

Migrations and the Emergence of a New Ibero-American Transnational Space

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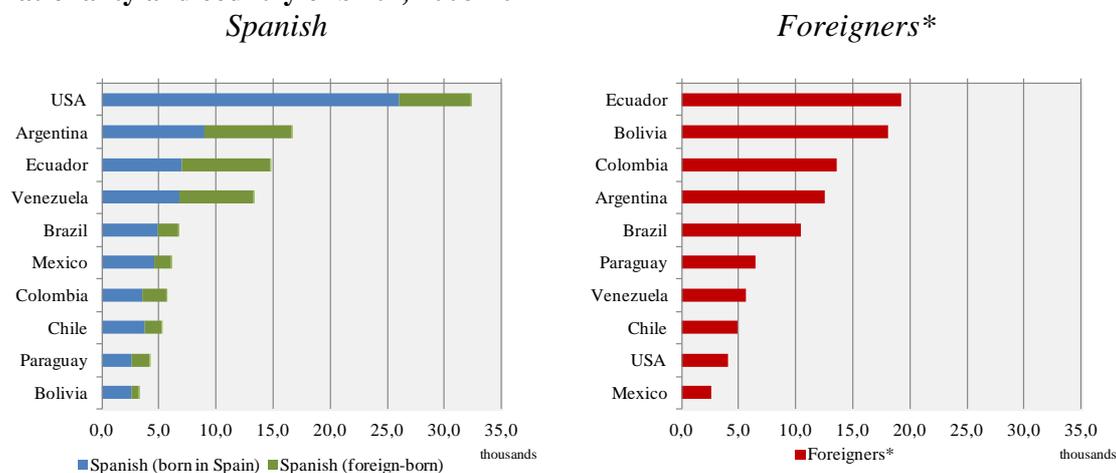
Abstract

A new Ibero-American transnational space is emerging in the Twenty-First Century as a result of the twin effects of the immigration boom at the beginning of the new millennium, composed largely of Latin American flows to Europe, and the impact of the Great Recession on international migration. Processes of return migration, re-migration and an emerging Spanish and Portuguese migration to developing economies and the USA have followed since, and have reinvigorated a migration system that already began in the Nineteenth Century. This study analyzes three concurrent migration processes that contribute to the formation of this new transnational space, focusing on those with origins and destinations in Spain. Based on microdata from the *Residential Variation Statistics* and *Register of Spaniards Resident Abroad* of the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), immigration from the Americas, return migration and re-migration of Latin Americans as well as new Spanish migration are examined.

Introduction

An Ibero-American transnational space is emerging in the Twenty-First Century as a result of the juxtaposition of the immigration boom experienced by Spain since the late 1990s and the impact of the economic crisis on migration processes. The growth of the Spanish economy between 1995 and 2007 led to an unprecedented migration flow. Spain was second in the world in net migration after the USA, recording 4.6 million immigrants between 2000 and 2010 (United Nations 2011). The latest data from the Population Register put the figure of foreign-born population at 6.8 million out of a total of 46.7 million. The demand for unskilled workers in agriculture, construction, and services, together with selective immigration policies and historical and cultural links, led to migration flows dominated by Latin Americans (Durand and Massey 2010; Hierro 2013; Pellegrino 2004). As in other countries, the Great Recession has profoundly affected international migration. Accordingly, the academic literature has been interested in the Spanish case because of the intensity of the crisis, as reflected in the sharp drop in GDP and the stunning increase in unemployment, which affects 27 percent of the workforce. The impact of the recession has been particularly severe for immigrant workers, affecting migration trends and patterns (Beets and Willekens 2009, Domingo and Sabater, 2013; Papadimitriou and Terrazas. 2009, Martin 2009). Thus, migration flows to Spain between 2008 and 2012 decreased by 30 percent compared to pre-crisis levels, while return migration and re-migration of the foreign population has increased progressively from 232,000 departures in 2008 to over 320,000 in 2012.

Figure 1. Top destination countries of migration flows from Spain to America by nationality and country of birth, 2008-2012



Source: Residential Variation Statistics, INE. (*) Only known destination countries.

Although smaller in magnitude, new trends were identified, among which Spanish emigration to Europe, the USA, and some rising Latin American economies such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico stood out. Previous work has shown that very diverse flows, in terms of demographic composition and the places of origin and destination involved, converge in current Spanish migration (Figure 1). Along with youth and adult mobility is the concurrent re-migration of Spanish returnees and migration dubbed "neo-Hispanic", that is, of people descended from previous foreign-born immigrants or those in the country that have attained Spanish nationality (Domingo et al. 2013). This is the context in which the new Ibero-American

transnational space should be assessed. Accordingly, previous migration flows were followed by return flows, re-migration to other countries and new Spanish emigration. Demographic, economic, cultural and institutional factors contributed to the formation of this emerging transnational space (Peixoto, 2012). A distinct dimension was the legal and political framework favorable to Latin American migration and that were manifested in bilateral programs of labor recruitment, visa policy in the Schengen area, and especially in the policies of the acquisition of nationality by residence and origin, which has allowed the naturalization of descendants of Spanish, Portuguese – and Italian – migrants in Latin America.

The aim of this study is to contribute to an understanding of this new scenario, based on the analysis of three concurrent migration processes and focusing on those flows originating and arriving in Spain: 1) immigration from the Americas; 2) return migration and re-migration to the Americas; and 3) Spanish emigration and neo-Hispanic migration. To reach these objectives, we review the literature on Ibero-American migration and examine the socio-demographic characteristics of migration flows and the stocks of the Spanish population living abroad.

Data and Methods

An understanding of the current international migration processes is complicated by the lack of comparable statistical information. The academic literature has shown that differences in the concepts and definitions of migration as well as the extent of national statistical systems affect the measurement of migration movements and migrant population stock (Poulain et al. 2006). Although various international organizations such as the OECD, World Bank, and United Nations have made an enormous effort to harmonize and disseminate migration data, the results are still modest. Given this dearth, we use data from two sources produced by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics in this study: the *Residential Variation Statistics* (RVS) and the *Register of Spaniards Resident Abroad* (RSRA). The first provides data on migration flows based on the changes of residence recorded in municipal registers. Microdata give information on individual sex, age, nationality, country of birth, place of origin, and destination country of migrants. It is important to note the exceptional reliability of the RVS in the reporting and coverage of migration flows because, firstly, there are incentives for the registration of the foreign population in the municipal register – such as access to basic social rights – and, secondly, because no migrant group is excluded from registering. In contrast, the RVS under-reports departures from Spain to other countries, which makes the study of international migration difficult. However, the introduction of administrative tools in the municipal register since 2004 has made a substantial improvement in capturing departures, particularly of the foreign population. Along with the RVS, RSRA data will also be examined. This source provides data on Spanish nationals residing abroad by country of residence, sex, age, and place of birth. It is worth noting that the main drawback of this source is the under-reporting of the Spanish population, since registration in embassies and consulates is not mandatory.

Expected findings

1. Migration processes that define the new Ibero-American transnational space result from economic push-pull factors, cultural and linguistic proximity, old

- migratory links (in both directions) and an institutional and political framework favorable to mobility in both the origin and destination countries.
2. American migration flows, return migration and re-migration, and new Spanish migration are heterogeneous in their demographic composition and typology. Economic migration of young people and adults coexists with return migration by migrants accompanied by their partners and offspring.
 3. New Spanish emigration and neo-Hispanic migration can be seen as an emerging form of circular migration in the Ibero-American transnational space.

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