

MOBILITY OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED PORTUGUESE PROFESSIONALS TO EUROPE

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Abstract. Skilled emigration has been analyzed according to two contrasting models: a) the model of the exodus that stresses the idea that more skilled individuals are forced to the exile, allowing them to get a job and a remuneration corresponding to their training; b) the model of the Diaspora that stresses the mutual benefits of intercultural exchanges opened by the circulation of academic, scientific and cultural cosmopolitan elites. This research aims to test the comprehensive power of each of these theses referencing to the various types of mobility of highly qualified Portuguese professionals to Europe in the last decade. The research strategy is suitable to the characteristics of an exploratory study. Articulating an extensive research with an in-depth analysis we seek to identify the subjectivity of the direct actors of emigration in some of its main working contexts. We use a mixed strategy which makes use of multilateral technical quantitative and qualitative data collection: questionnaire surveys; life stories and interviews with focus groups that will draft the life trajectories. Using a multiple case methodology we will describe and compare the circumstances, the modalities and the characteristics of the mobility of two types of migration of high skilled Portuguese individuals in Europe.

1. Introduction

The phenomena so-called ‘brain drain’ refers to «the international transfer of human resources and mainly applies to the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries» [1]. The use of this expression should, therefore, apply strictly to those movements identified as ‘high-skilled South-to-North migration’ [2], as it convenes the effects of human capital transferences can have over the economy and welfare of sending societies, namely its reflexes on their education systems, their propensity for new technologies use, the income of migrants’ remittances, in sum, what could be identified as an economical brain gain (or waste) for the sending country.

In many studies on this subject – the mobility of highly qualified professionals – Portugal is mainly referred to as a country integrating a geographical region identified both as a developed region as well as a migrants’ receiver one [2], which seems to contradict the present situation; in fact, Portugal would be one of the European countries where the drain is more accentuated in the last decade. The proportion of workers with higher academic degree who have emigrated in recent years is estimated at 19,5% [3]. Hence, rather than mobilizing the concept of brain drain – the reflex of a *movement*, rather than a movement itself – some literature tends to highlight the concept of mobility as a synonym to the phenomena of migration itself [4].

The significances of highly qualified Portuguese mobility in recent years suggests, therefore, an effort towards understanding the reasons underlying this flow, as perceived by those making this choice and, secondly, discussing whether it would identify a model of skilled emigration based either on the Exodus or in the Diaspora.

2. Exodus *versus* Diaspora? A theoretical hypothesis

The research approach to a population highly qualified, commits necessarily, to the advantages such qualifications might represent for the individuals in their professional goals and achievements, but also to the

extent, once the concept of mobility is highlighted, these qualifications are transferable. In this perspective, the potential of mobility of this population can be seen as a measure of the value of their qualifications – which has a strong connection to the area of knowledge, what Polanyi identifies as *explicit knowledge* [5] – but also of the relationship between the individual and the context, what Polanyi identifies as *tacit knowledge* [6]. If the former can be highlighted by the qualifications and thus, be particularly pertinent in the research of a highly qualified population's mobility, the latter would not be so determined by these characteristics, although its higher or lower relevance – once it is less identifiable through documented supports or even verbal forms, being learned mostly through experience [7] - could help in the understanding of short term/long term migration trajectories.

The major relevance of explicit knowledge would also seem to rely on a tray that distinguishes migrant highly qualified individuals from lower qualified ones; as Liebig remarks, «ethnic networks are less important for the skilled than for the unskilled, because the former are more flexible and not dependant on people of the same nation» [8], i.e., the reliance highly qualified individuals have on their skillful heritage would seem to suffice for the attainment of their goals and achievements through migration. On the other hand, and if we restrict the analysis to the European context, a set of different programs encouraging mobility in the EU space would explicitly reinforce the stimuli to students exchange programs, but this would also be the case for some professional categories as, for instance, academics. The major goal the EU has established around the concept of *knowledge society* involves both the attraction of highly skilled individuals from around the world – and mostly, the developing world, thus enlivening the market of qualifications – as well as the mobility of individuals within the common market (as a resourceful content to boost the qualifications' market itself).

In Portugal we witness, particularly in the last decade, a boom of participation in exchange programs of various sorts and especially concerning students looking for inter-cultural experience, but also aiming to finish their academic studies. The importance of such groups is not to be neglected; indeed such programs seem to provide networks of a different sort (where tacit knowledge can be developed) that one can later profit from. If the exchanging experience is temporary and, in regular conditions, the stimuli to exchange does not concern a migrant issue – Breinbauer refers the example of the scientific community to state that, «in the 21st century, leaving one's home institution for a shorter or longer period has become a key requirement for advancement in a researcher's career» [4] – it can, nevertheless, favour its more permanent character, especially if conditions at home are not the ones the individual is looking for, once he/she has completed graduation. As Constant and Massey state, «due to the fact that the tendency to stay abroad forever correlates negatively with age, the danger of permanent emigration is highest among this group» [9], which makes it become relevant when we discuss the brain drain phenomena; although the borders might be opened to those countries signing the Schengen agreements, the purpose of mobility might, inadvertently, induce brain drain effects as it tends to emphasize an unequal development of the countries sharing a common space (and the different legislation on immigration issues are there to prove it).

The recessive economic situation that Portugal is going through, being intervened by international financial institutions under a program of deep austerity is in a great measure the explanation for a recent growth of emigration taxes, reediting an historical profile that seems to be glued to the Portuguese labour market. Nevertheless, what seems to be new in the present migration flow is the relevance highly qualified individuals have in it. Considering that 'highly qualified' stands for individuals with tertiary education attained in the sending country (the definition of the Canberra Manual, according to Breinbauer [4]), it would mean, not only the result of an exponential growth of tertiary education in Portugal in recent decades (as an important trait of the consolidation of the 40 years old democratic regime), but also the result of a labour market unable to absorb these qualifications. According to Baldwin, this situation would identify the

Portuguese brain drain phenomena as a case of *Brain Overflow* [10], meaning the academic system has had an over-production of high qualifications in a society whose work system is unable to absorb them, the highly qualified individuals being forced to leave the country. In other terms, staying in the country would probably mean attending a lower skilled job than the level of qualification the individual had achieved, in a process of deskilling.

On the other hand, and according to Casey et al, the Portuguese brain drain phenomena could also result in a case of *Brain Waste*, occurring when «skilled workers migrate into forms of employment not requiring the application of the skills and experience applied in the former job» [11] or, the skills acquainted with the academic qualification; either situation could be considered as the present study covers both the situation of workers seeking a better job (presumably in closer connection to their qualifications) as well as the situation of new graduates seeking their first job.

This previous theoretical approach leads us to a central question, concerning the reasons behind the decision to migrate - which is in spite of mobility, ultimately an individual personal decision – and to what extent the conjuncture factors may determine the sense of this decision?

Putting it in other words, if the migration flow of highly qualified individuals has been particularly significant in recent years – in accordance with the recessive period the country is going through – can the phenomena be understood without indexing it to these external conditions?

This scenario leads us to the hypothesis this paper tries to debate, around the model that characterizes the Portuguese migration flow of highly qualified individuals:

- *In conditions of economic and social stability, the mobility of highly qualified individuals would rather typify the model of Diaspora, stressing the mutual benefits of intercultural exchanges opened by the circulation of academic, scientific and cultural cosmopolitan elites, whereas in conditions of both economic and social instability, the mobility of highly qualified individuals would typify the model of the Exodus, stressing the idea that more skilled individuals are forced to the exile, allowing them to get a job and a remuneration corresponding to their training*

This paper does not aim to discuss the effects of the mobility in terms of potential gains or losses for the sender country as the empirical data so far available does not allow deductions at this level. Nevertheless, the immediate effect the loss of brains trained in the Portuguese academic system seems to suggest is, considering the effort both families and the State have invested on it, a case of brain waste, not strictly understood at an individual level, but also at a social and economic level.

We develop further in a short presentation of the project this research covers, to discuss later, the data so far available.

3. The research design

Bradramo, the acronym of the research project that originates this paper, stands for Brain Drain and Academic Mobility from Portugal to Europe. From the comparative study of four cases representing different profiles of highly skilled emigration – a) migration to a European country for the exercise of professions in higher education or scientific systems; b) long-term migration to a European country for work in primary or secondary segment of the employment system; c) European student mobility of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle that leads to insert primary or secondary segments of the employment system of the receiving countries; d) mobility and transient movement or commuting through European networks of science, production, services or culture - the study involves the understanding of each case, and, at the same time,

seeks to deliver factors and processes of comparison, translation and transfer, allowing a generalization not based on statistical probability and representation, rather on depth, intensity and density of analysis.

Thus, from each case and within each case, we combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, explanation and understanding, deduction and induction, whilst moving back and forth between theory and practice. Nevertheless, the common condition of mobility also allows an understanding of the entire public concerned (the present paper follows this common approach as it seeks to understand, mainly, the notion of mobility itself). The application of a relatively varied range of research techniques allow the operationalization of purposes assumed beforehand, and the comparison of lived, experienced, narrated and declared practices of the players of these migratory flows, triangulating the collection of information.

The first empirical step of the research consisted of a set of interviews - focus groups - in the different cases under analysis [12]. Taking advantage of the inter-subjective and shared nature of this technique [13], we believe that prior to the application of the survey, it will be particularly useful to identify push and pull factors and deskilling and reskilling factors, because the review of the state-of-the-art points to very general factors. In this way, the dimensions and indicators of the survey will be more accurate.

Due to the lack of systemized studies on migratory flows associated with academic mobility, it will be relevant, at the onset and from a methodological point of view, to use a crosscutting approach more suited to an effort to map the representativeness of this phenomenon. It is precisely the lack thereof that determines the establishment of a non-probabilistic intentional sample, which gradually helps (and by association to other research instruments) to understand not just the extent of the phenomenon, but also its intrinsic characteristics.

The second and third steps of the research preview: a) a questionnaire in extension, which will probably confirm the validity of some interpreted results from the focus groups, such as those described in this paper, but also to better understand them according to the various study cases; b) sociological portraits that assume the existence of multi-socialized individuals, plural agents who, throughout their pathways, have acquired a wealth of predispositions, often contrasting and even contradictory, which in a way reflects both the complexity of contemporary societies and the multidimensional nature of projects and constraints associated with these migratory flows.

The final triangulation will allow us to confront practices and discourses, or, in other terms, compare the lived, with the experienced (the memory of a past), the narrated (especially visible in the portraits), the shared (highlighted in the focus group), and the declared (shown in the survey). Similarly, we will emphasize a type of reflexive scientific practice, permeated by the inter-subjectivity between social scientists and their object of study.

As an ongoing research project, the present paper will highlight the results so far available and concerning the focus groups held with a sample of 27 individuals, working and/or studying in a European country

4. Data analysis and discussion of results

The focus groups have been held through the internet in the months of October to December 2013 with small groups organized according to the study cases. The 27 individuals are scattered throughout several countries, mostly in Western Europe (United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany and Denmark are the more represented, which contrasts with a previous high flow of Portuguese migrants to Europe at the end of the decade of 1960, beginning of 1970's, mostly concentrated in countries like France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Germany) and are mostly represented in the age gap of 24 to 30 years (60%) and have an academic qualification

relatively high (74% master or higher, which also contrasts with the previous flow of migration we have mentioned). The group represents a relatively recent migration as 22 out of 27 individuals have entered the present country of residence between 2010 and 2013. The sample was composed of 13 males and 14 females, single in the most part (around 60%).

The focus groups' questionnaire aimed at understanding the process of migration of these individuals and covered a set of questions relating to:

- a) The diversity of the migratory processes;
- b) Characterization of the type of inclusion in various European employment systems;
- c) Understanding the strategies used to enhance the academic and professional capital;
- d) The factors contributing to the process of deskilling and reskilling;
- e) The types of relationships with the country of origin;
- f) Characterizing the pull and push factors of the country of origin and the country of destination;
- g) Understanding the relationships between the factors of economic and financial globalization and the different modalities of exodus;
- h) Understanding the expectations about future projects;
- i) Analysis of the type and intensity of integration in social and professional national or international networks.

We will focus mainly in this paper on those factors relating to the reasons relying on the decision to leave one's country, on factors that seem to characterize mobility as a progressive process, on friends' networks as part of one's support structures in the process of mobility, and finally on expectations and future projects the interviewees nourish.

4.1. Why leave one's country? Push and pull factors

When asked about the most important reasons for leaving Portugal (multiple choice), the individuals privilege "professional reasons" (43,6%), then "economic reasons" (25,6%) and in third position "continuing studies" (17,9%). On the other extreme, reasons as "unemployment" or "self-achievement" are scarcely considered, which seems to emphasize the importance of the idea of brain overflow felt towards the original country.

When we analyze push and pull factors, indeed "professional factors" don't count as an anti-push item, i.e., as an attraction factor towards one's birth country. On the other hand, they're relevant as a push factor, very connected with "job opportunities". A major concept is highlighted in several testimonies and it concerns **(non-)recognition**:

[...] money is extremely important, but also the international recognition, although Lisbon has good schools and the research has good quality, it doesn't have the same recognition as London (A1-Female, 34, Master, UK)

[...]I was teaching at the Faculty and doing my career, but I was paid as if I didn't have a PhD, the opportunity happened and I came alone with my son. [...] alone with a son is not ideal (A5-Female, 33, PhD, UK)

Something we don't find in Portugal is recognition. [...] I think in Portugal people are not so recognized (A6-Female, 25, Master, UK)

[...] here, PhD students are employees, not scholarships. We pay taxes, have health care, are very well paid (A2-Male, 25, Master, Denmark)

The recognition is a two-sided item; on one hand, it concerns the non-recognition of the individual but, on the other hand, and specially in some areas, it also seems to concern the distance of the country from “where things happen”. Moreover, either because of very specialized qualifications or because of an “excess” of skills, there seems to be a gap between the academic structure and the labour market in Portugal:

[...] I've got a PhD, paid by FCT [Foundation for Science and Technology] and it was useless to the country. It was useful for me, and a lot. The fact is, the country made a huge investment to train me, our generation, a generation who intended to stay in Portugal and is forced to leave the country for lack of conditions, opportunities (B10-Female, 38, PhD, Belgium)

[...] I applied both for Portugal as abroad, [...] after I returned from the United States, most of the offers I applied for [in Portugal] said I had too many skills. I think the problem in Portugal is the lack of perspectives (A6-Female, Master, UK)

As a reaction, to run for a job out of frontiers doesn't seem any longer an exception:

[...]I knew it would be very difficult to find something in Portugal, so I start sending curricula mostly to Europe (A2-Male, 25; Master; Denmark)

[...]In Portugal I didn't have so many opportunities in my area, that's why I came (A8-Female, 25, Master, Germany)

[...] one of the major reasons for coming was the lack of professional opportunities for me in Portugal (B11-Female, 34, Post-Graduation, Belgium)

If most of the individuals assume, somehow regretfully, not having at home the same opportunities as those they found abroad, returning seems a difficult decision in terms of professional development:

[...]I don't intent to return to Portugal while I don't have a stable professional trajectory, [...] I'll bet on a career here and I think there's good possibilities, if not better, at least more recognized internationally than if I did it in Portugal (A1-Female, Master, UK)

[...]the time passed, and even if I wished to return, I found a very hard situation, I tried to find a job in Portugal to return and I didn't find anything (D23-Female, 32, License, Spain)

If we contrast this data with those concerning “professional reasons” as a pull factor – the attraction towards the receiving country – the major concept highlighted is now **responsibility**, an opportunity to one's growth in a career, the perception of a more horizontal organization of hierarchies, but also the investment on young people's capacities:

[...]I grew up a lot, professionally speaking, because I was given a lot more responsibility (B11-Female, 34, Post-Graduation, Belgium)

Youngsters here assume a more important role, [...] we're given much more responsibility, and they believe more in people's critical capacities (B12, Male, PhD, Belgium)

[...]the responsibilities given to us, youngsters, are very important ones, decisions that may affect the future of the enterprise; they provide us opportunities to learn, whether it is languages, speech, or at the professional level (B13, Male, 27, License, Belgium)

[...] in Portugal, we have a pyramid structure, where the boss is above all and everyone has to report to him. Here, this is my vision, is more stretched out, we climb gradually and spread to the sides our responsibilities (B13, Male, 27, License, Belgium)

[...] the hierarchy is quite different from the experience I had from Portugal. [...] there's no doctors or professors, whatsoever, at work we're all colleagues, but work is a very serious thing, and we have to follow timings (C16, Female, 24, Master, Ireland)

There seems to be an undeniable connection between this sense of responsibility and the professional goals one estimates to achieve through work:

[...] there's a lot of things I search for in my new job, or when I decide to accept this new job, whether the quality of the social net I'm going to find in it, the level of responsibility I'm going to have in it, the passion for what I'm doing, if it's challenging or not, but of course, money also counts (D21-Male, 27, License, Portugal)

[...]I'm more interested in doing what I like, being involved in interesting, intelligent, challenging projects, rather than doing something that has no interest just for the money (D18-Male, 40, Spain)

[...]I emphasize money, recognition and the social, that means, one third working, one third hobbies and one third family times, and this is very well segmented and structured (A2-Male, 25, Master, Denmark)

[...] anywhere, in terms of science, mobility is a condition for progression, [...] it's a way of accumulating capital. [...] in a very competitive situation as that seen in the scientific system, if you don't have a strong capital on internationalization, you don't progress (D17-Male, 40, PhD, Portugal)

On the other hand, the job market seems filled with opportunities; one can evolve between jobs without great risks:

[...] that's it, to look around and see there are other opportunities, if not in this country, in the countries surrounding us there are other opportunities and that was a major incentive to come (B11-Female, 34, Post-Graduation, Belgium)

[...] there's no fear, mine or my colleagues, if it happens, that we can't find, almost from one day to another, an opportunity as good or even better (D21-Male, 27, License, Portugal)

[...] the difference is that, even in a crisis period, there are an amount of alternatives and opportunities, a bit like coming from the little village to Lisbon (D22-Male, 37, PhD, UK)

[...] I followed the master on Museum Cultures, as something I'd like to do extra-work, but then I realized there were several opportunities at hand; museum's world is quite competitive, in fact (D20-Female, 28, Master, UK)

Other push and pull factors would help explaining the major reasons behind the decision to leave, but we will simply summarize them here. In fact, so-called anti-push factors (those that make the decision harder) concern mostly personal/family factors (although, in some cases, this can work as a pull factor), but also the

quality of the Portuguese school system, recognized (by personal experience and comparison with the host country) as being very good. On the other side, pull factors accumulate economic ones, but also services, including health and teaching services (especially for the ratio price/quality).

4.2. The possibility of following studies as an up skilling factor

Although some individuals in the sample refer to experiencing situations of either re-skilling (when there's a change of studies and work path) or deskilling (when the individual experiences a situation of brain waste, i.e., he/she is not using his/her skills in his/her present job), the highest majority refer to experiencing situations of up skilling, meaning that the mobility is not understood strictly as an answer to a professional need, but also that this need can and should be fed in order to guarantee the progression in a career. The third most significant reason referred to for leaving the country – continuing studies – does not appear solely as a purpose on its own, it seems to be connected with an increasing perspective of improving one's qualification standards. The sense of mobility itself seems to require it:

[...]I applied for PhD's, than I was accepted here in Berlin and also in Nottingham and it was just a matter of deciding which PhD and what town were more appealing to me at the time (D25-Male, 29, Master, Germany)

[...] after eight years I decided I wanted to do other things in my life than just banking and, as I had a comfortable situation, I decided to do a PhD in Financial Mathematics, [...] and the reason why I choose the University of Frankfurt was because I had already met the professor I wanted to work with (D22-Male, 37, PhD, UK)

In 2008 I was in Gottingen where I did my master as Erasmus student and I was invited by my supervisor to continue in the same laboratory. I was working there until the end of April and in May I was invited to work for three months in the European Institute for Neurosciences, also in Gottingen. By the end of August I flew to Munich to start my PhD (A8-Female, 25, Master, Germany)

I had recently an offer to do a PhD; I didn't think to do it before, but then, as I was in research, I decided to take the risk and that's what I'm doing now (A4-Female, 29, Master, Germany)

The up skilling through academic qualifications is a phenomenon also observed in Portugal, the difference relies mostly on what some interviewees refer to as the conditions offered, i.e., especially PhD's being considered as a job, paid in accordance to the level of qualification and under a work contract, instead of a scholarship. On the other hand, by the testimonies of our interviewees, it seems a strong commitment is felt between the academic graduation and the situation of work.

4.3. Friends' networks

As we have mentioned previously, the recent flow of migration seems quite different from the one held in the end of the 60's, when Portugal was still under a dictatorship regime. If the migration flow was then somehow guaranteed, the experience of those who went first could provide a support to the newcomers – and the sense of community could be more strongly felt, the purpose of migration having most of the times a temporary term because the return, soon or later, was an objective. It is interesting to consider whether the migratory option presently has the same purpose. Undeniably, there is a common feeling of strong attachment to Portugal (and to friend's networks one has/had there), and this is shared by most of the individuals, but the contact with other contexts and other possibilities raise the standards individuals admit as acceptable, to eventually return to on a permanent basis. It sounds interesting, then, to confront the relevance of networks with friends from other countries or Portuguese friends tend to have in individuals' choices.

We'll first present some testimonies to further discuss their meaning.

Friends from other countries

The professional context, in the first place, seems to be the basis for establishing friends' networks. However, in these contexts, the locals always seem to be the hardest to address, these networks than become very multicultural:

[...] I knew there was a Portuguese at the University doing his/her PhD, but it was a different area, there was not much in common so I didn't do friendship with this person. [...] I felt it was difficult to meet people, especially the English (A1-Female, 34, Master, UK)

[...] I don't feel our Portuguese community is as close as the Greek or Italian ones. [...] we go out, but we're more opened to other cultures. We go out with a multicultural group, while Greeks and Italians go out together (A3-Female, 25, Master, Holland)

We're an international group, split between the Germans and the others, and there has to be all the time someone more active in the group, as the Germans are always quiet (A8-Female, 25, Master, Germany)

I also have Irish friends, but that's different because we have different habits, and I think we end up approaching much more different cultures than the Irish themselves (C16-Female, 24, Master, Ireland)

Friends from host countries are very scarce. According to my experience, we socialized more with other foreigners who shared uprooting or relocation. [...] this is very common; after all we're inserted in a completely global context (D18-Male, 40, Master, Spain)

[...] the majority of my relations are people from all over the world, some French, but the majority is certainly not French (D24-Male, 30, License, France)

On the other hand, one shares the migrant condition, rather than the nationality. It looked as if we could talk of a 'mobility class' conscience, almost:

[...] I share my house with a Polish girl, before it was with a German girl, and I don't feel the need to be only with Portuguese to be in better condition (A8-Female, 25, Master, Germany)

[...] I go along with everyone, regardless nationality; I don't have preferences (D23-Female, 32, License, Spain)

[...] it's a very personal place, where we're not simply co-workers, but great friends because we come from different countries; no one has family or friends, so ties become very strong (C16-Female, 24, Master, Ireland)

For me, it is the person instead of the nationality; I don't prefer to relate to a Portuguese, a Chinese, or a German. It has to do with the person and not the nationality (D26, Man, License, Germany)

The mobile condition the migrant experiences suggests the search for peers in similar conditions, what might also help explaining what we previously referred to as following studies as an up skilling factor, i.e., to explore the mobile condition to its limits; the sense of mobility may be nourished only if one actualizes in permanence his/her skillfulness and *capabilities*, in the sense Amartya Sen develops this concept, i.e., the connection of capacities – not independent of resources and means the individual can make use of, but also the opportunities available in the context – and abilities – the knowledge of how to do [14]). Because this condition is so essential, it seems to darken the identification relying on the nationality (not that it is not

appreciated, but it is not essential).

Portuguese friends

Portuguese friends are not neglected – on the contrary – but they're not, either, a primary purpose. On the other hand, there are references to the group of friends left in Portugal (and whose importance remains intact), but not necessarily the seeking of Portuguese friends in the country of residence:

I'd say, being Portuguese doesn't mean being my friend, [...] if I like the person and he/she is Portuguese, great, because I can talk about other things, the person will understand me better [...]. Sometimes is even negative, as the mentality, especially if the person is not out of the country for a long time, will be very different from mine (A7-Female, PhD, UK)

At the beginning I felt more that need, I had another support when I left to Holland to do my master; I lived with another Portuguese girl and we did plans with other Portuguese. But with the time, one gets used to be here, and this need disappears (A9-Male, 27, Master, Denmark)

Of course, Portuguese friends will always be Portuguese friends, and they'll remain friends forever. [...] There's always an emotional charge around Portuguese friends and family, of course (C15-Female, 24, License, UK)

Where Portuguese communities are bigger, the so-called effect of cultural proximity might work:

[...] I make part of the Liverpool Portuguese and once in a time, I try to 'sneak' Manchester Portuguese [community] and there's already a little group going out constantly that we can call friends (A6-Female, 25, Master, UK)

[...] I think we create friends here, also Portuguese, we sense a great cohesion, we're all in the same situation, we all value being far away from the country, being far away from everything we were used to take for granted (B13-Male, 27, License, Belgium)

I'm here two months ago, I don't still have a life here, but friends outside work are mostly Portuguese (D19-Female, 29, Master, UK)

A common appreciation of these two factors is particularly enlightening because it distinguishes the contexts where the migrant tries to integrate:

It does not concern solely countries, it has to do with towns; if you are in very cosmopolitan towns, like London or New York, it sounds natural that you know people from everywhere (D18-Male, 40, Master, Spain)

The friends' networks seem to be very determinately organized from the work environment. If time provides the possibility to find national peers, it doesn't seem to be a priority; it's the condition one lives - mobility, relocation – that is mostly shared. For the better if this can be shared with Portuguese, but the share of a common nationality does not seem to overcome in importance that of a common working subject. The exodus model of migration seems here particularly present as, in a certain sense, the relevance of what one does professionally (over other dimensions) appears as a determinant to what one expects (at least, in projection) to become. Although mobility would be very much determined by an individualistic and competitive rhetoric (though all but rhetoric in the testimonies, rather the result of lived experiences), it sounds clear that individuals seek for some common identity, whether it is rooted on some solid ground or not. If it is not, it must *become* so, and the condition of 'mobile' – although hinged on the 'performance' one attributes to him/herself - seems to provide the ground for it (we would be close to Bauman's *liquid identities*

[15]).

This is why it seems pertinent to approach the projects for the future that these individuals value, no matter the *conditioning* of their situation.

4.4. Projects for the future: “in five years I’ll be where the work is”

This quote from one of the individuals interviewed expresses a general feeling; the idea of mobility, where the place is not necessarily a priority, or does not necessarily determines a choice:

I expect not be doing what I’m doing now in five years (A9-Male, 27, Master, Denmark)

Right now I cannot say I’ll stay here; I’m happy with my present work, but I’ll might change to another country. Certainly emigrated (B11-Female, 34, Post-Graduation, Belgium)

I’m employed at xxx, they have offices all around the world and so, depending on their projects, their job opportunities, I think it is perfectly viable that I move to another country, again (C16-Female, 24, Master, Ireland)

[...] I think my future will be in this area, in the next years to come, but I don’t know where I will be, but I’d like to manage my time, what is missing me the most (D26-Male, License, Germany)

[...] in a few years, instead of thinking in terms of the English market, I think in the global market, as I intent to work as freelancer in project management, these are my plans... and, in that case, the market will be global (D27-Male, 31, Master, UK)

The Portuguese option might be always considered, but the conditions the individuals place have a lot to do with their professional aspirations:

Although I have a two years contract, I doubt after that I return to Portugal, as there are much more opportunities here than there (A3-Female, 25, Master, Holland)

I don’t find very probable returning to Portugal and I’m afraid these five years become ten, then fifteen, then twenty and after that I don’t return at all (A7-Female, PhD, UK)

In the next future I don’t intent to return. I had to have very identical conditions, future perspectives; otherwise I wouldn’t return (B13-Male, 27, License, Belgium)

I don’t see myself abdicating a more comfortable situation just to return to Portugal (C16-Female, 24, Master, Ireland)

[...] I only return to Portugal when there are conditions there to do my job at a level I consider according to my qualifications and experience (D18-Male, 40, Master, Spain)

I can return to Portugal for several reasons, but certainly not for professional reasons (D22-Male, 37, PhD, UK)

This general feeling of not identifying with one’s own country as a possible alternative in professional terms reinforces, as we mentioned before, a sense of brain overflow; the qualifications, once acquired are not yet seen as fitting to the work place where one acquired them. Of course, the returning to Portugal might have other meaningful reasons (we don’t treat them here in detail) but, when we retain the main reasons for emigrating – professional reasons, economic reasons, continuing studies – it sounds interesting to understand this possible return according to these same categories. And, accordingly – namely, the category concerning

professional reasons – it seems quite clear that, once leaving the country and especially, after contacting other worlds that offer different opportunities, the scenario of returning (at least, according to the ways the individual projects it) seem very scarce.

5. Conclusions

This paper aimed to discuss mainly whether the flow of highly qualified migrants was mostly described by a model of exodus or by a model of Diaspora. We set a hypothesis according to which the former would be more frequently verified in a situation of economic and social instability, whereas the later would happen more frequently in a situation of economic and social stability; the sense of intercultural exchanges opened by the circulation of academic, scientific and cultural cosmopolitan elites would be highlighted in a situation where, in the first place, individuals were not pressed by essential needs and mobility would not be held, necessarily, under a pressure condition.

What the analysis of data seems to prove is not necessarily a mutual exclusion of these two models – they can coexist and, in a certain sense, they do coexist (there are, in fact, intercultural exchanges) – but a clear prevalence of one over the other. The exodus model, hinged on the concept of *brain overflow*, and namely expressed by the concepts of (*non*) *recognition* as a push factor and *responsibility* as a pull factor (although the appreciation of this pull factor only happens after the experience of migration) express vividly the idea of more skilled individuals being forced into exile, allowing them to get a job and a remuneration corresponding to their training. This seems to be, in fact, what the individuals look for, although in the critical situation Portugal is going through, the devaluation of qualifications in the work force is an overall scenario; it does not concern strictly those aiming to enter the job market, but also those already integrated into it. One more reason, one could say, for those willing to enter the work force, to doubt the possibilities it may offer.

Individuals willing to avoid exposure to a brain waste situation will invest, reactively, in a permanent upgrade of their qualifications. This is somehow the precondition to guarantee permanent mobility and to explore one's own capabilities, as a conjunction of explicit and tacit knowledge.

Although our findings suggest, in fact, a prevalence of the exodus model and a brain overflow situation, they also express the need for social intercourse as an important part of their lives that the individuals do not neglect. Therefore, the mobility as an identity condition tends to push peer relations towards those sharing the same condition, a condition that would seem to evidence the move from a solid to a fluid phase of modernity, in which nothing keeps its shape, and social forms are constantly changing at great speed, radically transforming the experience of being human [16].

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