Bradramo - Brain Drain and Academic Mobility from Portugal to Europe

(PTDC/IVC-PEC/5049/2012)

COLEÇÃO WORKING PAPERS BRADRAMO

Working Paper 3 - Bradramo's Project Methodology

Rui Gomes
Luísa Cerdeira
João Teixeira Lopes
Henrique Vaz
Rui Brites
Belmiro Cabrito
Maria de Lourdes Machado-Taylor
Dulce Magalhães
Tomás Patrocínio
Paulo Peixoto
Rafaela Ganga
Sílvia Silva

December, 2013

BRADRAMO'S PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Being the brain drain a multifaceted phenomenon, the research design follows the relational nature of the social object, articulating many dimensions of analysis. From the comparative study of four cases representing different profiles of highly skilled emigration (as identified in the summary), the study will involve the understanding of each case, and, at the same time, will seek to deliver factors and processes of comparison, translation and transfer, allowing a generalization not based on statistical probability and representativeness, rather on depth, intensity and density of analysis.

Thus, from each case and within each case, we will combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, explanation and understanding, deduction and induction, while moving back and forth between theory and practice. Following a relatively open theory model, we embrace the possibility of reshaping the initial corpus of theoretical hypothesis throughout the field work, and will avoid them as "straightjackets", understanding them more as "exciting" heuristics, which brings us closer to the extended case method proposed by Burawoy (2009).

The application of a relatively varied range of research techniques will allow the operationalization of purposes assumed beforehand, and the comparison of lived, experienced, narrated and declared practices of the players of these migratory flows, triangulating the collection of information.

The selection of the four cases will follow the intersection of the main structuring principles listed below (shown in the most significant empirical research):

- Time characteristics of mobility: permanent or temporary; long term or transitory.

- Social place in the employment system: primary segment or secondary segment of the system;

- Functional profile in the employment system: academic and scientist; other highly skilled professions;

- Type of mobility: direct (after having entered in the employment system of the sending country); indirect or latent (after a period of study in the receiving country).

In each case, we will begin with an exploratory research based on the analysis of secondary sources, either documentary (official documents on this type of migration), or statistical, associated with informal conversations with privileged informant well placed in the organizations (associations and official institutions) who deal with these flows and players.

This will be followed by focus groups in the different cases under analysis (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). Taking advantage of the intersubjective and shared nature of this technique (Krueger, 1998), we believe that prior to the application of the survey, it will be

particularly useful to identify push and pull factors and deskilling and reskilling factors, because the review of the state-of-the-art points to very general factors. In this way, the dimensions and indicators of the survey will be more accurate.

Due to the lack of systematized studies on migratory flows associated with academic mobility, it will be relevant, at the onset and from a methodological point of view, to use a crosscutting approach more suited to an effort to map the representativeness of this phenomenon. It is precisely the lack thereof that determines the establishment of a non-probabilistic intentional sample (Almeida & Pinto, 1996), which gradually helps (and by association to other research instruments) to understand not just the extent of the phenomenon, but also its intrinsic characteristics.

To this extent, the questionnaire[1] deliberately chooses a dominant audience – with high academic skills –, but must contain the many situations expressed in the study cases to be developed, which, in a way, determines a prior categorization likely to ensure comparability with the survey instrument, a comparability that allows us to discriminate determining traits in the characterization of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the structure of the questionnaire, in addition to the independent variables that characterize the target population, will seek to list a set of scales covering the following topics:

1) Push and pull factors: these two entries will distinguish, to begin with, the types of migration, including the ability to determine an idea and a plan; the access to information that supports such plan; the networks of relationships in the decision to migrate; the role of employer institutions, potential or identified (in the country of origin and country of destination); identification (or not) of a migratory chain;

2) Factors perceived as crucial in the decision to migrate: to conceive a future in which migration is an option may be determined by various factors, starting henceforth with the economic crisis; the devaluation of local resources (versus their higher value in the desired destination); the lack of career opportunities (versus more opportunities to build a career in the desired destination); unemployment (versus more jobs in the desired destination); etc.

3) Deskilling and reskilling: the decision behind migratory flows may reflect the notion of deskilling underlying a professional practice not based on the skills held, or, conversely, the possibility that the desired (or held) destination will enhance those skills, in a process of reskilling;

4) Brain gain and brain waste: the ties that migrants have with their country of origin, including ties with the contexts of production that best articulate their areas of knowledge / reliability may help understand if migratory movements contribute more to

---

[1] A directly printed version of the online survey can be accessed at the following link:
http://www.bradramo.pt/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Surveys@UC-Bradramo_V.Impressao.pdf

situations of brain gain- a situation that offers employability and remuneration not likely to be obtained in the country of origin - or to situations of brain waste – in which migration to a context with high intellectual standards may result in outsourcing that requires less skills than those held;

5) Social and cultural mobility: another decisive aspect in understanding migratory flows, and in particular those that refer to highly skilled populations, is the decision to stay for a longer or shorter period of time, and also the impact that the intersection of cultural and social aspects may have in perceiving globalization. It is important to understand to what extent the decision to migrate based, at its outset, on training and employment reasons becomes (or not) social mobility, and cultural mobility.

The provisional findings and the shortcomings and clues resulting from the survey's data analysis will provide guidelines to prepare the scripts on sociological portraits (Lahire, 2002) focused on explaining contradiction from the intersection of the application of the survey, the exploratory analysis and the results of the focus-group. Moreover, the multivariate statistical analysis of the questionnaire survey will enable the construction of profile types of migrants, each defining a particular type of relation with the phenomenon under study. From these model pathways, we will select the individuals and groups for the sociological portraits (particularly modalities, agents, contexts, situations and diachronic processes of socialization of individuals). When preparing the baseline script, we will seek to understand how the players in migratory flows under analysis have structured, throughout their lives, favourable predispositions to emigrate, and, in the tension between predispositions and multiple situations, which are the main contexts that have triggered the desire for mobility.

The sociological portraits assume the existence of multi-socialized individuals, plural agents who, throughout their pathways, have acquired a wealth of predispositions, often contrasting and even contradictory, which in a way reflects both the complexity of contemporary societies (in their institutional differentiation and of "lifeworlds") and the multidimensional nature of projects and constraints associated with these migratory flows.

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

The confrontation between multiple case studies may be maximized, by presenting the results to the public (a fact related to the double hermeneutics proposed by Giddens and the critical sociology advocated by Burawoy) in a final workshop on the reflective

interiorization of research findings in public policies steered to the players of these migratory flows

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almeida, J., & Pinto, J. (1996). *A investigação nas ciências sociais.* Lisboa: Ed. Presença.

Barbour, R., & Kitzinger, J. (1999). *Developing focus group research: politics, theory and practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Burawoy, M. (2009). *The extended Case Method.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Krueger, R. (1998). *Developing questions for focus groups.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lahire, B. (2002). *Portraits Sociologiques. Dispositions et variations individuelles.* Paris: Nathan.