

# THE RECENT APPEARANCE OF FOREIGN IMMIGRATION IN GALICIA. SPATIAL IMPRINT AND FEATURES

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The appearance of foreign immigration in Galicia is recent. Although, there are significantly fewer immigrants on average in Galicia than in Spain and especially, in the Mediterranean region and Madrid in quantitative terms, their appearance in Galicia is part of a complex and decidedly dynamic migratory model in which the commencement of the first influx of foreigners coexists with returning emigration from Europe and America and the flight of the active population to other Spanish destinations.

This paper's primary aim is to study the foreign immigration phenomenon in Galicia and its territorial impacts at different levels from the regional to the infra-municipal. Galicia's situation on the semi-periphery of international mobility in Spain and the coexistence of two different positive and negative migratory flows are the two key premises to understanding the impact of immigration on this autonomous community.

## **II. THE CONFLUENCE OF MIGRATION MOVEMENTS IN GALICIA: EMIGRANTS, RETURNEES AND FOREIGN IMMIGRANTS**

Galicia is a participant in Spain's immigration process and yet has more modest rates and several particular features of its own, characteristic of a territory on Spain's semi-periphery, far from Europe's developmental hotspots. The new millennium coincided with the advent of substantial transformations in Galician immigration: a drop in the number of Spanish emigrants returning from abroad, a rise in the foreign population and a turnaround in emigration to other parts of Spain. The new migration cycle seems clear, however, the numbers of returnees and domestic emigrants are still significant, higher than in most other Spanish autonomous communities.

The number of foreign immigrants in Galicia overtook the number of returnees for the first time in 2001. Of all Spain's autonomous communities, Galicia received the most returnees per year from 1997 to 2004, only surpassed by Madrid in 2005 and ranking third behind Madrid and Catalonia in 2006. A total of 2.11% of all foreign immigrants settled in Galicia last year, as did 15.80% of all Spaniards returning from abroad.

As for migration to other parts of Spain, the decline in negative values since 2000 apparently came to a halt in 2006, when 17,010 Spaniards exchanged their residences in Galicia for other autonomous communities. These interregional changes in residence were not related to metropolitan displacements, but rather to jobs as the main motivation for domestic Galician emigration.

### **III. THE FOREIGN POPULATION'S INCREASING WEIGHT IN A DEMOGRAPHICALLY STAGNATING AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY**

Data from 2007 showed that there were 81,442 foreigners in Galicia, which represented 1.80% of Spain's more than 4.5 million foreign residents, a lower percentage than Galicia's relative demographic weight (6.13% of the Spanish population in 2007). Our autonomous community has more foreign-born residents than five other autonomous communities with half Galicia's population do. Nevertheless, these indicators should not lead us to underestimate the foreign immigration phenomenon in Galicia, and even more so, in view of its emerging evolution in recent years.

The advent of the immigration movement dates back to the 1980s. Spain's adhesion to the European Union in 1986 and subsequent convergence process with the more highly developed countries around it fostered the arrival of new kinds of immigrants. In Galicia's case, this meant strengthened bonds with Portugal and the arrival of the first immigrants from American countries with which Galicia has historically maintained close ties. Even so, the number of foreign residents in Galicia grew by only 211 people in the five years between 1991 and 1996. The authentic boom in foreign residents has come about in the past ten years, when yearly growth soared to nearly 30% in 2001 and 2002. In 1996, slightly over 18,000 foreigners resided in Galicia (0.66% of all inhabitants), 38.54% of whom were Portuguese; five years later, the percentage of foreign immigration had reached 1.20% and in 2007, it hit 2.93%, surpassing the 80,000 inhabitant mark for the first time.

However, as important or more than these figures is the weight of these migratory flows in the Galician population's recent evolution. Declining population trends reversed themselves at the turn of the twenty-first century and growth was registered, while the rise of foreign population intensified, which meant that Galicia's population was undergoing a slight recovery at a time when the weight of foreign residents began to influence demographic mechanisms.

Foreign immigration seem to have decisively influenced the population's evolution in all four Galician provinces, but especially in the less dynamic ones, in terms of population, because small changes in the number of immigrants in territories with aging populations and low absolute growth may result in substantial modifications in the population's evolutionary processes and dynamics.

In fact, approximately 65,000 foreigners joined Galicia's population in a little over a decade, a figure that may seem insignificant within a demographic context of growth, yet is highly transcendent in a territory with an uncertain population evolution. Almost seven out of every ten new Galician residents during 1996-2007 were foreign born.

#### **IV. FLOWS AND TYPES OF IMMIGRANTS WHO SETTLE IN GALICIA**

International immigration as a globalised phenomenon means that the numerical growth in foreigners is accompanied by other significant territorial processes: diversity of origins and distribution in the host space.

One suitable method for studying the foreign population's current composition as well as verifying trends is analysing the weight of foreign residents by general zones of origin and different arrival dates. The first conclusion is that, in contrast to the overwhelmingly European immigration of 1996, the clear majority of immigrants now come from Ibero-American countries; almost seven out of every ten foreigners were from non-EU countries in 2007. The second conclusion addresses the diversification of origin. If intensification is the immigration movement's first distinguishing sign, its flows' increasingly diversified origin is a second characteristic of the mature societies that serve as destinations for foreigners. Nevertheless, in 2007, almost 50% of all foreign immigrants came from Latin America, the group with the highest absolute growth in the last decade: a total of over 35,000 people.

In conclusion, although Galicia's immigration model is part of a more general one with Spain as its main destination, we believe it is possible to advance a Galician model of international immigration that may explain many of the social dynamics and territorial behaviours involved in the phenomenon, a model that gravitates to the Atlantic, first with regard to Portugal and increasingly in relation to Latin America and revolves around employment motivations in both cases.

- The flow from the North: almost exclusively from Portugal. The prevailing motivation of employment is reinforced by cultural, linguistic, commercial factors and proximity. A flow with a trend towards moderate growth.
- The flow from the South: from all points in the less highly developed world, but especially Latin American countries. At first, origin was limited to countries that had previously welcomed Galician emigration and have historically maintained close ties in the economic and affective spheres, but this trend has diversified of late. Flow with a trend towards high growth.

#### **V. ANALYSIS OF THE FOREIGN POPULATION BY DESTINATION IN A TERRITORIALY IMBALANCED AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY**

The foreign population's impact on Galicia has been very unequal. Two aspects of migratory typology explain the reasons for foreigners' choice of settlement areas: jobs as the primary motive for immigration and Portugal's weight as the main country of origin. As a result, the most economically dynamic Galician regions with the greatest capacity to generate employment and the zones on the Portuguese border attract the highest clusters of foreign-born residents.

## 1. Analysis by province

The polarization in clusters of foreigners in Galicia's western provinces broadened between 1996 and 2007, helping confirm the existence of «two Galicias» in the economic, demographic and migratory realms. The weight of industrial and tertiary activities, the importance of the urban population and the long, joint border with Portugal make Pontevedra immigration's primary target. The factors that attract immigrants to this southernmost province are similar to those exerted by Corunna, although the latter is not Portuguese immigrants' favourite destination simply because it is farther away. While these two provinces increased their relative weight in Galicia, Lugo remained at 11% (although it grew by almost 7,000 new foreigners) and Orense, where the number of foreigners grew by about 8,000, lost relative representation. The rise in percentages of foreign residents in the two demographically less dynamic provinces owes more to the loss of total population than to major increments in the number of foreigners.

## 2. Analysis by municipality

A clear-cut profile of the municipal distribution of foreigners emerged between 1996 and 2007, because of their widespread diffusion throughout Galicia and the remarkable quantitative leap in the number of immigrants in cities.

Despite representations of foreigners in certain rural spaces in Galicia, immigrants settle almost exclusively in cities. In 2007, the urban and peri-urban spaces led immigration density percentages, with southern Galicia (especially Pontevedra) being especially relevant. Galicia's seven major cities accounted for 47.48% of all foreigners in 2007, with Vigo and its almost 14,000 residents heading the list. Following cities were two other types of urban spaces: municipalities located in the peri-urban area, fundamentally in the western provinces and especially in metropolitan areas (Vigo, Corunna and Santiago); and villages or district seats that have a special industrial, but especially tertiary dynamism.

In short, immigration is drawn to urban spaces in the economically most dynamic part of Galicia, because of the Atlantic axis. Therefore, the profile of location makes this population's distribution a new indicator of the major territorial inequalities that exist in Galicia.

## 3. Analysis by municipal census district

The foreign population's distribution in the four Galician cities with the most immigrants on their census district reproduces currents detected in other major Spanish cities. However, the phenomenon's recent nature means that some of these municipalities are in an earlier stage of the residential mobility process than other major Spanish cities.

With the exception of Vigo, immigrants are still spatially clustered in just a few city districts. In this sense, Vigo is a more advanced stage than other Galician cities and is not only the municipality with the most foreigners, but is also where a trend towards territorial expansion in location has been noted. Over the years, these groups are moving away from the urban centre, even to sparsely urbanized districts in the rural-urban space. Immigrants

also prefer town centres in other cities. In Corunna, a shift in location from the more heavily-populated town centre (which includes a good part of the historical city) to the municipality's northern districts can be divined. In Lugo, most foreigners have settled in the districts along the walled city and very few live in rural and rural-urban areas and on the periphery. Lastly, most of the foreign population in Orense lives in the city centre and disperses as we move away from the less dense and compact city.

To conclude this section, we present a model of the foreign population distribution in Galician cities based on a division into three urban tiers (centre, first periphery and second periphery). At the outset, (stage 1), the foreign population clustered almost exclusively in city centres and rarely on the peripheries. New internal migratory dynamics (residential displacements from the centre to the first and second peripheries) arose in municipalities farther along in the immigration processes (stage 2), which coincided with the influx of new immigrants, who settled in both city centres as well as the first periphery. Internal residential displacement is not very significant in municipalities where the immigration process is still in an initial stage.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

With less than 3% of Spain's foreign population, Galicia trails the country's autonomous communities in terms of the relative importance of the immigration phenomenon; the percentages in Galicia in 2007 were slightly higher than Spain's in 2000. Nevertheless, the phenomenon in Galicia is not noteworthy in terms of demographic volume, but rather for the changes in migratory trends it represents. Galicia stopped being identified as a source of emigration at the close of the twentieth century and became a host for immigrant within the context of globalization.

In this sense, the immigration phenomenon in Galicia is not less important than in other autonomous communities with higher numbers of foreigners. Two factors help confirm this idea: firstly, the territories in Spain with the highest foreign immigration rates at present (Catalonia, Madrid, the Balearic Islands and the Community of Valencia) are those that have traditionally been receiving Spanish immigrants since the 1950s and thus, their native populations have been used to receiving culturally and even very linguistically diverse populations for over half a century. Secondly, the influx of foreigners in Galicia coincides with another international immigration phenomenon, the return of émigrés, who are still numerous in this autonomous community in the twenty-first century.

