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To cite this article: Inmaculada Mohino & José M. Ureña (2020): Mobility, housing and labour markets in times of economic crises, Regional Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2020.1711879

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2020.1711879

Published online: 05 Feb 2020.
EDITORIAL

Mobility, housing and labour markets in times of economic crises
Inmaculada Mohino\textsuperscript{a} and José M. Ureña\textsuperscript{b}

ABSTRACT
This special issue addresses the effects of the most recent financial and economic crisis (starting in 2007) on mobility, housing and labour markets, in order to learn some lessons for the future that would enable regions to mitigate the effects of a recession and speed recovery. These empirically based papers cover various different European studies for different regional contexts and scales of analysis (from local to national/international). Of special concern are the Southern European countries, especially badly hit by the economic crisis due to structural problems, labour market conditions and social inequalities.

KEYWORDS
mobility; housing market; labour market; economic crisis

INTRODUCTION
The relationship between housing and labour markets is well known. Lack of balance between the two tends to determine decisions to stay in one place – even commuting every day to the place of work – or move to another location. Undoubtedly, income levels and/or unemployment rates determine the affordability, or otherwise, of residing in one place or another, and whether to buy or rent a house (Haas & Osland, 2014; Qian-Liu, 2018). However, people move to a new house with the expectation of doing better after the move (DaVanzo, 1978), considering not only the economic costs but also other possible non-financial benefits.

There is a wide range of factors influencing labour mobility, including: (1) economic issues, such as the general economic context and business cycle (Alamá-Sabater, Alguacil, & Bernat-Martí, 2017; Plane, 1993) and transaction costs/mortgages versus commuting costs (Reuschke & Macleman, 2014; van Ewijk & Leuvensteijn, 2009); (2) the institutional framework, for example, foreign resident legislation (Domínguez-Mújica, Guerra-Talavera, & Parreño-Castellano, 2014); (3) the internal structure and segmentation of the labour market, for example, company size and industry diversity (Wang, Madsen, & Steiner, 2017; Withers & Clark, 2006); (4) population density (Skeldon, 1997), degree of urbanization (Van Mol, 2016) and geographical distance between markets (Haas & Osland, 2014); (5) the housing market in terms of the accessibility and affordability (supply and prices) of housing (Coulson & Fisher, 2002; Helderman, Mulder, & Van Ham, 2004); (6) housing tenure (Berg, 2010); and (7) the socioeconomic background of individuals, and psychological and emotional factors (Mertens & Haas, 2005; Staniscia & Benassi, 2018).

While much has been written on mobility, housing and labour markets, due to the severity of the last crisis, it is crucial to understand not only the complex interactions between these issues but also how they are affected by economic crises and downturns. First, the fairly recent recession has had a major impact on labour mobility and international migration, since economic issues are one of the main factors influencing this. While the effects vary depending on the extent of the recession, the spatial context or role that foreign workers play in the specific labour markets (Bonifazi & Marini, 2014), various studies have found that recessions impact migration flows either in terms of both the size (number) and nature (aims and other associated factors):

- In terms of size, undoubtedly, a weak socioeconomic status makes migration less attractive (Milne, 1993). In general, immigrants are more affected than natives by the economic context (and particularly penalized during recessions) due to the contracts they generally obtain (either temporary jobs or those in sectors more sensitive to economic fluctuations). Consequently, this influences their migration patterns. Thus, recessions...
affect mobility rates: (1) by deterring further international job migrants (as well as illegal immigration) (Castles, 2011); and (2) by maintaining the migrant stock because conditions are often even worse in the country of origin (Castles, 2011), and, furthermore, due to the social rights and unemployment benefits achieved in the host country (Janicka & Kaczmarczyk, 2016).

- In terms of the characteristics of migration flows, the last economic crisis produced new patterns of international mobility (Janicka & Kaczmarczyk, 2016). Some scholars have talked about a ‘counter-urbanisation crisis’ and identified several ‘anti-urban’ views on the part of migrants (Remoundou, Gkartzios, & Garrod, 2015). This means that traditional factors influencing labour mobility may vary after a period of crisis. In this direction, while some scholars have concluded that, during economic crises, migrants do not move due to economic reasons or employment opportunities but, rather, other personal factors such as family reunification or better weather (Alamá-Sabater et al., 2017; Cairns, 2014), other studies still find that economic factors played a more important role in regional migration after the last recession (Qian-Liu, 2018). The profile of immigrants also tends to change after crises, with a greater weight of older migrants coming from more developed economies (Alamá-Sabater et al., 2017). The so-called ‘adjustment mechanism’ of labour mobility and its ability to reduce regional inequalities (Jauer, Liebig, Martin, & Puhani, 2014) is also questioned during and after a period of recession (Janicka & Kaczmarczyk, 2016).

Second, regarding housing markets, the spatial variation of housing prices, which is significantly affected by the economic context, may influence decisions about whether to move or stay in various locations and may determine commuting distances (Hämiäläinen & Böckerman, 2004; Hunt, 1993; van Ewijk & Leuvensteijn, 2009). High net in-migration in certain areas may lead to an increase in housing prices (Jeanty, Partridge, & Irwin, 2010; Saiz, 2007), whereas sustained out-migration from, for instance, rural areas may have various favourable or unfavourable effects on both markets. Moreover, it is well known that housing tenure and policies play an important role during economic and financial crises (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2011). In this vein, the ‘lock-in effect’ created by homeownership (Oswald, 1999), that tends to tie homeowners to a particular location (instead of relocating to places with more job opportunities), also makes them more vulnerable to regional economic downturns (Oswald, 1999) and less able to adjust to changing labour markets (Bergy, 2010).

According to the Oswald hypothesis, and corroborated later by other scholars such as Bergy (2010) or Coulson and Fisher (2002), homeownership negatively influences unemployment and, consequently, residential segregation, especially of ethnic minorities (Hall, Crowder, Spring, & Gabriel, 2018). Directing attention to the spatial distribution of migrants is highly relevant, since different location patterns between natives and migrants may influence residential segregation (Hall et al., 2018; Nelïo, 2018). Prada-Trigo (2018) concludes that, due to the crisis, residential segregation became concentrated in certain areas, leading to unequal recovery and the appearance of new urban vulnerabilities. The role of these areas in economic resilience is also of considerable importance.

In this vein, Lewin, Watson, and Brown (2018) found that areas with increased income inequality entered recession earlier. However, as stated by Sharp and Iceland (2013), a more complete understanding of the mechanisms originating segregation is needed, particularly after the last economic crisis that hit minorities and low-income groups especially hard.

Last, but not least, there is no doubt that recessions significantly affect labour markets, leading in some cases to economic restructuring processes in regions and metropolitan areas. One of the main concerns in this regard is economic growth and employment rates. This has resulted in a consequent special focus upon economic issues after the last financial crisis. Different factors such as the structure of the economy (some sectors are more vulnerable than others) or the existence of labour market institutions (including policies, social rights/ unemployment benefits, etc.) all affect the labour market after a recession (Courvisanos, Jain, & Mardanesh, 2016; Doran & Fingleton, 2015; Green & Livanos, 2015). And depending on the severity of the crises, such effects may lead to long-lasting repercussions (Martin, 2016). For instance, it has been concluded that European Union countries with less flexible labour markets performed relatively better during the last economic crisis, since they were able to maintain stable employment levels, in contrast to those with very flexible labour markets (Leschke, 2013; Tridico, 2013). Also, diversification in industry was found to be of particular importance for employment growth during and after a financial crisis (Wang et al., 2017). In other cases, recessions have been considered to improve productivity, since the least productive firms tend to close, preserving the most efficient ones, consequently leading to changes in regional disparities (Kangasharju & Pekkala, 2004, p. 257). Finally, we cannot forget the consequences of immigration on labour markets in destination countries and the impact on native workers (i.e., on unemployment levels and wages). This issue has acquired a central role in public debates during recessions. In that direction, different studies have already explored how increases in the proportion of employed immigrants have impacted native workers’ wages (Bonifazi & Marini, 2014).

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE**

Bearing all this in mind, and given the severity and global impact of the last economic recession, this special issue addresses the effects of the most recent financial and economic crisis (starting in 2007) on mobility, housing and labour markets, in order to learn some lessons for the future that would enable regions to mitigate the effects of a recession and speed up recovery. The papers that make up this
special issue originate from a NECTAR Cluster 4 meeting (devoted to travel, migration, housing and labour market issues) held in Toledo, Spain, in October 2016. These empirically based contributions cover various different European studies for different regional contexts and scales of analysis (from local to national/international). Of special concern are the Southern European countries, especially badly hit by the economic crisis due to ‘structural problems’ such as low productivity, scarce innovation, exposure to the housing sector and a higher level of public debt. as well as ‘poor labour market policies, wider inequality and the past decade’s extensive labour market flexibilization’ (Tridico, 2013, p. 177).

Thus, the contribution of this proposed special issue is evident, due to the relevance for governments of assessing the resilience of regional/national employment cycles over different decades and major periods of recession, in order to learn from these and suggest strategies to mitigate the effects of future economic crises and speed up recovery. And although the main contribution of this special issue is to identify the effects of economic crises both on labour mobility (either permanent, migration; or temporary, commuting), and on housing and labour markets, there is also a range of unresolved research questions to be tackled throughout the different papers comprising this special issue: the post-2007 financial and economic crisis.

This special issue starts with a first group of papers dealing with the topic of residential segregation (and spatial inequalities). One of the main causes of residential segregation between socioeconomic groups has been income inequality (also one of the main causes of the crisis in many industrialized countries), which has been on the rise since the 1980s (Tammaru, Marcinczak, Aunap, van Ham, & Janssen, 2019, in this issue). This special issue therefore starts with a comparative analysis of residential segregation and its relationship with income inequality for different urban European regions, and its variation over time (for the period 1990–2010), by Tammaru et al. The main outcome is that socioeconomic segregation hinges strongly on income inequality, although there is no one-to-one relationship between the two, since several different mechanisms may intervene. Second, there is a time lapse of a decade between changes in income inequality and changes in residential segregation.

Also concerning segregation, the second paper in this special issue (Malouats & Stavros Nikiforos, 2019, in this issue) provides more insight into one of the urban regions analysed in the previous paper: Athens in Greece. Results show that despite the overall trend in the city, between 2001 and 2011, being desegregation, there are specific types of residential areas where segregation is actually increasing. The authors introduce the concept of ‘vertical segregation’, which considers the existence of social hierarchies on a lower spatial scale within neighbourhoods. This means lower conventional segregation indices – but without reducing inequalities and effective social distance.

Finally, we include a third paper on regional (income) inequalities by Mussida and Parisi (2019, in this issue). In this case, an exhaustive analysis is proposed for the whole of Italy. The main objective is to explore where personal income inequalities within regions have increased during the crisis and to identify individual and household features that give rise to such an increase. The data show differences in terms of the scale of analysis: while ‘between-region’ inequality did not change/deteriorate after the last economic crisis, ‘within-region’ inequality increased substantially and remained the main source of personal income inequality in Italy. Such a disaggregated analysis helps to identify the weakest categories of individuals/households who should receive attention when designing targeted regional income support policies that are still lacking.

Since immigration has been traditionally considered as one of the factors influencing segregation, a second group of papers is concerned with this topic and the impact of the latest recession on this. A primary characteristic of immigrants is their geographical concentration, which may vary after a period of recession. In this vein, the fourth paper, by Tanis (2018, in this issue), therefore contributes to existing literature by identifying the determinants that influence immigrants’ geographical distribution after the recession. Focused on the German case study, these results show that while, initially, immigrants are less dependent on networks and choose regions with a low proportion of immigrants (benefitting regions with a shortfall in available labour), after a time these new entrants choose to relocate to regions with a high proportion of immigrants. The role of immigration in the economies of the countries of origin and the host countries usually depends on specific characteristics such as skill base and/or level of education. Thus, the fifth paper, by Mendoza (2018, in this issue), provides evidence of emigration patterns of highly skilled immigrants from Italy and Spain to Mexico. Age, year of arrival, immigration channel and social networks explain entry to the labour market and mobility in Mexico.

Another factor highly influencing labour mobility is the housing market. Therefore, the sixth paper, by Palomares-Linares and van Ham (2018, in this issue), clarifies the effects of home ownership on internal migration before and during the last crisis within the Spanish context. Results show that while the regional unemployment level has not had a major impact during the recession, homeownership became more important in 2011, as compared with 2001. Finally, we cannot overlook the consequences of immigration on labour markets in host countries and the impact on native workers, that is, on unemployment levels and wages. Thus, the seventh paper, by Gutiérrez-Portilla, Villaverde, Maza, and Hierro (2018, in this issue), focuses on the impact of immigration on wages across Spanish provinces, which has been considerably reduced during the last economic crisis. Empirical results conclude a lesser negative impact on province-based wages, despite an increase in the immigrant population.

Lastly, since most existing analyses on regional disparities have tended to focus on the impact of migration flows and have paid little attention to the role of commuting (Elhorst, 2003; Patacchini & Zenou, 2007), a third (and last) group of papers included in this special issue deals
with temporary labour mobility. When deciding whether to stay put or move away, accessibility plays a crucial role. Congestion is also decisive in this decision. While traditional static accessibility models do not capture time-bound dynamics in delays and congestion, the eighth paper, by Moya-Gómez and Geurs (2018, in this issue), suggests a methodology to assess the spatial–temporal dynamics in job accessibility by car. This was applied to the Netherlands during the period of economic crisis (2009–14), with empirical results showing considerable changes in the space–time variation of job accessibility during the recession, due to complex interaction between changes in job availability, road infrastructure improvements, traffic flow and dynamics in travel times. Besides, apart from infrastructure improvements, more efficient transport modes are also relevant. This is the case of the high-speed rail system (HSR), which makes distant jobs more attractive to workers who would not have accessed them without this infrastructure (Vickerman & Ulied, 2009; Mohino, Ureña, & Solís, 2016).

Thus, considering the importance of HSR for commuting – the ninth paper, by Guirao, Casado-Sanz, and Campa (2018, in this issue), takes the Spanish context and explores the impact of HSR commuting on regional labour markets during a crisis. Results show that during the last recession private rental indicators proved to be more accurate in explaining HSR commuting than housing prices (although in any case, less significant than wage indicators). Nevertheless, it is believed that work-related commuting affects individual subjective well-being. Workers will only choose long-distance commuting if this means better employment opportunities and/or improved prospects in the housing market. Regarding this issue, the 10th paper, by Simón, Casado-Díaz, and Lillo-Bañuls (2018, in this issue), examines the opposite effects of commuting on satisfaction in different domains of life. Results show a less negative effect of commuting on job satisfaction during the last economic crisis, when unemployment was growing – or an attenuated adverse effect for commuting on the satisfaction levels of poorer workers during a recession.

This special issue closes with a methodology paper. As previously stated, labour mobility is related to an imbalance between housing and labour markets. In understanding this imbalance, it is necessary to depict characterize fully the underlying urban structure that gives rise to these processes. Traditionally, urban structure has been restricted to the analysis of the distribution of population and employment density or, alternatively, of commuting flows. Nevertheless, job-related and social changes in recent decades (flexibility of work, increase in temporary/part-time jobs, the consolidation of teleworking or changes in the way society spends its leisure time) have posed a challenge in identifying urban structures. In this direction, the contribution of the 11th paper, by Marmolejo-Duarte and Cerda-Troncoso (2019, in this issue), is also methodological, by providing a new source of information (taken from space–time behaviour analysis) that can be integrated into pre-existing subcentre identification methods. The methodology, applied to the metropolitan region of Barcelona, shows a more polycentric urban structure for non-work-related activities, which would have been underestimated by only considering job concentration.

CONCLUSIONS

The papers included in this special issue illustrate the complex relation between labour mobility and housing and labour markets, especially in the particular situation of economic downturn and recession. The main aim of this set of studies is to motivate critical thought on the part of governments and policy-makers, to drive successful policies to enable regions to be resilient to economic crises, despite an awareness of the dependence on the geographical context.

Differences and imbalance between housing and labour markets lead to segregation patterns between and within regions. Income inequalities, which have been increasing since the 1980s around the globe, are one of the key issues in this residential segregation of socioeconomic groups. However, there is not a one-to-one relation between these since population changes, residential mobility, housing markets’ features and changes, etc., may also influence this relationship. In any case, in addressing the key issue of residential segregation (which may exist not only between neighbourhoods but also within them – what Maloutas & Stavros Nikiforos, 2019, in this issue, call ‘vertical segregation’), governments would be well advised to work on managing income inequalities, considering a time lag that Tammaru et al. (2019, in this issue) estimate as a decade. Caution should be exercised in managing these inequalities, taking into account different scales of analysis. For instance, the labour market reforms of the 2000s, implemented in all Italian regions, especially the south, aimed at reducing the north–south divide in the country, resulted in inequalities within regions substantially increasing, while inequalities between regions did not change significantly after the economic crisis (Mussida & Parisi, 2019, in this issue). Moreover, as has been concluded in some of the papers in this special issue, by identifying the features of individuals most affected by the crisis, policies could be defined for these specific groups.

One of the main factors determining segregation is labour mobility (and more precisely, immigration). Of key relevance, therefore, is the existence of policies on immigration and residential mobility. According to Palomares-Linares and van Ham (2018, in this issue), in a period of recession, while higher unemployment levels do not motivate greater residential mobility, housing tenure does have a greater impact on this. This means that governments should not only approach labour markets by developing employment policies (Gutiérrez-Portilla et al., 2018, in this issue, conclude a slightly negative effect on salaries due to an increase in immigration) but also housing (promoting rental instead of homeownership) and transport (increasing accessibility, along with better and more efficient systems; Guirao et al., 2018, in this issue; Moya-Gómez & Geurs, 2018, in this issue). Finally, it is also
important for governments to encourage a balance between job availability and the density of the immigrant population and to guarantee their effective integration within the host country community. As concluded by Tanis (2018, in this issue), while immigrants initially are attracted towards regions offering jobs (benefitting these regions with a labour shortfall), after a period of time, immigrants would decide to relocate to regions with a higher share of immigrants.

Nevertheless, the outcomes and conclusions arrived at here would need to be revisited in future years in order to better evaluate the effects of some policies implemented since 2010 in certain countries to face the last economic crisis, and which attempted to mitigate inequalities through austerity measures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The guest editors thank the Regional Studies’ editors and referees for very helpful comments. Sincere thanks are also extended to the Network on European Communications and Transport Activity Research (NECTAR) Association and the Enrique Castillo Institute for Civil Engineering and Architecture Research (IEC) for their support in the organization of the Cluster 4 meeting (devoted to Travel, Migration, Housing, and Labour Markets issues) held in Toledo, Spain, in October 2016. Lastly, the guest editors thank all the contributors to this issue.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the guest editors.

FUNDING

This work was supported by the Enrique Castillo Institute for Civil Engineering and Architecture Research (IEC); and the NECTAR Association.

NOTES

1. NECTAR (Network on European Communications and Transport Activity Research) is a European-based scientific association with a network culture. Its primary objective is to foster research collaboration and exchange of information between experts in the field of transport, communication and mobility from all European countries and the rest of the world.

2. Young people and highly skilled workers comprise a high percentage of current migratory flows (Staniscia & Benassi, 2018; Van Mol, 2016).

3. Mexico has experienced relatively high economic growth rates and low unemployment, becoming an attractive destination for qualified migrants after the 2008 crisis, especially from Southern Europe (Mendoza, 2018, in this issue).

4. Spain is characterized by a very high percentage of homeownership due to decades of Spanish housing market policies stimulating homeownership to the detriment of the rental sector, leading to a housing market dominated by the owner-occupier.

5. ‘This enables the inclusion of different activities other than work that drive people’s daily lives and, thus, shape the way they make use of the city’ (Marmolejo-Duarte & Cerda-Troncoso, 2019, in this issue).

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