



Universitat
de les Illes Balears

BACHELOR'S THESIS

THE KELLYS MOVEMENT

Marina Rodeiro Garau

Double degree in Business and Tourism

Faculty of Tourism (Arxiduc Lluís Salvador)

Academic Year 2022-23

THE KELLYS MOVEMENT

Marina Rodeiro Garau

Bachelor's Thesis

Faculty of Tourism (Arxiduc Lluís Salvador)

University of the Balearic Islands

Academic Year 2022-23

Key words:

Kellys, housekeepers, movement, room attendants, dignity...

Thesis Supervisor's Name Marina Rodeiro Garau

Tutor's Name (if applicable) Jose Antonio Pérez Montiel

The University is hereby authorized to include this project in its institutional repository for its open consultation and online dissemination, for academic and research purposes only.

Author		Supervisor	
Yes	No	Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Abstract

This study analyses the case of Las Kellys, a social movement of room attendants in Spain. We will see their meaning, history, and demands in their sector. We will focus on their struggle for dignity in their labour because of the strong stigmatisation of their job and their way of acting through their identity. Beyond the Kellys of Spain, we will also discuss other more general movements and a more specific one.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza el caso de Las Kellys, un movimiento social de camareras de piso en España. Veremos su significado, historia y demandas en su sector. Nos enfocaremos en su lucha por la dignidad en su trabajo debido a la fuerte estigmatización de su trabajo y su forma de actuar a través de su identidad. Más allá de las Kellys de España, también discutiremos otros movimientos más generales y uno más específico.

Resum

Aquest estudi analitza el cas de Les Kellys, un moviment social de cambreses de pis a Espanya. Veurem el seu significat, història i demandes en el seu sector. Ens centrarem en la seva lluita per la dignitat en el seu treball a causa de la forta estigmatització de la seva feina i la seva manera d'actuar a través de la seva identitat. Més enllà de les Kellys d'Espanya, també discutirem altres moviments més generals i un de més específic.

Index

Introduction	5
Las Kellys	6
History of the Kellys	7
Struggle for dignity.....	8
Public interventions	10
The division of labour by gender	12
The Identity of ‘Las Kellys’	13
Manifesto.....	14
Achievements.....	15
Next steps	16
Las Kellys Mallorca	17
Las Kellys in Europe.....	18
Conclusions	19
References	20

Introduction

In Spain, one of the most important sectors is the tourism industry. Within this sector, we highlight hotel exploitation, with a specific focus on the position of hotel housekeepers. The collective denounces poor working conditions and the precariousness of their work, despite being employed in one of the sectors that contributes the most to the country's wealth generation. The occupation of room attendant in the tourism sector is known to have harsh conditions, low wages, high accident rates and occupational diseases. All of these factors led to the birth of the Kellys movement. We will delve into the concept, their struggle for dignity, their rights manifesto, and the direction in which they will continue to move forward. We will also explain their identity. Furthermore, we will briefly discuss the existence of the movement in other European countries. Additionally, the study provides an overview of the movement that exists in the Balearic Islands, along with some of their initiatives.

Las Kellys

“Las Kellys” is a Spanish association of room attendants that fight for the visibility of their problems and to claim different rights. This group comprises 8 Spanish territories: Barcelona, Benidorm, Cádiz, Fuerteventura, La Rioja, Lanzarote, Madrid, Mallorca.



Figure 1: Map of the Spanish territories where the Kellys act

The name “Las Kellys” comes from a play on words in Spanish: “la Kelly, la que limpia” which means “the one who cleans”. In the case of las Kellys, they are the cleaners in the hotels sector.

Between all of the precarious jobs in the tourism sector, the room attendants are known to have harsh working conditions, high accident rates, occupational diseases, low wages and barely any social recognition.

History of the Kellys

In Spain, the working conditions of room attendants have gotten worse due to the labour reform of 2012. It favoured the precariousness of work by allowing the externalization of those tasks. Because of this growing precarious situation, the room attendants began a movement integrated by themselves. In 2014, an International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco Workers' Associations (UITA) launched a campaign to report their unfair situation. That led to the first contact between housekeepers, which was made through social media in 2014. The app where they have more influence is Facebook. They gave their testimony of the different working situations and some of them started to meet to support each other. In 2015, they started to self-organise in territorial groups in certain tourist destinations in Spain above mentioned. "Las Kellys" is constituted as an association in March 2016 and presented officially the 11th of October in Barcelona. Currently, there are three organisations: Las Kellys association, Kellys Union and State Platform of Housekeepers (PECAPIS). In 2017, they first appeared in Brussels to explain their situation to the European Commission. In 2019, they submitted a draft to the Commission containing their demands and requested conditions.

Struggle for dignity

Cleaning tasks are usually considered as the “dirty work”. The “dirty work” in this sector is referred to the tasks viewed as physically, socially, and morally tainted. With this consideration begins the struggle for dignity in their labour (Alcalde-Gonzalez et al., 2021). Dignity is protected by resistance, organisational citizenship behaviour, creation of respect and pride and supportive work relations.

In the case of the Kellys Spain, the struggle for dignity has reached a different approach. It has crystallised in an autonomous movement where their key demands are in social and political debates and comprise workload reduction, bans on outsourcing, and recognition of occupational diseases (Alcalde-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

Dignity is a very important issue on the workplace, and it's comprehended of equality of opportunities, safety, health, collective representation, labour stability, proper retribution, autonomy, respect and development.

There are different tactics to counteract the devalued social labour situation and subvert the current situation of the Kellys' work. The main subversion tactics identified in the analysis of las Kellys are occupational (skilled-rewarding job), organisational (heart of the value chain) and socio-political (las Kellys as an agent). The three of them are interrelated.

The first one is to generate a sense of worth and self-pride for room attendants as a skilled and rewarding job to build a positive identity of their occupation. That is due to the stigmatization of their work, rejecting the “servant stigma”. To offer a service of quality they must have soft and hard skills. The “soft skills” are related to customer care for the customer contact situations. The “hard skills” are related to the cleaning work.

The second one is to put housekeeping in the heart of the value chain, recognising them as a community of value and professional capabilities. In hotel businesses, clean rooms are offered. Without clean rooms, there is no business (Alcalde-Gonzalez et al., 2021). Therefore, the role of room attendants is crucial. It is also important to highlight that the Kellys report the outsourcing of the activity as a form of mistreatment that worsens their working conditions and takes away the importance that they should have. The main problems in their working conditions are excessive workload, outsourcing, lack of participation in decisions affecting the flooring department, shortage of adequate work teams and absence of opportunities for professional development. Through outsourcing, companies reduce salary costs by offering lower wages, higher social security charges, and

restricted access to paid vacations or sick leave. That's why this community must be protected and promoted by the inclusion of their voice in the decision process.

The third one is Las Kellys as a socio-political agent in collective action for social recognition and improved working conditions. They turn into a political subject capable of debating in public and to articulate collective actions. The Kellys are currently an empowered interlocutor that have already won the public opinion. Their actions are focused on questioning the degradation of their occupation and defend its dignity.

The room attendants consider that the unworthiness of their job is not dealing with garbage and dirt or serving others, but to have to do it in precarious conditions and lack of consideration of the management team and colleagues (Alcalde-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

Public interventions

This movement has been accompanied by various public interventions by this association to defend their rights. These public interventions are based on government actions, union actions, and social movements.

The Spanish government has implemented different regulations, such as the mandatory registration of the number of rooms cleaned per worker and the guarantee of a minimum time for carrying out various cleaning tasks. They have also implemented various safety and hygiene measures. In addition, training and skills development programs have been introduced for the workers.

The labour reform carried out by the current government has restored rights that the Kellys lost with the reform implemented in 2012, such as the possibility of outsourcing their work by employers, and it has recognized the importance of labour inspections and occupational diseases within the collective.



Meeting of Pedro Sánchez with the Kellys on 03/10/2022 in Mallorca.

Unions have achieved agreements with companies to improve working conditions and have conducted awareness campaigns to win public opinion.

The Kellys movement has generated social and political awareness through demonstrations and other forms of protest, attracting attention from the media and politicians. Theatre plays and documentaries addressing the topic have even become popular. These works address the precarious conditions, the

protection of their rights, and the difficulty of balancing their personal and professional lives. Some also shed light on the issues of sexual harassment and gender discrimination they face. The main objective is to raise awareness and promote solidarity.

The division of labour by gender

Cleaning is one of the tasks culturally associated with women. The gendered division of work stereotypes that women must have caring, empathy and docility jobs and men must have physical strength and authority ones (Sandoval, 2015)

The cleaning chores of a room are recognised as inherent female skills and not as professional skills. When we talk about men in the cleaning industry, they are usually reserved for the common spaces and not the private ones (Martinez, 2019). The Kellys also claim to suffer a mistreatment by hotel managers for a *macho culture* that devalues “women’s jobs”.

Among the various gender-based labour discriminations, we find lower salaries, lack of promotion, and sexual harassment. With regards to salaries, cleaning jobs are considered less important or demanding than jobs traditionally considered as masculine. The lack of promotion is due to the limited opportunities for career advancement, which accentuates the gender pay gap. In the following section, we will discuss sexual harassment in more detail.

So, housekeeping is female-dominated. And it’s not only a division by gender but some studies reveal a division by ethnicities and nationalities. That’s why it is so relevant to emphasize the specific problems of immigrant housekeepers, who face a lack of knowledge of Spanish legislation, a lack of support and sometimes delays in the regularization of their immigration status (Perez, 2019).

Sexual harassment

This differences between genders at labour have also led many housekeepers to become victims of sexual harassment. Many of these women report being blocked in their rooms, coerced, and even offered money for different services. They also add that this harassment is not only perpetrated by clients but also by co-workers and supervisors.

Workers' Commissions (CCOO) conducted a survey and found that 13.2% of the Kellys have suffered sexual harassment in their workplaces (CCOO, 2020). That is why different platforms have demanded measures such as a "panic button," emergency phones, prevention measures, and legal and health protection.

Overall, sexual harassment is a serious issue that needs to be addressed in the hotel industry.

The Identity of 'Las Kellys'

The collective identity of Las Kellys is different from other traditional social movements. One of the main characteristics that makes them different is that they are composed of middle-aged working-class women that dedicate their free time to the political activities without remuneration for it.

The Kellys identity is built as cleaning workers who fight for dignity in their work, the reduction of workload, and the elimination of outsourcing (Alcalde-González et al., 2021). They have also developed an identity of a community of value and professional capabilities, recognizing themselves as a political actor capable of articulating collective actions and debating in public (De la Morena et al., 2019). Furthermore, they have sought to promote a positive identity of their work, emphasizing the importance of their work for the functioning of the value chain in the hotel industry (Alcalde-González et al., 2021).

The collective identity is firstly born through Facebook, creating a sense of belonging for all the room attendants that suffered the same situations. That way, las Kellys are built and politicised through this web, functioning as a support group and as micromobilisation. The politicisation is made with the process of consensus mobilization, the social capital and the expectation of change in the current situation through protest.

Subsequently, identities are born in different cities of Spain: Barcelona, Benidorm, Cádiz, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Madrid and Mallorca. They also get help from trade unions, labour lawyers and feminist organisations to articulate the precariousness conditions they work with.

The Kellys is understood as a case of intersectional activism between trade unionism and feminism. Despite not adopting an international approach, they do deploy some practices and intersectional approaches. Among them, a collective action of inequalities due to precarisation, feminization and migration. Also, mechanisms to promote inclusion and participation. The functioning of the association is necessarily assembly, and every territorial group designates its spokesperson(s).

Finally, they have stated that their identity is not based on performing tasks considered "dirty," but on the dignity of their work and their value as workers (De la Morena et al., 2019).

Manifesto

Their demands are constantly revised and separated by territories. The different demands range from the right to early retirement to the increase in labour inspections. The main demands are (Las Kellys, 2017):

- Early retirement: decent pensions.
- Recognition of occupational diseases of the motor and musculoskeletal system.
- NO to the externalization of their activity.
- Increase in labour inspections and punishment of irregular behaviours.
- Compliance with the Law on Prevention of Occupational Risks and the Law on Coordination of Business Activities.
- Link the category of hotels to optimal labour standards.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES IN LAS KELLYS

The most common health problems in the room attendants' sector are:

- Muscular and skeletal injuries (especially back, neck, and shoulders)
- Fatigue and stress
- Respiratory illnesses
- Sleep and eating disorders
- Dermatological problems (due to the exposure to chemicals)
- Psychological disorders as depression and anxiety

The Federation of Services of CCOO (Comisiones Obreras) concluded, after a study in Spain in 2020, that more than 90% of Spanish Kellys suffer from musculoskeletal problems related to their back, neck, and shoulders. 67% suffer from sleep disorders, and 65% experience chronic fatigue.

Achievements

The Kellys movement has achieved considerable progress in labour conditions in Spain and Europe. Some of these advancements include:

- Visibility and social awareness: they have the attention of the public and media (Martinez, 2019).
- Collective negotiations: companies, labour unions, and workers have successfully reached several agreements on salary increases, workload reduction, and safety measures. Different regulations have been approved, for example, in 2018, a regulation was established with a minimum time for cleaning tasks. Regarding safety measures, the use of toxic substances has been reduced, and personal protective equipment has been added (Pérez, 2019).
- Legal recognition: starting in 2021 with the approval of the Rider Law, this could affect the Kellys as a first step towards their labour regulation (Martinez, 2019).
- Creation of networks and organizations through which information and strategies are shared to face labour precariousness.
- Political support: included in the electoral programs of different parties. Among them, the left predominates, including Podemos, Izquierda Unida, Equo, and PSOE.

Regarding salary increases, there has been significant improvement, particularly in the last five years. In 2018, an agreement was made in Bilbao to rise the wages a 30%. (Olazábal, 2022). In 2019, a strike in Barcelona resulted in a salary increase from 800€ to 1400€ for the city's workers (Valero, 2018). In 2023, a salary increase of 8,5% over the next two years is expected (Ballesteros, 2023).

Although they have made a considerable progress, there is still work to be done.

Next steps

The Kellys still have multiple issues to work on. The main pending subjects are labour rights, work overload, wages, and security.

They strive to be recognised legally as a collective in the hotels cleaning industry as it is not recognised in some countries (El Diario 2022). The same happens with the workload, which has been regulated, for example, in the Balearic Islands but not in many other places (Ballesteros, 2023).

Among the most important goals, we find the eradication of subcontracting definitively and the payment of a fair price for the services provided by the workers.

The Kellys movement will continue to progress until dignified working conditions are achieved in all locations and countries facing the same problem.

Las Kellys Mallorca

Baleares is one of the major exploiters of hotel services. As the main tourist destination in Spain, it is also one of the most affected by the issue of the Kellys. Being highly relevant in the tourism sector, they serve as a reference for other cities regarding improvements in the working conditions of hotel housekeepers.

In the Balearic Islands, there is a territorial group of the Association of the Kellys called Las Kellys Mallorca. It is also worth mentioning the Union of the Kellys of Baleares for their importance in supporting the same collective (Unión Kellys Baleares, 2017).



Mobilisation of Las Kellys Mallorca

It is worth noting that Baleares is the first region to have regulated the workload of the Kellys and their respective rest times. Additionally, salary reviews are conducted periodically to consider various wage increases. They have also implemented other improvements, such as the requirement to provide adjustable beds to facilitate the work of hotel housekeepers (Ballesteros, 2023).

Considering that Balearic Islands are pioneers in some labour rights in the room attendants' sector, all of these initiatives should be extended by other autonomous communities and countries to ensure a general improvement in their working conditions.

Las Kellys in Europe

The Kellys movement is not limited to Spain, it is also present in other European countries, especially those with a thriving tourism industry similar to our own. Among the most significant housekeeping worker movements in Europe are those found in Spain, France, Portugal, and Italy.

In these different European countries, housekeeping workers have organized themselves to fight against precariousness through strikes and protests to ensure a minimum wage and appropriate hygiene conditions. All these countries demand a regulation of the sector and labour protection measures.

In Spain, the movement is notably visible and well-organized. Demonstrations, strikes, and awareness campaigns are being conducted to improve their working and salary conditions. Favourable regulations such as safety and hygiene measures, as well as a minimum task completion time, have been approved.

In France, although the minimum wage has been regulated, there is still much to be done in terms of workload and lack of security. In Portugal, workload and low salaries have been denounced, and there is a movement calling for respect for labour rights. In Italy, the lack of social protection is one of the most pressing issues.

The movement is also present in other countries as Belgium, Germany, and Greece with similar demands. Despite progress being made in several European countries, there is still much to do in the housekeeping worker movement to receive adequate rights and protections.

Conclusions

The Kellys movement is a demonstration that unity is strength. Their public interventions have not been in vain, resulting in an improvement in labour rights. Their tireless struggle has been crucial in raising awareness of the issues faced by this collective, promoting significant improvements in the sector. However, there is still much to be done in terms of labour rights, and the Kellys will not stop until they achieve it.

References

- Alcalde González, V. (2020). Activismo interseccional entre el sindicalismo y el feminismo - Un análisis de la acción colectiva de Las Kellys [Tesis doctoral]. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368706002_Activismo_interseccional_entre_el_sindicalismo_y_el_feminismo_un_analisis_de_la_accion_colectiva_de_Las_Kellys
- Alcalde-González, V., Gálvez-Mozo, A. y Valenzuela-Bustos, A. (2021). No clean rooms, no hotel business: Subversion tactics in Las Kellys' struggle for dignity in hotel housekeeping, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 91, 103315.
- Alcalde-González, V., Gálvez-Mozo, A. y Valenzuela-Bustos, A. (2022). 'Las Kellys son las que limpian': Collective identity and social media in the mobilisation of room attendants in Spain. *New Media & Society*.
- Ballesteros, E. (2023, 3 abril). Balears se convierte en pionera en regular la carga de trabajo de las «kellys» velando por su salud y su descanso. *elDiario.es*.
https://www.eldiario.es/illes-balears/economia/balears-convierte-pionera-regular-carga-trabajo-kellys-velando-salud-descanso_1_10091492.html
- Benavides-Gil, G., Ronda-Pérez, E., Mira, J.J., Artazcoz, L., García Calvente, M.M., Escribà-Agüir, V., & Vives-Cases, C. (2016). The cleaning women of hotel: Work, gender and health. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health*, 22(3), 241-250.
- CCOO. (2020). Informe sobre la situación laboral y la salud de las camareras de piso en el Estado español. Federación de Servicios de CCOO.
- De la Morena, E. L., Pardo, E. R., & Yagüe, M. J. G. (2019). Las Kellys: Hotel Cleaning Women in Spain. In N. N. Singh & A. J. Jolly (Eds.), *Gender and Race Matter: Global Perspectives on Being a Woman* (pp. 153-169). Springer.
- Federación de Servicios de CCOO. (2020). Informe sobre la situación laboral y la salud de las camareras de piso en el Estado español
- Galvín, A. (2022, 19 enero). Francina Armengol: «Las Kellys han luchado mucho por nosotros, tenemos que mejorar sus condiciones laborales». *elDiario.es*.
https://www.eldiario.es/economia/francina-armengol-kellys-han-luchado-mejorar-condiciones-laborales_128_8664355.html

García, A. M., Ronda-Pérez, E., Sánchez-López, M., & Benavides, F. G. (2014). Occupational health risks of hotel cleaners in five tourist resorts in southern Spain. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 28(5), 375-381.

García-Gómez, E., González-Gago, M., & González-Morales, O. (2019). Trabajo precario y trabajo de cuidados en el sector hotelero español. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 77(1), e114.

García-Ramírez, M., Benavides, F.G., & Serra, L. (2016). Discrimination of women in the workplace and health. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 30(Suppl 1), 30-34.

Cisquella, G. (2018). *Hotel Explotación: Las Kellys* [Documetal]. Filmin.
<https://www.filmin.es/pelicula/hotel-explotacion-las-kellys>

InfoLibre. (2020, 4 junio). Los riders, un paso más cerca de hacer valer sus derechos: «Por primera vez en tres años se nos reconoce como interlocutores». InfoLibre.
https://www.infolibre.es/politica/riders-paso-cerca-valer-derechos-primera-vez-tres-anos-reconoce-interlocutores_1_1183714.html

LAS KELLYS (2017, 4 julio). Manifiesto.
<https://laskellys.wordpress.com/manifiesto/>

LAS KELLYS (2020, 23 mayo). Quienes somos.
<https://laskellys.wordpress.com/quienes-somos/>

La Moncloa. (2022, October 3). El presidente del Gobierno se reúne con representantes de las Kellys de Mallorca. Recuperado el 11 de mayo de 2023, de
<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Paginas/2022/031022-sanchez-mallorca-kellys.aspx>

Martinez, D. (2019). "La Diferencia entre camareras de piso y botones es que ellos no son explotados": género, inmigración y trabajo en la hotelería. *Revista feminista de estudios de género*, 8, 1-17.

Murcia.com. (2022, October 3). Pedro Sánchez reafirma el compromiso del Gobierno con las Kellys para seguir dignificando sus condiciones laborales.
<https://www.murcia.com/nacional/noticias/2022/10/03-pedro-sanchez-reafirma-el-compromiso-del-gobierno-con-las-kellys-para-seguir-dignificando-sus-condic.asp>

Olazábal, P. (2022, 24 enero). Las «kellys» logran una subida salarial del 30%. cadena SER. https://cadenaser.com/emisora/2018/12/18/radio_bilbao/1545153160_500840.html

Oxfam Intermon. (2021). Las Kellys: la lucha de las camareras de piso.
<https://www.oxfamintermon.org/es/que-hacemos/campanas/kellys-lucha-camareras-piso>

Perez, M. (2019). Migrantes invisibles en el turismo español. Análisis de la situación de las camareras de piso. *Aposta. Revista de ciencias sociales*, 78, 1-20.

Sandoval, M. (2015). Limpieza en la sombra. Mujeres en la externalización del servicio doméstico y de alojamiento. *Revista de estudios de género y sexualidad*, 7, 76-103.

Unión kellys Baleares – Camareras de pisos. (s. f.). <https://kellysbaleares.es/>

Valero, M. (2018, 4 noviembre). De 800 a 1.400 euros: los hoteles catalanes se preparan para regularizar a sus 'kellys' elconfidencial.com.

https://www.elconfidencial.com/empresas/2018-11-04/camareras-pisos-kellys-hoteles-cataluna-limpieza_1638907/