Наукові повідомлення

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND MIGRANTS' PERCEPTIONS: PORTUGAL AS A POTENTIAL HOST COUNTRY FOR BRAZILIAN WORKERS

Social media use is increasingly affecting the various stages preceding the decision to emigrate, including the selection of final destination. Future migrants meaningfully use ICT to connect with those workers who are already living abroad, as a result more accurate perceptions of host societies are emerging through peers' experiences. This study evaluates the specific role played by YouTube in the way Brazilians are creating their mental images of Portugal. A sample of 135 YouTube videos were analyzed, in which Brazilian emigrants share their testimonies of adaptation to the Portuguese reality. The conclusions point out to a mismatch between the low skills' jobs, locally available in the Portuguese labor market, and the higher qualification profile of many Brazilian workers who moved to Portugal. If expectations must be reduced in terms of economic prosperity, there is a consensus regarding a higher quality of life, in a broader sense, experienced by Brazilian migrants after their decision to live and work in Portugal.

Based on the specific results of this study it possible to highlight some consensus among the testimonies analyzed which, for that reason, assume a non-negligible importance in the perceptions about Portugal that are being structured by potential Brazilian migrants, also due to the high number of views and shares these videos receive. These points of consensus deserve reflection by those who study migrations and define policy guidelines on migratory processes, especially in a country whose government has assumed the importance of immigration as a way to mitigate the effects of the alarming demographic ageing of the Portuguese society. Among these points of consensus are the warnings about the initial difficulties of integration into the labor market and the need to accept job offers that do not match the qualification profiles and professional skills developed in Brazil. There is also a warning about the need to reduce expectations regarding an eventual ambition of a substantial improvement of the financial conditions of these migrants. Although such difficulties do not condition an evident progress in terms of comfort and quality of life, which ends up providing a general satisfaction among Brazilians who decided to choose Portugal as their emigration destination.

Keywords: *Perception Geography, labor market integration, youtube, Brazil, Portugal.*

1. Introduction. Perception geography believe that people behave in real-world, in terms of territorial appropriation and use, many times according to subjective and mental images, and not only founded on objective knowledge; this assumption is on the basis of a psychologically grounded geography. Since the 1960s many geographical researches have been exploring the complexity behind the composition of territorial mental images, assuming that those can be measured accurately (Bunting and Guelke, 1979; Amedeo and Golledge, 2004). Nonetheless, this subject has been continuously demanding further researches on an attempt to understand how these geographical perceptions evolve, as well as towards the investigation of the relationships between those mental images and actual behavior in real-world geographical contexts (Tuan, 2004). The emphasis on spatial decision-making processes generated the impulse for these geographical studies, as they contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of many individual/institutional spatial behaviors, such as consumer choices in market places, industrial and retail location decisions, trip determinations or housing options

(Amedeo and Golledge, 2004). This paper intends to contribute to this on-going research field by exploring a different approach, its novelty lay in directing geographers' attention to the impact of social media on the way individuals as well as groups perceive and appraise their external environment.

The uniqueness of individual experiences and perceptions of a neighborhood, a city, a region or even a country are now easily worldwide spread throughout internet communication platforms, influencing geographical mental images as well as human decision-making in spatial contexts (Huang and Wong, 2016). But how social media and online information is being currently used to generate mental imagens and consequently determining people acting in spatial contexts? This is an emerging topic of research that is only now starting to get the attention of human geographers, and is demanding the development of new methodological approaches (Fearnley, 2020; Aversa, Hernandez and Doherty, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

In order to give a contribute to the exploration of new methodological tools, this study intends to disclose

geographical perceptions that are being currently formed by the massive use of online telematicplatforms, focusing on a specific spatial decision-making process: migrants' choices determining final work destinations and how those decisions are informed by online individual testimonies on labor market integration.

In digital era multiple effects and implications of online communication technologies have been reflected in different stages of migration processes contributing to the emergence of a hypermobile society (Hamel, 2009; Cooke and Shuttleworth, 2017a, 2017b; Martins and Silva, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2020):

- while choosing the final work destination (country, region, city) by facilitating the access to helpful information to clarify doubts and apprehensions;

- during the job search process, often initiated still at the origin from the use of online job agency services or throw job interviews in video call mode;

- during the process of integration in host communities by using online services to exchange experiences with those who are facing the same process of adaptation; or by facilitating remittances and allowing migrants to stay connected to families and friends who remain in the place of origin.

As there is a wide influence of the information and communication technologies in the migration process, this article focuses exclusively on assessing how social networks and telematic platforms can impact the stages preceding the decision to emigrate and the choice of the final work destination, causing significant transformations in this spatial decision-making process. Getting the opportunity to know real experiences of those who already faced the difficulties of adaptation in a certain work destination tend to be highly valued by those who are considering the same challenge, as it allows anticipating similar integration problems and thus facilitating their resolution. However, if access to these experiences was until very recently restricted to face-to-face interactions in the context of each individual's relational networks, such as family, friendship or professional networks (Truzzi, 2008), nowadays the ease of creating, sharing and disseminating digital contents allows these preliminary clarifications to be obtained from strangers, but whose personal experiences are also valued, especially because they represent a greater diversity of cases and thus allow the creation of a more faithful perception of the chosen destination, particularly its strengths and weaknesses.

2. Research methods. Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups are standard social science research methods for eliciting opinions from the workers in migration studies. This study explores the potential of a different methodological approach, as it seeks to reflect on the role that online social medial, in particularly the YouTube, has been playing in the way potential migrants structure their mental image about the work destination to which they are considering to move. In order to assess how YouTube interferes in the creation of the mental image that potential Brazilian emigrants create about Portugal, this research is based on an analysis of content, from the viewing of the reports of a sample of 129 videos that seek to disseminate testimonies of adaptation to the Portuguese reality to those who still reside in Brazil

and are also considering the same emigration destination. We opted for a traditional thematic categorical analysis of the analyzed discourses (Guerra, 2006), with the breakdown of the accounts into categories, according to analogical groupings (categories that represent the combination of discourse elements referring to a given general problem), thus trying to reach the implicit content of the shared testimonies. The categories detected were: advantages and disadvantages of Brazilian emigration to Portugal; integration in the host communities; labor market; cost of living; the choices taken regarding the place of residence in Portugal; and learnings and recommendations to potential Brazilian emigrants considering moving to Portugal. In order to illustrate and enrich the analysis, we chose to present narrative extracts of the YouTubers sample, which allows us to know their experiences and their own reflection on the issues addressed.

Regarding the sample analyzed and its characterization, it is important to mention that the selection of the videos was obtained by entering the descriptor 'integration of Brazilians in Portugal' in the YouTube search engine, considering only reports of Brazilian emigrants living in Portugal. The sample composed by these 129 videos corresponds to a total of 1268 minutes of recording (more than 21 hours of analyzed reports), and these audiovisual documents have an average duration of 9 minutes and 50 seconds. The videos that make up the analyzed sample were, overall, the target of 4,568,415 views. The sample is composed of videos whose record of views varies between 78 and 707,697 views, and on average each of these videos was viewed by 35,414 individuals. There is a balance in the gender of authorship of the videos in this sample, with a slight overrepresentation of the female gender (54% of the videos analyzed were recorded and shared by Brazilian citizens living in Portugal).

The results of the analysis are summarized below around four dimensions, which recurrently stand out in the discourses of this sample and tend to structure the perception created about Portugal by those who are confronted by these testimonies: Portugal: a welcoming country but with interaction networks that are difficult to structure; Portugal: a country of difficult and demanding professional integration; Portugal: a country where the probability of getting rich is very low; Portugal, a country with high levels of well-being and high quality of life standards.

2. Portugal: a welcoming country but with interaction networks that are difficult to structure. In general, the testimonies analyzed convey an image of Portugal as a country where attitudes of discrimination/superiority towards Brazilian immigrants do not prevail. However, some not so positive experiences were reported, although very sporadic, especially by female individuals who complained of some stigmas related with past and minority migratory movements, but which still determine mental images created in the meantime. Despite this, the prevailing opinion is that the Portuguese are a welcoming people to foreign citizens, valuing the presence in the country of individuals coming from diverse cultural contexts (as tourists, abroad students, migrat workers, ...), which allows the creation of a con-

text promoting dynamics of cultural enrichment, as well as respect and appreciation of diversity.

If the Portuguese are seen as welcoming and helpful, however these Youtubers alert Brazilians who think on coming to Portugal for significant cultural differences between the two countries. These differences are manifested not so much in the language -if in both countries the Portuguese is the official language there are some differences requiring some adaptation-, but mainly in distinct personality traits that determine an identity of the Portuguese people, distinct from the Brazilians. In this context, the more reserved and distant attitude of the Portuguese is recurrently mentioned. They are presented, by these Brazilian Youtubers, as individuals where a more closed and reserved attitude prevails, which creates added difficulties in what concerns the challenge of structure friendship networks, in comparison with the relationship practices present in the Brazilian reality. Friendships with Portuguese people require, in the view of these Youtubers, longer processes of interactions, in which trust grows and friendship is gradually strengthened. Alongside this characteristic, some warnings were made regarding a more assertive posture by the Portuguese when they need to make some criticism, repair or call attention, something that may be interpreted by the Brazilian immigrant as eventually a problematic issue, but which in reality only reflects a more direct and assertive posture on the part of the Portuguese.

"The Portuguese are very closed. In Brazil people easily make friends with anyone and for any reason, while here people turn out to be more suspicious."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 83327 views on 15/03/2022]

"The Portuguese people first analyses, then they embrace."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 83327 views on 15/03/2022]

"The Portuguese are direct people, a little different from the Brazilians who try to say things more delicately and with a game of waist, but with time I realized that it was something present in the Portuguese and that they did not do for bad reasons. However, at first, it wasn't easy to deal with this."

[Video posted by a female youtuber, with 7541 views on 11/04/2022]

"The teachers and people in general here in Portugal are much more direct...the Portuguese go straight in what they intend to say, and it's not because they are rude it's because it's their way."

[Video posted by a female youtuber, with 34974 views on 19/03/2022]

2. Portugal: a country of difficult and demanding professional integration

In the speeches analyzed one of the most consensual aspects about the adaptation process of Brazilian immigrants to Portugal is related to the integration in the labor market, which tends to devalue the qualifications and professional experience with which Brazilian immigrants arrive in Portugal. Recurrently, Youtubers referred to the need, especially in the initial stage of reception, for Brazilian immigrants to accept the existing job offers and not persist in the illusion of finding the job they consider adequate to their qualifications and professional skills.

The needs to accept unqualified, often physically demanding and low-paid jobs, promotes some frustration and in many cases leads these migrants to question whether they made the best choice when they decided to leave Brazil to come to Portugal. Different motivations lead to the decision to emigrate but they almost always involve a desire to improve the quality of life and well-being levels. However, these reports mention that coming to Portugal will often imply leaving a job in Brazil, which is more comfortable and adequate to the professional profile of the individual, and therefore provides greater personal fulfilment; to move to a job in Portugal that he/she never even imagined having to perform, in some cases arduous tasks in the primary sector associated with agricultural activities.

"You have to be available for difficult jobs that are not in line with your qualifications. Before Brazilians come here, they have to be prepared for this. […] If for you it is unacceptable to have a difficult work, for example in agricultural activities, then I don't know if Portugal should be an option for you. In Brazil I worked in a bank, I had a degree in Financial Management and the first job I had in Portugal was in agriculture. I had never been working in a farm in my life, and the first thing I did here was pick peppers. I worked from 8h in the morning to 5h in the afternoon, with a one-hour lunch break in the plantation, with nowhere to heat my food. [...] The first few days I cried. My back ached. My body couldn't take it. [...] I thought... what am I doing with my life? I left Brazil where I had a life that wasn't bad and I thought of giving up and going back. Why am I going through this? I don't deserve this."

[Video posted by a female youtuber, with 193789 views on 12/03/2022]

If the labor market integration can be an unexpected, demanding and difficult challenge to accept; these Youtubers, from their personal experiences, underline three factors that can motivate future Brazilian immigrants in this difficult process of professional integration in Portugal.

Firstly, the observation that, afterwards and with the contacts established over time, in many cases there is a transition to better jobs, better paid and leading to higher levels of satisfaction. However, in the initial stage it is necessary to accept the job available, which will enable to face the financial burden that the move to Portugal will imply.

Secondly, these Youtubers based on their experiences consider fact that in Portugal there are no humiliating or discrediting jobs, and the individual does not have his/her status and recognition in society directly related to the professional function he/she performs, contrary to what often happens in Brazil.

Finally, the observation that even the performance of a more unqualified job and with low remuneration (coinciding in many cases with the minimum wage) often allows one to enjoy a comfort and quality of life that in Brazil is very difficult to achieve, even with jobs considered more dignified and prestigious.

"There are people who are in Brazil and send me messages like 'I work in such and such area, how is that area there?' Well, you are going to emigrate and the first thing you have to understand is that you have to take whatever you can find."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 17606 views on 19/04/2022]

"If in Brazil there are discrediting jobs because it affects status, that's not the case here. You have to come with the awareness that work is work and that you will have to earn money. It doesn't matter what you are going to do. Here there is

no humiliating work. Here is normal to work in the agricultural activities. It is not humiliating like it is in Brazil."

[Video posted by a female youtuber, with 345339 views on 11/03/2022]

2. Portugal: a country where the probability of getting rich is very low

The Youtubers' reports are clear in their warnings to potential Brazilian immigrants, about the need to avoid moving to Portugal if their decision to emigrate is related to the desire to raise their economic level and become rich through the effort of their work. Although they mention they know of cases of Brazilians who have opened their businesses in Portugal and who have significantly improved their financial condition, they refer that these cases are very sporadic. In general, Brazilian immigrants in Portugal who live from their work, have salaries that allow them to have a comfortable life considering the cost of living in Portugal, but do not allow them to save money. Those who want to emigrate in order to work and send funds to their family who stayed in Brazil will find it very difficult to do so from Portugal. Money saving is considered difficult because jobs with high salaries are few and difficult to obtain, but also because the current expenses in Portugal (housing, food, electricity, water, transports…) have a high weight in the domestic economy. Among these are the high costs of housing, especially for those who choose to live in the large urban-metropolitan agglomerations. As well as the high costs of electricity paid in Portugal, which has a huge relevance with the need to heat homes, particularly for Brazilians who are used to a tropical climate and face many difficulties adapting to the low temperatures typical of the winter months in Portugal.

"If the idea is to have money to send to the family, it doesn't compensate to be here, unless you get your own business and it goes very well. [...] However here you can live very well with just the minimum wage, but when you want to save money, this is not the best country to choose."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 89376 views on 11/03/2022]

"Portugal is not a country to make money, it's a country for you to have a better quality of life."

[video posted by a female youtuber, with 8716 views on 16/03/2022]

2. Portugal, a country with high levels of well-being and high quality of life standards

Although integration into the labor market is mentioned to be difficult in Portugal, as it is the probability of enrichment and the ability to accumulate money; there is a consensus among Youtubers on the ease of obtaining a job with a salary level in Portugal, which, despite not being high, allows for a higher level of quality of life and well-being compared to what these immigrants had in Brazil. This increase in comfort, well-being and quality of life faced by Brazilian workers is seen in multiple dimensions of their daily life in Portugal, such as: the high levels of security in Portuguese society; the recognition of the existence in Portugal of a good purchasing power and the ability to access high quality products, when compared with reality in Brazil; the valorization of a public health system and quality education in Portugal; as well as the organization and good functioning of the public transport system.

"I advise people to come to Portugal if they want happiness, well-being and security for their family."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 91453 views on 18/04/2022]

"In Portugal you can find practically everything you are looking for in a country to live in. The biggest advantage by far is safety. The level of crime is extremely low compared to Brazil."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 175188 views on 15/03/2022]

"There is no feeling that you can be robbed at any moment. You can wear your rings and earrings and wedding ring. People drive around with their cars with their windows open, they have convertible cars and there is no feeling of insecurity here."

[Video posted by a female youtuber, with 67487 views on 16/04/2022]

"There is no money that can pay for the peace and tranquility that I find in Portugal."

[Video posted by a male youtuber, with 156743 views on 17/04/2022]

3. Conclusion. Visualizing YouTube videos is nowadays a common practice for millions of citizens worldwide, and it is impossible to neglect its influence on the way future migrants define their perception about potential host societies. In this study it was possible to evaluate how the contents of these videos can help to clarify doubts and apprehensions, based on the experiences of those who have already faced the same mobility challenge. However, it is important to highlight some limitations of social media research, especially those around sampling, mainly because it is not possible to define a set of videos posted by individuals representing different ages groups, genders, educational backgrounds or geographic locations, as this information is not available. Despite this sampling representative issues, this research provides insights into the opportunities of social media as a tool for a future generation of geographers concerned with perception geographies.

The experiences of adaptation to a specific labor market, previously faced by who come from the same geographical origin, has always been highly valued by those who are thinking about the possibility to migrate to the same desired destination, as it allows the anticipation of similar integration problems. However, if until very recently the access to these experiences were restricted to face-to-face interactions in the context of each individual contacts, such as family, friendship or professional networks; nowadays the ease of creating, sharing and disseminating digital content allows these previous clarifications to be obtained from information transmitted by strangers, which allows the access to a greater diversity of cases.

Based on the specific results of this study it possible to highlight some consensus among the testimonies analyzed which, for that reason, assume a non-negligible importance in the perceptions about Portugal that are being structured by potential Brazilian migrants, also due to the high number of views and shares these videos receive. These points of consensus deserve reflection by those who study migrations and define policy guidelines on migratory processes, especially in a country whose government has assumed the importance of immigration as a way to mitigate the effects of the alarming demographic ageing of the Portuguese society (Pinto, 2019; MPG, 2020). Among these points of consensus are the warnings about the initial difficulties of integration into

the labor market and the need to accept job offers that do not match the qualification profiles and professional skills developed in Brazil. There is also a warning about the need to reduce expectations regarding an eventual ambition of a substantial improvement of the financial conditions of these migrants. Although such difficulties do not condition an evident progress in terms of comfort and quality of life, which ends up providing a general satisfaction among Brazilians who decided to choose Portugal as their emigration destination.

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СОЦІАЛЬНІ МЕРЕЖІ І СПРИЙНЯТТЯ МІГРАНТІВ: ПОРТУГАЛІЯ ЯК ПОТЕНЦІЙНА ПРИЙМАЮЧА КРАЇНА ДЛЯ БРАЗИЛЬСЬКИХ РОБІТНИКІВ

Використання соціальних мереж все більше впливає на різні етапи, що передують рішенню про еміграцію, включаючи вибір кінцевого пункту призначення. Майбутні мігранти осмислено використовують інформаційно-комунікаційні технології, щоб спілкуватися з тими працівниками, які вже живуть за кордоном, у результаті чого через досвід однолітків з'являється більш точне сприйняття приймаючих суспільств. У цьому дослідженні оцінюється конкретна роль, яку відіграє YouTube у тому, як бразильці фрмують уявлення про Португалію. Було проаналізовано вибірку зі 135 відео YouTube, у яких бразильські емігранти діляться своїми свідченнями адаптації до португальської дійсності. Висновки вказують на невідповідність між низькокваліфікованими робочими місцями, доступними на португальському ринку праці, та вищою кваліфікацією багатьох бразильських працівників, які переїхали до Португалії. Якщо очікування мають бути зменшені з точки зору економічного процвітання, існує консенсус щодо вищої якості життя, у ширшому сенсі, як відчувають бразильські мігранти після їхнього рішення жити та працювати в Португалії.

Ґрунтуючись на конкретних результатах цього дослідження, можна виділити певний консенсус серед проаналізованих свідчень, що дають уявлення про Португалію, які структуруються потенційними бразильськими мігрантами. Ці точки консенсусу заслуговують на аналіз тих, хто вивчає міграцію та визначає керівні принципи політики щодо міграційних процесів, особливо в країні, уряд якої припустив важливість імміграції як способу пом'якшення наслідків тривожного демо-

графічного старіння португальського суспільства. Серед цих пунктів консенсусу – застереження щодо початкових труднощів інтеграції на ринку праці та необхідність приймати пропозиції роботи, які не відповідають кваліфікаційним профілям і професійним навичкам, розробленим у Бразилії. Існує також застереження щодо необхідності зменшити очікування покращення фінансових умов цих мігрантів. Хоча такі труднощі не зумовлюють прогрес у плані комфорту та якості життя, однак у кінцевому підсумку відчувається загальне задоволення серед бразильців, які вирішили обрати Португалію місцем імміграції.

Ключові слова: *географія сприйняття, інтеграція ринку праці, youtube, Бразилія, Португалія.*