

Fernando Gil-Alonso, Departament de Geografia, Universitat de Barcelona, fgil@ub.edu

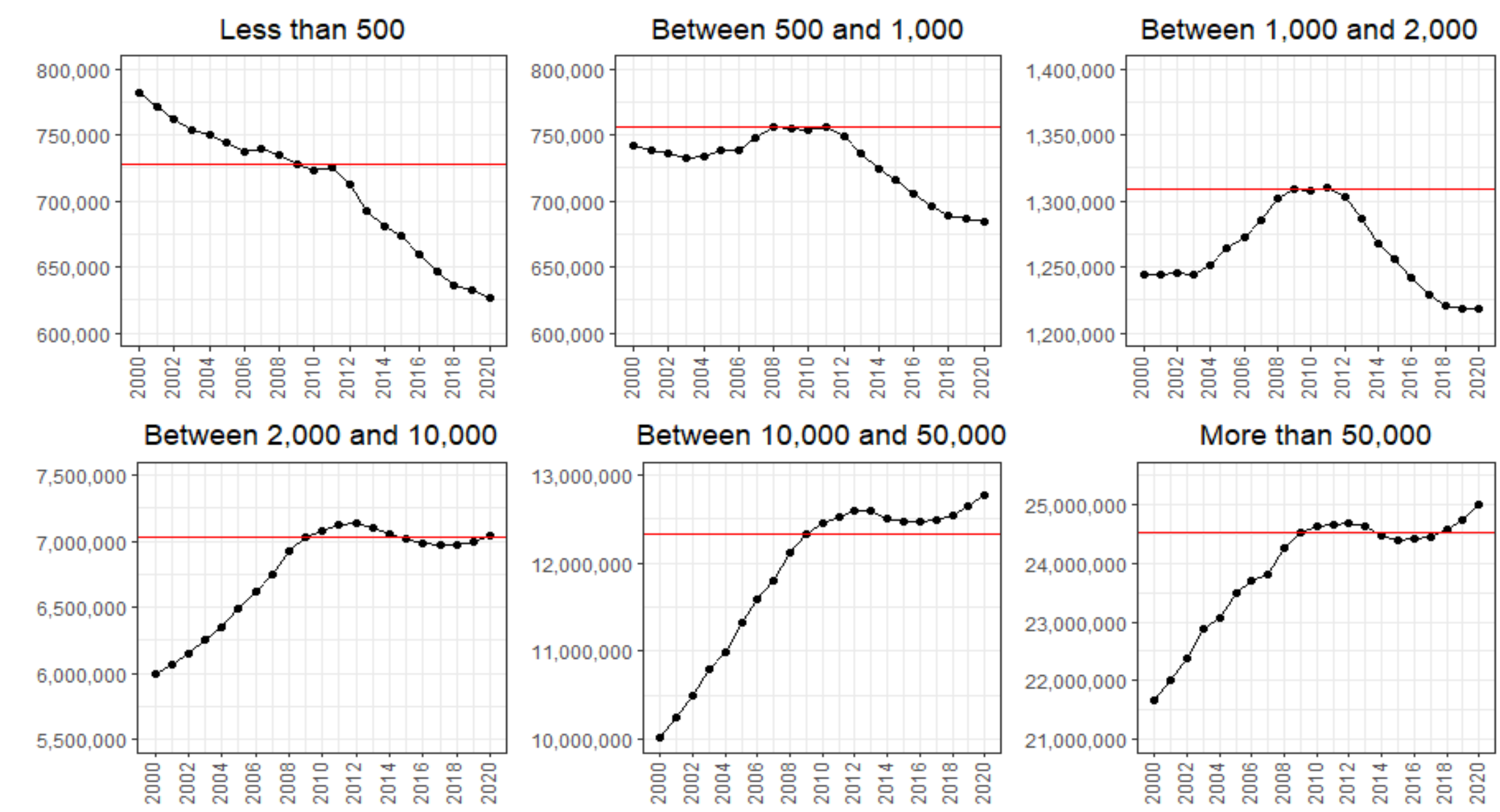
Jordi Bayona-i-Carrasco, Departament de Geografia, Universitat de Barcelona, and Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics, jordibayona@ub.edu

Isabel Pujadas-Rúbies, Departament de Geografia, Universitat de Barcelona, ipujadas@ub.edu

Introduction

- In contrast to the strong demographic growth that Spain experienced throughout the 20th century –increasing from 18.6 million inhabitants in 1900 to 40.5 million people in 2001– its rural municipalities showed, as a whole, a significant population loss.
- Many rural municipalities –a concept that, in Spain, applies to municipalities under 2000 inhabitants– experienced renewed growth during the first decade of the 21st century due to the massive arrival of foreign immigrants.
- However, the Great Recession put an end to this trend, particularly in the case of rural municipalities, which resumed its traditional pattern of demographic decline.

Population (absolute figures) by municipality size, Spain, 2000-2020



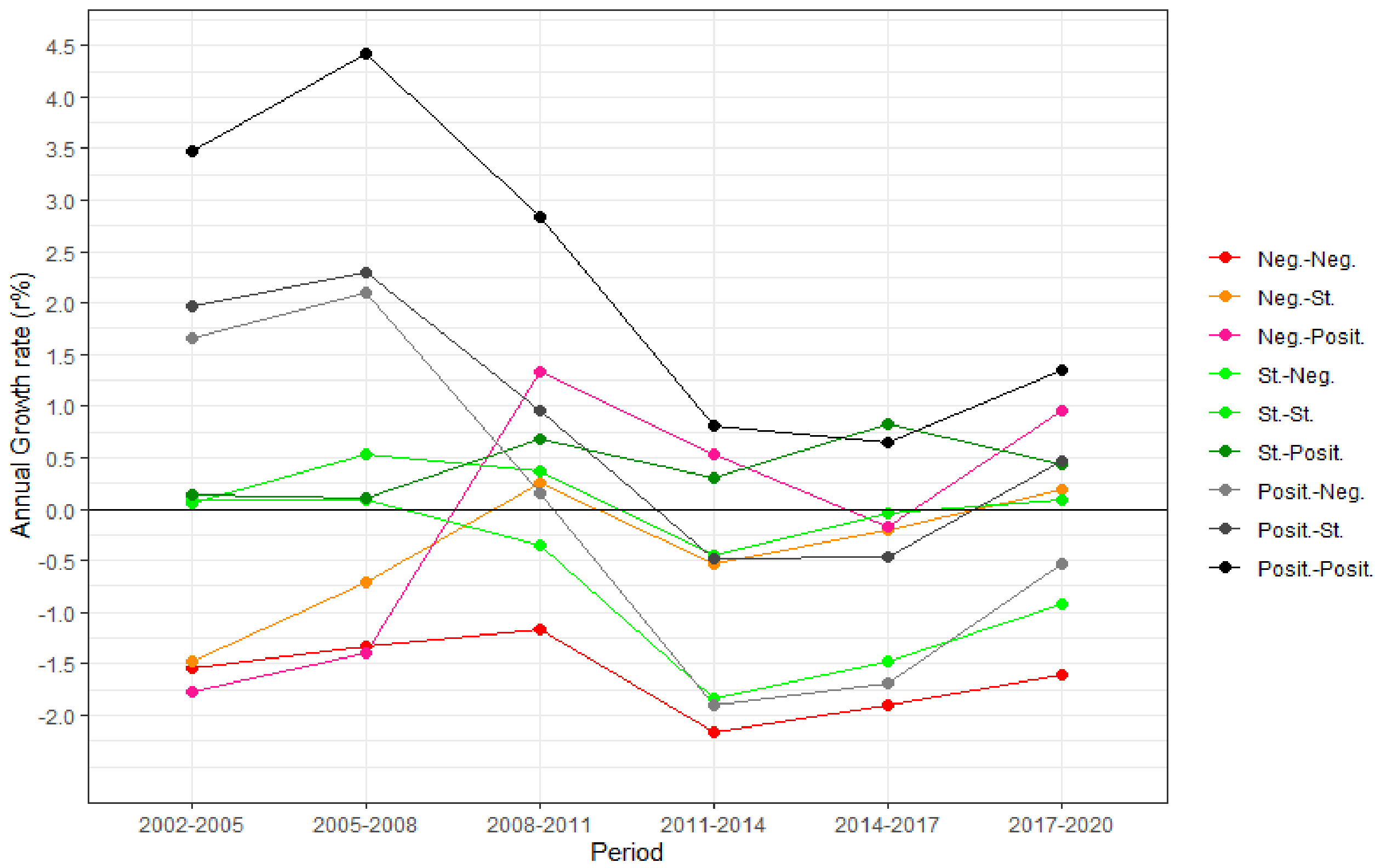
Data and Methodology

- 2000-2020 *Padrón continuo* (local register) microdata, have been used as the main source to study stocks.
- The 5,678 municipalities with less than 2000 inhabitants in 2009 have been classified according to their demographic growth during the 21st century.
- Birth and death figures have been used to calculate natural increase. Net migration is estimated using the demographic balancing equation.
- A typology of municipalities under 2000 inhabitants is constructed according to whether their population increased or diminished in the two periods analysed before and after January 1st, 2009: between 2000-2009 (expansion) and 2009-2020 (economic crisis and post-crisis years)

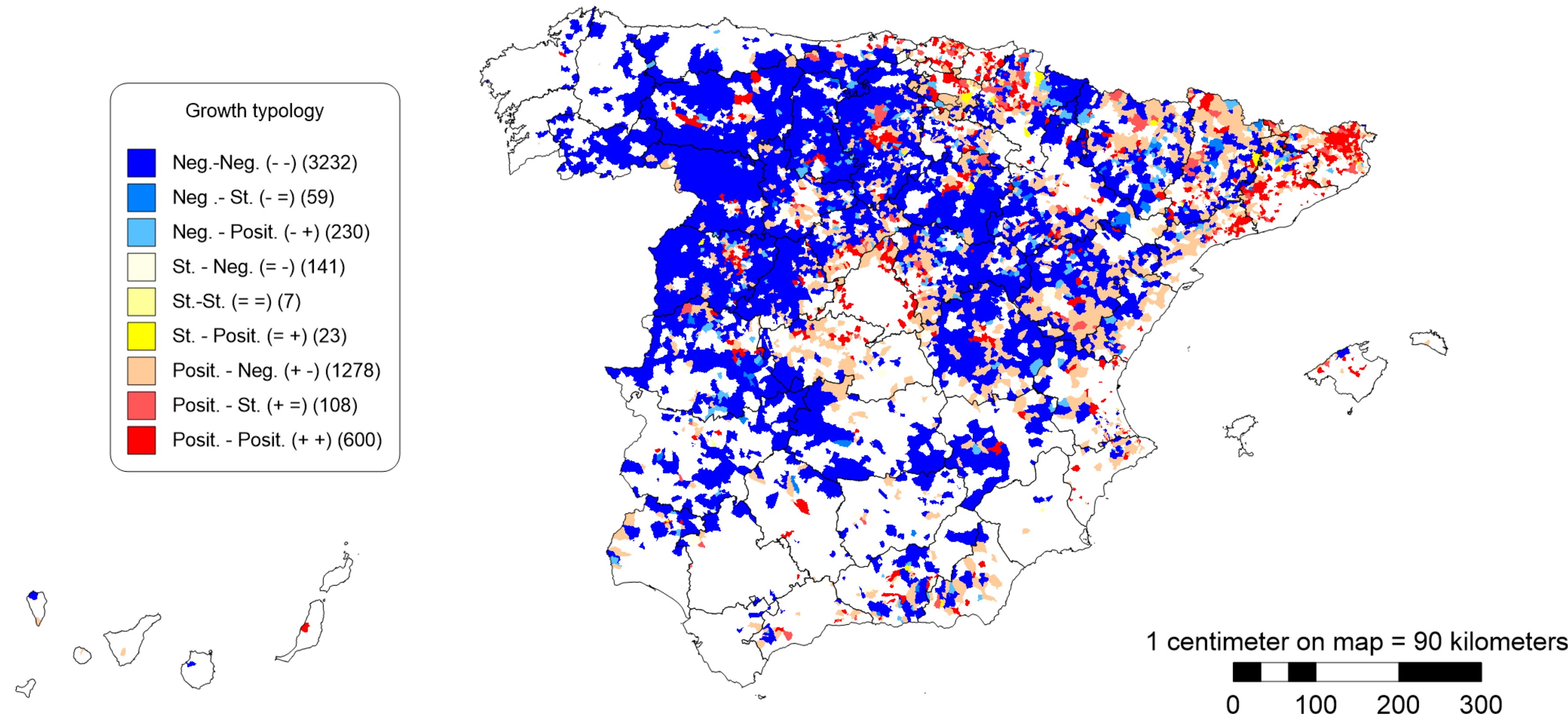
Typology of rural municipalities grouped by population growth before and after 2009 (9 categories), Spain, 2001-2020

Typology		Mun. (<2,000)	Mun. (total)	% Mun.	Population (2020)	Population (mean)	Total Growth	Relative Growth
Negative-Negative	(--)	3,232	3,609	89.6	1,105,064	342	-404,369	-1.63
Negative-Stable	(- =)	59	74	79.7	21,073	357	-1,958	-0.47
Negative-Positive	(- +)	230	238	96.6	52,257	227	-1,592	-0.16
Stable-Negative	(= -)	141	203	69.5	79,913	567	-11,665	-0.71
Stable-Stable	(= =)	7	11	63.6	6,471	924	5	0.00
Stable-Positive	(= +)	23	28	82.1	9,357	407	611	0.36
Positive-Negative	(+ -)	1,278	1,966	65.0	656,276	514	1,527	0.01
Positive-Stable	(+ =)	108	273	39.6	79,170	733	11,244	0.81
Positive-Positive	(+ +)	600	1,588	37.8	518,290	864	179,785	2.27

Population growth rates of the typology's 9 categories, Spain, 2002-2020



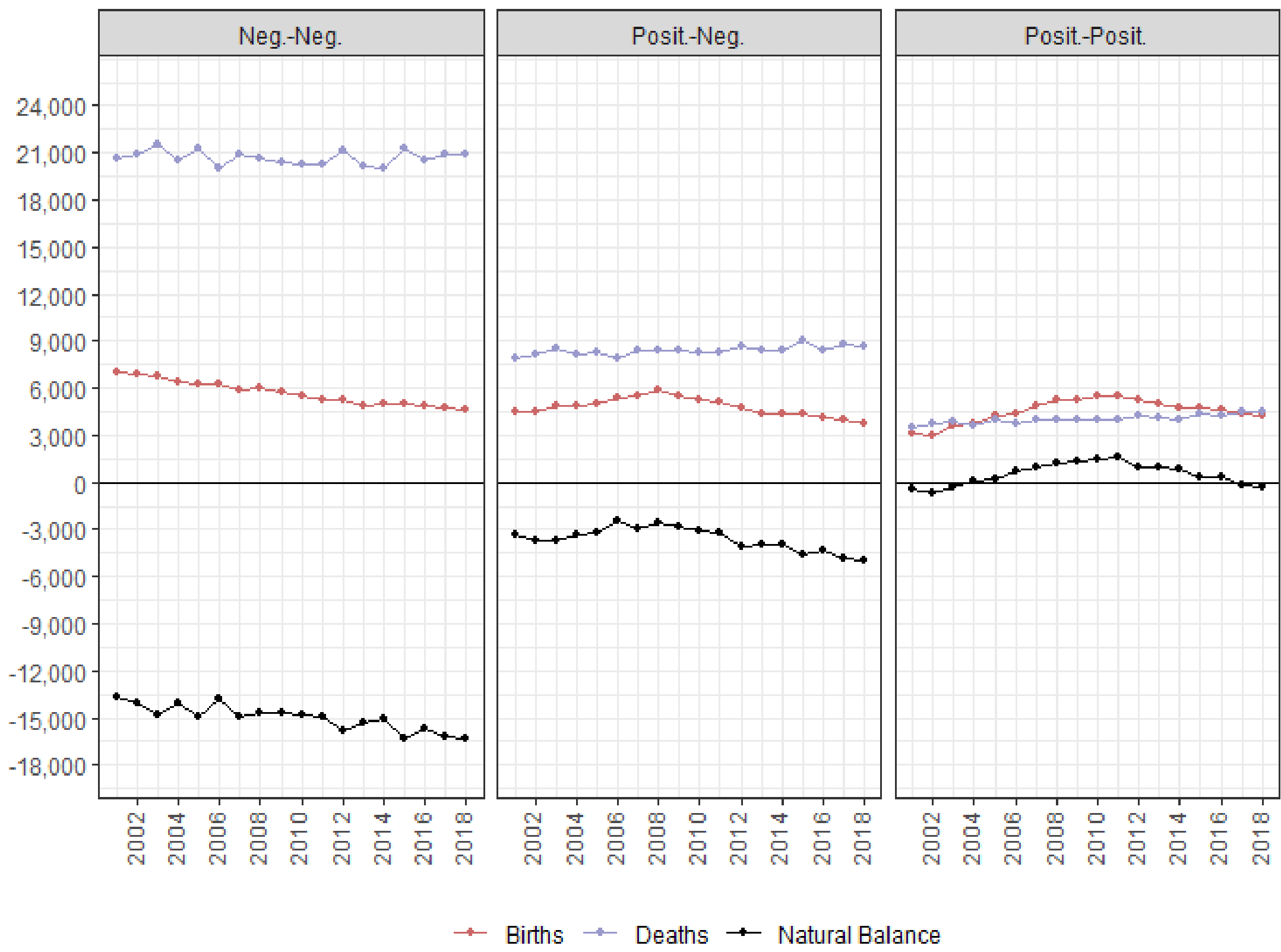
Geographical distribution of the rural municipalities grouped the typology's 9 categories, Spain, 2001-2020



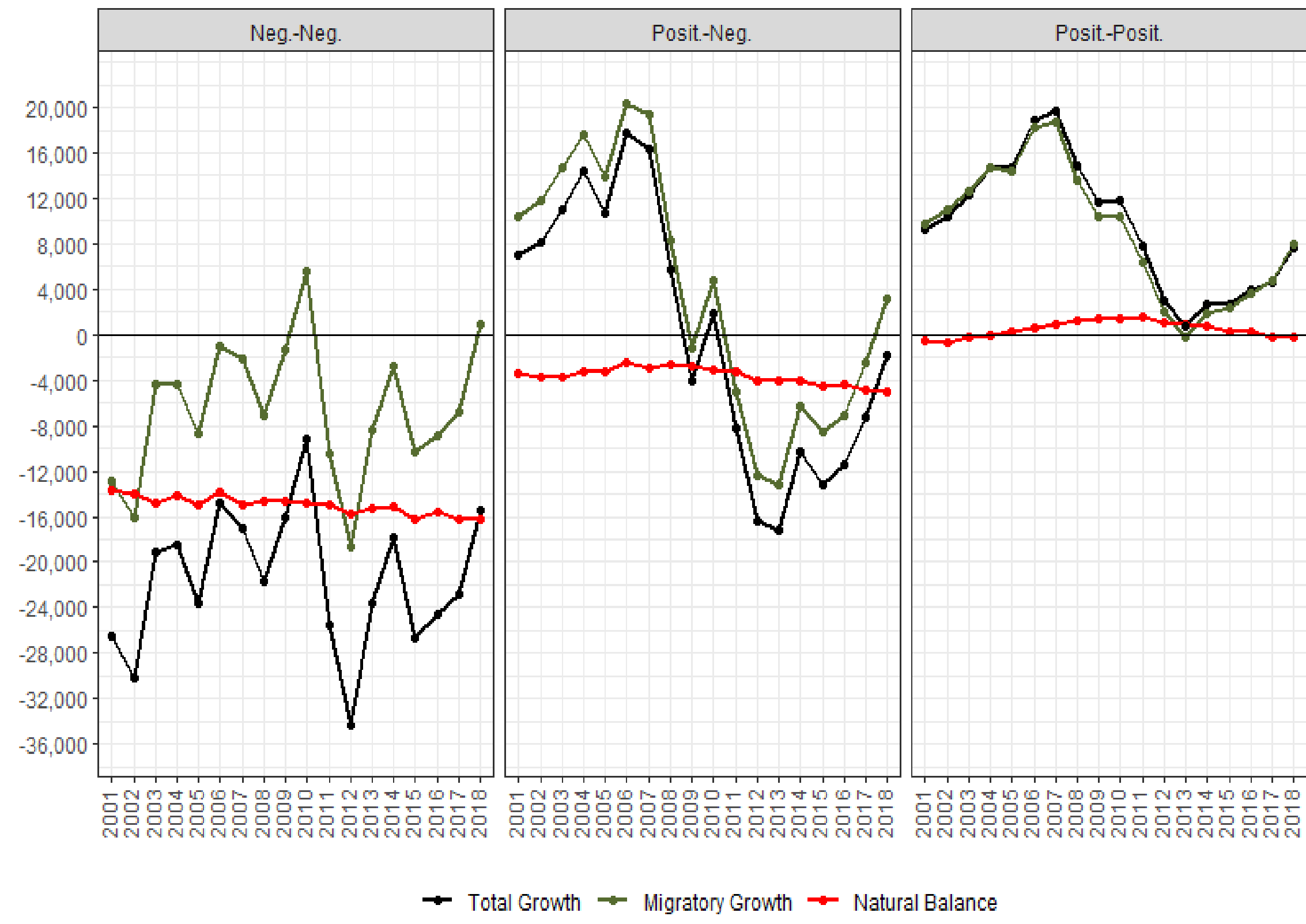
- The most dynamic rural municipalities are mainly peri-urban villages, or tourist-oriented municipalities placed in coastal areas or in the Pyrenees.
- The most regressive categories, in which many municipalities lost population even during the most economically and demographically dynamic years (2000-08), are mainly situated inland, more specifically in the Central Plateau (*Meseta central*) and interior mountains, and away from urban areas and coastal tourist ones.

Births, deaths, and natural growth for a selection of categories of the typology, Spain, 2001-2018

- Natural increase is negative in all rural areas, as there are more deaths than births. However, in the most dynamic groups of municipalities –such as the ++ category ones– natural increase was positive in the final economic expansion years and the first economic crisis ones.
- By contrast, in the -- category villages, natural increase was always strongly and increasingly negative, with hardly any variations throughout the different phases of the economic cycle. It is also the category showing the most negative net migration values during the economic crisis years, and even in almost all the economic expansion phase years.



Total, natural, and migratory growth for a selection of categories of the typology, Spain, 2001-2018



Conclusions

- In a scenario where natural increase has been negative for many decades, migration flows determine demographic changes in Spanish rural municipalities. And migration, and therefore demographic growth, is extremely sensitive to economic fluctuations.
- The 2008 economic crisis put an end to the demographic recovery phase that Spanish rural municipalities had experienced during the strong economic growth period prior to the Great Recession.
- These results demonstrate that rural demographic dynamics mainly depend on demographic size –the smaller the size of the population, the more regressive its demographic behaviour– and on the village's geographical location: only rural municipalities located in (outer) suburbs near metropolitan or urban areas, and in pre-coastal or mountain tourist areas, gained population in the post-crisis period. The rest –the vast majority–, continued to depopulate.
- For most rural municipalities, demographic recovery is very difficult: low density, few inhabitants, negative natural growth, advanced ageing and residential instability of the immigrant population.