

1 Objective

Did Spain's 19th-century land privatisation (disentailment) processes influence international migration?

A common view in Development Economics connects **property rights** and **privatisation** to **international migration**. By contrast, Institutional and Endogenous Growth theories link secure land rights to **economic development**.

Within this framework, late 19th-century **Galicia is a puzzle**:

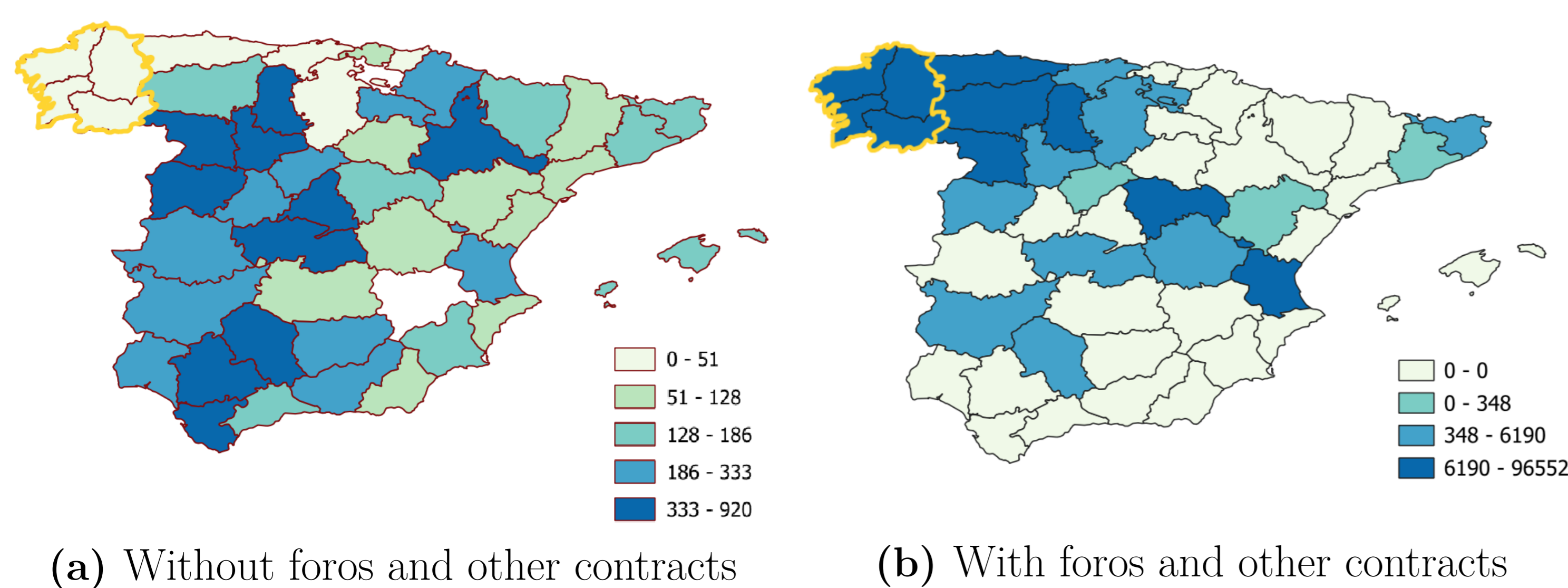
- Massive overseas emigration (1870-1930)
- Land tenure with private-like rights (*foro*)
- Common land was essential
- Economic stagnation and agricultural backwardness

Hypotheses:

- H1.** Privatisation without redistribution increases emigration
- H2.** The loss of common land intensified migration pressures
- H3.** The foro system provided stability but not prosperity
- H4.** The redemption of foros came too late to prevent mass migration

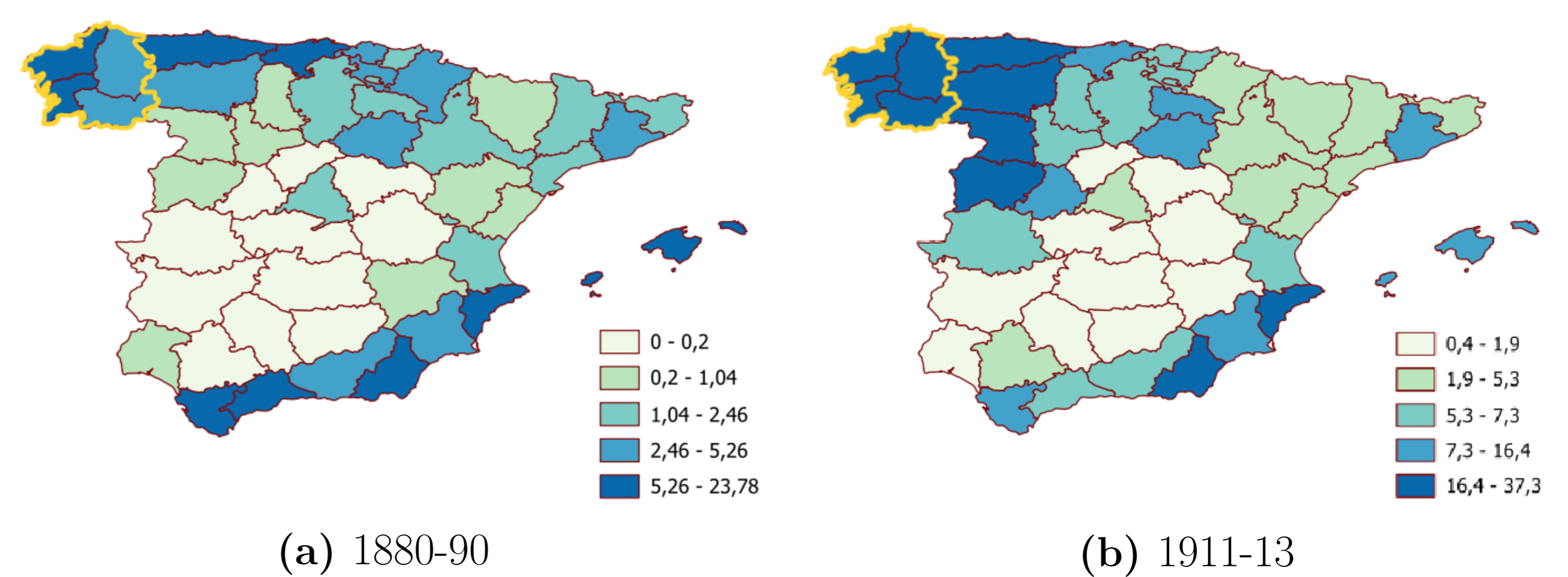
Why did Galicia (where the land tenure system most resembled private ownership) experience the highest emigration rates?

Figure 1: Per capita value of the properties confiscated during the Mendizabal disentailment (1836-1844), by Spanish provinces



Source: Own elaboration from Simón (1973, 158-59, 261)

Figure 2: Gross emigration rates by Spanish provinces



Source: Own elaboration from Sánchez-Alonso (1995)

2 What Drives the Process?

- **Liquidity of land:** Secure property rights increase land marketability, enabling sales, mortgages, and financing migration (Valsecchi 2014)
- **Investment anchoring:** Land ownership promotes long-term investment, reducing migration by improving local opportunities (Galiani & Scharrotsky 2010)
- **Displacement effect:** Land reforms, like the Highland Clearances and Enclosure Acts, displaced tenants, with communal land playing a key role (Humphries 1990; Devine 2019)
- **Endowment effect:** Owners may overvalue inherited land, resisting migration despite worsening conditions (Yan, Yang & Xia 2021)
- **Institutional environment:** Weak governance causes legal uncertainty and displacement but can also hinder mobility (Zhao 2024)

3 Empirics

Analysis focused on **Madoz's Disentailment (1859-1895)**:

1. **Data sources:**

- Census data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE)
- Disentailment data from Registry Books of land sold in the Galician provinces, held at the Spanish National Historical Archives and the Provincial Historical Archives in Galicia

2. **Dynamic modelling with municipal-level data (1859-1900)**

$$Emigration_{i,t} = Emigr_{i,t-1} + Value_{i,t} + Common_{i,t} + Buyer_{i,t} + \mathbf{X}_{i,t} + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

- *Emigration* measured as the municipality's 16-40 sex ratio
- *Value* captures the per capita value of auctioned land in each municipality
- *Common* measures the share of common land among all disentailed land
- *Buyer* measures the concentration of land buyers through the HHI
- *X* is a matrix of control variables including distance to port, literacy rate, population density and distribution

3. **Robustness:** GMM models to address potential endogeneity issues

- Remittances and returnees' capital were used to acquire land

4 Key Results So Far

- **Privatisation without redistribution increases emigration**
 - The mere act of selling land does not lead to higher emigration rates
 - ↑ Buyer concentration (HHI +0.1) ⇒ Migration rate +1.1%
- The loss of **common land** intensified migration pressures
 - Commons sold +1% ⇒ Migration rate +0.13%
 - Effect is weaker when sales were concentrated
- **Hereditary** character of foro → **Subdivision** → Stagnation
- **Coastal** regions new industries → Less migration
- The relationship between privatisation and emigration is **non-linear** and highly **context-dependent**

FECHA de la adjudicación.	NUMERO del inventario.	CLASE, DENOMINACION Y PROCEDENCIA DE LA FINCA.	Starting price		FECHA DEL PAGO, ó casa de no haberse efectuado.
			Buyer	Hammer price	
Enero 16	2940	Un terreno en Galicia	Don Gabriel Sordo	56 500	16 de Julio 69
	2951	Un terreno en Galicia	Don Gabriel Sordo	125	16 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2948	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	13 500	15 de Julio 69
	2949	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	18 500	15 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2950	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	22 500	15 de Julio 69
	2952	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	14 250	15 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2953	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	16	15 de Julio 69
	2954	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	1500	15 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2955	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	12 250	15 de Julio 69
	2956	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	5 750	6 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2957	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	120 750	12 de Julio 69
	2958	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	179	2 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2959	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	111 200	21 de Julio 69
	2960	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	36	16 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2961	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	6 000	16 de Julio 69
	2962	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	25	16 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2963	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	22 200	10 de Julio 69
	2964	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	25 200	27 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2965	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	10	13 de Julio 69
	2966	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	25 700	22 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2967	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	24 000	25 de Julio 69
	2968	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20	16 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2969	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	35	22 de Julio 69
	2970	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20 000	21 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2971	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	25 000	22 de Julio 69
	2972	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20	21 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2973	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	122 200	12 de Julio 69
	2974	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20	22 de Julio 69
Enero 16	2975	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20	22 de Julio 69
	2976	Un terreno en Galicia	Juan Sordo	20	22 de Julio 69

Page from a registry book of Pontevedra province, held at the Spanish National Historical Archive

Check out the full draft and the sources cited across the poster! →

