

## From boom to recession and, then, to post-crisis: How do economic cycles impact on mobility and demographic trends in large urban areas? The Spanish case in the European context

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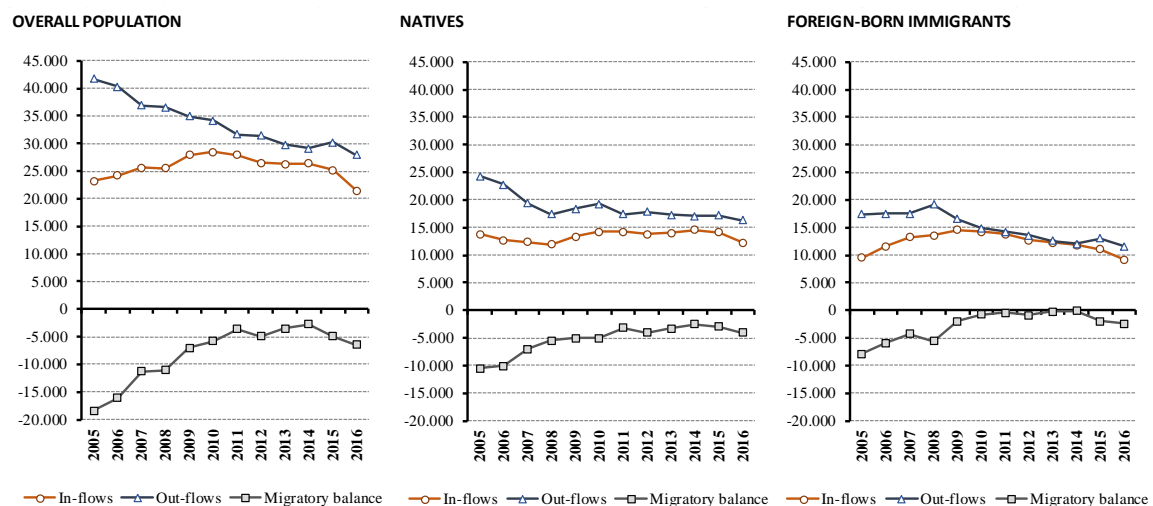
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### Background (see references)

The strong economic growth period that Spain underwent from the mid-1990s suddenly ended in 2008, when the impact of the Great Recession reached the Spanish economy. As the 'real estate bubble' burst, many housing developments remained unfinished and millions of workers were laid off. This did not only affect international migration (highly positive migratory growth became negative) but it also had consequences on intrametropolitan residential mobility, though it diminished less than expected. In fact, age-specific migration rates of Spanish-born people did hardly vary –those of foreign-born persons diminished slightly more.

Indeed, the most relevant effect of the economic crisis was not a major reduction in intrametropolitan mobility but a change in the direction of these flows. They did no longer respond to the classical residential project –i.e. moves from the core cities to newly built housing developments in peripheries. On the contrary, residential needs, possibilities and reasons for moving, multiplied. Consequently, cores lost much less native population due to suburbanisation than before the economic crisis and periphery municipalities continued to have positive, though now decreasing, net migration (Figure 1 shows residential moves between Barcelona and its metropolitan periphery as an example).

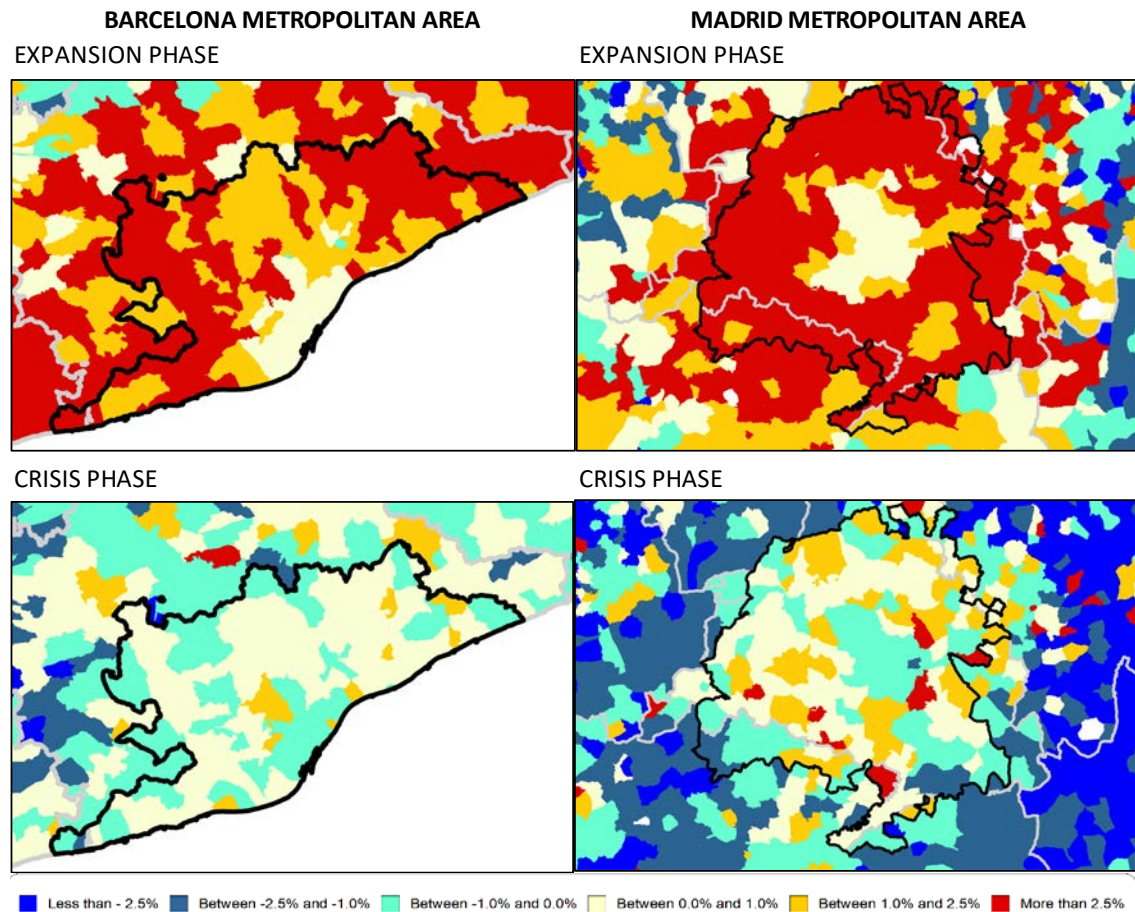
Figure 1. Migratory flows between the core city (Barcelona) and its suburban periphery, in absolute numbers. Barcelona metropolitan area, 2005-2016.



Source: Residential Variation Statistics (INE). Note: red color line: inflows in the city of Barcelona from its periphery; blue color line: outflows from the city of Barcelona to its periphery; black line: intrametropolitan net migratory growth.

As suburbanisation diminished and the dichotomy between core and periphery blurred, intrametropolitan flows acquired more diffuse spatial patterns (Figure 2 shows, for instance, population growth rates in Barcelona and Madrid metropolitan municipalities during the expansion and the crisis periods).

Figure 2. Municipal population annual growth rates. Barcelona and Madrid metropolitan areas, 2001-2016.

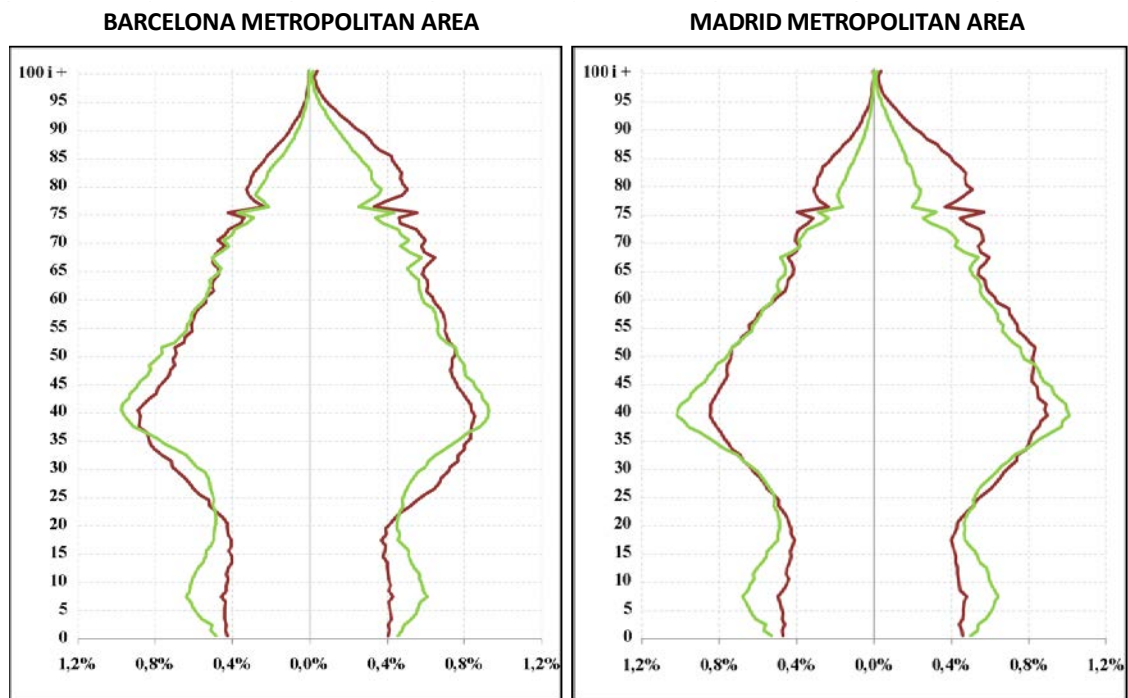


Source: Continuous population register (INE). Note: blue color denotes negative growth; pale to red color, positive growth.

At the same time, core cities –less affected by the economic crisis, with a more dynamic and diverse employment market and more rented housing on offer, which was then affordable– became more attractive to certain types of people. They basically were (though not only) medium to highly educated young-adults. Madrid stranded out for attracting young Spaniards and Barcelona for appealing to Europeans.

Therefore, all these changes in the diverse types of residential moves during the economic crisis had an impact on the urban demographic structure, strengthening ageing in most census sections. However, this was not so in the more gentrified sections of the main cities, that were rejuvenated by the arrival of both Spanish and foreign origin young-adults (Figure 3 shows Barcelona and Madrid population pyramids, comparing core city and periphery; see that population aged 25-34 is more present in the core city, particularly in Barcelona).

Figure 3. Population pyramids of the core cities and its suburban periphery. Barcelona and Madrid metropolitan area, 2016.



Source: Continuous population register (INE). Note: red color line is the core city's population pyramid; green color line is the suburban municipalities' one.

### Paper's aim

After the economic crisis, in 2014, Spain starts to show signs of recovery. Despite this improvement has not reached the entire population, it has had a positive impact on the housing market, activity and employment. Residential mobility has also grown, having important socioeconomic, demographic and residential implications. However, simultaneously –and this is our hypothesis– flows have become more unstable, more complex and more fragmentary. In other words, the direction of flows, the reasons for moving, the socioeconomic categories and the ages of migrants have diversified. These “new mobilities” are demographically reconfiguring large Spanish urban areas. The paper aims to study changes on mobility and on demographic trends in large urban areas in the post-crisis period (2014 onwards). Initially, the five large Spanish urban areas (Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, and Bilbao) are analysed using *Padrón Continuo* (municipal register) and *Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales* (residential variation statistics) datasets. Then, results obtained for the Spanish case are compared to other EU urban areas, using Eurostat's *Urban Audit* as the main source.

### Preliminary results

Spanish data up to 2016 demonstrate that, in effect, economic recovery has led to an increase in both international and internal migrations. The first has positive net migration rates once again and the second shows a particular impact on large urban

areas. Suburbanisation flows have been reactivated (see Figure 1 again) even though large cities have been consolidated as young-adult attraction poles. In this sense, the behaviour of both international and internal migratory flows shows that large urban areas are becoming increasingly attractive to the detriment of rural areas and non-metropolitan urban areas.

With new data up to 2019, we expect to demonstrate that the new mobilities would be reconfiguring both core cities and peripheries of large Spanish urban areas. Results obtained for Spain will be compared with those of other large European urban areas, with the intention to show that it is a global phenomenon, or that it can at least be found in other developed country metropolitan areas. In turn, these urban demographic changes would also be generating greater social fragmentation. Though we will not be treating this matter in the present paper as it is beyond its reach, we believe that these trends would be strengthening social polarization and creating new inequalities within the metropolitan areas. If confirmed, these processes would not only imply that urban demographic processes are not returning to the pre-crisis (before 2008) situation, but are drawing a new scenario that would pose new challenges to political actors and open new questions to urban researchers. Their responses should help improve the design and implementation of public policies aimed at improving urban dwellers' well-being.

## References

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