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# **Sikh diaspora and Spain:**

## **Migration, Hypermobility and Space <sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The recent emigration from Indian Punjab has included Spain into the global Sikh diaspora. This group is selected to study the production of ‘diaspora space’ and the transformation of the territory included in it. To achieve this objective, we have focused on the historical migratory waves, the itineraries followed by immigrants and their internal mobility, which provides the essential mechanism for the expansion of diaspora space. Alongside this, an attempt has been made to delimit the extent of virtual space of diaspora through transnational communication links from Barcelona (the municipality which concentrate the most important Sikh community in Spain), to rest of the world. The preliminary finding from the mixed methodology used in the research, illustrated that the Sikh diaspora is a dynamic physical and virtual space, which is expanding firstly with intense immigrant flows from Punjab to new destinations, and secondly with the expansion of advanced communication source like internet calling and other messaging services. Their appropriation of territory is visible in the form of Gurudwaras (Sikh Temples) as a node of

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<sup>1</sup> This paper forms part of the first author’s doctoral thesis, “Indian Diaspora to Spain: Demo-Spatial Analysis and Neighbourhood Relations” in the Autonomous University of Barcelona, under the Supervision of Dr. Andreu Domingo. The research was funded by I+D+i Project, “Diversity, Segregation and Vulnerability: Socio-demographic Analysis (CSO 2014-54059-R), financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Spain.

symbolic and communitarian network of the Sikh diaspora situated at different parts of Spain. In the conclusion part, we have summarized the principal results and underlined the future research lines.

**Keywords:** Sikh Diaspora, migration, space, Gurudwara, hypermobility, transnationalism, Spain.

### **Introduction: Creation of diaspora space**

Taking up the argument of Henri Lefebvre (1984) on the ‘production and reproduction of social space’, while talking about globalization, Arjun Appadurai (2013) explained how history produces localities. From the impact of globalization on mobility and the establishment of transnational communities, this suggestive formula of ‘space in motion’, leads us to consider an additional qualitative dimension of the concept of ‘Diaspora’ that emerges from both the quantitative increase in the size of diaspora communities, as well as their increasing complexity. It raises two initial questions. First, what is a diaspora space and how it is created? And second, how the territory transforms while coming in contact with a migration of Diasporic character?

A fluid idea of space has influenced the way in which connections between and across diasporic and transnational communities have been conceptualised. In 1996, Avtar Brah advanced the notion of ‘diaspora space’ as a conceptual category which is “inhabited” not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous (Brah, 1996: 181). For Brah, it is the nexus constituted from the confluence of journeys and narratives re-produced through individual and collective re-memory, which are re-lived through multiple modalities of gender, race, class, language and generation, among different Diasporic communities relationally positioned among multiple others (Brah 1996: 183–184).

The term diaspora was originally used to describe the conditions of dispersed Jewish communities (Safran, 1991) and also to describe groups which had been displaced through various processes of migration, such as movement of labour and trade (Vertovec and Cohen, 1999). With the expansion of transnational studies, it is also sometimes used to refer to the scattering of people over space, forming what has often been described as 'exemplary communities of the transnational moment' (Tölölyan, 1991:5). The generalization of the concept of diaspora to any migration of mass character has been echoed by Steven Vertovec (1997). He explains that "diaspora is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational. By this he means a population, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks across the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe" (Vertovec 1997: 277). This paper uses the term diaspora in its narrower definition, as claimed by Safran (1991), where the group members who are the real actors, retain the myth or the collective memory of their homeland; they also consider their ancestral homeland as their true home, where eventually they will return and are committed to the restoration or maintenance of that homeland. Finally, they also relate "personally or indirectly" with that territory to the point that it shapes their identity. It is not only a simple volume or the extent of transnational networks, but the special relationship with the place of origin which articulates and transforms the given space. In the case of Sikh community, the religion serves as an anchor of this privileged relationship that migrants keep with their origin, in the authentic diaspora communities.

Our starting point is the hypothesis that there is not only a single static space of the diaspora, but there are several dynamic spaces. Furthermore, these are mutable layers, depending both on the time and the dimension under analysis. The existing diaspora studies only focus on the size of population, but this concept also involves the mobility (international

and domestic) of the flows, or of transnational relations (especially in the case of Sikhs), which are responsible for carving a distinct image of each diaspora. In addition, each of these layers is mobile through its demographic changes with time, settlement period or antiquity, age structure, gender and generations that dominate it. Moreover, the territories where they settle are transformed by their inclusion in the diaspora, following the rhythm scheduled by globalization and the resulting circuits, scales and speeds involved.

Secondly, we emphasize the importance of transnational relations in the Sikh diaspora, which are, thanks to new technologies of transportation and communication, multiplied during the last decades to contribute to the rapid and efficient movement of humans, capital and ideas around the globe (Zhou, 2004). This mobility leads to the formation and expansion of a relatively stable and durable transnational space for the Sikh diaspora, by establishing a dense network of relationships that go beyond the borders of Spain. Adapting this to the definition of authors like Faist (2000a, 2000b and 2010), we consider that transnational space is composed of a combination of links, positions within networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that cross the borders of at least two national states.

The few studies that have explored the Sikh population in Spain have focused more on the religious phenomenon itself (i.e. Sikhism), rather than their socio-demographic behaviour or relationship of Sikhs with space. The current literature consists of a study of Sikh religion and its expansion in the world through the diaspora (Pániker, 2007), case studies describing the community's establishment in Spain (Estruch *et al*, 2007) and in the tradition of international studies, analysis of its internal contradictions exacerbated in the migration process, such as regarding the castes system (Lum, 2010). There are, however, works that put some light on the pioneer Sikh immigration (Farjas, 2006a and 2006b), or references to the community in broader sociological approaches on Indian immigration (Lopez-Salas, 2013).

However, we found no research on the geographical distribution, and appropriation and transformation of the territory by the group; hence we want to fill this gap.

The specific objectives of this article are therefore: 1) to present the most recent picture of global Sikh diaspora; 2) to estimate the size of Sikh population residing in Spain, its spatial distribution and socio-demographic characteristics; 3) to analyse the dynamics (international and internal migration) that contributes to the creation of diaspora space; and 4) to delimit Sikh diaspora from their transnational communication links from Barcelona to the rest of the diaspora locations.

### **Methodology and Data sources**

In this article, we have used a mixed methodology, a quantitative part that includes the demographic analysis relying on available statistical data, and a qualitative part based on the analysis of in-depth interviews of the members of the Sikh community in Spain. The main limitation in this study was the lack of relevant statistical data sources about Sikh community, because in many countries the data about ethnic backgrounds and religious affiliations is not collected (neither in censuses nor in different surveys of specific characteristics), to avoid its misuse for other political purposes. Therefore, to produce a recent picture of global Sikh diaspora, we have used secondary sources; most of them are estimates about Sikh population from various organizations and NGO's run by Sikhs around the globe.

In the case of Spain, as the National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE*) collects information about the surnames of the whole population registered in municipal register of inhabitants, we have made an indirect estimate of Sikh population through their surnames. This was possible as in Sikh population all males share the same surname of 'Singh', while all females share the surname of 'Kaur'. We asked the INE to cross surnames with the information in the municipal register of inhabitants (Padrón Continuo) of 2015, firstly with the micro data records of the 2011 Census for the stock and socio-

demographic characteristics of the population, and secondly with the Residential Variations Statistics to estimate their internal and external mobility during the period of 2000-2014. This has allowed us for the first time to have some estimate about the size of Sikh population, their province of residence, sex, age, education level and occupation in Spain. However, because of the statistical confidentiality and the small number of Sikh residents in Spain, the detail and crossings provided by the INE was very limited. In this sense, for the sake of anonymity, other Sikh family names like, Sandhu, Sidhu, Gill or Johal, were not considered. Similarly, the population born in Spain is subject to follow the rules of the imposition of surnames in order of father and mother, so in some cases, it becomes difficult to find the sex of the individual, although we believe that this bias is minimal as most of the Sikh population in Spain belongs to first, or one and a half, generations. Therefore are identified by their Indian passports with only one surname 'Singh' for males and 'Kaur' for females.

Data from the statistics available in Spain, were than compared and contrasted with the results of a qualitative study carried out during the period of November 2015 to June 2016 using semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with representatives of 22 Sikh temples (Gurudwara committees) situated in different parts of Spain, and 56 interviews with other members of different profiles from the community, progressively chosen with the advances in research, following the Glaser and Strauss' (1967) Grounded theory. Another important thing we have taken into consideration was the diversity of the socioeconomic characteristics of the municipalities where they live (metropolitan areas, tourist areas, areas with high concentration of agriculture or the food industry), which can be observed in the municipal registers (Padrón Continuo) of 2015. A total of 26 municipalities were represented, seeking the greatest possible variation in basic socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age, occupation, education level, marital status, or year of arrival in Spain).

### **3 The Sikh Diaspora: genesis and extant**

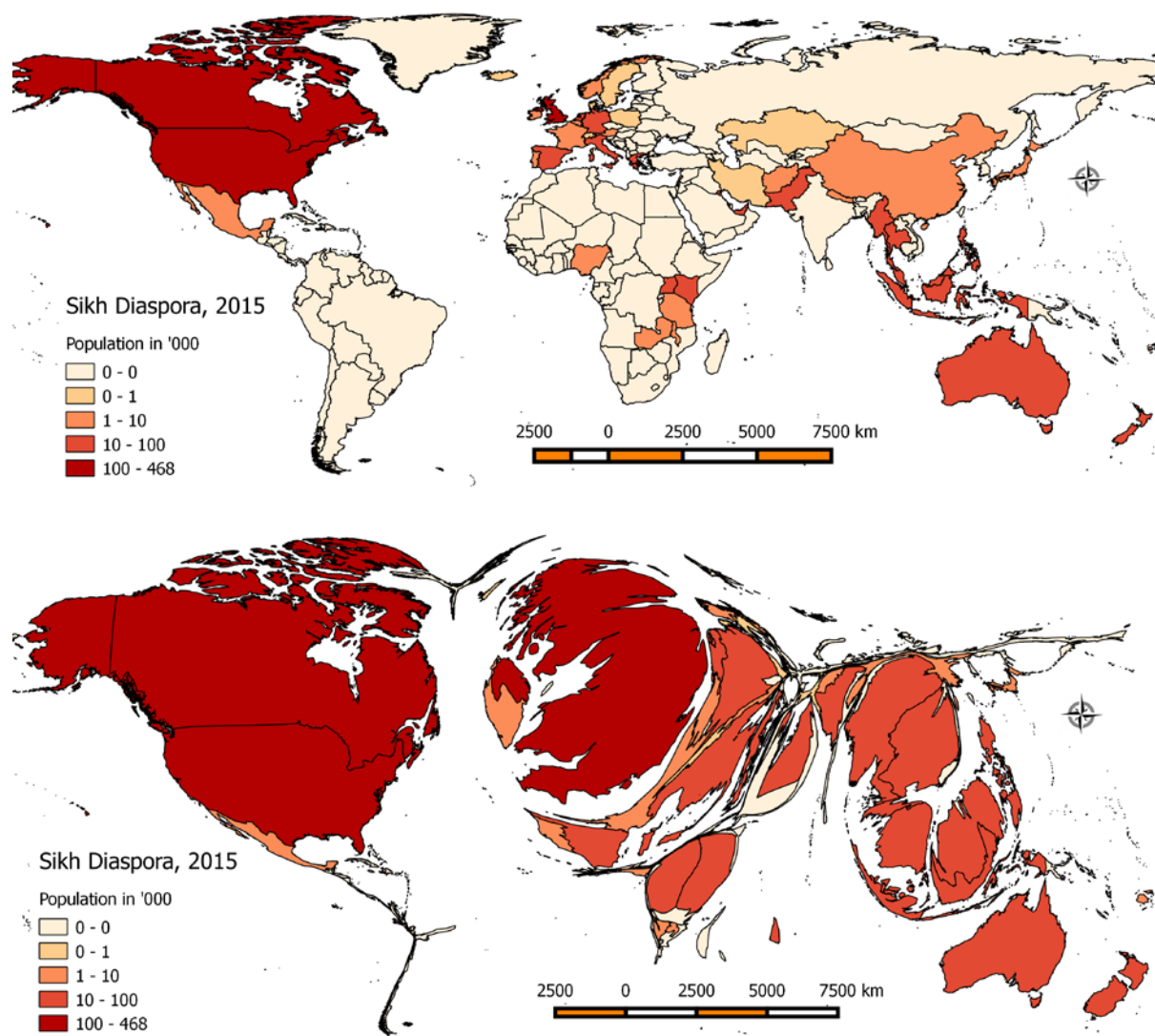
### *3.1 diaspora space through population distribution*

The present Sikh diaspora is made of more than two million Sikhs living out of India in more than 50 countries; half of their population have settled in only three countries i. e. Canada, the UK, and the USA. Canada, with more than 468,673 registered Sikh inhabitants (2011 census), occupies the top position (with 23% of the total overseas Sikh population) in the global diaspora community. In Canada they have mostly settled in the western coastal cities, like Vancouver and Surrey, in the province of British Columbia and Toronto in the province of Ontario on the banks of great lakes in the east. The expansion of Sikh diaspora space to Canada dates back to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when pioneer Sikh immigrants reached the state of British Columbia (Johnston, 2005). Now Canada has become the hub of transnational relations and the centre of reference for the Sikh community worldwide. Britain, with 432,429 Sikhs registered in the Census of 2011, occupies the second place in the population stock hierarchy of the diaspora. This is logical if we consider that Britain, due to colonial ties with India, was one of the first countries who entered into the Sikh diaspora space, with mass Sikh immigration directly from Punjab or from Kenya and other African colonies. In the UK most Sikhs have settled in the London region, where Southall has emerged as an ethnic enclave of Sikhs. In England the share of foreign born Sikhs is highest as at present fifth generation of Sikhs is living there and the flow of new immigrants is also continues from their homeland Punjab or from other diaspora locations like the Middle East and south European countries e.g. Portugal and Spain. The USA occupies the third place. According to the latest estimates published by the Pew Forum in 2012 ‘Survey of Asian Americans: Religion and Life’ more than 200,000 Sikhs live in different metropolitan cities stretching from California in the west to New York in the east. After this, we can also find a significant number of Sikhs in South East Asian countries (250,000) including Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore and in Middle East (120,000) especially in Dubai, UAE. In the first



decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Australia (72,000) and New Zealand (20,000) have emerged as the favourite destinations for the young Sikhs, who have migrated for higher studies or better work opportunities and eventually settled in these countries. Except for Britain, all other European countries remained in the periphery of Sikh diaspora. However, it is worth mentioning that Italy (70,000 Sikhs) has received huge flow of Sikh immigrants in the last two decades, which place it well ahead of Germany (40,000) and Spain (19,774).

Figure 1: The global Sikh diaspora and cartogram, 2015.



Source: own elaboration with data from various entities (see annex)

This Sikh diaspora is a product of continuous emigration from the Sikh homeland Punjab or their first migration destinations such as Kenya or the British colonies in Southeast

Asia (Figure 2). The existing research distinguishes 3 waves of emigration from Punjab on the basis of (Tatla, 1999) the selection of destinations, the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants and the motives of emigration: 1) The colonial period from 1860 to 1947, in this period the Sikh diaspora expanded from South East Asia to African British colonies; 2) The period of economic migrants, which includes the flow of labour from independent India to first world countries during 1947-1984; and 3) The refugees, who emigrated in the decades of 1980s and 90s, fleeing from the repression of the Indian state after the operation Blue Star<sup>2</sup> on Golden Temple and consequent socio-political unrest in the state.

In the first phase of the creation of diaspora (1860-1947), the Sikh emigration followed the routes mapped by the British colonial rulers. The Sikh diaspora was then basically composed of officials, soldiers, policemen, labourers and servants scattered throughout the Empire (Dhillon, 2007). During this period, they moved in masses to the British colonies as indentured workers hired under a regime of semi-slavery (Tinker, 1974). The Sikh diaspora space expanded from Southeast Asian colonies such as Fiji, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China to the shores of East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania). This emigration was favoured by the British government to promote the mobility of labour in their colonies.

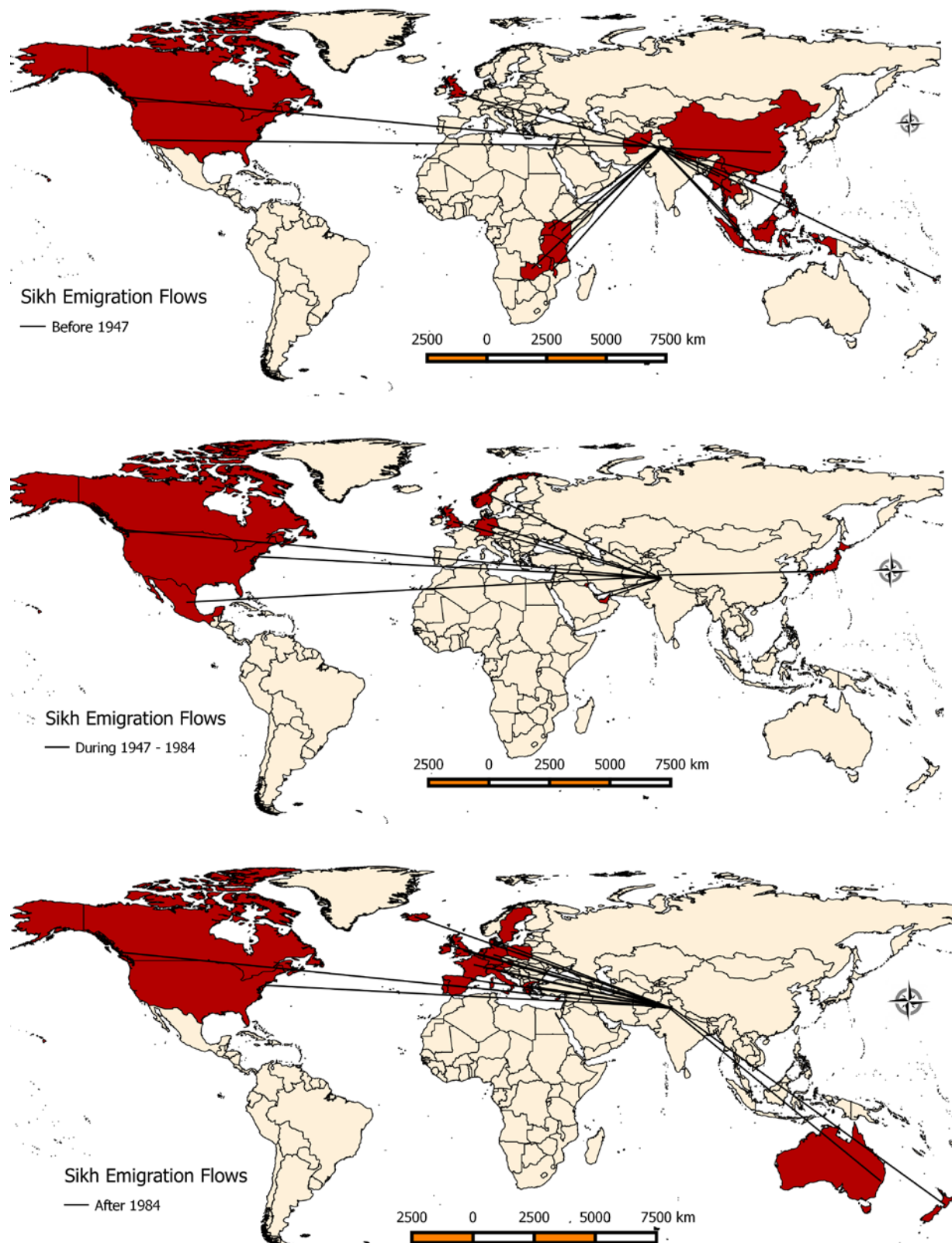
The second phase began with the independence of India in 1947, when the partition of Punjab and the formation of Pakistan triggered the internal and external migration on a large scale, causing an estimated 14.5 million people to migrate within four years (Bharadwaj *et. al*, 2008). At the same time, England and the United States permitted in-migration of Asian

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<sup>2</sup> Operation Blue Star was an Indian military operation which occurred between 3rd to 8th June 1984, ordered by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to crush the Sikh movement for greater autonomy and to establish control over the Harmandir Sahib Complex in Amritsar, Punjab.

migrants to support the war affected national industries. Since the mid-twentieth century, Britain has received a significant number of workers from India, including many retired Sikhs

Figure 2: The major emigration flows from Punjab and the genesis of Sikh diaspora.



*Source: compiled from estimates of Sikh population in the book "The Sikh Diaspora: the search for statehood" Darshan Singh Tatla (1999).*

from the army (Tatla, 1999). In the late sixties, the Sikh migration from Punjab reached to its peak, but in the seventies, it was replaced by the flows from the former African colonies like Kenya and Uganda (expelled by African nationalist governments) or from East Asia (Kaur, 2007).

In the third phase (after 1984), many Sikhs migrated to escape from the political crisis of Punjab and the consequent persecution of Sikh youth from the Indian state. This flow helped in the expansion of the global diaspora by integrating new countries with it, most of them settling in the UK, Canada, the USA, Italy, Germany, or the Scandinavian countries, under the status of political refugee or asylum seekers.

In the new millennium, a new phase of Sikh immigration can be identified composed of the flows of peasants expelled by the diverse effects of the acceleration of migrant movements due to the globalization process, which includes very heterogeneous emigrant flows from India, increasing different Diaspora communities in the world, and extending the geography of it to new countries, as is the case of Sikh Diaspora in Spain. This increase of emigrant flows it's parallel, and in part due to the Economic development. But if in the Kerala region, in general in Southern part of India, it is related with the New information economy (CITATION), in the case of Punjab it seems to be related with the worst effects of the the green revolution and the introduction of neoliberal policies after 1990's (Mani and Varadarajan, 2005). This migration flow was shared by educated young people, who left Punjab in the search of better jobs and living conditions, many of them ending up in the European Union, Australia and New Zealand, which are the recent additions to the global Sikh diaspora. In the case of Sikh flows arriving to Spain, we can understand this movements, as an extreme case of "expulsion", following the thesis of Saskia Sassen (2015), if we attend

to the importance of precarity in the push effects of emigration, and the relevance of illegal conditions of the majority of this new movements.

Secondly, in the pull factors, in addition to the job opportunities in the Spanish first years of the XXIth Century before the Economic recession of 2008, taking into account the response of interviewees, we have to take in account also the attraction to migrants of the Spanish legislation of immigrants (both before the implementation of the regulation *Arraigo*<sup>3</sup> in 2006 and later on) and the tentativeness with which they face their stay in Spain: the land which is considered as the first step towards the Canadian or British 'el dorado'.

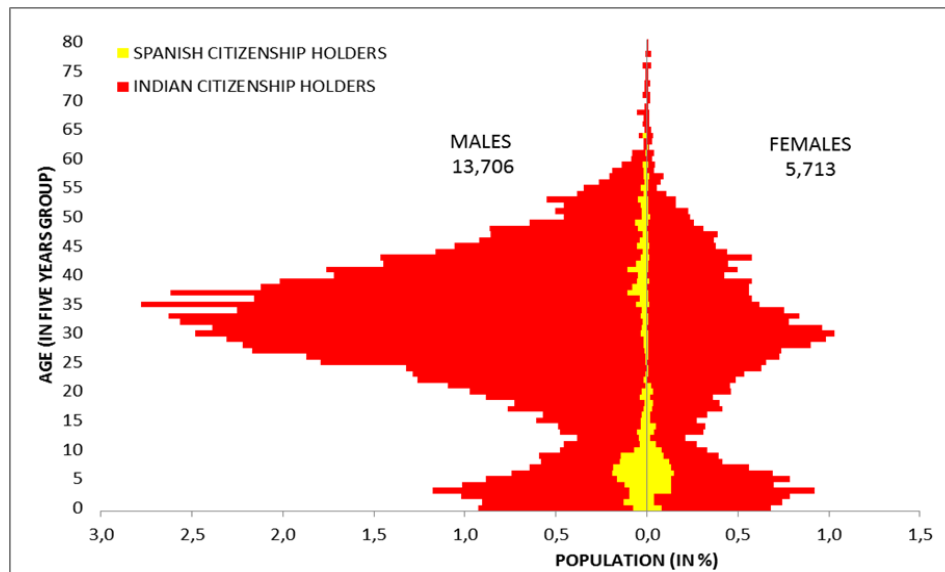
### *3.2. Sikhs in Spain*

Due to their recent arrival (according to data from the Residence Variance Statistics (EVR) 55% arrived between 2005 and 2010) and a small number (19,774 registered in municipal registers on January 1, 2014, 51% of the total Indian residents in Spain), Spain occupies a peripheral position in the global Sikh Diaspora. If we see the age structure, this population is very young, with 70.6% individuals aged 15-45 and only 10.4% aged above 45 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The age structure and sex composition of Sikhs in Spain, 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> *Arraigo* or continuous individual legalisation process is a mechanism adopted by Spanish government since 2006 to legalise the illegal immigrants who are living in Spain for at least three years continuously.



Source: own elaboration with data from municipal registers (*Padrón Continuo*, 2015).

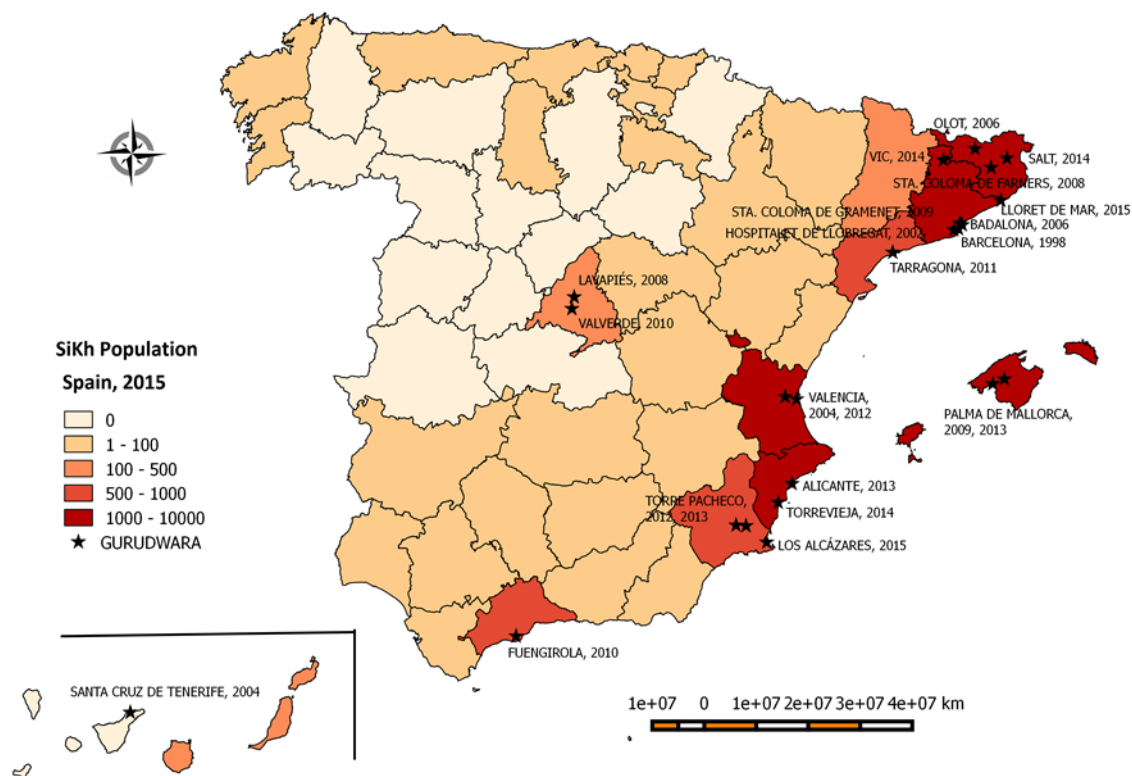
As migration is usually dominated by males in Punjab, and given the relatively recent arrival, the group is distinguished by strong presence of males. About 71% of the total Sikh population of Spain are males, despite more than half of the Sikhs being married (53%) and living in family households. According to census data, 39 percent are living in ‘*Couple with or without children*’ households and 19 percent in complex household ‘*nucleus family and others*’. The education level is generally low, almost 60% are below primary completed and only 8% have higher university education. In terms of citizenship status, only 5% are Spanish nationality holders.

The pioneer Sikhs migrated to Spain in the early 1970s, but their number was limited to about twenty individuals. These early immigrants came from the northern European countries to work in the agriculture sector in the region of La Rioja. Later on, during the decade of 1980s, attracted by job offers in the food processing industry, a substantial number of Sikhs arrived into Catalonia, especially, in Olot and neighbouring municipalities where they settled in huge numbers (Frajás, 2006b).

According to the *Padrón Continuo* 2014, Catalonia alone accounts for 61% of the total Sikh population of Spain, (Figure 4) which is reflected by their share in the total Indian

population in Catalan provinces (81% in the case of Girona and on the contrary 5% in Las Palmas of Canary Islands). Furthermore, in provinces such as Murcia and Valencia, it also exceeds 75%. The sex ratio can serve as an indirect indicator of the family settlement, considering that most women take the place of wives, mothers or daughters in a family household. The provinces of Girona and Barcelona, with sex ratios of 1.4 and 2.1 men per woman, respectively, depicts the consolidation of community in these provinces. Conversely, Madrid and Alicante, with 6 and 5 men per woman respectively illustrates the recent arrival of Sikhs in these provinces. Due to the problems of statistical confidentiality, we only have the information on the territorial distribution at the provincial level; however, we have estimated municipal distribution from the presence and year of foundation of Sikh temples in these municipalities.

Figure 4: The spatial distribution of Sikh population (provincias) and Gurudwaras by year of foundation (municipalities) in Spain, 2015.



*Source: own elaboration, with data from municipal registers (Padrón Continuo 2015), INE.*

The production of diaspora space and appropriation of territory is clearly visible through the construction of Sikh temples (Gurudwaras) at different locations around the globe. In this sense one cannot ignore the presence of the 22 Gurudwaras (literally translating as "the door of the Guru") constructed in Spain during the last two decades. Even though the temples are often modest in appearance, they nonetheless have a very central position in the cohesion of the community. They serve as a meeting place and refuge for the new immigrants, a source of maintaining strong ties with homeland Punjab, and also act as an institution that converts the diaspora into a transnational space (Jakobsen, 2012). The Gurudwaras are the symbolic centre of the reproduction of the group's identity. The very layout of the temple space in which the community moves show the internal mechanism of community building: first the interior spaces are devoted to worship, *Darbar* (place of prayer and exposition of Guru Granth Sahib) and *Sachkhand* (space of rest for Guru/Holy Book), provide a common



space for the community to discuss their religious issues and on the other side the *Langar* (the dining room open to everybody) demonstrate the community's commitment towards selfless service. In relation to the articulation of diaspora space, Gurudwaras in Spain, regardless of the areas (rural or urban) where they are established; represent the possibility of entering into transnational networks. Generally gurudwara managing committees invite priests from Punjab and other countries like Britain, Canada or Italy, to join in the religious functions and ceremonies organized there annually (Myrvold, 2013; Purewal and Lallie, 2013). These efforts are made to strengthen the legitimacy of new temples and encourage people to take part in religious activities, and to pass religious beliefs to the next generation, who are mostly born outside Punjab.

The chronology of the foundation of Gurudwaras illustrates the history of the immigration flows and more or less estimates the size of the actual Sikh population in all municipalities with Gurudwaras (Figure 4). We can see the spread of Sikh population from north to south of Spain through the construction of Gurudwaras (first in Barcelona in the year 1998 and last in Los Alcázares (Murcia) in 2015). The geographical distribution also represents the settlement related to the insertion into the labour market; especially for males (71% of males were economically active as compared to 21% of females in 2014). More than half of the Sikh population lives in Catalonia and work in the food industry, with a special presence in the slaughterhouses of Olot and Vic, and the hospitality sector of Barcelona and Lloret de Mar. Consequently, half of the total Gurudwaras in Spain are situated in Catalonia. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Sikh population moved from Catalonia to the south of Spain, along with the Mediterranean coast from the provinces of Girona, Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia, Alicante, Murcia, Malaga and Mallorca diversifying their economic activities from temporal jobs in bars and restaurants to work in the agricultural fields of Torre Pacheco (in Murcia).

## 4. Crossing Borders

### 4.1. Sikh's immigration routes to Spain

The reconstruction of migratory routes with the help of in-depth interviews (Figure 5) shows the production of diaspora space by including new territories. On the basis of the responses of interviewees these routes can be classified into five different types. The first two types, an Eastern Europe route via Moscow and an African route, are already observed in other studies (Thandi, 2012). In the Spanish case, however, the "Baltic route" is not often used, which has a notable significance for the Sikhs living in Sweden or Germany. The third type is the Middle East route, which includes a stay in Dubai. Alongside, these three routes are two uncommon types: an American route, which is used by professional Sikhs, who first migrated to USA for higher studies and then moved to Spain for work, and a "Direct route" which is commonly used by the family members of different Sikhs who migrated to Spain under the process of family reunification.

Figure 5: The different types of routes followed by Sikh immigrants to reach Spain.

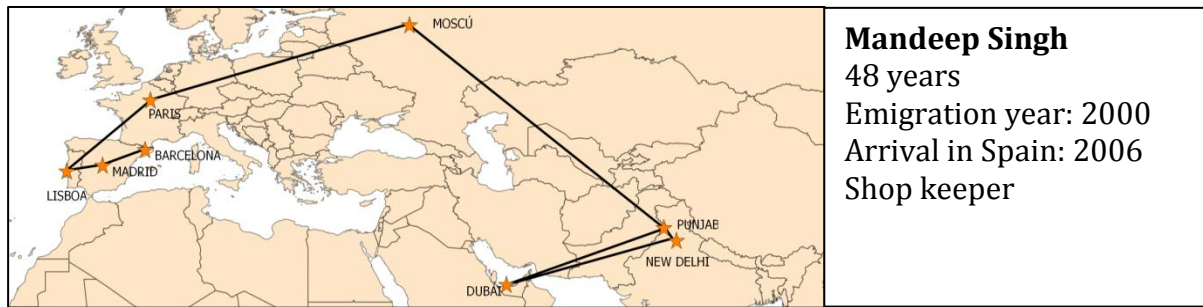
#### Type 1: African route



#### Type 2: Middle East route



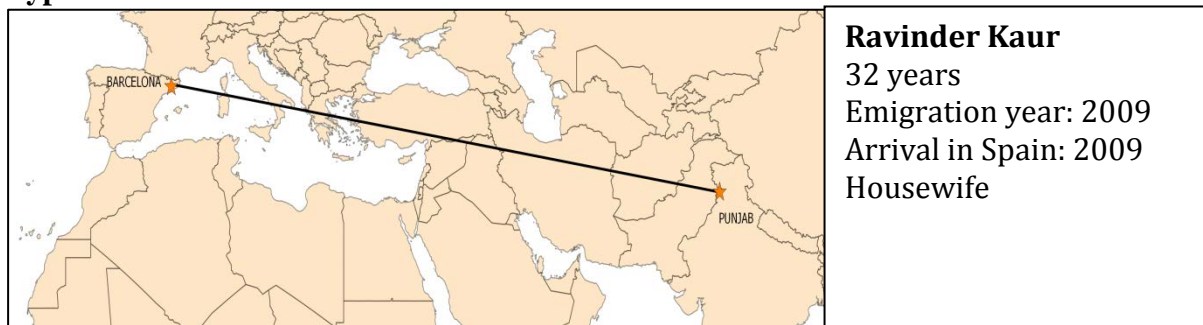
#### Type 3: East European route



**Type 4: American route**



**Type 5: Direct route**



*Source: from in-depth interviews of the doctoral thesis Indian Diaspora to Spain Preparation: spatial analysis and neighbourhood relations (2015-16).*

Generally, most of the migratory flows from the Indian subcontinent, but particularly from Punjab, occurring during the economic crisis can only be understood in the context of the "illegal migration industry". This involves both human trafficking (Salt and Stein, 1997) but also more or less formal circuits in which assistance is provided by NGO's and world organisations for immigration purposes (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sorensen, 2011). In this migratory process the main engine and the beneficiary are no longer the immigrants themselves, but the intermediary involved in the process, who promotes these movements either with the help of Russian mafias or the African travel agents. These illegal immigrations are charged depending on the target place of destination, the route selected by the immigrants and the time when migration is undertaken, for example, among interviewees, many have

claimed about paying 5,000 euros for Dubai, 20 thousand for Spain and 40 thousand for Canada or the United States.

This illegal immigration market exists thanks to the combination of three factors: Firstly, the demand of cheap manual labour for agriculture and industry in Spain, promotes the flow of illegal immigrants, as they accept blue colour jobs on low wages, (which lead to their over-exploitation by Spanish businessmen, especially in some municipalities dedicated to agriculture and agro-industry); Secondly, some community members also promote the illegal immigration of Punjabi youth to Spain, seek to exploit these immigrants upon arrival by hiring them for their own benefit utilising their status and position in Gurudwaras; The final factor results from the failure of the state (the Spanish but also Indian) to regulate and control of the immigrant flow and their insertion in the labour market. This situation increases the isolation and vulnerability of the Sikh population.

We can also consider that the restrictions applied on the immigration from Commonwealth countries to the UK under the British Immigration Act of 1968, led the Sikh immigration to other European countries and can be a remote factor of their arrival in Spain, initially in La Rioja during 1970's and then in Catalonia (Farajas, 2006a). Political instability in the Punjab during the 1980s undoubtedly played a role in promoting migration to European countries, although most Sikh immigrants, who then ended up in Spain, were firstly, attracted by the possibility to get legalized more easily than in other countries and secondly, by the economic opportunities especially during the economic boom period. This emigration has opened the Sikh diaspora to non-English speaking countries, which has resulted in the community's exposure to a great diversity.

Between 1999 and 2010, the Sikh immigration flow has increased 10 fold, reaching to its peak in the year 2010 with 2,105 individuals in a single year. State regularization of immigration during 2000 and 2005 marked as milestones in the Sikh's immigration history to

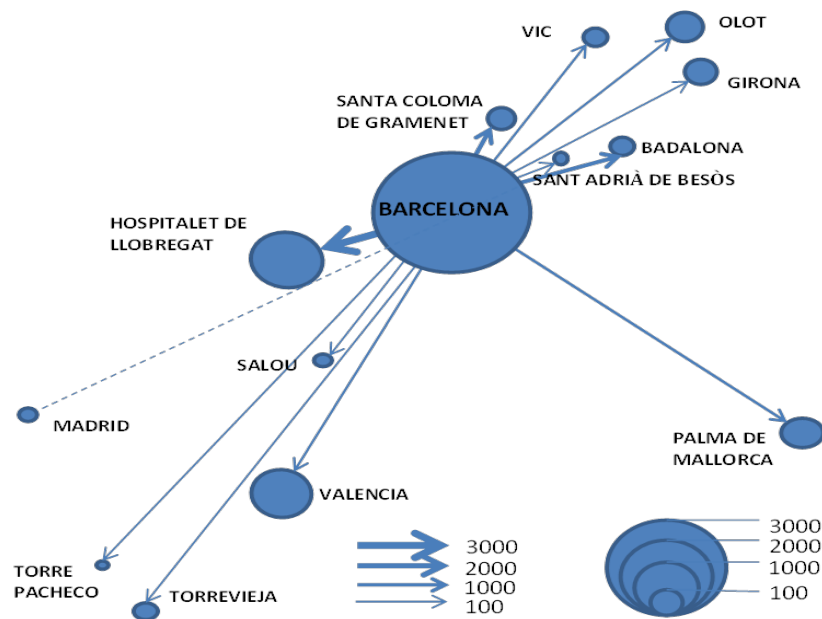
Spain, as well as the application of the Arraigo system since 2006, which has encouraged flows even during the period of economic crisis. According to data from EVR 2000-2014, the municipalities that have received the largest number of immigrants directly from outside of Spain are Barcelona (6,225), Valencia (2,362), Hospitalet de Llobregat (2,214), Lloret de Mar (1,513), Badalona (1,454), Olot (1,108), Palma de Mallorca (1,077) and Santa Coloma de Gramenet (1,043). Except Valencia and Palma de Mallorca all other municipalities are from Autonomous community of Catalonia and four of them (Barcelona, Hospitalet de Llobregat, Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet) are the parts of Barcelona Metropolitan Area, in an urban agglomeration.

#### *4.2. Internal mobility: the statistical trail*

Internal mobility not only informs us about the progressive spread of the Sikh population in Spanish territory directly related to the job offers, but also the strength of the ties that interconnect these territories, which forms the diaspora space. We must therefore consider internal mobility as a pillar in the formation of the Sikh community. Of the total of 73,756 movements recorded by the EVR during the period of 2000-2014, Barcelona received the highest proportion coming directly from abroad (22%). However, from here these migrants move to other Spanish cities. Almost 26% of the total recorded movements departing from the municipality of Barcelona.

As shown in Figure 6, Barcelona and especially the neighbourhood of El Raval, undoubtedly, have served as the gateway of immigration, i.e. as a filter and distributor of the population by establishing a centred metropolitan area network. On the basis of the exploration of the EVR data 2000-2014, we find that the municipalities of Hospitalet de Llobregat (56%), Badalona (40%), and Santa Coloma de Gramenet (36%), are the leading receiver of the Sikh population from Barcelona municipality.

Figure 6: The diagram of Sikh emigration from Barcelona, 2000 – 2014.



Source: Own elaboration with data from Residence Variance Statistics, EVR 2000-2014, INE

Mostly Sikh migratory movements follow kinship networks. The concentration of Sikh population in Barcelona is also a result of these kinship networks. Pioneer Sikhs settled in Barcelona and became the main source of information for other immigrants. Together with Gurudwaras, they have also created a place of refuge for new immigrants. With the increasing influx of immigrants (brothers, cousins and nephews), communication and kinship networks also strengthened, which increases in attractiveness of the city for the diaspora. The centrality of Barcelona is complemented by others poles of attraction, which represents very diverse occupational niches, from jobs in the agriculture sector, which is capitalized by the municipality of Torre Pacheco in Murcia, to the work in the food processing industry in Vic and Olot in the province of Girona, and the hospitality sector jobs in Palma de Mallorca, Lloret de Mar, Torrevieja and Fuengirola. In recent years, many Sikhs have moved to jobs in restaurants and hotels, which allowed them to settle in other coastal cities such as Valencia, Alicante, Palma de Mallorca, Torrevieja and Salou. It is especially interesting to know that the job offers, and the concentration of Sikhs in the hotels and restaurants in the province of

Alicante (and partially in Murcia), is partly to satisfy the demand of Indian food by British population, which is highly concentrated in these areas (Sabater *et al*, 2013), and not the indigenous market. While the neighbouring municipality of Torre Pacheco, popularly known as a 'school' among the Sikh population, is characterized by the flow of new illegal immigrants and the harsh working conditions. Finally, it is noteworthy that Madrid is an exception in the case of internal migration of Sikhs during this period. It is the only municipality with sizable of Sikh population, which has not received immigrants from Barcelona. The small Sikh community of Madrid entered directly from outside or from other cities of Spain.

#### *4.3. The hypermobility of Sikhs: the invisible space*

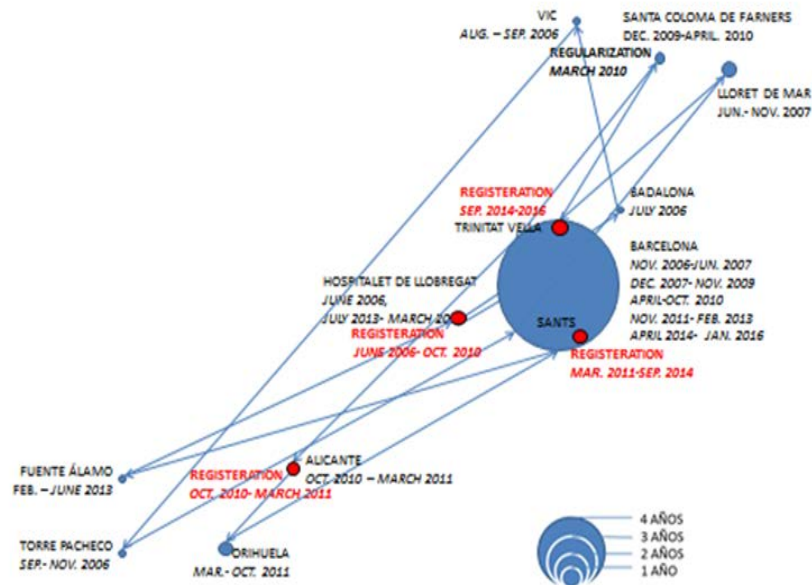
As we know from other works, the mobility recorded by the residence variance statistics (EVR) should be considered as only a very small part of the real inter-municipal mobility (see for example what Aron Cohen and M. Berriane (2011) tell us about the internal mobility of Moroccan population in Spain). On the basis of the responses of in-depth interviews, we find that the difference in the real and registered internal and external movements is of such magnitude that it deserves special attention with regards to the hypermobility of Sikhs.

In the in-depth interviews, both high mobility of the group and its statistical invisibility became evident. The initial registration (as an essential requirement for the regularization process) and the search for work opportunities at different places, explain the existence of invisible hypermobility, while the permission of permanent residence and family reunification mark the end of the period of hypermobility. According to the testimony of the interviewees, it is common that the first registration does not correspond to the real place of residence, and most commonly a payment is made to the owner or resident of the home to get

Figure 7: Typologies of internal migration of sikhs in Spain.

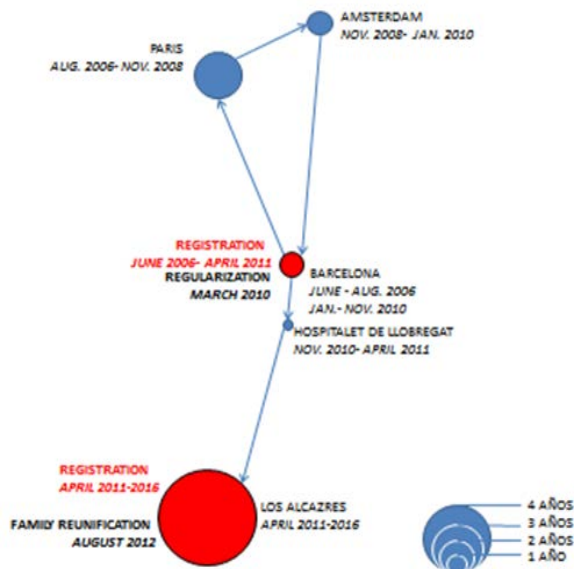
### 7.1 Simple internal mobility

SUKHJIT SINGH, 33 years  
Year of Arrival: 2006



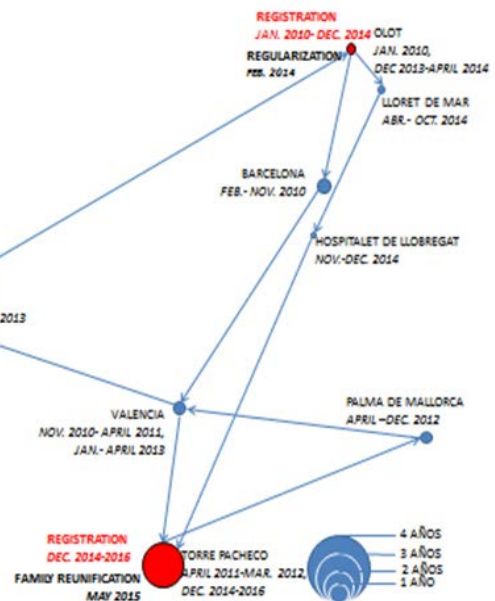
### 7.2 Mixed mobility (internal and international)

MATINDER SINGH, 28  
Year of Arrival: 2006



### 7.3 Family mobility

GAGANDEEP SINGH  
Year of Arrival: 2010



Source: own elaboration from in-depth interviews of the doctoral thesis *Indian Diaspora to Spain* Preparation: spatial analysis and neighbourhood relations (2015-16).



registered in that house, as it ensures the possibility to get legalized after three years of regular registered stay in Spain, under the immigration law called '*Arraigo*'. On average, an irregular Sikh immigrant changes his place of residence three to four times annually, without any registered entry (Alta) and exit (Baja) from the municipal register of inhabitants. Based on the socio-demographic profiles, the destinations, and the time of stay, we can classify three types of internal migration: 1) "Simple internal mobility"; 2) "Mixed mobility" including international movements; and 3) "Family mobility" related to family reunification. After the family reunification, internal mobility tends to disappear because it becomes very costly to move with the whole family. However, many families still try to emigrate to Britain or Canada for better education of their children and better living conditions, especially after obtaining Spanish nationality.

In all types of internal migrations, much of the movements never get registered. In Spain these movements or residential changes are captured by the EVR statistics. However due to the lack of registration of the immigrants in all places of residence, it becomes impossible to track the actual movement of immigrants from one municipality to another and the time spent in each of them. As shown in Figure 7, in the first case of simple internal mobility, only four movements were registered in the municipal registers. However, in reality 17 residential changes had been made during the last 9 years. In most of the cases, the actual time spent in places where immigrants were actually registered, constituted not even half of total registered time. Part of this hypermobility is related to seasonal employment such as in agriculture and hospitality, forcing the need to move for work. The greater knowledge of Spanish territory acquired through these movements is inversely related to their assimilation to their neighbourhoods and society, as mostly they live in a kind of provisional state, where they move according to the availability of seasonal work. As a result, they do not maintain regular contact or relations with the host community, which contributes to their isolation and

‘cocooning’ behaviour. In the early stages of immigration this strategy helps them to earn their living and survive till permanent settlement.

After watching the share of unregistered migrations, we can conclude that there is an invisible diaspora space, which is not captured by any administrative register or other data sources. In Spain the perfect example of this invisible space is the municipality of Torre Pacheco in Murcia, where, according to our interviewees at present live more than 1000 Sikhs. However, in the municipal records only 327 Sikhs were registered as inhabitants, mostly living in isolated areas.

## **5. Diaspora through transnational communication links**

The world we live in is characterized by accelerating, intensifying and deepening social, economic, cultural, religious and recreational interconnections between one geographic and cultural area of one people to another (Magu, 2015 p. 642). These interconnections create a virtual transnational space, which provides a platform for the interaction of different actors of diaspora community. Contrary to diasporic communities that imagine and recreate connections across migrant groups with a territorial basis for attachment, belonging and identity, research on transnationality focuses more on connections that exist through actual networks (Bonnerjee, 2012 p. 12). In his article Vertovec (1999: 447) refers to transnationalism as ‘multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across borders of nation-states’. According to Mitchell (2003:84) the key feature of transnationality is that it refers to ‘embodied movements and practices of migrants and/or the flows of commodities and capital, and [we] analyse these flows with respect to national borders and the cultural constructions of the nation, citizen and social life’.

The movements in the Sikh diaspora, and the relationships derived from them can be considered as "transnationalism from below" (Guarnizo, 1997), which focuses on individual immigrants as agents of their own migration (Glick Schiller, et al. 1995), in contrast to the

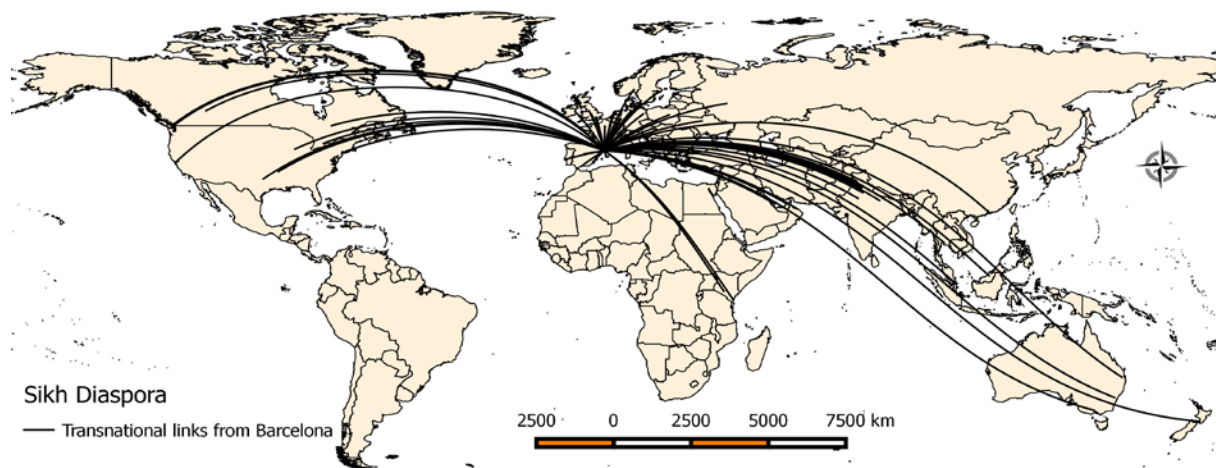
studies that put the movement of multinational or political parties as the hub of transnational relations (Faist, 2009). In our preliminary "transnational relations" approach, we have focused on the social networks of Sikh individuals, who are active in different parts of the diaspora and help the flow of information and resources across the borders. These networks include the people, who are mostly family members or friends, who share the information about the living, work, weather and marriage market conditions of their country of residence with others. Mostly they compare different parts of the diaspora and decide the position of different countries in the hierarchy of the most desired destinations.

The Sikhs have maintained strong transnational ties with their homeland Punjab and all other destinations, where they have settled around the world (Singh, 1999). These transnational links provide a mechanism for the movement of people, capital and ideas throughout the diaspora. Due to the increased use of information technology and the hyper-connectivity via the Internet, WhatsApp, Facebook, phone calls and television channels, the present Sikh diaspora is densely interconnected and forms a virtual transnational space, where all actors of the diaspora interact with each other and discuss the main issues of community's identity struggle and challenges related to religion, society and politics in the global and local contexts. In this space they feel connected with their community around the world, which provides them with strength and a sense of security. These links on the one hand are used for the better allocation of resources of the community and on the other hand are also helpful in finding partners within the diaspora community, via matrimonial web pages.

On the basis of interview responses, we have delimited the extent of diaspora through transnational communication networks, which are expanded from Barcelona to the rest of the diaspora (Figure 8). We have asked interviewees to tell us about the Sikh people whom they call at least once a week and their present country of residence. Taking into account the number of calls made by Sikhs from Barcelona, we find that they have communication links

with their friends and relatives in 30 countries around the globe. After the Indian Punjab; the other important places are Canada, the UK, the USA, Germany and Australia, which are also the major centres of attraction in the diaspora. More than 25% of the total calls go to Canada and UK only. The flow of information through regular contacts also affects the central position in the diaspora, which is very mobile and currently lies in Canada.

Figure 8: Transnational communication links from Barcelona to rest of the Diaspora.



*Source: own elaboration from in-depth interviews of the doctoral thesis Indian Diaspora to Spain Preparation: spatial analysis and neighbourhood relations (2015-16).*

Hyper-communication in the Sikh diaspora has a multiplier effect on social control, creating a specific panoptic device; everyone knows everyone and everyone is interested in everything. At the same time, scrutiny for the possibility of migration creates a space where the imaginary hierarchies of cities, sometimes becomes confused with the countries themselves. Thus, the imagined space emerged from transnational relations, overlaps practical information about actual job opportunities, facilities for regularization or social services concerning health or housing, or possible marriage markets, and incorporates a categorization, which connects them with the prejudices that European countries have traditionally had for one another. The symbolic capital of the city or the country of destination, determines the social capital of the immigrant residing in that country, regardless of his own actual socio-

economic status. Thus, Sikh migrants living in Germany consider themselves better than those who live in Spain; even when they belong to the same family, have the same education level, and similar occupations. That prestige also affects their price as a candidate in the Sikh marriage market both at origin and in the diaspora.

The imagery of the different destinations created by discussions on transnational virtual spaces results into greater migration from one country to another, which generally are supposed to be in better conditions, e.g. in qualitative work many interviewees told us about the mass movement of Sikhs from Spain to Canada and the UK in the last five years. Especially in the Sikh diaspora the status of an individual is largely determined by the country in which he lives. For example, a person who lives in an Arabian country would not have the same status as a migrant living in Germany. One that has migrated to Germany is in turn considered to be well below those who have gained a foothold in Canada. These differences encourage further migratory flows from countries, which are considered as poor or peripheral, to the countries which are considered as rich or central. The transnational communities from the flow of information transform the sense of spatiality in such a way that affects both its practices and its own image (Debarbieux, 2015).

## **6. Conclusions: Mobility and appropriation of space**

Demographers and geographers, generally all social scientists who depend on statistics, are the prisoners of "methodological nationalism". By that we mean to impose the framework (and perspective) of a state to our studies, both from below, when we try to study regions or nationalities without State, or from above, when we approach the transnational movements and communities. This limitation is exacerbated in the case of religious communities like Sikhs, for which only a handful of countries collect data systematically. To this statistical limitation; we should also add the complexity of the concept of "diaspora", which is mostly confused as the sum of different interactions only. Sikh diaspora is a space

produced by the emigration. On the one hand, it provides a reproduction place for the community out of Punjab and on the other hand, it affects the demographic reproduction of the population in Punjab, as emigration has become one of the key elements of demographic change in Punjab.

In answer to the first research question, the Sikh diaspora space can be considered as a large transnational community that extends from their homeland Punjab to North America in the west and New Zealand in the east. It has dynamic geometry and polycentric character. Its main centres are Canada, the UK, the USA and Australia. It is formed by the three historical migration waves, colonial migrations, economic migrants and refugees each with their own specific characteristics. The Sikh diaspora organizes itself through the dynamics of the centre and periphery, in which the centre is centripetal (that attract immigrants from periphery) and periphery is centrifugal (that push immigrant to the core or other peripheral locations). Each centre is surrounded by its own peripheral region, ancient or modern, for example, we can consider Malaysia, Thailand as peripheral regions in the colonial period and recently France, Italy, Portugal and Spain have occupied this peripheral position. The hierarchy between centre and periphery depends largely on the cultural construction, configured through information flows that make the relational diaspora. The Sikh diaspora intersects and interacts with the Indian diaspora in general and to a lesser extent with the Pakistani Punjabi or Bangladeshi, with which they share territory in different countries. Factual information about the labour market, housing, legalisation processes 'papers', social benefits or matrimonial markets are taken into account during the allocation of symbolic capital to each place in the diaspora. The hierarchical logic established between centres and peripheries, results in increased mobility. Hence, we can conclude that the Sikh diaspora space is created through movement and transnational interconnectedness.

The second objective of this paper was to explore, how the diaspora space transformed while coming in contact with a migration of diasporic character. As we have seen, Spain is a recent addition into the Sikh diaspora. Most migrants are settled on the Mediterranean coast between Catalonia in the north to Andalucía in the south. Their presence in Spain has contributed to the population diversity and now they have become a part of the human mosaic of Spain. The Gurudwaras play a prominent role in the articulation of the Sikh diaspora. Along with their formal role as religious centres, they also serve as a common platform for the community to discuss their social and political issues. In the Sikh community, it is their primary duty to establish a Gurudwara when the number of residents reaches to a critical mass at a place (mostly 3 to 4 hundred individual or 100 families), which is needed to permit its construction and maintenance. The existence of Gurudwara at a particular place, changes the setup of that space and mostly in the neighbourhood it is seen as the appropriation of space by a foreign religious group.

Due to the structural adjustments made by the Spanish government during the economic crisis, Spain has become a “mousetrap” for Punjabi lions, attracted by the facilities to regularize their situation and job opportunities during the boom period. Now most Sikh migrants are trapped in low paid jobs, with no chance of improving their situation in the short or medium term and many are forced to undertake a second migration to get out of this precarious situation. The widespread experience of harsh working conditions (due to exploitation by Spanish bosses or by their own ethnic business community) and concentration in highly segregated residential neighbourhoods, has resulted in the withdrawal of Sikh migrants from social and economic spheres. This in turn results in the paradox that hyper-mobility, which was the symbol of their regular movement for betterment, in fact contributed to their isolation, making the community generally invisible and marginalised.

Both the first and second question required qualitative research to be answered satisfactorily. This paper has highlighted the need for further research in the areas like: how the presence of Sikhs in Spain has changed neighbourhood relations, and how host community have reacted towards these changes? Furthermore we need to establish whether we can consider Sikh diaspora as a demographic reproduction system based on emigration. Finally, further research is required to elucidate how the endemic shortage of women at the origin and in the diaspora will affect the marriage market in the near future.

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#### **Annex 1. Sikh Population in different countries**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Sikh Population</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
India	19,215,730	Census of India, 2011
Canada	468,673	Census 2011, Canada.
The UK	432,429	2011 Census of UK.
The USA	250,000	<a href="http://www.pewresearch.org/2012/08/06/ask-the-expert-how-many-us-sikhs/">http://www.pewresearch.org/2012/08/06/ask-the-expert-how-many-us-sikhs/</a>

Malaysia	100,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Malaysia">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Malaysia</a>
Australia	72,296	2011 Census Quick Stats: Glenwood". Retrieved 14 February 2015.
Italy	70,000	<a href="http://www.nriinternet.com/EUROPE/ITALY/2004/111604Gurdwara.htm">http://www.nriinternet.com/EUROPE/ITALY/2004/111604Gurdwara.htm</a>
Thailand	70,000	International Religious Freedom Report for 2006: Thailand". Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. Retrieved 2015-09-12.
Philippines	51,000	<a href="http://asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-51-12015/Migration%20and%20Business%20-%20A%20Survey%20of%20Indian%20Communities%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf">http://asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-51-12015/Migration%20and%20Business%20-%20A%20Survey%20of%20Indian%20Communities%20in%20the%20Philippines.pdf</a>
UAE	50,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates</a>
Germany	40,000	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Germany">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Germany</a>
Mauritius	37,700	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
France	30,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_France">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_France</a>
Singapore	23,000	<a href="http://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/sikh-population.636/">http://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/sikh-population.636/</a>
Spain	20,797	Padron continuo, 2015, INE.
Greece	20,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Greece">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Greece</a>
Kenya	20,000	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Kenya">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Kenya</a>
Kuwait	20,000	<a href="http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71425.htm">http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71425.htm</a>
Pakistan	20,000	<a href="http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71443.htm">http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71443.htm</a>
New Zealand	19,191	"2013 Census Quick Stats about culture and identity". Retrieved 1 Feb. 2016
Indonesia	14,000	<a href="http://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/sikh-population.636/">http://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/sikh-population.636/</a>
Holland	12,000	<a href="https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Netherlands">https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Netherlands</a>
Belgium	10,000	Dutch newspaper on Sikhs celebrating Maghi in Brussels
Hong Kong	10,000	<a href="http://yp.scmp.com/article/2275/sikhs-hong-kong">http://yp.scmp.com/article/2275/sikhs-hong-kong</a>
Afghanistan	8,000	<a href="http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_sikhs-hindus-reclaim-kabul-funeral-ground_1006343">http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_sikhs-hindus-reclaim-kabul-funeral-ground_1006343</a>
Mexico	8,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
China	7,500	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Portugal	7,000	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Portugal">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Portugal</a>
Nepal	5,790	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Norway	3,363	<a href="https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/225814?_ts=14d005aeb20">https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/225814?_ts=14d005aeb20</a>
Burma	3,000	<a href="http://www.epw.in/node/131164/pdf">http://www.epw.in/node/131164/pdf</a>
Lebanon	3,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Malawi	3,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Nigeria	3,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Zambia	3,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Austria	2,794	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Austria">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Austria</a>
Fiji	2,577	Population by Religion - 2007 Census of Population
Japan	2,000	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Tanzania	2,000	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Ireland	1,200	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asian_people_in_Ireland">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asian_people_in_Ireland</a>
Sweden	1,000	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Sweden">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Sweden</a>
Kazakhstan	800	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Denmark	700	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Poland	700	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country#Europe">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country#Europe</a>
Finland	600	<a href="http://research.jyu.fi/jargonia/artikkelit/jargonia21_hirvi.pdf">http://research.jyu.fi/jargonia/artikkelit/jargonia21_hirvi.pdf</a>

Cyprus	500	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_by_country</a>
Iran	500	<a href="http://asiasamachar.com/2015/08/24/bathing-dead-in-tehran-gurdwara-divides-iranian-sikhs1/">http://asiasamachar.com/2015/08/24/bathing-dead-in-tehran-gurdwara-divides-iranian-sikhs1/</a>
Switzerland	500	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Switzerland">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism_in_Switzerland</a>
Argentina	300	<a href="http://thelangarhall.com/general/buenvenidos-a-la-comunidad-sikh-de-la-argentina/">http://thelangarhall.com/general/buenvenidos-a-la-comunidad-sikh-de-la-argentina/</a>
Papua Nueva Guinea	120	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhs_in_Papua_New_Guinea">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhs_in_Papua_New_Guinea</a>
Iceland	100	<a href="http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Iceland">http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sikhism_in_Iceland</a>