

# Expatriates, immigrants and refugees in Brazil: trajectories and insertion strategies<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

Increased levels of international migration have become a significant political issue in many countries in recent years. In the case of Brazil, the immigration law, created in 1980 and still in force, is reminiscent of the period of the military dictatorship, focusing on national security and restricted to the attraction of qualified labor. The difficulties imposed by the law are intensified by a nonintegrated administration of immigration, among different State actors, marked by slow and inefficient bureaucratic processes, whose greatest bottleneck is the service provided in immigration posts. At the beginning of the 2010s another two immigrant profiles appeared: nationals from the Mercosul countries, and refugees, especially Haitians, creating a type of immigrant hierarchy, distinguishing between desirable and undesirable immigrants, with differentiated access to legal, social, and cultural resources for their integration in society, a reality also found in other countries. Based on qualitative research carried out with immigrants, both legal and illegal, this paper aims to discuss in a comparative manner the economic and social insertion strategies used by these three profiles of migrants expatriates, immigrants, and refugees – to deal with migration control mechanisms and constraints in Brazil. That new type of immigration, in opposition of the flow of European origin, is black or brown and suffer prejudice from society, media and even sectors of public power. The article concludes that the immigrants who obtained success in integrating themselves in the labor market were not necessarily those who had better professional performance, but those who understood the different strategies of social navigation, in which Brazilians create modes of facing the specific contradictions and paradoxes between the law and the social reality, in a typically Brazilian manner. At last, we propose that Brazil might be considered what the literature calls a case of "reverse immigration policy paradox".

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Migration, and Refugee Studies

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## 1. Introduction

Research on migration involves almost all of the so-called social sciences, among which we may highlight Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Demographics, Geography, Social Psychology and Political Science. Richmond, in 1988<sup>8</sup>, suggested that the issue of migration had been treated, until then, as merely an effect of the development process of capitalism, as well as of the processes of industrialization and urbanization<sup>9</sup>. Examples of this are the unclear approach to the subject by Max Weber, who, as Durkheim and Marx, was more interested in the consequences of industrialization and of the growth of capitalism, and the original reflection on the phenomenon of migration produced by the demographer Thomas Malthus, to whom an increase in migrations was an inevitable consequence of overpopulation.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, migration became the object of study of North-American Sociology in response to the social problems generated by the growing population influx from Europe to the United States.<sup>10</sup> Thomas and Znaniecki demonstrate how the process of migration breaks the traditional bonds of solidarity, especially the family system, integrating migrants in a new world governed mainly by monetary and labor relations.<sup>11</sup> This study has a documental and subjective character, because it describes the trajectory of a social group based on the autobiographical account of a young Polish immigrant settled in Chicago, and on the letters he wrote to his parents, which were never sent. The pioneering of Thomas and Znaniecki contributed to the emergence of urban sociology:

[...] the first sociological study to found a “school of Chicago” which stresses the fieldwork and the subjective dimension, “The Polish Peasant” offers an analysis of the transformations of behavior of the Polish peasants after their contacts with the modern (urban) world and, especially for some, after their migration to the United States. The autobiographies and the correspondence with family are the new documental sources “invented” by Thomas to analyze the subjective dimension of behavior. Even though Thomas, the main author, left the University of Chicago in 1918, the study exerted great influence on the monographs on urban sociology carried out at the University of Chicago in the following years, whose authors constitute what is often designated by the term “school of Chicago”. Thus, the study paved the way for further studies which were based on an ethnographic approach (fieldwork).<sup>12</sup>

The School of Chicago expanded the studies on migration with concern to the processes of adaptation, integration and assimilation of immigrants into the American society. It also developed the concept of melting pot, which would be questioned in the 60s “when the resurgence of ethnicity contested the insensitivity towards individual and group identities and their involvement in a one-way process”.<sup>13</sup>

According to Gabaccia, the growing contemporary interest in the migratory phenomenon

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<sup>8</sup> RICHMOND, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> SASAKI and ASSIS, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> SASAKI and ASSIS, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> THOMAS and ZNANIECKI, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> CHAPOULIE, 2001, p.146 *apud* OLIVEIRA, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> GREEN, 2008.

is marked by economical analyzes, which see immigrants as atomized individuals – and not as people inserted in networks of social relations.<sup>14</sup> According to the author, another perspective on international migration has been emerging, and its starting point is the constitution of a transnational space of relations – which touches on cultural, geographic, political and legal boundaries. By this approach, immigrants are integrated in networks which connect people, projects, interests and institutions in different parts of the globe.

The mainstream economical approach aims to explain the international migratory influxes based on the regulation between the supply and demand of job openings in the labor market – which usually leads to differences of salary and opportunities between countries. Classical studies such as Sjaastad's<sup>15</sup> and Borjas'<sup>16</sup> understand the migratory issue based on a framework of resource allocation, associating the international mobility of people with the general equilibrium model typical of the mainstream theory, in which the perfect mobility of people, associated with rational individual choice, results in an efficient balance from the point of view of maximizing general well-being.

Borjas<sup>17</sup> evaluates the theme of migration as a subgroup of Labor Economics, aiming to establish relations of causality between the act of migrating and economical issues, especially the difference of salaries. For the author and for others who compose the dominant paradigm in Economics, the decision to migrate results from a calculation of costs and benefits (measurable in monetary terms) involved in migration. In these terms, the success of the migrant would be determined by factors such as education, work experience and length of stay at the destination, among others.

This approach was criticized by Portes, who rejects the overestimation of economical relations to the detriment of socially-oriented expectations.<sup>18</sup> In other terms, migrants should not be treated primarily as maximizing individuals, extirpated from their social relations, but as members of collective structures with complex behavior, which condition their spatial and socioeconomic mobility.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, the so-called new economists of migration have challenged hypotheses and conclusions from the classical studies, incorporating different elements into the analysis. Authors such as Docquier and Machado<sup>20</sup>, Alesina, Harnoss and Rapoport<sup>21</sup> and Stark and Dorn<sup>22</sup> have been carrying out studies in what came to be known as the “New Economics of Immigration”, adding databases which allow for more complex analyses of the migratory phenomenon associated with work-related issues.

Based on the literature reviewed in this article, we present the results of a research carried out together with immigrants and stakeholders related to the theme of immigration in Brazil, aiming to assess and provide an in-depth analysis of the perceptions of the research subjects about the migratory policy in the country. For such evaluation, we used a qualitative research methodology involving the use of focus groups, as explained in the methodology of this article.

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<sup>14</sup>GABACCIA, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> SJAASTAD, 1962.

<sup>16</sup> BORJAS, 1999, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> BORJAS, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> PORTES, 1976.

<sup>19</sup> SASAKI and ASSIS, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> DOCQUIER and MACHADO, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> ALESINA, HARNOSS and RAPOPORT, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> STARK and DORN, 2013.

This study was in contact with immigrants, both legal and illegal, proposing a comparative analysis of the strategies of economic and social insertion used by three profiles of migrants (expatriates, immigrants and refugees) and of the migration control mechanisms and constraints in Brazil. We concluded that there is a new type of immigration, that of refugees who are mostly Haitian and who, as opposed to the influx of European origin, is black or brown and suffers prejudice from society, media and even sectors of public power. The article concludes that immigrants who were successful in integrating with the labor market were not necessarily those who had better professional performance, but those who understood the different strategies of social navigation.

In line with the practices of the literature on the theme, the utterances and interactions of the focus group participants constitute the main contribution of this study, which is the reference to collectivities, and not to atomized individuals.<sup>23</sup> The feeling of adherence to different ethnical or cultural groups, religious beliefs, etc. conditions the decision to emigrate, as well as the choice of the country of destination. The authors suggest that the families (or home units), as well as other culturally-established units of production and consumption, in addition to relational networks, prevail over the interests of the individuals and must be the main focus of analysis when it comes to understanding the issue of migration. In addition to the income difference and to the public policies of attraction, it would be necessary to consider the networks of protection created by immigrants<sup>24</sup>, including as an instrument to minimize the risks inherent to the fluctuations of the labor markets, and that is what we sought to observe during the research. A classic example is the network of immigrants in the metropolitan area of Boston who come from the city of Governador Valadares in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

This article is structured in four sections in addition to this introduction. Section two presents methodological aspects of the study, centered on qualitative techniques. Section three presents the research results, divided according to the profile of the interviewees. The fourth section presents a discussion on such results, by way of concluding and raising points for debate. Lastly, section five contains the references used.

## **2. Methodology**

Qualitative research has its origins in sociological and anthropological studies, gaining space in other fields of knowledge such as Psychology, Business Management, Education and Social Medicine starting from the 60s. Its main characteristics are:

- it takes into consideration the viewpoint of the research subjects, that is, it comprehends the meaning of social actions based on the meaning attributed by the actors themselves;<sup>25</sup>
- its approach is inductive;<sup>26</sup>
- its main instrument is the researcher himself or herself;<sup>27</sup>
- it uses a flexible plan instead of a rigidly structured questionnaire, allowing for the redirection of the course of research while it is still in progress;

As opposed to the quantitative approach, its results do not allow for a generalization for the studied population. Qualitative methods are linked to a comprehensive perspective

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<sup>23</sup> MASSEY, 1997; SASAKI and ASSIS, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> A classic example is the network of immigrants in the metropolitan area of Boston who come from the city of Governador Valadares in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. See Becker, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> COULON, 1995

<sup>26</sup> GODOY, 1995

<sup>27</sup> GODOY, 1995.

of the Social Sciences, of Weberian origin, which searches for the sense of the social action in the meaning attributed to it by its actors, thus favoring its symbolic context,<sup>28</sup> while the quantitative ones are linked to an explanatory approach, in that they seek to establish relations of causality between the phenomena.

Qualitative methods are thus focused on social actions and intersubjective dimensions, aiming to reconstruct the symbolic and material context in which social phenomena find meaning, valuing the different ways of seeing, understanding and representing the world. Lastly, such an approach understands such differences and the conflicts that may arise from them as an inherent aspect to the social system. The methodology is adequate when the intention is to study the perceptions and values which guide the actions of groups of individuals, being particularly useful for studies of evaluation, attitudes, communication tests, among others. Qualitative research comprises a set of techniques and is quite efficient when the intention is to reach the more subjective dimensions of social phenomena, because it allows for an in-depth study of these phenomena.

In this report, we used the focus group technique, also known as group discussion. The focus group is an informal meeting in which a small number of participants freely discuss subjects of interest to the research. The conversation is guided by an open and flexible plan: a moderator introduces the debate and encourages the members of the group to discuss the subject among themselves. Ideally, the themes should emerge spontaneously during the conversation.

The flexibility of focus groups allows for many topics to be discussed and for new issues to arise, reorienting the course of the research. There is persuasion and embarrassment among the participants, and these facts are witnessed and analyzed. Furthermore, the debate allows the participants to better elaborate their arguments: the assumption is that the individuals are more likely to express their ideas when they listen to the ideas of others.<sup>29</sup> In the analysis, we take into consideration the social categories used; the emotional context in which the information was obtained; the agreements and disagreements between the opinions of the participants; the changes in opinion caused by the interaction; the answers linked to personal experiences, in contrast with vague impressions; and, finally, the main ideas, the gestures, the reactions and feelings.

The advantages of the focus group are: the low cost compared to other techniques; the flexible format, allowing for the moderator to explore unforeseen questions; the possibility to approach and understand complex issues; and the efficiency to measure the degree of satisfaction of the interviewees with the services, programs, products and public policies.

Therefore, by applying this methodology, we aimed to identify and analyze the perception of the immigrants on the migratory reality in Brazil, as well as of other strategic actors related to the theme. We specifically investigated:

- Perceptions on the immigration policy in Brazil;
- Evaluation about the process of immigration;
- Reasons to emigrate and to choose Brazil as the destination;
- Conditions of adaptation and life in the Brazilian society;
- Expectations fulfilled and unfulfilled;
- Plans for the future.

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<sup>28</sup> WEBER, 1991.

<sup>29</sup>FRANKLAND J, BLOOR M, 1999.

Ten focus groups were analyzed, according to the following segmentation:

- 01 group of Human Resource managers from companies which make international transfers of manpower;
- 01 group of representatives from labor unions;
- 02 groups of immigrants who exercise professional activities of technical level;
- 02 groups of immigrants who exercise professional activities of higher level;
- 02 groups of immigrants of academic profile;
- 01 group of entrepreneurs – immigrants who started some kind of business in Brazil;
- 01 group of immigrants with refugees and humanitarian visa holders.

### **3. Main findings**

This section presents the findings from the qualitative research carried out with immigrants and stakeholders related to the theme of immigration. It is noteworthy to remark that the opinions conveyed in the focus groups were understood and interpreted as a product of the interactions favored and assumed by the technique. The methodology, as described previously, starts from the assumption of interaction to produce answers to questions which would likely not produce the same results if the participants were interviewed individually. In other words, the results obtained from the group discussion are not simply the sum of the individual opinions and viewpoints, but the fruit of mutual negotiation. The debate allows participants to better elaborate their arguments and face the questions proposed from different perspectives. Therefore, this technique potentiates analyses which go beyond evaluation, covering what participants understand about the theme proposed.

It is important to emphasize that the focus group technique aims to capture the perceptions of the interviewees, and therefore it is exclusively centered on the analysis of the discussion, disregarding the comparison between the information obtained and objective data. Also, there is no judgement of the opinions expressed; the technique seeks only to understand how the issues are linked together and hierarchized in the participants' minds.

Next, we present the main findings of the ten focus groups carried out between the 20th and 25th of August of 2015 with Human Resource managers from companies which make international transfers of manpower, with representatives from labor unions and with immigrants with different levels of professional qualification and activity, that is, of technical profile, with high qualifications, of academic profile and entrepreneurs – who started some kind of business in Brazil, as described in the methodology.

#### **3.1 Human Resource managers**

The group highlighted the “partnership” with the MTE (the Ministry of Labor) and especially with the CNIg (the National Immigration Council) as a positive aspect of their context of activity in managing talents and international mobility in Brazil. The interviewees emphasized the importance of the Regulatory Resolutions (RRs), which came to address the needs and the anachronism of the Foreigner's Statute, a migration law in force in Brazil since 1980<sup>30</sup>. The RRs allowed for the transfer of foreign workforce, which is necessary for the development of the human and technological capital of the multinational companies that settled in the country. In the view of the Human Resource

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<sup>30</sup> In the moment this article was written, the new migration law awaited presidential approval to substitute the Foreigner's Statute.

managers, the MTE is very receptive to the demands of the companies and class organizations, and it has a very active attitude in implementing the necessary changes to oppose the restrictive legislation still in force.

*[...] we have an old legislation, but it's still very well supplied with the regulatory resolutions. And so I've always seen the Ministry of Labor having a very active attitude to be able to make the changes which were necessary, demanded by Febraban, Gadex and all the class organizations. So they've always been very receptive [...] Every time we pleaded for any change, any indication, they always received us very well. [...] They are very attentive to our requests, our remarks.*

The participants recognize the efforts made by the MTE towards a more efficient management of migrations. Besides their willingness for debate, other strengths of their performance are: the reduction of time for analyzing visa requests sent by companies; the informatization of the processes, and the simplification of some bureaucratic procedures, such as the issuance of the technical visa at the Brazilian consular authority abroad, without the need for processing at MTE.

*They improved a lot, even in the matter of time efficiency, so we used to have a more bureaucratic, slower, more laborious process for the analysis and today we have requests analyzed in 10 days.*

*They informatized and it was a tremendous evolution. So when we see the visa applications, the requests, you may say it's an old law, but it advanced with the resolutions. I see an organization that is very open for listening [...] they hear us and point out to us what they can do to improve.*

*I'll give an example of a more recent thing. We now have the technical visa process which we used to follow through the Ministry of Labor and the resolution itself allows it to be done via consulate, which is more recent.*

The managers interviewed lament, however, the excessively bureaucratic procedures required for the hiring of the foreign workforce necessary for the development of the activities of their companies. Another issue which emerged in the group discussion is the difficulty to revalidate the diplomas from foreign universities. Oftentimes the professional abandons the process, and ends up occupying functions beneath their ability.

*Our company could have the best, most well-suited talent for a certain function, the job could be vacant in Brazil waiting for him, but if he doesn't have technical approval, documental verification which the Ministry of Labor requires from that person and for the visa process, we can't bring him.*

*Unfortunately he can't legalize this diploma so easily, because the bureaucracy is so high that he gives up.*

A relevant aspect which was considered in the discussion of immigration policies in Brazil is the difficulty to understand the concerning legislation, even for big companies which

can count on robust legal support. Afraid to make mistakes, companies opt for the least legally risky procedure, which is, in general, the most expensive. All these costs make the international transfer of workers very onerous.

*Yes, we really need the legal support, because of the interpretation... but what the company has to do is not written in the law! If the law said do XYZ, we would do it.*

*We don't know, but we go to the law firm, call lawyer A, and he says something, but then lawyer B says something different.*

*We take that law that is not clear and find which are all the possibilities that can happen, the risks. We take the biggest risk and follow that to try and minimize it. If something happens at least. [...] take the one which is the least risky and the most costly, after some time there is a plant which operates with half that cost in China, and the plant closes here.*

Lastly, the defense of the protagonism of the CNlg in the Brazilian migration policy emerged in the discussion, given the participative character of its management.

*So, even though [the CNlg] is a political organization, but today it's an organization which, because it covers both executive personnel and important representatives of the society, as far as possible, we've been working or even succeeding, through the examples of the resolutions, despite the limitations of law, in meeting the needs of the market.*

### **3.2 Representatives from Labor Unions**

The group of representatives from labor unions demonstrated lack of knowledge on the immigration policy and its legal provisions in force in the country. They specifically mentioned the residence agreement for nationals from the States which are part of the Southern Common Market (Mercosul<sup>31</sup>) and also Bolivia, Colombia and Chile, which will be referred to throughout this text simply as Mercosul Agreement.

*Brazil has international immigration agreements with some countries. In Mercosul, we have free entry and departure agreements with Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. And Bolivia too.*

*They are the entrances of foreigners, we have this open door for them to stay, enter and leave Brazil. And also there is commerce.*

The participants highlight the necessity to better welcome the waves of immigrants that arrive every day in the country, not only providing them shelter, but above all offering them the conditions of insertion into the labor market, so as to prevent employers from exploiting them, often in slavery-like situations.

An important point here is that highly qualified immigrants are not a threat to the national workforce, because they do not fit in the aforementioned scenario. They represent a very small percentage of the labor market, and their level of qualification does not turn them

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<sup>31</sup> Mercosul is the Portuguese name of Mercosur.

into competitors.

*This situation exists, but it's an exception; these particular, small situations do not interfere with the point of view of labor relations. This is so that some Brazilians leave the country to provide state-of-the-art services.*

*This is incipient, it's not visible. We export much more technology than we attract foreign workforce.*

From the perspective of the interviewees, there is no deficit of qualified workforce in Brazil, and they use this argument to justify the decrease in the value of wages.

*What happens is they want to pay low wages for an excellent service. Then they disseminate that there is no qualified workforce. It's a lie.*

*We're sure that [there is no deficit of qualified workforce].*

The interviewees believe we must not deny a humanitarian reception to populations who come to Brazil looking for better life opportunities, but they also think the government should be responsible for protecting immigrants by inspecting labor contracts and ensuring they comply with the CLT (the Brazilian Labor Law). With these measures, immigrants will not represent a threat to the workforce, since they will have fair conditions to compete with national workers on an equal footing.

*First, enforcing federal laws. Inspecting labor contracts of immigrants. Not letting them underemployed, because then they will take the jobs of Brazilians. To give conditions for those people to have a house, to study, and to make a living here. And not to make a living from illegal means here, because many Brazilians have already been on illegal activities out there. The Brazilian government had to have this vision of not only opening borders but also providing conditions. And we know there are conditions here for that.*

*Education, structure and compliance with our CLT's regulations. The federal government, Brazilian entities should look at this path, to qualify immigrants and the native sons of Brazil. The world shouldn't have borders, and the currency should be one for us all. The capital world has failed, unfortunately. If we don't look at this social aspect, it's like seeing my neighbor being butchered, and pretend I'm not seeing it.*

### **3.3 Immigrants**

We observe, among the groups, a profile of migrant who relocates simply for the desire to live other cultures, new life experiences. They are people for whom we could use the expression "citizens of the world". They say they emigrated not for economical or any other motivation but due to an adventurous spirit. In these cases, the country of destination is only one more stop in a process of global mobility.

*Just knowing, travelling. I had lived in other places. I had lived in Cuba. (Technical profile)*

*The thing is, I like to travel and get to know another country, because when someone stays in my country it's important to come to another country. (Entrepreneurs)*

*I've always wanted to live outside of France, discover other cultures, speak other languages. In the past, I've lived four years in Mexico. Now, I'm in Brazil. I've traveled to Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, I know a lot of Latin America and didn't know anything about Brazil, so new language, new culture and here I am. (Academic profile).*

Unsurprisingly, the economic crisis, especially in the European countries, is referred to as a reason to emigrate. The interviewees stated that, facing the recession and the resulting difficulty of continuing with their businesses, of staying in their jobs or of inserting themselves in the labor market, they saw in emigration the possibility of starting a new phase in their careers.

*France was a little heavy with the economic crisis. Everyone was uncertain whether there was a future. There was another idea of Brazil, everyone had a project for a company and everything 3 years ago. In France everyone was dismayed, with no perspective for the future. (Technical profile)*

*I left Portugal due to the economic crisis. I had a company there which started to go very bad. [...] when the fiscal shock happened in Portugal, I decided to come here. (Technical profile)*

They highlight, as reasons for choosing Brazil as the destination for relocation, the idea that the country was in a phase of economic ascension, presenting itself as an advantageous alternative for the start of a new life. The country was “booming” in the perception of the immigrants, showing perspectives of professional growth. Such is the case of a French engineer and a French architect who saw in Brazil, a developing country, the opportunity to develop building projects.

*I studied Civil Engineering in France. There were many exchanges, opportunities. Because I study Civil Engineering I wanted to know a country that is growing, with many things to build, back in Europe there are many things done, except building projects. I chose Brazil, but now building is a bit difficult here, but there are still many things to be built, a lot of infrastructure is needed. (High qualification)*

*I already wanted to come to Brazil. I knew that things were booming here. [...] I arrived in January of 2014. There were many stories. My brother works with publicity and he said his company could make money in Brazil. Everyone was talking about Brazil, that it was working well. I think we could improve here. My wife works with pâtisserie and I thought it could work out well. (Technical profile)*

The tropical climate was indicated as an attractive reason by the immigrants, especially those from European countries. These interviewees argue that the long winter in their countries, with short days, impacts the moods of people who live there, making them depressive, unsociable and irritable. They state that in their countries, Brazil is seen as

an interesting place, with a rich musical culture, fit for adventure, where you can “go to the beach after work”. For them, there was an expectation of a more glamorous life. Latin-Americans, surprisingly, presented a very stereotypical image: a place where Carnival happens the whole year, where people listen to and dance samba every day on the streets.

*I was here in 2008, travelling around Brazil, Rio, São Paulo and I fell in love with the landscape, culture, I like Brazil. I came to stay. I love the sun, the light, it makes me well-disposed.*  
(Technical profile)

*I lived in the United States and thought that in Brazil everyone was happy, dancing, with music, and so I arrived here thinking that everything was samba, music, everyone united.*  
(Entrepreneurs)

*I speak for myself, but the image I had always made me interested in Brazil, since I was a child, but the image I had was of the Carnival. I came with the idea that every day was a party, music, samba on the streets. That was it, monkeys everywhere. An idea that is very different from what it is.* (Entrepreneurs)

For the immigrants who came to Brazil with student visas, the quality of the public higher education in the country – considering they are studying at the University of São Paulo (USP) – was the great attractive point, aside from the fact that it is free and that there are scholarship grants. In Colombia, for example, there are no free universities, even among the federal ones, and post-graduation is considered very expensive.

*In Colombia, even at public universities it's very expensive to do a post-graduation. We don't have free public universities. So, this is an enormous attractive point, we are nearby, we have scholarships to study, without cost. The quality of education is very good, it's attractive, I personally think that in Brazil people don't know the value that this has, the quality of education.*  
(Academic profile).

*I started looking for a place to be able to study out of Chile and I've always wanted to do my studies and post-graduation abroad. In the ranking there was USP and then, afterwards I met a Brazilian. And then I decided to live with him here. Later on, I got into USP and continued my studies.* (Academic profile).

A perception that is highlighted among the groups of highly qualified immigrants is that Brazilians have the mastery of emotional intelligence as a quality and a competitive advantage, which makes them skilful in interpersonal relationships, and this ability, in the case of the organizations, is responsible for the professional success or failure of its collaborators. Here the person is more important than the efficiency and, for the interviewees, this is a captivating aspect of the work relations: the sensibility to judge others in a perceptive and sensible way. It is the emotional intelligence that allows Brazilians to stay motivated and reach their goals, despite the adversities, and to count on their intuition and creativity. “Brazilians are unique”, they say.

*Brazil can offer the world the emotional, interpersonal intelligence; this is very good. [...] I think there are many differences between Brazil and Europe, Brazil is very different.*

*Here people go by intuition a lot. (High qualification)*

*What captivates me the most are the people. People can make everything from nothing, and are always predisposed to be well, to do everything possible. To sleep four hours, work ten and stay four on traffic and still... The main difference between Brazil and Europe is the very humane form of the relationships. The efforts, here, are much bigger, because the city is bigger, but the people are willing to make it happen. (Academic profile).*

Another positive aspect highlighted by the groups is the reception they got from Brazilians, considered “nice” and kind. The interviewees, especially the Europeans, were surprised by the fact that people on the streets aid those who feel sick or fall, and demonstrate willingness to offer their time to help find an address or provide information.

*I had a positive surprise, of a very affectionate people, very nice, I was coming from a very uncaring country, which complains a lot, here I'm always making a joke, Sidney is the paradise on Earth where people are a bit boring, São Paulo is a garbage city, but the people are very nice, to me it was better, I prefer to live in São Paulo with nice people than in Sidney with uncaring people, and that was the personal side. (High qualification)*

*I was well received both at work and with friends. I arrived, here, I didn't have friends. I think foreigners here are well received, they want to know where you came from. (Technical profile)*

*Here, when you have a problem at the street, people stop and help you. Afterwards you say thank you and they say “imagina” [a Brazilian way to say “you’re welcome”, meaning literally “imagine”]. I don't have to imagine a world like this, it exists. They're good people and it's really delightful. This has a great value. (Academic profile).*

The biggest difficulty faced by the interviewed immigrants – and the first thing pointed out when the group discussion got to this topic of discussion –, is the bureaucracy for issuing the different documents necessary to legalize their situation. Many situations are mentioned, from renewing the different types of visas, to acquiring the National Register of Foreigners (RNE), to issuing the employment record book, to issuing the National Driver's License (CNH). The problem is not only the innumerable procedures necessary to obtain each document, the many trips to the organizations which issue them, the hours lost in lines, and the long times elapsed until the completion of these processes, but also the high costs involved. The procedures are so difficult and time-consuming that companies or forwarding agencies are hired by those who can bear the cost of these expenses, burdening the processes even more. The interviewees say that these costs and time expenditure jeopardize their hiring by the companies. Many had not been able to work for months due to the delay in acquiring all the documents.

*It's possible if you have an expected specialty here. An engineer at a very advanced level, you can do it. But everything is paperwork, documents, taxes. It's a big burden for the company, that's why the company isn't interested in this. (Technical profile)*

*The driver's license, wow, it was like an odyssey, even with*

*another forwarding agency hired to do this thing, there were 10 registrations in one day, it was very time-consuming. [...] I also think that this thing was a result of a policy for the state to guarantee job opportunities. (High qualification)*

*I had my permanent visa issued in Italy, because I got married there. [...] I started doing it in Italy, had to translate the marriage for here, had to have a guy sign it and then it takes six months to have a permanent visa. After that, when you get to Brazil, you have 90 days to let the Federal Police know that you are here. It took me another six months to have the RNE. So, I got here on 11/24/2011, and my RNE is from March 2012. It took a year and a half. (Technical profile)*

*When I checked in for the visa renewal, which should be automatic, my process was rejected, but then I proved everything again and the process got lost in the Ministry of Justice, because they changed the law and between the Ministry of Justice and the Federal Police it got lost. Until last year I checked in at the ombudsman office and it was just published in the Official Gazette one month ago. (Entrepreneurs)*

Although they lament the bureaucracy, the immigrants notice some improvements in the service. They mention, for example, the reduction of the formalities for issuing the RNE, which resulted in a decrease in the time needed for it; the emission of the protocol on the same day of the request for the permanent visa, and the quickness in its concession; and the possibility to schedule an appointment with the Federal Police via the internet.

*This part of the RNE has already improved, because I just did it last month and the government decided to change it last month. When it arrives at the Federal Police, it stays there and doesn't go to the Ministry of Justice and doesn't need to be published in the Official Gazette anymore. So this is saving a lot of time. The RNE now is being issued in up to three months. (Entrepreneurs)*

*Recently the Ministry of Justice published a directive, because before, to get permanence it was necessary to wait for the Official Gazette publication, but according to the directive from the Ministry of Justice, nowadays those who request permanence, even if it's incorrect, the permanence is granted on the same day. Even if you don't have the RNE, the protocol already happens, that is, in less than two months the person already has the permanence concluded. So much so that at that point, when we arrived, I came as a student until I got it in Bauru, where there are less foreigners, but even so I had to wait six months to get the student's RNE. I mean, it's six months, but the RNE only lasts for a year, so it was only valid for six months. Nowadays it's different. (Entrepreneurs)*

*Now it has improved, the marriage visa is issued immediately. Before, they had to go visit who knows when, you kept a protocol. That could last from two to three years to get the permanent visa and during that time you couldn't work because you couldn't have an employment record book, a bank account. It used to take two years to have a permanent visa through marriage. Nowadays, it*

*takes three months and they give you a protocol immediately. With this protocol, you can apply for an employment record book. (Technical profile)*

The validation of the diploma is another obstacle to the insertion of the immigrants in the Brazilian labor market. The process described is very time-consuming, bureaucratic and expensive, reaching up to 20 thousand *reais*, in the case of the Engineering diploma. Universities demand curricular complementation, which is not always possible for those who work, besides demanding more than a year for the conclusion of the diverging courses. Furthermore, the college councils meet only twice a year to judge the validation requests. It is not understood why the validation of the diploma by a Brazilian university is not enough, requiring additional approval in professional councils, when that is the case. The vast majority abandons the validation and in the cases of the engineers and architects, the projects are signed by a Brazilian.

*They ask for a lot of documents, we spend a lot of money to validate: an absurd sum to me. [...] 1 year and a half, but it's still not approved. After you pay it takes 14 months to approve. It's too much time. (High qualification)*

*Here, the architect has to be registered at CAU<sup>32</sup>. You can only get that when you have a Brazilian diploma. I could get it, but only if I transferred my diploma. But I didn't do that, because there was a lot of paperwork and I didn't have the time to go to a school. It's two courses per year. It's a group of architects, people who get together and give the equivalent application. That's it. I found out that it's not necessary in some offices. But you can work and you can't sign. (Technical profile)*

The groups reported many episodes, experienced or observed, of racism or xenophobia, which disseminate stereotypes associated with certain nationalities, such as, for example, Colombians associated with drug trafficking, Bolivians related to underemployment in the production of clothes, Haitians and Africans identified as poor and unqualified, beyond the cases of racial discrimination.

*I only have problems with Brazilians. I work with Brazilians, the boss asks me to work overtime, I work 50 extra hours per month, but when the payment comes it only pays for 20 extra hours. I ask the boss – “Why this? I came here to work together with Brazilians, don't you want to pay me well?”. He's angry with me: ‘You're Haitian, Brazil is not your country’. (Entrepreneurs)*

*Because I'm Colombian. That's how it is: “Do you have coke?”. It's a joke, always a joke. It's funny once, but not twice, three times, four times. (Academic profile).*

*I thought I would have a better welcome. Brazilians have a very rich culture, but they're a bit uncaring with foreigners. I felt prejudiced for being Bolivian, they said: “you do needlework”. (Technical profile)*

Facing such difficulties, the immigrants adopt some strategies for insertion in the market. It is possible to enter the country with a tourist visa, renew it, and later register in a

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<sup>32</sup> Council of Architecture and Urbanism.

course, obtaining a student visa. Or to arrive in Brazil with the student visa – while looking for a company which accepts hiring and provides the work visa. People often stay in Brazil illegally, working without the required documentation, in the hope of regularization, which can happen through marriage, through offspring or through employment in a company.

*I stayed in Brazil illegally for two years, why? Because I had this objective, I knew that Europe was a bad place to go back to [...] I worked for three companies as an illegal immigrant. It wasn't just because I didn't want to do it, but also because of the difficulty to do it. First year with a student visa, two more as an illegal [...] that was a decisive moment for me, when I was in Brazil illegally and I thought: do I go back to Portugal where there is no work and where I could be in a worse situation or do I risk it here because I believe in it, I can try and it'll work [...] the job opportunity appeared in São Paulo, with a foreign company wanting to hire, I came and then I got the work visa. [...] The biggest difficulty was for the companies to also understand the process to do it, all of that. (High qualification)*

*As a tourist. I had three months to arrive here, and to get a temporary paper which the police gives to people who get married. And then, you can have all the registrations. But during this time, you can't work. I started to work in July and I still didn't have the employment record. I talked to my boss, he understood the situation and allowed me to work. It was the typical Brazilian way. (Technical profile)*

*I'm from Mexico and I've been here for six years. I've done everything here, I arrived legally, tourism, but I stayed here to work without documents and then as a student. Then I got a common-law marriage and obtained residence, and then I got my employment register signed and worked for a travel agency and now I've set up my own agency. (Entrepreneurs)*

As expected, the participants are divided between those who wish to remain in the country indefinitely, settling here, and those who see this life experience as temporary. Those who wish to stay indicate as reasons for that choice the same reasons which influenced the decision to immigrate: the tropical climate, the cordiality of the people and the potential for economic growth of the country.

*In my case, I came here because it's a personal choice, I want to live here, so there's no date limit, I want to make my life here. (Highly qualified)*

*In my case, it was very difficult to get here through documentation and all. For now, I want to stay, live here, die here. (Technical profile)*

*I think Brazil has all the natural things that it needs. Brazil can be self-sufficient. If it's managed well, Brazil has the capacity to grow a lot. Brazilians work a lot more than the people in my country. In Europe you can't work more than 40 hours per week. You are very hard-working. I think you suffer a lot with the government that you have here. I think that the Brazilian people are strong,*

*hard-working, someone who wants to advance. Brazil could be the country of the future. So much so that I chose to stay here. I've lived in many countries, and I've never felt an affinity with a country. In Brazil, you feel good here. I feel good, here. The Brazilian way is much more relaxed than in Europe. (Academic profile).*

The interviewees who wish to return to their countries or even travel to other destinations justify their decision due to the increase in the cost of living and the resulting difficulty in reaching or maintaining a certain standard of comfort, which are reflexes of the economic crisis.

*As I said, to build a life here, to have a future here, it's hard, I'm living in a country, the French in France is much easier, because we have it a lot easier, because we have free healthcare, free education, it's easier, here we have to struggle a lot and have a lot of money to have good conditions, today I don't have the money to have good conditions, so I don't know, we'll see. (Highly qualified)*

*We don't have kids and we're thinking about it. And we're thinking about healthcare, education, and there are a lot of things that work well in France. We're staying longer to be able to develop more in life, but now we're more like surviving here. We always end up with no cash in the end of the month. It's hard to accept. (Technical profile)*

#### **4. Conclusions**

The qualitative analysis indicated similarities in participants' perceptions and reaffirmed Sasaki and Assis's propositions<sup>33</sup> about supporting networks, economy-related issues, and the necessity to observe the immigration issue beyond public policies.

First, we identified the importance of reducing bureaucracy to regulate immigrants in Brazil. Besides the many documents to be provided to immigrants, the several stages of this process extend the period of time to issue them. In addition, people have difficulties to understand the legislation and procedures on this matter. We also verified the necessity of a new legal framework for migration, because the Foreigner's Statute closed the country to migratory influx and impaired the action of organizations managing immigration. The difficulty and cost of revalidating a foreign diploma is another relevant obstacle to properly employing the immigrant workforce, which often take jobs below their qualification.

Immigrants reported difficulties to enter the labor market for many reasons: companies' lack of information on the validity of the protocol issued by the Federal Police; non-recognition of their diplomas; lack of knowledge in the professional fields, since reference is important in Brazil; and even racism and xenophobia, which consider immigrants a threat to the national workforce.

In addition to the warm and mostly sunny climate and the cultural wealth, the positive aspects of immigrants' experience in Brazil were the solidarity of Brazilians, their "emotional intelligence", that is, their ability to deal with interpersonal relationships, and their ability to keep motivated to pursue their goals despite misfortunes.

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<sup>33</sup> SASAKI and ASSIS, 2012.

Immigrants understand the national economic crisis is within a global context, and they believe the situation in Europe is much worse. Besides, interviewees believe Brazil is the country of the future, and that it will quickly overcome this difficult phase due to the talent of Brazilians to overcome difficulties – with their joyful spirit, their easy way to face the world, and their intuition and creativity – and our great natural resources and growth potential. For this reason, a considerable part of the participants of the focus groups affirmed they intend to put down roots here.

The Human Resource managers defended the central role of CNIg in the immigration policy in Brazil and manifested their worries regarding the creation of an agency, which can distort the interactive character of the management of this theme. CNIg's has performed a relevant role; it is recognized as the only institution to rapidly meet the demand of companies when they need to hire foreign workforce to face the qualification deficit in the national labor market. An agency can not only centralize the decisions, but also be subject to the political conjuncture.

Bill no. 2516/2015 presents important changes to the migration law in the country by privileging immigrants' rights. However, it has some gaps regarding labor immigration and does not provide for the policy management, since it does not assign the responsibility to regulate this dimension to any governmental body. The efficacy of this law depends on its regulation. According to the stakeholders' perception about management of immigration, CNIg has complied efficiently and rapidly with this duty with social legitimacy.

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