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The impact of the Great Recession on the urban growth of the Málaga agglomeration

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the defining characteristics of Spanish history in the 20th century and the beginnings of the 21st century has been the process of urbanisation. Since the 1960s, Spanish cities have undergone a process of urbanisation that had never before been seen in Spain. This accelerated process of urbanisation was intensified between 1960 and 1975 due to the economic development experienced in certain areas of the country and the rural exodus. However, since 1975, large Spanish cities entered a new phase of drastic reduction in population growth coinciding with the economic crisis. During the crisis, the central areas of the great Spanish cities lost their inhabitants and activities tended to disperse throughout the metropolitan area, bringing about a phenomenon of urban spread in the surrounding area.

The changes in recent decades have altered the traditional conception of a metropolitan area that is characterised by a relationship in which the city centre predominates. New terms arise in order to describe the new reality (Méndez, 2010): the diffuse city (Indovina, 1991), the scattered city (Monclús, 1998), the city without borders (Oriol Nel-lo, 1998), the metapolis (Ascher, 1995), the postmetropolis (Soja, 2000), the universal pantopolis (García-Bellido, 2003), and post-suburbia (Méndez, 2010). All of these underscore the fact that the previous models of urbanisation that are related to the Chicago School have been left behind and differentiate a suburban area and, linked to this, a peri-urban area; as well as underscoring the realisation that postmodernism has entailed the arrival of a more diffuse and infinite suburbanisation (Méndez, 2010).

It is useful to highlight the differences between the Anglo-Saxon city and the European and, more specifically, Mediterranean city, given that we are analysing a Mediterranean agglomeration.

In Europe, 'the traditional Mediterranean city is characterised by its compactness and by the clear separation between urban and rural landscapes. The difference in dwellings was clearly noted in buildings with several floors in the Latin style and the single-family dwelling with a small garden in the Anglo-Saxon model' (Demateis, 1998).

In the Anglo-Saxon countries, suburbanisation is more recent than in the Mediterranean city, where the tradition was already enjoyed on the part of a social elite: its residential use being associated with productive use, since latifundia were worked by labourers and sharecroppers. Furthermore, it is a scattered urbanisation in which the countryside depends on the city. In contrast, suburbanisation in the Anglo-Saxon is more delayed, whilst it derives from the urban expansion as a consequence of the industrial revolution. 'This suburbanisation will not be of a rural type, as in the Mediterranean city, but rather an invasion of rural spaces on the part of the city' (Ibid.). Finally, as Indovina highlights, 'suburbanisation in Anglo-Saxon countries is in answer to a planned model, whilst the dispersed Mediterranean city arises completely spontaneously, although this does not mean that it was not compelled by the circumstances' (Indovina, 2012).

In the years of the Great Recession, González-Romero and Caravaca stressed that 'at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the existence of a profound cri-

sis was already being revealed' (González-Romero and Caravaca, 2016). The Great Recession has resulted in a slowdown on the spread of diffuse urbanisation; above all because diffuse urbanisation depends on the construction of houses and these are not built if the financial sector also undergoes a crisis, affecting the economy as a whole and the workers in particular. Some economists currently talk about the end of the crisis, but it is difficult to uphold this statement with the levels of unemployment and poverty that still grip our country.

In terms of sources, we employ sources of various types with the following intentions:

1. The 2011 Censo de Viviendas [Housing Census] that was carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística [Spanish Statistical Office] was used to calculate the importance of the conversion of a second residence to a permanent one.
2. The 2001 and 2011 housing censuses in order to understand the types of tenure of houses and the changes that occurred between censuses, with the aim of estimating the impact that the crisis had on access to property for the population of the agglomeration.
3. The variations of the Continuous Register of inhabitants carried out by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, in order to determine the population figures in the interval between 2001 and 2008 and from 2008 to 2013. Our intention is to identify to what extent the crisis slowed down the pace of demographic growth in the Málaga agglomeration.
4. The Estadística del Movimiento Natural de la Población [Vital Statistics] and the Estadística de Variaciones Residenciales [Residential Variation Statistics] from the Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía [Andalusian Statistics and Cartography Institute].
5. The 2008 to 2013 Nomenclátor [Nomenclature], key years in the crisis, with the aim of analysing whether or not the crisis contributed to a retreat of the population into compact communities and whether or not growth in the dispersed area contributed to processes of peri-urbanisation in the rural environment.

II. THE SUBJECT MATTER

We chose the agglomeration of Málaga as the object of research due to its study has been addressed in a re-

cent article in which is emphasised that construction and the real estate sector have a considerable impact on the economy of the province, in as much as its main activity was, and continues to be, tourism.

It is the urban agglomeration of Málaga, a supra-municipal system without the legal entity of a metropolitan area, but with the characteristic of belonging to a single market of houses, services, production, etc. It encompasses, in our case, the group made up of the municipality of Málaga and the inner metropolitan ring composed of municipalities located in a radius of 25 km with respect to the central municipality.

The space inside the inner metropolitan ring includes a territory that is physically contrasted: Montes de Málaga on the one hand, characterised by rugged landform at moderate altitudes that has brought about, as a constant, fragility in the population (Ocaña, 1995). The area of the Montes is briefly interrupted to the west by the Hoya de Málaga, through which the River Guadalhorce flows (figure 1). At the bottom of the valley, in the Vega Baja, the population is scattered, with the working houses interspersed among the greenery of the valley's irrigated land. As we get closer to the coastline, the population becomes denser.

The coastal belt is spread out as an unbroken urban continuum, from east to west, centred on the city of Málaga that joins the east coast to the western coastal belt.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. THE DEMOGRAPHIC EVOLUTION DURING THE GREAT RECESSION IN THE AGGLOMERATION OF MÁLAGA

In spite of the Great Recession, the differences in the volume of the population between the municipality of Málaga and the inner metropolitan ring continue to fall. The inner metropolitan ring has undergone demographic growth at a greater rate than the municipality of Málaga, which has been stagnant since the beginning of the nineties. In so doing, a demographic stagnancy would be confirmed in the metropolis and a growth, first accelerated and then solely positive, in the inner metropolitan ring.

In this evolution of the population, it is necessary to discern two stages: one prior to the eruption of the crisis and another since 2008 that ushers in the financial-real estate crisis and that has an impact on the slowdown

in demographic growth in a significant fashion. Since 2008, growth has slowed down in municipalities where the supply of housing has dropped considerably. Due to this revolving around a crisis that affects the real estate sector, the bursting of the real estate bubble hugely restricted access to houses, which led to a massive slowdown in demographic growth that, however, continued in double digits, which we cannot consider as demographic stagnancy.

By analysing the components of the growth, the loss of attraction of municipalities that have experienced greater demographic growth in the years prior to the crisis is confirmed, both among climate immigrants that dominate the residential tourism in the western coastal region, as well as among emigrants from the capital who began to abandon the central municipality in a meaningful way as of the middle of the eighties, an initial era of suburbanisation, whose growth was, in part, interrupted by the bursting of the real estate bubble. However, I would like to qualify that the crisis does not explain the fact that the figures regarding demographic growth on the coast and in the suburban municipalities of Alhaurín de la Torre and Rincón de la Victoria are upheld, but for it being by means of a conversion of second residences to permanent residences.

The global balance offers moderation for the figures of the migratory balance. However, there is a new element that invites us to think further, the similar volume reached by the provincial migratory balance the foreign migratory balance in the municipality of Málaga. This leads us to formulate the hypothesis that both are somehow related: urban emigrants transfer their houses to immigrating foreign labour, by which a *filtering down* phenomenon occurs with the formation of ghettos in the municipality of Málaga.

The distribution of the foreign immigrant population shows a concentration on the eastern Costa del Sol, in the conurbation of Torremolinos-Benalmádena and in Málaga. It is in the municipality of Málaga where the foreign immigrant working population is concentrated, above all from Africa and Latin America, much less so from non-EU European countries and from Asia. In contrast, climate immigration is more concentrated in the inner metropolitan ring: on the western Costa del Sol, which is set apart from previous immigration in that they are retirees with high purchasing power originating in the EU who come to the Costa del Sol due to the attractive climate. In contrast, working immigrants choose the municipality of Málaga for economic reasons: because it consolidates the majority of jobs in the agglomeration.

3.2. THE EVOLUTION OF HOUSING DURING THE GREAT RECESSION IN THE AGGLOMERATION OF MÁLAGA

In order to calculate the importance that the conversion of second to permanent residences had, we have prepared an indicator that offers the result that a little less than 55,000 inhabitants of the inner metropolitan rings converted their second residence to a permanent one between 2001 and 2011, which is a figure that considerably matches that lost by the capital during the period between census, and which confirms to us the hypothesis that this emigration was due to this collective previously putting their house in the capital on the market, giving them up to foreign immigrant workers. In spite of the end of easy access to real estate credit and the construction of newly-built homes, the majority of houses in 2011 were mortgaged due to their having been acquired in the years prior to the Great Recession, above all in the inner metropolitan ring of the agglomeration of Málaga.

It is worth noting the increase in rental housing stock in the inner metropolitan ring, which is especially relevant in the municipality of Málaga. This boom in rental housing, reached above all since the Great Recession, is due to the slowdown in the construction of new houses and, above all, to the impossibility of accessing house ownership due to the end of real estate credit being granted until relatively recently.

3.3. THE USAGE OF NOMENCLÁTOR AS A SOURCE AT AN INFRA-MUNICIPAL LEVEL

One final demographic source is that of the Nomenclátor de Unidades de Población [Nomenclature of Population Units], which we use with the aim of observing whether or not demographic growth has slowed down or not in the municipal capitals of the peri-urban area in recent years or whether, conversely, an emerging process of population growth in the scattered municipalities that make up the agglomeration can be observed, as an alternative way of life to the crisis.

The scattered areas of the Vega Baja of the Guadalhorce in Alhaurín el Grande and in Cártama and of the municipalities on the coast, Rincón de la Victoria and Benalmádena, stand out due to their growth in population at critical moments of the crisis: 2008-2013. However, it is a differentiated growth: in the Vega Baja of the Guadalhorce, the majority of these dwellings are linked to agricultural holdings, aimed at production on a part-time basis, specialising in irrigated crops. This agricultural

specialisation has served as a traditional supplement to the main family income based on construction activities or services on the coast. It is the classic figure of the countryside labourer, who has their main job on the coast, who has lost it due to the crisis and who supplemented their income with part-time work at weekends and in holidays on their farmland in which, furthermore, agricultural smallholdings predominate. The economic crisis and the demand for organic production has caused a progressive transformation of peri-urban agriculture in order to meet the urban demand by taking advantage of the location in the closest part to the city of Málaga and the improved accessibility of the provincial capital. But they have an additional value: that of serving as the main residence for many families who have lost access to housing as a result of the crisis, which has consequently caused these weekend and holiday homes to become permanent residences.

As a consequence, a reduction in the second residence in the agglomeration occurred.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In summary and to conclude, we are able to declare that:

1. There is a differentiated growth dynamic between the inner metropolitan ring and the municipality of Málaga. This dynamic is characterised by a greater pace of demographic growth in the inner metropolitan ring than in the municipality of Málaga. However, Málaga continues to include the most populated part of the agglomeration, but its pace of growth is stagnant in comparison with other municipalities in the agglomeration.
2. There are two distinct areas within the inner metropolitan ring: one is the coast, which maintains positive dynamic, although greatly reduced from previous years; and another is the interior, where municipalities in the Guadalhorce valley stand out, above all those closest to the municipality of Málaga.
3. The process of peri-urbanisation resulting from the occupation of the rural area of the valley, which saw its precedent in the area of Axarquía, coexists, in the inner metropolitan ring, with the residential suburbanisation. This latter form of growth is the one that predominates in Churriana and Alhaurín de la Torre in the east, and in Rincón de la Victoria on the eastern coast, although with rates of growth very much lower than those in the years prior to the crisis.
4. Demographic growth has slowed down but still remains positive figures. In Málaga, the emigration of middle-class people from Málaga has not been fully stopped, as they continue to abandon the big city in order to move to the middle-class suburb of Alhaurín de la Torre and Rincón de la Victoria, by means of the conversion of second residences to permanent residences, which has contributed to the stagnant demographic growth figures of the provincial capital in spite of the immigration of foreign workers.
5. In the municipality of Málaga, immigrating foreign workers have an impact, principally from non-EU countries who constitute unskilled labour and who are isolated in ghettos.
6. On the western Costa del Sol, there is a large conurbation that spreads beyond the limits of the agglomeration of Málaga to Marbella, continuing as far as Manilva and even nearing the urban area of Campo de Gibraltar. Growth is distinct to the labour immigration of the municipality of Málaga: it is a climate migration originating in EU-member countries, made up of foreign retirees with high purchasing power.
7. There is a difference between the pace of growth in the population centres and in the dispersed areas located in the inner metropolitan ring. The scattered locations, which correspond to a repopulation of the countryside, are dispersed within a large part of the valley of the Guadalhorce. The pattern of growth is determined by their low density and dispersion. Mainly due to part-time agricultural workers, who, although illegally self-constructed houses for non-agricultural purposes deserve to be mentioned.
8. A differentiated reaction definitively occurs in the face of the crisis: we witness a reassessment of access to second-hand housing with regard to new construction. This reassessment is generated thanks to the boom, in general, of the conversion of second residence to permanent ones, as seen in the area where it is most common, which has led to a significant draw-down on secondary residences in the period between censuses.