

A statistical approach to poverty at the Barcelona Area, 1720-1860.

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Introduction

From the eighteenth century, Catalonia begins a process of Protoindustrialization that will end with an industrial process in the second half of the nineteenth century. Barcelona will become the most industrial capital of Spain. The demolition of the walls around Barcelona started as late as 1854. In the enclosed space of what is today the old city, Industrialisation took place. Barcelona was transformed from an important commercial and administrative centre into one of the densest manufacturing conglomerates in Europe. In 1858, not less than 563 industrial establishments devoted to the different textile activities were located inside of the walls of the city of Barcelona, mainly in the western and eastern parts of the city. Attracted by a flourishing labour market, successive migration waves caused the doubling of the population between 1787 and 1860. This increase, from roughly 100.000 to almost 200.000 inhabitants, corresponds to a sustained annual average growth of around 1 per cent over 73 years. This growth is quite extraordinary considering the negative sign of the natural increase, conditioned by very high mortality rates and by a fertility which started its decline among the first in Europe, before 1850 in all probabilities.

Aim

The present contribution focus on the changes in the levels of poverty and its specific location along the process of Protoindustrialization and Industrialization from 1720 to 1860 in the Barcelona Area using the so declared poor in the marriage licenses of the Diocese of Barcelona collected at the *Barcelona Historical Marriage Database* (BHMD).

Data Source

Our data comes from the “Llibres d’Esposalles” (Marriage licenses Books) conserved at the Archive of the Cathedral of Barcelona, a fiscal register covering the Diocese of Barcelona from 1451 to 1906, collected at the abovementioned BHMD. This database is built through the project Five Centuries of Marriages, an Advanced Grant project directed by Professor Anna Cabré and funded by the European Commission through the IDEAS Programme of the European Research Council.

Taxes on marriages were raised since the 15th century in order to contribute to the building and maintenance of the Cathedral of Barcelona. A central register, gathering the information sent by over 200 parishes belonging to the Diocese, was kept until 1905. Along all of the 456 years, the same gradient of taxes has been maintained, though slight changes have been operated into the classification of categories and occupations belonging to each level (7-8 levels, depending on the socio-economic status of the husband). Therefore, the taxes paid can be used as indicators of social structure. In the present contribution we shall deal only with one category, those exonerated from paying taxes because of their poverty. They were married *Amore Dei*, that is to say, for free. Because of the taxing purpose of the classification

and the centralized control of the tax collecting system, we will assume that the defining criteria of groups must have been relatively homogeneous through time and space.

Main Findings

Table 1. % Marriages Amore Dei, 1720-1860

| | 1721-1740 | 1741-1760 | 1761-1780 | 1781-1800 | 1801-1820 | 1821-1840 | 1841-1860 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| BCN-Old City | 27 | 21 | 27 | 22 | 14 | 12 | 34 |
| BCN-Area | 24 | 19 | 26 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 42 |
| 4 Industrial Cities | 14 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 3 | 27 |
| Rural | 12 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 22 |
| Region of BCN | 22 | 16 | 21 | 16 | 11 | 8 | 31 |

- Levels of poverty increased throughout the period, particularly in the last 20 years with the beginning of industrialization process. (Table 1)
- The most impressive it's the spatial concentration of poverty. The municipalities around Barcelona (BCN-Area) almost double the percentage of poverty going from 24 to 42%. (Table 1)
- This concentration of poverty, in the inner city of Barcelona, was in the parishes where the industry was located. Thus poverty may be linked to the process of Industrialization. (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Barcelona city in 1860

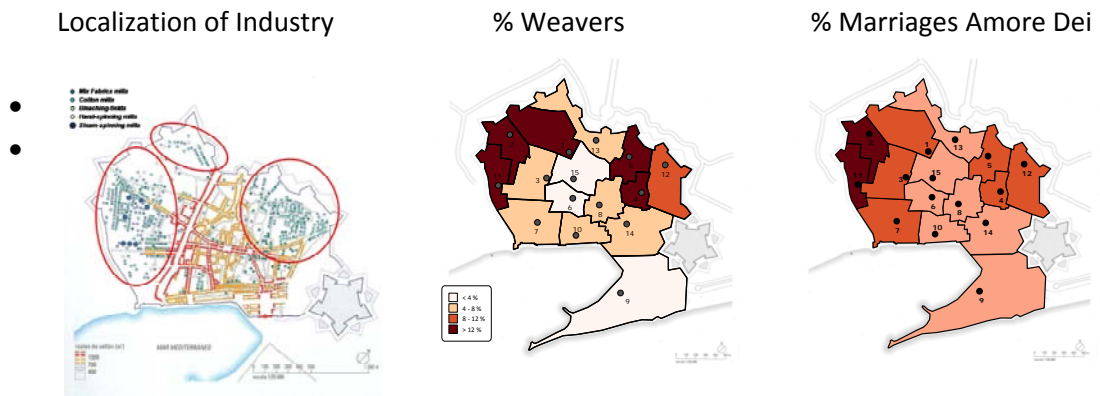
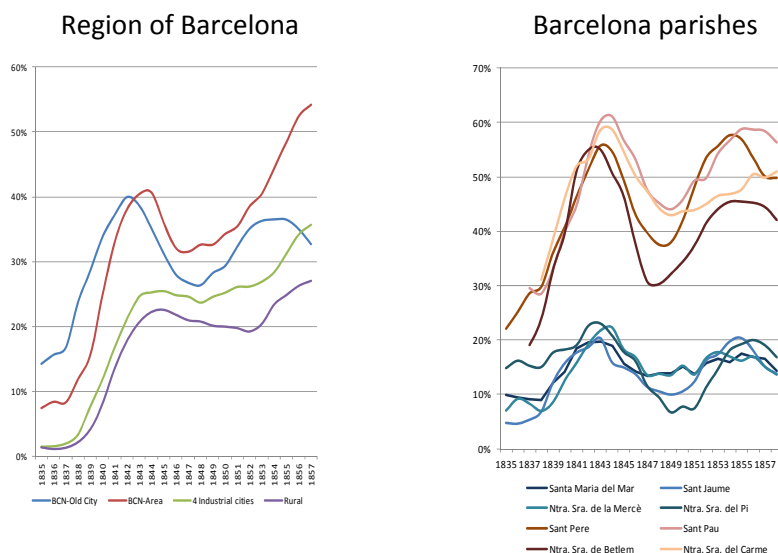
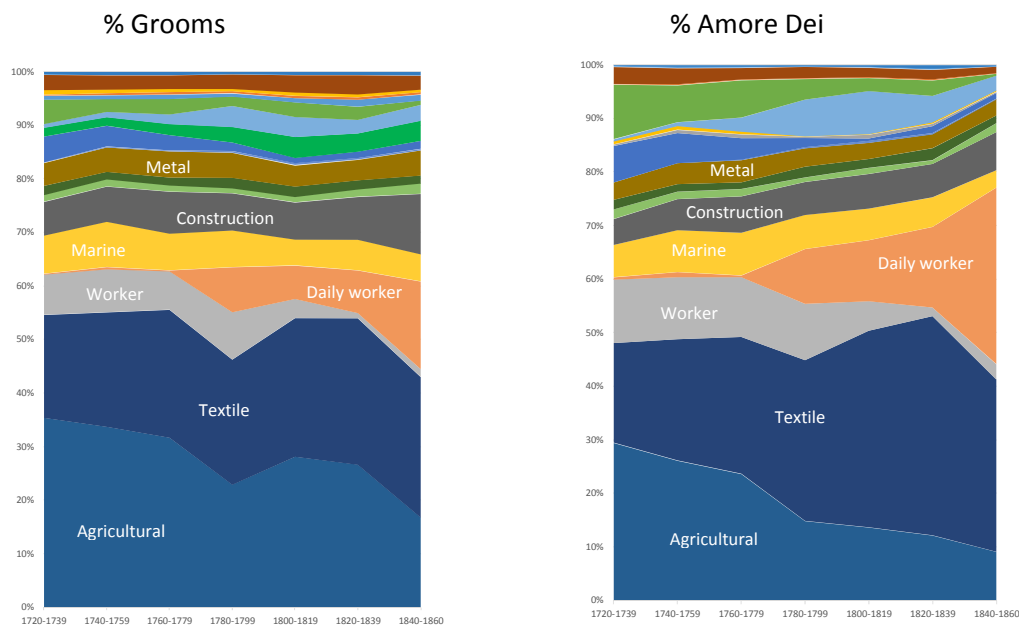


Figure 2. % Marriages Amore Dei 1835-1860



- The rural parishes with the largest number of agricultural occupations show lower levels of poverty. (Figure 2)
- The parishes with high population growth during Industrialization are the ones that experienced bigger increases in poverty levels.
- The labourers and textile workers raised their levels of poverty throughout the studied period. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. % Grooms and Amore Dei, by economic sector, 1720-2860



As this is a work in progress, we expect to be able to present some more results at the EPC2014. In particular, we aim to analyze the individual occupation of the so-declared poor.