

Geographies of Tourism and Global Change

Josefina Domínguez-Mujica
Jennifer McGarrigle
Juan Manuel Parreño-Castellano *Editors*

International Residential Mobilities

From Lifestyle Migrations to Tourism
Gentrification



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Chapter 12

The Contribution of International Residential Mobility to Tourism Development: Cienfuegos City, Cuba



Manuel R. González-Herrera, Mercedes Á. Rodríguez-Rodríguez,
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12.1 Introduction

Reflecting on international residential mobility in times of mobility (Coles et al., 2005) is not an easy task for tourism researchers since tourism mobility is conditioned by multiple factors. Proof of this is the growing appearance of new complex social forms of residence and mobility of a real-estate nature, which involves various sectors and social actors (Aledo et al., 2007), and enhanced investment in infrastructure and services as an alternative to traditional tourist accommodation modalities. In some cases, these accommodations occupy heritage properties that add cultural historical value, which makes them very attractive and familiar environments for visitors, thereby modifying the conventionality of the tourist accommodation product.

In general terms, residential mobility is defined as “those spatial practices that refer to activities and specific behaviours and, at the same time, display a symbolic dimension linked to the perceptions established around these practices” (Di Virgilio, 2014, 13). This definition is very broad, so it is necessary to narrow its scope for the purposes of this study. Residential mobility is understood as the product of housing opportunities (Cruz & Xavier, 2011), defined by the existence of new and/or vacant homes that result from the processes of rehabilitation and enhancement of the

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central areas of the city (gentrification), the incorporation of urban land, the dynamics of the real-estate and land market (Di Virgilio, 2014). Housing needs and expectations, which in turn are conditioned by the position that the family occupies in production and consumption, their lifestyle, the preferences of its members, the networks of which they participate and the perceptions about their own social position and about the conditions of the surroundings.

Taking into consideration the previous theoretical positioning, the object of study of this research focuses on international residential mobility towards family-owned houses (hostales) that are offered to the market as an option for tourist accommodation, and the place of intervention corresponds to the Cienfuegos city, located in the Central region of Cuba. The context in which Cuban tourism activity is currently inserted is characterized by the state monopoly of foreign trade (few companies); given this situation that characterizes the current scenario, in the short term completely different, more concrete, measurable and hopeful measures should be applied, while requiring the publication and implementation of the Enterprise Law and the Cooperatives Law as a necessary way for the legitimization of all forms of property (Everleny Pérez, 2019).

In the opinion of Everleny, former director of the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy (CEEC) of the University of Havana, and prominent Cuban economist, greater proactivity is necessary in the search for external capital from Cuban individuals or families residing abroad. At the same time, the creation of wholesale input markets with foreign companies or foreign commercial firms for all forms of property is necessary, thus avoiding the outflow of foreign currency to buy inputs abroad (Everleny Pérez, 2019). This specialist acknowledges that, when there is financial fragility there is a tendency to treasure USD, which is why, removing the state tax from the United States dollar would make the conversion more attractive, in this way, and part of the remittances received by the population could be changed in CADECA or in Banks with more favourable interest rates.

According to the possible relationship between international residential mobility and the development of the real-estate sector for tourism use, this study assumes the following research question: how has international residential mobility contributed to the revitalization of the residential real-estate sector for tourist accommodation in private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos City?

Different findings from previous research recognize the contradictory relationships between international residential mobility and its contribution to the generation of new housing opportunities for international tourism, as well as the impact on the revitalization of the residential real-estate sector for tourist use, both in first residence and in second private residences (Müller, 2002, Casado et al., 2004, Díaz & Lourés, 2006, Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, Fernández & Barrado, 2011, Williams & Hall, 2012). Such learning experiences developed in different countries of the world explain international mobility of a residential nature favoured by both internal and external factors, which seem to contrast with the experience of Cuba. In Cuba, the formation and consolidation of tourist accommodation in private accommodation houses (hostales) seems to be more associated with external support generated by

economic income derived from visits by foreign and Cuban tourists residing abroad, as well as other external support associated with remittance flows from abroad.

This fact justifies the need to know, in the specific case of the Cuban reality, the relationship between international mobility represented by Cuban residents abroad and other groups of foreigners regarding real-estate development that has allowed the revalorization of private homes as an option for tourist accommodation. That is why the general objective of this study is to assess the contribution of international residential mobility to the revitalization of the residential real-estate sector for tourist accommodation in private rental houses (*hostales*) in Cienfuegos City, Cuba.

In correspondence with the previous components of the theoretical research design, it was assumed as a working hypothesis that international residential mobility promoted by Cuban residents abroad and other foreigners has encouraged residential real-estate investment for tourism purposes in Cienfuegos city. Consequently, enhancing the supply of an alternative type of accommodation in family-owned houses (*hostales*), which favours the enjoyment of this historical-cultural destination, and its surroundings.

The main limitations of the study were caused by difficulties accessing information due to the lack of data on tourism in Cuba and the city of Cienfuegos, in particular, published on the ONEI website. The last published statistical yearbook corresponds to 2015 and contains only the data until 2014. This limitation was accentuated since there is no updated database to consult and there is no tourism observatory with tourism information, neither from the public nor private sectors; specifically regarding self-employed activities there is no officially systematized information published, the data is widely dispersed and restricted for use in research activities. In addition, it is important to recognize that the subject under study is very susceptible for Cuban entrepreneurs, who must demonstrate financial solvency to be able to maintain their business, without outside help, so the answers may have a certain masking tone.

Future implications of research work on this topic should be oriented to the methodological, management and operational definition of the concept of the private rental house (*hostal*) as a modality of accommodation for the non-state tourism sector in Cuba, its typologies and categorization appropriate to the national context of tourism in this destination. It is also recommended to extend this type of study to other cities and tourist regions of the country where this type of accommodation has gained relevance. This would promote better management of these establishments in terms of quality and sustainability in an integrated way with the rest of the types of accommodation of the state sector.

12.2 Tourism, Mobility and Accommodation

12.2.1 *Tourism and Human Mobility*

Tourism and human mobility are integrated as a spatial phenomenon (Boullón, 1997; Carranza & Serrano, 2005; Di Virgilio, 2014; Vera et al., 1997; Vogeler & Hernández, 2000) associated with residential mobility, through which housing opportunities are generated (Cruz & Xavier, 2011). Such opportunities are in new or vacant houses as a consequence of the processes of rehabilitation or enhancement of different types of properties with the participation of the real estate market and the land market. In fact, the term tourism itself comes from the Latin word “tornare” or “tornus” meaning, in terms of action, the activity of “going and returning”, which in essence constitutes the basis of tourist trips (Acerenza, 2000; Gallego, 2002).

Different authors recognize that tourism is a phenomenon that has been the subject of various conceptualizations with divergent approaches and meeting points (Acerenza, 2000; Bigné et al., 2000; Figuerola, 2000; Gallego, 2002). However, a set of terms commonly used for its definition appear, such as travel, change of place, temporary stay, as well as social, economic, and territorial environmental relations and phenomena. During the last decades the approaches related to it have evolved with respect to aspects such as the temporary movements of people (trips), the economic significance of tourism as a productive activity, the psycho-sociological, cultural and environmental scope, or the operational components of the tourism process. The pioneering definition for its connotation and acceptance is provided by Swiss professors Kurt Krapf and Walter Hunziker (1942) who defined tourism as a set of relationships and phenomena produced by the displacement and permanence of people outside their place of residence, as long as these displacements and permanence were not motivated by a lucrative activity; note that it is a definition that focuses on the trip and the social processes that are generated.

In correspondence with the previous premises, the authors of this chapter understand tourism as the set of industrial and commercial activities that produce goods and services consumed by tourists during the realization of a tourist trip. In turn, temporary migrations and a set of social and economic relations and phenomena are generated in the double tourist-host direction. In this sense, tourism is a complex economic and social activity that occurs in a specific place, namely a tourist destination, which is characterized by a type of environment and a specific technological base. This tourist destination constitutes a geographical or perceived place in which the supply of certain tourist products is located and towards which the demand flows are directed from the emitting markets in which the tourist flows. Assessing the complexity of the concept, it can be considered that it is a delimited area, physically and socially arranged to receive tourist visits (Cohen & Franco, 2000), a geographical portion in which the factors of production and consumption that enable the generation of tourism products are located. It is continuous, with heterogeneous components, whose limits are imprecise and reach as far as the aspirations,

proposals and/or possibilities of the supply reach, and the image and use that it has (Valls, 2004; UNWTO, 2007; Ivars i Baidal et al., 2013).

Associated with the definitions and scope of the terms of tourism and tourist destination mentioned above, it is inferred that residential mobility for tourism purposes requires tourist accommodation as a receptive base for the duration of stay in the destination (tourists who need to spend the night). As an associated function, different services are provided in hotel establishments and with other typologies, such as the modality of private houses or hostels developed in Cuba, in which regular temporary lodging services are offered, which may include food and beverage services, and other facilities. Formal family tourism companies offer this type of service, which means the operation of business institutions based on the concept of family management.

Regarding tourism and human mobility, Coles et al. (2005) contend that there has been a paradigm shift in tourism studies, under which it is necessary to understand tourism as a form of human movement within a much broader spectrum of social and physical mobility. They argue that mobility patterns must avoid all orthodox inter and multidisciplinary approaches in favour of a more flexible production, dissemination and consumption of knowledge due to the transgression of disciplinary boundaries and the movement towards a post disciplinary scenario.

According to Williams and Hall (2012) new forms of international mobility can be found at many scales from the local and national to the global. All age ranges are included, but particularly those near the polar extremes of the life course like young, single adults and the active elderly, in contrast, families with young children and the frail elderly tend to be some of the least mobile socio-demographic groups. These groups include for example, young New Zealanders or Australians taking their Big OE (Overseas Experience) in Europe, or the partly retired Canadian living a peripatetic lifestyle between Toronto and Florida, or the German and Swedish long-term travellers visiting organic farms around the world. These forms of international mobility are associated both with the concept of long-stay tourism and residential migration. In this regard, Huete and Mantecón (2010) recognize new lifestyles related to the phenomena of a sometimes tourist and sometimes migratory nature through the study of international mobility processes of retirees from northern Europe to the Mediterranean coasts. Such mobilities hinder their categorization as tourists or immigrants, based on which differences between long-stay tourism and residential migration can be determined.

12.2.2 Tourism Model Based on Private Rental Houses and Second Residences

There is a complex relationship among tourism, mobility and private houses used for tourism accommodation (Hall & Müller, 2004), which is characterized by an increasing quantitative importance of the tourist use of family or private houses as

part of the accommodation supply (Martínez et al., 2003) and real estate development (Díaz & Lourés, 2006). In this context, two types of development could be identified. The first one corresponds to the tourism model of construction and/or rehabilitation of housing for tourist use. The second one relates to the model of second residences, giving rise to the consolidation of international tourist destinations of residential specialization in different regions (Fernández & Barrado, 2011), like the case of exponential housing construction for tourist use on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (Huete, 2008). Especially in the case of Cuba, it seems to be that the prevailing model is the proliferation of the tourist use of private houses that generally rent one or more rooms shared with resident local families. Such houses have undergone modifications, transformations or reconstructions for their use as specialized spaces to accommodate the foreign visitors they receive.

It is important to note that within the context of contemporary human mobility second houses or residential tourism (Aledo, 2008; Casado, 1999; Gili, 2003) are an important part of the tourism and leisure lifestyles of many people in the developed world (Hall & Müller, 2004; Serrano, 2003), and also in underdeveloped countries where the tourism of second houses has been growing, like in rural Mexico (Cestur-Sectur, 2004). Particularly, the study of lifestyle migration has been used to refer to an increasing number of people who take the decision to migrate based on their belief that there is a more fulfilling way of life available to them elsewhere. This mobility is particularly important in the current era given the impact such moves have on places and people at both ends of the migratory chain (Gullette, 2007, Aledo et al., 2007, Benson & O'Reilly, 2009).

Residential migration towards tourist spaces leads to participation in the production and consumption of new places that implicate the construction of a new life in places of coexistence far from their regions or countries of origin, which entails the affirmation of new identities (Mazón et al., 2011). In particular, international retirement migration is an important process closely related to the development of tourism. Researchers from Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom recognize that during the last two decades, northern European retirement residence in the southern European sunbelt has grown strongly and its forms have rapidly changed. Yet standard demographic and social statistical sources provide no information about the flows, the migrants or their increasingly mobile and complex residential patterns; this international retirement migration (IRM) is characterized by different socio-economic backgrounds, motivations and behaviour of the various migrant groups and their relationship with the host and home countries (Casado et al., 2004).

The tourism of second homes has acquired great importance within the Spanish tourist scene. At the same time, studies reflect significant differences between residential tourists and other groups of tourists in relation to sociodemographic profile, perspectives and future behaviour (Sanz, 2008). For example, groups of citizens from the United Kingdom and Germany have been migrating to Spain's coastal towns in increasing numbers since the 1980s (O'Reilly, 2007) and destinations like the Region of Murcia show the predominance of second homes as a proportion of overall accommodation (García et al., 2002).

In other countries like Mexico, the tourist model of second houses is a phenomenon of growing importance, both in large tourist centres, and in less important destinations that maintain a strong boost in the production of second residences. This phenomenon is associated with a segment of tourism activity that mobilizes strong real estate investments from the private sector, as well as infrastructure from government authorities (Hiernaux, 2005, 2010). Therefore, it is clear that tourism of secondary residences has become fashionable, reflecting the evolution of ways of life especially in Western societies; so, it is worth asking whether these owners who share their time between two residences should be considered as tourists or migrants (Aledo et al., 2010; Müller, 2002).

12.3 Methodology Approach

This study proposes a methodology that aims to generate information on the contribution of the international residential mobility of Cubans living abroad and other foreigners to the revitalization of the real estate sector for tourist accommodation in private rental houses (hostales). A quantitative - qualitative approach was used, and the deductive methodological route was applied from part of the general explanatory theory to the particular; the study design was based on applied, observational, descriptive and transversal research, in which mixed information sources were used. The methodology tried to generate a deep understanding about a particular situation that has occurred in the city under study, through democratic participation, sustained communication and cooperation of the actors involved, represented in this case by the owners of a group of selected private rental houses (hostales) in the city of Cienfuegos.

The method used to obtain the information was based on the implementation of a structured survey through the application of a questionnaire. The selection of the method was supported by its wide use as a research procedure in the social sciences, facilitating the collection and elaboration of data quickly and efficiently. The applied questionnaire resulted from previous research (González-Herrera et al., 2019; González-Herrera & Castro-Acevedo, 2015), adapting it to the Cuban environment, and especially to the phenomenon under study.

The unit of analysis corresponds to human groups, considering as subject of interest for this research the owners and operators of the private rental houses, the investors of the residential real estate sector representing the external support, and emigrated Cubans living abroad. The sample size was 122 questionnaires, so it was determined to conduct the survey of 150 owner entrepreneurs or private rental houses administrators. The survey was conducted between July and August 2019, face to face with the owners of the private rental houses in their own homes. The surveys were partially anonymous, because, although the analyses are depersonalized, there is a numerical registry according to property, with the previous consent of the participants.

The variables of the study were: entrepreneur profile; construction time, reconstruction and beginning of business; style profiles, decoration and business size; business services; composition of visitors by nationality and gender; travel motive of visitors; competitiveness of the private rental houses sector; and contribution of foreign capital. These variables were used to obtain a better understanding of the contribution of international residential mobility to the revitalization of the residential real-estate sector for tourist accommodation in private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos.

12.4 Results and Discussion

12.4.1 *Research Setting*

This study is framed in the urban space of the city of Cienfuegos; this is a town and municipality of Cuba, which constitutes the capital of the Cienfuegos province. The population of the city is 174,769 inhabitants (ONE, 2016), it is predominantly urban (93.8%), and concentrates 43% of the population of the province. French settlers founded it on April 22, 1819; it was the only town of Latin-America with this characteristic during the stage of the Spanish colonization. Its strategic location in the central southern part of the Island of Cuba and the presence of a wide bay (approximately 90 km²), have favoured from the beginning its vertiginous socio-economic development and extensive commercial exchange (Fig. 12.1).

The city is magnificent in architectural terms influenced by neoclassicism. It has wide sidewalks running from north to south with the straight lines, intersecting between themselves, reaching perfect harmony. The first block, which was reserved for the Arms Square (today José Martí park), marks the centre of the first 25 blocks traced, which determined the urban concentration surrounding this initial centre of the town, the place in which most services are concentrated. In 1995, the urban historical centre of Cienfuegos was declared a National Monument; 10 years later 70 hectares (70 square blocks) were declared Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which makes it the only town in Latin America founded in the Nineteenth Century that has UNESCO recognition (Batista, 2015; Xinhua Español, 2017).

Its beauty and impressive stateliness make Cienfuegos and its historic centre an outstanding heritage destination for its urban, architectonic, landscape, environmental, natural and commercial values both nationally and in the Americas context and a privileged destination for tourists visiting Cuba, who may feel motivated by these attractions, while stimulating the development of local tourism (Figs. 12.2 and 12.3).

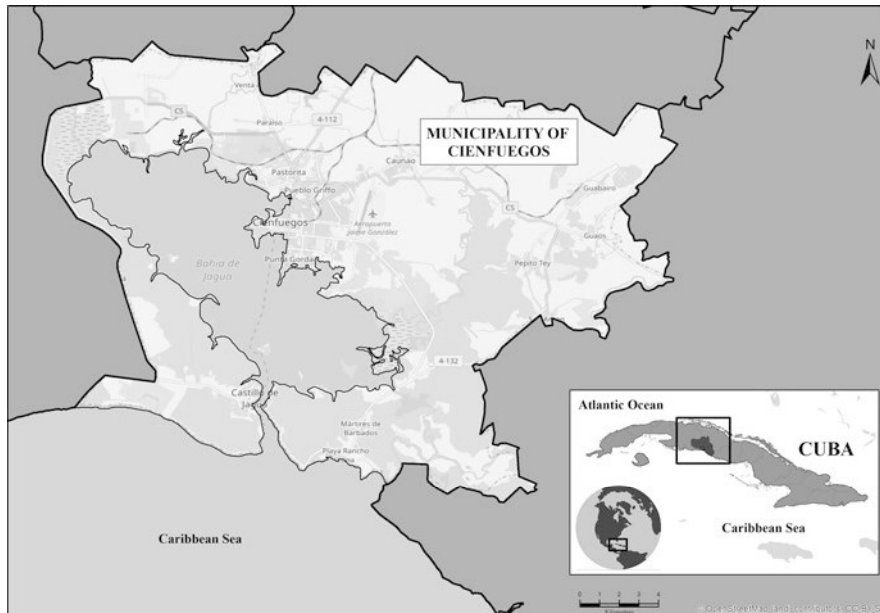


Fig. 12.1 Location of Cienfuegos city, Cuba. (Source: Own elaboration)

12.4.2 Sociodemographic Profile of Respondents

The sociodemographic characteristics of the people surveyed show that the predominant age is between 41 and 65 years old (68.6%), followed by another group between the ages of 24 and 40 years old (16%), and older than 65 which are the least represented group (14.1%). The sample is feminized, 87 women and 63 men. It is also seen that three quarters of entrepreneurs who cooperated in the study, present a university level or technical school level of education, which shows the high qualification of entrepreneurs, very much in relation to the average level of the population of Cuba for these age groups, which corresponds to High School and University (ONE, 2016).

12.4.3 Characteristics of the Private Rental Houses (Hostales) in Cienfuegos City

In the methodological and operational order no precise definition was found about the term private rental houses (hostales), since in the methodological definition of the main indicators of the statistical yearbook (ONEI, 2015) only the state sector entities are defined, without dedicating a section to these new accommodation modalities. In general terms, it is considered that a private rental house (hostal) is an



Fig. 12.2 Palacio de Valle, emblematic building of Cienfuegos city. (Source: Own elaboration)

“establishment” of accommodation with a small number of rooms, generally located in the tourist centre of the city, all of these based on the concept of a familiar atmosphere. In support of this definition, it is indicated that this establishment is intended for accommodation as a fundamental activity, classified by modalities and categories, which offers rooms furnished with complementary services such as food and drinks (ONEI, 2015).

Therefore, in the case of Cuba, private rental houses in family properties constitute private tourist accommodation establishments that generally have a location close to areas of architectural, cultural, or landscape attractions. They are usually located in buildings or houses of different characteristics, although in many cases the equity value of the construction itself is exploited. The date of construction of the properties occupied by the private rental houses (hostales) varies depending on the geographical area in which they are located.

In Cienfuegos city there is a greater concentration of private rental houses (hostales) in areas of the historic urban centre and in Punta Gorda; in these urban spaces the buildings built in the first half of the last century predominate. However, because of the physical deterioration of many of them it has been necessary to demolish and rebuild them under new concepts and styles that have nothing in common with what they were originally. According to the sample selected for this study, 72% of the private rental houses (hostales) were built in this period— the first half of the



Fig. 12.3 José Martí Park, former Plaza de Armas, Cienfuegos. (Source: Own elaboration)

twentieth century - even more than half of them are dated before 1935. As for the time of the reconstruction, it varies depending on the year in which they were opened as private rental houses (*hostales*), although all of them were generally rebuilt before opening as accommodation services.

The opening of the private rental houses (*hostales*) studied in Cienfuegos city has been asynchronous, which has been related to the changes in the regulations of the country,¹ especially in relation to the permits for rental of private homes for tourism purposes. This process has been favoured by the designation of Cienfuegos city as a world cultural heritage. According to the results of this study, two stages related to the opening date of the private rental houses (*hostales*) could be distinguished, that is to say, they were grouped as follows: from 1997 to 2005: 33%; and from 2005 to 2018: 66%.

For the integrated analysis of the three mentioned variables (construction year of the house, last repairs to the property, and business start) a grouping of the cases was carried out using the hierarchical cluster technique. The distance was measured through the quadratic Euclidean distance and the centroid grouping method was

¹ Decree Law No. 171 dated May 15, 1997 and modified by Decree Law No. 275 dated September 30, 2010, on the lease of homes, rooms or spaces. Due to the large number of regulations, it is advisable to review and unify in a single legal body the contraventions related to the exercise of self-employment.

used. The dendrogram showed the process of grouping, differentiating two large groups. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used which tests the hypothesis that the variables are independent of the dependent variable for two samples. In this case, the null hypothesis is rejected, demonstrating that there is dependence between the variables and the group.

As can be seen in the cash charts of Fig. 12.4, group 1 shows a greater variability with respect to the opening of the business, some opened since the beginning of 2000, while the median was in 2010 (year in which the regulations on housing leases were changed). This group of private rental houses (hostales) represents the oldest construction of houses, with a median always below 1950. This fact explains how the location of most of the private rental houses (hostales) begins in preferential areas of Cienfuegos city located in the historic centre and in Punta Gorda, places with valued houses built in the first half of the twentieth century, with an attractive location for tourists.

The opening of new properties as private rental houses (hostales) has occurred to the extent that tourism has grown enough to generate more demand and occupation, as well as in response to the flexibility of policies to practice private self-employment. These constructions are part of group 2, which is made up of houses of recent construction and with an average opening date after 2010. As far as remodelling is concerned, the oldest houses have modifications in years close to the year 2000 (Figs. 12.5 and 12.6), while the most modern buildings have not undergone major modifications.

Another criterion assessed in the questionnaire was the construction typology of the property. Regarding this aspect, the results obtained express a differentiation related to the evolution and particularities of the territory (Fig. 12.7). In the case of Cienfuegos city, a neoclassical architecture was developed, predominantly eclectic (nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century). However, as in the case of a large number of the Spanish colonial cities and especially in Cuba, this city has a mixture of styles, which are nuanced with the constructions of the revolutionary

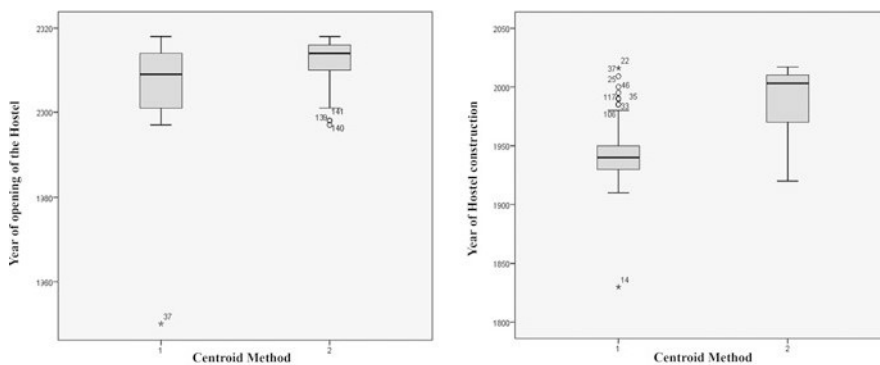


Fig. 12.4 Grouping of the private rental houses (hostales) by year of opening (on the left) and year of construction (on the right). (Source: Own elaboration)



Fig. 12.5 Private rental houses (hostales) of group 1 (year of construction 1930). (Source: Own elaboration)

period,² and with self-constructed homes of architectural style, determined by the owner's resource availability.

In more than 91.3% of the private rental houses (hostales) two or more rooms are rented, the percentage in which only one room is rented being very low. This could be explained by several factors. On the one hand, the predominance of neoclassical and colonial style properties (63.9% of the houses) which are characterized by their size and large number of rooms; and on the other, by the cumbersome and expensive nature of the process of permits and maintenance of the private rental houses (hostales), which is why in practice it is not economically feasible for an entrepreneur to assume the rent of only one room.

² *Revolutionary style*: corresponds to the period of the socialist revolution (after 1959 until now) that do not have a well-differentiated nomenclature and elements that make a distinction (interview with Fernández, 2019). *Spanish colonial style*: architecture and decoration style of the Spanish colonies in the Americas adapted to local demands and materials. Retrieved from <https://www.parro.com.ar/definicion-de-estilo+colonial+espa%F1ol>



Fig. 12.6 Private rental houses (hostales) of group 2 (year of construction 2010). (Source: Own elaboration)

According to the answers of the surveyed business owners, the private rental houses (hostales) supply other services in addition to the lodging service, such as breakfast, meals and drinks (86%), and Internet (61.3%). To a lesser extent, they provide transportation services, and very few provide entertainment services such as a pool table, Latin dance classes, or scheduled trips, among others (Fig. 12.8).

The spatial analysis of this type of accommodation shows that the distribution of the private rental houses (hostales) is geographically concentrated in the old areas of the city, with high patrimonial value, around the Paseo del Prado and in the area of Punta Gorda (Fig. 12.9). It is important to highlight that the buildings reflect a

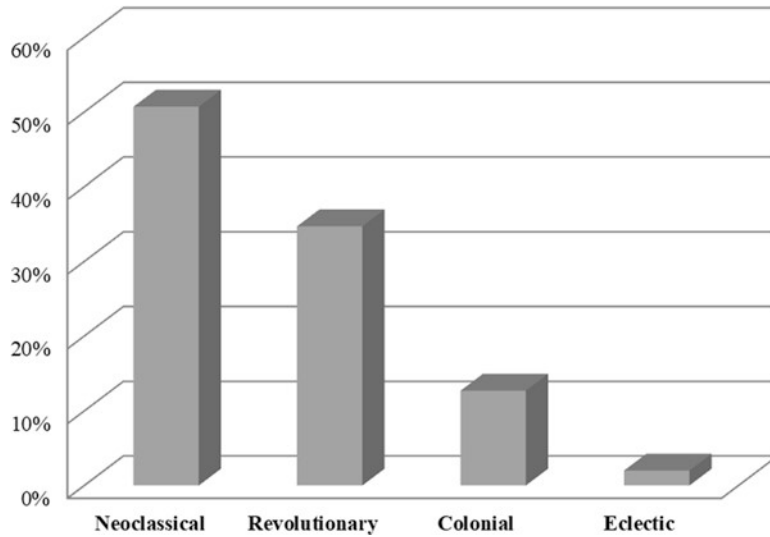


Fig. 12.7 Constructive typology of the private rental houses (hostales). (Source: Own elaboration)

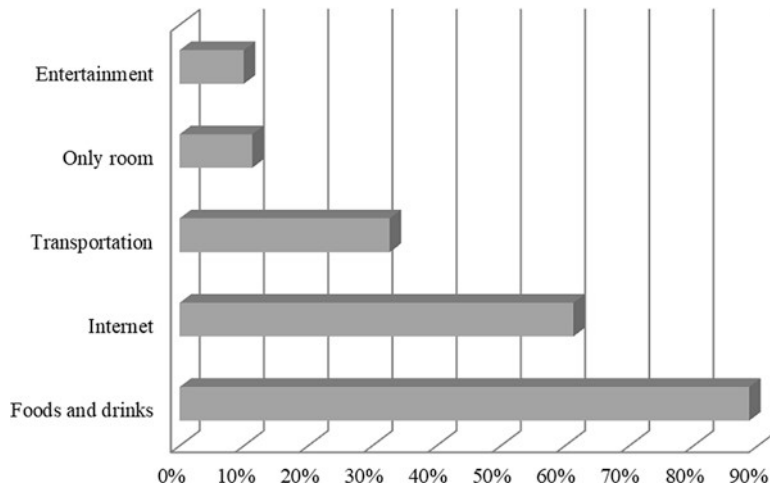


Fig. 12.8 Services provided by private rental houses (hostales). (Source: Own elaboration)

mixture of styles and times, so the homogeneity of the groups differentiated above is not maintained. This heterogeneity is determined by the total reconstruction of several properties due to the state of destruction caused by the passing of the years, meteorological phenomena or by the new constructions developed in spaces that allowed it, given the existence of unoccupied lots, like in the area of Punta Gorda.

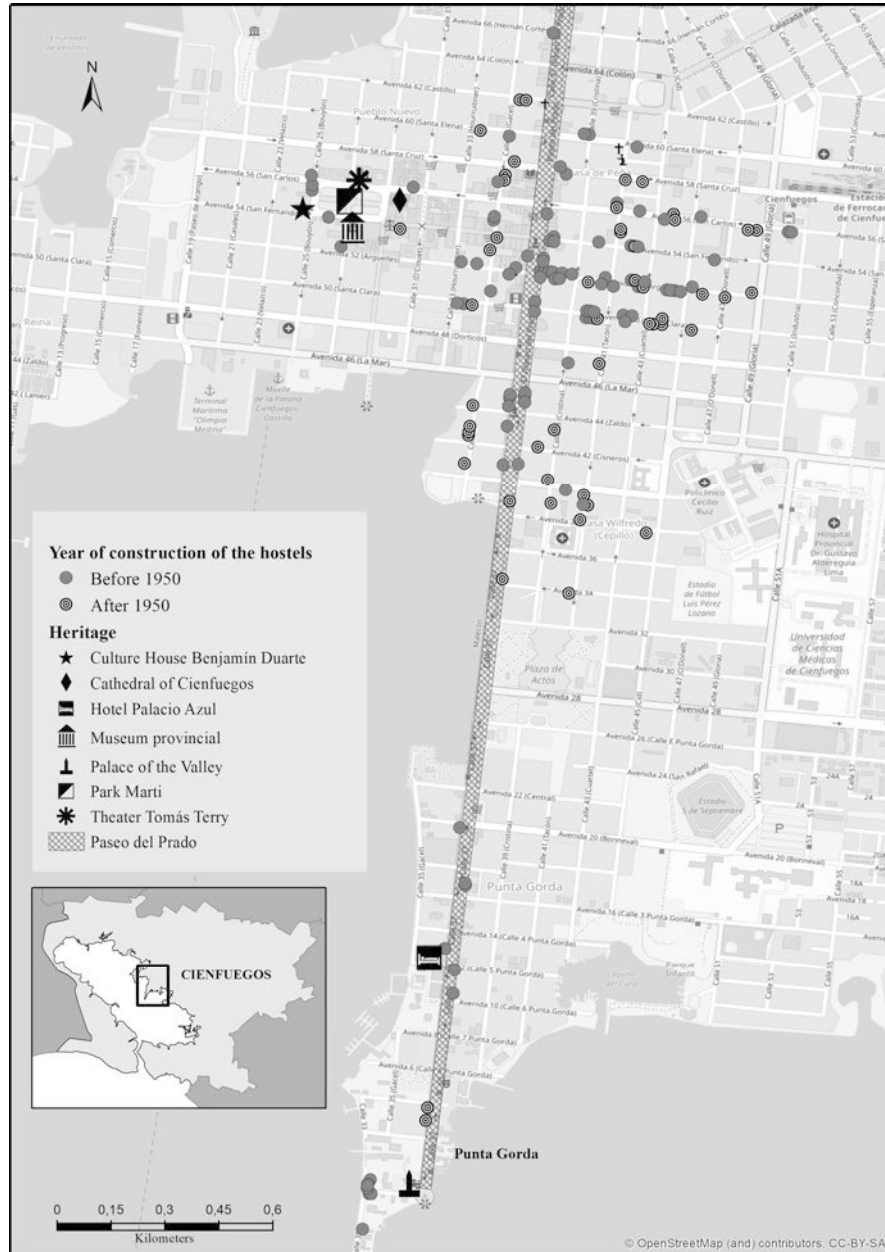


Fig. 12.9 Spatial distribution of the private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos city. (Source: Own elaboration)

12.4.4 Main Characteristics of Tourists Visiting the Private Rental Houses (Hostales) in Cienfuegos City

The number of tourists who have visited Cienfuegos city in recent years has been increasing, which is in correspondence with the trends that Cuba has experienced as a tourist destination, as shown in the statistical series on tourism published in official sources (ONEI, 2015). Despite this, the current tourist crisis that the destination is going through has been affecting the arrival of visitors, a fact that is reflected in the breach of the projections of receiving 5 million tourists in 2019 (Periódico Cubano, 2019). In 2016, 346,210 tourists were received in Cienfuegos city, whose composition is made up of 58.2% foreigners, and 41.8 of Cubans residing abroad (Martínez-Molina, 2016); these data represent around 11% of the tourists who arrived in Cuba in that period (ONEI, 2019).

The analysis of the profile of the tourists who visit the private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos city showed that there is no tendency of any particular gender; 88% of the business owners state that one sex or the other visits them interchangeably. The age groups to which they belong are the same as the rest of the tourists who visit the country, showing a predominance of young people and young adults (ONEI, 2019) as reflected in the following data: between 25 and 44 years, 34%; between 45 and 60 years, 28%; and over 60 years, 21%.

Respondents have the perception that the tourists who most use the services of the private rental houses (hostales) are foreigners who most often travel alone (34.7%), although also in an important proportion are those traveling in pairs (27.3) or in groups (26.7%). They perceive that Cubans residing abroad use their services to a lesser extent than foreigners do (11.3%) since mainly during their visit to Cuba they stay in the houses of relatives and/or friends. By nationalities, there were no notable differences with respect to tourists from the rest of the country who stay in private rental houses (hostales) and Canadians, Mexicans, Italians, French and Spanish predominate.

The main reasons why tourists travel to Cienfuegos city are, in first place sun and its beach/coast destination (87%), in second place due to the fact it is a city with cultural and historical heritage attractions of tourist interest (75%), and in third place for the nightlife of the city (50%). The rest of the reasons in lower percentages are related to cruise tourism that arrives to the city (12%), event tourism (9%), and business tourism (8%).

12.4.5 Residential Real Estate Associated with Tourism in Cienfuegos City

The development and expansion of tourism in Cuba during the last decades has been largely managed by foreign companies and professionals, unlike that which happened with other sectors of the Cuban economy. According to Mateos-Cuesta (2017,

n. p.): “Non-state activity in accommodation, gastronomy and other services, as a complementary tourist supply to the State, expressly admitted by Cuban legislation as an economic activity on its own, has experienced a great boom and importance from the sharp increase in tourist demand experienced in Cuba in recent years. However, so far and despite the many initiatives in this regard, the participation of capital and foreign investors in these private initiatives is not legally admitted.”

Non-state tourism (where private rental houses are classified) had around 21,000 rooms at a national level in 2017, and received around 25% of foreigners arriving in Cuba (CUBAAHORA, 2017). These numbers have been increasing, and although official statistics are lacking, it is estimated that more than 10% of these rooms are located in Cienfuegos city. Therefore, the residential real estate sector associated to non-state tourism in this city and the investments made through it have strengthened the capacity of tourist accommodation in this territory, information validated by 97% of the respondents in this research.

Similarly, this study has shown that the percentage of tourists who prefer private rental houses (hostales) instead of hotels in Cienfuegos city is unknown, although it is supposed according to unofficial sources that it exceeds a third of those who arrive at the city. The surveyed entrepreneurs recognize that in 98% of the cases, guests argue that they have selected this type of accommodation because it is cheaper, more welcoming and familiar, more personalized, as well as having more privacy with respect to traditional hotels.

12.4.6 Investment Process and Forms of Collaboration in the Tourist Business of Residential Private Houses (Hostales) in Cienfuegos City

Private rental houses (hostales) require a systematic investment process, determined by the need for maintenance, promotion, marketing, etc. Family and friends of the owners of the tourist accommodation establishments support these investments, but in an unofficial way, that is, without legal participation in the business, although many owners reserve that information. According to the data collected by this study, 70% of the entrepreneurs surveyed said they had the support of residents abroad, of which nine out of ten are Cuban, without specifying the country where they reside, nor the origin of foreigners who cooperate in the private rental house (hostal) business.

On the other hand, the degree of participation of residents abroad varies according to each of the private rental houses (hostales). A third of respondents argue that the high degree of participation of their relatives/friends residing abroad in their business has allowed the investment capacity in their houses (hostales); another third state that this participation has been little or very little, while the remaining group declares not having received foreign help.

A more detailed analysis of this phenomenon was carried out to understand the contribution of foreign capital to the investment process in private rental houses (hostales); this study was developed through a cluster analysis with quadratic Euclidean distance and the centroid grouping method, which allowed differentiation of the private rental houses (hostales) into two large clusters or groups. To validate this result, a discriminant analysis was carried out, which allowed adjustment of a model that classifies them according to the previous grouping, in this case the one obtained in the decision of the hierarchical cluster. As shown in Table 12.1, a correlation test is also performed between the results of the classification of the hierarchical cluster analysis and the discriminant, which denotes almost 90% correlation, significant for 99% confidence between the two results, which means that the decision to obtain two groups is correct.

With the purpose of checking if all the variables contribute to the formation of groups, the Mann-Whitney U test is performed, where the null hypothesis that the variables are independent of the groups is tested, demonstrating that in all cases the variables contribute to group formation (Table 12.2).

Residents abroad collaborate with the business of their relatives and/or friends' rental houses (hostales) in different ways. Figure 12.10 shows in a stacked bar chart the number of collaborations according to the sections assessed in the survey, in those private rental houses (hostales) that showed support for this research (105 hostales).

According to an elaborated Likert scale, business components that have received important and very important collaboration from abroad are those related to the promotion (81.9%) and commercialization (67.2%) processes of private rental houses (hostales). This is practiced fundamentally through social networks and webpages enabled for it, such as Booking, Tripadvisor, Trivago, Airbnb, etc. However, given the difficulties of internet connectivity in Cuba, it is difficult and expensive to face these tasks from within the country. A non-negligible number of private rental houses (hostales) also receive support, though to a lesser extent, during the investment process (55.2%) and in the organization of tour packages

Table 12.1 Correlation between the results of the classification of the hierarchical cluster analysis and the discriminant

		Centroid Method	Predicted Group for Analysis 1
Centroid method	Pearson correlation	1	.899 ^a
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
Predicted group for analysis 1	Pearson correlation	.899 ^a	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

Source: Own elaboration

^aCorrelation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 12.2 Hypothesis test summary

Nº	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig	Decision
1	The distribution of <i>design of tourist packages</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of <i>as an investor</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
3	The distribution of <i>In the promotion of the hostel</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
4	The distribution of <i>Design of tourist packages</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
5	The distribution of <i>Design of tourist packages</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
6	The distribution of <i>Design of tourist packages</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis
7	The distribution of <i>Design of tourist packages</i> is the same across categories of centroid method	Independent – Samples Mann – Whitney U test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05

Source: Own elaboration

(40.0%), as well as in the formation of alliances with national and international tour operators, and in the organization of tour groups. In these last aspects, collaboration is only recognized by a third of the surveyed entrepreneurs.

12.5 Conclusions

The theoretical research implications of this study are related to the analysis of the main conceptual and operational categories that serve as the basis for the management of the tourist accommodation modality in private rental houses (hostales). The methodological contribution of this research is related to the testing of the instrument for collecting information, which combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, and could serve as a guiding model in other studies, such as those that are intended to continue in other cities of Central Cuba, like Caibarién and Remedios.

The exploration and analysis of different variables have answered the central research question of this study, demonstrating that there is a close relationship between international residential mobility and the development of the real-estate sector for tourism use in Cienfuegos city, which has contributed to the generation of tourist accommodation opportunities in private rental houses (hostales), opening new capacities for receptive tourism in family residences. However, the case of

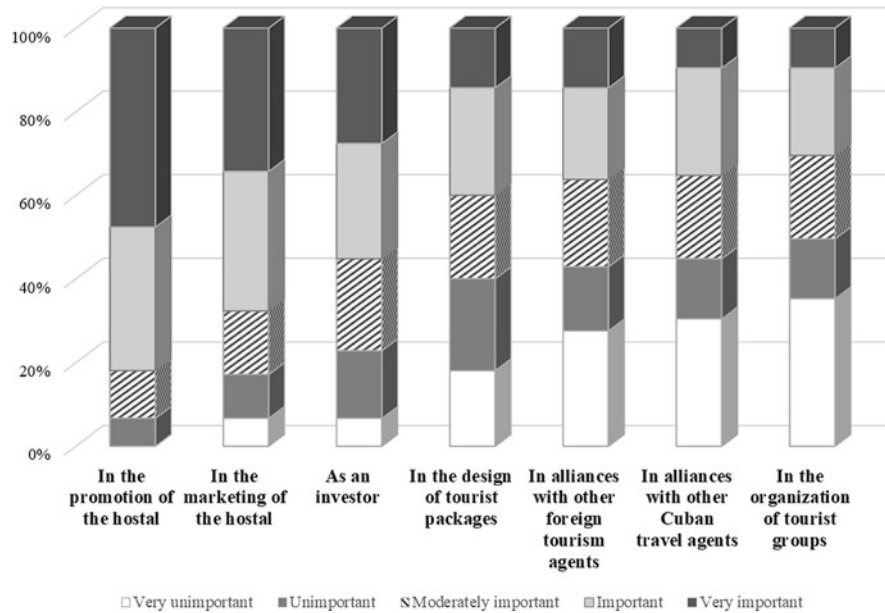


Fig. 12.10 Kind of activity in which residents abroad collaborate with family and friends' business. (Source: Own elaboration)

second private residences in Cuban tourism like in other countries is not so significant, as different authors have reported in their studies (Gullette, 2007, Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, Aledo et al., 2010; Cruz & Xavier, 2011, Williams & Hall, 2012, Di Virgilio, 2014). It is significant to note that the participation of Cubans residing abroad is much less than that assumed by the team of researchers (with experience in urban revitalization and tourism studies in Cuba) and other experts on the subject residing in the country, focusing mainly on aspects such as promotion, marketing and as investors, this last aspect has been reduced to remittances.

Moreover, the external capital from Cuban individuals or families residing abroad and other tourists from different markets visiting Cuba has been one of the most important sources in the investment processes in private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos city, albeit without legal recognition in the business. This thesis coincides with the exposed arguments made by other authors in relation to the best practices for improvement of the national economy (Everlery Pérez, 2019). The main forms of collaboration of residents abroad with the business of private houses (hostales) in the city of Cienfuegos correspond to the promotion and online marketing, organization of tour packages, formation of alliances with tour operators, and the organization of groups.

Practical research implications of this study recognize that the residential real-estate sector for tourist accommodation in the city of Cienfuegos has grown continuously since the end of the 1990s, reaching the highest values after 2010. This is due, principally, to two causal factors, on the one hand, the changes in regulations

that make it possible and on the other, the increase in tourism towards the city, favoured by its declaration as a Cultural Heritage Site in 2005.

Based on the synthesis of the information it is possible to conclude that private rental houses (hostales) in the city of Cienfuegos are classified in the modality of non-state tourism and tend to form geographic concentrations associated with the patrimonial zone of the downtown area, the axis that forms the “Paseo del Prado” and the area of “Punta Gorda” that extends towards the homonymous bay. They offer an attractive heritage characterized by residences with a colonial and neoclassical architecture with a predominantly eclectic tendency, although in some cases there are mixtures of epochs and styles, including constructions of the revolutionary period with diverse characteristics and materials, as well as aesthetic values associated to the reconstruction or modification made by their owners. The accommodation infrastructure corresponds to fully furnished residential rooms, in a shared family-owned home environment, but with small numbers of rooms, while combining with the supply of food & beverage services, internet and in some cases transportation. This affirms that this offer is based on the concept of a tourist multiproduct.

The main trends related to the composition of the demand are coincident with the behaviour of these indicators at the national level, both in terms of composition by sex and ways of organizing the trip, as in terms of motivations for visiting the city. The preferences for this type of tourist accommodation establishment are also coincident at the national level, and these are related to a tendency that shows the important growth of private rental houses (hostales) in Cienfuegos city, and other tourist destinations in Cuba.

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