

## **The continuity of migration transition drivers: A long-term perspective on Spanish social transformation**

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### **Abstract:**

Efforts to map migration drivers have in part resulted in calls to abandon rigid economic and demographic indicators so as to explore how cultural and political factors facilitate or constrain migration. Although a considerable amount of research has investigated the migration-development nexus, its focus is often shortsighted or primarily on developing countries. Instead, this working paper adopts a social transformation perspective to analyze how processes of change at the political, economic, technological, demographic, and cultural levels have impacted the timing, geographical orientation, volume, and composition of Spanish migrations since the early 1880s to the present day. To do so, the working paper draws on a collection of statistical data on Spanish migration and societal indicators, as well as on a comprehensive literature review of the social and migration history of Spain. The working paper argues that the interrelation between three forces explain Spanish migration transitions: (1) state expansion and contraction, (2) economic fluctuations, and (3) uneven urbanization processes. Ultimately, the paper also demonstrates that the unequal development of central and peripheral areas within the country is a consequence of social transformations, and in turn, links past and present by illustrating how similar factors have triggered migration dynamics for more than a century.

**Keywords:** migration transition; social transformation; temporalities; Spain

## **Introduction**

This working paper engages with the non-linear relation between migration and development, which gained momentum with the mobility transition theory pioneered by Zelinsky (1971). According to this theory, ‘modernization’ processes initially trigger higher emigration levels and mobility overall (de Haas, 2010; Skeldon, 2014; Zelinsky, 1971) as the welfare state and capitalist structures expand, in turn jeopardizing traditional, rural livelihoods while concurrently stimulating urban employment. Over time, these transformations spur the rural exodus, increasing international migration, and at a later stage, commuting patterns. While recent quantitative research has greatly enriched and nuanced the debate (see Clemens, 2014; de Haas and Fransen, 2018), investigations on how changes at the economic, political, cultural, demographic, and technological levels influence migration dynamics remain scarce.

In an effort to overcome this limitation, migration scholars have applied the social transformation perspective, which investigates long-term change processes that lead to fundamental societal shifts at the structural level. Indeed, the framework is a meta-theoretical perspective concerning changes at the economic, political, cultural, demographic and technological levels (de Haas, Fransen, Natter, Schewel and Vezzoli, 2020) that uncovers patterned complexities and ramifications of migration over time (Castles, 2010). In this manner, previous research has stressed how nation-state building processes trigger a transformation from (semi-)nomadic to sedentary communities (Schewel and Legass Bahir, 2019), and the manners in which welfare state consolidation and industrialization processes affect internal and international migration patterns (Vezzoli, 2020a). Nonetheless, scholars have also highlighted occurrences of plateaued emigration rates as the economy improves which contradict theoretical predictions for a decrease in emigration rates (Berriane, de Haas and Natter, 2021); this illustrates that economic development alone is not enough to explain migration transitions. However, the focus of such research is often on low- and medium-income countries (see Berriane, de Haas and Natter, 2021 for an analysis of Morocco and Schewel and Legass Bahir, 2019 for Ethiopia) or concludes in earlier decades (see Vezzoli, 2020a for an analysis of Italy until 1970s). As a result, we still know little about the various mechanisms affecting rising emigration rates on high income countries. This is pertinent considering recurrent emigration patterns in Southern Europe particularly since the 2008 economic crisis (Bartolini, Gropas and Triandafyllidou, 2017; Caro, Civasola and Fernandez, 2018). For instance, in the Spanish case emigration rates surpassed immigration flows in 2010, and

although the trend was reversed in 2015 (INE, 2022a), emigration levels have remained high in comparison to the pre-2008 crisis period (Gonzalez-Ferrer and Moreno-Fuentes, 2017). On the one hand, this challenges assumptions about the interpretation of history as a sequence of improvements, and on the other, about the deterministic nature of migration dynamics (see Skeldon, 2012).

With the aim of exploring Spanish migration transitions, as well as their recent quasi-reversal, this working paper provides a historical examination of migration patterns, trends, and drivers within and from Spain since the early 1880s to the present. For this, I adopt a social transformation perspective and analyze how change at the political, economic, technological, demographic, and cultural levels impact the time, volume, and direction of Spanish national and regional<sup>1</sup> migrations. In doing so, I seek to address the following questions: What mechanisms explain Spanish migration transition over the last century? How have these mechanisms changed over time? To answer these questions, I analyze both statistical data on Spanish migration and societal indicators<sup>2</sup> and existing literature on Spanish social and migration history. The working paper proceeds as follows: after reviewing the Spanish internal and international migration trends, I disentangle the drivers of these migration patterns and analyze how fundamental social transformations explain the country's migration transition. The paper ends with a discussion and overview of the implications of these findings.

### **An historical overview of Spanish migration patterns<sup>3</sup>**

I highlight four turning points in Spanish mobility patterns (Figure 1). The first turning point is between the 1880s and mid-1910s, when international emigration increased and peaked in

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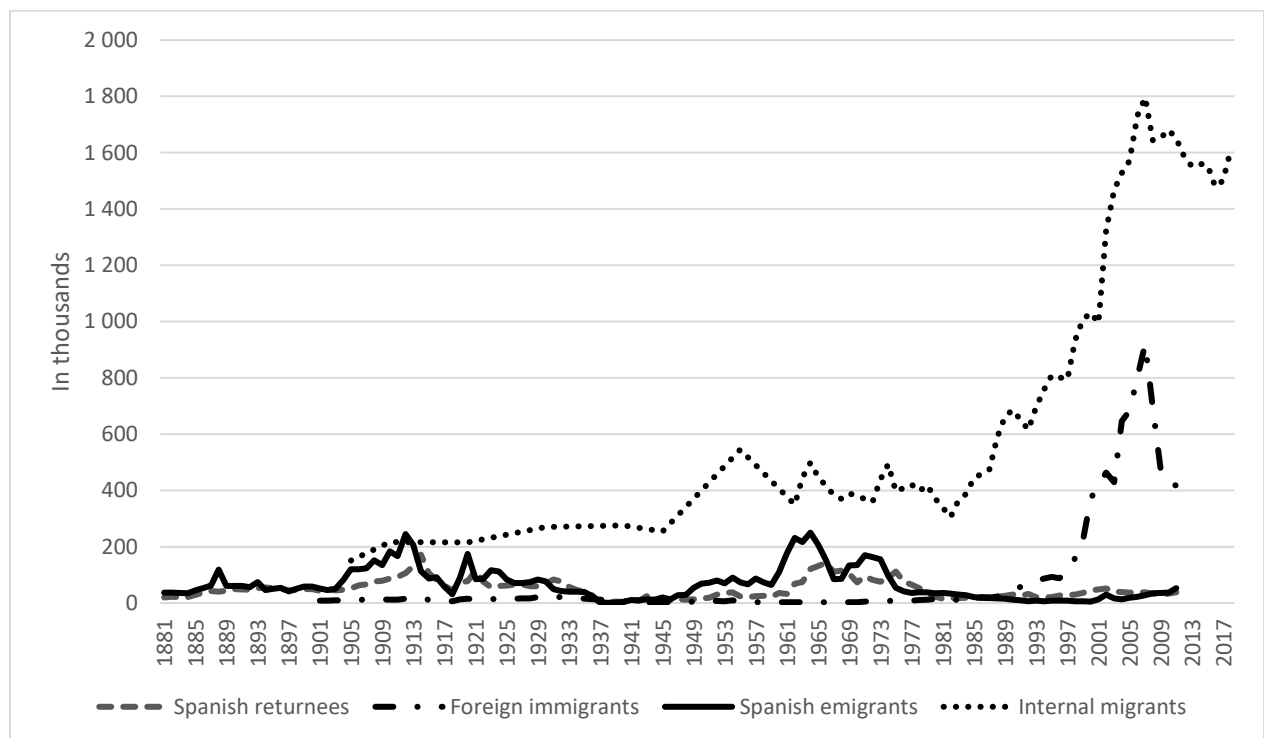
<sup>1</sup> I differentiate six major Spanish areas: (1) North-West, which includes Galicia, Asturias and Cantabria; (2) North-East, including the Basque Country, Navarre, La Rioja and Aragon; (3) Center, composed of Madrid, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha and Extremadura; (4) East, including Catalonia, the Valencia Community and the Balearic Islands; (5) South, which includes Andalusia, Murcia, and Ceuta and Melilla; and (6) Canary Islands.

<sup>2</sup> I collected longitudinal datasets on internal and international migration and return patterns, population estimates, vital statistics, unemployment rates, governmental expenditure, components of the GDP, occupation by sector and GDP per capita, cultural and individual orientations and data on political structures, among others. The majority of the data was collected through INE – the Spanish Statistical Institute –, although data was also extracted from Mitchell (2013), DEMIG (2015), Guindo, Guindo and Fernández (2007), the World Bank, and from Prados de la Escosura (2017). Portions of migration data were also retrieved from Martínez Cachero (1965), Palazón Ferrando (1991) and from Rodríguez (2002).

<sup>3</sup> This working paper focuses on Spanish migration patterns since 1880s to the present for two reasons: (1) it is when Spanish mass emigration began (Sanchez-Alonso, 2000), and (2) annual statistical emigration reports started being published in 1888. However, the years themselves are not significant since there was migration before (see, for example, Aleman 2003, 2019; Castelao (2003), Cura (1993), Fagel (2003), or Lopo (2003)).

1912 with 245,470 departures, primarily from Northern regions and the Canary Islands towards Central and South America (DGM, 2016). Although less voluminous, this period also witnessed increasing migrations to Argelia from Spanish Southern regions (Bover and Velilla, 1999). Although lower in number, emigration to Morocco, especially from Andalusia and the Canary Islands, also increased continuously since the beginning of the 20th century (Garrigues, 2008).

**Figure 1. Annual migration of Spanish emigrants, returnees, foreign immigrants and internal migrants, 1880-2017 (absolute numbers)**



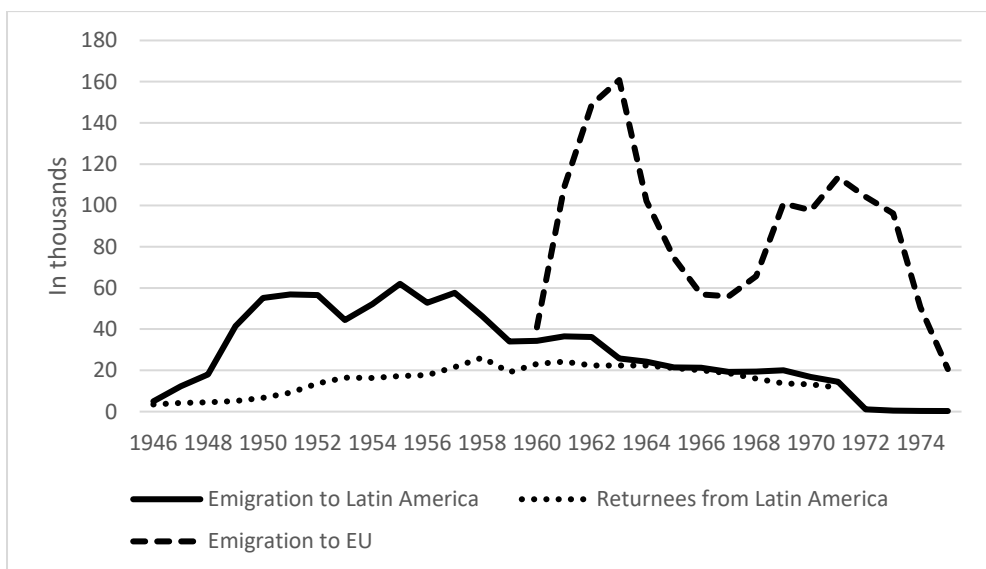
Source: DEMIG (2015); INE (2022b) Historical Data from 1960 onwards; Guindo, Guindo and Fernández (2007).

Second, between the mid-1910s and late 1940s, international emigration rates reduced significantly following World War I and the Spanish Civil war. The 91,616 departures that occurred in 1915 dropped to 9,831 in 1942. Internal migration also slowed down, and the rate of inter-regional migration remained stable at around 10/1,000. In addition, during this period we observe a reverse flow from urban to rural areas, which was reverted in the late 1940s (Bover and Velilla, 1999; Rodríguez, 2002).

The third turning point occurred between the 1950 and the late-1970s, when the international emigration orientation shifted. While emigration to Latin America increased again in the mid-1940s, it rapidly lost importance in the late-1950s, as Western Europe and other destinations

such as Australia or Argelia gained momentum (Figure 2). There are important regional variations in these international emigration rates: whereas Galicia and Canary Islands presented more voluminous emigration flows, with 76/1,000 and 73/1,000 emigration rates respectively in 1950, the international emigration rates of Aragon, Castile-La Mancha, Extremadura and Murcia did not reach 5/1,000 (Palazón Ferrando, 1991, p. 221). The 1950-mid-1970s period also experienced intense return dynamics and a rapid growth in rural-urban migrations and inter-regional flows, especially from Southern and Central regions to the more dynamic North-Eastern and Eastern areas (Bover and Velilla, 1999).

**Figure 2. Annual migration of Spanish emigrants to Latin America and Europe and Spanish returnees from Latin America, 1946-1974**



Note: The data excludes seasonal migrations to France during harvest periods, and from 1972, emigration patterns to Latin America only include emigrants assisted by the Spanish Migration Institute. The sharp drop in 1966-1967 corresponds to the German economic recession.

Source: INE (2022b); Martínez Cachero (1965); Palazon Ferrando (1991)

Fourth, by the late 1970s, we observe a transition from net emigration to net immigration. This transition was called into question during the 2008 economic crisis, when immigration flows started gradually decreasing and emigration patterns increased rapidly, ultimately peaking in 2013 with 532,303 departures. While disaggregating emigration patterns by nationality indicates that non-Spanish citizens emigration flows have been more voluminous in absolute terms, the percentage increase of Spanish emigrants has been greater: Spanish emigration has

grown 118.86% between 2008 and 2013<sup>4</sup>, whereas the emigration of non-Spaniards has only grown by 80.04%. Additionally, given the lack of mechanisms to correct Spanish citizens' registration figures (González-Ferrer and Moreno-Fuentes, 2017), data reliability has been contested, and González-Ferrer (2013) has calculated that around 700,000 Spaniards emigrated between 2008 and 2013, which would more than double official figures. During this period, internal migrations also increased, peaking in 2007 with 1,795,353 movements at a rate of 40/1,000 (INE, 2022a). The composition of internal migrants has nonetheless changed in comparison to previous decades, due to the higher mobility of both civil servants and highly educated individuals (Bover and Velilla, 1999). Moreover, while inter-regional migration decreased, intra-regional, intra-provincial and short-distance movements increased since the early 1980s, when the service industry growth triggered new regional employment opportunities, especially within larger towns (Bentolila, 2001).

How can we explain the changing orientation, volume, timing and composition of migration? Most importantly, what encouraged migration during each of these turning points? Are the mechanisms affecting the mobility trends the same or do they differ? The following section examines Spanish migration drivers, focusing on how social transformations have shaped migration within and from Spain across the 20th century. The long-term perspective allows to map fluctuations in internal, international and non-migratory mobility, as well as the (dis)continuities behind migration drivers.

### **The drivers of Spanish migrations**

Since the late 19th century, I present four periods of social transformation with distinct migration dynamics:

- From the early 1880s to the mid-1930s, a period associated with incipient industrialization and urbanization processes and emerging social security nets. Internal migrations became more permanent and the geographical orientation of internal in-migration flows changed;
- From the mid-1930s to the late-1950s, the civil war, immediate post-civil war period and the initial years of Franco's regime, when industrialization and urbanization

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<sup>4</sup> The emigration of nationalized individuals has contributed to the increase in numbers, as certain emigration flows, such as migration to Ecuador, are primarily composed of nationalized and second-generation migrants (González-Ferrer, 2013)

processes and the role of the state as provider of guarantees stopped. This period implied a worsening of living conditions and the halt of migration patterns;

- From the 1960s to the mid-1970s, when new socio-economic and cultural models emerged and migration diversified and increased in volume; and
- From the mid-1970s to the present, a period associated with democratization, and economic and political expansions and contractions. In this period, international emigration and inter-regional migration patterns slowed down to rapidly increase after the 2008 crisis.

Throughout these periods, three factors explain the Spanish migration transition: (1) the consolidation and weakening of the state; (2) economic fluctuations; and (3) the uneven urbanization process. In conjunction, these processes triggered the peripheralization of southern and central Spain and important changes in migration dynamics.

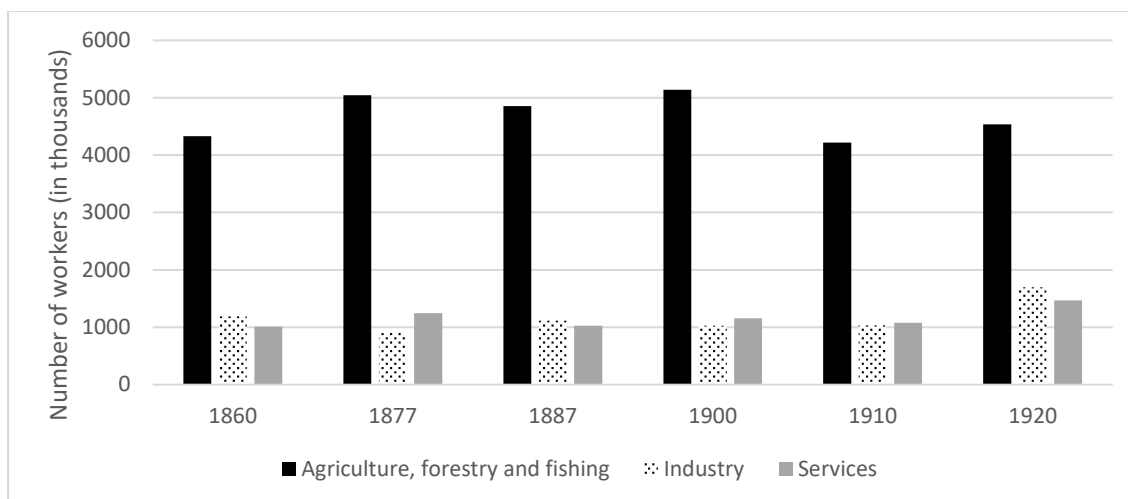
### ***Incipient industrialization and fragmented state expansion, early-1880s-mid-1930s***

Starting in the early 1880s, Spain's productive structure began experiencing incipient reverberations due to an emerging industrialization process (Figure 3). This triggered more permanent forms of movement and a change in the geographical orientation of migration. Traditionally, southern Spain presented voluminous short-distance rural-rural migrations and inter-provincial in-migration patterns due to the existence of latifundiums (Domenech, 2013; Silvestre, 2007). In contrast, northern Spain was typified by longer-distance, seasonal out-migrations as familial holdings were highly divided and presented fewer opportunities<sup>5</sup> (Martín, 1994). However, traditional destinations in southern Spain lost importance in the early 20th century, when in-migration rates (per total population) doubled in north-eastern and eastern regions (Rodríguez, 2002; Silvestre, 2005, 2007), whereas in-migration rates decreased 2% in southern Spain (Silvestre, 2007). Three factors influenced these shifts: (1) an incipient industrialization process; (2) increasing urbanization rates; and (3) the state expansion.

### **Figure 3. Economically active population by economic sector, 1860-1920**

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<sup>5</sup> Temporary migrations to north and south Castile, Andalusia and the north of Portugal were common, especially among skilled artisans (Reher, 1990), rural young women (Poska, 2005; Reher, 1986), and north-western rural peasants (Cura, 1993; Lopo, 2003).



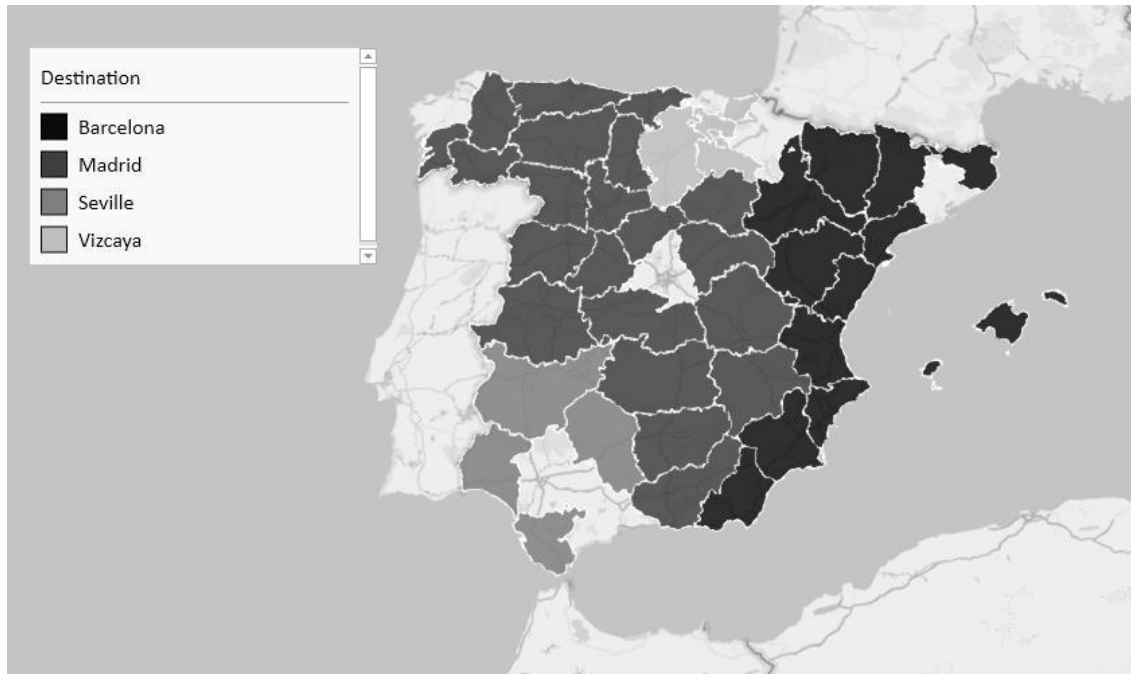
Source: Mitchell (2013)

First, starting in the second half of the 19th century, an incipient process of trade openness and internationalization began (Prados de la Escosura, 2017), which was eased by advancements in the railway system (Herranz Loncan, 2004). Important regional inequalities in infrastructure distribution shaped regional economic differences (Herranz Loncan, 2007), as well as shifts in migration orientation (Franch, Morillas-Torné and Martí-Henneberg, 2013; Mojica and Martí-Henneberg, 2011). In certain areas, such as northeast Spain, Madrid, the Mediterranean coast or western Andalusia, railway expansion contributed to the development of both emerging industrial and services activities (Franch et al., 2013; Gómez Mendoza, 1982) and increasing rural-urban migrations (Clar 2008; Osuna 1983). In comparison, the economic structure of other areas was strongly affected by poor integration into the national rail network, which encouraged out-migration patterns and a decline in (seasonal) in-migration (see Alonso González and Álvarez Domínguez, 2015).

Second, the urbanization process consolidation during the 1860-1930s also reinforced the shift in the orientation of migration flows. While the traditional agricultural nuclei in Andalusia stagnated, cities along the north-eastern and eastern coastal areas grew rapidly, as industrial concentration encouraged voluminous rural-urban migrations (Recaño Valverde, 1996) and the development of satellite towns (Le Gallo and Chasco, 2008). Excluding Madrid, which consolidated as the capital city, center regions did not experience an urban concentration either (Cardesin Diaz and Araujo, 2017). Despite the expansion of inter-provincial in-migrations, main destinations remained limited, and the geographical orientation of out-migrants remained limited to close-by provinces (Figure 4; Recaño Valverde, 1996).

**Figure 4. Main regional migration corridors in 1930**





Note: The map presents the first destination for each province clustered around the four main locations in the 1930s, i.e. Barcelona, Madrid, Seville and Biscay. The main destinations for some provinces are different: For Navarre the main destination is Gipuzkoa, for Malaga it is Cadiz and for A Coruña it is Pontevedra; these are not pictured in the map.

Source: Rodríguez (2002)

Finally, increasing rural-urban migrations were also driven by state apparatus expansion. After the Peninsular War (1807-1814) and the 1812 Spanish Constitution, efforts to consolidate a centralizing unitary state were made. Despite system fragmentation and regional and rural/urban differences (Vilar Rodríguez, 2007, p. 180), state expansion impacted migration in four manners. First, new taxes increased fiscal pressure and impediments to accessing communal lands triggered important social unrest and protests (Da Orden, 2005). In particular, small agricultural producers and day laborers in northwestern regions experienced high unemployment rates, difficulties to commercialize their products and low wages, which boosted emigration rates (Vallejo Pousada, 1996). Second, state expansion benefited particularly skilled workers and middle-class members in Castile and Andalusia, who found stable jobs in the civil administration and perceived the state as a major source of opportunities (Moreno, 2001). Relatively low out-migration dynamics in these regions, despite increasing unemployment rates and low economic productivity (Silvestre, 2005), might be related to the opportunity to rely on security nets, as they presented greater numbers of charitable foundations

than northern Spain (Table 1). Third, efforts to regulate labor relations and protect working classes were made (de la Calle Velasco, 1997; Guillén, 1990, 1997). In the early 1930s, municipal districts implemented prohibitions on the employment of migrant laborers if local unemployed rural workers were available (Casanova, 2010, p. 44). Consequently, employment opportunities for temporary migrants in southern regions decreased (Domenech, 2013) along with their migration (Silvestre, 2007). Finally, increasing governmental intervention also impacted international migration policies, as in the mid-1920s highly restrictive conditions to enter north Morocco were implemented.

**Table 1. Number of active charitable foundations by regional area, 1915-1930**

	1915	1920	1925	1930
Total	5699	5858	5940	6091
Northwest	532	554	560	593
Northeast	700	740	755	774
Center	2014	2075	2113	2161
East	687	782	793	823
South	1679	1689	1701	1721
Canary Islands	18	18	18	19

Source: INE, Historical Data, Chapter VII, Table A.1 – Table by concept, number of charitable foundations, classified as active or inactive.

Overall, unequal industrialization and urbanization processes, together with the fragmented provision of social security nets and infrastructure networks, generated regional and class differences. These dynamics shaped migration differently across Spain and facilitated the re-orientation of in-migration dynamics from southern to northeast and eastern Spain. Distinct bargaining power between regions set a distinguishing feature for comprehending the country’s social and migratory history throughout the 20th century.

***Post-civil war and autarchy: A rapid deterioration of living and working conditions***

The establishment of Franco’s dictatorship in 1939 significantly deteriorated living and working conditions, in turn stagnating international and internal migration patterns. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the migration capabilities of the Spanish population

decreased heavily, as (1) economic structure and purchasing power experienced an impasse, (2) national-Catholicism restricted the population's autonomy, and (3) legal barriers to migration were established.

Firstly, throughout this period, Spain was characterized by high governmental intervention, autarchy, and the establishment of ration books. Social security programs shrank (Guillén, 1997), and the imposed wage levels were not modified, despite an increase in living costs (Benito del Pozo, 1990). Private consumption fell and both GDP per capita and private consumption per capita rates did not recover to their pre-war levels until 1954 and 1956, respectively<sup>6</sup> (Prados de la Escosura, 2017). International emigration patterns decreased 19.92% between 1931 and 1942 (DEMIG 2015) and internal migration slowed down.

Secondly, the efforts of the Second Republic to separate state and religion were truncated during the dictatorship (Casanova and Sanchis, 1999), as national-Catholicism became an ideological cornerstone of Franco's regime, and a mechanism through which to gain hegemony over public and private life. Strict censorship was established, and the public sector was purged, which triggered political and intellectual exile (Frago, 2014; Oliver, 2008). Moreover, traditional codes of conduct and values were institutionalized and legislation to protect the family were introduced (Nicolás, 1971; Valiente Fernández, 1996). Other policies put forward by the Second Republic, including divorce, civil marriage and female full access to the workforce, were revoked. Furthermore, trade unionism, associationism and collective negotiations were prohibited, and labor discipline was maintained through strike repression, the implementation of vertical unions and cooperatives control (Balfour, 1990; Igual and Vidal, 2001).

Finally, the Francoist regime aimed to control both internal and international migrations. Immediately after the Civil War, emigration was de facto prohibited and decrees regulating emigrants' repatriation were established. Even if national statistics reflect insignificant emigration flows (see Figure 1), according to the statistics of Latin American countries between 1939 and 1945, over 20,000 people left Spain (see Yáñez 1993, p. 120-123). In the mid-1940s, this prohibition was lifted; however, restrictive provisions, including limitations on the issuance of passports and increasing military border controls, were imposed (Kreienbrink, 2009). Likewise, efforts to control internal migration were made: (1) internal travel documents were introduced; (2) bureaucratic hurdles, such as requiring official work visas, were

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<sup>6</sup> The slow recover has been linked to exiles and internal displacements following the Civil War, which resulted in human capital losses (Nuñez, 2005; Prados de la Escosura, 2017).

established to move into the main cities; and (3) probation provincial boards, impeding the movement of those who opposed to the regime during the civil war, spread (Corbera, 2015; Díaz Sánchez, 2016; Teijeiro, 2012). In this way, migration dynamics halted during the 1930s, and due to the increasing insecurity and unemployment rates urban-rural migrations exacerbated (Domenech, 2013). This resulted in the revival of agricultural activity at the expense of industrial production (Prados de la Escosura, 2017) and urban growth (Le Gallo and Chasco, 2008). Despite these measures, some internal movements persisted (Corbera, 2015) as internal migrants left certain regions in southwest and northwest Spain and moved towards the more industrialized provinces of Barcelona and Madrid<sup>7</sup> (García Barbancho, 1967). Additionally, the different allocation of food quotas between rural and urban areas triggered pendular migration until more restrictive measures were introduced in the mid-1940s (Moreno Fonseret, 1993). Mobility flows recover in the late 1950s, when new economic and socio-political models emerged.

#### *New economic and political models: A path towards increasing liberties*

The economic unsustainability of Franco's regime triggered policy shifts from the late 1950s onwards (Balfour, 1990) that began a gradual liberalization process (Figure 5). Life quality and healthcare coverage expanded slightly, even though public administration remained fragmented and social policies limited<sup>8</sup>. In addition, by the early 1960s, the volume of internal and international migrations increased rapidly, the orientation of international migrations shifted towards closer-by destinations, and the origin of internal out-migrants diversified. These migration configurations were shaped by three important economic and social shifts: (1) the transition to an industrialized and service economy; (2) technological innovation; and (3) important shifts in the migratory policy.

#### **Figure 5. Freedom of expression and political liberties in Spain, 1940-1975**

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<sup>7</sup> For a micro-scale analysis of internal migrations during the 1940s see Marín Corbera (2006) for the town of Sabadell and Díaz Sánchez (2016) for out-migration from Murcia to Barcelona.

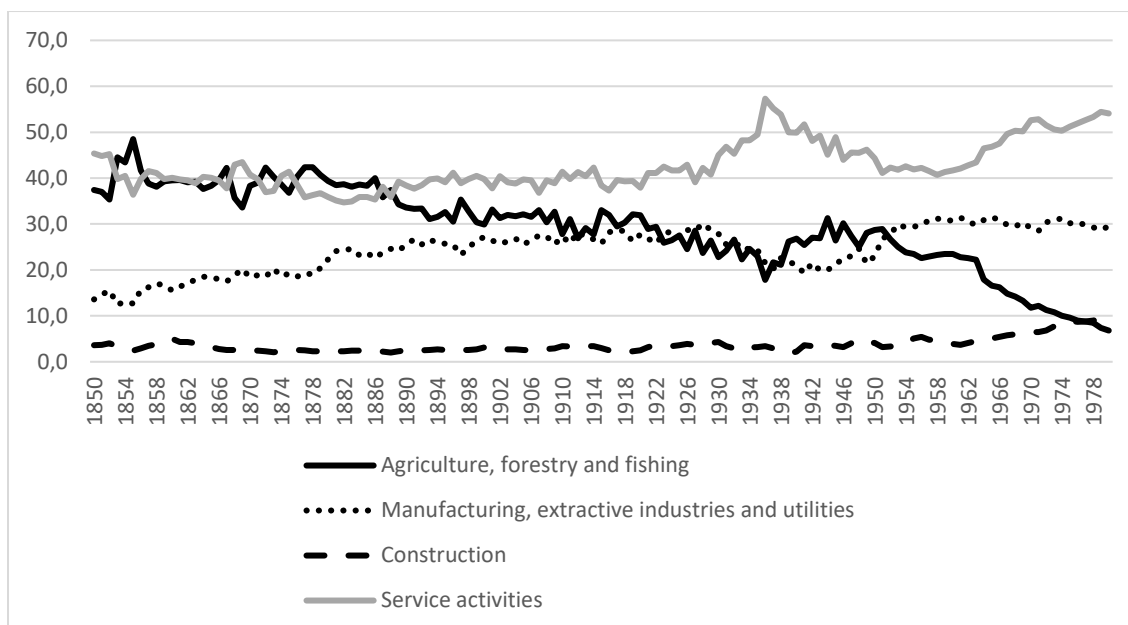
<sup>8</sup> In 1975, there were 10 million taxpayers and retirement pensions were taken by 3,5 million people, around 28% and 10% of the total population, respectively (Guillén, 1997).



Source: V-DEM (2022)

First, the 1950-mid-1970s period is known as the Spanish Golden Age, when the economy experienced its fastest growing rates. Agriculture underwent a sustained contraction and industrial sectors continued their sharp increase and reached a plateau around 30% of the GDP, peaking in the mid-1960s (Figure 6); the service sector also experienced a continuous expansion. USA economic aid in the mid-1950s and the Stabilization and Liberalization Plan in 1959 favored foreign investment, technological innovation, and changes in the occupation structure (Collantes, 2007a; Lieberman, 2005). Despite these economic reverberations, most urban growth and in-migration patterns were still concentrated in a small number of industrialized destinations along the northeast, Madrid, and the Mediterranean coastline (García Barbancho, 1967; Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001; Le Gallo and Chasco, 2008).

**Figure 6. Shares of output components in GDP (%) (current prices), 1850-1980**

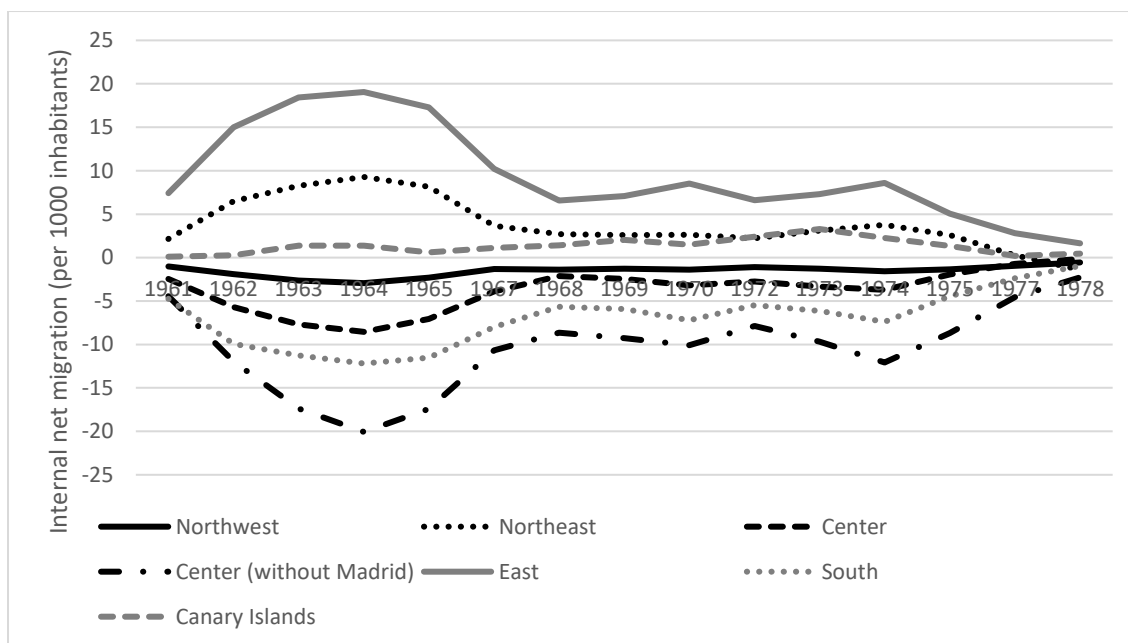


Source: Prados de la Escosura (2017, pp. 296-300)

Second, agricultural mechanization, together with growing non-agricultural employment, triggered a rural exodus (Collantes, 2007b). Internal out-migrations' volume increased from 254,011 movements in 1945 to 545,365 in 1955<sup>9</sup> (Guindo, Guindo, and Fernández, 2007) and the geographical orientation of out-flows expanded (Figure 7; Paluzie et al., 2009). Indeed, mechanization reduced the need of peasants and laborers, especially in Southern regions' landholdings, encouraging migrations to sub-urban and urban sites offering non-agricultural employment (Clar, 2008; Clar et al., 2015). In comparison, the extensive irrigation systems in the Mediterranean coastline created dynamic and productive agricultural areas attracting migrants. Additionally, new track stretches were constructed to connect main population centers, such as Sevilla, Madrid or Valencia, more efficiently, which eased mobility to those specific locations and their surrounding areas. Small municipalities connected to the national railway networks experienced significant population increases in contrast to those poorly integrated into transport structure (Franch et al., 2013).

**Figure 7. Net internal migration by main region, 1961-1978**

<sup>9</sup> Internal out-migration increased particularly in the South – out-migration from Andalusia increased by 101,89% between 1901-1930 and 1931-1960 (García Barbancho, 1967).

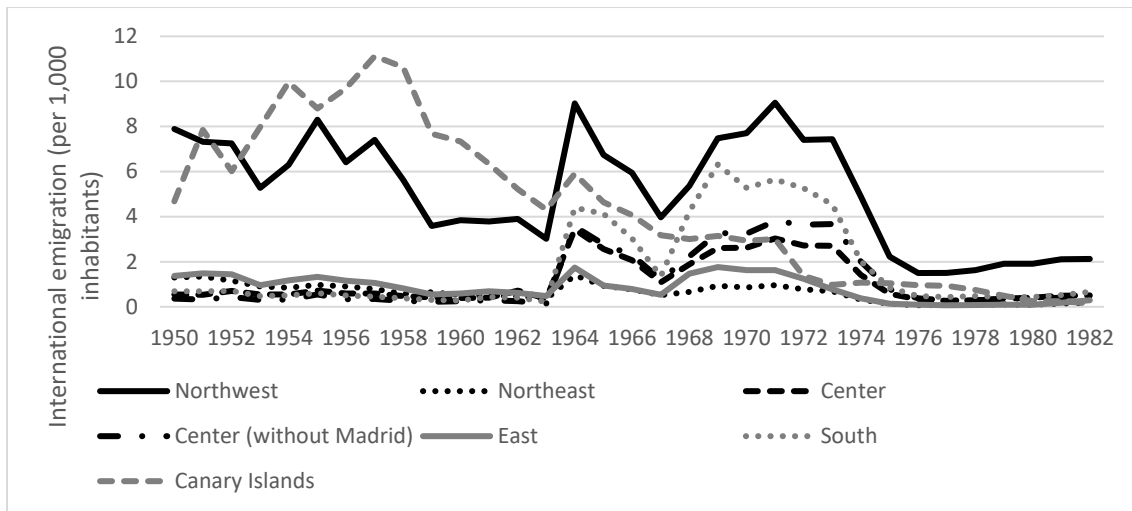


Source: INE (year)

Finally, there was also a shift in the migratory policy. In order to alleviate the pressure on the labor market and obtain foreign currencies, the Spanish Emigration Institute (IEE) was created in 1956 (it remained active until 1984), which strengthened the state tutelary character regarding international movement. The IEE objective was to gather and channel overseas employment, especially in Western Europe, and match it with Spanish applicants (Sánchez Alonso, 2011). The assisted continental emigration, together with restrictive measures in Latin American countries, implied a gradual decrease on transoceanic migration flows (Kreienbrink, 2009; Valero Matas et al., 2015, pp. 59-60) while continental migration increased rapidly (Figure 2). Assisted emigration peaked in 1971 with 213,930 departures and the main destination countries were France, Germany, and Switzerland (INE, 2022a); emigrants were mainly low-skilled workers leaving northwest and southern Spain (see Figure 8)<sup>10</sup>. These mass emigration flows to European countries lasted until the petroleum crisis in the early-1970s, when state control on movement decreased (V-DEM, 2022).

**Figure 8. International emigration by region, 1950-1982**

<sup>10</sup> Granada in the southeast and Orense in the northwest were the provinces with the highest emigration flows during the 1960s (INE, 2022b); yet, official Spanish emigration data are incomplete, as they only capture assisted emigration (Kreienbrink, 2009).



Source: INE (2022b) Historical Data, table 3.3.1 – Emigrants by province of origin, gender, age, civil status, and economic activity.

It is important to note that migration also affected the societal structure. Indeed, while the state structure remained authoritarian, incipient vectors of bottom-up cultural and political change emerged. Pro-democratic associations mushroomed in universities, and feminist activism, cultural associations and neighborhood movements gained momentum (Oliver, 2008; Giuliana, 2006). These encouraged socio-political mobilization and political left reorganization. Migration played a key role in these revindications. On the one hand, internal migrants, who did not share the culture of traditional working classes (Balfour, 1990), created new spaces for organization through neighborhood associations and regional centers (Sampere, 2003). On the other, emigration patterns to Western Europe also facilitated associationism, particularly in France, where political exiles had a dense pro-democratic organizations network that confronted migrants with better life conditions and ideas on socio-political liberties (Lillo, 2011).

***Welfare state consolidation, economic swings, and shifts in the meaning of the ‘good life’***

Since the mid-1970s, Spanish societal structures have been marked by important economic and political ups and downs. In fact, the country started transitioning towards a democratic society in 1975, and despite temporal contractions, the economy experienced spectacular growth since the mid-1990s when the construction and the service sector took off and spread across the territory (Prados de la Escosura, 2017). The increasing development was accompanied by an exponential increase in internal migration patterns and by a migration transition, as



immigration rates surpassed emigration flows in 1988. Nevertheless, Spain has remained spatially divided between dynamic locations and the ‘emptied Spain’<sup>11</sup>. These inequalities were further reinforced with the 2008 economic crisis, when the welfare state contracted, the economy collapsed and emigration patterns increased once again. The expansion and contraction of the welfare state and the national economy, together with the changing meaning of the ‘good life’ and ‘good work’, explain the migration configurations of the last 45 years. First, democratic transition was accompanied by both a welfare state consolidation and decentralization and regionalization processes (Moreno, 2001). Yet, these were not accompanied by an equal distribution of resources and social guarantees across regions. Indeed, workers affiliated to social security remained below the national average in south and center regions, in contrast to the northeast and Madrid (Guillén, 1997). As a result, informal social networks have remained important to access resources, especially in the Canary Islands and southern Spain. Informal and formal welfare protection mechanisms, including national and EU programs sustaining rural livelihoods (Palacios, 2007; Sotiropoulos, 2004), might explain low interregional migration dynamics, despite regional differences in unemployment rates and rent per capita (Bentolila, 2001). Yet, the 2008 economic crisis and subsequent austerity programs have negatively affected the welfare state. Shifts in the political economy since 2010, including welfare cutbacks and fiscal tightening, have triggered increasing inequality rates and growing disparities in rent distribution (Muñoz de Bustillo, 2013) along with raising political dissatisfaction, which has triggered international emigration (Bygnes and Flipo, 2016).

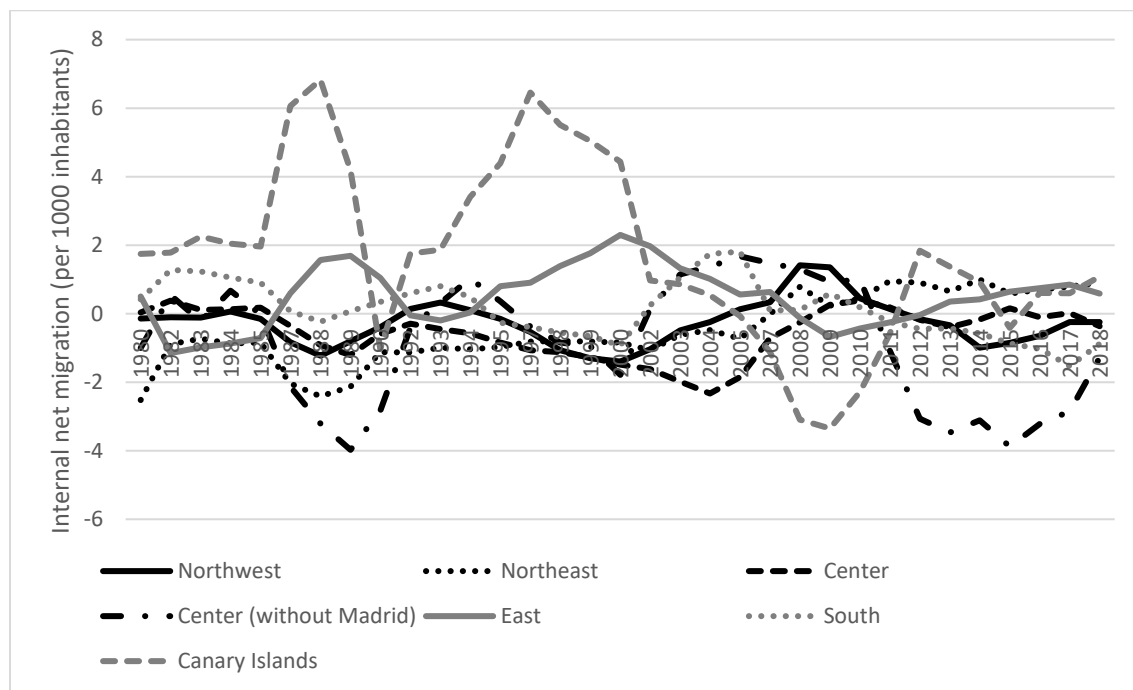
Second, while the early-to-mid-1970s were characterized by rising inflation rates and a surge in unemployment rates (Prados de la Escosura, 2017), economic growth since the mid-1990s triggered slight reductions on inter-regional inequalities (Hierro, Maza and Villaverde, 2019). Thus, the spread of the service sector has been linked to (1) decreases on inter-provincial migrations, (2) increasing intra-provincial movements (Bentolila, 2001; Rodríguez, 2002) and (3) a diversification of the geographical concentration of internal migration (Figure 9; Hierro et al., 2019; Paluzie et al., 2009). Similarly, the reduction in wage differentials between Spain and main European destinations minimized aspirations to migrate internationally (Bover and Velilla, 1999). Still, the important Spanish spatial division has impacted the economic restructuring of the country, as well as migration dynamics. The metropolitan areas of Madrid and Barcelona and key eastern and southern tourist enclaves are key socio-economic locations

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<sup>11</sup> This term refers to the continuous de-population of Spain’s rural regions.

concentrating services and industries, and are thus the main destinations for migrants, whereas towns in the northwest, center and inland south are characterized by the predominance of agricultural workers (Serra et al., 2014) and present high out-migration patterns.

**Figure 9. Net internal migration by main region, 1980-2018**



Nonetheless, the 2008 economic crisis marked a turning point. Household indebtedness increased significantly and unemployment rates grew 13.16% between 2007 and 2011. Youth unemployment rates increased 28.1% during the same period, reaching 55.50% of the total labor force (ages 15-24) in 2011 and remaining around 30% since then (World Bank, 2022). As such, the economy has been characterized by job destruction, informality, the collapse of the stock market and drops in the GDP annual growth rate. Economic deceleration was accompanied by growing international emigration: the 28,091 departures in 2007 increased to 52,841 in 2011 (DEMIG, 2015), the majority being highly educated young people migrating to the UK, France and Germany (Izquierdo, Jimeno, and Lacuesta, 2015) from Madrid, Galicia and Tenerife, while emigration from the central regions has been more moderated (Ortega-Rivera, i Valls and i Coll, 2016). The directionality of internal migration flows has also changed slightly, and the spatial diversification of out- and in- migration patterns has been, to some extent, vested (Figure 9). Overall, main metropolitan industrial cities, including Madrid and Barcelona, have received a higher share of migrants, whereas the Canary and Balearic Islands

and provinces along the Mediterranean coastline lost attractiveness as destinations (Hierro et al., 2019). In terms of volume, migrations from less to more dynamic regions have decreased 3% from 2004-2007 to 2008-2011 (Uribe-Etxeberria, Silvente and Domingo, 2013).

Finally, value shifts have led to changes in understandings of a ‘good life’ and ‘good work’, leading to internal and international migrations. Limited services in small and rural municipalities and the consideration of farming as a demanding, low-status job have contributed to growing aspirations to hunt for urban jobs (Hoggart and Paniagua 2001). As a result, the number of agricultural workers decreased from 4,672,3 workers in 1960 to 1,842,2 workers (per a thousand inhabitants) in 1981 (INE, 2022b). Despite this decline, aspirations to reside in mid-size cities remain high, as an incipient counter-urbanization process started gaining momentum in the 1980s (Le Gallo and Chasco, 2008). Dynamic municipalities, primarily along the Mediterranean coastal areas (Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001) and the Cantabrian range (Serra et al., 2014), remain a desirable alternative, especially for women (Navarro Yáñez, 1999) and, after the 2008 crisis, for highly educated entrepreneurial youth (Baylina Ferré et al., 2019). In contrast, economically depressed rural areas, including southern Galicia, certain areas of Aragon and Spanish central regions, have experienced intense population de-concentration (Serra et al., 2014).

Overall, regional inequalities and corruption have led to important social reverberations, including low social capital endowments (Pérez, Serrano and Fernández, 2008) and a loss of trust in public institutions, especially after the 2008 economic crisis (Bolancé Losilla Caïs and Torrente, 2018). Increasing frustration with the socio-political and economic environment and low life satisfaction in Spain (INE 2022c) stimulated social mobilizations and political protests (Lima, Maria da Paz Campos and Artiles, 2013), as well as both internal and international emigration (Bygnes, 2017; González Enríquez and Martínez Romera, 2014). Internal migrants left center and, to a lesser extent, southern regions for Madrid and eastern Spain, and the eastern, southern and central regions experienced the highest volumes of international emigration during and after the economic crisis (INE 2022a).

## **Discussion**

The social transformation framework introduces how change at the economic, political, cultural, demographic, and technological levels explains the nature of migration transitions. Recently, scholars have applied a long-term perspective to investigate how social transformation processes have impacted primarily migration dynamics in developing countries (Berriane, de Haas and Natter, 2021; Schewel and Legass Bahir, 2019; Schewel, 2020; Rodriguez-Pena, 2020; Osburg, 2020), although efforts to map migration patterns in high-income countries have also been made (see Wielstra, 2020 for an analysis of a Dutch village or Vezzoli, 2020a, 2020b for Italy). Yet, we still know little about the (dis)continuities of migration drivers, especially in those countries where the transition from net emigration to net immigration has been called into question. This working paper has focused on Spanish migration transitions and presents four periods of social transformation in the country since the 1880s. Throughout these periods, three factors are repeatedly raised: (1) state consolidation and weakening; (2) economic up- and down-turns; and (3) unequal urbanization processes. Altogether, these factors led to the marginalization of southern and central Spain and to changes in the nature of migration flows. These factors resemble those highlighted by other researchers applying the social transformation perspective (see MADE Research Team, 2021), but they particularly feature the drivers pointed by Vezzoli (2020a) for the Italian case, raising questions about the further similarity of migration drivers across the Mediterranean.

First, the expansion and contraction of the state shaped migration processes during the four periods under study. While the expansion of the state generated safety nets during the first decades of the 20th century, it also imposed taxations and employment regulations negatively affecting temporary laborers, and concurrently encouraging emigration and immobility patterns (Vallejo Pousada, 1996; Moreno, 2001). The tutelary character of the state during the Francoist regime initially banned migration, while at a later stage, it facilitated state-assisted migration, shifting the orientation of international flows to closer-by European destinations. Since the mid-1970s, social protection mechanisms and economic stimuli reduced migration, although poor governance and negative state perceptions have encouraged emigration since the 2008 crisis (Bygnes and Flipo, 2016). The role of the state has partially triggered the peripheralization of southern and central Spain, given the unequal distribution of resources.

Second, since the 1880s, the incipient industrialization and urbanization processes prompted shifts in the orientation of internal migration, as well as more voluminous flows. For instance, southern agricultural destinations and urban nuclei started losing momentum in the early 20th century, while cities along northeastern and eastern coastlines accelerated. Despite the impasse experienced during the first decades of the dictatorship, inequalities in urban growth and

technological innovation further exacerbated the dynamism of the northeastern and the Mediterranean coastline, at the expense of southern landholdings. Spain is, therefore, characterized by an important spatial division that has been further aggravated since 2008, when job destruction and informality grew encouraging the emigration of immigrants and of skilled youth.

While this research supports recent literature regarding how different developmental trajectories affect migration trends, it also opens a line of research investigating whether countries in the same region present more similarities in their migration drivers. Finally, this paper brings together the social transformation framework and migration temporalities to show that regardless of societal change, migration drivers may remain consistent throughout time.

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