

Méditerranée

Revue géographique des pays méditerranéens / Journal of Mediterranean geography

130 | 2018 :
Portugal, a country in transformation
New territorial dynamics

Changes in mobility and migrations. On the possibility of new intra-European migration networks

Changements dans la mobilité et migrations. Vers de nouveaux réseaux migratoires intra-européens

FÁTIMA VELEZ DE CASTRO

Abstracts

EnglishFrançais

This article aims to explore the new intra-European migration dynamics, highlighting the importance of globalization in promoting migratory processes and establishing new social networks, which can generate migration microsystems between departure and arrival places at the European scale. Thus, we will present a case study in Southern Europe, more specifically Portugal, based on a survey of individuals who have conducted their migration abroad, namely France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom, coming from a territory and a community with rare cases of international migration. We will try to understand the motivations behind the mobility project, as well as their role in establishing migration networks and future consequences in terms of opening and strengthening new migration channels.

Cet article vise à explorer les nouvelles dynamiques migratoires intra-européennes, en soulignant l'importance de la mondialisation dans la promotion des migrations internationales et des nouveaux réseaux sociaux, qui peuvent générer des micro-systèmes migratoires entre lieux de départ et d'arrivée au niveau européen. Nous présentons une étude de cas en Europe du Sud, particulièrement au Portugal, sur la base d'une enquête menée auprès de personnes qui se sont expatriées en France, au Luxembourg, en Belgique, en Allemagne et au Royaume-Uni, et qui sont originaires d'un territoire et d'une communauté où les migrants internationaux sont rares. L'objectif est

de comprendre les motivations qui ont conduit au projet de mobilité, ainsi que leur rôle dans la mise en place de réseaux de migrants et leurs implications futures en termes d'ouverture et de consolidation de nouvelles filières migratoires.

Index terms

Mots-clés : Migration, réseaux sociaux, capital de mobilité

Keywords : Migrations, social networks, mobility capital

Geographical index : Europe, Portugal, Alentejo

Full text

Introduction

- 1 Europe is currently undergoing new migration challenges, which will effect in significant changes in the demographic, social, cultural, and economic dynamics of its population and territory. From an external point of view, the intensification of the entrance of refugees has raised the discussion around the associated anthropo-social risks, as well as the need for a swift and effective integration of this flow of migrants in the working world and in the European society (RODRIGUES, 2010; ACNUR, 2016; PAR, 2016; VELEZ DE CASTRO, 2016).
- 2 From an internal point of view, population movements are complex, both in volume and in the diversification of destinations. Concerning the latter point, empirical observations allow to witness that there is a generalization in the geography of origins, i.e., if until the late 20th century one could understand regional differences in terms of propensity for international migration, with places where the (e)migration culture was far more marked than in others, nowadays, globalization and the intensification of mobility make the hypothesis of living and working in another European or extra-European country a plausible scenario, even for populations and territories benefiting from weaker migration traditions.
- 3 We will get insight into new social networks able to increase the importance of circulation channels, a fundamental structure for sharing multiterritoriality experiences, and focus on the possible establishment of an emigration culture in departure places that were not usually concerned by the phenomenon of international migration.
- 4 In this paper we intend to explore new intra-European migration dynamics, starting from the idea that the globalization of migrations also influences the places of departure that remained aloof from international migration systems. The goal is to reflect about this idea, focusing on the evolution of a particular situation in the Mediterranean area. Thus, we will present a case study in Southern Europe, more specifically Portugal, in the Alto-Alentejo sub-region, which has witnessed a rural exodus towards the Lisbon metropolitan area during the 20th century. In the 21st century, the direction of flows tends to be aligned with other European countries. With regard to the adopted qualitative approach, we will try to analyze the mobility capital of these individuals, as well as their role in establishing (potential) social networks, and their role in opening migration channels.

1 - Migrations and Social Networks: The Influence on (New) Migrants and Territories

- 5 FAZITO and SOARES (2010) quote studies carried out by LOURY (1977) and COLEMAN (1990) who define “social capital” as being a set of social resources, in the perspective of collective public good, able to foster the development of human capital. These resources originate in family and community relations and allow migrants to develop skills able to advance the migration process, mostly concerning the labor market integration, but also other aspects of the everyday life (housing, education, etc.). The development of human resilience and capabilities, the ability to travel and the relocation experience are also relevant knowledge. So, we can think about how “social capital” develops strong links with “mobility capital.”
- 6 According to these authors, a migration process is more likely to succeed if the migrant shows interaction with the various contact poles within the social network that is helping him. This comprehends elements that are family members and friends, countrymen, and even organisms such as migrant associations, religious institutions, tourism agents, cores of illegal activities (for example, document counterfeiters), among others, an idea that is confirmed by FAZITO (2010) and PICHÉ (2013). FIGUET and COULON (2010) synthesize the operating dynamics of these structures, calling them “desire to be together,” i.e., following a logic of family class, but at a community scale. This way, we understand the circulation of information throughout the districts that give rise to emigration, with the purpose of attracting countrymen.
- 7 KUREKOVA (2011) highlights the role of diasporas for the consolidation of such mechanisms connected to social networks, which, apart from encouraging migration, facilitate the dissemination of information and reduce the inherent dislocation risks. Besides, these interfere with the maintenance of flows, which become, to a certain point, independent from meso-structural factors such as the economic and labor frameworks of migratory destinations. The diasporic nature of these networks is connected to migrant associations, who maintain common bonds, and retain a relatively defined identity, related with the original departure territory. It means that they are strongly established in the emigration counties, while maintaining material and immaterial connections with departure areas, which has to do with traditions and everyday life.
- 8 Having this kind of “bridge” activated between departure and arrival territories, one can consider the strong possibility of risk mitigation through the social networks constructed around diasporic ties. The idea is highlighted by authors such as MASSEY *et al.* (1998), ARANGO (2004) and PALLONI, MASSEY *et al.* (2013). These authors even assume that such influences may condition the choice of destination, inciting potential migrants to move towards territories where they already have relatives. Therefore PINHO (2015) questions the logic of social networks, because it can generate the immobility of some individuals: on the one hand, they can bring support to the migration process; on the other hand, they can press the participants to circumscribe their mobility to pre-defined areas, without other settlement alternatives.
- 9 The dynamics of social networks are also highlighted by HAGEN-ZANKER (2008). He points out the fact that

the role of social linkages and especially migrant networks on the micro or meso-level is crucial for understanding the patterns and volume of the migration, once it has set off. After a pioneer period, where migrants face many difficulties, the access of their followers to the destination country is easier, as they are better informed through the pioneer migrants.

- 10 Regarding the initial migrants, TRUZZI (2008) argues that the information overview is made available by these elements as the outcome of a successful migration process, and that the aggregation of new members has a chain effect: leading individuals influence followers. The idea will be to aggregate more individuals in the process of relocation; therefore PINHO (2015) acknowledges that social networks are privileged channels for obtaining information on arrival destinations. He quotes SIMMEL (1999) and highlights the fact that they comprehend reciprocal actions between individuals, part of a socializing community in destination places, creating a set of potential relation, i.e. a contact network able to create assistance and information mechanisms.
- 11 HAUG (2008), PICHÉ (2012) and VAN MEETEREN and PEREIRA (2013) also points out the reduction of migration risks and costs, through the mitigation plans developed by network elements who bring material (for example, money loans) and immaterial assistance (establishing contact with leasers, employers, etc.) to new migrants. And as MITERNIQUE and GAROLERA (1999) refer, it is worth reflecting about the cultural links that are developed within diasporas, because they are very important in generating the idea of migration need, and defining life projects, especially in departure communities.
- 12 The forming of networks does not depend only on previously structured mechanisms. CASTLES, HAAS and MILER (2013) identify two types of migration networks: the first one is spontaneous, being the result of social and family relations; the second one follows a formal recruitment. HAGEN-ZANKER (2008) identifies a “*macro-level opportunity structure*,” namely a territorial differentiation, supporting international migrations. Thus, the absence of consolidated social networks does not demotivate or delay the migration process. On the contrary, the individuals conduct their mobility project just the same way, becoming pioneers.
- 13 In this logic, PEREIRA and VAN MEETEREN (2015) emphasizes the role played by virtual space for the proper distribution of information by stating that
- (...) avec la généralisation de l'utilisation d'Internet, les personnes qui fournissent des informations sur le web peuvent jouer un rôle crucial. Celles-ci ne sont généralement pas situées dans les communautés d'origine et elles ne viennent pas nécessairement de la même ville que les personnes en recherche d'information. À travers Internet, et les divers médias sociaux, les migrants potentiels peuvent entrer en contact avec des migrants qu'ils ne connaissent pas, dans le pays de destination de leur choix.
- 14 Meaning that social networks can already extrapolate the standard practices of their participants, i.e., on the one hand, they inform and create mobility conditions for relatives, friends and countrymen; on the other hand, with globalization and information sharing through the Internet (for example, through sites, blogs, Facebook, etc.) they would be attracting other elements outside the group.
- 15 That is what happens with many individuals, whose motivation to move abroad is based on macro-structural factors, but also on the collection of data that, directly or indirectly, they collect from groups of individuals constituted as

social networks for migration. ELRIK (2005) argues that the dimension of these social networks tends to expand from its own ethnic or national dome, when establishing relations of assistance outside the own group. Thus, the aid from migrants is valued based on affinities *in loco* (for example, sharing the same migration destination).

- ¹⁶ So, to sum up, if, on the one hand, we witness the permanence of migration social networks, resulting from the consolidation of Diasporas, on the other hand the maintenance of migration systems, associated with a multiterritorial globalization process, is generating new mobility dynamics, namely in some territories and communities with no significant background in terms of emigration. In this case, we can observe the establishment of new migration networks, resulting from the complexity of the social capital of a relatively young generation, with a greater ability and ease of move.

2 - Portuguese Emigration and Social Networks: A Territorial Approach

- ¹⁷ Our case study focuses on the Alentejo region, a territory that was not a “provider” of international migrants until the late 20th century. The mobility of populations was orientated, mostly, towards the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, in a logic of rural exodus, having contributed to the demographic growth of the capital.

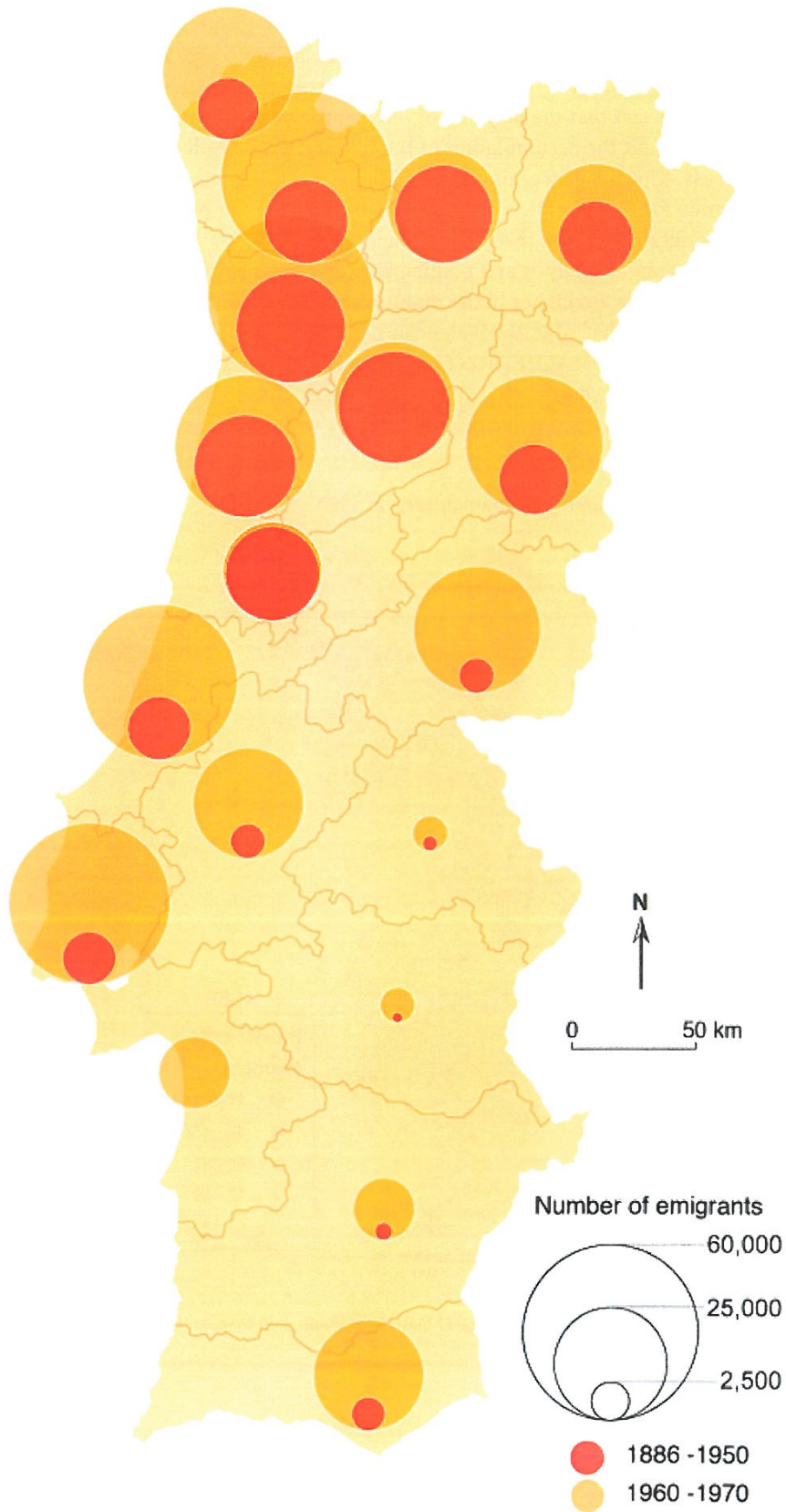
- ¹⁸ Regarding the Portuguese case, PIRES *et al.* (2010) state that, in the 19th and 20th centuries, migration waves have occurred in all Portuguese regions, despite the existence of deep geographical imbalances in the spatial distribution of emigrants, at a regional and national scale, as we can see on fig. 1. MARQUES (2009) signs up to the idea, claiming that, in a European context characterized by the elimination of a significant part of the obstacles to the mobility of community workers, such a fact has contributed and will continue to contribute to reinforcing the emigration culture in regions where the trend is significant. In this article, we assume that the enhanced freedom of movement allowed by the EU also causes effects on populations with no emigration tradition, as is the case with the studied territory. PADILLA and ORTIZ (2012) advocate that Portugal is dealing with a new wave of emigration, and also with a decline of entries, especially of labor immigrants. They say that some groups are returning home, for instance Brazilian labor migrants.

- ¹⁹ Nowadays, the OBSERVATÓRIO DA EMIGRAÇÃO (2017) reports that emigration is declining in Portugal. Apparently the flow stabilized, which allows for the development of economic and professional opportunities. Furthermore, we should consider another type of migration, i.e. academic flows and lifestyle migrations that could actually become reality in the following years in Portugal.

- ²⁰ MEDEIROS (1978; 1996) and BRITO (1997) identified these regional contrasts, assuming that, despite the weight of emigration throughout the country, there were places and districts with a greater emigration prevalence. They underline the role played by three regions: the North (with particular emphasis on the districts of Aveiro, Oporto and Viseu), the Center (especially the districts of Castelo Branco, Leiria, Lisbon and Santarém), an area where the exit volume was more significant; and the Alentejo region (Beja, Évora and Portalegre), which presented lower emigration indexes.

21 These authors, although acknowledging in the 1960s and 1970s that the regional differentiation was fading, keep validating dissimilar territorial tendencies in terms of emigration.

Fig. 1 - Districts of origin of Portuguese emigrants



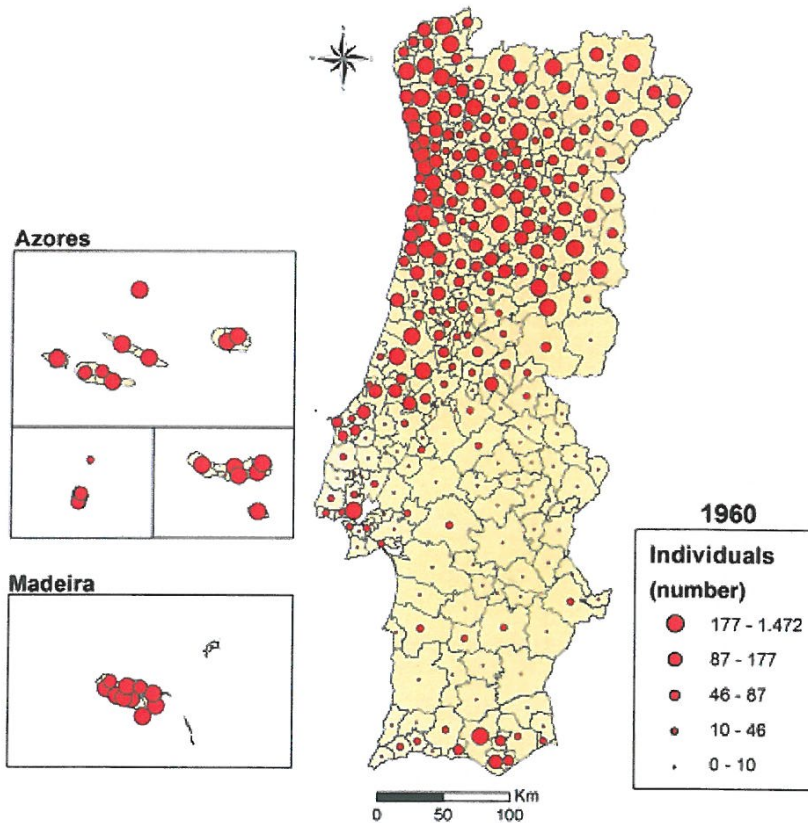
Source: After Brito (1997).

22 About Alentejo, MALHEIROS (2005) notes that the area presents low levels of participation in migration flows until the beginning of the 21st century.

Firstly, because the tradition of dislocation is internal, turned towards the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, inhibiting the formation of social networks that support emigration. Secondly, in a historical perspective, lower household incomes, associated to the fact that the majority of the population does not own immovable property, prevent the accumulation of the initial capital needed for the emigration process. Thirdly, concerning the middle of the 1980s onwards, the advent of EU funds for the execution of infrastructures and social projects has created a few jobs, retaining the native population *in loco*.

23 A disaggregated cartographic analysis at a municipality level confirms that, in 1960, the emigration numbers are higher in the municipalities north of the river Tagus. In the South, the number of individuals who migrate internationally is very low. PEIXOTO (2004) and MALHEIROS (2005) claim that many of those who emigrate over a relatively short period (below one year) -those for whom mobility acquires a seasonal character-, associate their stay with activities such as agriculture (e.g. harvesting).

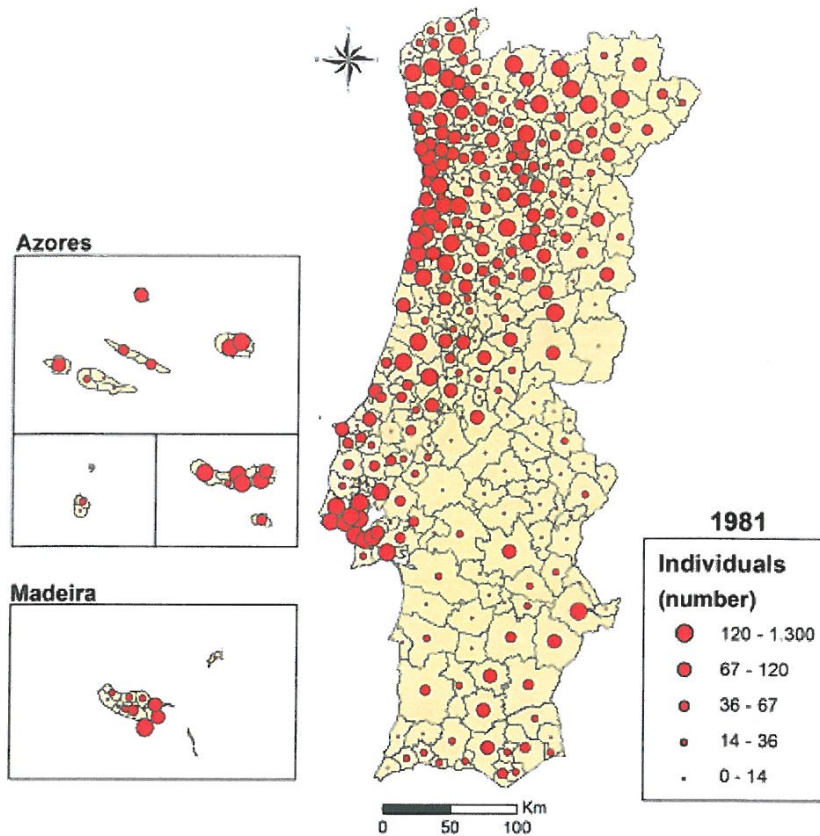
Fig. 2 - Origin of Portuguese emigrants by municipality, in 1960



This figure shows that the Faro area records numbers higher than in the South, and evidences the contrast between the Alentejo and the rest of the country.

Source: Pordata (2016).

Fig. 3 - Origin of Portuguese emigrants by municipality, in 1981



In 1981, we observe an increase in the number of emigrants in the South in general and in the Alentejo in particular, although the Alto Alentejo still presents quite low numbers.

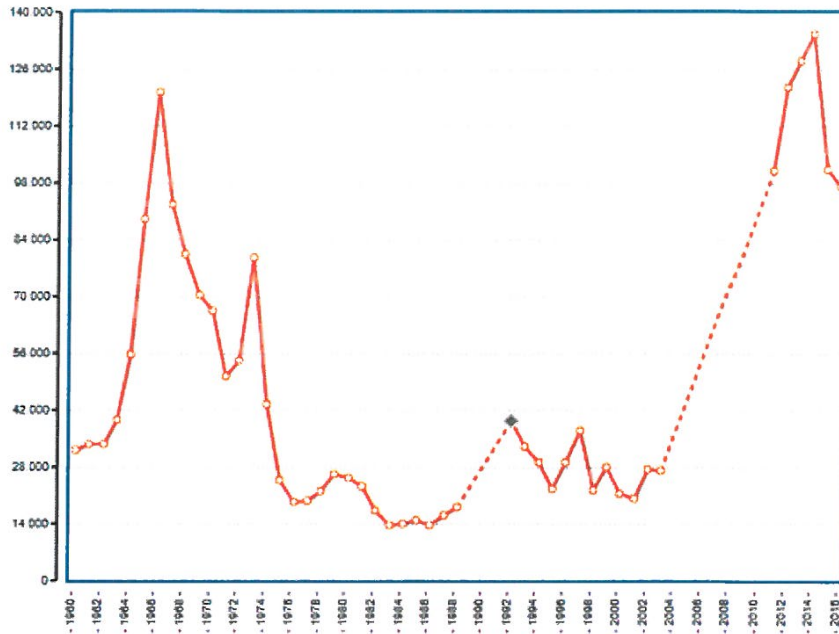
Source: Pordata (2016).

- 24 This opens up a perspective that has to do with international migratory culture, more developed in the North than in the South of Portugal. Northern districts have witnessed the emergence of the initial diaspora groups. Another perspective could be that, in the North, more people disposed of small real or personal property, which could be mortgaged to collect the money that would be needed to cover the costs of migration.
- 25 So, in Alentejo, social emigration networks could not generate significant migration dynamics. A further point to emphasize is the missing geographic scope of the available statistical data, namely about the origin of present-day Portuguese emigrants. Empirical observations help us to understand that living and working abroad is a life project for many youngsters. Given this territorial scenario, we will now focus on the emigration flows currently affecting this Portuguese sub-region.

3 - The Case Study of a Target Group of Emigrants from Alto Alentejo

- 26 PEIXOTO *et al.* (2016) and the OBSERVATÓRIO DA EMIGRAÇÃO (2016) put forward that, in 2014, about 135,000 Portuguese have moved abroad (total of permanent and temporary flows).

Graphic 1 - Total of permanent and temporary flows, 1960 - 2016



Source: Pordata (2017).

27 With no access to disaggregated data per municipality or region of origin, we assume that the exits from places with strong migration culture increased, the phenomenon now spreading to districts with no emigration tradition. As a result, we will focus our attention on the dynamics of migrants who have conducted their migration project without coming from Alto Alentejo, a departure territory where international migration had not been a relevant option during the 19th and 20th centuries.

28 To reach our goal, it was decided to adopt a qualitative approach, based on ten in-depth interviews with emigrants originating from the sub-region of Alto Alentejo (place of birth or residence), and currently living in European countries, namely France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. This study was carried out in October, November and December 2016. The questions aimed at inferring information about the interviewee's mobility capital, as well as addressing their current social-territorial relationships, and future ability to establish a social network. We defined three sets of questions, apart from the definition of the interviewee's profile: questions about general mobility (e.g. frequency and nature of travels made in the country of origin and in the country of emigration, potential involvement in university mobility programs, volunteer work, etc.); questions about the person's own migration experience and the one of his (her) relatives (in cases where the interviewee had already emigrated or if he had been in touch with emigrated relatives); questions about the social network in which the interviewee is inserted (knowing who helped in the emigration process, identifying the current contact network, possible participation in an emigrant association, and assistance provided to family members or friends around emigration).

29 All interviewees were born in the sub-region of Alto Alentejo (municipality of Portalegre, fig. 4). Aged 32 to 40, they had emigrated about 4.5 years ago, on average. They all have higher education (degree and/or master degree) in the areas of psychology, nursing, foreign languages, social service, engineering and journalism.

Fig. 4. Location of Portalegre



Source: Google Maps (2017).

- 30 When questioned about their past mobility experiences, only two interviewees mentioned previous migrations outside the country, while four of them have been living outside the municipality of origin to complete higher education within Portugal. Until they reached adulthood, at least, the general trend was to remain continuously in the place of origin.

31 Therefore, we verified other short and medium duration mobility schemes, i.e. vacations or participation in university programs abroad, respectively. Concerning the short duration schemes (equal or less than one month), all interviewees have mentioned that, on average, they go on vacation five times a year, including weekend getaways or work trips, to relatively close regions (Central Alentejo, Vicentina Coastal area, Algarve). Trips abroad are also mentioned, although more sporadically, with a special highlight on European countries (Spain, France, United Kingdom). Only one of the interviewees has confessed traveling 20 times per year (South America and Asia) for work reasons. In two cases were mentioned mobility experiences associated with volunteer work and participation in young people meetings (Church).

32 With regard to medium duration mobility experiences (more than one month), eight interviewees have taken part in the university mobility program ERASMUS, having lived outside the country between six and twelve months (France, Denmark, Germany, and Belgium). Among those eight respondents, only two had moved to the country where they had previously studied (France). Some of them have stated to have been influenced by that experience. In the other cases, the interviewees felt that it had been a particular experience, of great interest, given they had acquired useful knowledge and tools for their career –the one for which they had been studying. Thus, they claimed that the mobility rationale was more related to low wages and employment insecurity, rather than the desire to start a new job.

33 The direct influence of family or friends from the place of origin seems to be limited. Contacts with emigrated relatives were mentioned twice, considering that, in one case, the interviewee was living abroad near relatives. Such answers validate the trend observed through statistical analysis and mapping: the sub-region of Alto Alentejo has no significant migration culture, which is explained by the inexistence of emigration social networks in that area.

34 If, on the one hand, we find a spontaneous process, with traces defined by the theory of migration systems (the migrant workforce follows the availability of work in the capitalist market), on the other hand, the most significant contacts were established with foreign or Portuguese friends (not born in the studied subregion). The university experience turned out to be positive, both in the country of origin and in the country where the ERASMUS program was completed; such moments had provided contact with individuals outside the native community –contacts that would be used afterwards.

35 The analysis about the issue of social networks reinforces some of these ideas. When asked about who has provided help in the emigration process and establishment abroad, three obvious answers emerge:

36 The first, and strongest one, concerns the assistance provided by friends in the emigration country, namely the search for work, house, registration in tax services, social security, etc., validating the ideas defended by HAUG (2008), PICHÉ (2012) and VAN MEETEREN and PEREIRA (2013), regarding material help. Two respondents still claimed they had been assisted by family members (wife and sister/brother-in-law).

37 The second one acquires a more formal character, given that the mentioned assistance was provided by the employer and by the recruitment agency. This allows the identification of both migration networks defined by CASTLES, HAAS and MILER (2013)–formal and informal.

38 The third one (about half of the interviewees) indicated not to have benefited from any type of help, having used several sites to find jobs and houses. PEREIRA and VAN MEETEREN (2015) had already highlighted the importance

of the virtual space, designed as a global network, when it comes to giving impetus to migration movements in a more transversal manner.

39 After moving abroad, the current contact network is of two types: co-workers and foreign friends, or co-workers and friends of Portuguese nationality. These relationships derive from the everyday life and from the ties established by means of work or residence. Such networks might contribute, in the future, to the achievement of social cohesion based not so much on the origin of migrants, but on the community made of native individuals.

40 Thus, there is no such thing as an organized migration process, based on familial networks, friends or acquaintances. Mobility acquires a spontaneous and occasional character, resulting from the interviewees' own experiences, but also from the world migration system, partly ruled by the work offer/demand at the international scale. ELRIK (2005) claims that social networks tend to go beyond the ethnic and the national, expanding outside the group itself towards local acquaintanceship abroad. However, this group seems to be gaining mobility capital, given that the number of dislocations has doubled after their *exile* abroad. There is a growing number of return travels to Portugal for vacations, leisure, or work but these combine with trips towards other EU countries, which can be important for the development of a mobility culture associated with short, medium and even long-term dislocations. This fact must be related to the potential constitution of a geographic identity of multiterritoriality.

41 However, it should be recalled that the migration flow is recent. As previously noticed, the sub-region of Alto Alentejo has always seen a small number of international departures. Such a recent development means that there was no time to effectively consolidate the migration network. None of the interviewees has claimed to be a member of any association of emigrants, considering that this kind of organization has much contributed across time to the congregation of individuals with a common national denominator, which can provide for active mobility channels.

42 Half of the interviewees have confessed they had already shared information about the destination place with fellow countrymen who were considering emigrating. This may be a hint as to the possible establishment of migration channels able to consolidate the international mobility in the studied sub-region.

Conclusion

43 Europe is currently undergoing a period of profound change about migration flows. On the one hand, we managed to verify the sustained consolidation of migration social networks, and observe the continuity of more traditional diasporas. On the other hand, as a result of the multiterritorial globalization process, the geography of migrations has adopted a new pattern, reflecting new mobility dynamics and affecting territories and communities deprived of any significant emigration history. We are on the verge of observing the constitution of new migration networks and subsystems.

44 About this case study, we focused our attention on a group of emigrants from the sub-region of Alto Alentejo that has always sent a small number of people abroad. Research shows that the mobility capital of the interviewees was not acquired in the original community, but through contacts established outside the area. We noticed that, especially in the manner they have conducted their

emigration project, the respondents have acquired an active multiterritorial experience, which may be, in a near future, a huge push factor for emigration for other fellow countrymen.

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List of illustrations

	<p>Title Fig. 1 - Districts of origin of Portuguese emigrants</p> <p>Credits Source: After Brito (1997).</p> <p>URL http://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/docannexe/image/10657/img-1.jpg</p> <p>File image/jpeg, 420k</p>
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References

Electronic reference

Fátima Velez de Castro, « Changes in mobility and migrations. On the possibility of new intra-European migration networks », *Méditerranée* [Online], 130 | 2018, Online since 28 November 2018, connection on 04 December 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/10657> ; DOI : 10.4000/mediterranee.10657

About the author

Fátima Velez de Castro

Department of Geography and Tourism / CEGOT /RISCOS, University of Coimbra,
velezcastro@fl.uc.pt

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