

# FOREIGNER'S INTERNAL MIGRATION IN SPAIN: RECENT SPATIAL CHANGES DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Spain underwent a high immigration period which came to an end in 2008 when the present global economic crisis, worsened in this country by the real estate bubble, burst. Then, a new period, in which foreign immigration significantly falls and emigration begins to increase, starts and from 2010, Spain's migration growth rate becomes negative. Many of the recent year's migration parameters should be revised as a consequence of the depth of the economic crisis, and if we intend to focus on foreign population, the one which has the highest unemployment rates of this high unemployment country, particularly so.

Origin and destination areas are socially and demographically affected by population redistribution generated by internal migrations. In a low fertility and mortality context such as this, internal mobility is a particularly relevant population growth or decline trend generator. Depending on their origin, destination and type of migration, movers are in general sociodemographically different. For foreigners, internal mobility implies moving again once they have entered the country and readapting to local residential and labour markets. Present economic crisis and labour instability which has particularly touched non-EU immigrants –as they have the highest unemployment figures– has surely led to substantial migration pattern changes like flows to new labour market destinations, and possibly, less residential changes and therefore reduced mobility.

The paper's main aim is to offer a wide picture of recent foreigner migration trends in Spain and test its main hypothesis, that the economic crisis has changed previous patterns. More specifically, the paper intends to answer the following questions. How did the economic crisis affect internal migration flows? Have internal migration rates increased or

decreased? Have all nationalities been affected in the same way? Are foreigners more mobile than nationals as they were before the economic crisis? Has any previously immigration province become an emigration one? Are there still migration patterns by nationality? To answer these questions we have used two classical *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (INE) data sources, the *Padrón continuo* and the *Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales*. For analytical reasons we have divided the period from 2004 to 2011 into two, one from 2004 to 2007 and another from 2008 to 2011, where the effect of the crisis can be observed.

## II. STATISTICAL SOURCES

The *Padrón continuo* results from collecting, checking and cleaning population data stocks given by local *padrones*. The number of inhabitants of each Spanish municipality – and therefore that of the whole country – on January the first is annually given by this source since 1998. Data published offer information on residents' nationality, their place of birth and basic demographic characteristics. According to the *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local* anyone living in a Spanish municipality is obliged to be registered at its *padron*. Despite not being completely exact, it is considered to give a good proxy of the number of foreigners living in the country, and this in spite of recent suspicions of the database's political use and that therefore certain national groups could be –or partially be– less visible. However, this problem's spatial impact throughout the country depends on how restrictive local policies are.

On the other hand, the *Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales* (EVR) offers information on flows between Spanish municipalities or between the latter and abroad. It is annually elaborated by the INE by exploiting *padrón* registrations and deletions and its data on residential changes between Spanish municipalities are considered reliable (Recaño, 2002; Martí y Ródenas, 2006). However, flows to other countries are much less so, as many emigrants do not register their departure. It should also be noted that this source collects moves and not movers and that therefore it includes new re-emigrations. As a result of its administrative use, it can also include possible false migrations due to the advantages and disadvantages of being registered at a certain municipality. Registration delays should also be taken into account. To solve these problems the INE has just recently published a new data series called the *Estadística de Migraciones*. It intends to estimate internal and external migrations by correcting EVR data submitting EVR data to certain corrections. It is also related to a new statistical series called *Cifras de Población* which estimates the number of people living in Spain at diverse administrative levels (INE, 2013). However, this new database does not take movements with a same province into account and only exists since 2008, year in which the effects of the economic crisis on migration flows were already visible. Therefore, we have chosen to continue using the *Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales*.

## III. MAIN FINDINGS

2007 was the year in which Spain's internal migration flows reach their highest level as the EVR registered 1,795,353 moves inside the country. 1,050,637, that is to say 58.3% of the total, did not cross any province borders and 744,716 did. Since then, internal flows have only slightly diminished, as in 2011 there were 1,650,298 moves, 59.3% inside provincial

limits. However, Spanish and foreign people did not exactly behave in the same way. While 2006 was the year in which more Spanish nationals moved and, since then, their number has slowly diminished (less than 5%) 2007 was the one in which more foreigners did (535,193 moves). Since then, their number of movements has plummeted to 439,992, that is to say, they have fallen by 17.7%. In other words, two thirds of the reduction since 2007 is due to foreigners moving less. As for the type of movement which the two nationality groups carry out, it is also different. In relative terms, foreigners move more between provinces –45% of their moves– than Spanish people –less than 40% of their moves.

In general, foreigners' internal migration rates are higher than those of Spanish nationals. While the later show rates of 29.2 per thousand, those of foreigners rocket to 76.6 per thousand. These rates would have decreased from a maximum rate of 31.2 per thousand –in the case of Spanish people– and from 109.4 per thousand –in that of foreigners–, so those of foreigners have fallen much more. There are also significant differences by continent of origin. In the case of Asians, their maximum rate was of 189 per thousand in 2007 which, in 2011, fell to 138 per thousand. In that of Africans, their highest rate was 143 per thousand in 2007 in comparison to 107 per thousand in 2011. As for Americans, their maximum rate was of 122 per thousand in 2007 and most recently reached 104 per thousand. However, Europeans' behaviour is more similar to that of Spanish people, though some nuances should also be introduced. In 2004, the EU 15 rate was at its maximum, 54.3 per thousand, and has decreased to 32.1 per thousand. For the rest of Europeans it was in 2002 that it reached its maximum, 119 per thousand, and, most recently it is of 56.4 per thousand.

Some of the former figures are obviously due to age structure, as foreigners tend to be much younger than the Spanish population as a whole and concentrate at the ages at which mobility is at its highest level. Sex and age specific internal migration rates confirm it. Except in the case of the elderly, foreigner rates have always been higher, particularly during active ages, and presently it continues to be so despite the economic crisis.

What impact did the economic crisis have on internal migration? Out of the 1.65 million moves done in 2011, nearly 440 thousand were carried out by a foreign resident, that is to say, 26.7 per cent of them. This percentage rises to 28.9 if migration between provinces is taken into account. In this sense, Europeans and Americans are those who have the most similar patterns to Spanish people as their interprovincial migration percentages are relatively low, whereas Asians and Africans are overrepresented in interprovincial migration.

As for age, in absolute terms, internal immigrants are basically young adults, and many of them take their children with them, Africans particularly so. Regarding sex, in 2011, 67 per cent of African migrants and 65 per cent of Asian ones are men. At the other end, European and American migrants are mostly women (51 per cent and 57.4 per cent respectively).

From the spatial point of view, the importance of foreigners in internal migration flows varies greatly. Among emigrants, the province in which they are less important is Ourense (10.3 per cent in 2011) and the one where they are more relevant is Almeria (37.8 per cent). Among immigrants, the province with the lowest foreigners' proportion is Caceres (11.6 per cent) and the one which has the highest one is Alava (38.3 per cent).

How would have internal migration spatial patterns changed as a consequence of the economic crisis? Analysing EVR data on the four large groups of foreigners –Europeans, Americans, Africans and Asians– there would be three new trends. Firstly, Mediterranean seaside

provinces, and Valencian ones particularly, have gone from being large internal immigration attraction poles to expelling focuses, as a consequence of construction sector job destruction. Secondly, provinces which had formerly contributed to redistribute foreign population are currently reducing their population loss. While waiting for better times, these provinces seem to be reducing mobility as a strategy. They are either very urban provinces like Madrid or more agrarian ones like Murcia or Almeria. Finally, the provinces that formerly had the lowest percentages of foreign migrants –like Galicia or the Basque Country– and those where agriculture is still important –the economic sector that has been less hit by the economic crisis– are those which are presently the most attractive. In fact, in 2011 Biscay was the province with the highest migratory growth, followed by Jaén.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Results show that the exceptionally high immigration period which Spain underwent in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century concluded in 2008 when flows started to diminish as a result of economic crisis. Indeed, in this new phase, immigration flows are much lower. While in 2007, 900 thousand foreigners entered Spain, in 2012 only less than 340 thousand did. Therefore, evidence confirms our hypothesis that the economic crisis did not only end up reducing entry flows but also impelling part of the foreign residents to leave due to their lack of labour expectations. This would, at least for most foreigners, refute what some other authors claim, that is to say, that in postfordist capitalist countries which have dual labour markets, immigrants adapt better to economic crisis than local people. Possibly, the hardship and duration of the economic crisis might have obliged locals to accept job niches which they had formerly rejected and left to foreigners.

Moreover, economic recession has also reduced foreigners' internal mobility, as once inside the country they are moving less than they did before the economic crisis. However, despite this pronounced drop was steeper than that of autochthonous people, they are still moving much more than Spaniards. Finally, it should also be noted that immigrant internal redistribution patterns have also been changed by the economic crisis. For example, in moves between provinces, origin and destination ones are no longer the same. Flow patterns have been affected in a similar way as other economic crises did with those of Spanish internal migrations then.

Up to 2008, foreigner internal mobility rates were high as immigrants arrived in increasing numbers to Spain and, during their first years here, their place of residence was not very stable. 2007 was the year in which more foreign immigrants changed of address; 540 thousand moves compared to only 100 thousand in 2001. Out of the former, 290 thousand were among municipalities of the same province and 250 between different provinces. However, as a consequence of the economic crisis, foreigners presently move less within the country. In 2011, they made 440 thousand moves, 250 within the province in which they lived and 200 thousand to a different one.

In 2007, despite the economic crisis, foreigners changed much more of address than local people –77 internal moves per thousand foreign inhabitants in front of only 29 moves per thousand Spaniards. However, not all foreigners moved the same. Asians were the ones which most changed of address inside Spain, followed by Africans –mostly Moroccans– and

by Americans –basically Latin-Americans. By contrast, former EU-15 immigrants, that is to say, western Europeans are those that move less and therefore their migration rates are the most similar to those of Spanish people. They are mainly retired people who moved to Spain for residential reasons, and therefore the economic crisis has scarcely affected their internal mobility pattern. The rest of Europeans –from new EU member States and non-EU countries– are quite more mobile. They are mainly Bulgarians, and above all Rumanians, who moved here for labour reasons and, during the real estate boom years, basically worked in the construction sector.

The economic crisis has mainly reduced long distance moves, while those between bordering provinces are maintained. Some “gateway” ones, like Madrid, which receive foreigners to later redistribute them –and therefore their internal migration growth rate is negative– have seen how these flows have significantly been reduced, as, on the one hand, many less foreigners are arriving and, on the other, moves between provinces have substantially fallen due to reduced labour perspectives throughout the country which discourage new movements. Provinces with significant agriculture like Murcia or Almeria follow similar trends. They had traditionally expelled foreigners who had firstly incorporated to the Spanish labour market through agriculture and then moved on to other provinces and sectors but, due to the economic crisis, agriculture can be considered a refuge economic sector. This could also explain why would, in 2011, Jaen be the province with the second highest internal immigration rate. The Cantabrian coast, less affected than the Mediterranean one by the construction bubble, is now receiving internal flows. Therefore, due to internal migration, a new budding foreign resident redistribution trend seems to be emerging in Spain.

Therefore, the economic crisis did not only affect flow size, but has also modified its spatial pattern. Indeed, some foreigner internal migration origin and destination provinces have interchanged their role. While during economic boom years, Comunitat Valenciana provinces and adjacent coastal ones (Murcia and Tarragona) were those that received more foreign migrants –and therefore had the highest internal immigration growth rates–, they are presently those expelling more foreign migrants to other provinces –and consequently have the most negative internal migration growth rates. This change would mainly be due to the effect of the economic crisis on the labour market and on the construction sector, where particularly male immigrants worked. On the other hand, foreign population is also gradually redistributing to new immigration provinces, like the Cantabrian and some interior agrarian ones, where in fact, during the previous boom years, internal immigration had been less important than for the mean. Though flows to them are still low, their internal migration growth rates are now positive, and they are modestly becoming the new “Eldorados” to which foreign migrants looking for jobs are moving to because work is less scarce in them than in the rest of the country. In sum, less international and internal migrations, foreign immigrant redistribution of from those provinces most affected by the real estate bubble to previously low immigration ones and, finally, certain residential stability compared to 2008, seem to be the most clear effects of the economic crisis on migration. However, the recession has been so deep and has had such an impact on foreigners that more changes would have been expected. In any case, the country is no longer the same as twenty years ago, and current foreigner immigration, emigration and internal migration flows are far higher than those