Always the last?
Housing market integration of Moroccans in Spain

Sarah Meier
University of Potsdam, Germany
e-mail: sarah.meier@uni-potsdam.de

Abstract

Moroccan migrants are the largest group of immigrants in Spain. They can up to now look back on a history of more than 20 years of migration, although the majority barely lives in Spain for more than ten years. Once they arrive at the new place, one of their first necessities is to access shelter. Focusing on the south-eastern Region of Murcia in Spain, I explore the process of housing market integration of Moroccan migrants. Special attention is paid to the dynamics of this process and the role that the interaction between the supply side and the foreign demand of accommodation plays. Thereby, I will emphasize how an unfavourable structure of the housing market, along with the manners of acting of the local private landlords on the supply side leads to considerable problems concerning the housing market integration of migrants in Spain. Thus, this paper aims to give a more accurate interpretation of the dynamics influencing the housing outcomes of migrants in the studied area.

Keywords: migration, integration, Spain, housing, Moroccans

Introduction

Housing conditions are considered a central aspect of quality of life, they are a visible sign of the living conditions and they serve as an indicator for the status in the integration process of migrants in the receiving country. Thus, since almost one century, the housing situation of migrants has been an issue of investigation in different contexts of time and space. Caused by the apparently deficient housing conditions of migrants, a number of lines of research has been developed to illustrate this phenomenon, and explanations have proceeded through several stages.

This article aims to analyse the processes and dynamics of housing market integration of Moroccan migrants in Spain. I will start with a short overview of the existing explanations on this topic and I will point out the approach under which I examine the situation of Moroccans in Spain. In the main body of this article I will describe the dynamics of housing market integration and the housing careers of Maghrebians in the south-eastern Region of Murcia in Spain. Analyzing the mechanisms of integration into the housing market, I especially question how the suppliers of dwellings limit and at
the same time facilitate the opportunities Moroccans face when competing with other groups which demand for housing.

**Housing market integration and housing conditions**

Before starting with the explanations of housing market positions and situations of migrants, I want to clarify my understanding of housing market integration. Being aware of the different concepts of integration, assimilation or inclusion, I opt for a neutral understanding of this issue in this article. Drawing on the synthesized understandings of Brubaker (2001), Hinrichs (2003), Gestring et al. (2006) as well as Bolt et al. (2009), I describe the process of integration into the housing market as followed: Housing market integration comprises the equal access to accommodation as the reference population under similar conditions. Therefore, differences in the housing conditions of migrants and the host society will gradually decline during the process of integration. Analyzing housing market integration, we have therefore to study the housing conditions of the migrant groups we are interested in, and to compare them with the housing conditions in the receiving country.

What types of explanations are available to analyze the (often deficient) housing situation of migrants? Traditional explanations of socio-ecological-oriented investigators like Park and Burgess (1925) as well as neoclassical analysis focus on the demand side of the housing market (Alonso 1964, Dahya 1974). They emanate from the freedom of choice of the households and consequently, substandard housing quality of migrants as well as ethnic segregation is considered a result of migrants’ choice. However, these approaches do not take the constraints and the potentials of acting of the different actors in the housing market into consideration. Neomarxist scholars developed their explanations on the basis of belonging to a social class (Castells 1977, Harvey 1973). Immigrants’ disadvantage in the housing market may therefore be explained in terms of class position and hence their economic position. As authors like Peach (1975, 1981) and Rose (1969) argued, these approaches fail to explain why housing deficits and segregation among different migrant groups are often much higher than their economic situation would predict. Based on a Weberian perspective, institutional approaches, like the urban-manager approach (Pahl 1975) and the theory of housing-classes from Rex and Moore (1967), focus on the supply side of the housing market. For the first time, investigators shed light on the important question of strength in the housing market. They point out that those owning the demanded good have decisively more strength and therefore, can define the quality and distribution of the housing stock as well as the allocation rules to accommodation. Hence, they also play an important role in the housing outcomes of migrants. However, these approaches have experienced legitimate criticism, whereby the assumption of a unitary scale of housing preferences among the consumers is one of the most important. Although resources of some households may be low, it has to be supposed that the preferences among them are quite different; they depend for example on the stage in the lifecycle, lifestyle and culture. According to that, a closer look at the existing literature has shown that most of these works only focus on partial aspects related to the positioning of migrants within the housing market.

Newer approaches which are based on Giddens’ theory of structuration (Giddens 1997, Sarre et al. 1989) or the agency-based approach from Odermatt in German Housing Geography (Odermatt 1997, Odermatt/Wezemael 2007) as well as applied, comparative studies among different migrant groups in Europe (Bosswick et al. 2007, Öziükren/van Kempen 1998, among others) try to explain the housing market integration both of nationals and migrants by linking structural aspects of explanation with supply- and demand-side influencing variables.

Based on these previous works, I argue that housing conditions of migrants can only be explained as an outcome of the supply of dwellings, the interrelations between resources and preferences of households, the aims of the different actors on the housing market, and the context of economic, demographic, socio-cultural and political structures in which they are shaped (Öziükren/van Kempen 1997:13). In this article, I especially want to consider the interrelations between these explaining
variables on the basis of an agency-based point of view, which will be applied subsequently to explain
the housing market integration of Moroccan migrants in Spain.

Following the idea of an agency-based approach, every action concerning the integration of migrants
into the housing market is based on the specific structural context which is point of reference both for
the supply side and the households requiring accommodation. Thereby, this context is not concerned
something external to the actors. As Reuber (2001) states, actors perceive them as a basis for their
action. They are integrated as a “perceived, subjective reality” in every action and are (re-)produced
constantly within the intended and unintended consequences of the actors’ agency (Reuber 2001: 81).
Consequently, they are not to be considered as static, but they transform permanently.

Migrants as actors of the consumers’ sphere of the housing market want to adjust their housing
situation to their economic and mental dispositions. Decisive for their acts are thus the perception of
the situation at the housing market, their specific economic, cultural, social and institutional resources
or capital as well as their preferences. In almost the same manner, the competition with other actors on
the housing market, as well as the allocation rules are decisive for achieving an accommodation. That
is to say that on the housing market different expectancies concerning accommodation come together:
The aim of satisfying the basic need for housing of the households faces the aim of the mostly
economic yields of the suppliers, who posses the authority to dispose the residential property. Hence,
owning the goods, commercial suppliers and even (public) non-profit housing authorities have more
strength on the housing market. Linking the agency of the consumers with those of the suppliers, it has
to be assumed that the strength of the supply side is even higher the smaller the offer and the more
households demand accommodation. Competition among households allows for a further
“constriction” and specification of the allocation rules. To analyze this, aims and manners of acting of
the different suppliers have to be observed. In doing so, we have to consider that prejudices and
discrimination of the home owners and intermediaries may allow a different treatment of migrants in
comparison to other groups with similar characteristics.

These considerations are taken subsequently as a basis to explain the dynamics of the housing market
integration of Moroccan migrants in Spain. By this means, the gap concerning the dynamics of
housing market integration in this geographical context will be filled at the same time. This is due to
the fact that results from previous reports cannot be easily transferred, because the context of
immigration as well as the housing market tends not to be equivalent, and may differ between
countries and through time.

Before explaining the housing market integration of Moroccan migrants in Spain, I want to give a
short overview of the immigration in the Region of Murcia and the dynamics of the housing
conditions of Maghrebians since the beginning of their settlement in the region. Therefore, I will refer
to data collected both from secondary statistics as well as the results of my own fieldwork between
2005 and 2008 (Meier 2011), which contains a questionnaire with 515 immigrants in the Region of
Murcia as well as 47 qualitative interviews with experts on the studies issue. These experts are real
estate agents, agents from NGOs and the public government, constructors as well as financial service
providers, directorates of neighbourhood associations and owner’s associations.

**Immigration in the Region of Murcia**

The foreign population in Spain has increased significantly over the last decades and has now reached
a percentage of 12.2% of the total population (INE 2011a). In the south-eastern Spanish Region of
Murcia it has augmented above the Spanish average. From only 2,200 registered persons in the year
1985 (CES 1997), it increased to more than 54,000 persons in the year 2002 and reaches the number
of nearly 241,000 at the beginning of 2011 – a percentage of already 16.4% (INE 2011a). 81.0% of
them come from Latin America, Africa and non-EU-25-Eastern Europe (INE 2011a). These people
have to be considered mainly as working migrants and their families. Until the end of the 1990s, the
majority of these migrants came from Morocco (66.6% of the non-European foreigners in 1998, INE
2011a). With 28.9% in 2008, Moroccans still represent the largest group of the non-EU-25 citizens in
the Region of Murcia, but nationalities have diversified a lot. More than 46.7% of the migrants come
now from Latin America (mainly from Ecuador and Bolivia), as well as from Sub-Saharan Africa.
(especially from Senegal and Nigeria) and non-EU-25-Eastern Europe, particularly from Ukraine (INE 2011a).

The attractiveness of Murcia as a destination for migrants can be explained to an essential part by a high demand of low-qualified workforce. There is an important demand for workers in the rural areas, where they are needed to support the agricultural production. In the urban context, labour force demand is particularly high in the service sector. Since the end of the last century, workers have been increasingly needed in the construction industry although there is an important decrease since the economic crisis has reached this previously booming sector in Spain. Not least, it is also the process of chain migration and family reunification which has led to an important increase of the foreign population over the last years.

**Housing conditions of Moroccans in the Region of Murcia**

Housing conditions of Moroccan migrants in Spain have changed significantly over the last decades. Due to their occupation in agriculture in the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of Moroccans lived in the rural areas of the Region. One of the first studies about the housing conditions of migrants in the Region of Murcia revealed that in 1996 58% of the migrants lived in so called _infraviviendas_. These are substandard dwellings which are characterized by an insecure basic structure of the building, a lack of basic equipment or even of access to water and electricity – and some of the dwellings are not suitable for human lodging at all (Asociación Columbares 1997). These accommodations are often located isolated from the villages and basic infrastructure.

Since then, the housing situation of the Moroccans has changed in many aspects: A rigorous decline of the percentage of _infraviviendas_ can be stated. In 2007, only one in ten Moroccans lived under these conditions. However, 76% of the migrants still find themselves in housing conditions which are definitely deficient concerning the _quality of the accommodation_: They have a strong need of rehabilitation, show deficiencies concerning the furnishing and/or the number of persons who live in the flat. Thereby, the main problem of migrants’ housing is found in the _overcrowding_ of the flats. Taking the Eurostat definition (in: Federcasa 2006) as a basis, 77% of the Moroccans live in overcrowded dwellings. That is to say, they have less than one room per person at their disposal. 17% even share their room with two or more persons. Given that many migrants share their apartment with the extended or non-family-members – only 28% of them only live with the nuclear family or alone – the lack of privacy is one of the main problems in the overcrowded flats. Even modifying the definition in that way, that – in the case of a nuclear family sharing a flat – we speak of overcrowding only when there is less than half a room per person, still 63.9% of the Moroccans live overcrowded.

Concerning the _location_ of the immigrants’ dwellings in the Region, Maghrebians are nowadays spread over the whole Region. However, concentrations are found particularly in the rural areas. This is also where the first migrants settled down in the 1980s when job opportunities were particularly good in agriculture. In the rural areas, many Moroccans are now moving to the central villages. However, a mentionable number of 22% still lives in secluded homesteads, and a large number is located in the smaller and remote parts of the villages (40%, Torres et al. 2007: 105 ff.). In the latter the percentage of the foreign population often reaches the 40%-mark and segregation is quite more visible than in the urban agglomerations. In contrast, the three mayor cities – Murcia, Cartagena and Lorca – show a smaller proportion of foreigners, who concentrate in some city districts. In the urban areas, the majority lives in the economic inner-city working class districts, where dwellings became vacant in the course of the Spaniards’ moving to the newly build apartments in the surroundings of the city.

Regarding the _tenancy structure_, 76% of the Moroccans live in rented flats, whereof 48% are subtenants and share their accommodation and sometimes even their room with other households. 14% have already achieved home-ownership and a total of 10% lives in dwellings provided by the employer, occupy dwellings or live in other situations. Though, not only the latter are suffering from
tenure insecurity – also migrants living in a rented flat miss a rental agreement in 34.2%. However, they have to pay more for these types of accommodation than Spaniards.

Asking migrants for the development of their individual housing careers, a majority of 81% affirms to have improved or maintained their housing conditions with their last move. This leads to the assumption that most of the migrant households can advance in their individual housing situation over the years. Comparing the housing conditions of migrants and Spaniards during the last two decades, conclusions are quite more difficult to deliver: Although the housing conditions of migrants have improved significantly, it is quite difficult to judge if they show processes of integration or exclusion. As both the housing conditions of migrants and Spaniards are supposed to have improved during the period of economic growth, it is even possible that the gap between both groups has increased. To evaluate this development we have to wait for the results of the 2011 census in Spain and further studies on this topic.

What comes clear according to these results is that housing conditions of Moroccans are still far below the Spanish average (see table 1). Furthermore, comparing the different migrant nationalities in Spain, Moroccans are – along with migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa – those with the worst housing conditions, though their average time of residence in Spain is one of the longest of all migrants. How may this be explained?

Table 1. Housing conditions, origin of households and year of arrival in Spain (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing conditions and year of arrival in Spain</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan-Africa (aggregated)</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
<th>Spain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding *</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Infraviviendas”</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated from villages</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No security of tenure</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price/m² (Euro)</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of arrival in Spain (Median)</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of arrival in Spain (Minimum)</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Modified definition of Eurostat (see above). Spain: Eurostat definition.


Explaining housing conditions of Moroccans in the Region of Murcia

As mentioned before, housing conditions of migrants are conceptualized in this paper as a result of the interrelations between different explaining variables. First, I will outline the specific context to which both the supply and demand-side of accommodation relate to.

The context

The general situation on the housing market constitutes the basis for the access to housing for everyone. To characterise the developments on the Spanish housing market, we first have to analyze the economic development in Spain.

The economic growth of the last decades was one of the reasons for a high demand of manual workers and attracted immigrants from Africa and later on, from Latin America and Eastern Europe. Until the recent crisis, labour market opportunities for low-skilled workers were developing quite favourable.
Hence, contracts were (gradually) of longer duration and especially in the growing construction sector, wages were comparatively high. At the same time while the construction industry was characterised by strong investments, the housing stock increased significantly. However, the newly constructed dwellings of the large construction firms basically responded to the demand for flats in the mid- and high-price-segment in privileged locations. Moreover, the excessively increasing prices on the housing market during the last decade made it not only difficult for many migrants, but also for Spanish households, to get access to housing. Thus, the booming real estate sector has not helped to alleviate the shortage of economic dwellings for rent. Until today, Spain is one of the nations with least rented accommodation in Europe (11%, INE 2001), and, at the same time, a nearly inexistent segment of social rented dwelling with only one percent of the housing stock (Allen et al. 2004, Pareja Eastaway 2009). This is also the case for the studied Region of Murcia. The mismatch of demand needs and supply characteristics, which becomes visible in the deficient availability of affordable rental housing options, has to be seen as one reason for many immigrants having to fall back on inappropriate housing conditions. Furthermore, the increasing number of households, which can be explained by immigration and the growing number of smaller households in Spain, sharpened the competition on the local housing markets, especially for the lower income groups.

Access to housing: The role of the suppliers of dwellings

Because public housing alternatives and non-profit housing associations barely exist, the dwellings in the Region of Murcia are basically supplied on the private housing market. Thus, commercial promoters or private owner-occupiers, willing to sell or to rent their accommodation, define the allocation rules to their goods. And while competition for a certain segment of the housing market is high, suppliers of housing have the possibility to choose between households. As mentioned before, immigrants in the Region of Murcia first lived mainly in the rural areas. The accommodations in these small villages are mostly owned by private landlords who have a high interest in the conservation of the value of their property and are used to identify strongly with their estates. Therefore, they tend to decide about renting a flat not only by mere economic interests, but more than other suppliers - on emotional decisions and prejudices. Hence, the majority of the homeowners with accommodation in appropriate conditions opted for not renting their properties to the Moroccans. The causes are prejudices against the mostly young, male Moroccan immigrants, which originate from both, historically determined resentments and from negatively interpreted experiences with the immigrants in everyday contact and in some rented flats. The subsequent discrimination on the housing market occurred on the one hand because some homeowners have own resentments against the Moroccan immigrants. On the other hand, some decided not to rent their accommodation to immigrants because of the prejudices of their neighbours. The strong social embeddedness of these home owners leads them to take decisions in favour of their established neighbourhood relations than of the foreign demand. As a consequence, the majority of the landlords with accommodation in appropriate conditions opted for not renting their properties to the Moroccans and more than 20% of the dwellings in these areas were unoccupied. Thus, until the mid 1990s, large parts of the housing market were not accessible to migrants (see figure 1).
Figure 1: Agency of suppliers concerning the demand of migrants (until 1990s)

Only in the most remote areas, far from the villages of the Spaniards, some landlords decided to rent their (often deficient) houses to migrants.

"In the past, you virtually saw no migrants here ... for example in Torre Pacheco [village in the region of Murcia], here in the central village there were no migrants... they lived all in the remote neighbourhoods" (Representative local police, Torre Pacheco/Murcia, interview during the investigation with Torres et al. 2007)

As alternatives, like company housing possibilities or social rented flats, were missing, the majority of migrants had no other option than to live in these few offered flats, to occupy abandoned dwellings or even to build their own shacks.

Due to the increase of the demand for housing, the augmentation and diversification of immigration, the dissemination of the migrants’ settlements both in the rural and urban districts, their growing interest not only in rented flats but also in homeownership and the real estate ‘boom’, the situation changed. Allocation rules for migrants were established, which mix between discriminatory practices and rational, economic strategies.

The large promoters of newly built constructions and their intermediaries, who now construct both in the cities as well as in the rural districts and new urbanization zones, mainly offer mid-class and costly flats. In the fear of financial losses because of renting to migrants, most of them close their offers to them, even if they bring the necessary financial resources. Although migrants have access to social accommodation since 2000, social rented accommodation remains at the same negligible level, so that this sector cannot really offer any alternatives for migrants. Therefore, they continue relying on the offers of the small local landlords in the rural villages and in the cities.

Due to the increasing demand of different migrant groups and the possibility of the suppliers to rent or sell their old flat in order to buy a new one and improve their own housing conditions during the real estate ‘boom’, landlords have diversified the allocation rules to their property. Whether they rent or sell their accommodation to Moroccans depends on the location, quality and competition with other nationalities as well as on the household structure on the demand-side. As before, access to higher quality accommodation in exposed locations is mainly denied, and some substandard houses in the rural areas are left to migrants. Some landlords rent their accommodations under common market conditions to the migrants. However, a large group has begun to apply strategies to maximise their gains which are combined with discriminatory acting. They offer overpriced apartments or claim a rent per capita to achieve more financial benefits. Others are renting or selling shelter without previous, necessary rehabilitation, and they even rent self-constructed-shacks in the patios of their properties (see figure 2).
“People realised that the migrants are like a gold mine. Many of them don’t want their houses to be vacant anymore because they can take the double price of a normal rent which they would demand from the Spaniards (…). They definitely exploit the situation. They rent all kinds of things.” (Constructer, Murcia)

“No, they realized that they cannot make money with their vacant apartments (…). If they rent them, they can add to the household income, earn a lot of money, finance their own new house because there aren’t any controls which would make sure that the price, the conditions of the offered accommodations are pure exploitation or not. Then they rent and have a second income.” (Representative of a real estate agency, Torre Pacheco/Murcia)

Figure 2: Agency of suppliers concerning the demand of migrants (since 2000)

Source: Meier 2011

In spite of these constraints, many migrant households have achieved to improve their housing conditions successively, although their housing quality remains below the Spanish average. In addition, during this period, favourable mortgage conditions for migrants allowed a significant number of households to obtain residential property. Anyway, this does not mean at all that the housing quality rises; but households at least dispose of more tenure security and they have the possibility to upgrade the quality of their shelter step by step.

Nevertheless it has been shown that housing situations of Moroccans still remain at a low level compared to other, more recent immigrant groups. As the fieldwork reveals, this has mainly to do with the consistently stronger prejudices against Moroccans than against other nationalities: At the turn of the millennium, when immigration from Latin America increased significantly, many Spanish landlords preferred the new immigrants because of the supposed minor social distance, concerning the same language, religion and similar culture. Thus, houses and flats of better quality in the rural central villages or the proper accommodations in the cities were given to them but quite less to the Moroccans. Analogue to the beginning immigration from Eastern Europe and the first communicated negative experiences with the Latin Americans at the neighbourhood-level, this image has changed one more time: To date, migrants from Eastern Europe (Ukraine and Russia) are preferred against the latter because landlords now think that they adapt better to the Spanish culture and care better for their properties, too.

“In the past they didn’t want to rent to migrants because... they were afraid... they didn’t know ... they were xenophobic... Now, they are xenophobic to the Islamic world. …. Now, they splitted that. .. They rather take the people from the East... at the moment, people from the East.” (Representative of non-governmental organization, Fuente Álamo/Murcia)

“Yes, Latin Americans did have it easier in the beginning. (...) Now they prefer in particular the people from Eastern Europe and then the Latin Americans or Ecuadorians. But it remains that those from the Maghreb and the Sub-Saharan Africa are the ones with the worst image, and they want them least when there is an apartment for rent.” (Representative of public institution, Murcia)

What persists, are the strong resentments against the Moroccans. According to that, prejudices of the landlords and discriminatory mechanisms of selection which deny access to accommodation can
explain an important part of the tardy housing market integration of the Maghrebian migrants in comparison to other groups in similar conditions. Nevertheless, there is a first tendency that Moroccan families are preferred compared to single migrants from other countries who want to share a flat, but it is too soon to confirm this trend.

**Resources and preferences of the demand-side**

Under the described conditions, households in need of an accommodation find it per se difficult to get access to adequate housing. However, it is not only the supply side which defines the housing outcomes of households. Generally, the households’ possibilities of access to housing are closely tied to their different resources or capital and to their preferences (Ozüekren/van Kempen 1997: 16).

Concerning the **financial resources** of migrants, the labour market position has a key position. The first years of Moroccan immigration in Spain in the 1980s and 1990s were often characterized by precarious employment situations. The work in agriculture was often seasonal, and for many young men this work did not guarantee a secure annual income. Thus, they were not able to rent an apartment independently. As a strategy, most of the young men opted for sharing a flat with other Maghrebians. In situations of joblessness, it was common to help each other, especially when the migrants were tied through family networks or networks of the same local origin. Taking into account the shortage of rented accommodations, others had no choice than to occupy abandoned, run down buildings or to construct their own auxiliary hut. After a while, large parts of the migrants could achieve better labour conditions both in the increasingly engineered agriculture as well as in other sectors of the labour market, where they got more secure jobs or even unlimited contracts. As my investigation shows, Moroccan families still have a lower income than Spanish or even Ecuadorian households, where often two adults contribute to the income. However, I could work out that most Moroccan households are willing to pay the same amount of money for housing than Spaniards in a similar or even better financial situation.

Hence, the majority of the migrants still has a low income but they earn as much money as comparable groups of Spanish households, and they should be able to compete with them for decent housing. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into consideration that the increasing prices on the housing market make it difficult to compare the situation between Spaniards which often live in their flat for already some years and still pay lower prices, and migrants who currently moved into a new flat, paying the recent and higher price.

Surprisingly, I observe no significant relation between the housing conditions of migrants and their income level or between the housing situation and the spending in housing. A minor positive correlation is only shown concerning income and tenure security: With more income and income security, the access to mortgage loans improves, and some migrants even could become home owners. Thereby, it has to be considered that in some cases, this development may be interpreted as a strategy of the migrants to escape from the stronger discrimination in the rental sector (Villanova 1997). In other cases, we can see that the often mentioned nexus between the ‘here to stay’-philosophy, the assimilation of migrants in the receiving country and the purchase of accommodation is dissolved in some cases (Díaz McConnell/Redstone Akresh 2008): Some migrants clearly express the wish to go back to their country of origin in the medium term. However, some of them have already bought a house in Spain, during the real estate ‘boom’, as they imagined achieving a secure profit by selling their flats when departing to their countries of origin.

Another quite small effect on the housing outcomes is made out by analyzing the **cultural capital** of the Moroccans. After a few years they have a broader knowledge of the local housing market, although most of them – even after more than eight years in Spain – still ask compatriots when searching for an accommodation. Nevertheless, especially when trying to buy a flat, they also use their informal contacts to other migrants, Spanish acquaintances or the formal support of real estate agents. However, most of them do not use public organizations because of the perceived minimal possibilities to obtain access to the barely existing public housing stock. Not at last, the surveyed migrants could improve their knowledge of the Spanish language over the years. Nearly in every household there is one person able to maintain an everyday conversation in Spanish and who can follow both the basic allocation rules as well as the necessary formalities to sign a rental contract. Nevertheless, there is no
detectable interrelation between the language skills, the knowledge of the local housing market and the housing outcomes of the Moroccans.

*Institutional capital,* understood as the legal status of the migrants, is clearly increasing over the years. After more than eight years of residence in Spain, all the interviewed people own a (temporal or permanent) residence permit. It is supposed that this helps to access accommodation because it gives more security of the rental conditions both for the owners and for the tenants. Furthermore, buying a flat in Spain is generally only possible by having a residence permit. Actually, a slight, statistically proved positive interrelation between the institutional capital and the housing situation of migrants can be observed.

Also the *social capital* may have a mayor effect on the housing outcomes, as it can facilitate access to housing. In my study, the interviewed experts affirm the positive effects of social intraethnic capital especially in the first time of settling down in Spain, as it facilitates fast access to a first shelter – a room or even a shared room. The same effect is assumed for interethnic social networks when migrants are looking for a whole flat to rent or even to buy. Knowing the landlord, prices may be lower and the quality of housing often may be somewhat better. Nevertheless, there are no statistically relevant effects of the social capital on the housing outcomes.

To sum it up, interrelations between the diverse resources of the migrants and their housing outcomes are quite weaker than expected. To go further and to analyze whether the small effects of the resources of the migrants have to do with their *preferences,* I also asked for the economic preferences of the migrants in Spain (wherein housing may not be a major issue), and the preferences concerning the characteristic of their dwelling. Firstly, I observed that after a few years in Spain, Moroccans orient their housing preferences to the national standards of housing rather than on possibly differing housing characteristics of their country of origin. Moreover, it became apparent that the improvement of the housing conditions in Spain is one of the most important aims. No at last, I already mentioned that they are willing to pay the same or even slightly more for housing than Spaniards in similar economic conditions.

Thus, neither the resources nor the preferences can give a comprehensive explication of the deficient housing outcomes of Moroccans in Spain. The majority of them can increase their different sorts of capital over the years, and these resources can be interpreted as low, but potentially enough to get access to adequate shelter. The fact that they cannot achieve this, gives strong evidence that the described shortage of the accommodations, along with the excessively increasing prices and the ways of acting on the supply-side are the mayor factors explaining the housing conditions of migrants. Suppliers of housing, who have the authority to dispose on their accommodations, have a higher strength on the housing market and can therefore, define allocation rules which lead to the loss of impact concerning the migrants’ capital and preferences. The better housing outcomes of other migrants with less time of residence in Spain (like the case of Ecuadorians) and similar or even less resources (like the case of migrants from Ukraine) confirms clearly, that discrimination has a major relevance on the housing situation of migrants in Spain.

**Conclusions and future perspectives**

From the brief sketch of my findings it should be apparent that Moroccan migrants in Spain have difficult conditions for their housing market integration. A majority of them can indeed improve their housing careers over the years, although they advance slower than the ones of other nationalities. Thus, a large difference in the housing conditions of migrants and households of the receiving society can still be observed. Thereby, it is difficult to examine if the housing conditions of Moroccans and Spaniards are converging and if we can speak of processes of integration or exclusion on the housing market, because reliable data about the development of the housing conditions of Spaniards is still missing.

Examining the reasons of the housing deficits of Moroccans, this study has revealed that the lack of affordable rental accommodation and the drastically increasing prices for housing are one major, structural obstacle for the housing market integration. Moreover, the diminutive sector of social
housing has decreased significantly over the last decades and barely offers any alternatives for migrants searching for shelter. As public and non-profit-oriented offers of flats are largely missing and competition for affordable accommodation is high, the housing outcomes of migrants are strongly influenced by the agency of the actors on the private housing market. In the case study, the supply of dwellings demanded by migrants is mostly owned by small, private landlords. The local ties and the embeddedness of the landlords in their neighbourhoods led to allocation rules which are determined by economic calculations which are clearly overlapped by emotional decisions. Prejudices against the migrants, both by the owners themselves and by their neighbours, hamper the access of migrants to a shelter until today. In this regard, it has become obvious that the unequal treatment of different groups of migrants is not static although the disadvantage of Moroccans in particular is continuously re-created.

Under these conditions, the explanatory factors of the demand side are only of small value. Nevertheless, it can be shown that the financial, social, cultural and institutional resources of the majority of migrants increase significantly after the first years in Spain and should be sufficient in order to gain access to accommodation. However, it has to be considered that the income of the Moroccan households has been quite low in regard to the strongly increasing prices for housing. At the same time, migrants’ preferences suggest a high relevance of their housing conditions in the receiving country, which is not visible in their housing situations.

Summing up and comparing with other European countries, the conditions of housing market integration in Spain have thus been and are still quite unfavourable for migrants. In case of the Moroccans, it is especially the discrimination against this group which leads to the result that they are still last comparing their housing outcomes with households from other nationalities who live in Spain for a shorter period of time.

With the current economic crisis, severe problems of access to housing and maintenance of the recent housing situation seem to arise and to revive respectively. As recent interviews of the author from spring 2011 show, we can now state two opposed developments whose results are still not clearly conceivable.

On the one hand, housing prices, both for sale and for rent, decline significantly (INE 2010a). Furthermore, real estate agents in the Region of Murcia tell that Spanish home owners are now rather willing to rent their flat to migrants than to leave it unoccupied, as they themselves need the rental income. Thus, the offer of affordable housing is expected to rise to a certain extend. However, Moroccans are still the ‘last choice’ among the different migrant households.

On the other hand, the economic crisis has led to a strong increase of unemployment in Spain. While joblessness even in the Spanish population has already passed the 20%-mark, unemployment with migrants is still higher (Spaniards 21.3%, Non-EU-foreigners: 32.5% in Spain; in the Region of Murcia 37.1%, INE 2011b). Many migrants are no longer able to pay their rents or mortgages and are vulnerable to lose their accommodation. As a consequence, Torres/Gadea (2010) have reported that several, traditionally oriented Moroccan families have recently decided that also women may contribute to the households’ income, and have begun to assure the households’ income in this way. Contrarily, some representatives of non governmental organizations have reported that the heads of the households who already live with their families in Spain have opted to send the family back to Morocco for a while. In this case, preferences have to be postponed: The men pass on to share their flat with other Moroccan men to reduce their expenses until their income situation gets better again. As a consequence, it has to be expected that overcrowding of the houses rises. Hence, the housing quality of migrants will decrease to a certain degree. Overcrowding may lead to renew problems in the neighbourhood and may reinforce prejudices against the Maghrebians.

Besides, the destabilization of the economic and social situation of the migrants is accompanied by a degeneration of the legal situation of the migrants. As Torres (2010) and Cea/Valles (2009) indicate, the latest modifications of Spanish migration and integration legislation hamper the renewal of the residence permit of the migrants as well as family reunions. As a result of the cutback of the migrants’ rights and the withdrawal of the aim of the integration of migrants as a mutual aim of the receiving and the immigrating population, the impression that migrants are a part of the explication of the economic crisis and their consequences may be abetted.
Concerning at last the spatial allocation of migrants, ethnic spatial segregation has not been a major issue until now, especially due to the comparably low mobility of Spanish owner-occupier households. However, the real estate boom has shown first tendencies of Spanish households leaving districts with higher percentages of migrant population as well as the decision of the Spaniards not to move into these districts. If the tendencies to a negligent urban development policy in the neighbourhoods with higher percentages of immigrant population will also persist or reinforce over the next years, segregation may be increase. Besides, a negative link between the influx of migrants and the decline of life quality as well as a negative image of the neighbourhoods has to be expected. As this scenario reveals, the effects of the economic crisis for the housing market integration of migrants depend to an important extent on governmental or regional policies. They can have a strong influence especially on the institutional resources of the migrants and even on their perception in the receiving society. Besides, they affect the development of the supply of housing (including temporarily solutions of allocation) as well as the perception of segregation and the consequences for the life quality. Depending on a great variety of factors, the accurate study of the dynamics and development of the housing market integration of the Moroccans will continue to be an important issue in order to facilitate the housing market integration (not only) of the Maghrebians.

References


‘Mixité’: an urban and housing issue?


