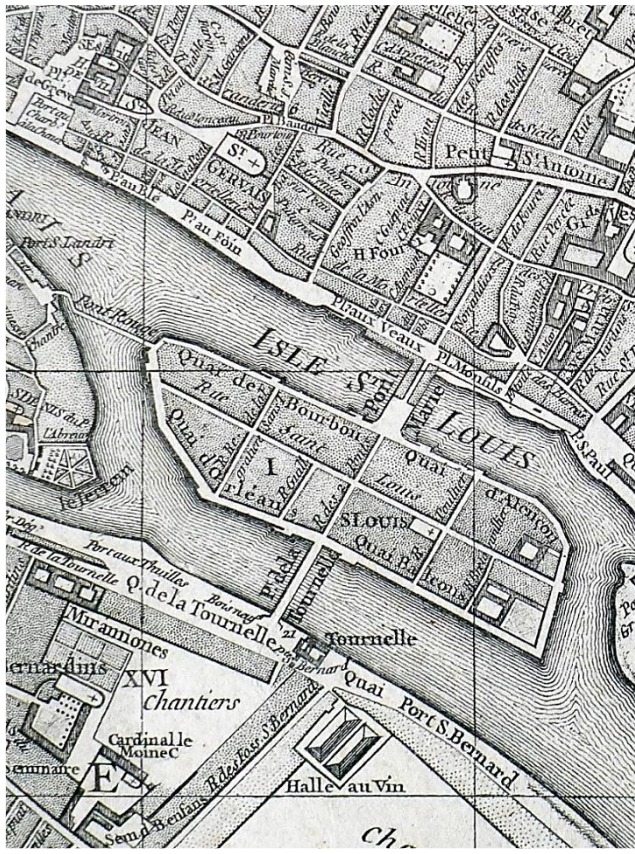


SPANISH GEOGRAPHY AT CONTEMPORARY TIMES. STATE OF THE QUESTION (1972-2022).



Spanish contribution to 35th IGC, Paris 2022. Time for Geographers.
Spanish Committee of the International Geographical Union



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Societat
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GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE TRANSPORTES, MOVILIDAD Y AGENDA URBANA



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The Geographical Dimension of Human Mobility: A Spanish Perspective

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Abstract: Population mobility and, particularly, migrations, have attracted the attention of an exiguous number of geographers, even though they hold an undeniable transforming power in spaces and societies. The transversal nature of this subject, at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences, has made it indebted to other disciplines: history, anthropology, sociology, etc. However, since the turn of the century, the transfer of study approaches, methods, and procedures within science has reinforced the role of geography in mobility research, giving it a renewed vitality. In turn, a review of its issues and analysis perspectives becomes a valuable instrument to identify the influence of the currents of thought guiding the future of geography and making the state of knowledge on human mobility an indicator of those paradigms that have been most successful.

1. From migration studies to the human mobility paradigm: an international perspective

1.1. Demography and migration research at the dawn of geographic science

A diachronic review of the contents of demography shows that any treatise in this discipline considers migratory processes as one of the components that condition the state of populations, intervening in their evolution and structures (Pressat, 1973). The same is true of geodemography which, in a broader sense, aims to analyze the spatial variations of the population, the factors that explain them and their consequences, giving an important role to migratory processes (Reques, 2006).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the first research in the field of demography was concerned with the measurement of mortality, its incidence and the way to calculate it, with great success in the publications that dealt with it, both in France and in the rest of Europe. To these were added those related to population growth, which was boosted by Thomas R. Malthus' *Essay on the principle of population* (1798). And almost a century later, at the end of the 19th century, research on migration burst onto the scene, in the wake of geographer Ernst G. Ravenstein's article "The laws of migration" (1885), published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*.

His theorization of migrations represented a great advance for geography, showing the strength acquired by the discipline as a positive science, after the legacy of the great masters -Humboldt and Ritter- and the consolidation of empiricism. The influence of Darwinism and the role of the Geographical Societies, of which Ravenstein himself is a clear exponent -he was a prominent member of the *Royal Geographical Society*- made migrations a clear object of research from the postulates of positivism, that is, from a

conception of knowledge that arises from the application of a scientific method, contrasted from practice and experience. Thus, its laws made it possible to identify structures, patterns or characteristics that could be observed by comparing demographic data that reflected the spatial changes of the population (Reques, 2014).

At the end of the 19th century, from a completely different angle, Élisée Reclus argued that migrations and cultural mixing were essential factors for the development of civilization (García & Ortega, 2006). In his work “Du sentiment de la nature dans les sociétés modernes (The feeling of nature in modern societies)”, published in the *Revue de Deux Mondes (Review of Two Worlds)* (1866), Reclus defended the process of emigration towards cities and the movement of population towards their peripheries, because he understood that it was necessary to favor the contact of their inhabitants with nature, in order to make cities healthier (Oyón, 2017). However, this peculiar perspective informs us of a secondary attention to migratory processes, subordinated to ethical principles and evolutionism, the foundations of his scientific work (Gómez et al., 1982).

A few years later, in the first decades of the twentieth century, there was still a virtual absence of research on migration in the field of geography. This subject lost strength in the context of possibilism and the postulates of the French regional school, which prioritized the concepts of region, landscape, and genre of life. Human mobility and its transformative power were alien to the geographical school of Paul Vidal de la Blache and his disciples, who devoted their efforts to the elaboration of descriptive monographs that increasingly distanced geography from any theoretical reflection on the structures of society. They came to deny the possibility of finding laws in the human sciences, which resulted in the irrationalism or vitalism of the first decades of the twentieth century, or in the literary genre of regional narrative, as defined by Ortega Valcárcel (2000: 293).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that, from the second decade of the 20th century, sociology took the lead in migration studies. Within this discipline, research was specifically oriented towards understanding international migration and its social consequences. This trend emerged in the context of work on transatlantic migration to the United States, led by some representatives of the Chicago School, with whom urban sociologists such as Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess converged, proponents of the so-called theory of migrant assimilation (Domenech & Gil-Araujo, 2016).

In this leading role of sociology in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, it is perhaps necessary to recognize the first signs that disciplinary boundaries began to blur within the social sciences, as evidenced by the fact that the topics of study and work procedures of the members of that school are a continuous reference for geographers, and migration studies are no stranger to this.

1.2. The consolidation of migration studies within geography since the middle of the 20th century

After World War II, new concepts and methods emerged in geography, because of the crisis of the postulates that had remained unalterable since the end of the 19th century. These changes are of enormous importance and derive from approaches and objectives that represent a certain rupture. This is what has come to be called the “theoretical-quantitative revolution” or “new geography”, which developed in the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden and, later, in France, Germany, Italy, Spain

and other countries. The main characteristics of a new approach, which defends the neutrality of science and the rejection of historicist perspectives, become the appropriate framework for the formulation of new laws applicable to migratory processes.

The progressive use of logical schemes and mathematical language, the search for explanations by means of formulas from physics or economics, the construction of models, and the defense of theories explain the new focus of geographers on demography and migratory processes. As part of this approach, in which statistics took on renewed importance, it is worth mentioning the creation of the National Institute of Demographic Studies in France (1945), its counterparts at the universities of Louvain (Belgium) and Montreal (Canada), and the development of demographic studies in Italy, Great Britain and the United States in the 1950s.

From a geographical perspective, the quantitative revolution had a notable impact on the study of migration since the 1960s, with the development of interaction models, whose main objective was to identify correlations between socioeconomic, demographic, spatial and behavioral variables. These models were interested in estimating the volume of migration flows and their causes from individual and household data, which highlighted the relationships between migration, labor market and housing (Mendoza, 2016). A classic study of the application of quantitative techniques to migration was that of Goddard et al. (1975), who used regression analysis to develop a spatial interaction model of population movements in tropical Africa. However, there is no doubt that the most recognized author in the formulation of new “migration laws” was the famed geographer Wilbur Zelinsky (1971), whose migration transition hypothesis sought to link the regularities observed in the evolution of migrations to the sequence of phases of demographic and economic change (King, 2012), with the underlying idea that each type of society corresponded to differentiated forms of mobility.

Another author who considerably expanded migration studies was Torsten Hägerstrand, representative of the Lund school, who introduced the notion of the time axis and the sequence of events that make up the life of each human being. According to him, people’s biographies are the ones that should count (Hägerstrand, 1975), a statement that puts us on the path of the structuration theory formulated by Anthony Giddens (1984) a few years later, as Lois (2010) rightly points out. Giddens examined the relationship between agency and structure, between the micro and macro levels, so that migration research could move beyond the perspective of migrants as independent actors who behave voluntarily, or as puppets whose actions are determined by structural mechanisms. In other words, the need to adopt an approach that explores the way in which migrants’ geographies are made by migrants themselves, while being embedded in social and economic structures that migrants do not choose and that define, in part, their existence (Findlay & Li, 1999), prevailed from that moment on.

If we interpret these approaches, which combine time and space, as a sign of the influence of the postulates of the critical geographies that flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, it will be possible to understand that, from that moment on, the horizons in the geography of migration will broaden considerably. Thus, since the 1990s, there has been a diversification of analytical perspectives in the context of what was called postmodern geography, consolidating the study of lived spaces, the daily practices of migrants and their communities, the gender condition, as well as the symbolic and affective dimensions represented for migrants by the places of origin and reception. This cultural

turn of postmodernity is going to imply not only a modification of the study themes but also of the methodologies, as qualitative research techniques become widespread (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018). And, as had happened previously, sociology plays a definitive role in this impulse.

As pointed out by Pisarevkaya et al. (2020), the increase in migration studies in the last three decades of our history implies a growing diversity of research, a fact that makes it necessary to select those concepts that have been most important in the current evolution of knowledge. From my point of view, and despite the difficult choice, the ones I consider most important and that should be elevated to the category of paradigms are those of transnationalism and human mobility.

Agreeing with Göler & Krisjane (2016: 25), “one of the key tools in contemporary migration research is the well-known concept of transnationalism, understood as increasing interconnections between nation states across borders”. This is a concept that emphasizes the interrelationships between two or more places and defines the transnational space as a realm of social interaction, a realm of confluences and divergences. This approach has been extensively developed by the demographer Alejandro Portes (Cuba-USA); the sociologists Timothy Dunn, Douglas Massey and Luis E. Guarnizo (USA), Peggy Levitt (USA-UK) and Thomas Faist (Germany); anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller (UK), Noel Salazar (Belgium) and Steven Vertovec (Germany); as well as by geographers Doreen Massey (UK), Daniel Hiernaux (Mexico), Russell King (UK), Alison Blunt (UK), Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Singapore) and Adrian J. Bailey (UK), among many other researchers.

As for the concept of “mobilities”, there is no doubt that the publication of the work of the late John Urry *Sociology beyond societies: mobilities for the twenty-first century* in 2000 represented a veritable manifesto, advocating the intersections of mobility from social (social classes, gender and ethnic groups) and geographical (regions, cities and places) perspectives (Montanari & Staniscia, 2016), through new forms of relationships (networks) that should be interpreted in the context of the fluidity of relationships generated by the process of globalization and the generalization of information technologies. Therefore, as pointed out by Domínguez-Mujica (2016: v): “owing to its ability to link locations and societies, human mobility has received increasing academic attention over the last few years in the context of the globalization”.

To echo this new “mobilities paradigm”, John Urry and Mimi Scheller created CeMoRe (Centre for Mobilities Research) in 2003 at Lancaster University, with a transdisciplinary perspective. And, in the same line of action, they founded the journal *Mobilities* in 2006, seeking to foster academic debate around the *mobilities turn*, with the analysis of global, national, and local movements of people, objects, capital and information. This broad perspective goes beyond the study of migratory movements, including other mobilities such as tourism, transportation, displacements in public and private space and the movement of material objects in everyday life.

As far as migration is concerned, it is necessary to recognize that the perspective of mobility is much more inclusive, since it allows for a much better interpretation of its complexity at the international level. Processes of circular mobility, cross-border mobility, return, re-emigration, seasonal, study, lifestyle, etc., are becoming increasingly frequent, while factors such as migration policies and policies to combat discrimination, exclusion and marginalization of migrants and ethnic communities are acquiring a

significant dimension. These policies correspond to the governance enunciated in eleven of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Agenda 2030 - <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>), since they contain targets and indicators relevant to migration or displacement, in application of the basic principle of “leaving no one behind”.

In addition to this international mobility, there are internal migrations, which are the processes with the greatest impact on the pattern of human settlements in much of the world (Bell & Muhidin, 2009), especially in less developed countries, where the movements caused by regional imbalances and differences in opportunities between rural and urban areas are compounded by displacements due to the global climate crisis and internal socio-political conflicts. Finally, from a local point of view, we must remember daily mobility, which is so important in territorial planning and in the defense of sustainable cities and communities. On the other hand, this multiplicity of themes is analyzed with new approaches such as gender, age, the migration-development link, or that which emphasizes migrants’ feelings of identity, otherness, etc., all of which, paraphrasing King (2020: 8) allows us to speak of “a new age of diversified mobilities” that have made “migration studies come of age”.

Although the paradigm of human mobility arises in the context of sociology, it has flourished notably in the field of geography. Among others, renowned geographers have theorized on this paradigm: William Clark (USA); Tim Cresswell (UK-USA); Michael Hall (New Zealand); Kevin Hannam (Macau); Aharon Kellerman (Israel) and Allam Williams (UK). Many geographers are also involved in research institutes specializing in migration studies, created under the auspices of many universities around the world, especially in North America. In addition, there is a considerable number of collaborators in IMISCOE (International Migration Research Network - <https://www.imiscoe.org/>), the largest European network of researchers in the field of migration, integration, and diversity studies. This network involves 61 institutions from almost all European countries and, having been created as a *Network of Excellence* in April 2004, within the EU *6th Framework program*, it was constituted as an independent network in 2009, when this program expired.

Another initiative of undoubted impact for the advancement of migration studies from the field of geography was the creation, in 2000, of the International Geographical Union’s commission on “Global Change and Human Mobility”, also known by its acronym Globility (<https://globility.org/>). At the conference of this association, which was held in The Hague in August 1996, the proposal for the aforementioned commission was conceived at a meeting between William A. Clark, Armando Montanari, Ayelet Shachar and Allan Williams. Subsequently, it was approved at the general assembly of the *29th International Geographical Congress*, in Seoul (Korea, 2000). This commission has continued to function within the International Geographical Union and currently has 197 members, in addition to the ten members of its Steering Committee, its president and scientific secretary, and has actively participated in events organized by the IGU and other entities such as EUGEO (Association of Geographical Societies in Europe), EGAL (Meeting of Latin America Geographies) or the World Social Science Forum.

The dynamism shown by the examples we have given augurs a future in which studies on mobility will continue to contribute to the progress of geography and, in general, of the social sciences.

2. *Research on human mobility in Spain*

2.1 The Awakening of Migration Studies in Spain (1857-1949)

At a contemporary stage, when tracing the origins of geodemographic studies in Spain, in general, and of migratory processes, there is no doubt that we must refer, above all, to the production of statistical information, a task that constitutes the first keystone of the arch that supports research on human mobility in Spanish geography.

In the middle of the 19th century, specifically in 1856, during the reign of Isabel II and the government of General Narváez, the first Ley General de Estadística (General Statistics Law) was published, while the Comisión de Estadística General del Reino (General Statistics Commission of the Kingdom) was created. This fact explains why a few years later (1870) the Instituto Geográfico Nacional (National Geographical Institute) was established, with organic dependence on the Dirección de Estadística del Ministerio de Fomento (Statistics Directorate of the Ministry of Development), which became, from 1873, the Directorate of Statistics and the Geographic Institute of that Ministry.

In addition to this fact of great transcendence for the Spanish geography, there was a substantial legislative production of the Government in relation to statistics on migration, which reinforced the leading role of the Instituto Geográfico y Estadístico (Geographical and Statistical Institute). This is exemplified by the Royal Orders of August 26, 1882, and August 13, 1883, which entrusted it with the preparation of statistics on emigration and immigration, for which a Negociado de Emigraciones (Bureau of Emigrations) was created, as the body responsible for preparing the flow and migratory movement counts. It is a document with different names (from 1912 onwards it will be called “Estadística de Pasajeros por mar” (Sea Passenger Statistics) which will continue annually until the sixties of the 20th century, based on the entries and exits of passengers by sea registered in Spanish ports. They were published by the Geographic and Statistical Institute in normally quinquennial volumes (Ministry of Culture and Sport, 2022). Therefore, there is no doubt that these initiatives, as well as the enactment of different laws for the regulation of emigration, which increased as the years went by, can be interpreted in the context of the intensity of emigration abroad that Spain had registered since the second half of the 19th century, especially to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and other already independent Latin American countries, but also to the African colonies and to Cuba.

The creation of the Boletín de la Real Sociedad Geográfica (Bulletin of the Royal Geographical Society) in 1876 offers a clear example of this, since in its different issues it is possible to identify the importance given to the dissemination of information on population in general and migration in particular. In fact, to facilitate its consultation, the institution periodically disseminated directories of publications and tasks in which it is possible to recognize the importance of migration studies. Thus, in that made by Ricardo Beltrán y Rózpide in 1911 (Beltrán y Rózpide, 1911), we find, among many others, the following titles published between 1901 and 1911: “European Emigration (1901-1910)”; “Immigration and Colonization in Spanish America”; “Population and Immigration in the Argentine Republic”; “Indians and Immigrants (Peru and Ecuador)”; “Braceros and Spanish Immigration in Panama”; “Immigration in Cuba”; “The Emigration Congress in Santiago de Compostela”; etc. These pages also include the

signatures of geographers, historians, and other prestigious professionals of the time (Real Sociedad Geográfica de España, 2022).

To the production of statistics on foreign migrations, which reflect the data we have provided, must be added the work carried out by the aforementioned General Commission of Statistics of the Kingdom in terms of conducting modern Population²⁰. Thus, the statistical stage was inaugurated in Spain with the 1857 Population Census, although that which included, for the first time, the register of those “born in another province”, as well as the categories of “present, transients and absent” already contained in the 1860 Census, was that of 1877, all of which would facilitate the study of internal mobility (Instituto Nacional de Estadística -INE-, 2022; Silvestre Rodríguez, 2002).

This abundant information, which came to light in the second half of the 19th century, could have supported a more elaborate scientific analysis of mobility/migrations in Spain; however, the research carried out was descriptive in nature and, in very few cases, went beyond the mere enumeration of data. However, in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, some figures appeared who studied these processes with a more reflective look. Most of them developed their work around the decade of the thirties and forties of the twentieth century and it is worth mentioning, among them, the geographer Leonardo Martín Echeverría, the commercial technician of the State, Javier Ruiz Almansa, and the economist Román Perpiñá Grau, among many others.

The first of them (Salamanca 1884-Veracruz, 1958) was an enthusiastic geographer, who entered the Instituto Escuela of Madrid as an Aspirant Professor of Geography in 1918 and obtained the Chair of Geography and History at the institute of Segovia in 1920. He participated in the introduction in Spain of modern geography, which before the 1920s had hardly any cultivator here and, since it was not possible to receive sufficient geographic training in the Faculties of Arts, he had to make an effort of self-training, driven by his entry into the faculty of the Instituto Escuela, by his learning of foreign languages, and by a stay in Germany (Real Academia de la Historia, 2022). Committed to the cause of the Second Republic, through the Republican Action party, he held various positions from 1931 until the end of the civil war, and went into exile in Mexico in 1939, where he died years later. His stay in Germany familiarized him with the European geographical schools and with Ratzel's anthropogeographic school, which left a mark on his publications and his editorial work. About the study of population and migrations, it should be noted that, in the *Geografía de España (Geography of Spain)* published by Labor in 1928, “the part devoted to population is perhaps the best resolved and is based on two questions: the ‘laws’ of its distribution and the ‘forms of agglomeration’” (Quirós Linares, 1997: 74). A similar scheme, with a clear Ratzellian influence, can be found in the book published in 1940 by the Atlante publishing house in Mexico, under the title *El país y los habitantes (The country and its inhabitants)*, in which he makes a brief allusion to rural-urban migrations, interpreting population densities in Spain from a deterministic perspective, pointing out altitude, climate and the industrializing process as causal factors.

The figures of Javier Ruiz Almansa (1888-1950) and Román Perpiñá Grau (1902-1991) have been selected, among many others, to illustrate the nature of migration

²⁰ As such, they should be understood as those that meet four minimum conditions: official sponsorship, defined territory, universality, and simultaneity.

studies at this stage because of the impetus they gave to the *Estudio Científico de los Problemas de Población* (*Scientific Study of Population Problems*), as they called the Association that brought them together with other professionals from different branches of knowledge to promote demographic studies, the holding of conferences and the publication of articles in the *Revista Internacional de Sociología* (*International Journal of Sociology*) (1943), whose edition was sponsored by the Instituto Balmes de Sociología (Balmes Institute of Sociology) (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2022).

Javier Ruiz Almansa was a member of the special bodies of the Administration and published many articles on demography in that journal, in which he oversaw a section of *Noticias demográficas* (*Demographic News*). He began his work of scientific dissemination with a first work that saw the light of day in 1930, with the title *La población de España* (*The Population of Spain*), in which he ordered and systematized the statistics on the Spanish population since 1900. He also analyzed in greater depth the demographic evolution of Galicia, Aragón, and Madrid in successive issues of the *Revista Internacional de Sociología* (*International Journal of Sociology*) and elaborated the statistical series on Spanish emigration to Argentina, which he published in the same with the title *Emigración española a la Argentina. Series Estadísticas* (*Spanish emigration to Argentina. Statistical Series*) (Gascón, 1950).

Román Perpiñá Grau, a graduate of the Commercial University of Deusto (1918) and PhD from the University of Frankfurt (1929), after studying at the Institute of World Economics in Kiel, developed an intense work of research and dissemination on the Spanish economy, which transcended the borders of our country, which was recognized with the award of the Prince of Asturias Prize for Social Sciences in 1981. Among many other topics of economic policy and economics in general, he also wrote articles on population in the *Revista Internacional de Sociología* (*International Journal of Sociology*), such as the one he signed in its first issue with the title *Las migraciones: ley inexorable de los pueblos* (*Migration: an inexorable law of the people*) (Real Academia de la Historia, 2022).

In summary, in this first century of analysis, studies on migration are still scarce and their dissemination is the responsibility of a series of researchers of very diverse origins. At this stage, however, the Real Sociedad Geográfica y Estadística (Royal Geographical and Statistical Society) shines with its own light, carrying out an enormous task to organize and provide useful statistical information for the studies that will be developed in later stages, as well as the *Revista Internacional de Sociología* (*International Journal of Sociology*), which brings together a series of pioneering works that contributed to the scientific dissemination of demography and the study of migrations.

2.2 Migrations in the Spanish regional geography (1950-1975)

Migration studies within the geography of the population in Spain are marked by two fundamental facts, as we have been pointing out. On the one hand, by the evolution of geographical thought itself and, on the other, by the sequence of events inherent to the socioeconomic and political evolution of the country. For this reason, we have set the threshold of this stage in 1950, when the United Nations Organization accepted the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Spain, in the still hard years of autarchy of Francisco Franco's regime. For its part, we have set the end of this period in 1975, the year of the dictator's death. Parallel to these political events, Spain underwent far-reaching changes in its socioeconomic structure, including the resumption of

industrialization and urban growth which, together with other types of political transformations, came to be defined as “developmentalism”. From a social point of view, these processes gave rise to an intense movement from rural areas to the cities, as well as a gradual resumption of foreign emigration to Latin America and, fundamentally, to Western Europe.

From the perspective of geographical thought, this stage is marked by the great influence exerted by French regional geography in Spain until well into the 1970s, while geographical knowledge is institutionalized at all educational levels, due to the role given to it by the dictatorship in the cultural reconstruction of the country, as a vehicle for nationalist ideologies (Capel, 1976). In this context, the triumph of possibilism and the acceptance of geography, in the words of Vidal de la Blache, as “the science of places and not of men” meant that the population was considered as one more element in the explanation of the landscape, analyzing only those aspects of it that were related to its greater or lesser adaptation to the physical environment (García Ballesteros, 1985). This subordination of population studies to the regional approach prevailed in the work of well-known geographers in the early development of the discipline, such as Pau Vila or Dantín Cereceda, who focused their attention on population studies.

From the point of view of the institutions that will promote geographic studies, the Instituto Juan Sebastián Elcano del CSIC (Juan Sebastián Elcano Institute of the CSIC) (1940) and its sections of Zaragoza and Barcelona stand out. In addition, the work of the most renowned geographers of the 1950s in regional and human geography, Professors Manuel de Terán Álvarez, José Manuel Casas Torres and Joan Vilá Valentí, contributed to the consolidation of a university community of geographers who gave a definitive impulse to this discipline in the 1960s and 1970s (García Ramón et al., 1992). As for the former (Madrid, 1904-1984), there is no doubt that he is the exponent, par excellence, of the renewal of geography in the years of the dictatorship and the democratic transition and a great intellectual of the Spain of his time (Asociación Española de Geografía -AGE-, 2019). This is evidenced by the numerous articles published as a tribute and recognition of his figure after his death (Ribeiro, 1983; Bullón & Troitiño, 1984; Vilá Valentí, 1984; Solé i Sabarís, 1984; de Torres Luna, 1985); the four round tables that, under the title “Manuel de Terán: maestro de geógrafos (Manuel de Terán: Master of geographers)”, were held in 2004 at the Real Academia de la Historia (Royal Academy of History), en la Residencia de Estudiantes (Students Residence) and at the Autónoma and Complutense Universities of Madrid (del Río Lafuente, 2007); and the exhibition entitled “Manuel de Terán: geógrafo (Manuel de Terán: geographer)” was held at the Students Residence, curated by professors Nicolás Ortega Cantero and Eduardo Martínez de Pisón in 2007 (UNED Canal, 2007; Olivera Poll, 2008).

Although in the 1950s, the influence of regional geography kept population studies away from Spanish geography, Professor Terán's 1964 article “Geografía humana y sociología. Geografía social (Human geography and sociology. Social geography)”, in the words of Professor Aurora García Ballesteros, is that which “most profoundly proposes a social approach to population geography” (1985: 38). However, the human geography volume of the most outstanding work of these years was never published: the *Geografía regional de España (Regional geography of Spain)*, directed by Professor Manuel de Terán himself and by Lluís Solé Sabarís (1968) and which, in the words of Gómez Mendoza

(2018: 2), was “a school of thought that of the second-generation geographers of the century”.

Another geographer who made a strong defense of population studies in this period is Professor Casas Torres (Valencia, 1916 - Madrid, 2020). Although this academic joined the university in Valencia, he developed his research and teaching at the universities of Zaragoza and Complutense of Madrid. In the latter he created the Instituto de Geografía Aplicada (Institute of Applied Geography), and he also received tributes in recognition of his scientific work in 1972, 2007 and 2008. In the field of Population Geography his most outstanding work is that which he published in *Geographica*, in 1956, with the title “Un plan para el estudio de la geografía de la población española (A plan for the study of the geography of the Spanish population)”, a proclamation of his conception of the role of population within geography, as his words show: “it is necessary to situate this population, known statistically, in the place it occupies on the surface of the earth and to see it there as a passive subject of the influence of its environment, and of the other human collectivities in relation to it, at the same time as an active modifying agent of that environment” (1956: 31). These reflections show that population studies in Spanish geography were still confined to the schemes of regional geography, a perspective that Casas Torres intended to improve with his project to promote new research.

Finally, it is worth mentioning Professor Joan Vilá Valentí (Bages, 1925 - Barcelona, 2020), another teacher who developed a great task for the international recognition of Spanish geography (Asociación Española de Geografía -AGE-, 2020). He also played an important role in the *Societat Catalana de Geografia (Catalan Geographical Society)*, an organization founded in 1935 by Pau Vila that contributed to the consolidation of this knowledge in Catalonia. At the University of Barcelona, he promoted the creation of the Department of Geography, initiated the *Revista de Geografia (Journal of Geography)* and created a university delegation in Palma, the seed of the current Universitat de les Illes Balears (University of the Balearic Islands). Regarding research on migrations, Vilá Valentí introduced a certain statistical rationality in his study, publishing early (1960) together with María de Bolós an article in *Geographica* entitled “Las migraciones y las densidades e índices migratorios (Migrations and migration densities and indexes)”, as well as other works related to the role of migrations in the growth of Barcelona (1958; 1960).

In addition to these three authors, we recognize the work of other prestigious geographers in the study of internal migrations at this stage, whose subject matter was explored based on case studies. These include Amando Melón (1952; 1962); Jesús García Fernández (1960 and 1964); Joaquín Bosque and Alfredo Floristán (1957); Francisco Quirós (1960); Ángel Cabo (1961); and Eusebio García Manrique (1961). This list of geographers is accompanied by other researchers in economics, sociology, history, etc. According to the rigorous bibliographic work done by Professor Horacio Capel in 1975, among those who had tackled the study of migration with solvency were, in addition, the economists Ramón Tamames, Alfonso García Barbancho and Luis Martínez Cachero; the statisticians José Ros-Jimeno and José Ayuso Orejana; sociologists such as Víctor Pérez Díaz and Salustiano del Campo; and historians such as Jordi Nadal Oller and Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz. The latter played a decisive role in the advancement of knowledge, as they were the promoters, respectively, of the Centro de Estudios

Demográficos (Center for Demographic Studies) and the Asociación de Demografía Histórica (Association of Historical Demography), entities to which we will refer later.

About external migrations, the contributions of geography in this field of study are much scarcer, even though emigration to some Latin American countries and to Western Europe acquired great importance in this period. On this subject, a bibliographic review of the publications reveals, once again, that the weight of research rests on historians, demographers, economists, and sociologists. However, special mention should be made of the work of the Instituto Español de Emigración (Spanish Institute of Emigration) (1956), which was created to plan the departure of Spaniards in accordance with the migratory, social, and foreign policies of the immigration States, carrying out assisted migration programs (Calvo Salgado et al, 2009). At the same time, with the data collected in its central registry of emigration, it published a series of maps that were recognized as sources of great interest for geographical research (Rafael Puyol, 1972). Finally, it is worth mentioning the works of Professors Pérez Puchal (1975) and Estébanez and Puyol (1973) as an example of the overall studies carried out by geographers, to which other specific works on foreign emigration from certain Spanish provinces should be added.

We would not like to end this section without referring to what seems to us to be a magnificent testimony of the role that geographers gave to the territorial impact of mobility in this period. We refer to the book published in 1970 by Professor Joan Vilá Valentí and his young disciple at that time, Professor Horacio Capel, entitled *Campo y ciudad en la Geografía Española (The Countryside and the City in Spanish Geography)*. This work reflects the transformations that took place in those years because of the so-called rural exodus, which has had such a transcendence in the socioeconomic imbalances of Spain. It is a work that had, in addition, a great diffusion thanks to the fact that it was part of a collection of Salvat Editores, with the collaboration of Alianza Editorial, called Biblioteca Básica Salvat Libros RTV, which combined academic rigor and diffusion.

2.3 Migratory transition at the pace of European integration (1976-2000): the emergence of migration studies in geodemography

The broad period that integrates this stage is defined by the years of democratic transition and consolidation, to which European integration has contributed definitively since 1986. This was a period in which, simultaneously, the migratory transition took place in Spain, since, in contrast to the negative external balances that had been recorded prior to the so-called oil crisis of 1973, the migratory balance became more balanced, with immigration predominating over emigration from the 1980s onwards (Alcaide et al., 2007). With respect to internal migration, there has also been an important change in direction (Ródenas & Martí, 2002), with the rural exodus, which had attracted so much attention among researchers in previous decades, having lost its strength.

It may seem arbitrary to choose the year 2000 as the end date of this period, however, beyond the fact that it marks the end of the 20th century, there are a series of circumstances related to the migratory transition that make it advisable to set this date as the end of this stage. With respect to foreign migration, a positive migratory balance had been recorded for some years, however, the stock of foreign-born residents had not yet reached the figure of one million people at that date, an amount that will be exceeded one year later (INE, 2022). The trend towards an increase in immigration flows led to the approval and enactment, precisely in 2000, of the Organic Law on the Rights and

Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain (4/2000, of January 11), marking a new path in the regulation of foreigners (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2022). And, with respect to internal migrations, in the last decade of this period there had already been a change of direction, with residential variation from large cities to medium-sized cities and urban peripheries becoming increasingly important (García Coll and Puyol, 1997), in line with the process of suburbanization and with the beginning of the stage in which the housing sector began to evolve wildly (Domínguez-Mujica, 2021). All this meant that, in 2000, the intraregional migration rate reached a value of 11.42 emigrants per thousand inhabitants, surpassing interregional migrations (rate of 7.7 at that date) (Lago & Aguayo, 2004).

Finally, population studies in Spain were already well established within university geography, as evidenced by the fourteen years of existence of the *Grupo de Población de la Asociación Española de Geografía* (Population Group of the Spanish Geographical Association) (AGE, 2022), which held its seventh congress in Madrid in 2000, and the *Instituto de Economía, Geografía y Demografía -IEGD-* (Institute of Economics, Geography and Demography) of the CSIC, which had been created in the same year, 1986 (CSIC, 2022). A few years earlier, in 1983 and 1984, respectively, the *Asociación de Demografía Histórica -ADEH-* (Spanish Historical Demography Association) (ADEH, 2022) and the *Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics -CED-* (Center for Demographic Studies) (CED, 2022) had been founded. The temporal proximity in the constitution of these four entities means that we can consider the eighties of the twentieth century as the moment of hatching of research in the field of population geography. And, without any solution of continuity, we find them fully consolidated at the turn of the century. According to Vidal Bendito (1992: 130), their creation was much more than a mere formality, or an ephemeral declaration of intent.

The importance acquired by geodemographic studies at this stage is also related to the influence exerted by the new paradigms: the theoretical-quantitative revolution and the triumph of neopositivism, without excluding the critical perspective of the radical approach, whose imprint we recognize in many of the publications in which the influence exerted by the hidden forces of capitalism on migratory processes is revealed. Parallel to this triumph, the sources of analysis acquired a renewed impulse, generating statistical information of increasingly higher quality, with the participation of the statistical offices of the different autonomous communities, which had been created in the eighties, under the protection of the statutes of autonomy.

Another event of great importance at this stage was the development of the Internet, a decentralized set of interconnected communications networks, which gave rise to one of the most successful services, the World Wide Web (WWW or the Web), a series of protocols that allowed remote consultation of hypertext files, starting in 1990. In this way, the Web began to make it possible to consult demographic statistics online, giving a new dimension to the possibilities of disseminating demographic data and, therefore, to geodemographic research. Aware of this, some members of the Population Group of the Spanish Association of Geography published, precisely in 2000, a text in which Internet resources for population geographers were collected (García Coll et al., 2000) and, the following year, in the news and comments chapter of the journal *Estudios Geográficos* (Geographical Studies) they reflected on the possibilities that were opening up in this new stage of the emergence and expansion of the Internet (Reques et al., 2001).

In the 1980s, research methodologies also acquired great importance, as evidenced by the creation of the *Grupo de Trabajo de Tecnologías de la Información Geográfica* (Geographic

Information Technologies Working Group) within the Asociación Española de Geografía - AGE- (Spanish Geographical Association) in 1985, with many of its researchers collaborating in it as well as in the Population Geography Group. Increasingly refined analysis procedures were developed and, in the 1990s, with the commercialization of geographic information systems (GISs), a great advance was made in the quantitative treatment of information. The spread of these procedures, thanks to the generalization of personal computers, favored the georeferencing of demographic data, facilitating new processing methods combining statistical calculation and cartography.

In correspondence with this new panorama, regional research on population will gradually lose weight in relation to other areas of study, among which migration stands out. In the reflection made by Professor Vidal Bendito on the geography of population in Spain (1992), after reading the specialized bibliographic repertoires from 1975 to 1990, the growing weight of migratory studies was already evident. According to his research, works on migration, in that period, represented 18 percent of the publications in geodemography and were in second place, in order of importance, after regional studies (Vidal Bendito, 1992).

The process of transition towards new themes, new approaches, new sources and methodologies of analysis is evidenced by a review of the proceedings of the congresses of Population Geography. Thus, after the hatching to which we referred in the mid-1980s, research was oriented towards the study of the processes inherent to a post-transitional society: international immigration and foreign population; urban mobility linked to processes of suburbanization or metropolization; depopulation and demographic aging in rural areas; coexistence structures and gender, home and family studies linked, on many occasions, to the migratory processes themselves, i.e., human mobility gains enormous prominence as the axis of social transformation processes (Dominguez-Mujica et al. , 2011). Therefore, the geography of the population in Spain becomes a faithful reflection of the socioeconomic changes of a stage that can be described as modernity, within the developed countries of Europe.

Allow me to point out, as a colophon to this bibliographical review, the works mentioned below as examples of the socioeconomic transformation linked to new mobility processes. With respect to international migration, Muñoz-Pérez and Izquierdo Escribano published an article in 1989 in the journal *Population*, in which they defended the modification of the sign of international migration in Spain with the suggestive title “L’Espagne, pays d’immigration (Spain, a country of immigration)”. The article by Recaño and Cabré (2003) “Migraciones interregionales y ciclos económicos en España (Interregional migration and economic cycles in Spain) (1988-2001)” reveals the intimate relationship between the dynamics of internal mobility in the period under study and the economic conjunctures of that period, thus fulfilling the maxim so often stated by Reques (1996) that demography is a variable dependent on the economy.

2.4 Globalization and human mobility: the maturation of migration studies in the first decades of the 21st century

As we write these lines, it is difficult to define, with a single expression, the current situation of geographical research in Spain in the field of mobility and migration, since there are many factors that shape its character, while it is impossible to mention the

number of geographers dedicated to it. Nevertheless, the word that seems most appropriate to describe this stage of knowledge is that of maturity.

If we look at the socio-economic context of these years, from a structural point of view we must refer to a phase of late and post-industrial capitalism, which has become the focus of countless analyses at the pace of increasing socio-spatial interactions. Consequently, while persistent geostrategic and political tensions persist in the world, as well as income and wealth imbalances at all geographic scales of analysis, mobility flows are becoming more complex, influenced not only by factors such as work or housing, but also by gender, leisure, studies, consumption, remote work, etc., typical of a postmodern society. It is these components that condition the dynamics of human mobility, i.e., the attraction or repulsion of the population to certain areas, as well as daily movements.

From the point of view of historical junctures, the 21st century offers a sequence of events that make it a privileged laboratory for observing the dynamics of human mobility in Spain. The first years of this stage, up to 2008, correspond to a period of intense financial-real estate growth, which gave rise to an unprecedented urban expansion, because of the business expectations of landowners, developers and builders, and their collusion with the financial and political-administrative system. This situation was accompanied by a large influx of immigrants from abroad, due to the opportunities offered by the Spanish labor market, especially in certain activities related to low-skilled jobs in agriculture, construction, and personal services, which directed almost all the attention of geodemographers towards these flows. The consolidation of foreign population communities, for its part, also contributes to arouse the interest of scientists, because this fact generates new spatial dynamics (segregation processes, neighborhood transformation, gentrification, etc.) that are accompanied by cultural heterogeneity and diversity, as well as processes of transnationality.

Subsequently, in the economic outlook from 2008 onwards, economic overaccumulation and large capital surpluses led to a deep crisis, due to the lack of investment opportunities, falling profit rates and lack of effective demand in the market. To this was added an employment crisis, being dramatic the social consequences that they entailed and that became even more acute with the debt crisis, which was forced by the austerity policy of the European Union of the years 2011-2013. At this juncture, the attraction of foreign immigration decreased and the re-emigration and return of foreigners took place, as well as the emigration of an important group of Spaniards to other countries, reversing the external migratory balance. Gradually this situation is overcome since 2015, although the positive signs of evolution, much more recognizable in 2018 and 2019, in relation to the economy and the evolution of foreign migration, are abruptly interrupted by the expansion of the great pandemic of COVID-19, from 2020.

With regard to the impact of these circumstances on geodemographic research on internal migration, the bibliographic compilation carried out by Domínguez-Mujica in 2011, following the work carried out by the Red Temática para los estudios de Geografía y Población en España (Thematic Network for Geography and Population Studies in Spain), revealed that a significant part of the publications published in the first decade

of the 21st century continued to focus on rural exodus and depopulation, while at the same time there was an interest in recognizing the timid demographic recovery of certain sparsely populated municipalities. Conversely, the study of residential mobility in urban areas (suburbanization processes) had gained enormous weight, especially in large metropolitan areas. After the crisis, however, peri-urban areas became expulsive and reduced their attractiveness, while the flows that had contributed to slight population growth in certain rural municipalities decreased (Otero et al. 2019). Finally, in the years of economic recovery, we note the regained centrality of many cities, which gained prominence with the attraction of population from practically all other territories, while at the same time patterns of residential displacement develop in intraurban spaces, because of the ongoing gentrification processes.

The topics described show the vitality of studies on human mobility/migration within Spanish geography in this last stage of its history, in close correspondence with the evolution of the times and with the process of internationalization that characterizes it. It is no longer just a question of the strength of internal research, but of Spanish scientific production acquiring a global dimension, parallel to the participation of researchers in international events, European projects, international exchange programs, stays in foreign university centers or publications with an impact in a foreign language. At the same time, research teams are made up of specialists from different branches of knowledge, so that geographers work with anthropologists, sociologists, economists, etc., which enriches the perspectives of analysis and the channels of methodological transfer.

For their part, information technologies facilitate new quantitative and qualitative study procedures, such as the study of daily mobility through its trace in telephone devices, or the approach to migrants' social networks through virtual ethnography, to give just two examples. There is no doubt that new avenues of research have opened up with the computerization of analysis operations, not only with Geographic Information Systems but with all those that can be grouped under the generic term of Geographic Information Technologies or, even more, with the revolution of macro data, the so-called *big data*, based on new computer applications for their processing. We can also include in this quantitative revolution the progress in the processing of qualitative data, thanks to specialized programs that provide different software tools for the examination of such information. All this is yielding fruitful results that can be seen in many of the investigations underway.

In summary, the information provided, although it does not include a repertoire of authors and works of reference in this last stage, shows the thematic and methodological diversity of migration/mobility studies in this last period, studies that are keeping pace with the times. Thus, the qualifier of maturity seems to us to be fully justified to define the level reached by geographical studies in this field and their capacity to go beyond the limits of their diffusion in Spain.

3. *Coda. The pandemic: a new challenge for geographical mobility studies.*

It is very difficult to evaluate the changes to which the pandemic may have given or may give rise, since we do not have sufficient empirical information to assess whether or not the immobility that accompanied it during the confinement and the subsequent restrictions on mobility have been able to modify the patterns that had been observed in human mobility in the first decades of the 21st century, those defined by Schaffhauser Mizzi (2017) not only as a spatial process, but as an emotional, social, cultural and experiential displacement constituting a human coming and going.

Nor is it possible to estimate the impact of this immobility on the population as a whole, since the pandemic may have increased the social fracture and vulnerability of certain groups, for example, the elderly (more immobile than the rest of the population); forced migrants (more mobile because their survival depends on mobility); lower-skilled labor migrants (their professional activity requires mobility, even in times of pandemic, as is the case with seasonal agricultural workers or those engaged in care work). At the same time, the mobility of others has increased, such as the so-called digital nomads, who have been the object of attraction policies by some less developed countries during the pandemic (Latvia, Slovenia, Thailand, Indonesia, India, etc.).

At this point, therefore, there are more questions than certainties regarding the reconfiguration of human mobility in the coming years. And it could be said that there are as many questions as those concerning the evolution of the pandemic itself, since, given that human mobility is a right and a value, just like territory, work, education, culture, or health, we doubt that it will cease to play the leading role that geographers have conferred on it. Thus, theoretical reflections on immobility, on the new dimension of local mobility, on “digital mobilities” or on the resilient behavior of migrants must guide much of the research underway, since the pandemic has been a real litmus test that forces us to redefine and rethink the world in which we live and the role that mobility plays in it as a nexus connecting spaces and societies.

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