INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRATION AND SUBURBANIZATION IN SPAIN'S MAIN URBAN AREAS: IS RECESSION CHANGING URBAN GROWTH TRENDS?

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Paper's aim

This paper seeks to analyze the impact of the current deep economic and housing market crisis on Spanish largest urban areas population growth and composition, giving an answer to research questions like: Have core city demographic recovery and suburbanization flows been affected by the sharp economic cycle change? Have foreigner flows and stocks been particularly touched, compared to Spanish-nationality population ones?

During this last decade (2000-2010), Spain has had the largest international migration inflows in Europe. The proportion of foreign residents has therefore increased from a trifling 2.3% in 2000 to today's 12.2%. In other words, in absolute terms, more than five million new inhabitants have been added to the existing population. Moreover, they have unevenly distributed throughout the territory, concentrating in specific provinces which specialize on tourist, service or intensive agriculture jobs, and in large urban areas. This paper focuses on their impact on Spain's fifteen large metropolitan areas with more than half a million inhabitants, which added up to 22 million inhabitants in 2010, 2.9 million of them being foreigners, compared to only 18.7 million ten years before, 446 thousand of which aliens. During this last decade and after a long period of stagnation or negative growth, their core cities have clearly grown (due to foreign immigration), while suburbanization, to which foreigners have also incorporated, has intensified.

The upsurge of the economic crisis (2008) and its strong impact on the real estate sector draw an end to this urban expansion and growth period, and metropolitan areas enter a new phase to which we address our attention. The paper seeks: 1) to provide an overview of recent population changes in Spanish metropolitan areas; 2) to analyze suburbanization and (re)urbanization dynamics, taking differences in foreigner and Spaniard mobility and settlement patterns into account; and finally, 3) to assess the impact that the current economic crisis has had on the aforementioned trends, pointing to the most affected metropolitan areas and establishing causal typologies.

Theoretical framework

The classical cyclical urbanisation model or 'stages of urban development' built by Van den Berg *et al.* (1982) has been widely used by many urban geographers and other urban researchers to explain past and present population changes in functional urban regions (FUR) and to compare contemporary European urban trends (Cheshire and Hay, 1989; Lever, 1993; Cheshire, 1995; Champion, 1995; Haase *et al.*, 2005; Buzar *et al.*, 2007; Turok and Mikhnenko, 2007; Kabisch and Haase, 2011). This model is useful as it not merely analyse demographic growth in cities as a whole but focuses on what occurs in both urban cores and the surrounding fringe areas. More specifically, it describes urban growth and decline periods in Europe through four sequential stages: urbanization, suburbanization, desurbanization and reurbanization, each one being sub-divided into two periods of relative or absolute population increase (centralisation) or decrease (decentralisation).

Van den Berg *et al.* (1982) considered that the fourth stage, reurbanization, was purely hypothetical and unlikely. Nevertheless, population data collected in the 1990s and the early 21st century shows that many European core cities are once again gaining population and thus, some kind of reurbanization –even if is this concept is still under-theorised (Buzar *et al.*, 2005) and therefore used with very different meanings (Rérat, 2011)– is in fact taking place (Lever, 1993; Cheshire, 1995; Ogden and Hall, 2000; Hugo *et al.*, 2003; Haase *et al*., 2005; Buzar *et al*., 2007; López-Gay, 2011). However, this core city recovery is not accompanied by a suburbs decline as suggested by the Van den Berg's reurbanization stage, but by continued urban sprawl and counterurbanization. Therefore, the 'stages of urban development' model has received many criticisms (Champion, 1995; Cheshire, 1995; Antrop, 2004; Storper and Manville, 2006; Buzar *et al.*, 2007; Kabisch and Haase, 2011; Rérat, 2011), although it can be used as conceptual framework to analyze how the urban development process is evolving in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century. Using this analytical framework, a population growth based cluster has been built to classify the agglomerations according to core cities and periphery demographic characteristics, in order to group the Spanish urban areas according to the cyclical urbanization stage where they stand and to find spatial patterns.

Data and Urban Area Definition

The main source used in the paper is the *Padrón continuo*, the local continuous register collected and harmonised by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE), referenced to January the 1st of each year. It permits to obtain annual stock data on the Spanish and foreign nationality population at municipality level, thus allowing to annually analyze settlement dynamics in both populations. 2000, 2008 and 2010 data have been used to study these municipalities. The 2000-2010 period has been divided into two: the first corresponding to the economic growth and large immigration flow years and the second to the present crisis and slow foreign population increases one. Finally, data on births and deaths –from the INE's *Movimiento Natural de la Población* (population natural movement statistics)– have also been included to obtain natural growth and, indirectly, migratory one. Regarding urban area definition, we decided to employ the metropolitan area delimitation used in the *Atlas de las Áreas urbanas de España* (Ministerio de la Vivienda, 2006) and to situate the threshold at 500,000 inhabitants. In sum, fifteen metropolitan areas satisfied the requirements. The only exception to the former definition and limits is Madrid, where the whole Autonomous Community (administrative region) has been taken.

Preliminary findings

As expected, the studied metropolitan areas have grown more before 1/1/2008 (annual mean growth rate of 1.73%) than after that date (1.06%). Both increases are higher than their corresponding national average (1.65% and 0.93%, respectively). According to the number of registered residents, foreigner numbers raise more rapidly than national ones. Moreover, in the crisis period, their annual growth even reached a 4.44%. However, despite being relatively significant, these figures are six times lower than those of previous years (24.76%). In other words, as shown by their plunging levels, foreigners have been strongly affected by the crisis. Oddly enough, annual growth rates for Spanish people are higher after than before 1/1/2008 (rates rising from an annual 0.39% to a 0.58%). Rather than explaining this trend by natural or migratory growth of Spanish population, it is possibly explained by naturalisation.

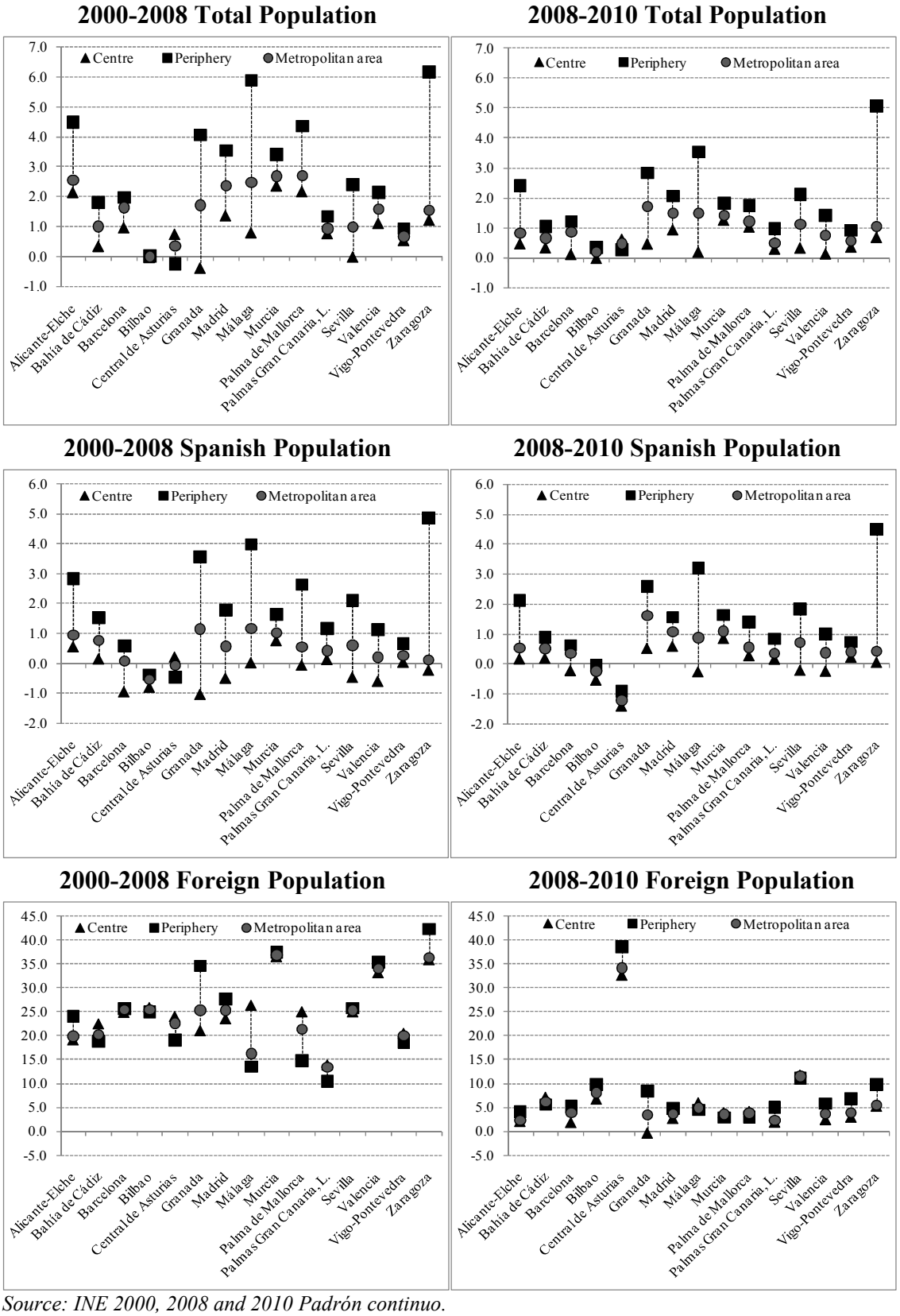
Between 2008 and 2010, none of the urban areas studied lost population in absolute terms, although they all won less than in the preceding period. However, to compare them properly, analysis should focus on annual cumulative growth rates. From this perspective, there are five urban areas (Bilbao, Asturias central area, Seville, Vigo-Pontevedra and Granada) showing higher or similar annual growth rates in 2008-2010 than in the previous period. As these are the five metropolis where foreign immigration has been relatively less present, they are probably also those less affected by the impact of economic crisis on foreign arrivals. On the contrary, in metropolitan areas that received highest proportions of foreigners, growth rates have considerably fallen.

Figure 1 differentiates national and foreign core city and fringe area population growth both in economic expansion and crisis periods. Between 2000 and 2008, all core cities except for Granada, Bilbao and Seville, grew. All the peripheries –except for the Asturias central urban area, where growth was negative– increased even more, being the cases of Zaragoza and Malaga, particularly significant. This generalised urban expansion cannot be understood without the enormous foreign immigration inflows they received. Eight of the metropolis even lost Spanish population. The cases of Granada and Barcelona would especially stand out. On the other hand, except for the central area of Asturias and Bilbao, all the other peripheries gained local residents.

Interestingly enough, the 2008-2010 crisis seems to have particularly affected peripheries and those centres which grew more during the previous period. By contrast, core cities receiving less impact during growth years are also those being less modified by the crisis. Seville and Granada even show small positive growths. This diversity of impacts seems to be due to the large immigration reduction to which metropolitan areas are submitted as a consequence of the crisis. Probably driven by demographic inertia, Spanish population growth seems to be less affected by the crisis. The number of urban centres losing Spaniards even reduces from 8 to 6.

Therefore, the economic and real estate crisis in effect seems to have restrained suburbanization dynamics. On the one hand, there are many less foreigners arriving, so metropolitan areas have reduced their pace of growth. On the other, as getting access to new dwellings has become much more difficult, Spanish population is moving less and exit flows from core cities to suburbs have been reduced. As a consequence, most urban centres are even gaining Spanish residents, or at least have stopped losing them, the only exception being Málaga, Alicante-Elche and Gijón-Oviedo urban centers.

FIGURE 1. 2000-2008 AND 2008-2010 CENTRE AND PERIPHERY FOREIGN, SPANISH AND TOTAL ANNUAL CUMULATIVE GROWTH RATE FOR THE 15 SPANISH LARGEST METROPOLITAN AREAS



Source: INE 2000, 2008 and 2010 Padrón continuo.