

Foreign immigration and suburbanisation in the Spanish main urban areas (1999-2009)

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Introduction

In the past ten years, one of the main changes experienced by the largest Spanish urban areas has been a rapid increase in the number of foreigners. At the beginning of 1999 748,953 foreign citizens lived in Spain, but by the end of 2008 they had increased to 5,598,691. In other words, foreigners went from representing 1.9% of the total population (one of the lowest proportions in the then EU-15) to being a 12%, exceeding other European countries with a longer immigration history. As a consequence, at a moment when all previous demographic projections expected figures to be stable or even to diminish, the total number of people living in Spain increased from 40.2 million to 46.6 million.

Big urban areas have been one of the immigrants' preferred destinations, breaking cities' former stagnation dynamics, and making them recover demographic growth. Urban centres, which were losing population due to suburbanisation, are now growing again, even though metropolitan residential dynamics continue to exist and are even intensifying. Moreover, foreign population has incorporated to suburbanisation process, being responsible of most of the short distance moves.

Indeed, Barcelona city lost 250,000 inhabitants between 1975 and 1996, a 14% of its initial population. During the same period, Madrid experienced a similar trend, with a reduction of 330,000 residents, that is to say, 10.5% of its population. Valencia and Seville, the two following Spanish cities by number of inhabitants, did not reach their maximum population size until the beginning of the 90's, starting to lose population by the middle years of that decade, at the same time as the two main cities were stabilising their number of residents. This paper focuses on these four cities, the largest in Spain, which together, including their metropolitan areas, have a total of 13 million inhabitants, representing around 30% of the Spanish population (2005 data). There are however differences between them: while percentages of foreign residents for the two main cities are highly above the national average (17.5% in Madrid and 18.1% in Barcelona) and they are also important for Valencia (14%), they only reach 4.3% in Seville. In other words, foreign immigration represents more than 80% of total metropolitan growth in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, whereas it only means a 40% of it in Seville. Comparing cities and metropolitan areas with an unequal share of

foreign immigrants will help us seize the role this phenomenon has played in metropolitan population growth, residential mobility changes, and suburbanisation dynamics.

By using municipality-level data grouped by distance to the city centre, this paper focuses on three metropolitan dynamics directly affected by the arrival of foreign immigrants, that is to say, a) population growth and distribution in the municipalities of the main Spanish metropolitan areas; b) its impact on metropolitan residential mobility, and finally, c) changes on the age and sex population distribution. The initial hypothesis is that Spanish and foreign populations have different spatial patterns: residential mobility among Spaniards is characterised by suburbanisation towards outer ring municipalities, far away from the city centre, whereas foreigners mainly do shorter distance moves into inner ring municipalities –i.e., concentrating in the same neighbourhoods which Spanish rural-urban immigrants occupied several decades ago.

Data:

Three statistical data sources, collected and published by the Spanish National Statistical Institute (INE), have been used: stock data on the evolution of Spanish and foreign nationality population, with reference to January the 1st of each year, coming from the continuous local register (*Padrón continuo*); statistics on flows determining natural growth (births and deaths) obtained from the natural population movement (*Movimiento Natural de la Población* or MNP); and flow data determining the migratory growth (immigration and emigration), found in the residential change statistics (*Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales* or EVR) collecting municipality residential moves.

We have analysed the last ten years with available data, corresponding to the 1999-2008 period. The four main Spanish cities and metropolitan regions have been studied, taking the distance between each municipality and its metropolitan central city as spatial reference point.

Preliminary findings

In the case of Barcelona and its metropolitan area, formerly analysed by authors (Bayona and Gil-Alonso, 2008 and 2009; Pujadas, 2009), immigration has become the main component in the 14% metropolitan population growth between 1998 and 2007, therefore ending the former population stagnation period. Indeed, around 90% of the total growth would be attributed to a foreign population increase. Despite it, suburbanisation processes continue, and even grow among Spanish people. As a result, in the last ten years, the city of Barcelona itself has lost 120,000 Spanish inhabitants. And municipalities nearest to it have also undergone the same process. However, this

loss has been compensated by foreign immigration. Moreover, there has also been a strong residential mobility among foreigners, particularly in the last five years. However, the two populations, i.e. Spanish people and immigrants, follow different territorial patterns: while foreigners particularly undertake short moves, Spanish people move longer distances and go to outer ring municipalities.

Madrid is similar to Barcelona in this aspect (Pozo and García, 2009) as, after twenty years of having lost population, it is winning it due to foreign immigration. Here again, we find two residential models by nationality. Foreigner moves are particularly high in the capital city and the nearest metropolitan areas (Parejo, 2009), while Spanish people predominate in more suburban moves.

As it can be seen in both cases, the influence of foreign immigration on metropolitan dynamics falls with distance. Differences between the two cities are partly explained by their size. As Barcelona only has 100 km², foreign immigration has its strongest impact on suburban municipalities situated at less than 10 km from the central city. However, Madrid is much bigger (607 km²) and therefore residential mobility is mainly done within the central city. Moreover, in Madrid social territorial segregation is much more clear (Northwest-Southeast) than in Barcelona, and this influences flow characteristics and intensity.

In this last decade, there have also been significant changes regarding population structure. Perhaps the most representative one would be population rejuvenation due to international immigration. However, it is unevenly distributed. While Spanish people's residential mobility has mainly had an impact on the age structure of municipalities furthest away from the metropolitan centre, foreign immigration has rejuvenated city centres and municipalities situated near them. Despite it, important age structure differences can still be seen between metropolitan centres and their peripheries.

The paper will complete the former findings for Barcelona and Madrid, extending the research up to 2008 (the last year with available data), perhaps obtaining significant information about the economic crisis' impact on residential mobility flows and foreign immigrant arrival. Valencia and Seville metropolitan areas, presenting, as we have already stated, very diverse foreign population impacts, will also be incorporated to the study, geographically extending the scope of the analysis.

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