PRESENTACIÓN

MIGRATION POLICIES, PARTICIPATION AND THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF MIGRATION IN SPAIN

POLÍTICAS MIGRATORIAS, PARTICIPACIÓN Y CONSTRUCCIÓN POLÍTICA DE LA MIGRACIÓN EN ESPAÑA

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Abstract: This article offers a state of the art of research on migration policies, participation and the political construction of immigration in Spain. It starts with an overview of migration policy, addressing the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on the configuration of the political agenda. Secondly, it addresses the political participation of immigrants in Spain and their role as "new" voters. Finally, the appearance of the extreme right political party VOX has shifted the classic debates on the attitudes of the population towards immigration and built a new anti-immigration discourse. The article argues that academic interest and scientific production have been modulated in line with the various phases of Spain's configuration as a country of immigration. The text ends with some reflections on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which has opened up a period of major challenge and uncertainty.

Key words: immigration policies; migrants political participation; migration and politics; anti-immigration discourse; Spain.

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Resumen: *Este artículo ofrece un estado de la cuestión de la investigación sobre políticas migratorias, participacion y construcción política de la inmigración en España. Comenzamos con una visión general de la política migratoria, abordando el impacto de la crisis económica de 2008 en la configuración de la agenda política. En segundo lugar, revisamos la participación política de los inmigrantes en España y su rol como "nuevos" votantes. Por último, se analiza cómo la aparicióndel partido de extrema derecha VOX ha transformado los debates clásicos sobre las actitudes de la población hacia la inmigración y construido un nuevo discurso anti-inmigración. En este artículo argumentamos que el interés académico y la producción científica han evolucionado de la mano de las distintas fases de la configuración de España como país de inmigración. El texto finaliza con algunas reflexiones sobre el impacto de la crisis de COVID-19, que abre un periodo nuevo de grandes retos e incertidumbres.*

Palabras clave: *políticas migratorias; participación política de los migrantes; inmigración y política; discursos anti-inmigración; España.*

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the 2008 economic recession has brought about changes in Spanish migration policies over the last decade (both in terms of management and social integration), together with a growing process of naturalization that has transformed the nature of migrants' political participation. In addition, over the last few years, "migratory discourse" in our country has become increasingly politicized.

This nexus between politics and migration is based on a series of fundamental pillars. Firstly, the economic crisis produced a change in the Spanish migratory cycle: instead of receiving growing numbers of new arrivals, coinciding with a period of economic prosperity, the country began to witness a flow of departures (Arango, 2016). Spain was once again forced to pack its bags and become a "country of emigration", with the departure of native born population and the return home or reemigration of immigrants to other countries (Ortega-Rivera et al., 2016). The effects of the crisis on the labor

market led to a change of direction in migration policies that, during the years of economic growth, had been directed towards controlling the flows. Immigration management had been designed to meet the demands of a dynamic labor market, but during the recession, the focus of public policies shifted to return programs, with few measures taken to address the "new emigration". In recent years, the management of flows on Spain's external borders has remained a key issue, not only because of the renewed increase in maritime arrivals, but also because of the rise in applications for asylum.

A second factor is the scant attention paid to pre-crisis social integration initiatives, due to the reduction in the resources available, the result of austerity policies and the influence of a climate of "regulatory and institutional atony" in this sense (Arango et al., 2018). However, despite the crisis, immigrant settlement continued to form part of the political and academic debate on integration. Indeed, the arrival of new left governments in 2015 led to the appearance of a series of additional factors, such as increase in the number of local initiatives. Mention should also be made of measures relating to the naturalization of immigrants and the regulation of the labor market, as well as initiatives within the field of education.

Thirdly, the processes of naturalization and, in general, the consolidation of the legal status of the immigrant population, have brought about changes in their political participation and, with it, the right to vote in Spain. This has happened in such a way that the political participation of immigrants, together with the development of initiatives hindering the political participation of "new emigrants", has recently attracted the experts' attention (Bermúdez and Escrivá, 2016; López-Sala, 2017), forming a third pillar of migration discourse.

Finally, the impact of the recession brought with it another major transformation to our country, stemming from growth in the "politicization of migration" and the increasingly prominent influence of migration in public and electoral debate. On one hand, the "new emigration" by persons of Spanish origin has been politically articulated as a mobilization attributable to "economic exile". Furthermore, the radical right political party VOX, with a growing presence in national and regional parliaments, have adopted an anti-immigration discourse. These factors are also part of the crisis that is affecting the structure of the European Union, questioned by Brexit and by the joint management of external

borders, put under further strain by the growing involvement of conservative governments and anti-immigration parties.

This special issue of *Migraciones* aims to address these core factors of the politics/migration nexus. In recent years, numerous studies have analyzed the policies of flow management, social integration, migrants' political participation and the politicization of migratory discourse in Spain. However, no special issues of journals or books have shed light on the areas of research that have emerged from the new configuration of migration that has appeared in Spain in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and which is occurring within an unsettled European context, the result of Brexit and the rise in "anti-immigration" discourse.

The current COVID-19 crisis is also shaping a new scenario in our country, characterized by the supervening crisis and forced immobility, which will not only affect the dynamics of migration flows and migration management, but may also increase or exacerbate the politization of immigration and the centrality of anti-immigration discourses in public debate.

The introduction to this special issue aims to provide a broad insight into the state of the art of research into migration policies, participation and the political construction of immigration in Spain and to presents the authors' main contributions to this issue. We begin with an overview of migration policy, addressing the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on the configuration of the political agenda on migration in our country. Secondly, we address the political participation of immigrants in Spain. Following the push for naturalizations, the migrant population is beginning to have a voice and a vote, attracting the attention of academia, who are beginning to consider these "new" voters. Finally, the appearance of VOX in the Spanish political arena has shifted the focus from classic debates on the attitudes of the indigenous population towards the configuration of immigrants as new political actors and the construction of an anti-immigration discourse.

The text argues that academic interest and scientific production have been modulated in line with the various phases of Spain's configuration as a country of immigration, beginning with the initial wave of arrivals, which coincided with the economic boom, and the subsequent economic recession and configuration of our country as a context of consolidated immigration. Within this context, the politics/migration nexus has acquired new tones that are largely

reflected in the articles included in this special issue. Finally, the text ends with some reflections on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which has opened up a period of major challenge and uncertainty due to its potential effects on economic and mobility dynamics.

1. MIGRATION POLICY, UNDER DEBATE, IN A CONTEXT OF A SUPERVENING CRISIS

The economic crisis of the late 2000s marked a change of cycle in the dynamics of mobility in Spain and shaped a new research agenda in migration studies (López-Sala and Oso, 2015). Of particular relevance in this agenda were the analyses centered on the links between migration and the labor market in the context of the crisis and the dynamics associated with the new forms of mobility derived from the recession. However, since the middle of the last decade there has been a renewed interest in the analysis of Spanish migration policy and its spheres. This interest is due to a number of processes. First, the maintenance of flows across Spanish borders in the European context of the so-called refugee crisis and their influence on the highly strained modulation of European immigration and asylum policy. Secondly, the increase in internal control measures in Spanish migration control policy as a whole; an internal dimension that has become visible over the last decade. Added to this are the changes observed in labor migration policy, in the context of the recession, with impacts such as those on recruitment programs at origin. This context of recession has also triggered the debate on its effects on integration policies, in the light of the weakening of an already diminished welfare state. Finally, after more than three decades as a host country, naturalization and nationality policies, the most marginal aspects of migration policy research in Spain to date, have begun to be addressed.

In the field of border policies, studies have highlighted the consolidation of patterns of remote control, outsourcing, technologization and privatization (Casas-Cortés et al., 2016; Godenau and López-Sala, 2016; Ferrer-Gallardo and Gabrielli, 2018; López-Sala and Godenau, 2020). These governance techniques have been complemented by additional measures aimed at the preventive control of arrivals, the containment and promotion of refoulement at

the border, and deterrent confinement in external perimeter enclaves. Hence the centrality of the research that in recent years has focused on issues such as the study of "hot returns" (Martínez-Escamilla and Sánchez-Tomás, 2019); the practices of immobilization in the cities of Ceuta and Melilla (Ferrer-Gallardo and Albet-Mas, 2016) and, more recently, on the institutionalization of "border processing" through the appearance of Foreigners "Temporary Stay Centers (Barbero, 2021). These studies have, in recent years, contributed to literature on migration control in the case of Spain, highlighting its far-reaching institutionalization and the extent of measures applied. In many instances they have questioned their legality effects on the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees, providing an empirical contrast for some of the most influential theories in this sub-area of migration studies (including, but not limited to, the crimmigration approach, humanitarian borders, camperization or the deterrence paradigm). The effect of the refugee crisis on policy and the European states" concern regarding the so-called 'secondary movements' have also been reflected, in line with the trends observed in other European countries, in an increased interest in the study of the dynamics of internal European borders (Barbero, 2018). In turn, Spain's transformation into one of the main European countries of reception of asylum seekers for the first time in its recent migratory history, has led to a rise in analyses of asylum border management (Morgades, 2015; López-Sala and Moreno-Amador, 2020) and reception policies (Iglesias and Estrada, 2018). The latter are largely framed within studies into multilevel governance and the so-called 'local turn' (Garcés-Mascareñas and Gebhardt, 2020).

Internal control is another area that has experienced sustained growth in the last decade as an object of study. Indeed, there is a growing literature that had shifted and expanded the spatial dimension of this policy from border to territory. In this area, studies have focused on three elements of migration studies in Spain, broadly interrelated and the object of scant attention until the last decade: detentions by ethnic profile (García-Añon et al., 2013), internment (Boza, 2017) and deportation (Fernández-Bessa and Brandariz, 2016). Although their complexity and multidimensionality would require, as in the case of border studies, approaches from different disciplines, in the case of Spain, studies from law, legal sociology, as well as work on criminality and critical criminology have predominated this area, albeit not exclusively. Moreover, they have

had a fundamentally structural focus, centered on the conformation of deportation regimes, leaving aside a dimension that has attracted considerable international attention in recent years within the field of deportation studies, namely the life experiences of the deported subjects and their social impacts. In this academic context, another line of research has recently emerged, focused on the analysis of mobilization and resistance actions against border regimes and the criminalization of pro-migration activists (Fernández-Bessa, 2019; López-Sala and Barbero, 2019).

Integration has continued to be a focus of academic interest, and is currently one of the main objectives of migration studies research in Spain (Rinken et al., 2018). Its political dimension, however, has been largely overlooked, partly as a result of the "inaction as strategy" that has dominated this area of public policy in Spain. The long shadow of the effects of the economic crisis on the welfare state and social policies aimed at the immigrant population has, however, attracted some attention. For example, a number of authors have highlighted how the economic crisis has affected the immigrants' social rights (Bruquetas and Moreno-Fuentes, 2015), how cuts in social spending have led to a deinstitutionalization of this policy (Fernández-Suárez, 2017) or a weakening of municipalities as entities managing immigration (Bueno and Treviño, 2015). Other studies have focused on analyzing the effects of the policy on some innovative dimensions, such as family reunification (Mato and Miyar, 2017) or the health rights of irregular immigrants (Moreno-Fuentes, 2015). In a context of consolidation of immigrant settlement and economic crisis, naturalization has also been addressed as an indicator of integration and a strategy in the face of difficult times (Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2016).

In recent years, in contrast to what is happening in the case of integration policies, there has also been an incipient interest in citizenship regimes and nationality policies, a dimension that has traditionally been overlooked in literature addressing Spain, despite a few notable exceptions (Álvarez-Rodríguez, 2014; Martín-Pérez and Moreno-Fuentes, 2012). Studies on the Spanish citizenship regime have revealed its asymmetrical effect and its differentiating (or discriminatory) impacts, both within the migrant group (Pinyol and Montijano, 2015), as well as on the dynamics of mobility itself (Domingo and Ortega-Rivera, 2015). A number of specific studies on the Latin American community bring to light how their

privileged status within the Spanish citizenship regime (shorter access through residence and dual nationality) has diversified their possibilities —and patterns— of mobility, converting them into resources for coping with the economic crisis (Recaño and Jáuregui, 2014; McCarthy, 2020). Other authors, who have analyzed the strategic and instrumental use of citizenship in times of crisis, have suggested that naturalization processes should be embedded in a complex matrix of national and international regimes, which create structures of opportunities that can be used by both migrants and states to mitigate the deterioration of the socio-economic dimension of integration (Finotelli et al., 2017). More recently, comparative analyses have addressed the stability of the citizenship regime in the Spanish case despite its transformation into one of Europe's principal countries of immigration (Pasetti, 2019) or its characterization in accordance with citizenship theories and immigrant incorporation models (Duarte de Carvalho, 2020).

In "The Disruptive Regularization Mechanism in the Spanish Law that Challenges the Reform of the Common European Asylum System", Laura García Juan looks at the procedure of *regularización por arraigo*, a mechanism in Spanish law that allows foreigners in an irregular situation access to a temporary residence permit, on the condition that they can provide "proof" of integration. The author conducts an analysis of this procedure within the framework of European legislation. The aim is to elucidate, from a legal perspective, whether this mechanism could be used by asylum seekers whilst their applications are under study. Furthermore, and within the context of the forthcoming reform of the common asylum system in Europe, the author considers whether similar regularization procedures could have a positive effect as pathways to more stable legal statuses.

In "Language and Social Integration in Times of Increasing Anti-immigration Discourses. Challenges for Teachers and Migrant Adult Learners in Catalonia in the Context of the European Union", Charo Reyes, Silvia Carrasco and Laia Narciso analyze the structural barriers that influence the linguistic integration of migrants and adult refugees in Catalonia, revealing how the anti-immigrant discourses of the radical right delegate responsibility for integration to immigrants through the acquisition of the national language. Their conclusions spotlight the fact that although supranational, national and regional institutions stress the importance of language

teaching for migrants' labor integration and participation, it is not a real priority in most European receiving countries. They also stress that the lack of language training and notions related to anti-immigration and/or nationalist discourses limit initiatives, based mainly on the third sector.

Spain's status as a context of consolidated immigration has also shaped a literature that focuses on the political participation of "new voters"; those who have become part of the political community in the wake of their migratory experience. In this sense, after discussing the initial focus of the text, we will now go on to address the second of the key aspects addressed by scientific production regarding the politics/migration nexus: migrants' participation in politics.

2. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: SPAIN'S "NEW VOTERS"

The political participation of immigrants has been studied from various angles, largely because it encompasses a wide range of activities and actions of a more or less conventional nature (Morales, 2011). From a traditional perspective of the phenomenon, many studies have focused on the participation of the foreign-born during electoral processes, either through the analysis of their voting behavior or involvement in political parties (Tam Cho, 1999; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Bevelander and Penkadur, 2009; Voicu and Comşa, 2014; Triviño-Salazar, 2018). Other studies have adopted a less "formal" approach, considering alternative forms of participation such as associationism, membership of civil society organizations or demonstrations (De Rooij, 2012; Melo and Stockemer, 2014; Pilati and Morales, 2016; Pettinicchio and Vries, 2017).

Multiple individual, social and political factors come into play in immigrants' political integration (Morales and Giugni, 2011). Some of them are connected to variables that are frequently used to explain the political participation of the general population, such as age, educational level or socio-economic status (Adamson, 2007). In the specific case of gender, for example, it has been found that the political participation of immigrant men and women responds to different patterns (Jones-Correa, 1998). While men tend to remain in the organizations established by first-generation immigrants, women are more active in the construction of community life and

function as intermediaries between the immigrant community and the social environment. As for socio-economic status, a factor that is often positively associated with higher participation, this relationship only seems to work among immigrants when accompanied by socialization in values such as civic duty, voting efficacy and democratic ideals (Tam Cho, 1999).

Other factors that influence political participation, on the other hand, are specific to the foreign-born population, such as the feeling of belonging to the host society, the duration of residence in the destination (temporary/permanent) or social networks with the ethnic community (Martiniello, 2006). Following this line, a comparative analysis between several European countries shows that the degree and form of immigrants' participation in politics is not so much conditioned by their economic resources and political engagement, but rather by the length of residence in the destination country, as well as by membership of social organizations, factors that are closely connected to integration processes in the host society (De Rooij, 2012). However, the impact that these determinants may have on immigrants' participation may differ depending on the ethnic group and generation (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade, 2001; Togeby, 2004).

Moreover, national and local opportunity structures in destination countries have proved decisive in immigrants' participation in political life (González-Ferrer, 2011; González-Ferrer and Morales, 2013). Although, on average, participation amongst naturalized immigrants is lower than that of the native population, ease of access to residence permits and citizenship, coupled with the level of electoral support for anti-immigration parties, influences immigrants' likelihood of voting in national elections. In addition, the country of origin is another important predictor of immigrants' political integration at destination, both in terms of their naturalization processes and their voting behavior (Simpson Bueker, 2005). The influence of the country of origin depends on the connections that immigrants maintain with their society of origin, as well as the political and institutional structures of the country (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014).

In Spain, early studies into political participation focused on immigrant associations as a key instrument for the social integration process (De Lucas, 2009; Aparicio and Tornos, 2010). This initial stage describes how the emergence of associations is strongly conditioned by the state resources obtained, which undermines

the capacity to influence the political agenda (Veredas Muñoz, 2003; Martín Pérez, 2004). In this sense, studies have shown how certain African immigrant associations were originally created in order to secure social and political recognition, but the difficulties encountered forced a shift in focus towards welfare work and service provision (Moncusí Ferrer and Albert Rodrigo, 2013; Giró Miranda and Mata Romeu, 2013). In general, the subordinate relationship between immigrant associations and institutions is still predominant today (Cebolla-Boado and López-Sala, 2015a), although a number of recent experiences suggest that changes are taking place within the second generations that could potentially lead a civil society of immigrant origin (Ferrás Murcia and Martín Pérez, 201). Moreover, during 2008 economic crisis, a considerable percentage of associations were affected and even disappeared (Cebolla-Boado and López-Sala, 2015b).

More recently, literature has analyzed the impact of the political opportunity structure in the country of residence on immigrants' political participation. This has highlighted the need to consider how legal, institutional and discursive factors influence the reception context. Some studies have indicated the need to include a transnational perspective, which takes into account the ties and dynamics between the country of origin and destination (Bermúdez, 2010; Moraes Mena and Cutillas Fernández, 2018). Although immigrant participation may be partially explained by the structure of political opportunities, it fails to shed full light on the phenomenon, as shown in the case of the Peruvian collective during the 2011 elections in Spain (Escrivá, 2013). Along these lines, the incorporation of associations into development cooperation projects is an example of how transnational processes influence migrants' political participation, both in the countries of origin and in Spain (Cortés and Sanmartín, 2018).

In the last decade, there has been a growing interest in immigrants' political participation in electoral processes in Spain (Aja and Moya, 2008). The low turnout of foreign voters in the 2011 municipal elections led to questions about the effectiveness of the conventional reciprocity model for extending foreign suffrage, possibly due in part to the requirement of prior enrolment on the voting register (Méndez, 2008; Moya and Viñas, 2012). The low influence of the immigrant population in local political institutions, at least in the case of Northern European residents, seems to be related to their lack of interest in public life, an attitude encouraged by the political elites

(Huete and Mantecón, 2012). Studies have confirmed that the low turnout registered in municipal elections was repeated in the 2015 elections, when the number of non-EU foreign voters decreased, due to the rise in nationalizations and exits from the country following the economic crisis (Bermúdez and Escrivá, 2016).

Other studies, addressing more conventional participation have also focused on the political representation of people of immigrant origin residing in Spain (Pérez Nievas et al., 2014). Despite the intense migratory flow received in the last two decades, empirical evidence shows an under-representation of candidates of immigrant origin on electoral lists and, especially, of elected councilors in the municipal elections of 2003, 2007 and 2011. The modest incorporation into political life of residents from abroad is not specific to Spain, but is a pattern that is repeated in other southern European countries (Vintila and Morales, 2018).

In this special issue, the contribution by David Moya and Alba Viñas, entitled "The Suffrage of Foreigners in the Municipal Elections from 2011 to 2019 in Spain: Balance and Future Prospects", reviews the last three municipal elections, focusing on the participation of non-EU citizens and the influence of the conventional reciprocity voting recognition model. The low turnout of this group has been constant over the last decade, raising questions about the effectiveness of the current model. The authors dismiss the usefulness of extending suffrage to new nationalities, since, as has been shown, the number of potential voters is far from the number of actual voters. On the contrary, political participation by the non-EU community could be encouraged if the right to vote were less conditioned by certain requirements, especially that of prior census registration.

The article by Josep Lobera, Santiago Pérez-Nievas and José Rama, entitled "Combined Effects of Cultural-linguistic Proximity and Naturalization on Political Integration of First-generation Immigrants", discusses some factors that may influence the political integration of immigrants from the point of view of preferences for a political party. Based on data from the 4th Survey on Intercultural Coexistence on the Local Level in Spain 2017, the study shows that both cultural and linguistic proximity and naturalizations increase the likelihood of immigrants having a stronger attachment to politics in the destination country. In this sense, the authors support the idea that more permissive naturalization policies favor more active political participation by ethnic minorities.

From a complementary perspective, Soledad Escobar, Santiago Pérez-Nievas and Guillermo Cordero, in "Killing Two Birds with One Stone? The Inclusion of Immigrant-origin Women on Spanish Local Party Lists 2011-2015", focus on the presence of immigrant women on party lists in two municipal elections and their success in gaining access to council seats. Based on the analysis of survey data and in-depth interviews, the authors find that women from the EU-15, Romania and Latin America have a higher political representation than their male compatriots and all other women, including native women. The inclusion of immigrant women by political parties seems to respond to a two-pronged strategy. Although parties are still reluctant to include candidates of immigrant origin, in order to comply with gender quotas, they take the opportunity to give visibility to ethnic minorities. In terms of access to council seats, Latin American women are the only group that maintains an advantage over other groups. Local associations seem to be the main gateway through which women from Latin America manage to gain political prominence.

Finally, the article by Anastasia Bermúdez and Francisco Cuberos Gallardo "Colombian-Spanish Migrants in London since the Great Recession: Political Participation and Attitudes amid (Dis)Integration Processes", explores the political integration of Spanish-Colombian migrants who left Spain during the 2008 crisis and settled in the UK in the context of Brexit. The various difficulties they face, such as unfamiliarity with the language and access to citizenship, limit their political participation, reducing them to forms of associationism and volunteering oriented towards practical issues rather than mobilization to achieve more rights as a collective. The article also describes how the onset of the economic crisis had a twofold effect on the Spanish-Colombian group's interest in politics, in some cases strengthening it and in others turning it towards skepticism.

In short, it can be seen that the focus on migrant associations, with the configuration of a consolidated host society, has shifted to a debate on the electoral participation of the immigrant population, both as voters and as candidates for representatives, albeit in a limited way. We will now consider the third of the axes that have marked the debate on politics and migration in the Spanish context in recent years: attitudes to immigration and the development of the anti-immigration discourse.

3. FROM TOLERANT SPAIN AND ITS EXCEPTIONALITY TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF VOX'S ANTI-IMMIGRATION DISCOURSE

Ever since Spain became a country of destination, literature has attempted to identify and analyze the population's attitudes towards immigration. This interest has been particularly evident since the mid-1990s, following the creation of the Permanent Observatory for Immigration. This observatory was later joined by other regional observatories (Andalusia, Basque Country, Tenerife, Madrid, Valencia), which made major contributions to studies on attitudes to immigration. This was also boosted by the work carried out by the Center for Sociological Research (CIS in its Spanish initials), through specific surveys or the inclusion of questions in their barometers. This field of research also developed thanks to the Eurobarometers (European Commission) on racism and xenophobia.

On the other hand, at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the first decade of this century, media interest in immigration in Spain increased. This was due to a growing number of racist incidents, particularly during the summer of 1999 and early 2000, such as those in El Ejido (Checa Olmos, 2001); the increase in tragic deaths in the Strait of Gibraltar; the accident involving Ecuadorians which took place in Lorca in 2001; media interest generated by the extraordinary regularization processes in 2000, 2001 and 2005; as well as the cayuco boat crisis in 2006. This had an impact on public opinion, insofar as the media are the main source of information and therefore contribute to shaping attitudes towards immigrants (Checa Olmos and Arjona Garrido, 2011).

Research revealed how, at the time of the greatest growth in arrival flows, during the late 1990s and early 2000s (coinciding with the economic boom), immigration was not a key concern of the general public in Spain, who ranked unemployment and terrorism higher. Indeed, at the beginning of the 21st century, only between 10 and 20 percent of Spaniards interviewed by the Center for Sociological Research (CIS) ranked immigration amongst the country's three principal problems (Muñoz Comet, 2020). Along the same lines, the 2000 Eurobarometer placed Spain in third place in terms of tolerant citizens, after Sweden and Finland. This can be explained by the presence of a post-Franco universalist culture in terms of civic and social rights (Arango, 2013), which generated

more open attitudes towards immigration and inhibited express manifestations of negative attitudes (Rinken, 2015).

Concern about immigration increased during the regularization processes and debate surrounding the "call effect", which contrasted with the more generalized tolerance of the 1990s (Méndez, 2007; Rinken, 2015). Less open-minded attitudes emerged, generating discourses that highlighted competition for resources (work, social services, choice of schools). Nevertheless, public opinion continued to show majority support for "controlled" immigration (with a work contract) and the recognition of immigrant rights (Méndez, 2007).

Yet by the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, this "tolerant Spain" had begun to display less positive attitudes towards immigration (Cea D'Ancona, 2004; Colectivo IOE, 2005; Checa Olmos and Arjona Garrido, 2011). This can be explained by the increased visibility of immigration in the media; the rise of the media discourse on irregular immigration (the treatment of inflows as an avalanche, invasion, wave, etc.) (Checa Olmos and Arjona Garrido, 2011); as well as the development of a discourse, by the conservative Partido Popular (PP), during their 2000-2004 government, linking immigration and crime (Colectivo IOE, 2005). The 2006 cayuco boat crisis and its media coverage coincided with the peak of the conception of immigration as a social problem in Spain (almost 60% of CIS respondents considered it to be one of the three main problems) (Rinken, 2015; Muñoz Comet, 2020). The onset of the 2008 economic recession led different authors to assess whether negative attitudes towards immigration were on the rise, as might be assumed by Group Conflict Theory (Cea D'Ancona, 2015; Rinken, 2015). For this theory, hostile attitudes towards immigration and prejudice towards ethnic minorities and foreigners increase in a situation of real or perceived competition for sought-after and scarce resources in society (Allport, 1954; Blumer, 1958).

The analysis of the surveys carried out revealed how, surprisingly, the crisis did not have a significant influence on the perception of immigration as a problem in Spain. In fact, the percentage of respondents to the CIS barometer who considered immigration to be one of Spain's three main problems plummeted to below 5 per cent. 2018 saw a rise in this percentage, which by mid 2019 stood at 10 per cent (Muñoz Comet, 2020), a figure similar to that of the turn of the century, but still far from the peak reached in 2006 (59.2%).

The exceptional situation of Spain is explained by the greater prominence of post-recession concerns about the economy, unemployment, corruption and political standards, as reflected in the CIS Barometer (Rinken, 2015). As noted above, public opinion is shaped by the media and political discourses, and in this sense, falling levels of intolerance can be explained by the focus of the post-crisis political and media debate on the "new Spanish emigration" and return, whereby the figure of the foreign immigrant lost prominence (Cea D'Ancona, 2015). A further factor is the evolving sense of empathy and mutual awareness between immigrants and natives, after years of coexistence (Cea D'Ancona, 2016). The media's construction of the greater impact of the crisis on the immigrant population and the focus on exits may have contributed to alleviating perceptions of competition among locals (Rinken, 2015).

However, beyond the perception of immigration as a problem, the consideration of other indicators also reveals that the recession had a clearly negative impact on the hitherto prevailing acceptance of immigration as a necessary resource for supplying labor to the Spanish economy, especially in the case of "hard, low-paid jobs" (functionalist attitude). A less favorable discourse was constructed, emphasizing situations of 'unfair' competition or other undesirable effects of immigrant arrivals (Rinken, 2011). Thus, arguments suggesting labor competition and a negative impact of immigration on the labor market increased, and the image of immigrants doing jobs that Spaniards do not want diminished. Opinions on the regulation of immigration flows, the expulsion of irregular immigrants, the negative impact of immigration on the quality of public services, and the notion of immigrants' religion as a threat also hardened (Rinken, 2015). A number of regional studies carried out in Andalusia, the Basque Country and Tenerife also brought to light a growing sense of resentment, stemming from the perception that migrants receive more than they deserve, in comparison with the native population (Ikuspegi, 2019; Rinken, 2019; Buraschi and Godenau, 2020).

However, despite the development of these discourses, studies coincide in pointing out how, in Spain, in line with Scandinavian countries, the attitudes of the population were less reticent towards immigration and more positive than those observed in European countries with a greater tradition of receiving immigrants (Cebolla-Boado and González-Ferrer, 2016).

The study of the perception of immigration has also been approached from the perspective of political science, specifically in works that have analyzed the development of extreme right-wing and anti-immigration parties in Western democracies. According to this literature, the characteristics of these political parties are nativism, authoritarianism and populism (Mudde, 2004). These parties coincide in being against immigration and in favor of the assimilation of immigrants, who must renounce their culture of origin. They uphold popular sovereignty, the fight against the corrupt elite and the defense of conservative values, such as family, religion and traditional gender roles, and oppose the feminist movement (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Kantola and Lombardo, 2019; Antón-Mellón and Hernández-Carr, 2016).

Literature revealed the exceptionality of the Spanish case (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015), insofar as, prior to the appearance of VOX, no political party of this type had emerged. However, Xavier Casals defined the situation of the Spanish far right as an "absent presence" (2000:148), insofar as the Partido Popular (PP) had managed to include Spanish far-right voters in its political project. Moreover, the Spanish electoral system, which promotes majorities and geographical concentration, as well as continued weight of the memory of the Franco regime, were obstacles to the emergence of this type of party in Spain (Casals, 2000).

The far-right VOX party first participated in an election process (European elections) in 2014, and entered the Andalusian Parliament in 2018. Its strength was consolidated in the general elections of April 2019, when it won 24 seats, doubling that number in the repeat elections of November 2019. This arrival marked the end of Spanish exceptionalism (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019; Denison and Mendes, 2019); although some authors point out that the anti-immigration discourse is not the main basis for the success of this party, but rather "Spanish nationalism", in the context of the "Catalan crisis" and the erosion of traditional parties affected by corruption (Rinken, 2019).

This special issue includes several contributions that analyze VOX's discourse on immigration. First, Laura Cervi and Santiago Tejedor's article, "Africa Does Not Fit in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of Anti-immigration Parties' Discourse in Spain and Italy", is an original contribution to this research question, as it goes beyond the study of a local case, to compare the anti-immigration narrative and its politicization in VOX and the Italian Lega party. The

discourses of these two groups are similar, insofar that immigration is perceived as an invasion or avalanche of sovereign space by "others". Immigrants are constructed as "illegal", or a threat. These two parties set themselves up as the "saviors" in the face of this threat, as those who have come to "close the doors". VOX's discourse is based on "Hispanicity", while the Lega speaks of Italian *gentismo*. The former party resorts to the colonial imaginary to reach out to Latin American voters, which differentiates them from the enemies of "Hispanicity" (Muslims and separatists). Salvini resorts to the imaginary of the *barconi* (Mediterranean boats), which received extensive media coverage during the so-called "migration crisis", ignoring immigration of European origin, which is a considerable phenomenon in Italy. Both parties coincide in criminalizing rescue NGOs.

In turn, in "Gender and Immigration in VOX. The Discourse of the Radical Right in Spain", Belén Fernández-Suárez analyzes VOX's discourse, linking immigration issues and gender. The text brings to light how this group promotes border control, the prioritization of immigrants of Latin American origin and those who enter Spain legally. It also argues that entries should be conditioned by the demands of the labor market. Irregularity is associated with crime and insecurity. It denounces abuses of the welfare state by immigrants, who are required to integrate into Spanish culture. This party also fights Islam and opposes immigrants from the Maghreb, whom they associate with delinquency and violence against women, victims of the "other foreigner". Women appear as the symbolic guarantors of the community's identity and honor. Consequently, an intersection is formed between anti-immigration and anti-gender equality discourses. Emphasis is placed on Catholic and family-centered values and traditional gender roles, demonizing feminist ideologies and portraying men as their victims.

The article by Fernando Relinque-Medina, Manuela Fernández-Borrero and Octavio Vázquez Aguado, "Elections and Segregation of the Foreign Population in Andalusia: Indicators in the Face of a New Political Panorama", is an original contribution to studies that analyze the results of the 2019 elections to the Andalusian parliament and the extent to which residential segregation influences the far-right vote (Janssen et al. 2019), a topic that has not previously been addressed in Spain. In this region, residential segregation grew with the sharp hike in immigrant arrivals at the start of the century,

attracted by agricultural work. The study, based on the exploitation of secondary data (obtained from the Spanish National Statistics Office, INE), confirms that there is a correlation between the VOX vote and the percentage of foreign population in the municipalities. Furthermore, residential segregation has a significant influence on the orientation of the far-right vote; however, the concentration of the VOX vote is not reproduced in the census sections with the highest concentration of immigrants, but rather in the neighboring ones, which indicates that it is not the immigrant population that votes for the far right, but rather those residing on the spatial and social border.

It can therefore be seen that political discourse, together with migration policy and political participation, has accompanied Spain's evolution as a country of immigration, from the first phase of arrivals to its consolidation as a receiver of immigrants in a context of supervening crises.

CONCLUSIONS

We have highlighted how, after three decades of immigration, scientific production and interest in migration policies, the political participation of migrants and the politicization of immigration have been shaped in accordance with the various phases Spain's migration cycle has experienced.

In the 1990s and the early 21st century, scientific literature on migration policies focused on arrivals, centering its interest on the design of immigration policies, with special attention on the control of flows, regularization processes, labor-oriented strategies and the policies and mechanisms for integrating the "new neighbors". Studies on political participation focused on highlighting the role of immigrant associations, whilst literature on attitudes towards immigration stressed the exceptional nature of the Spanish case, insofar as Spain had, in comparison with other European countries, a greater tolerance towards aliens and the inexistence of far right-wing anti-immigration parties. However, coinciding with the end of the economic boom, attitudes towards immigration gradually became less positive. Influenced by the media debate on the extraordinary regularization processes associated with the "call effect" and, above

all, by the cayuco boat crisis, Spanish public opinion became less affable than in the first phase of the migration cycle to the extent that 60 per cent of Spaniards considered immigration to be one of the country's top three problems.

The arrival of the Great Recession in 2008 marked a change of direction in scientific production, which accompanied the transformations in migration dynamics that the country experienced as a result of the crisis. By the end of the decade, the study of the regulation of flows incorporated analyses of return programs, and in subsequent years interest in border policies continued. This period also saw an increase in research focusing on internal control mechanisms and, more recently, on asylum policies following Spain's transformation, for the first time in its recent migratory history, into one of the principal recipient countries of asylum seekers in Europe.

In the last decade, although the issue of integration has continued to play a crucial role in Spanish migration studies, analyses of integration policies have lost prominence in line with the weakening of this area of intervention as a result of social cutbacks.

Similarly, Spain's consolidation as a country of immigration is marked by a growing interest in citizenship regimes and nationality policies, in the context of increasingly "naturalized" immigration. In turn, this has led to an interest in the participation of the "new Spaniards" in electoral processes, either as part of the voter market or as political representatives, although in the latter case their presence is still very limited. The onset of the crisis shifted media attention from immigration and to unemployment, political corruption, as well as the "new Spanish emigration" and return. Contrary to the indications of the Group Conflict Theory, this led to a surprising drop in the percentage of Spaniards who perceived immigration as one of the country's main problems. The fact that the migrant population was harder hit by the crisis, as well as the media's focus on departures rather than arrivals, may have influenced a lower perception of allogenous people as competition. However, other attitudinal indicators showed that the recession had a negative impact on the discourse of acceptance of immigrants as a necessary labor force for jobs that Spaniards are unwilling to perform. In this sense, opinions underlining competence in labor and social benefits increased, together with growing calls for stricter border controls and an outcry against

irregular immigration. Nonetheless, Spanish public opinion remained more affable compared to its European neighbors with a longer tradition of receiving immigrants.

Finally, this special issue highlights how the consolidation of Spain as a country of immigration has been accompanied by the debate surrounding far right-wing parties. In the European context, our country is unique in that, until the appearance of VOX in 2014, and with the exception of the fleeting appearance of parties such as Plataforma per Catalunya, no anti-immigration party had obtained a voice in the country's parliaments. VOX has politicized immigration, which it perceives as an invasion of sovereign space, although it softens its discourse on Latin Americans as members of the Hispanic community, in contrast to its demonization of Islam. This discourse is combined with a decidedly anti-feminist perspective. Support for VOX was particularly strong in some municipalities with a high concentration of immigrants, particularly in neighboring electoral rolls, indicating that it is their neighbors, not the immigrant groups, that vote for VOX, within a context of strong spatial segregation.

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented effect on the international and internal dynamics of mobility, and its economic impact, although still unpredictable, will almost undoubtedly Spain's economic future and its role in the European migration system. In the current scenario of uncertainty, the effects of COVID-19 have, however, offered some certainty, such as the heavy dependence of agriculture on the supply of foreign workers, or its central role in several essential sectors, such as care, cleaning and maintenance services or goods distribution chains. Yet this new crisis scenario also has the potential to impact even more decisively on the three axes of the politics/migration nexus addressed in this special issue: either through even more restrictive border policies, in line with the proposals for the new European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, or through integration weakened by the reassignment of resources to other priorities. In the context of a more unequal and less cohesive society facing a new crisis a decade later, it is worth considering not only a reconfiguration of the dynamics of flows, but also a scenario in which anti-immigration sentiments may consolidate and exert an even greater influence on shaping public and political life.

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