

First Submitted: 10 December 2018; Accepted 3 March 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i3.647>

## Working apart together: The impact of immigration on Spanish class structure

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### Abstract

*In this article, we explore how the massive incorporation of the foreign-born population into the labour market during the economic expansion in Spain and the subsequent destruction of employment in the period of the economic downturn have contributed to changes in Spanish class structure. Drawing on data from the Labour Force Survey we estimate an entropy-based segregation index in order to assess the extent to which the unevenness of the distribution of natives and immigrants within social classes has contributed to the overall demographic composition of social class structure. Our results reveal that in the period of economic expansion the segregation of the class structure increased as a result of the concentration of immigrant population in specific classes. In contrast, during the economic crisis this process has been reversed: the uneven class distribution between natives and immigrants has levelled out and segregation among natives has decreased.*

**Keywords:** Spain; class structure; demographic identity; migration; segregation.

### Introduction

Over the last few decades European social stratification sociology has developed an ambitious research programme centred on *class analysis* (Goldthorpe & Marshall 1992; Goldthorpe 2007). As part of the programme, the concept of class has been defined, criteria have been developed to apply the concept and corresponding classifications have been established. This kind of analysis uses classes to explain (*explanans*) the patterns observed in, for example, differences in education, wage inequalities, or social gradients in health. So far, the empirical results of this research programme have been remarkable (selected references include Kunst & Roskam, 2010; Ballarino, et al. 2009; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Torssander & Erikson, 2007; Breen & Jonsson, 2005). However, much less attention has been paid to the contemporary processes of class structuring or class formation. From this perspective, it is the classes themselves that need to be explained (*explanandum*) by identifying the social changes that shape class structures and establish their distribution and composition.

In order to fill in this gap we will examine how migrations impact the class structure of a contemporary, developed society. To do so, we look at how, and to what degree, the massive wave of immigration in Spain at the start of the 21st Century transformed the demographics of its class structure. During the first period we will be looking at (2000-2007) Spain had become the second largest destination country for foreign population in terms of migration flows, after the United States

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(Lopez de Lera, 2007). In the second period studied (2008-2013), the massive job destruction caused by the economic crisis had the heaviest impact on the immigrant population. These circumstances make Spain a very illustrative example of how massive global migrations can transform social classes in advanced societies.

### **Conceptual framework and hypothesis**

In his classic work, Goldthorpe (1980) pointed out that a crucial aspect of class formation is how a group develops a specific demographic identity. This mainly refers to how classes form specific and discernible social collectives as their members remain in the same class positions over time. In this sense, a certain homogeneity in the demographic composition of classes is a prerequisite for their existence as identifiable social entities; and, by the same token, a given class must have some degree of demographic identity in order to be able to study its specific characteristics in terms of life opportunities, lifestyles, patterns of association, socio-political orientations, and modes of action.

Because the demographic identity of a class depends on its members remaining in the same class position over time, the first processes to look at are intra- and inter-generational mobility. Social mobility can hinder the formation of a given class by reducing its homogeneity in regard to the class origin of its members. In fact, to date most of the literature has seen the demographic identity of classes as a consequence of social mobility (Crompton, 2008; Pakulski & Waters, 1996; Goldthorpe, 1980, 1982; Goldthorpe et al., 1987). However, changes in the demographic composition of classes can also be caused by other processes which, like social mobility, can break the social homogeneity of the people who occupy a class position. Besides marriage (class endogamy) and friendship patterns (Western, 1991; Jones & David, 1988), another factor that can have a role in class formation are migratory movements. Quite obviously, migrations can alter the composition and reduce the social homogeneity of classes by bringing new members from different origins to existing class positions in host societies. Therefore, migrations have to be considered as possible vectors of demographic identity of classes and as a potentially relevant facet of class formation. However, as mentioned, most research on processes through which classes acquire their demographic identities has focused on social mobility. And, apart from a few exceptions, little effort has been made in order to explore the impact of migratory movements on social class formation and social structure transformation (Oesh, 2013; Bernardi & Garrido, 2008).

The vast majority of immigrants who have recently settled in Spain are economic migrants in search of better jobs, improved conditions and more opportunities for social promotion than they or their families can attain in their countries of origin (Domingo et al., 2007; Cebolla & González, 2013). A substantial portion of these economic migrants, particularly those from developing countries, entered into the new unskilled occupations (requiring little qualification and receiving low salaries, poor contractual conditions, little social prestige, and limited possibilities of upward mobility) that were created during the prolonged growth of the Spanish economy in sectors such as agriculture, construction, tourism and domestic work (Alonso-Villar & del Río, 2013; Veira et al., 2011). Later, the economic crisis destroyed a large number of low skilled jobs, which equally contributed to changes in the Spanish class structure, as it led to a massive outflow of foreign population from the country's labour market. Against this backdrop, our hypothesis in this study is that the employment 40 growth during this economic boom period had a strong impact on the demographic identity of the 41 Spanish class structure, specifically, of the working classes.



## Data and method

The analysis presented here draws on the data of the Spanish Labour Force Survey (LFS), a survey carried out quarterly by the Spanish Statistical Office (INE), the official source of information on the Spanish labour market. Every quarter, its sample consists of about 60,000 households and 180,000 individuals. This paper uses the data provided for the second quarters - selected because they usually are the closest to annual averages (see Artola & Bell, 2001) - between 2000 and 2014, covering the entire cycle of the recent Spanish migratory boom and bust that mirrored the economic boom and bust. Only employed individuals aged 16-65 are observed, those to whom can be assigned an unequivocal class position based on their current occupations. In this way the present analysis avoids the always troublesome issue of class units (individuals or families) and specifically excludes the unemployed and economically non-active population. At any rate, throughout the years we have studied the employed population represents 75% of the economically active population in Spain, even in times of high unemployment rates.

The class schema used for this paper the so-called EGP social class schema (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992). Following a well-established practice in the tradition of social stratification studies, in this paper we use the term class structure to refer exclusively to the class positions of the employed population.<sup>3</sup> In our analysis, EGP operationalization combines three digit occupations coded to ISCO88 following the classificatory algorithms proposed by Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996). Analogous classification algorithms are applied for the ISCO08 occupational categorization introduced into Spanish statistical system since 2011. The EGP schema, widely used in the contemporary literature on stratification, distinguishes the following ten categories: (1) I Higher service (includes mostly professionals, large enterprise employers and higher managers); (2) II Lower service (mostly associate professionals, lower managers, and higher sales); (3) III Routine clerical/sales (routine clerical and sales workers); (4) IVa Small employers (small entrepreneurs, except those in I); (5) IVb Independent (own account workers with no employees); (6) IVc Farmers/Farm managers (self-employed and supervisory farm workers, irrespective of skill level); (7) V Manual foremen (manual workers with supervisory status); (8) VI Skilled manual (mostly craft workers, some skilled service, and skilled machine operators); (9) VIIa Semi-Unskilled manual (mostly machine operators, elementary labourers, elementary sales and services); and (10) VIIb Farm workers (employed farm workers, irrespective of skill level; also family farm workers).

Our analysis of the transformation of class structure in Spain and the measure of the impact of immigration is based on a segregation index, referred to as  $M$ .<sup>4</sup> This index is a very good tool for describing the differential distribution of two or more groups (in this case, groups formed by people of different origin) among organizational units (social classes). According to Massey and Denton (1988), the  $M$  index captures the unevenness dimension of segregation (understood as departure from evenness) calculating the weighted deviation of the entropy of each group or class from the group or class entropy of the entire population. Reardon and Firebaugh (2002) show that  $M$  index satisfies several useful properties, including organizational equivalence, size invariance, transfers, exchanges, additive organizational decomposability, and additive group decomposability. In

<sup>3</sup> The rationale behind this approach is that class positions of the unemployed and non-economically active population are far from clear. Keep in mind that class schemas are intended “to apply to positions, as defined by social relationships, rather than to persons” (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992, 37). Perhaps for this reason the attempts to define unemployment as a class position and the unemployed as a class (e.g., Rose and Harrison, 2009) have not been consolidated. Therefore, we use occupational structure as a proxy for class structure.

<sup>4</sup> The segregation index we use ( $M$ ) is an entropy-based index. For more information on this kind of index, see Guinea et al. (2015) and Reardon & Firebaugh (2002).



particular, the group decomposability property allows the contribution of different super-groups—defined as partitions of original groups—to overall segregation to be assessed. For any partition of original groups ( $G$ ) into a reduced number of super-groups  $L$  ( $L < G$ ), overall segregation can be expressed as the sum of two factors: (1) segregation between super-groups, and (2) segregation within super-groups, which equals the weighted average contribution of segregation within each of the super-groups (Mora & Ruiz-Castillo, 2011). By studying the change in these two factors, this sort of decomposition can be used to interpret segregation levels over time.

## Results

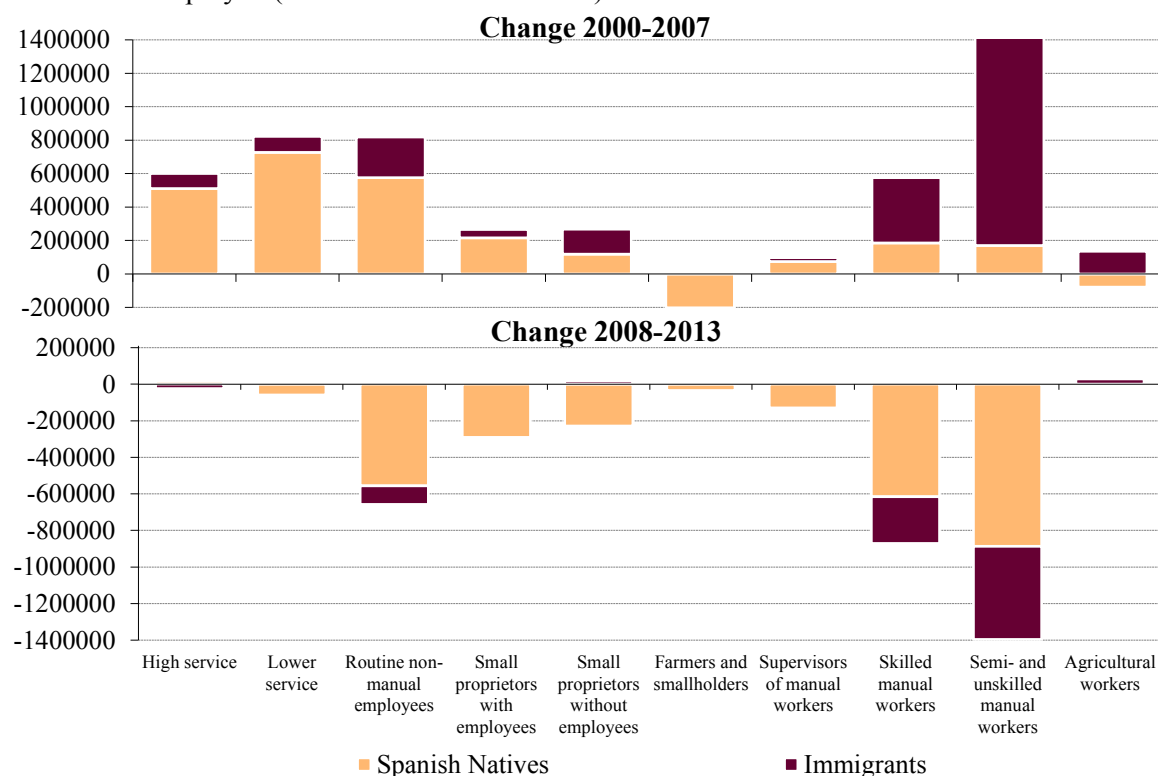
According to the data provided by the Municipal Register, in 2000 around 1.5 million foreigners were living in Spain, along with 41.1 million natives. The foreign-born immigrants accounted for a small fraction of the total population of the country (only 4.8%), a relatively small proportion compared to other European nations and quite distant from countries with longer traditions as immigration destinations, such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, or the United Kingdom. By 2014 the foreign-born population had increased to 6.2 million and the native population had decreased slightly to 40.5 million, meaning that the proportion of immigrants had increased to 13.4%. Even taking into account the fact that the absolute number of immigrants has decreased since 2012 - the number of departures between 2012 and 2014 is estimated to be 476,000 individuals (see Izquierdo et al., 2015) - the change in migration to Spain these years has been dramatic: arrivals of immigrants account for 76% of the population growth in Spain during this period. The fact that a large part of these arrivals are economic migrants (Requena & Sánchez-Domínguez, 2011) has clearly affected not only their basic work behaviour, but also the way that they participate in the occupational structure and where they are positioned in the class structure.

Three large tendencies, consistent with what is to be expected to occur to the occupational structure of a post-Fordist society, summarize the transformation of the Spanish class structure between 2000 and 2014 (see Figure 1). First, the service classes grew within the structure, while the traditional petty bourgeoisie shrunk slightly, a predictable process in the sense that it clearly prolongs the tendency of the last few decades in which the new middle classes are gradually replacing the old middle classes in Spain. Second, the balance between non-manual and manual workers has clearly tipped toward the former: white collar routine workers have grown more (+17%) than skilled and unskilled workers. And third, in the case of the working classes, unskilled workers have grown more (+5%) than skilled manual workers (-10%), a tendency that has to do with the formation of a growing service proletariat that in some way has been replacing the traditional industrial proletariat (Bernardi & Garrido, 2008).

How have immigrants contributed to the change in the Spanish class structure? Data show that during the period of economic growth (Figure 1 upper panel), the working classes (categories V, VI, VIIa and VIIb) grew by 2.3 million jobs in Spain, 2 million of which (85%) were occupied by immigrants. That is, almost the entire growth in these classes during the period was attributed to immigrant labour. The contribution of the immigrants to the growth of small proprietors without employees was also considerable. However, the tendency observed in the high and lower service classes is quite different, as well as in the class of small proprietors with employees: a very large part of the growth in these classes was due to the contribution of natives, something that also occurred, although to a lesser degree, with routine non-manual employees. In addition, the reduction in the size of the agricultural proprietors class is entirely explained by Spanish natives abandoning these jobs in the agriculture sector, while among agricultural workers the loss of native workers was compensated by the entrance of immigrant labour (see Gil Alonso & Domingo, 2008).



**Figure 1.** Contribution of natives and immigrants to the change in class structure. Spain, absolute numbers of employed (2000-2008 and 2008-2013)



Source: Spanish Labour Force Survey, second quarters.

Between 2008 and 2013 all classes, save agricultural workers, shrank in size as a consequence of the intense job destruction of the Spanish labour market (Figure 1, lower panel). During the economic crisis period a net total of 3.64 million jobs were lost in Spain (-18% of the total), of which almost a quarter were occupied by immigrants. The fact that immigrants represent 25% of the lost jobs when they constitute 17% of the labour force in 2008 means that unemployment had a greater impact on immigrants than on the native population, which was to be expected, taking into consideration the lower quality of the positions they occupied. In 2008 the gap between unemployment rates among the native and immigrant populations was 5.9% (9.5 and 15.4%, respectively), by 2013 the difference reached 11.6% (24 and 36.1%). In fact, the loss of immigrant jobs was concentrated in the skilled and unskilled working classes and among routine non-manual employees.

These changes in the demographic composition of the social classes have had consequences on the levels of segregation in the distribution of classes (Table 1). The variation of the *M* segregation index reflects the changes mentioned above. The level of segregation in the class structure increased in Spain from 2000 to 2008 and then started to descend between 2008 and 2014. The segregation increased in the 2000-2007 period (+0.035) due to the concentration of the groups in certain classes (immigrants in working classes and natives in service classes) as an effect of more women joining the labour force and the massive entrance of immigrants into the Spanish labour market. In the second period examined a clear change in tendency can be observed: the level of



class segregation diminished between 2008 and 2014 (-0.008) because the entropy of the classes within the groups increased (+0.002) while the entropy of the classes in the total population diminished (-0.006) due to the greater demographic homogeneity of the classes caused by the loss of jobs occupied by immigrants. It can also be stated that the  $M$  index decreased between 2008 and 2014 (-0.008) because the entropy of the groups within the classes diminished (-0.023) less than the entropy of the groups within the total population (-0.031).

**Table 1.** Class segregation in Spain, 2000-2014. Entropies and segregation indices.

	$E(P_c)$	$E(P_g)$	$\frac{\sum P_g}{E(P_{c,g})}$	$\frac{\sum P_c}{E(P_{g,c})}$	$M$	$M_{BETWEEN}$	$M_{natives}^{WITHIN}$	$M_{immigrants}^{WITHIN}$
2000	2.001	0.838	1.955	0.792	0.047	0.002	0.043	0.002
2001	2.010	0.884	1.958	0.831	0.053	0.006	0.044	0.003
2002	1.996	0.930	1.941	0.874	0.055	0.008	0.044	0.003
2003	1.986	0.972	1.923	0.909	0.063	0.013	0.046	0.004
2004	1.983	1.013	1.914	0.944	0.069	0.018	0.046	0.005
2005	1.986	1.059	1.918	0.991	0.069	0.021	0.043	0.004
2006	1.977	1.092	1.899	1.013	0.079	0.028	0.046	0.005
2007	1.972	1.119	1.891	1.037	0.082	0.030	0.045	0.007
2008	1.974	1.137	1.892	1.055	0.082	0.031	0.045	0.006
2009	1.979	1.139	1.895	1.054	0.085	0.034	0.044	0.007
2010	1.981	1.139	1.899	1.057	0.082	0.031	0.043	0.007
2011	1.964	1.138	1.882	1.055	0.082	0.028	0.044	0.010
2012	1.973	1.131	1.893	1.052	0.080	0.028	0.043	0.009
2013	1.983	1.124	1.902	1.044	0.080	0.029	0.042	0.009
2014	1.968	1.106	1.895	1.033	0.074	0.025	0.041	0.007
$\Delta$ 2000-07	-0.029	0.280	-0.064	0.245	0.035	0.028	0.002	0.005
$\Delta$ 2008-14	-0.006	-0.031	0.002	-0.023	-0.008	-0.005	-0.004	0.001

Source: *Spanish Labour Force Survey, second quarters*

What then has been the contribution of natives and immigrants to the changes in the level of segregation in the Spanish class structure during this period? The decomposition properties of the  $M$  index allow us to establish that the dominant factor in the growth of segregation during the 2000-2007 period ( $\Delta M_{2000-07} = +0.035$ ) was the disproportionality between the class distribution of natives and immigrants ( $\Delta M_{BETWEEN} = +0.028$ ), much greater than the contribution of segregation within natives ( $\Delta M_{natives}^{WITHIN} = +0.002$ ) or within immigrants ( $\Delta M_{immigrants}^{WITHIN} = +0.005$ ). This is precisely the result that would be expected in a labour market that receives a massive flow of immigrants with a very clear and persistent pattern of class location that is also very dissimilar to that of the native population. In the second period, 2008-2014, the level of segregation decreased in Spain ( $\Delta M_{2008-14} = -0.008$ ) because the disproportionality between the class distributions of natives and immigrants decreased ( $\Delta M_{BETWEEN} = -0.005$ ), as well as the segregation among natives ( $\Delta M_{natives}^{WITHIN} = -0.004$ ), while the segregation among immigrants ( $\Delta M_{immigrants}^{WITHIN} = +0.001$ ) increased, but to such a small degree that it was not enough to counteract the reduction of  $M_{BETWEEN}$  and  $M_{natives}^{WITHIN}$ . In order to interpret the decrease in segregation during the crisis years, remember that the entropy of the distribution of the groups within the total population decreased ( $\Delta E(P_g) = -0.031$ ), while at the same time within the native population the decrease in the size of the working classes and the proportional





growth of higher and lower service categories reduced the entropy of its class structure and made its distribution more even.

## Conclusions

Building on Goldthorpe's concept of the demographic identity as one of the factors in the conformation of class formation, we analysed the impact of migration flows on the recent transformation of the class structure in Spain. We initially assumed that the intensity of migration during the period of dynamic economic growth and the high concentration of migrants in low skilled occupational categories, along with the subsequent massive destruction of employment, especially in occupations with high participation of foreign workers, would have a significant impact on the transformation of the class structure. Our analysis, in which we use the entropy-based  $M$  segregation index, not only confirmed our study's hypothesis, but also allowed us to reconstruct the dynamics of the change, as well as measure its basic components (in terms of the contribution of the native and immigrant population).

The analysis confirms that the transformation of the class structure during the period studied can be divided into two phases that are heavily associated with the dynamics and characteristics of economic growth and the magnitude of the migration flows. From 2000 to 2007 the predominant tendency in the change of the class structure was a gradual and incremental increase in segregation. As the decomposition of the  $M$  index reveals, the main determinant of this phenomenon is the disproportionality of the distribution of the class structure between natives and immigrants. In line with other studies carried out to date, our analysis confirms the gradual polarization of the Spanish class structure during the first upward phase of the economic cycle as a result of the growth of professional and technical employees at one end of the occupational structure, and unskilled service workers at the other end (see Requena et al., 2013; Bernardi & Garrido, 2008). Immigrants played a crucial role in this process, becoming a pool of semi- and unskilled manpower that occupied labour-intensive segments of the labour market; in fact, during this period the contribution of the immigrant population to the increase in class segregation was far greater than that of natives. Therefore, the expansion of a heavily segmented labour market in terms of occupations and ethnicities increased the segregation of the class structure by country of origin during the years of economic growth. The employment growth during this period of economic bonanza had a strong impact on the class structure, specifically of the working classes. At the bottom of the social structure semi, unskilled and agricultural worker classes—around four of every ten employed in Spain—received an inflow of workers of different ethnic origins, while at the same time natives departed. This process considerably increased the internal heterogeneity of the working classes and, consequently, reduced their social distinctiveness as collectives. Having lost part of their demographic identity the extent of their formation as classes dwindled.

The outbreak of the global financial crisis revealed that the spectacular economic growth and job creation in the previous period had unstable foundations. As a result of the macro-financial downturn, the Spanish economy went from intense growth and job creation to a sharp slowdown with a rocketing increase of unemployment rates. This deterioration of the labour market had a strong impact on the class structure in Spain in the 2008-2014 period. The level of segregation of the classes among the employed population decreased, which was an inversion of the tendency observed during the prior period. This inversion was due to the impact of two factors. First of all, during the crisis class distribution within the immigrant population tended to converge with that of natives because the greatest loss of jobs occurred among the unskilled occupations and low value-added sectors in which a large part of foreign workers were concentrated. The second factor is the



decrease in segregation within the native group. The impact of this factor is due to the fact that the process of job destruction was also asymmetrical for the native population, creating unemployment especially among Spanish workers in low or medium skilled jobs: in the end, the destruction of these kinds of jobs led to a more uniform class distribution for employed natives.

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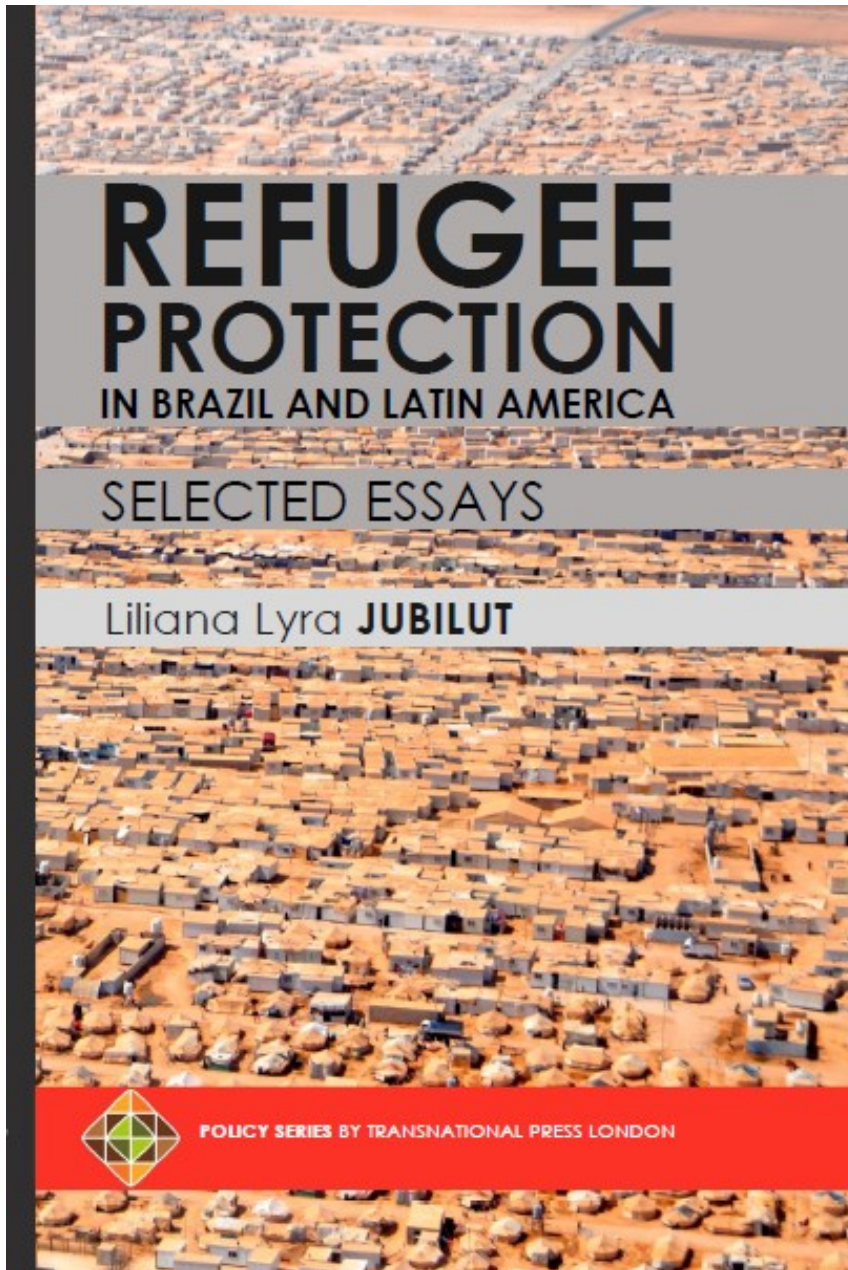
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