

**TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY CHANGES
IN SPANISH AIRPORTS: A PARAMETRIC DISTANCE FUNC-
TIONS APPROACH**

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Technical efficiency and productivity changes in Spanish airports: A parametric distance functions approach.

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Abstract

Nowadays, most of the effort is being put towards applying non-parametric techniques such as Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) in airport performance studies. This work explores another methodology that could either confirm or disagree with the empirical evidence attained by those studies. This methodology is a parametric technique which estimates an efficient frontier by making assumptions that enables to separate the random and efficiency factor. In a parametric context, a functional form has to be chosen. We have selected a distance function because of its advantages to deal with the multiple output nature of airport activities in a parametric context. Parameters estimated through the multi-output input distance function let us calculate the evolution of the Total Factor Productivity (TFP) and its decomposition in Spanish airports.

Key words: Airport; Total Factor Productivity (TFP); Technical efficiency; Technological change
Parametric Distance Function.

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1. Introduction

An airport is more than a mere interchanger of transport modes. It is a system that serves a wide and complex range of needs related to the movements of persons and things worldwide. In that sense, to guarantee that those services are provided in the correct way, a performance measurement of the airport industry becomes crucial. However, the evaluation of airport performance has been, for quite some time, neglected by transport research. Recently, a great variety of airport studies have been performed in order to overcome this existent lack in transport literature (see Table 1 in section 3).

A review of the productivity literature, including airports, shows that the most used method is the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) for the non-parametric group and the Stochastic Frontier Analysis (SFA) for the parametric one. These methods could be applied to cross-section samples, but if panel data are available, it can also be used to measure technical change and change in efficiency.

Both methods have advantages and drawbacks. DEA neither impose any functional form for the frontier, nor assume distributional form for the inefficiency error terms and can easily handle multiple outputs, but it can be influenced by noise and traditional hypotheses tests cannot be carried out unless bootstrapping techniques are used (Simar and Wilson, 2000). On the other hand, SFA involves the cost of imposing a particular functional form and making particular distributional assumptions for the one-side error term associated with technical efficiency, which could introduce a potential source of error. However, SFA also has advantages. To begin with, it is capable to manage

random shocks and/or measurement error¹. Moreover, traditional hypothesis tests could be used and, finally, environmental variables are easier to deal with.

This paper attempts to analyse the technical efficiency and productive change for Spanish airport using a parametric distance function approach. The main objective of this work is to overcome the lack of parametric studies in the area of airport industry and to test the empirical evidence achieved by non-parametric approaches. This work is organized as follows. First, in section 2, the methodological approach applied to this work is described. Subsequently, in section 3, a literature review on airport productivity analysis is undertaken. Afterwards, in section 4, the estimation of the distance function for a sample of Spanish airports is presented and the results are discussed. Finally, some conclusions are pointed out.

2.Methodology

Productivity is generally defined in economics as the ratio of what is produced to what is required to produce. Productivity measurement has a long history. The earliest approach to productivity measurement was based on single or partial factor productivity measurement. Although easy to calculate, this index is too simple in practice and could provide a misleading picture of performance when there is more than a single output or a single input. When there is more than one input and more than one output (which is usually the case), productivity measurement must take this into account using the Total Factor Productivity (TFP) measurement and the change in productivity over time could be measured through TFP growth.

¹ Although recent developments surveyed by Simar and Wilson (2000a, 2000b y 2005) allow making statistical inference and hypothesis testing with DEA and other nonparametric efficiency estimators.

The different approaches to productivity measurement could be divided into two groups². The traditional group ignores inefficiency and could be non-parametric (index number) or parametric (average function). Any case, traditional group consider that observed output is always the best output, so they are non-frontier techniques. However, when inefficiency exists, a frontier approach, which explicitly incorporates inefficiency, must be used. On the contrary, an overstatement of the unexplained residual and also a wrong allocation of productivity change and its sources is obtained because inefficiency change provides an independent contribution to productivity change which is being ignored. For this reason, we follow the frontier approach.

In the frontier approach a best practice frontier, by which each firm is to be compared, has to be estimated. It could be also done using non-parametric³ or parametric⁴ techniques but, in both cases, some assumption about technology must be done. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. A detailed analysis about the relative merits of all of these techniques could be found in Färe *et al.* (1997).

When airports are the subject, as we will show in the next section, almost all papers use DEA (see Table 1 in section 3). For this reason, to measure the productivity change of Spanish airports we have decided to estimate the best frontier using SFA, and then to analyze the productivity change and its decomposition, the Malmquist TFP index.

²A detailed analysis about the relative merits of all of these techniques is out of the scope of this article, but a good summary could be found in Grosskopf (1993).

³Like the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) and Free Disposable Hull (FDH).

⁴Linear programming or econometric techniques. Econometric group is also divided into two: deterministic and stochastic frontiers.

Moreover, in our case due to the heterogeneity of the sample, we think the advantages of SFA outweigh the disadvantages.

Malmquist productivity indexes were introduced by Caves *et al* (1982). They named these indexes after Malmquist, who proposed to construct input quantity indexes as ratios of distance functions (Malmquist, 1953). The distance function, introduced by Shephard (1953, 1970), allows estimation of the relative efficiency of firms in relation to the technological frontier described by the distance function.

Distance functions describe a multi-input, multi-output production technology without making behavioural assumption (such as cost minimization or profit maximization) which is especially suitably in regulated industries. Another important distance function's advantage is that input and output prices are not needed.

The distance function can take an input orientation or an output orientation. An input distance function characterizes the production technology by looking at a minimal proportional contraction of the input vector, given an output vector. On the contrary, an output distance function considers a maximal proportional expansion of the output vector, given an input vector. In this paper, we follow an input-oriented approach because in airports, like in most regulated industries, demand is beyond the airports' control and it has to be met. In this way, output is exogenous and hence, input orientation is the most relevant because input choice is endogenous (Coelli *et al.*, 2003).

Distance function can be estimated through SFA. SFA was introduced by Aigner *et al.* (1977) and it is motivated by the idea that deviations from the production frontier might

not be entirely under the control of the agent being studied. Kumbhakar and Lovell (2000) provide a useful revision on this field. An input distance function can be thought of as a multiple output version of a production frontier and, as we stated before, it characterizes the production technology by looking at a minimal proportional contraction of the input vector, given an output vector and, in a parametric context, could be expressed as:

$$1 = D_i(y_{it}, x_{it}, T; \alpha, \beta, \gamma, \phi, \delta, \lambda) \exp(\xi_{it}) \quad (1)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N ; t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

where $D_i(y_{it}, x_{it}, T)$ is the input distance function, y is a vector of outputs, x is a vector of inputs, T is a time trend, i relates to the i -th firm, $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \phi, \delta, \lambda$ are parameters to be estimated. Lastly, ξ_{it} is an error term which is discussed later.

The empirical application of a parametric distance function calls for the definition of an appropriate functional form. It is desirable that the functional form presents the following advantages: it must be flexible⁵, it must be easy to calculate and, lastly, it must allow imposition of the homogeneity condition. The translogarithmic functional form, proposed by Christensen *et al.* (1971), meets these conditions and this is the reason why we have chosen it.

In order to determine the frontier, D_i needs to be equal to the unit and, in that case, the term on the left of equation 1, according to the neperian logarithm, will equal zero.

Consequently, it is necessary that inputs meet the homogeneity condition of degree 1.

⁵ In order to weaken as much as possible the implications of assuming a particular functional form for the underlying input distance function.

Following Lovell *et al.* (1994)⁶, this condition has been imposed by normalizing the distance function with one of the inputs. If in a translogarithmic distance function any input is chosen, say x_{mit} , the following expression results:

$$\ln(D_i / x_{nit}) = TL(y_{it}, x_{it} / x_{nit}, T; \alpha, \beta, \gamma, \phi, \delta, \lambda) \quad (2)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

Finally, the following expression is obtained:

$$-\ln(x_{nit}) = TL(y_{it}, x_{it} / x_{nit}, T; \alpha, \beta, \gamma, \phi, \delta, \lambda) - \ln(D_i) \quad (3)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

In equation (3), the $-\ln(D_i)$ is non-observable and can be interpreted as an error term.

Equation 3 could be estimated by maximum likelihood following the stochastic frontier approach proposed by Aigner *et al.* (1977), if we replace $-\ln(D_i)$ with a composed error term $(v_{it} - u_{it})$, where v_{it} and u_{it} represent statistical noise and technical inefficiency respectively. Applied to the distance function, this yields:

$$-\ln(x_{nit}) = TL(y_{it}, x_{it} / x_{nit}, T; \alpha, \beta, \gamma, \phi, \delta, \lambda) + v_{it} - u_{it} \quad (4)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

Therefore, we estimate the following stochastic translogarithmic input distance function through Frontier⁷, version 4.1, developed by Coelli (1996).

$$\begin{aligned} -\ln(x_{nit}) = & \alpha_0 + \sum_i^M \beta_i \ln y_{it} + \sum_i^{N-1} \alpha_i \ln x_{it}^* + \frac{1}{2} \sum_i^M \sum_j^M \beta_{ij} \ln y_{it} \ln y_{jt} + \\ & \frac{1}{2} \sum_i^{N-1} \sum_j^{N-1} \alpha_{ij} \ln x_{it}^* \ln x_{jt}^* + \sum_i^M \sum_j^{N-1} \gamma_{ij} \ln y_{it} \ln x_{jt}^* + \lambda_1 T + \lambda_{11} T^2 + \\ & \sum_i^{n-1} \delta_{1i} T \ln x_{it}^* + \sum_i^M \phi_{1i} T \ln y_{it} + v_{it} - u_{it}; \quad \text{with } x_{it}^* = x_{it} / x_{nit} \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

⁶ This methodology has been applied in some empirical papers (Coelli and Perelman, 1999, 2000; Morrison *et al.*, 2000; Orea, 2002; Trujillo and Tovar, 2007; among others).

⁷ We follow Battese and Coelli (1992) specification to model the temporal pattern of technical inefficiency, but we ensure the frontier program treats each observation individually to avoid imposing that the technical efficiency of each firm must be constant.

where y is a vector of M outputs, x is a vector of N factors, T is a time trend, i relates to the i -th firm, $\alpha, \beta, \psi, \gamma, \rho, \theta$ are the coefficients to estimate. v_{it} is a symmetrical error term, iid with a zero average (which represents the random variables uncontrollable by the operator) and u_i is a one-sided negative error term (which measures the technical inefficiency of each operator) and is distributed independently of v_{it} .

The parameters obtained through the distance function estimation allow us to calculate the input oriented Malmquist productivity index to measure and decompose productivity change in the following way⁸:

$$\ln\left(\frac{TFP_{i1}}{TFP_{i0}}\right) = \ln\left(\frac{TE_{i1}}{TE_{i0}}\right) + 0.5 \left[\left(\frac{\partial \ln D_{i0}}{\partial t} \right) + \left(\frac{\partial \ln D_{i1}}{\partial t} \right) \right] + 0.5 \sum_{m=1}^M \left[(SF_{i0} \varepsilon_{mi0} + SF_{i1} \varepsilon_{mi1}) (\ln y_{ji1} - \ln y_{ji0}) \right] \quad (6)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

where:

$$\text{Pure Technical Efficiency Change (pech)} = \ln\left(\frac{TE_{i1}}{TE_{i0}}\right); \quad (7)$$

$$\text{Technical Change (techch)} = 0.5 \left[\left(\frac{\partial D_{i0}}{\partial t} \right) + \left(\frac{\partial D_{i1}}{\partial t} \right) \right] \quad (8)$$

$$\text{Scale Efficiency Change (sech)} = 0.5 \sum_{m=1}^M \left[(SF_{i0} \varepsilon_{mi0} + SF_{i1} \varepsilon_{mi1}) (\ln y_{ji1} - \ln y_{ji0}) \right] \quad (9)$$

The interpretation of these components is the usual one. TE_{ni} is the inverse of the input distance measure and varies between 0 and 1 as required. The technical change is measured as the mean to technical change obtained in two consecutive periods and is equal to:

⁸ We follow the general approach outlined in Orea (2002) but adjusted to suit input distance function used here instead output distance function.

$$\left(\frac{\partial \ln D_{it}}{\partial t}\right) = \lambda_1 + \lambda_{11} t + \sum_{n=1}^N \delta_n \ln x_{nit} + \sum_{m=1}^M \phi_m \ln y_{mit} \quad (10)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

Finally in order to calculate the scale efficiency change, production elasticity and scale factors are needed. We can calculate productions elasticity for each output and each observation through the following expression:

$$\varepsilon_{mit} = \left(\frac{\partial \ln D_{it}}{\partial \ln y_{mit}}\right) = \beta_m + \sum_{m=1}^M \beta_{mi} \ln y_{mit} + \sum_{n=1}^N \gamma_{ni} \ln x_{nit} + \phi_m t \quad (11)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

In order to obtain scale factor we use:

$$SF_{it} = \frac{(\varepsilon_{it} + 1)}{\varepsilon_{it}} \quad \text{where} \quad \varepsilon_{it} = \sum_{m=1}^M \varepsilon_{mit} \quad (12)$$

with $i = 1, 2, \dots, N$; $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$

3.-Literature review: key issues

Early, economic analysis of airport has been concentrated on congestion process and its related costs. Different issues such as pricing structure, regulation and investment emerged (Carlin and Park, 1970a,1970b). Also, management aspects were considered crucial for understanding the industry performance (Doganis, 1992). However, actually, most of the effort is being approached towards developing models to measure airport productive. Table 1 shows a summary of airport performance studies with different specification. This gives an idea about the rapid growth in the literature related to this aspect of airport industry.

As it is apparent in Table 1, most of airport efficiency studies have used non-parametric methods to evaluate the level of airport inefficiency. The DEA approach is the most common method used. It has the advantage that it does not require any hypothesis about production technology and therefore it is free of specification bias. However, DEA approach provides a measure of the “Farrell” inefficiency rather than an explanation of it. In order to overcome this limitation some authors use the DEA-efficiency score in a second-stage regression to construct an ad hoc model to explain inefficiency (Abbott and Wu, 2002; Gillen and Lall, 1997; Pels *et al.*, 2001, 2003).

On the other hand, the first papers focusing on parametric frontier approach estimated a production frontier function (deterministic, -Martín-Cejas, 2002- or stochastic -Pels *et al.*, 2001, 2003) ignoring the multioutput nature of airport activity. To the best of our knowledge, this paper provides the first attempt to use a stochastic parametric frontier approach to measure productivity changes from airport taking into account multiples output. We could do that using a stochastic distance function.

As we stated before, the choice of a translog input distance function⁹ gives us several advantages, that is, we could deal with multiple nature of airport production, we do not need behavioural assumption, or input and output prices. Moreover, it allows us to decompose productivity change in its sources (efficiency change and technical change) which are crucial for regulators.

⁹ Stochastic input distance functions have been used to measure efficiency and/or productivity changes in other regulated infrastructure service such as, i.e., railway (Coelli *et al.*, 1999, 2000), electric utilities (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003), ports (Rodríguez-Álvarez *et al.*, 2007).

Finally, other authors have proposed the endogenous-weight TFP index (EW-TFP). The EW-TFP method is a variant of the distance function oriented methods and specifies a flexible functional form for the production transformation function with multiple inputs and outputs (see Yoshida, 2004 for methodological details)¹⁰. This method has been used by the Air Transport Research Group (ATRS) in the airport-benchmarking projects (2002). Some examples of this methodology can also be seen in Oum *et al.*, (2003), Yoshida (2004) and Yoshida and Fujimoto (2004). Although the EW-TFP method has some of the input distance function's advantages, we consider that input distance function approach outperforms the EW-TFP method because the latter has relatively more assumptions such as separability and constant elasticity among inputs and output which could be tested using stochastic distance function.

On the other hand, it should also be pointed out that the majority of airport performance studies show a diverse range of specification that, in some cases, produces different and sometimes contradictory results. Two features become crucial to the sensitive analysis of these results: 1) The choice of output and input variables to be used in the efficiency analysis and 2) The approach to estimate the "best practice" production frontier. With regard to the former, as we stated before, airport infrastructures are multi-product firms with different sets of functions. For example, the terminal building serves more than one function, such as passenger processing and duty-free retailing. In that sense, a troublesome element in the evaluation of airport performance is defining the output to be utilized in the analysis. Table 2 shows a summary of outputs and inputs variables utilized in the majority of airport efficiency studies.

¹⁰ A possible extension of the EW-TFP method is incorporating it to the production function the soft-cost input and concession revenue in order to measure the effect of outsourcing and commercial intensity at terminal building on airport efficiency (Yoshida, 2004).

Airport output is easy to identify but it is not homogenous. For instance, it can be defined in terms of aircraft movements, passengers and cargo volumes. However, each of these output measures is only related to a part of the infrastructure. Runways are related to the number of aircrafts landing, while terminal building size depends upon the amount of passengers and cargo processed. Therefore, none of these measures taken in isolation comprehensively explain airport production structure. Gillen and Lall (1997) and Pels *et al.*, (2001, 2003) analyze airport efficiency from the air side and the land side point of view. These authors argue that although outputs and inputs in both sides are clearly related, production technology is not. However, the first two authors conclude that, in presence of externalities, more research is needed to integrate airside and terminal operations. On the other hand, as Yoshida (2004) points out, airport industry is the typical example of joint production. While sharing the same set of inputs such as capital, labour, land, and other miscellaneous materials, it yields various kinds of outputs, such as passenger loading/unloading, aircraft movements and cargo handling. Therefore, this joint-production characteristic makes it difficult to evaluate the efficiency of airport activities in a unanimous measure.

Monetary outputs are also used in performance studies. In this case, an additional problem emerges from the price differential between different time periods or countries (with international airports samples) and a comparability bias can be introduced. Other types of output that have to be taken into account in airport efficiency study are the undesirable outputs. Yu (2004) estimated an n-year-window DEA model considering noise as an undesirable output. Pathomsiri *et al.*, (2008) computed a non-parametric

directional output distance function which allows to manage undesirable outputs such as the number of delayed flights and time delays in minutes. In the past, some authors noted the relationship between undesirable output and airport performance (see Gillen and Lall, 1997 and Salazar de la Cruz, 1999). The finding was that DEA approach tends to identify congested airports as efficient.

On the other hand, if output measures are relatively easy to obtain, then consequently there should not be any problems in obtaining the necessary data required by the analysis, in turn, input measures give rise to more serious problems. The most important inputs at airports are labor and capital. Regarding the former, the easiest measure is provided by the number of employees. However, this is not homogenous, as it includes both part- and full-time personnel, in addition to qualified workers such as technicians and managers, and unskilled personnel. Therefore, given that different types of employees carry out different tasks at airports, it would be necessary to develop a more comprehensive and accurate measure for determining the labor input. A solution may be found by considering the financial value of the input. Nevertheless, such a measure also presents considerable problems since it reflects not only the quantity of the input applied, but also the relative wage differentials among airports.

Regarding the capital factor, the situation is even more complicated. This is essentially due to the diverse nature of capital inputs. For instance, the difference arising between small capital resources with a short economic life and large long term investments such as runways and buildings makes posterior input allocation very difficult to measure. ICAO (1991) recommends the utilization of assets value in order to measure capital.

However, the existence of diverse accounting methods means care has to be taken. For example, if capital goods investments are financed by government funds, it is very likely that depreciation is not entered into the accounts. This procedure is common at those airports traditionally operated as public firms. Determining asset value at such airports is misleading due to a lack of regular accounting practices. Therefore, any other measuring of capital input has to be used. A list of no monetary (physical) input has been used in many studies (see Table 2). In our case, however, Spanish Airport Authority (AENA-Aeropuertos Españoles y Navegación Aérea) is the only data source and therefore the data are supported by homogeneity of accounting criteria.

4.-Discussion of results

This section reports a parametric decomposition of input oriented Malmquist index for Spanish Airport network. We were able to collect data from 26 airports between 1993 and 1999. The airports covered by the sample were the two hubs Madrid-Barajas and El Prat-Barcelona. Other nine tourist airports in which the percentage of international passengers is above 50%. These are Alicante, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Gerona, Ibiza, Lanzarote, Málaga, Palma de Mallorca and Menorca. Finally, medium and small regional airports such as Almería, Asturias, Bilbao, Coruña, La Palma, Melilla, Pamplona, Santander, Santiago, Sevilla, San Sebastián, Jerez, Valencia, Vigo and Zaragoza. We tried to get enough representation of the main types of organizational structures for airport authorities in terms of their specialization (i.e. hub, tourist, regional, etc).

For each of these airports, we have collected information on airports movements in terms of aircraft and passengers volume and the level of commercial activities. Three

outputs measures were considered. The first, aircraft movement (ATM); the second, average size of aircraft (defined as the ratio between passenger's volume and ATM) and the third, the share of non-aeronautical revenue in total airport revenue. The latter represents the level of commercial activity developed by the airport. There is some empirical evidence that shows that large airports have higher TFP index. In relation to the third variable, airports which exploit demand complementary between aeronautical and commercial services appear as more efficient (Oum *et al.*, 2003).

The information available about inputs only allows us to consider three inputs to approximate capital and labor. The latter is approached by the average number of persons employed by the airport. Capital is obtained by two variables: the surface of land occupied by the airport measured by hectare and the number of gates. Table 3 summarizes all the relevant statistical information about those variables. The spread between the maxima and minima give a good sense of the heterogeneity of the sample. It suggests that we are estimating the performance of an average airport which handles annually 32 516 ATM, with an average of 81 passengers by ATM, and its non aeronautical revenue means 57% of aeronautical revenue. This airport delivers its activities on 302 hectares, has 11 gates and employs an annual average of 190 workers.

In Table 4, the estimated Maximum-likelihood parameters from the input distance function are shown. It can be seen that all first order parameters are statistically significant and have the correct sign. This implies that the distance function estimated complies with all the expected theoretical properties. At the sample mean, the regularity conditions are satisfied: it is non-decreasing and quasi-concave in inputs and decreasing

in outputs. The variables have been divided by the geometric mean. Therefore, the first order coefficients can be interpreted as elasticity. Moreover, the variance parameters, σ^2 and γ , are statistical significant at 5% level and the estimated value of parameter γ is 0.9282 showing that technical efficiency have an important role to play explaining TFP change.

Before analyzing productivity change and its decomposition we present the airport's average¹¹ technical efficiency in the period. Figure 1 shows the technical efficiency of Spanish airports which is estimated to be on average at 80.11%. This average, however, hides very significant differences across airports. Indeed, the performance ranges from 60% to 93%.

Among Spanish airports the ones that show a higher technical efficiency than the average are: La Palma, Melilla, Ibiza, Jerez, Vigo, Coruña, Madrid, Asturias, Bilbao, Pamplona, Alicante, Lanzarote, Málaga, Mallorca, Barcelona, Fuerteventura, Menorca, San Sebastian and Gerona. Finally, airports that show a lower technical efficiency than the average are: Santander, Gran Canaria, Valencia, Almería, Zaragoza, Santiago and Sevilla.

As we stated before, the parameters of the input distance function are used to calculate the Mamlquist index of the Total Factor Productivity and to decompose it into technological change, pure technical efficiency change and scale efficiency change.

¹¹ For the sake of brevity we only report average results.

Again, for the sake of brevity we only report average results. The mean results for each year are shown in Table 5.

In order to understand the index, it could be useful remember that a value larger than 1 for the Malmquist index, or any of its components, indicates an improvement in that source of inefficiency. A value smaller than 1, indicates a decrease in the productivity. Finally, the average growth rate in the specific source is the difference between the measured index and 1.

The Malmquist index indicates that the overall productivity has increased by the whole period as noted in Figure 2 (this means an increase rate of about 23% between 1993 and 1999).

To understand what is driving this productivity growth, it is useful to analyze the components of the Malmquist index. On a year to year basis, Figure 2 shows clearly that technical change has grown smoothly during the whole period at a constant rate. It has been the most important source of productivity growth during the period examined. On the other hand, pure efficiency change played a positive role in the first part of the period, but it has been source of deterioration in the second part of it.

The mean result for each airport is shown in Table 6. As we can see the airports of San Sebastian, Madrid and Barcelona were the best-performing airport during that period. Moreover there are only five airports whose productivity decreases for the same period. These are Santander, Jerez, Zaragoza, Sevilla and Menorca.

When the decomposition of TFP changes in technological change (TECHCH), pure technical effect (PECH) and scale economy effect (SECH) for each airport is analyzed. It is obvious that technical change growth is concentrated in hub and tourist airports, except for Sevilla. Airports with a technical change growth above average are: Gran Canaria, Mallorca, Lanzarote, Malaga, Madrid, Fuerteventura, Ibiza, Alicante, Barcelona, Gerona, Menorca and Zaragoza. The average Spanish economy growth over the period 1993 to 1999 was 2.7%. By contrast, the average TFP growth of Spanish airport was 0.9%. This means that the growth of productivity is way below the rest of the Spanish economy for the same period.

5. Conclusions

As we have seen above, almost all of the papers have used the non-parametric DEA approach to analyze airport productivity. In order to contrast the empirical evidence attained by these studies, we propose a different methodology to estimate airport productivity. In this study the productivity change of Spanish airports was analyzed by a parametric technique. The estimation of a best frontier for Spanish airports was made using a Stochastic Frontier Analysis. The paper relies on a distance function which can be viewed as a multiple output version of a production frontier. And then, to analyze the productivity change and its decomposition the Malmquist TFP index was used.

The empirical evidence found in this study is similar to those in the literature reviewed. Hub airports showed a level of efficiency above the average. We also found a significance difference in efficiency between main land airports and island airports.

Except for the case of Gran Canaria airport, the rest of island airports included in the sample showed a level of efficiency above the average. In accordance with Fung *et al.*, (2007) airport efficiency depends on their geographical location. Airports in the north of Spain seem to be more efficient than those in the south. The same is true for island airports. In this latter case, the reason perhaps is the touristic characteristic of the traffic in island airports.

In general terms, we found that, for our airport sample, the average rate of productivity showed a slight improvement of 0.9% per annum and the core engine of this productivity increase was the technical progress (3% increase) rather than efficiency improvement. By airports, there was a rapid technological change in almost all airports with only three exceptions Pamplona, Santander and Jerez airports. Tourist airports verified the same rate of technical change like the two hubs Madrid and Barcelona. Only these two hubs airports verified a significant improvement in pure technical efficiency. The efficiency change associated to the airport size was negligible for almost all of airports in the sample.

A natural extension of this work would be to include undesirable output on the productivity analysis. Yu *et al.*, (2007) and Pathomsiri *et al.*, (2008) have used non-parametric techniques to estimate the impact of this derived external effect, noise and delay respectively, on the productivity of airports. The methodology used here, the Stochastic Frontier Analyses, could be a suitable form of integrating this kind of undesirable output. This technique is capable of managing random shocks,

measurement errors, and hypothesis tests and could be an easier method to deal with environmental variables.

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Table1: Summary of airport performance studies

Year	Authors	Methodology			Measures	Data	Observations
		Frontier?	Parametric?	Model			
1997	Gillen <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	21 USA airports (1989/1993)	Explain ET through Tobit
	Hooper <i>et al</i>	No	No	PIN	TFP	5 Australian airports (1988/89-1991/92)	Estimate Two regression models for estimating output adjusted-TFP
1999	Salazar	Yes	No	DEA	CE	16 Spanish airports (1993/1995)	
	Parker	Yes	No	DEA	TE	22 UK airports (1988/89-1996/97)	
	Murillo-Melchor	Yes	No	DEA	TE, TFP	33 Spanish airports (1992/1994)	Use a Malmquist Index (and decompose it)
2000	Sarkis	Yes	No	DEA	TE	44 USA airports (1990/1994)	ET scores are analyzed using Mann-Witney Test
	Nyshadham <i>et al</i>	No	No	PIN	TFP	25 European airports (1995)	Use a Translog Multilateral Index
2001	Adler <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	26 Worldwide airports (1996)	Use Principle Component Analysis and applied Superefficient DEA model
	Pels <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	34 European airports (1995/1997)	Use a Coob-Douglas function
		Yes	Yes	SPF	TE		
	Martin <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	37 Spanish airports (1997)	
Gillen <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE, TFP	22 USA airports (1989/1993)	Use a Malmquist Index (and decompose it)	
2002	Abbott <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE, TFP	12 Australian airports (1989/90, 99/2000)	Malmquist Index (and decompose it), explain TFP's variations through Tobit
	Fernandes <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	35 Brazilian airports (1998)	
	Martin-Cejas	Yes	Yes	DCF	TE	40 Spanish airports (1996-1997)	
2003	Bazargan <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	45 USA airports (1996-2000)	ET scores are analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Witney Tests
	Oum <i>et al</i>	No	Yes	EW-TFP	TFP	50 World airports (1999)	Further analysing TFP by regression models
	Pels <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	34 European airports (1995/1997)	Use a Translog function and explain de inefficiency
Yes		Yes	SPF	TE			
2004	Yoshida <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	67 Japanese airports (2000)	Explain ET through Tobit
		No	Yes	EW-TFP	TFP		Explain ET through OLS
	Oum <i>et al</i>	No	Yes	EW-VFP	VFP	76 Worlwide airports (2000-2001)	Further analysing VFP by regression models
	Barros <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE, AE	13 Portuguese airports (1990-2000)	Explain CE through Tobit
	Yu	Yes	No	DEA	TE	14 Taiwan airports (1994-2000)	Undesirable (noise) are taken into account
	Sarkis <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	44 USA airports (1990-1994)	
	Pathomsiri <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	63 Worlwide airports (2000, 2002)	Use paired-sample t-test to test differences in ET scores before/after Sept-11
2005	Yoshida	No	Yes	EW-TFP	TFP	30 Japanese airports (2000)	Further analysing TFP by regression models
	Pathomsiri <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TFP	72 Worldwideairports (2000, 2002)	Parametric and non parametric test to test ET differences before/after Sept-11
2006	Oum <i>et al</i>	No	Yes	EW-VFP	VFP	116 Worlwide airports (2001-2003)	Further analysing VFP by regression models
	Pacheco <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	58 Brazilian airports (1998, 2001)	Use financial and operating performance as outputs
	Pathomsiri <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TFP	72 Worlwide airports (2000, 2002)	Tobit to explain variation in airport productivity
	Colón <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	30 Brazilian airports (2004)	Inverted frontier is used to discriminate false efficient unit
2007	Hong <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	14 Korean airports (2000-2004)	Identification of super efficient airports
	Barros <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE	31 Italian airports (2001-2003)	ET scores are analyzed using Mann-Witney Test
	Fung <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TE, TFP	25 Chinese airports (1995/2004)	Use a Malmquist Index (and decompose it)
2008	Pathomsiri <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TFP	56 USA airports (200-2003)	Use a Malmquist-Lumberger Index Undesirable (delays) are taken into account
	Yu <i>et al</i>	Yes	No	DEA	TFP	4 Taiwan airports (1995-1999)	Use a Malmquist-Lumberger Index.Undesirable (noise) are taken into account

Note: TE= Technical Efficiency; AE = Allocative Efficiency CE= Cost Efficiency; TFP = Total Factor Productivity; VFP = Variable Factor Productivity; PIN = Price-based Index Number; DEA=Data Envelopment Analysis; DCF = Deterministic Cost Frontier; SPF = Stochastic Production Frontier; EW-TFP=Endogenous-weight TFP
 Source: own elaborated from several studies

Table 2: Summary of output and input measures in airport performance studies

Output	Input
<p><i>No monetary outputs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Numbers of passenger -Number of domestic passenger -Aircraft movements (ATM) -Number of air carrier operations -Percentage of on time operations -Cargo tonnes -Mail tonnes -Work load Unit <p><i>Monetary outputs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aeronautical revenue -Non-aeronautical revenue -Defected revenue index -Total revenue -Operational revenue -Sales to plane -Sales to passengers -Noise fees (undesirable output) -Commercial revenue -Handling revenue <p><i>Undesirable output:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Noise -Delay 	<p><i>No monetary inputs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of runway -Number of gates -Terminal building area -Number of employees -Minimum connecting time -Number of baggage claim -Distance to nearest city center -Number of remote aircraft parking -Number of public parking spots -Number of air routes connecting with other airports -Number of full time equivalent employees -Number of aircraft parking position at terminal <p><i>Monetary inputs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Labour cost -Capital cost -Capital stock -Other expenditures -Total cost - Number of check-in desk - Runway length - Apron area - Departure long area - Length of curb frontage - Baggage claim area - Airport surface area - Operational cost - Airport charge - Material cost - Soft cost - Access cost

Source: own elaboration from several studies.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of variables used in estimations

Variables	Units	Average	Maximun	Minimum	Standar deviation	C.Pearson
ATM	Number	32.516	252.428	1.803	49.539	1,52
Aircraft size	Passenger/ATM	81	148	11	28	0,34
NAR/AR	Percentage	57	153	16	20	0,34
Labor	Number	190	823	42	162	0,85
Area	Hectare	302	1.038	37	249	0,83
Gates	Number	11	74	1	16	1,39

Table 4. Input Distance Function parameter estimates

Variable	coefficient	standard-error	t-ratio
cte	0,2815	0,0330	8,5272
ATM	-0,4529	0,0205	-22,1313
Aircraft size (pas/ATM)	-0,4693	0,0568	-8,2575
NAR/AR	-0,3098	0,0479	-6,4616
ATM sq	-0,1968	0,0291	-6,7741
Aircraft size sq	-0,6294	0,1453	-4,3327
NAR/AR sq	0,1962	0,1309	1,4988
ATM x Aircraft size	0,1878	0,0479	3,9177
ATM x NAR/AR	-0,1101	0,0602	-1,8290
Aircraft size x NAR/AR	-0,2273	0,1315	-1,7280
Gates	0,1404	0,0529	2,6549
area	0,1641	0,0434	3,7840
Labor	0,6955	0,0480	14,5045
Gates sq	0,1788	0,1313	1,3616
area sq	0,1201	0,0837	1,4358
Labor sq	0,0917	0,1848	0,4963
gates x area	-0,1036	0,0622	-1,6661
gates x labor	-0,0752	0,1315	-0,5719
area x labor	-0,0165	0,1070	-0,1543
gates x ATM	0,0123	0,0566	0,2172
gates x Aircraft size (pas/ATM)	-0,0102	0,1068	-0,0955
gates x NAR/AR	0,0661	0,0883	0,7495
area x ATM	0,2110	0,0323	6,5386
area x Aircraft size (pas/ATM)	0,0839	0,1077	0,7785
area x NAR/AR	-0,0157	0,1206	-0,1305
labor x ATM	-0,2233	0,0607	-3,6804
labor x Aircraft size (pas/ATM)	-0,0737	0,1496	-0,4923
labor x NAR/AR	-0,0504	0,1430	-0,3525
Gates x t	0,0118	0,0154	0,7655
area x t	-0,0262	0,0149	-1,7580
Labor x t	0,0145	0,0186	0,7776
ATM x t	0,0084	0,0072	1,1754
Aircraft size x t	0,0296	0,0191	1,5497
NAR/AR x t	-0,0348	0,0177	-1,9642
t	0,0298	0,0069	4,3318
t sq	0,0294	0,0072	4,0892
sigma-squared	0,0785	0,0110	7,1626
gamma	0,9282	0,0319	29,1059
mu	is restricted to be zero		
eta	Is restricted to be zero		

Table 5. Malmquist index and its decomposition. Summary of years' means

	TECHCH	PECH	SECH	TFP change
1993				
1994	0,9546	0,9074	0,9960	0,8588
1995	0,9873	1,0169	0,9881	0,9934
1996	1,0143	1,0799	0,9795	1,0745
1997	1,0469	0,9806	1,0000	1,0282
1998	1,0796	0,9693	0,9892	1,0387
1999	1,1070	0,9899	0,9861	1,0835
MEAN	1,0303	0,9893	0,9898	1,0099

Table 6. Malmquist Index and its decomposition. Summary of firms' means

AIRPORT	TECHCH	PECH	SECH	TFP change
Alicante	1,0484	1,0034	0,9716	1,0230
Almería	1,0234	0,9947	0,9952	1,0151
Asturias	1,0108	0,9938	0,9990	1,0020
Barcelona	1,0417	1,0266	0,9779	1,0470
Bilbao	1,0092	0,9950	0,9983	1,0020
Coruña	1,0160	0,9971	0,9978	1,0099
Fuerteventura	1,0595	0,9822	0,9676	1,0112
Gran Canaria	1,0746	0,9506	0,9771	1,0042
Gerona	1,0409	0,9908	0,9930	1,0269
Ibiza	1,0506	0,9836	0,9817	1,0169
Lanzarote	1,0673	0,9771	0,9619	1,0095
La Palma	1,0243	0,9822	0,9992	1,0060
Madrid	1,0626	1,0265	0,9627	1,0540
Malaga	1,0631	0,9978	0,9679	1,0292
Mallorca	1,0690	0,9879	0,9679	1,0271
Melilla	1,0168	1,0021	1,0036	1,0220
Menorca	1,0393	0,9675	0,9917	0,9987
Pamplona	0,9980	1,0066	1,0200	1,0224
Santander	0,9995	0,9650	0,9869	0,9504
Santiago	1,0231	0,9939	0,9926	1,0087
Sevilla	1,0050	0,9658	1,0042	0,9778
San Sebastian	1,0174	1,0172	1,0170	1,0570
Jerez	0,9613	0,9976	0,9992	0,9531
Valencia	1,0232	0,9957	0,9955	1,0136
Vigo	1,0132	0,9887	1,0005	1,0019
Zaragoza	1,0379	0,9380	1,0077	0,9755
MEAN	1,0303	0,9893	0,9898	1,0099

Figure I. Average technical efficiency of Spanish airports. 1993-1999.

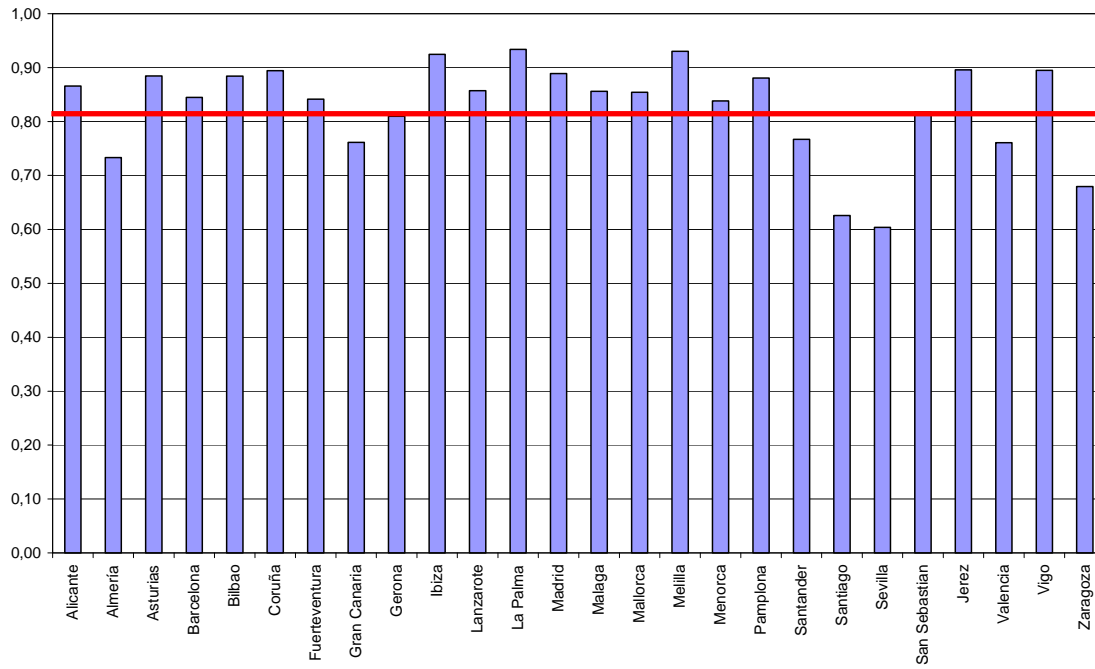
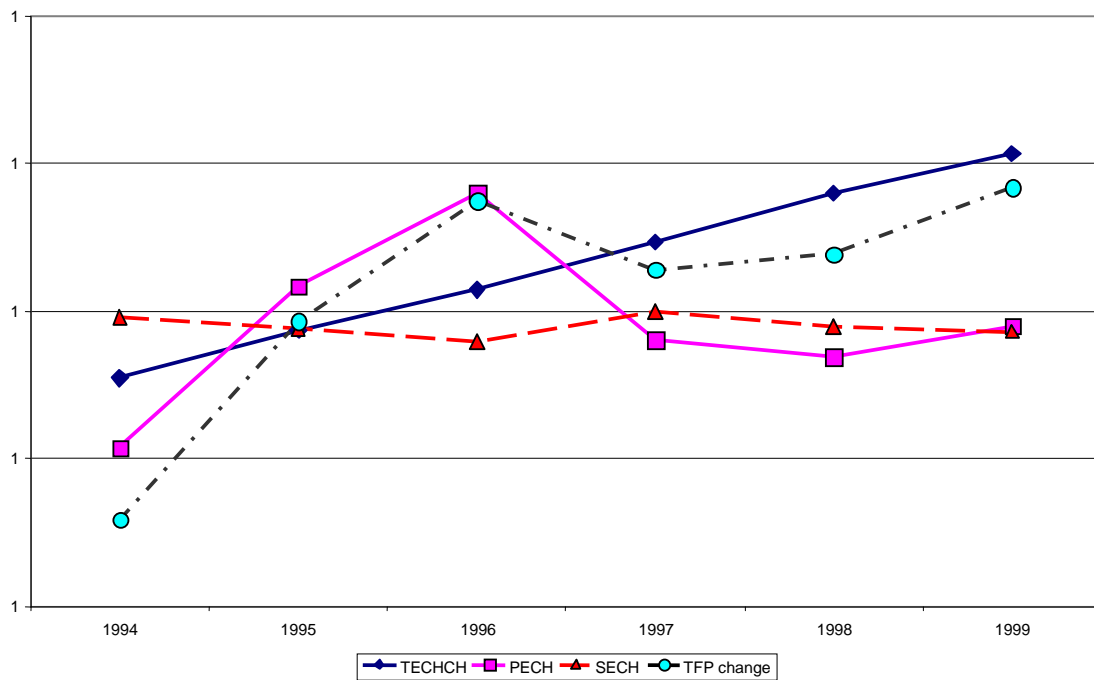


Figure 2. Malmquist Index and its decomposition. Summary of years' means



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