

RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AND ECONOMIC CRISIS. NEW ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS WITHIN THE BARCELONA METROPOLITAN REGION

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Introduction

When, in mid 2008, the economic crisis hit Spain an exceptionally expansive demographic phase, linked to high economic development, came to an end. In it, nearly five million immigrants had entered the country. Their arrival –almost 10% of the population in less than five years– had an impact on several economic and social areas, internal migrations among them. When they reached highest level, one in three metropolitan moves was made by a foreigner. As they had a different, age, sex and spatial structure from the rest of the migrants, they even ended changing global patterns.

Theoretical framework and state of the art

Since the 1970s, the city of Barcelona is constantly losing population moving to its metropolitan area. In other words, it is undergoing suburbanization (Champion, 2001), a process which can also be observed in other large metropolitan towns and even in some other smaller Catalan ones (Pujadas, 2009; Pujadas and Prats, 2011).

As Tammaru (2001) argues, a part from de-concentrating people, this process is also linked to life course changes and people's preferences for places where they consider they can improve their standard of living. In the BMR, it is associated to urban sprawl (Pujadas *et al.*, 2013). Like other demographic phenomena, internal mobility has lately strongly and increasingly been influenced by international migration flows, as the latter are getting increasingly involved in them. In fact, according to their population figures, their presence in flows should be much lower than what it is, as they have been involved in one in three moves (Bayona and Gil-Alonso, 2012), particularly those coming from the central city (Bayona and López-Gay, 2011).

Data and methodology

Residential change Statistics (EVR) collect new registrations and deletions from the local population register. Its microdata are a valuable datasource to analyse internal migration pattern changes through time. Even though the whole 1988 to 2012 period – from first to last available year– will be examined, we will concentrate on two latest

stages, from 2005 to 2008 (characterised by strong growth) and from 2009 to 2012 (the economic crisis years). Internal migration intensity will be measured by calculating internal migration rates and total migration rates (TMR), using the *Padrón* as a reference database. The main indicators will also be referred to by municipality size.

The definition of the Barcelona Metropolitan Region as that including 164 municipalities within 3,200 km² corresponding to seven *comarcas* where 5.051 million people lived in 2012, the most classical one, is the one used. This region was defined as so in the 1960s (Esteban, 2003) and many studies analysing the Barcelona metropolitan region have used it as their reference area. One of its main features is that it has a polycentric nature (Roca *et al.* 2011; Trullén and Boix, 2003).

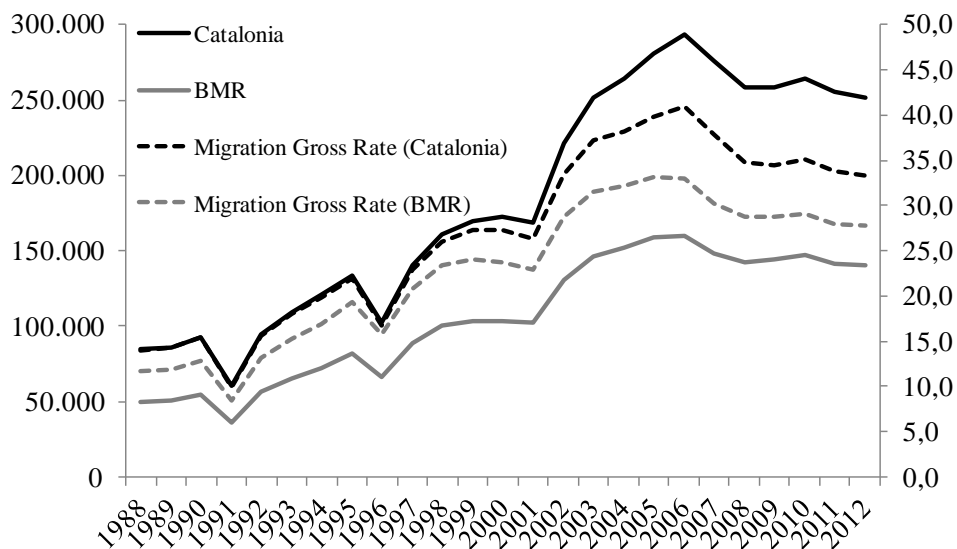
Analysis

These last years, BMR residential mobility patterns have changed as a consequence of the economic crisis. Flows would presently be less intense; differences in central city-periphery migratory growth would have reduced, while foreigners' response to the economic crisis would follow its own different pattern and timing. Additionally, present foreign movers would not have the same characteristics as the rest of them. Therefore, attention will focus on those ages in which they tend to move more and on municipality size.

Internal mobility trends

From the late 1980s to around about 2005, internal migration within Catalonia did not stop growing. The highest figure (293.940 moves) and rate (41‰) were achieved in 2006. From that year, when the housing bubble had not yet burst –it did not do so until the middle of 2007– to 2012, numbers progressively fell to 251,330, which meant a 33.3‰ rate. In other words, early 21st century levels were regained. This paper will however focus on BMR internal mobility, where more than half of the moves are made. Here, the highest levels were also attained in 2006 (159.811 changes of municipality of residence) and then fell to 140,035 in 2012, 55% of the total. Intensity is however, slightly lower than for the total (figure 1).

Figure 1. Internal migration trends and crude internal migration rates in Catalonia and the Metropolitan Region of Barcelona, 1988 to 2012.



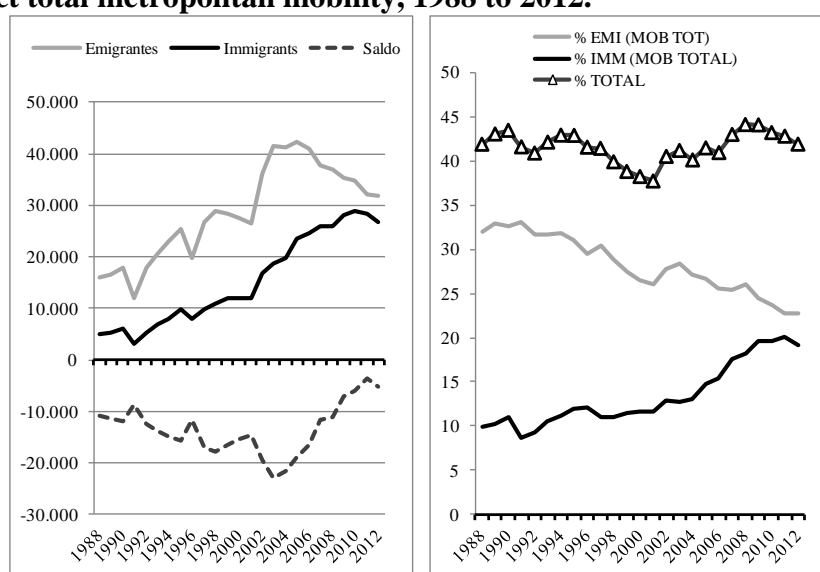
Source: EVR (INE) and 1996 to 2012 Padrón; 1991 population Census and 1986 Padrón.

The central city

These last decades, flows leaving the central city, Barcelona, have been the particularly significant. For instance, in 1989, 32% of the region's moves (16,670 people) were made from Barcelona. In 2005, exits from Barcelona attained highest levels (42,439 exits, 26.7% of the region's internal moves). Since then, numbers have plunged, and in 2012 only 31,901 people left the city (22.8% of the moves). More than half of the internal mobility was due to less people abandoning Barcelona.

Around 40% of the metropolitan moves made within the analysed period have Barcelona as their origin or destination point. Exits have been decreasing since 2005 and entries from 2010. Therefore, its migratory growth rate is presently annually negative in little more than 5 thousand people.

Figure 2. Internal migration trends in Barcelona. Absolute figures and percentages with respect total metropolitan mobility, 1988 to 2012.



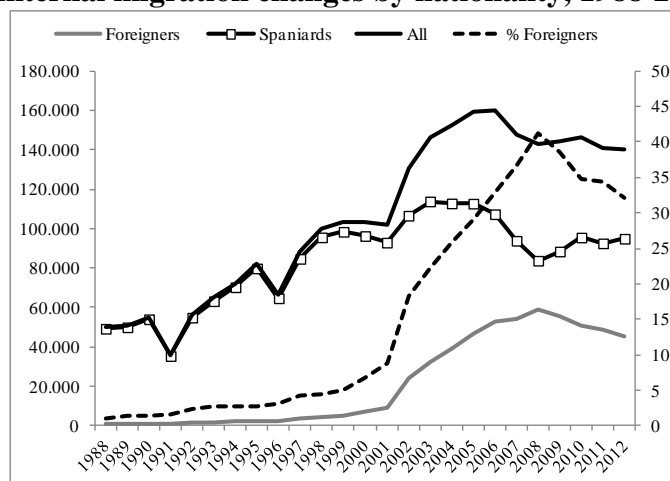
Source: 1988 to 2012 EVR from INE, 1988-2012.

Foreigners

As foreigner stocks grew, their participation in internal migration flows also did. Indeed, in 2008, the year in which this percentage reached its highest level, 41% of the moves were made by them. In fact, these figures are much higher than what they should be if we take into account foreigner percentages within total population –that same year the BMR had 690 thousand foreigners, that is to say, only 14% of its population was not Spanish. These results would be influenced by the fact that they have only recently arrived, their population structure is remarkably younger than that of the rest of the population, and that they are economically more unstable and have less housing stability than the rest of the metropolitan inhabitants.

The economic crisis has had a strong impact on foreigner mobility. In 2008, figures attained their highest level (58,911 moves) and then, the following years, fell by 24%. Therefore, in 2012, foreigners' repetitiveness in metropolitan mobility decreased to 32% (figure 3). However, among Spaniards it seems to have slightly recovered since 2008, even though figures continue to be very from early century ones.

Figure 3. BMR internal migration changes by nationality, 1988-2012.



Source: 1988 to 2012 EVR from INE, 1988-2012.

Preliminary Conclusions

As Spaniards' and foreigners' mobility grew in the early 21 century, BMR's residential mobility attained its highest level. This trend was abruptly interrupted by in 2008 by the present economic crisis. Consequently, both Spanish people and foreigners started to move less. Though the former began to change trend when the housing bubble reached its highest level, the latter did not start to do so until they were affected by the economic crisis. It should therefore be noted that while Spanish people change their mobility patterns even before the housing bubble bursts, foreigners are more vulnerable to economic crisis effects.

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