

Topic: *Perceived Livability of Expatriates: The Case of Barcelona*

ABSTRACT

Globalization has challenged cities in the last decades. Urbanization, infrastructure and mobility are just some of the affected factors. Mobility, in particular ease of movement and accessibility have allowed people to explore different cities and countries for various reasons, like education, work, leisure and other. As outcome, a high skilled immigrant group arose, namely expatriates. They come to the city, settle down, work or study, use it, in terms of infrastructure and services and after some time they leave. Expatriates challenge cities, but still in appositive way so that cities want to attract and keep them. Retaining them is another point that has been hard for many cities, Barcelona is among them. This type of high skilled migration has a major effect on a city's quality of life, and not only is the city affected, its residents and visitors are too. Initially it is essential clarifying who are expatriates and that they are an important part of a city land-scape as well the image.

This thesis aims to understand which factors influence the perceived livability of expatriates in Barcelona. Through 13 in-depth interviews with expatriates living in Barcelona, various interesting findings are presented. In general, they love Barcelona, and appreciate the lifestyle, food, good climate, Spanish language, culture, beach and other aspects, but the majority of the expats do not see a future in Barcelona. Only four stated that they see themselves living in Barcelona in the next five years. Nevertheless, although the political situation does not play a big role now for the expatriates, still four stated that they would have to move because of issues with their documents. Although the majority of the expatriates in Barcelona consider their countries as better organized, offering more safety and less crowdedness, they still come to Barcelona to look for something new. That said, majority's expectations have been met. Furthermore, the expats state that they are annoyed by the crowds and admit that Barcelona is not the safest city, but it is not factor for them that affects their quality of life. Factors as the high prices, housing and job situation, bureaucracy, economic situation, drug business, prostitution and pickpocketing were mentioned by the interviewees, and often comparisons were made with their home countries, where the majority consider it as better.

This thesis recommends the city of Barcelona to wisely develop strategies in order to retain ex-pats who can contribute to the development of the city, encouraging interaction with locals. For example, the implementation of a buddy system is one suggestion, where expats are supported when dealing with administrative processes or integrate into the local system. Focusing on these key issues, taking productive measures would be appreciated by expats, ideally leading to enhanced engagement with locals and increased motivation for integration.