

**RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY, HOUSEHOLD
DYNAMICS AND LOCATION CHOICE IN
BARCELONA AREA**

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Resum.- Durant els anys vuitanta, la població de l'àrea urbana de Barcelona feia pocs canvis d'habitatge principal. Aquesta situació no era pas exclusiva de Barcelona, sinó que reflectiva els processos que eren propis d'Espanya i de Catalunya. El context exterior, especialment pel que fa al mercat de l'habitatge i l'estabilitat laboral determinaven el nivell i la freqüència de la mobilitat residencial, alhora que condicionaven un model senzill d'evolució familiar. La localització de l'habitatge de les parelles joves es veu influïda pel tipus de sistema que permet fer compatibles les activitats dins de la llar i fora. Un sistema basat en la xarxa familiar, com ara l'espanyol explica l'elevada preferència local de la residència.

Paraules clau.- Mobilitat residencial, habitatge, família, àrea urbana, Barcelona.

Resumen.- En los años ochenta, la población del área urbana de Barcelona realizaba pocos cambios de vivienda principal. Esta situación no era exclusiva de Barcelona, sino que reflejaba los procesos que se desarrollaban en España y en Cataluña. El contexto exterior, especialmente en lo que respecta al mercado de la vivienda y la estabilidad laboral determinaban el nivel y la frecuencia de la movilidad residencial, al mismo tiempo que estaban condicionando un modelo sencillo de evolución familiar. La localización de la vivienda de las parejas jóvenes se ve influida por el tipo de sistema que permite compatibilizar las actividades dentro y fuera del hogar. Un sistema basado en la red familiar explica la elevada preferencia local de la residencia.

Palabras clave.- Movilidad residencial, vivienda, familia, área urbana, Barcelona.

Abstract.- During the eighties, the population of the Barcelona urban area made few first residence changes. This situation is not exclusive to Barcelona, but reflects what is happening in Spain and in Catalonia. The external context, particularly the housing market and jobs stability patterns, determine the level and the frequency of residential mobility, as well as it leads to a simple model of family evolution. Young couples' housing localization has been influenced by a type of system that permits the compatibility of activities inside and outside the home. A system based on the family network explains the strong local preference for housing.

Key words.- Residential mobility, housing, family, urban area, Barcelona.

Résumé.- Dans les années quatre-vingt, la population de l'agglomération urbaine de Barcelone a effectué peu de changements du domicile principal. Cette situation n'est pas exclusive de Barcelone, mais reflète ce qui se passe en Espagne et en Catalogne. Le contexte extérieur, en particulier le marché du logement et la stabilité de l'emploi, détermine le niveau et la fréquence de la mobilité résidentielle, en même temps qu'il conditionne un modèle simple d'évolution familiale. La localisation des logements des jeunes couples a été influencée par un type de système qui permet la compatibilité des activités à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du foyer. Un système basé sur le réseau familial explique la forte préférence résidentielle locale.

Mots clés: Mobilité résidentielle, logement, famille, agglomération urbaine, Barcelone.

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RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY, HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS AND LOCATION CHOICE IN BARCELONA AREA

This paper's aim is to present the residential behaviour of Barcelona urban area population¹. The data we have analysed is from the 1991 Sociodemographic Survey (SDS), implemented by the Spanish official statistics office (INE). This survey offers biographical information about a set of topics (partner relationship formation and dissolution, children birth, migrant history, educational and occupational experience). There is also data on residential mobility (housing change), but only for the period 1981-1991. This is the more recent source with this kind of longitudinal and cross-theme information. Thus, we will focus our discussion in the interrelation between residential change, contextual constraints, household dynamics and spatial location during the eighties².

1.- The intensity of residential mobility

In the eighties, Barcelona's urban area population was making very few residential changes. This situation was not exclusive of Barcelona, but was reflecting processes developing at Catalan and Spanish scales. The gross rate of residential mobility was between 4 and 5 per cent annually.

This rate level was moderate if compared with other cases from abroad and was among the lowest in the Spanish regional context. Long (1991) made an international overview based on data of the first eighties, but he could not use contemporary Spanish values. Spain would be virtually in the last place of his main table. The 1991 Spanish gross rate (1 year interval) was 5.3 per cent and 18.5 per cent in a 5-year interval (1986-1991), less than Ireland (6.1 per cent) and Austria (20.1 per cent) respectively, the two "more immobile" countries in the Long's list. According to his article, 9.6 per cent of British population would move every

¹ This paper is based on the author's doctoral thesis "Flujos espaciales e itinerarios biográficos: la movilidad residencial en el área de Barcelona", presented at the Department of Geography, Autonomous University of Barcelona.

² This topic is related with the interdisciplinary field of residential strategies. For a literature example for the french case, see Bonvalet and Fribourg (1990).

year, whereas in France this figure was 9.4 per cent. At the table's top were New Zealand (19.4 per cent), United States (17.5 per cent) and Australia (17.0 per cent). These three countries had, clearly, housing and labour markets too much far from the European ones.

However, the residential mobility age timing of Barcelona coincides with a standardized timing. It reproduces broadly the Rogers and Willekens models (Rogers, Willekens, 1986) for internal migrations. The form of the Barcelona's age specific rate curve is similar, but the curve level is markedly lower despite collecting dwelling changes and not only internal migrations. Most movements are experienced by 20-34 year old youngs and the highest rate is around 25 years old. At this age residential mobility rate was 11.5 per cent yearly, slightly higher than French or British global rates and much lower than United States global rate.

The total mobility rate for the period 1981-1991 and Barcelona area according to the SDS was 2.66. Calculation of longitudinal total rates is not possible because complete cohort data is lacking. Interpretation of this total period (cross-sectional) rate is similar to, say, the total fertility rate: aggregated number of housing changes that a person born in the 80's would carry on if age specific rates would become fixed. Moreover, a set of age specific rates are translated as an individual theoretical behaviour when actually were affecting members of all present cohorts that had quite different residential and biographical histories. Any real cohort with this low residential mobility does not exist, by the moment.

International comparisons for this period total rate are difficult because there are so few examples in the topic literature. One of this can be found at Stillwell and Congdon (1991) book preface. They indicate following 1981 British Census data that individuals would change of residential location at least 6 times during their lifes. The cross-sectional level of mobility, controlling the age effect, was more of twice higher in Britain than in Barcelona. It is possible to find other examples in French literature, although usually cohort mobility indicators are calculated with data from several topic-specific surveys. These mobility indicators fail to evaluate the conjuntural residential environment, but are offering an interesting longitudinal information. Bonvalet (1990) (a) found that Paris inhabitants, born between 1911 and 1935, occupied 3.2 dwellings from leaving parental house to 45 years old, mainly from 1940 to 1970. In other words, during this vital phase 3.2 moves were made. In Barcelona the period observation points that a hypothetical cohort would make 1.6 residential migrations as a maximum between leaving parents and the age of 45. It must be said that Bonvalet research's individuals experienced an important long distance migrant mobility (many of them were born outside Paris in France or abroad). On the contrary, in Spain during the eighties interregional migratory flows almost ceased. The level of interregional, rural-urban migration was high between 1950 and 1975, and Barcelona was one of the main destinations.

2.- External actors intervening in the 80's residential mobility low level

Observed low level in Barcelona's urban residential mobility is not caused directly by cultural particular traits. Macroeconomic and structural constraints have been influencing micro behaviour, at household level. If deep cultural reasons were playing, there would be some meaningful differences between Spanish regions, following some of the main cultural divisions: north versus south, castilian speaking regions versus catalan, basque or galician speaking regions... Neither of them seems to be working. It is not meaningful either the division according to the level of economic development. Moreover, residential mobility is significantly higher in countries with similar economic and cultural backgrounds, as Italia.

Factors influencing Barcelona residential system are influencing Spain as a whole. They are factors relating to the performance of Spain as a political and economic integrated body. In this section, we'll expose some elements that can help to explain the structural low mobility level.

First of all, it's important to consider the deep transformations in the Spanish labour market since 1975. The successive new democratic governments were induced by industrial crisis to strengthen working population protection against unemployment by difficulting worker dismissal. Entry of young people to labour market was made even worse by this policy. The common adaptation strategy was to prolong the school years by massively joining the university system. This solution was made easy by continuous State investment in public universities. State social policies were centred in working and old-age pensioner population and any public scheme was not implemented in order to ease autonomization of the youths. As known, both financial and residential independence were delayed. The relative economic improvement experienced from 1985 to 1992 was caused partially by the legalization of different types of temporal labour contracts. Young people could finally start to enter the labour market but in high unstable conditions (Vergés, 1997).

Property is the dominant housing tenure system in Spain. About 80 per cent of Spanish dwellings are owned by their occupants. Being home owner is a main cause of residential immobility. Nevertheless, it is more interesting to refer the residential mobility intensity to the proportion of new households buying directly their first dwelling. According to the SDS, 60-65 per cent of young people buy their first independent dwelling. Acces to home-ownership, one of the main motives that explain in most western countries the residential course, is almost absent in the Spanish partnership coresidence phase. The dominance of home-ownership, even in moves around household independence, implies two mobility consequences. Mobility during the first years of the partnership phase is reduced, but

residential instability (experimentation) before union is also discouraged. Any sector of the housing market is not destined to an eventual pre-partnership phase. Then, the housing market restrictions, that are forcing an early heavy investment in housing, are explaining maybe the widespread adoption of a couple, even marriage, independence way. Just 25 per cent of young people leave parental home to start a non-partnership independent residential phase.

The Spanish economic growth cycle, from the entrance in EEC in 1985 to the 1992 Olympic Games, was dominated by financial and real-estate speculation. Property housing market prices rose sharply until 1991-1992. At the same time, socialist government strengthened monetary policy in order to attract foreign capital flows (Naredo, 1996). This policy brought about the rise of mortgage interest rates, the main way to finance house purchases. In response to this context, cycle-advanced households increased their residential stability even more. Young people willing to leave parental house were left out of market. The minority rent market alternative was difficult because private agents are used to adapt rents to the property prices standard. There was not, neither is, a public significant rent sector. The state implemented several schemes to subsidize a part of interest rates; in fact, only individuals who were financially able to operate in the housing market were helped by these schemes and out-of-market population was not benefited. Mortgage loan concession by banking institutions is highly dependent on the applicant financial solvency. The financial solvency normally is proved by the temporal stability and payment agreement of the applicant job, but in the eighties most young people were in high unstable laboural conditions. Many of them had to appeal to their parents to answer for them before banking institutions. In fact, the young people access to home-ownership was combining mortgage loan, parental financial aid and personal saving.

Young's housing market insertion is often a matter of time. The youths need to invest in time to qualify as a viable buyer. But in the late eighties and early nineties the individual effort was eventually not sufficient. To many the traditional couple common strategy was the solution. As a side effect, the mutual confidence needed in order to implement this kind of strategy reduce the coresidence of just met couples. We can say that young people were making a temporal investment with two main purposes: first, to get a stable position in labour market (of both partners of the future couple); second, to save in order to be able to pay the house deposit and additional expenditures (Domingo, 1997; Cortés, 1995). But a fundamental consequence of this temporal process was to stabilize the partnership relation before they could make the house purchase. Maybe partnership stability is also a more or less explicit condition for parents in order to be involved in the financial investment. Meanwhile, the

young remain living in the parental home. Family was rising as the only support outside the couple world in order to get its residential independence.

3.- A reduced residential course

The residential course in the Spanish context of the eighties was, as seen, quite different from other countries. Moves linked to the young residential independence from coresidence with parents to stable couple union was tending to be reduced to just one. As an aggregated behaviour, a residential phase of lonely or couple experimentation was absent. On the other hand, several causes were explaining the relative absence of moves after union formation. Two of them have been already mentioned: early home-ownership and economic instability. But the structure of housing stock has to be taken in account as well. Usually first dwelling fulfils space needs brought about by children births. Moreover, advanced-cycle, middle-class households could not accede to a quite differentiated market segment.

Residential changes caused by the beginning of partnership coresidence can be delayed, but not indefinitely. On the contrary, changes in order to improve housing conditions can be put off without date, when family income is not enough and when the current dwelling fulfils the minimum standard of quality. In favourable years improving movements normally recover more quickly. Such a positive conjuncture appeared by mid the eighties. Total mobility rate rose slightly and arrived to 2.9 in 1986. The 35-49 year old group, well after the union formation phase, increased more the intensity of residential mobility than the other groups. When Barcelona households reached advanced ages residential mobility was quite low. After 50 years old, individual mobility rates were between 1 and 2 per cent per annum.

4.- Household stability as an intervening factor

As seen in the former sections, a list of external reasons has been influencing the low mobility of the Barcelona's urban area. But elements of demographic structure have been responsible as well. In fact, as seen before, a certain mutual interdependence and interference is operating between residential history and household evolution. On the one hand, the great stability in the adscription of people to households is avoiding, among other things, the succession of residential changes throughout life. On the other hand, the household stability is caused partially by residential constraints. The best expression is the relative absence of a period of high residential turbulence linked to the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

After counting such household transitions like leaving parental home, partnership formation, separation or divorce, widowhood, then one hypothetical subject would accomplish 1.8

transitions throughout life. Women would do slightly more, 1.9, because they are more affected by widowhood.

Leaving parental home would be experienced at the same time that the beginning of the first partner relationship coresidence by 74 per cent of men and 79 per cent of women. That does not mean that union formation is not important for the rest of young people leaving parental home. Three years after residential independence just 10-15 per cent of young people are not yet living in couple. At the end, 90 per cent of Barcelona youngs will enter a partnership relation. As explained, residential independence mean age is quite high in Barcelona: 29 years old for men and 26 for women. We could say that Barcelona young people are leaving parental home as the last act in the evolution toward adulthood, not as the first act as in other spatial contexts.

Partnership unions, normally started in coincidence with residential independence, are very stables. The probability of staying for ever more with the same first couple is quite high. The period data for the eighties inform that no more of 15 per cent of couples would be dissolved by separation or divorce. And marital life is not interrupted by mortality until very old age. Duration of coresidence with the first couple is very long: the expected length is 49 years for men than enter a couple and 42 for women. Why are so lasting the Barcelona's (and Spanish) couples? Several explanations have been provided, many of them linked with a supposed delay of South Europe with respect to the North Europe demographic evolution, as suggested by the Second Demographic Transition theory. But, it is important to take in account that the first partner normally is chosen after a long process of selection that can last all adolescence (Domingo, 1997). In other words, it is possible that the residential restrictions were obstructing indirectly the formation of those partnership relations with a eventual high dissolution risk. The time investment needed in order to get couple's own house could mean as well an investment in partner selection, previous to coresidence.

Nevertheless, male household stability is greater. Logically, divorce (or legal separation) probability is similar for both sexes, but it is more probable for women not to enter again a partnership coresidence. Whereas about 60 per cent of men would begin a new union again, only 25 per cent of women would do the same. Women are more intensely affected by widowhood, at an earlier age and women enter an almost irreversible phase. About three in four sometime united women would have experience widowhood provided they reached the age of 85. Only one in three men would do it. For women this household stage becomes normal from 50 years old. For men from 75 years old. And just about 2 in 100 widow women are able to enter a partnership union again whereas 7 per cent male widows are able to.

To sum up, we could say that only the unavoidable effects of age are influencing a simple model of household evolution. The majority of Barcelona inhabitants would change from parental home to a dwelling shared with their first and, in many cases, only partner. Because of the delay in the start of partnership relation, union would be more stable and would last until one member dies, normally man. Around 40 per cent of men would pass through only two household stages: coresidence with parents and coresidence with the first couple (and eventually children). More of 50 per cent of women would experience only two transitions: parental independence to go to live with male couple and the death of this after a long period together.

5.- Residential mobility and household dynamics

Every household transition is not related automatically with a dwelling change. But household stability was influencing the low level of population's residential experience intensity. Only a type of dwelling change is common to most people: the move related with partnership union. Mobility rate of young people leaving parental home to live with partner is 80 per cent as minimum, and this household transition is made by 20 per cent of all persons moving. And at this time of their household development the couple take a decision on residential location that will last a lot of years.

The long phase of partnership coresidence is characterized by a low mobility level. As said, couples normally own their dwellings, that usually fulfil the minimum standard demanded by normal, middle-class households (couple with children). Thus, unlike other spatial contexts, households experience few residential changes to improve tenure situation or to get more surface. In other cases, the unstable economic climate during the eighties and early nineties made a dangerous affair of any financial commitment in order to improve housing conditions. Then, following our period data, the Barcelona couples would make only one further residential change in the more of 40 years of joint coresidence. In other words, one movement would be carried out every 20 years in partnership relation. But most moves during partnership phase are made during the first years of common life, since more of 50 per cent of movers in couple were below the age of 35. Residential stability and duration at dwelling after the first years of the union is extreme.

Couples' residential stability means also children's residential stability, being this a very important point to explain young spatial behaviour. Only 60 per cent of children would have had to displace with parents during dependence phase, more of 25 years. That is to say that, for 40 per cent of youths, residential independence from parents would be also the first dwelling change. Or that this 40 per cent would be leaving the house where they has been

living since birth. Furthermore, most moves made at childhood do not result in a long displacement outside the neighbourhood, and, then, the processes of socio-spatial integration are not affected. Young people are very deep-rooted in their residence places. They have lived there probably all childhood and adolescence and gradually have created there their own social network. Young spatial location preferences and residential strategies surely are influenced by this facts. Current high local preference when beginning autonomous residential life is depending in part on residential stability during childhood.

6.- Social relations and dwelling location choice

Population of Barcelona's urban area is very binded to their residential locations. Both young and mature subjects have lived many years at the same dwelling, that is, at the same neighbourhood. There is a certain correspondence between social integration networks and network's spatial closeness. Several researches about the use of daily time by the Barcelona's metropolitan area inhabitants (Mendizábal, 1993; Riera, 1992) have shown that a direct relationship exists between frequency of space use and distance from the dwelling location. Has been showed too that older cohorts tend to locate their daily activities at shorter distances. And that higher class individuals tend to localize their social activities and links further off from their homes.

No wonder that most dwelling changes into Barcelona's urban area took place during the eighties inside municipal, local boundaries (76 per cent). The suburbanization process that started to be important in those years was fed by only 24 per cent of all residential moves. Then, Barcelona area's inhabitants moved few times and to short distances.

Although high in all ages, local preference increases in function of age. The 50 to 74 age span showed the biggest level of local mobility (somewhat more of 80 per cent). Children of 14 years or less were used to migrate more, because about 26 per cent of them were changing of residence municipality after move. That is to say that adults with little children in charge were slightly more migrant than adults without children.

General local preference intensity is determined by the behaviour of people in majority household stages. All moves linked to the start and development of partner relationship keep similar local preference proportion: 75-77 per cent. If couple is dissolved by divorce or legal separation, one partner, above all men, is quite often forced to leave the local environment. Only 67 per cent of divorced or separated men changing of dwelling can remain in the municipality of former residence.

High spatial endogamy is acting as an important factor to explain intense local preference. We would await that the proportion of couples made up of individuals living in different

municipalities would be high in a metropolitan urban area like the Barcelona one where intense commuting mobility prevails. However, the opposite happens. Barcelona's youngs are used to find their partner in his or her local context (67 per cent of cases in 80's decade). Both partners have been living many years in the same neighbourhood, because of the low residential mobility of parents. This is one of the consequences of low residential mobility on social network making.

Although generalized, local endogamy does vary in function of young's social position. Spatial endogamy is more intense at the two extremes of social ladder. Low class youngs base more their spatial experience in local context, whereas high class youngs behave surely following socio-spatial auto-exclusion mechanisms. The former are influenced by spatial residential segregation with a social projection; the latter are influenced by a social auto-segregation with a strong spatial projection.

No wonder that in 72 per cent of cases the chosen dwelling after forming a partner relationship is located in the same former municipality. When both partners were living before union in the same municipality, the couple remained there in 85 per cent of cases. Moreover, just 30 per cent of exogamic couples (those with members from different municipalities) chose a third municipality to live; they preferred more to keep residential links with one of the two origin municipalities. Regarding social position, who were more endogamic became more emigrant: both low and high class young couples emigrated more from municipality of residence when union.

In Spain, people can not count on public financial or services aid for the development of household life. No direct monetary aid is given to couples with children. Neither there is a public network of day-nurseries in order to care for children until the starting age of primary school. However, as seen before, revenues from both partners are needed by most couples, and women (potential mothers) are supposed to remain into labour market. As a consequence an intense conflict between women insertion in labour market and childbearing is developed (Cabr e, 1989). This is a large problem in Spain and is among the main causes explaining the very low fertility level. Daily help offered by partners' parents, usually women's mother, is a partial solution. This intergenerational transfer of services is favoured by residential proximity between mother and daughter. I would like to point to the possibility that the intense local preference of young couples could be influenced by the need to appeal very often to the relative network's help. To sum up, relatives, particularly parents, are important for young people to be able to buy a dwelling (financial aid) and to organize daily activities. No wonder that about 90 per cent of young couples, if both mothers still alive, were inhabiting the same municipality than, as a minimum, one mother.

7.- Residential location choice between housing market and couple's daily life restrictions

In the eighties, residential strategy of new couples was made taking in account two ends, with quite opposite spatial effects: first, to have a suitable dwelling at a right price and, second, to be able to appeal to the family network when needed. On the one hand, the structural restrictions of housing supply at the metropolitan centre and at other urban centres would reinforce the population deconcentration and, then, the increase of migratory, longer movements into the Barcelona urban area. On the other hand, the wish to keep the social and family cohesion, that is, the daily interchange and contact flows, would strengthen high residential stability and very short displacements.

Social position interferes in the elaboration of residential strategies. Those who have more income resources can reduce the need of daily help while they increase the incentives to satisfy pure locational and housing preferences. However, high class couples may withstand pressures to choose a socially acceptable residential location. Behaviour of very low income subjects tends to be very influenced by residential restrictions. As a result this group would leave central locations, despite their relational life might be damaged.

Rest of population, the vast majority, just wanted to balance both ends, but without much success. Available data is suggesting that to keep spatial proximity of social links is finally chosen. To this aim, the improvement of residential conditions would be sacrificed. Improvement moves usually mean the displacement to peripheral locations, unsuitable from the social insertion point of view. Residential immobility and local preference is a strategy developed by young couples in order to be able to harmonize laboural and reproductive lives. This strategy would keep working the social aid network and, in a broader sense, the affective place links.

Mature households do not need to rely so often upon family network help because children are more autonomous and start themselves to leave home. The household 'empty nest' phase imply the change in the net direction of aid flows to parents, at the end of their lives, and, probably, to children's own households. Thus, probably mature households' residential strategy is still influenced by the need to keep local links. However, pure residential preferences probably are gradually more important when reevaluating location. Suburbanized moves would be more likely in household's more advanced vital stages.

To sum up, external conditions influencing housing market and stability of jobs would determine the level and frequency of residential mobility, whereas conditioning a simplified model of household dynamics. Housing location of young couples is influenced by the kind

of system implemented in order to make compatible out-home and in-home activities. A family network system like the Spanish one is explaining the high local residential preference. The Spanish residential model, as seen with Barcelona example, was based on reducing mobility in both frequency and distance of movement.

8.- Epilogue: which consequences of the improvement of housing market conditions by mid the nineties

In recent years, dwelling purchase has been quite eased, because of a intense reduction in mortgage interest rates. Stagnation in, still high, housing prices and an increase in the proportion of stable job contracts among young workers has been helping too.

Although young residential independence might be helped by these processes, the restrictions framework to young couples' daily activities has not been changed. Mature households would have increased more their mobility level; they could finally make those improvements moves postponed in the past. As a result population deconcentration of Barcelona area is increasing because mature households are changing to new, quality housing of the metropolitan periphery. Supply of secondhand dwelling is raising in the metropolitan centre, and the residential opportunities of young people are diversifying. This sector of population might start to make several residential moves around household's own formation, and not just one. An interesting question arising is if these transformations could affect household formation and evolution model. But, whereas dependence of young couples from familiar network help is not resolved, local spatial preference probably will be still a fundamental trait of their residential mobility strategy.

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