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ABSTRACT

Emigration is a chronic structural process of Portuguese society. The discussion and key arguments raised in this chapter are mainly focused on data from a research project (Bradramo) on Portuguese skilled emigration; based on the outcomes of the Bradramo project it can be suggested that recent phenomena in general, and the crisis that began around 2008 in particular, profoundly transformed the patterns of Portuguese emigration. Nowadays, the country faces a brain drain dynamic that is dramatically altering the profiles of national emigrants, emigration destinations, self-identity, and the strategies of those who leave the country. The neologism “MobiGrants” is used here to characterise recent Portuguese emigration. Academic mobility, which was mainly promoted by the European Union (through grants from the Erasmus Programme), created and fostered mobility flows that reinforced a latent mobility phenomenon. Once engaged in academic mobility programmes, Portuguese higher education students tend to stay in the country of destination or, upon returning temporarily to Portugal, to evince a very strong predisposition to move to a country of the European Union. Further, this grant-fuelled latent mobility exhibits a clear tendency towards moving between various countries and a very weak predisposition *vis-à-vis* a possible return to Portugal. Alongside this weak propensity to return, there is a marked refusal to assume a self-identity as emigrants. The profile of Portuguese “MobriGrants” reveals a trend towards a permanent and a long-term (as opposed to a temporary or transitory) mobility, an insertion in the primary segment of the labour market of the destination countries, a predominance of professionals connected to the academic/scientific system and to professions requiring high skills, and a latent mobility (after a period of study in the country of destination) rather than direct mobility flows (after having entered in the employment system of the sending country).

Keywords: MobiGrants, brain drain, higher education, emigration, mobility, Portugal

5.1. INTRODUCTION: THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF PORTUGUESE EMIGRATION

Although emigration is a constant in the history of Portugal, migratory patterns have varied in very significant ways. The Second World War, integration into the European Economic Community (1986) and the financial crisis of the early twenty-first century, which affected skilled workers in particular, are three important milestones that one should bear in mind in order to understand the changing patterns of contemporary Portuguese emigration.

“Portugal is today the European Union country with the highest emigration as a proportion of its population” as “more than 20% of the Portuguese population lives outside the country of their birth” (Observatório da Emigração 2014, 12). *Statistics Portugal* (the National Statistical Institute – INE) reports that since 2011, considering permanent and temporary emigration, more than 100,000 Portuguese have left the country every year¹. One must go back to the early 1970s to find this level of migration flows. “Over recent decades, the growth in the number of Portuguese emigrants has been greater than the growth of the resident population in Portugal” (Observatório da Emigração 2014, 12).

The aftermath of the Second World War was dominated by the need for reconstruction, as infrastructures and cities had been gravely damaged during the war. That need functioned as a trigger element for the transformation of the patterns of Portuguese emigration. Up until the 1960s, the primary destinations of Portuguese emigration were located in North and South America and also in the former African colonies (Baganha 1994a). Registrations in Portuguese consulates in 2014 (or last

¹ About 101,000 in 2011; about 121,000 in 2012; about 128,000 in 2013; about 134,000 in 2014 and about 101,000 in 2015.

year available) list as top destinations for Portuguese emigration: France (1,122,564), Brazil (644,903), Switzerland (305,128), United Kingdom (298,760), United States (200,070), Venezuela (170,267), Germany (164,799), Angola (126,356), and Luxembourg (121,127) (Observatório da Emigração 2015, 43). It is possible that these numbers are somewhat overstated, but they do express the reality of Portuguese emigration in the last 100 years. As was stated by Maria Baganha, since the mid-1950s, Portuguese emigration flows, which were mostly intercontinental, have become predominantly intra-European. However, since the late 1970s, the intercontinental flows have gained a new momentum (Baganha 1994b). It was necessary to wait until 1963 for Europe (receiving 32,798 Portuguese emigrants that year) to replace the Americas (22,420 Portuguese emigrants) as the main destination. The permanent outflows increased up to the end of the dictatorship (1974), running at around 100,000 per year after 1965 and reaching maximums of over 155,000 between 1969 and 1971 (Baganha and Marques 2001). For the most part, these emigrants had low levels of education. Many were illiterate (in 1970 the illiterate resident population aged 10 and over in Portugal was 25%). Those emigrants came from disadvantaged areas, mainly rural, and they were people from the lower social strata, devoid of economic and social capital.

Portugal's entry into the European Economic Community (later the European Union) changed the symbolic and functional orientation of the country. With a colonial empire that straddled America, Africa and Asia and lasted for more than five centuries, Portugal had, for a long time, turned its back to Europe. The European turn "offered Portugal the chance to develop a new national identity whose primary orientation was continental and European as opposed to pluricontinental and oceanic" (Buettner 2016, 209). The flow of Portuguese emigrants sharply declined in the years after the end of the dictatorship but it began to rise again gradually and steadily in the late 1980s. "Freedom of movement within Europe, to European Union and EFTA member states, explains why most Portuguese emigration was increasingly focused on Europe during this period" (Observatório da Emigração 2014, 12). The geographical proximity of these countries in relation to Portugal and the creation of

active migratory networks are two other factors that cannot be ignored. In 1974, 17 years after Portuguese emigration to Europe began to acquire statistical significance, France had already received more Portuguese than the former Portuguese colonies during the five centuries of colonisation (Pereira 2009). One of the most distinctive features of Portuguese emigration to Europe since the late 1980s, in relation to the migratory flows to Europe in the 1960s and early 1970s, is the wider diversity of European countries that were the destination of these flows. The entry into the European Union meant that, besides France and Germany (the principal destinations of the first wave of Portuguese emigrants to Europe), countries such as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Spain and the United Kingdom gradually emerged as new destinations (cfr. Schiltiz 2013; Marques 2006). “Not only did more than two-thirds of Portuguese emigrants settle in (...) [European Union and EFTA member states], in 2010, so did more than 85% of the emigrants who left Portugal that year.” (Observatório da Emigração 2014, 12).

An important factor for understanding the change in Portuguese migratory patterns since the late 1980s, which in turn was a consequence of the modernisation process resulting from the integration into the European Economic Community, has to do with the increase in enrolment in higher education. In 1998, 7% of the resident population aged 15 to 64 had completed tertiary level education. The percentage for this indicator rose to 12% in 2007 and to 21% in 2015, and it is quite clear that in the twenty-first century Portuguese emigration began to involve an increasingly skilled population with higher levels of education. According to the OECD, the emigration rate of the Portuguese highly skilled population was 8% in 2000 and 12.9%² in 2010 (OECD 2016; OECD-UNDESA 2013). “Currently the main migration flow is to the United Kingdom, which accounts for almost one-third of all Portuguese [annual] emigration” (Observatório da Emigração 2015, 11). Although the majority of Portuguese emigrants have low levels of education, “in the United Kingdom in 2011, 38% of the Portuguese-born aged 15 and over had a

² 14% according to Barrio and Lee (*apud* Arslan, et al. 2014, 62).

tertiary qualification” (Observatório da Emigração 2015, 14). The current trend shows that the proportion of holders of higher education degrees among those who emigrated in the last five years and among those who are now migrating to new destinations (such as Denmark, Ireland and Sweden) is clearly higher (always around 40% or more) than the proportion of residents in Portugal holding a higher education degree. The effects of the crisis, combined with freedom of movement in the European Union labour market and the transformation of the pattern of qualifications among the Portuguese, are undoubtedly changing the profile of contemporary Portuguese emigration (see Gomes, et al. 2015a; Observatório da Emigração 2015; Pereira 2015; Faria 2012).

5.2. HIGHER EDUCATION IN PORTUGAL IN A CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AND BRAIN DRAIN

If we consider the threshold of 50% of the age grade, Portugal is still far from reaching universal access in higher education (Trow 1973, 7). As Magalhães, Amaral and Tavares have noted, until the end of the dictatorship access to tertiary education - in this chapter, tertiary education (TE) and higher education (HE) are equivalent terms - was reserved for the elites, although massive access was promoted in the years immediately following (Magalhães, Amaral and Tavares 2009). Focusing on the process of expansion of higher education and on the regulatory role of the state, Seixas concludes that the organisation of the Portuguese system has gone through various phases since the 1970s: a first phase in which the university and non-university systems were separated; a second that was marked by the expansion of higher education through the creation of new universities and the proliferation of short courses, in which all teaching establishments had the same status and awarded the same degrees; and then a third phase involving the effective adoption, in 1977, of the binary system (already legislated for in 1973), which separated higher education