interplay between intergenerational relations, family strategies, and transnational networks leading to new opportunities for mobility. The profiles of Spanish nationals to be found in the official census record reveal a diverse scenario characterized by large households, marriage, and widowhood. For these native Spanish pensioners, financial assistance from Spain is a vital resource, covering daily subsistence expenses, the cost of applying for citizenship, or possible future mobility. Clearly, policies coming from Spain, in particular the possibilities opened up by the LHM, have reactivated new strategies that are deeply rooted in identity, although these may also depend on other, individual circumstances, such as having family networks in the countries of origin and destination, feeling nostalgia for the culture of origin, and life-long strategies of recollection and forgetting. As previously stated, in the case of Cuba, it is worth noting the large number of descendants who become naturalized with the hope of emigrating to Spain or to another destination open to holders of Spanish passports. Most elderly emigrants link a possible return home to their children's and grandchildren's plans to travel abroad, either to the family's place of origin or to other, more promising destinations. We thus see that both the financial assistance and the mobility grants (assistance to returnees) offered in recent years have facilitated the reactivation of family networks, of emotions, and of recollections leading to the reconstruction and development of new life possibilities and expectations, which may in turn include migratory processes.

## 5. Conclusion

Recent scenarios are centered on the population of senior citizens of Spanish origin and their descendants, with their newly acquired right to citizenship.

First, policies implemented by Spain contribute heavily to improving these senior citizens' autonomy and the lives of their families. Second, Spanish associations abroad play an important role in managing the provision of benefits, which includes identifying seniors in vulnerable situations. The association sector offers important support for the implementation of policies launched by Spain, as some emigrants suffer from limited access to the benefits and financial assistance to which they are entitled. Our fieldwork showed that this limited access in certain cases is more attributable to geographical distance and difficulties with mobility on the island than to any lack of awareness of the assistance available.

Third, looking at the construction of identity, we see that it is affected both by the migratory trajectory and, notably, by the effects of the social policies described above. The adoption of the LHM marked a turning point in this regard, as it allowed for the naturalization of hundreds of thousands of descendants of Spanish citizens, thus providing an incentive for the recovery of memories related to both these individuals' roots in Spain and their new home in Cuba. This law, in facilitating the passing on of citizenship from the first to the third generations, has played a key role in rebuilding family networks, in its conveying of collective moods and meanings.

In sum, both the interviews with key informants and association leaders and those conducted with Spanish

nationals offer an overview of practices surrounding these resources and their uses, thus making it possible to identify needs and strategies for overcoming everyday challenges. Indeed, our research found that the application of certain social policies by Spain is closely linked to the consolidation currently observed in the social functions played by the association sector and with the design of new family strategies in Cuba.

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