
Immigration and social policy in Spain: A new model of migration in Europe¹

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Introduction

Spanish society has made a commitment of extraordinary dimensions with regard to immigration, the implications of which can be seen in practically all spheres of social life. To a large extent, many of the social features and tendencies of the Spanish social policy that will have to be outlined in the future will depend on how this commitment unfolds.

Social policies have not been excluded from this influence. Rather the opposite: recent transformations of the Spanish welfare state are difficult to explain without the immigration factor. On the one hand, the general increase in wealth, especially in social security contributions, has made possible a great expansion of certain social services and pensions. On the other hand, immigration has brought a marked growth in the demand for several services and required them to adapt to the new needs and the peculiarities of the recently settled population. Moreover, the Spanish welfare state, with all its limitations in comparison with the countries of north and central Europe, has become a fundamental component of this new migratory model in the south of Europe.

In this chapter our aim is, first, to show the emergence of Spain in the international migratory system as one of the primary global destinations. We then

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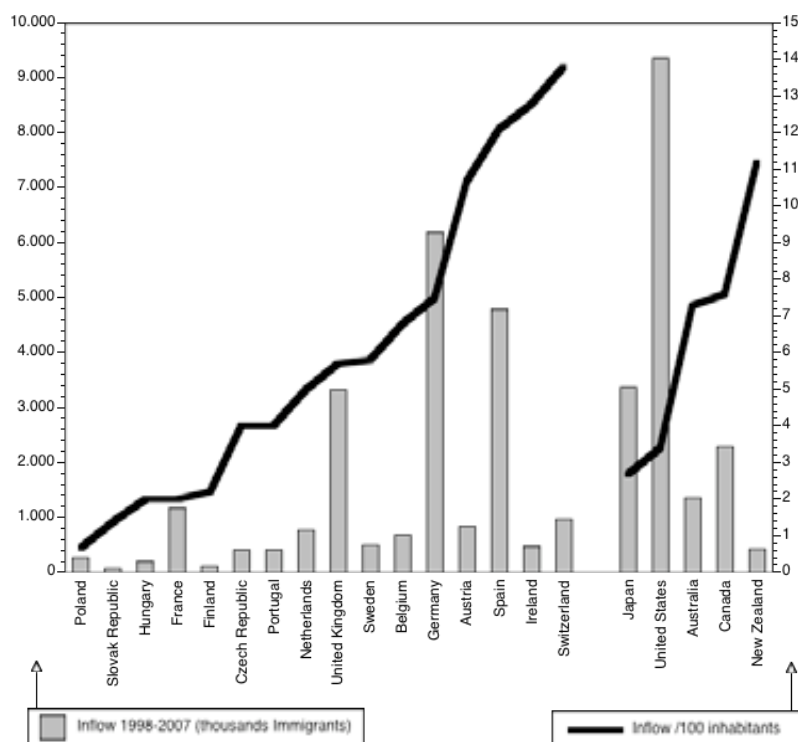
examine how migratory policies have evolved. Policies of integration have quickly acquired special prominence. These are economic and social rather than cultural policies, firmly based on labour market integration, although they also give access to different systems of social protection, so extending social rights to the immigrant population overall. Finally we look at the (provisional) results of this migratory model, its main limitations and the most important challenges that confront it in the future.

The emergence of Spain as a destination in the international migration system

As the first decade of the twenty-first century closes, Spain has come to the end of a long period of immigration, which started in the mid-1990s.² It covered a period of sustained, and at times spectacularly high, economic growth, which led very directly to an increase in employment, especially in unskilled work, within a pattern of growth which is now pejoratively referred to as *del ladrillo* (based on bricks). A significant feature of this model was the intensity of the flow of immigrants into Spain. The rate of net migration for much of the decade was between one and two immigrants per hundred inhabitants, a spectacular level which made Spain one of the principal destinations for migrants in Europe and, in relative terms, in the OECD countries as well. Within the European Union, since 2000 immigration to Spain has been exceeded only by immigration to Germany, and in relative terms it is only just below immigration to some small countries. Spain stands out even in comparison with countries traditionally described as having ‘populating’ immigration patterns (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), with an inflow four times greater than that into the United States (see figure

² The phenomenon had already been noticed (Izquierdo Escribano 1996).

Figure 1. Total inflow (thousands of immigrants) and inflow per 100 inhabitants in several EU and other OECD countries (1998-2007)



Source: Author's estimations based on OECD data, 2010

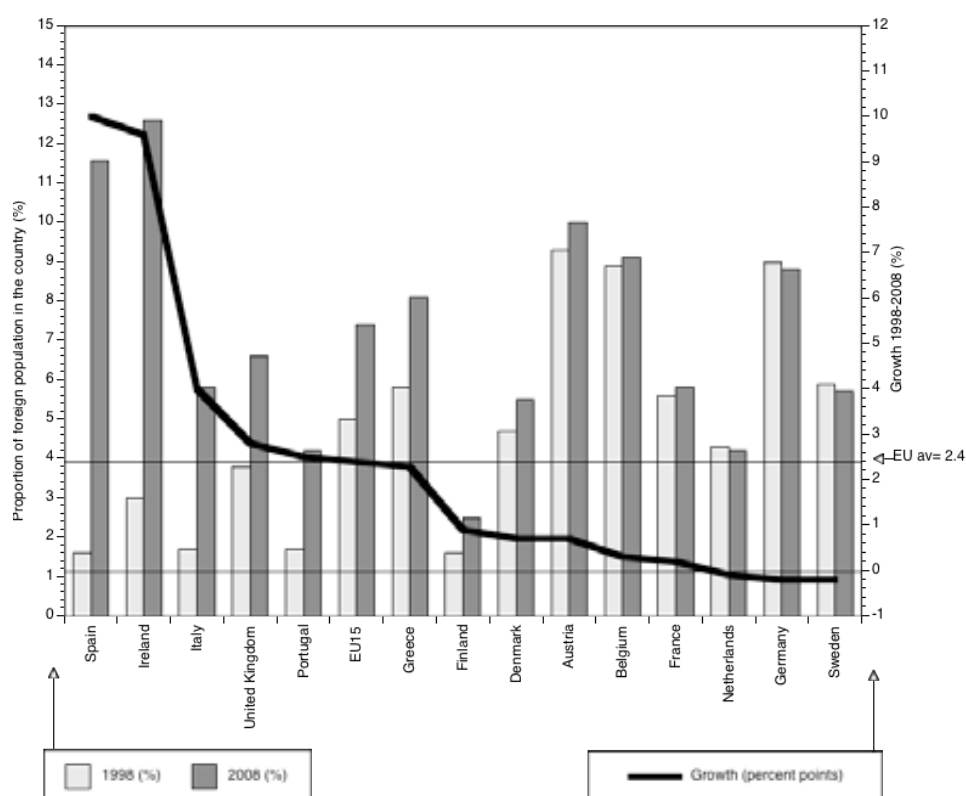
Currently immigration is not significantly affecting half the countries in Europe, in particular the eastern European states, which in some cases have experienced negative net migration. But other countries in the centre and north of Europe with a stronger tradition of immigration and with high levels of wealth and generous welfare systems have also remained below the European average in this respect, at 3.8 per cent for the period 2001–05 (the United Kingdom, France and Germany having an annual average of between 2 per cent and 3 per cent) according to Eurostat³ (Laparra 2008b).

At the end of the decade, Spain, together with Ireland, had the largest foreign-born populations of the EU-15 countries (Luxembourg, with 42.3 per cent foreign-born residents, is undoubtedly a special case, because of its unique characteristics). But this is less significant than the speed with which this transformation has occurred. In 1998

³ The figures provided by the OECD show significant differences in some cases and consequently it is not easy to make a precise comparison of these countries. But in the case of immigration into Spain, the difference is clear.

Spain, together with Finland (1.6 per cent), was the country with the lowest proportion of immigrants within the EU-15. Ten years later it was the third-highest (after Luxembourg and Ireland). During this period, and especially in the years immediately before the economic crisis, Spain undoubtedly experienced the greatest increase in foreign-born population (see figure 2).

Figure 2 1 Changes in the proportion of foreign-born population in various European countries, 1998–2008



Source: Author's estimations based on Eurostat and OECD data.

What we wish to highlight here, however, is the extent of immigration in southern Europe: six out of every ten immigrants who come to Europe each year entered Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus or Malta. With the exception of Greece, immigration for all these countries is above the European average and in some cases the rate is four times higher than the average.

With these absolute and relative figures and the data on immigration flow and the stock of foreign-born population taken into account, Spain is undoubtedly a remarkable case in the international context, as it has undergone one of the most intense immigration processes of the industrialised countries.

This extraordinary process, from the demographic point of view alone,⁴ has had a very marked impact on Spanish society as a whole, its institutions and social policies (labour market, taxation, social security contributions, and so on). Within one decade immigration into Spain has been the equivalent of receiving the whole population of Denmark (almost five million). This has affected, for better or worse, all aspects of employment, housing, education and health care, as well as other infrastructural needs that may be considered less relevant to this chapter, such as water supply and electricity, public transport and telecommunications.

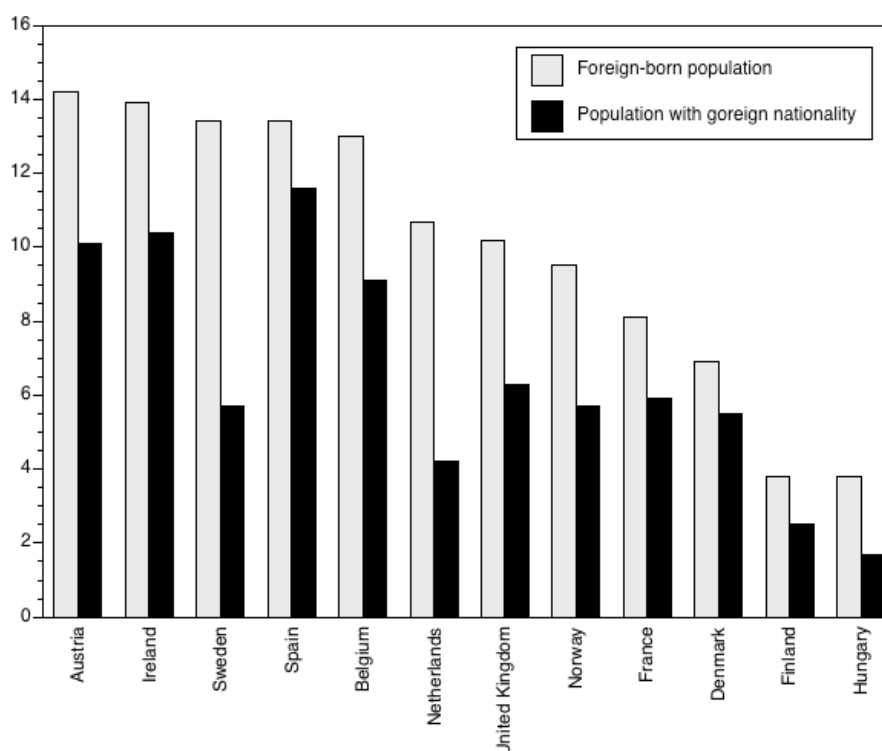
We are witnessing, therefore, *a new model of migration in southern Europe* which was already noticed some time ago (Baldwin-Edwards 1998). This is the result of a combination of factors, principally the geographical position of southern European countries as either bordering or near to immigrants' countries of origin; their affinity with Latin America (a greater influence in the case of Spain), the economic dynamism that creates a need for unskilled labour, and the existence of a large irregular economy.

If we look back at the classic approach (Ravenstein 1885), southern European countries should play the role of the southern gateway to Europe and countries of passage to the north, where there are better salaries and more highly developed welfare states. However, nowadays the countries of southern Europe have become the preferred destination for many migrants, not only from Africa or Latin America but also from eastern Europe.

Even if we are not describing a new model of migration, the stage at which southern European countries currently find themselves as compared with countries in the centre and north of Europe involves certain significant characteristics. This is what Dassetto conceptualized as the 'migratory cycle' (Bastienier and Dassetto 1990; Cachón 2009). In Spain, for example, the immigrants have arrived so recently that most of the population of immigrant origins has not yet acquired Spanish nationality. Consequently, the difference between the proportion of people born abroad and those who have foreign nationality is still small. Most immigrants in traditional destination countries have been naturalized, though more in some countries than in others (see figure 3).

⁴ For a detailed analysis of the demographic impact of immigration, see (Izquierdo et al. 2006)

Figure Percentage of population with foreign nationality and of foreign-born population, in some EU countries, 2007.



Source: OECD (2010). Data for 2007 except for Ireland (2006) and France (2005).

These differences in the tempi of immigration processes also means notable differences in the social policy contexts. This is evident, first, in the limitations to political participation by immigrants (note the differences between Sweden and the Netherlands) and therefore in the way in which questions about immigration or the management of cultural diversity are framed. It also affects, second, to the restrictions on recognising certain social rights of the non-national population.

Along with access to nationality, certain other changes that normally arise from immigration are still almost imperceptible in Spain. The speed, intensity and recent nature of this process of immigration has meant that some of the dynamics associated with immigration, such as the institutionalization of immigration policies or the increasing social integration of immigrants, are not sufficiently valued in Spain, as can be seen in the following sections.

The institutionalization of immigration policy in Spain and its consequences for social policy

From 2000 onwards the question of immigration was ‘institutionalized’ in Spain (Cachón 2002). Immigration has become consolidated ‘as a political question, perhaps one of the key political questions’ (de Lucas, Mestre et al. 2002). It is worth highlighting the most noticeable aspects of this process of institutionalization that resulted from the change of government in 2004. These were: (a) the construction of a model for gradually bringing immigration flows under control by reducing the number of illegal immigrants (as a result of the new immigration law of 2004 and the ‘regularization’ of 2005); (b) the stimulus given to integration policies as a result of the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration 2007–2010,⁵ and (c) the implementation in 2005 of the Fund for Receiving and Integrating Immigrants and for Educational Support, which financed specific activities by town councils and autonomous regions.

Regularization and the maturing of the immigration process: 2004–2008.

The Spanish model of immigration since the first 90s has been firmly based on irregular immigration and consequently the flow of immigrants has been barely controlled by the public authorities. But the key is not the illegal entrants who evade border controls; these still amount to a minority of immigrants. Rather it is the existence of an irregular employment market, which has provided real opportunities for employment without the necessary work permits. In the long term, it would continue to be difficult to control immigration flows if a large black economy and irregular employment sector continued to exist.

The rate of irregular immigration in Spain has been amongst the highest in the European Union, and is therefore a significant characteristic of the country’s immigration pattern. The difference between the number of current residence permits and the number of foreigners registered as resident with their local councils has been used as an approximation that enables us to identify at least the trend in irregular

⁵ The plan was approved by the government in February 2007 but the preparatory work began in December 2004 (MTAS 2007).

immigration in Spain. However, it is extremely difficult to calculate the number of irregular immigrants.⁶

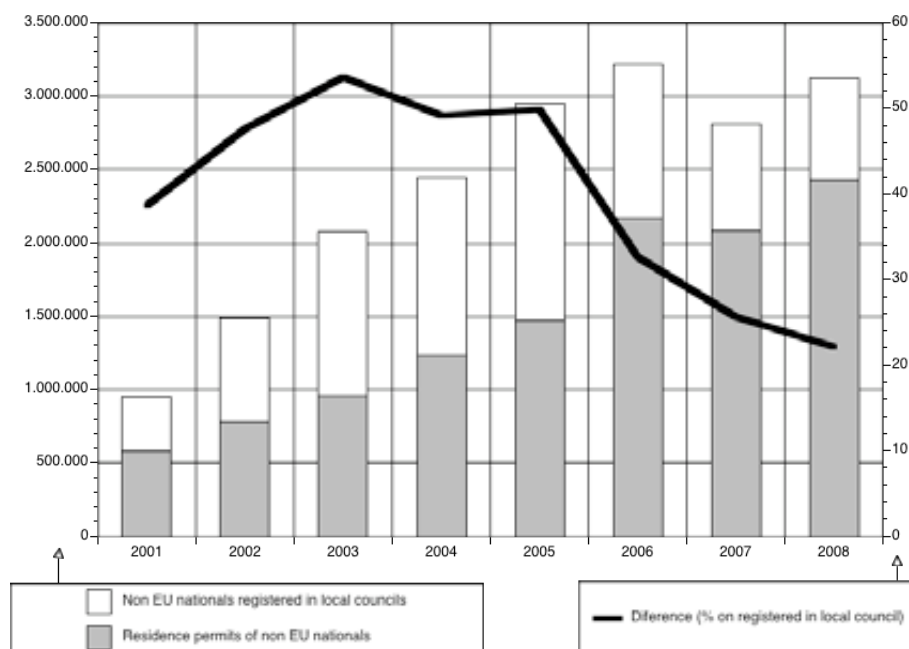
With these caveats, we analysed the difference between the Register of Inhabitants and the register of residence permits for non-EU citizens only, who are in a more vulnerable position legally.

The figure 4 shows how in recent years irregular situations have been reduced significantly, although there could still be a significant number (albeit a minority) of non-EU citizens without residence permits.

⁶ Registration with the local council (*padrón*) is compulsory even for irregular immigrants, almost all of whom are actually registered since the door to certain social rights is thereby opened. The estimate, based on a comparison between the local Register of Inhabitants and residence permits, does not take into account applications for residence that are in progress. The population of citizens of EU countries also tends to be incompletely registered, although this may not be significant for the social integration of immigrants. It is necessary to be aware of the distortion in the register, whereby some residents in Spain are not registered and some people who appear on the register are no longer in the country. Within these limitations it is necessary to recognize that the municipal register of inhabitants is a high-quality source of data for estimating the number of immigrants that are actually living in the country, including those whose presence is irregular. It is a characteristic which is absent from censuses and registers in other European countries do not have and which can on occasions make comparison difficult.

The updating of the register improved as the result of a regulation from 2005 that requires people from outside the European Union to renew their entries in the register every two years. As for residents from other European Union countries, updating the register improved as the result of the passing of Royal Decree 240/2007, which requires all people from other EU countries who reside in Spain and do not have a residence card to request entry in the Central Register of Foreigners.

Figure 4 Changes in the number of non-EU citizens in Spain entered in the Register of Inhabitants and those who have a residence permit, 2000–2008



Source: Drawn up by the author based on data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and from the Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration (figures for 1 January each year).

In recent years this pattern of intense and irregular immigration (both dominant features of immigration in southern Europe, especially Spain) seems to have been changing (Laparra 2008b). First, the increase in formal employment from the mid-1990s was significant, and this trend could have led to a reduction in irregular employment, at least in relative terms. Second, the introduction and implementation of new instruments for regulating the flow of immigrants was steering most of them through regular channels. A number of factors seemed to be especially significant here: access to work and residence permits by means of contracting in the country of origin, organized by the employing companies themselves (between 2006 and 2007 this involved 440,000 people); widening the range of activities open to work-permit claims; access by immigrants without papers to the right of residence through established roots in the community or in employment, and through family reunification.

From 2004 onwards, a new political discourse about immigration emerged in the central government that was to be embodied in the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and

Integration.(PECI)⁷ This represented a break from the earlier ‘Programa Greco’ (Global Programme of Regulation and Coordination of Immigration in Spain) approved by the Popular Party in 2001–04, which was strongly focused on establishing security and control measures but lacked a strategy for integrating the immigrant population. In parallel with this a Support Fund for the Reception and Social Integration of Immigrants (Fondo de Apoyo a la Acogida e Integración Social de Inmigrantes) was established. The fund began to be distributed to the autonomous regions and to town and city councils from 2005 onwards, and grew to a total of 200 million euros.

But the most important change during this period was that immigration into Spain ceased to be predominantly irregular. Between 2004 and 2008 the pattern gradually shifted from irregular immigration (which eventually involved almost half the non-EU immigrants) to regular immigration. Most of the existing population of immigrants without papers became regularized, and forms of regular immigration were developed at the same time, thereby increasing the government’s ability to control the flow of immigrants into the country.

The 2005 ‘normalization’ process led to almost 600,000 immigrants accessing residence and work permits. This was possibly the largest regularization process to occur in Europe in a long time. The bulk of irregular immigration that had been accumulating since the previous regularization in 2000–01 was thus regularized.⁸ In addition, the enlargement of the European Union meant the implicit regularization of more than half a million immigrants from eastern Europe from 2007 onwards. In the long term, however, if the trend is not reversed,⁹ the regularization of the flow of immigrants through three very different mechanisms may be of greater significance. These mechanisms are: contracting in the country of origin, which has increased very significantly in recent years; family reunification, which channels a progressively larger

⁷ The Peci was finally approved by the Council of Ministers in 2007, but its lines of action and political orientation had an impact from the preparatory phases in 2005.

⁸ This is the direct consequence of the passing of Immigration Law 2394/2004.

⁹ This is the change that might be indicated in the statement from the Ministry of Employment at the beginning of the 2008 legislature. The minister focused on the reduction in family reunification and contracting in country of origin, the principal mechanisms that have made it possible to increase the number of regular immigrants in recent years.

proportion of the flow of immigrants, and the progressive regularization of residents through the right to residence as a result of having established roots in the community or in the labour market (*arraigo social y laboral*).

As a result of all this, the number of immigrants without permits, which was estimated to involve half the non-EU immigrants in 2003, was reduced to an almost residual level of around 10–15 per cent, in a period when the foreign population in Spain had doubled. In contrast to a situation in which there was a substantial number of *margizens* at the start of this period, there has been a very substantial increase in *denizens* (1.1 million immigrants with permanent residence permits) and even *quasi-citizens* (1.9 million citizens from the European Union) (Hammar 1990; Martinello 1994; Castles y Davidson 2000). That is, 53 per cent of foreign residents in Spain now have a permanent right to remain, and a large proportion of these have the right to vote in local and European elections.

Thus, the main obstacle to promoting integration (it is practically impossible to develop processes of social integration in irregular situations) was gradually overcome during this period. It would be regrettable if the social goal of integration were lost as a result of the reforms proposed by the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners and the management of immigration flows. Quite the reverse: it would be better to consider how to fully resolve the situation of irregular non-EU immigrants who are still in Spain.¹⁰

As a consequence of all these changes, together with the extremely rapid process of social change that Spain has undergone since the 1960s, the Spanish immigration system has also developed very rapidly and is already showing definite signs of maturity despite its very recent appearance on the international scene. This is reflected in the migration routes, which do not lead to Spain by chance as a place of passage or as a temporary alternative destination. It is also reflected in the composition of the flow, which is increasingly complex and more selective, and progressively involves family reunification; and it can be seen in a large number of plans for the future of the population already established in the country.

¹⁰ It is not easy to estimate the number of these irregular situations, but the difference between the numbers in the Register of Inhabitants and the number of residence permits suggests a figure of less than half a million.

An immigration policy structured on two levels

In Spain the control of immigration is in the hands of the central state but, nevertheless, most of the responsibilities that affect integration belong to the autonomous regions (a similar division of responsibilities can be found in some other countries). The central state is responsible for issuing and reviewing of work and residence permits, family reunification, recognizing refugee status, controlling the frontiers, establishing quotas of legal entries, as well as initiating deportation procedures and repatriations. Meanwhile the autonomous regions manage current policies on employment, housing, health, education and social services.

This model for implementing immigration policy has been shown to be ineffective in dealing with the diversity of situations in each autonomous region (see table 1) and is seen to involve very significant contradictions.

Table 1. Foreign population in Spain per 100 inhabitants, according to nationality (grouped into large region of origins).

	Foreign population	Total EU-15	Total EU-12	Total EU-27	Magreb	Rest of África	Latin America	Total non-EU nationals
Murcia	16.31	2.51	1.68	4.18	4.61	0.53	5.98	12.13
Catalonia	15.91	2.33	1.78	4.11	3.19	0.89	5.37	11.80
Madrid	16.66	1.41	4.12	5.53	1.35	0.59	7.53	11.13
The Balearic Islands	21.69	8.67	2.47	11.15	2.27	0.86	6.08	10.54
Melilla	10.34	1.43	0.06	1.49	8.38	0.01	0.18	8.85
La Rioja	14.59	1.84	3.96	5.80	2.85	0.49	3.71	8.78
Valencian Autonomous Community	17.46	5.58	3.92	9.50	1.80	0.46	3.98	7.96
Navarre	11.20	1.46	2.15	3.61	1.86	0.53	4.48	7.59
All Spain	12.08	2.51	2.36	4.86	1.68	0.47	3.88	7.22
The Canaries	14.32	6.86	0.77	7.63	1.04	0.42	4.07	6.68
Aragon	12.79	0.87	5.54	6.41	1.74	0.96	2.93	6.38
Castilla-La Mancha	10.85	0.45	5.11	5.56	1.69	0.23	2.82	5.29
The Basque country	6.12	0.84	0.78	1.62	0.80	0.37	2.80	4.50
Cantabria	6.47	0.82	1.24	2.06	0.33	0.21	2.97	4.41
Ceuta	4.51	0.37	0.04	0.41	3.79	0.01	0.14	4.11
Andalusia	8.13	2.65	1.41	4.05	1.34	0.32	1.73	4.08
Castilla and Leon	6.54	0.90	2.37	3.27	0.82	0.13	1.98	3.27
Asturias	4.34	0.68	0.90	1.58	0.25	0.19	1.98	2.76
Galicia	3.81	1.08	0.31	1.40	0.23	0.14	1.80	2.42
Extremadura	3.38	0.67	0.91	1.58	0.80	0.05	0.76	1.80

Note: EU-15: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

EU-12: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia

Source: Calculations by the author based on the Register of Inhabitants as of 1 January 2009 (National Institute of Statistics, INE).

In reality, the autonomous regions have not completed the construction of a clearly defined integration model adapted to their needs; and the central state has not been capable of introducing entirely efficient mechanisms for controlling the immigration flow and the legal presence of immigrants in the country.

Perhaps in response to these limitations, in recent years both levels of administration (i.e. the central state and the autonomous regions) have sought to extend their influence over issues that initially were not their responsibility. The central state is trying to exert more influence on social policies and to participate in the construction of a model (or several models) for social integration, while autonomous regions aspire to

increase their decision-making capacity over policies for controlling the inflow of immigrants. The state monopoly on the management and control of immigration and conditions for residence, which left the autonomous regions with a much reduced ability to influence decisions regarding the level of immigration, seems to be a source of contradiction that the autonomous regions at times feel to be an unjustified imposition by the central authorities.

The 'Programa Greco' 2001–04 did not meet the needs of the local and regional administrations in this respect, largely because its philosophy was one of control and not integration. The change of government in 2004 initiated a change in the level of intervention by the central state, whereby it influenced the social policies of the autonomous regions and fostered the social integration of immigrants with standard criteria throughout the country. The principal instrument used was the Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration 2007–2010 (PECI), approved by the government in February 2007 with a budget of 2,005 million euros for the whole period.

After the approval of a new Immigration Law in December 2004 and the consequent 'regularization' of the position of immigrants in 2005, the Support Fund for the Reception and Social Integration of Immigrants and Educational Support was the first step in a move to link the central state with the integration policies of the autonomous regions. This fund for specific actions was distributed to the regions on the basis of a variety of parameters related to the impact of immigration. The aim is to provide specific funding to the autonomous regions and municipalities for actions that lead to increased integration.

This fund for specific actions (a small part of the total budget for the PECI, the Strategic Plan) increased to 200 million euros in 2007 and 2008, although afterwards it was reduced because of national budgetary restrictions. This fund was used for specific actions with the immigrant population; the general cost of the services used by the immigrants (education, health care, and so on, was financed from the ordinary sections of the Budget. This amount, although reduced, has had a significant impact in relation to the specific measures that were developed, and for this reason it is an important instrument in the hands of the central state for influencing regional and local policies.

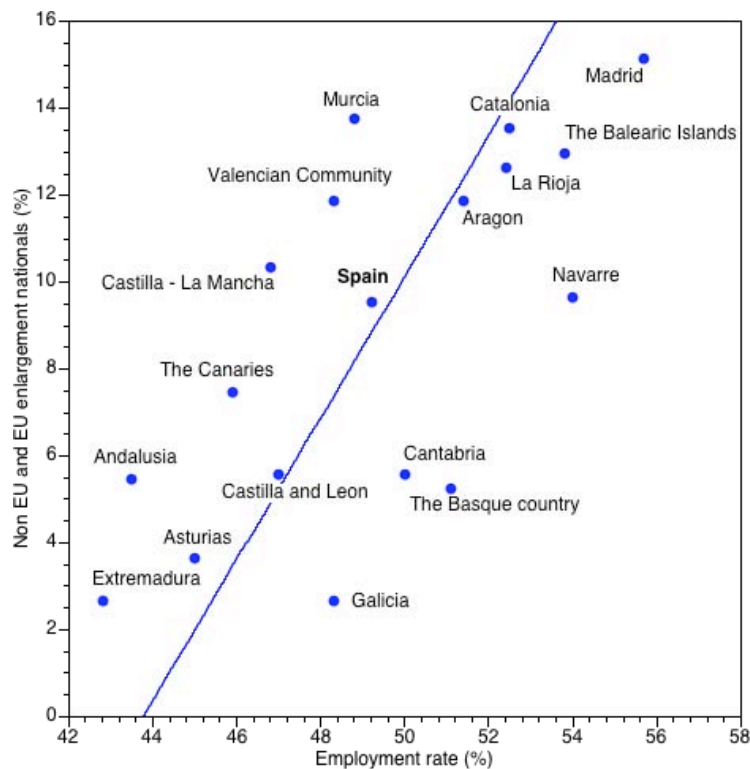
At the same time, the autonomous regions approved various plans for the integration of the immigrant population which, directly or indirectly, sought to

influence the ways in which immigration is controlled (Martínez de Lizarrondo 2006). As one more step in this process, responsibility for the management of work permits has been added to the new Statutes of Autonomy in an attempt to adapt immigration policy to the reality of each regional labour market. This is the case in Catalonia and Andalusia.

An integration model based on (precarious) employment

The contribution to the Spanish labour market made by foreigners has been clear to see. The positive development of the economy until 2008 cannot be understood without reference to their contribution. Figure 5 demonstrates the significant correlation between immigration and employment. Immigrants have mainly chosen to settle in the autonomous regions with the most employment, although this relationship does not fit perfectly. Some regions, such as Andalusia, the Canary Islands and Extremadura, are experiencing pressure on the labour market as a result of the flow of immigrants, while others (the Basque Country, Cantabria, and Navarre among others) seem to have a greater capacity to absorb the new workers (although they have also experienced a loss of employment during the economic crisis that began in 2008). In general, in the regions with the greatest economic dynamism the business world has generally adopted a more open policy towards legal immigration.

Figure 5. Immigration and employment in the autonomous regions in 2009



Source: National Institute of Statistics (INE); the Register of Inhabitants (I January 2009) and the Labour Force Survey (EPA) (2009 average)

Another issue is the type of jobs that the immigrant population performs. Immigration has normally been associated with extremely precarious employment; and the media are full of news about high levels of exploitation and the quasi-slavery of certain workers.¹¹ There has come to be talk of ‘invisible workers’, characterized by their very precarious employment and poverty, a model that was to lead to El Ejido,¹² a municipality in Andalusia, being described as ‘an authentic icon of the basic trends in Spanish capitalism’ (Martínez Veiga 2001; 2004).

However, it is necessary to recognize that labour mobility has been intense and that many immigrant workers, after relinquishing the hardest and least protected employment, have managed to gain access to more regulated employment with better

¹¹ An analysis of immigration surveys in Navarra reveals an association between illegal immigration and precarious conditions of employment, associated with abusive strategies on the part of employers.

¹² A reference to the immigrant population of south-east Spain that works in intensive agriculture in greenhouses.

working conditions, although their presence in the most skilled positions is still very limited.

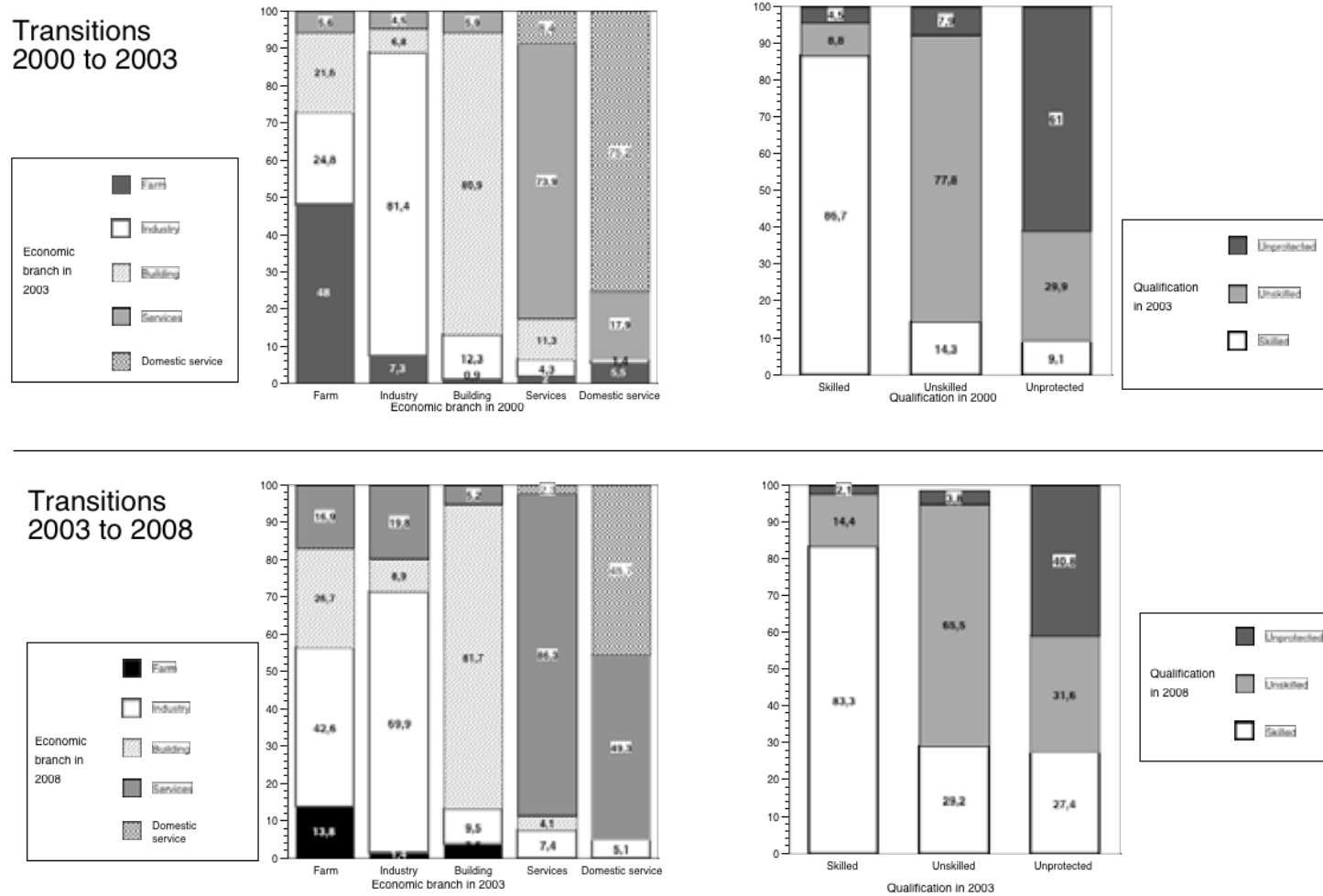
In an immigration process as intense as that experienced by Spain, the overwhelming majority of immigrants have been in the country for only a short time. Their labour market situation, therefore, could not be expected to be very favourable, and fact this has to be taken into account. A more dynamic perspective that enables us to see trends in the employment of foreign workers over time and, therefore, the employment trends for those who have been settled for some time gives us a rather different impression (Laparra 2008a; García de Eulate 2009).

The figure 6 shows the labour transitions of the immigrant population, both between different sectors and between different qualification levels, over the two inter-survey periods in Navarre: 2000–03 and 2003–08.¹³ This diachronic perspective, based on retrospective information in each of the surveys carried out, provides us with a snapshot of the dynamics of immigration in the labour market and, in doing so, enables us to anticipate a future in which immigrants do not have always to be automatically condemned to situations of precarious employment and over-exploitation.

To make a comparison between the two periods, it is necessary to note their different durations (three years and five years). This is a limitation that is difficult to circumvent with the information available, but it does not invalidate the conclusions reached. We must also stress that the meaning we give to the notion of ‘qualification’ is extremely broad here; we are referring to any employment level higher than that of labourer, in agriculture, industry and construction, and its equivalent in the service sector. It refers to highly qualified employment in only a very few cases.

¹³ This autonomous region in northern Spain serves as a reference, with the presence of an immigrant population that is similar to that of Spain as a whole, although with a more dynamic labour market and a significantly higher income level.

Figure 6. Labour market transitions of the immigrant population in Navarre, 2000–2008



basis of data extracted from immigration surveys in Navarre in 2003 and 2008 (the Government of Navarre).

Source: Devised by the author on the

The figure shows how mobility from the most precarious labour market sectors, such as agriculture, is substantial in the first period (with 52 per cent of immigrants changing sector between 2000 and 2003), while nearly half of all immigrants remained trapped in their sector of origin, which is normally more precarious. But in the second period (2003–08) the process intensifies and only 14 per cent of workers in agriculture remained in the same sector.

The same happens, at a different level, in domestic service. While only one in five domestic workers managed to find other (normally better) employment in the first period, 54.4 per cent managed this potentially positive move in the second period.

Once employment at a higher qualification level is achieved, it is relatively difficult to regress to a lower level (eight out of ten maintain the higher level). The differences between the two periods may arise from their different lengths. However, progress to a higher qualification level from unqualified work (labourer or similar) achieved by only 14 per cent in the first period, doubled to 29 per cent in the second period.

This empirical evidence leads us to conclude that, at least up until the economic crisis, and despite strong social and institutional limits, the dynamic of the upward labour mobility progressively intensified among the immigrant population in employment.

Despite many problems that continue to exist in the process of the social integration of the immigrant population, many positive elements can be highlighted in the period immediately before the economic crisis, and the trend over the medium to long term was especially positive. What is especially worrying is that some of these trends have become less certain and, although there is no consistent evidence of effective regression, we cannot ignore this possibility.

However, we must not adopt the simplistic belief that *all social problems are a consequence of this economic crisis*. On the contrary, it is the crisis which in many cases is magnifying some of the structural problems that Spain has not adequately addressed and which is making them more visible. One such problem is unemployment among the immigrant population. It is true that the economic crisis has particularly

affected immigrants and that foreigners make up a large part of the newly unemployed. However, unemployment amongst immigrants was already a problem before the crisis and was largely explained (and continues to be explained) as the obverse of the flexibility and mobility which immigrants contribute to the labour market.¹⁴ Both during and before the crisis, the foreign active population has functioned as a shock absorber in the labour market, incurring the costs of flexibility in the form of precarious employment and periodic unemployment. What the crisis does is to put this shock absorber fully into effect and to impose a large part of the market pressure on the foreign labour force.

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that the economic recession is having a substantial impact on the labour market and especially, as discussed above, on the immigrant population, which in many cases is seeing the hard-won achievements of previous years disappearing and its standards of living deteriorating. In mid-2009 the number of unemployed immigrants was 2.7 times greater than the number in 2007, exceeding one million. According to the Labour Force Survey (EPA), one in every four unemployed people was a foreigner in mid-2009.

The integrating potential of universalism in a limited welfare state

Beyond the labour market (in any case on the basis of our model of integration), improvements in the social situation of the immigrant population have been extended to other areas. In general the Spanish welfare state, despite its inadequacies, has shown itself to have a great potential for the social reception and integration of the immigrant population. This has been possible, among other things, because public opinion is more disposed to accept the incorporation of foreigners into social programmes (Mau and Burkhardt 2009), an aspect of a comparatively positive attitude towards immigration¹⁵.

Education was provided quickly and within the mainstream school structure, despite the growing number of foreign minors and the diversity of their origins. In compulsory education, practically all of the foreign population was incorporated without any problems worthy of particular mention. For example, families with minors

¹⁴ Real unemployment among the immigrant population was 25 per cent in Navarre in the first half of 2008, before the effects of the economic crisis were felt (Laparra, Martínez de Lizarrondo et al. 2009)

¹⁵ Spain was in seventh position out of 23 European Union countries (Masso 2009).

expressed a high level of satisfaction with the process of integrating their sons or daughters in the educational process.¹⁶ However the positive aspects described here must not be allowed to conceal serious problems of overload in the system, the excessive concentration of immigrant children in some schools, and an insufficient response to the emerging diversity of social and academic situations (Anaut 2009; Pérez and Rahona 2009).

Universal health care was also extended to the immigrant population. Only a small minority¹⁷ – in general a small group of recent arrivals who are free from health problems – does not have a health card. It is notable that when they settle down they will be incorporated into the system without major problems. It is possible to say that the process of extending and universalizing the right to public health care, which began in 2002, has been successfully extended to people of all nationalities, sexes and ages. However, problems of overload in certain more sensitive services and a lack of adaptation to immigrants' needs (Jimeno and Moreno 2007; Lasheras 2009) have also emerged.

The living conditions of immigrants have improved over this period, for example in enhanced access to housing, in the reduction of house sharing, in the type of tenancy and in the ownership of general domestic equipment. Nevertheless, the current economic crisis has to be taken into account, as it may have the effect of decelerating or reversing these positive trends. Taking Navarre as a reference, sub-letting in 2008 had decreased in frequency (15.5 per cent) compared with data collected for 2003 (31 per cent). In addition, the proportion living in overcrowded conditions decreased (2000: 47.5 per cent, 2008: 28.9 per cent). Even so, these problems continue to be significant. Fewer than 0.5 per cent of homes lacked the most basic facilities (hot water or bathroom). Homes lacking heating fell to 13 per cent (less than half the figure for five years earlier) and almost one in every two immigrant households had its own vehicle (double the figure from the previous survey in 2003). Beyond these most basic indicators, however, the immigrant population has a long way to go before it reaches a situation of equality with the Spanish population (Iturbide and García 2009).

¹⁶ A satisfaction rate of 90 per cent was expressed by the immigrant population in Navarre (Survey III 2008. Immigration in Navarre).

¹⁷ In Navarre, 6.5 per cent (Survey III 2008. Immigration in Navarra).

It never ceases to be surprising that in just one decade some five million people arrived in Spain and have been housed and that, despite the absence of policies implementing measures appropriate for such large numbers of people, this has not noticeably increased the problem of slums or sub-standard housing. To a large extent the immigrants have occupied a major part of the empty housing that existed at the beginning of the process and housing that has become available as a result of property development during the property bubble, with the native Spanish population accessing better-quality housing. The market has been the principal way for immigrants to access housing; public policies have had little impact.

In accordance with the political and administrative framework,¹⁸ and also with the improvements in living and working conditions, social relations between the host population and the immigrant population have been progressively less characterized by ethnic discrimination. The share of immigrants claiming to have suffered from discrimination fell by more than 22 per cent from 2000, to 45.6 per cent of the immigrant population surveyed in 2008. The number of complaints received by social bodies such as SOS Racismo has also fallen. Almost half the people surveyed in Navarre in 2008 considered that discrimination had decreased since 2003, compared with only 7 per cent who thought that discrimination had increased since 2003. (Andueza 2009). This reduction in discrimination could be seen in practically all areas. In some areas such as employment or housing, it can be explained by the rationality of financial relationships. This rationality has developed with the acceptance of the presence of immigrants both in the labour market and in the housing market when the immigrants demonstrate they are useful, satisfy specific needs, or provide supplementary income. Curiously, it is in public premises where a reduction in discrimination is least reported, and it is in the streets that the perception of discrimination reaches one of its highest levels (affecting one in four immigrants). By contrast, when real socializing occurs and immigrants become better known, such as

¹⁸ On other occasions we have stressed the socially constructed character of racist attitudes. Now, by contrast, it must be understood that there is a relationship between a more positive political context for the immigrant population and a more receptive attitude by the local population towards the presence of immigrants.

through being neighbours, discrimination is noticeably reduced, to only 13.5 per cent.¹⁹ The presence of immigrants becoming accepted as normal, and immigrants and locals getting to know one another and interacting, therefore seem to be the key factors in strengthening equality of treatment in all areas. This process of normalization and the immigrant population's own perception of decreased discrimination have without a doubt been influenced by the experience of equal treatment in the main systems of social protection, namely, the health and education systems. In both, the perception of discriminatory treatment is minimal amongst the foreign-born population.

In short, one might think that the more clearly universal social protection systems in Spain (the educational and health systems) have played an important role in the social integration model for the new immigrant population, with other social programmes playing a lesser role. These systems have accompanied a process based more on economic rationality, befitting the labour market as well as the housing or consumer markets. Altogether this has prompted important feedback for a reasonably positive reception by the Spanish population as a whole.

An undefined cultural integration model: between interculturality and civic integration

In recent times some European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and France have introduced, with a wide degree of variation, changes in their immigration policies with the objective of achieving what has come to be referred to as 'civic integration'. This is established through a series of repressive policies towards immigrants (Joppke 2006), which consist of the introduction of certain obligatory activities and commitments aimed at guaranteeing an adequate understanding of the language, customs, laws and basic institutions of the host country. They also aim at ensuring the incorporation of the immigrant population into the democratic values of tolerance and respect for individual freedoms and human rights. These measures are usually justified as providing immigrants with the real possibility of integrating socially

¹⁹ It has even been suggested that attitudes towards foreigners do not depend so much on whether immigrants are present in greater or smaller numbers, or even on how much the host population knows about immigration, but instead reflect ideological factors and beliefs (Aierdi and Bilbao 2009).

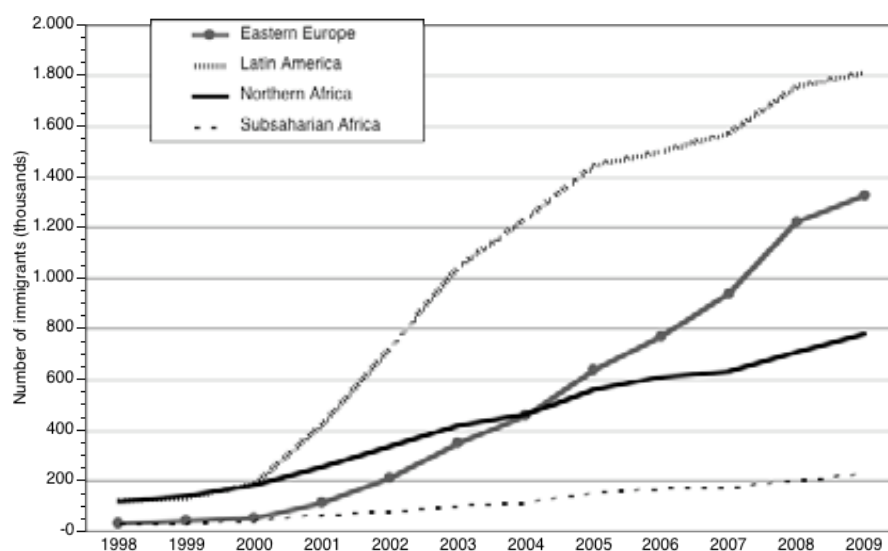
and improving their employment levels. These policies, however, which emphasize the most cultural aspects of integration, gradually come to be understood in an authoritarian way, and are then converted into devices for controlling the flow of immigration and for selecting immigrants. The issue of civic integration raises at least three issues: (a) the paradox that certain countries, such as the Netherlands and France, with relatively low levels of immigration (although with substantial established ethnic minorities) are those that most insist on directing these policies, theoretically, at recently arrived immigrants; (b) pragmatic doubt about the efficiency of these policies in achieving their professed objectives and in improving the levels of social integration of the immigrant population; and (c) a methodological (and ethical) contradiction between the liberal objectives of these policies and the authoritarian methods that they use.

Curiously, despite a supposed Europeanization of policies aimed at integrating immigrant populations (Rosenow 2009), the debate about civic integration has not been seriously taken up in Spain. It has only occasionally appeared in the public debate, based on some proposals from the parliamentary opposition, and has only occasionally resulted in specific measures or the design of programmes or protocols for action.²⁰ Neither learning the Spanish language nor knowledge of Spanish society on the part of the immigrant population has been considered an objective for which significant resources would have to be provided.

In Spain, the substantial amount of immigration from Latin America is an element that leads to the question of integration being posed differently. In a way, the option of strengthening Latin American immigration first and European immigration second (de facto selectivity, never made explicit in the design of immigration policies) was the principal instrument used as a (preventive) policy for cultural integration and against the African ‘threat’ (see figure 7).

²⁰ Only the question of the veil features frequently in public debate, as the result of some conflict that has occurred, generally in a quite decontextualized way.

Figure 7. Principal origins of the foreign population settled in Spain, 1998–2009



Source: Register of Inhabitants, 1 January each year (INE)

As a consequence of this selectivity in immigration flows, the issue of civic or cultural integration arose as a serious political and civic concern only in relation to the immigrant population from the Maghreb. Curiously, however, no cultural integration policy is specifically proposed for this group.

The political discourse that has been constructed in the European Union on the cultural dimension of integration (i.e. civic integration) introduces a legitimate debate which seems necessary from various points of view. In Spain it could have a positive influence leading to actions aimed at facilitating knowledge of the language and institutions of the destination society. However, there is always a significant risk of reinforcing repressive elements that introduce new symbolic barriers to social integration.

Conclusion: the results of a precarious integration model applied to immigration

The migratory flow experienced in Spain since mid 90s has had profound economic implications which, in the context of an economic crisis, seem to have been forgotten. Economic growth and the increase in tax revenue and social security contributions, which accompanied immigration, represent a significant support (at least provisionally) for the sustainability of the welfare state in Spain. For example, the regularization in 2005 alone brought into the open 565,000 irregular workers, and their corresponding

social security contributions increased revenues by €1,500m for 2006. Calculations made by the Economic Office of the President (OEP 2006) estimate that 50 per cent of the increase in GDP could be explained by immigration in Spain during the five years prior to the economic crisis that began in 2008. Immigration would have caused an increase in the rate of activity, especially for women (one third of the 12 percentage points increase) and a two percentage point reduction in the rate of unemployment. As a result, in 2005 immigration would have generated a surplus of €5,000m in the Central Government budget (0.5 per cent of GDP).

Other regional estimations had previously come to similar conclusions. In Navarre, for example, the increase in aggregate demand and the subsequent commercial expansion was quantified as a fiscal surplus of €15m in 2003, including social security contributions (Rodríguez Cabrero 2005). The investment of between €180m and €250m in the purchase of housing in the period 1998–2003, aside from the immigrants' strategic contribution to the active population in quantitative terms and in flexibility have also been underlined (Laparra 2005). Even during the crisis, in spite of the increase in unemployment rates already mentioned, the employed foreign-born population remained quite stable: an average of 2.63 million in 2009, compared with 2.78 million in 2007.²¹

It should be stressed that, in spite of the relative general success in the immigrants' incorporation into the labour market in Spain, the process of social integration of immigrants in Spain is far from consolidated, as can be seen from the list of 35 exclusion indicators, divided into eight large dimensions defined in the FOESSA Report 2008 (see table 2). In nearly all the dimensions, the households in which there is a non-EU foreigner or a foreigner from the enlarged EU-12, the distance from the local population (EU-15 included) is very considerable. If we leave aside the exclusion of political rights (*a priori for foreigners*) in other aspects of social and economic rights, the impact of social exclusion is double that on the host population.

²¹ INE: EPA, yearly average

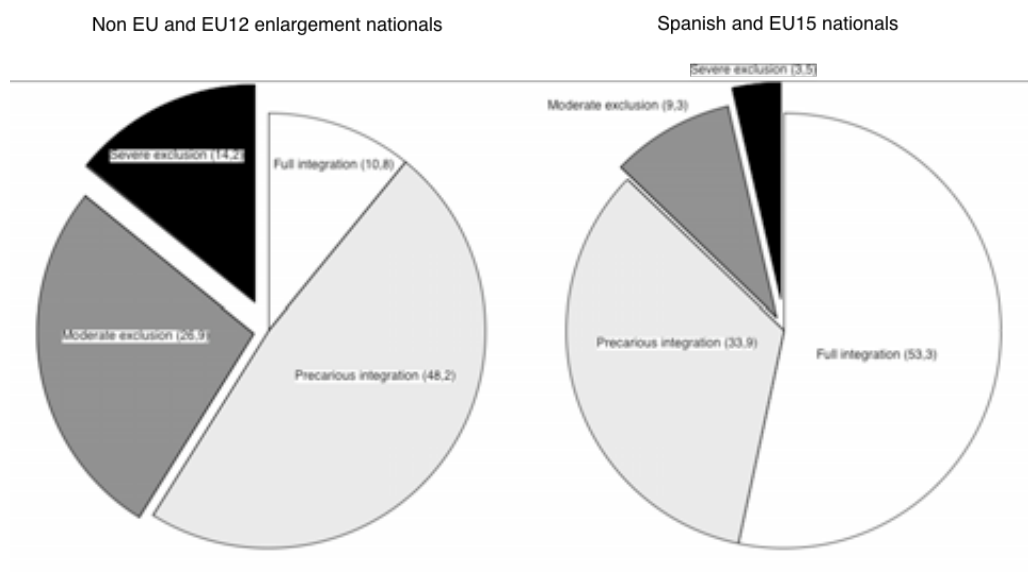
Table 2. Percentage of households affected by exclusion processes in different areas in Spain, 2007

	Spanish and EU-15 nationals	Non-EU and EU-12 enlargement nationals
Exclusion from employment	12.5	27.2
Exclusion from consumption	8.0	17.6
Political exclusion	4.3	89.1
Exclusion from education	6.0	3.5
Exclusion from housing	17.8	37.0
Exclusion from health	10.8	16.6
Social conflict	12.3	16.4
Social isolation	7.5	9.2

Source: FOESSA Survey (2008) (Laparra and Pérez Eransus 2009)

Of the households of non-EU immigrants or from the enlarged EU-12, 28 per cent would be below the relative poverty threshold, compared with 18 per cent of the native-born population; and 43 per cent had several problems of exclusion, compared with 14 per cent for Spanish or EU-15 households. The most severe social exclusion, which would only affect 3.5 per cent of Spanish, reaches 14.2 per cent of non-EU nationals or people from the enlarged EU (see figure 8). These are the failed migration projects, which reveals the limits of the model of the social integration of immigrants in Spain. This is the genuinely unresolved issue of immigration policy.

Figure 8. Social integration of non-EU immigrants (and immigrants from countries in the recently enlarged EU-12) with the population of Spanish nationality (and with the EU-15).



Note: EU-15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) are joined with Spanish.

Enlargement EU-12 (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia) are joined with Non EU nationals.

Source: Foessa Survey (2008)

Perhaps the crisis that began in 2008 further highlights the extent of these limits to Spain's social integration model. The way it is tackled will very significantly mark Spanish society in the future. The property and financial crisis has decisively affected the evolution of these trends. It has had a very rapid effect in destroying employment, especially in sectors such as construction, which has a considerable number of foreign workers. This could be reducing the attraction which the expansion of the labour market had experienced since mid 90s (if networks transmitting information about the new context work) but it could also represent a risk of repeating past strategies of adaptation to bad times, so 'submerging' the economic activity of companies and expanding irregular contracting (of Spanish and, possibly to a greater extent, of foreign workers). As a first consequence, a hardening of the political debate on immigration could be questioning some of the ways in which irregularity has been reduced in recent years (such as contracting in country of origin, or family reunification). It remains to be seen how these migratory flows evolve and what routes, regular or irregular, they mainly use.

As a consequence of the increase in unemployment, the economic situation of immigrants has rapidly worsened. In the first quarter of 2009 the proportion of 'households without an income' among the immigrant population²² was 2.7 times that of Spanish households, the equivalent of more than one in ten immigrant homes in an extremely complicated social situation.

More delicate may be the effect which the reduction in employment, more specifically regular employment, might have on the process of renewing residence permits. If this process of *irregularization befalling the unemployed immigrant population*, or, as has been said, of 'illegalization of unemployment'²³ intensifies, a significant social achievement, painstakingly constructed since 2005, would have gone to waste, and prospects for the future social integration of the immigrant population would be seriously affected.

In the immediate future, the context could be less favourable and, with it, the management of the migratory phenomenon could become more conflictual. It is not only the economic climate that has changed, adversely affecting especially immigrant employment and undermining one of the most solid bases of the model of integration that has been collectively built. The changes announced in migratory policies could destroy the progress made both in the regularization of the migratory flow (contracting in country of origin, family reunification) and in the regularization of the stock of irregular immigration (extraordinary regularizations, case by case regularization because of labour or social, rooted, settlement). If there are fewer employment opportunities, it would seem reasonable to try to reduce the flow of new immigrants and to facilitate a process of voluntary return as far as possible. Beyond this interim adjustment to the crisis, it is necessary to give thought to a long-term migratory strategy: after the crisis, immigration will continue to be necessary in Spain (and migratory pressure will continue in many countries of origin).

One of the questions for the long term is precisely what role immigration and migratory policy should have in a new, post-crisis model of growth, based more than

²² Households whose main breadwinner is a foreigner and in which there is no employment, pension, unemployment allowance or benefit. Data from the EPA, Spanish Labour Force Survey (2009 1st quarter).

²³ Antonio Izquierdo, *Público* Newspaper

the previous model on knowledge, investment and productivity. The migratory system in this possible new model would need to be more selective (in quantity and quality), attracting a more qualified population and encouraging training processes for resident immigrants. It is not clear, however, that a structural transformation of Spanish economy and society will unavoidably come about after the crisis. We do not know whether it is viable or whether an attempt to implement it would be successful, much less in what time frame. What does seem reasonable to assume is that important sectors of the economy, such as agro-food, tourism and social care, will continue to demand a considerable volume of labour which the resident population may be unable to supply, even if unemployment rates increase (Oliver 2006; Jimeno and Moreno 2007). It seems reasonable, therefore, to believe that Spain will participate in the *dual tendency* (qualified and unskilled immigrants) that has been proposed for the migratory-labour system in Europe (Favell 2008).

The demographic imbalances in the Spanish population, furthermore, will continue to need a migratory flow to make a contribution to ensuring the sustainability of the system (Jimeno and Moreno 2007). This prospect of the transformation (but also of the maintenance) of some of the structural characteristics of the society must be considered very seriously when decisions are made on matters of migratory policy, in an attempt to respond not only to the economic and political imperatives of the present situation, but also to future structural needs.

The crisis, in the short and long terms, raises a whole series of misgivings that we cannot resolve here. In any case, an alternative prospect free of immigration could possibly be worse for all. It would have to be recognized that the settled immigrant population already forms part of Spanish society and is destined to be fully integrated in it. For this reason, it remains a priority to continue promoting social rights (and also political rights), equality of opportunities (removing the barriers that block social mobility) and equality of treatment (avoiding ethnic discrimination). Whether we like it or not, immigrants and host population alike have to live through the crisis together; and the resulting model of society depends, among other things, on an awareness of what this implies. It would seem reasonable, in this sense, to continue to build migratory policy while giving thought not only to present economic circumstances but also to long-term economic and social trends.

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