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What Explains the Increase of Nepalese Migration into Portugal from 2007 till 2024?

*A Case Study on the Role of Social Networks and
Immigration Policies in Increasing Nepalese Migration
to Portugal*

Dissertation submitted by
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Attention is power. In a world shaped by hierarchical injustices, neo-colonial structures, patriarchal realities, ever threatening unjust climate crisis, the few owning the many and a serious lack of representation of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, shaped by an inherent fragility, the choice of topic remained hard.

The topic that I decided to tackle thus goes beyond the rather narrow territory of Portugal where the action takes place, it is about understanding how specific migration dynamics have been established not only there but elsewhere, it is about the people on the move. This research is an earnest attempt at trying to understand a particular migration from Nepal to Portugal, between 2007 and 2024. This gives a new insight into why specific ties emerge and people go on the move. Although my stay and training in a farm in São Teotónio, in Portugal back in 2023 has not permitted me to grasp this migration trend and its reasons, my personal experience was the initial trigger of my questioning and research.

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Abstract:

This research explores the factors contributing to the growing migration of Nepalese nationals to Portugal. Employing a qualitative case study approach, it draws on four semi-structured interviews with experts and a policy analysis of two national immigration frameworks. Inductive coding is used to explore how social networks and immigration policies interact to shape migration patterns.

In order to understand the rise in Nepalese migration to Portugal, this research applies and uses primarily the “pull” factor of Everett S. Lee’s (1966) “push-pull” migration theory.

First, the research conceptualises social networks as a central mechanism in establishing the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese migration link. From this perspective, migration is viewed as an act of individual agency related to personal decision-making processes that shape the migration tie. Second, the research analyses Portugal’s national immigration policies as permissive, reflecting an open migration approach. By integrating these two dimensions – social networks and national immigration policy – the research explains how Nepalese migration to Portugal has increased in recent years.

This research finds that social networks serve as a vehicle contributing to the increase in migration, operating through various channels such as associations, businesses and the temporary nature of immigration itself. Simultaneously, while focusing on two contested national immigration policies, the research observes that Portugal continues to adopt a permissive and open approach to migration. Ultimately, the study concludes that the combination of active social networks and favorable, permissive immigration policies enables and facilitates the increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal.

Keywords: Migration, Nepalese migration, Transnational migration, Social networks, Permissive immigration policies

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a highly politicised phenomenon, migration has severe impacts on the countries concerned, challenging their national sovereignty, affecting labour dynamics and creating demographic challenges. It also raises issues around adequate protection for incoming migrants (Piper, Rother & Rüland, 2018; Martinoia, 2018; Findlay & Wahba, 2013; Sabates-Wheeler & Koettl, 2010).

Immigration to countries in the European Union (EU) has increased significantly since the 1990s (Stalker, 2002; Kancs & Lecca, 2018). Specific migration regimes and routes have therefore emerged affecting some EU countries more than others. Within the EU, Southern European countries show a specific migration model (King, 2000). The Southern European migration model – exemplified by Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece - is characterized by their transition from countries of emigration to destinations of immigration, coupled with relatively lenient immigration policies, and ageing populations (King & DeBono, 2013; Carvalho, 2017; Domínguez-Mujica & Pérez-García, 2017).

Portugal is a country that has experienced a significant increase in immigration in recent years (Carvalho, 2022; Oliveira & Peixoto, 2022). According to the Portuguese Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA), over 1 million foreign nationals were living in Portugal in 2023, marking a 130% increase compared to the previous year 2022 (European Commission, 2024). These figures highlight a substantial increase of immigration to Portugal. Within Europe, Portugal stands out due to its distinct immigration and integration policies which accommodate a variety of communities (Malheiros & Peixoto, 2023). Portugal's "silent" transformation into an "immigration hub" is a consequence of its "permissive" national immigration policies, which facilitate obtaining employment and then applying for residency status (Makan, 2022, p.1).

Specifically, Portugal accommodates migrants from the PALOP (*Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa*) - Portuguese-speaking African countries, mostly former colonies such as Angola and Cape Verde, but also Brazil, due to the existence of bilateral migration agreements (Perdigão, 2010). While these ties remain the most prominent, there has been an increase in South Asian migration to Portugal. Migration from India accounts for 5% of total foreign population inflow, followed by Bangladesh at 4% (OECD, 2024). Similarly, the number of

Nepalese migrants to Portugal has increased rapidly from 1145 in 2011 to 16,849 in 2019, an almost fifteen-fold increase (Pereira et al., 2021, p.550, as cited in SEF, 2021). Overall, these figures represent a shift in South Asian migration towards Portugal, with the Nepalese community emerging as a new demographic.

Interestingly, despite the absence of bilateral migration agreements between Nepal and Portugal, Nepalese migration has nonetheless continued to grow (Pereira et al., 2021). As of 2022, there are 23,839 Nepalese residents in Portugal (Gaspar, Cojocarú & Carone, 2024, p.11). This growing migration in the absence of a bilateral agreement offers an valuable case study that sheds light on transnational migration dynamics (Pereira et al., 2021).

This thesis draws on two core theoretical frameworks – transnationalism and social network theory. Integrating a transnational perspective into migration studies provides a more holistic and individual-centered understanding of migration dynamics. Transnationalism assumes that social relations, fields, and spaces contribute to migration patterns, illustrating how economic, social and cultural remittances can contribute to a transnational life (Pries, 2022, p.243). Social networks theory conceptualises the social links between individuals that persist throughout society (Munshi, 2020). These frameworks are valuable in that they integrate the role of individuals in migration processes, whereas traditional migration theories tend to neglect individual agency, and focus on migration solely in relation to external drivers.

Additionally, this research aims to understand the increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal through Giddens “structuration theory” (1979), which highlights the interplay between agency and structure. Structuration theory recognises that social structures and human agency are intertwined, hinting at the “duality of structure” (Giddens, 1979, p.5, as cited in Chatterjee, Kunwar & Den Hond, 2019, p.62), which emphasises how structure remains an instrument and a result of social practices, while human agency is shaped and constrained by structures. This theory provides a comprehensive understanding of migration processes, through the interplay of agency and structure. The term “agency” will refer to established social networks that contribute to the forging and shaping of migration routes. The term “structure” will correspond to national immigration policies. In this research Portugal’s national immigration policies will be qualified as permissive policies, defined as facilitating migratory processes and enhancing mobility (Sur & Kalir, 2022). By being often intertwined with labour market needs and considerations, Portugal’s immigration policies reflect a fluid approach, able to adjust to market requirements (Carvalho, 2022).

This research aims to contribute to the migration studies in the following ways: First, it emphasises the increase in South Asian migration towards Portugal. Secondly, it moves away from traditional migration theories by offering a framework that combines a focus on the migrant experience with an analysis of the structural factors. Thirdly, it seeks to demonstrate that migration emerges through a combination of agency and structure. The goal is to highlight how social networks and permissive migration policies can contribute to migration changes. Understanding this interplay offers a more holistic and human approach to migration studies and advocates for policies that encompass both aspects.

A. Relevance

Much research documents the impact of migration on Southern EU countries, often referred to as the “Southern European model of migration” (Domínguez-Mujica & Pérez-García, 2017; King, 2000). While there are numerous characteristics that define a Southern European migration model, a key feature is its engagement with strong waves of emigration and immigration (King, 2000). Existing research on Southern European migration has focused particularly on Spain, Italy and Greece (Finotelli & Echeverría, 2017; Cavounidis, 2002). Although Portugal is often associated with Southern EU countries’ immigration models, it distinguishes itself from these traits, often dubbed the “Southern European exceptionalism”, due to its similar yet deviant nature (Carvalho, 2017, p.502). One central feature associated with the Southern European migration model is a lack of proactive immigration integration policies. This is not the case for Portugal, which has made significant progress in this field (Cook, 2018).

Although research on Portugal’s immigration is slowly growing, many issues remain under-explored. Portugal is affected by various types of migration and offers diverse visa schemes, such as the Golden Visa and high-skilled labour visas. These affect national migration dynamics and highlight the necessity for further research. Without sufficient migration research, housing shortages, irregular status, lack of migrant protections and increasing exploitation are likely to remain persistent challenges (Pereira et al., 2021; Carreiras, 2024). Through continuous research, effective immigration and integration policies can be designed to counteract the often precarious and vulnerable positions of migrants.

This research covers the period from 2007 to 2024, as these years saw changes in the national immigration policies in Portugal. In 2007, the “expression of interest” policy, which facilitated

migration, was introduced (Malheiros & Peixoto, 2023). This policy was revoked in 2024 (Portugal Gov., 2025). This explains the chosen timeframe.

B. The Research Question

While this case study focuses on the migration link between Nepal and Portugal, it also explores the impact of social networks and permissive immigration policies on migration in Portugal. It seeks to provide relevant insights into broader migration trends in Portugal. It offers a lens through which to grasp the mechanics behind migration and grants insights into a global phenomenon operating on various scales and across many countries. It sheds light on how social networks and immigration policies influence migration. This study is therefore guided by the following research question:

What explains the increase of Nepalese migration into Portugal from 2007 till 2024?

Chapter 2: The Hypotheses

While the research question has been presented in the above section, it is guided by two hypotheses that will be tested through qualitative research. This will involve a qualitative analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, followed by a policy analysis.

The two leading hypotheses are listed below:

- 1. Agency perspective: Social networks have contributed to the development of transnational Nepalese-Portuguese migration ties.*

The first hypothesis focuses on the emergence of the transnational migration ties between Nepal and Portugal. The increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal is attributed to the fundamental role of social networks enabling migration. Social networks are not only seen as an enabler of migration but also as a guiding force in determining where people migrate to (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022). This phenomenon, therefore, remains central to the formation of transnational migration ties. Here, the term ‘transnational tie’ refers to: “The diverse complex of the social relationships and practices that develop at a distance (and the identifications that

underpin them), through which migrants exert a significant, provable and reciprocal influence on non-migrants in their countries of origin” (Boccagni, 2009, p.20, as cited in Boccagni, 2011, p.1). As such, transnational practices are understood to reflect relations facilitated through social networks. Social networks are therefore a fundamental component of transnationalism.

Transnationalism is reflected in the movement of Nepalese migrants to Portugal who maintain strong ties with their country of origin through various forms of remittances, including monetary, informational and social. This research explores how transnational ties have been reinforced through social networks.

2. *Structural perspective: The increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal is facilitated by permissive national immigration policies.*

The second hypothesis relies on the role of national immigration policies. An immigration policy is defined for this research as: “Government’s statements of what it intends to do or not to do (including laws, regulations, decisions or orders) in regards to the selection, admission, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens (Bjerre et al., 2014, p.559).” Another term to be clarified for this research is “permissive immigration policies”. This refers to immigration policies that enhance immigrants’ economic, legal, social or cultural opportunities (Lopes, 2014). This term was selected because it encompasses a specific approach to migration that is in opposition to more restrictive stances (Sur & Kalir, 2012). Of course, immigration policies may also combine permissive and restrictive features.

To build on existing literature, the term permissive will be used as it reflects a flexible and open approach to managing immigration. The research considers Portugal’s immigration policies as permissive.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

1. Migration in a globalised world

Migration, as an overarching phenomenon, describes the mobility of people and has been a persistent historical feature. Rising socio-economic inequalities, the development of transportation and the pressing climate crisis have contributed to new waves of migration (Castles, 2013; Esses, 2018). Migration remains a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by a variety of external and internal factors. The discipline of migration studies has undergone many transformations, shifting away from an analysis of the external factors that trigger and enable migration towards a focus on the migrant - the individual who migrates. The following section therefore analyses the concepts of transnational migration ties, social networks and labour migration.

A. The emergence of transnational migration ties

This research analyses specifically the migration tie from Nepal to Portugal, but it exemplifies the broader notion of transnationalism that aims to highlight how migration ties emerge and endure over time. According to Boccagni (2011), the concept of transnationalism encompasses the existence of continuous ties reflecting various dimensions. Firstly, migrants' personal ties with non-migrants, specifically those left behind in their country of origin. Secondly, migrants' interaction with institutions in their country of origin. Lastly, there are symbolic or emotional ties to the life left in the country of origin (Boccagni, 2011, p.1).

In the context of human mobility, the concept of transnational migration has gained traction as it understands the act of migration as the emergence of a link between the country of origin and the country of destination (Schiller, 1992). The overarching terminology of “transmigrant,” encompasses different possible ties such as: “The migrants’ interpersonal ties with non-migrants (especially family members left behind); or the interactions of migrants with the institutions of the homeland [...] or even the symbolic and emotional ties of migrants with their past life experience at home” (Boccagni, 2011, pp.118-119). The concept of transnational ties touches on the definition of a cross-border (transnational) social phenomenon and highlights the possibility of a two-way relationship that takes place at a distance (Faist, 2010).

Levitt and Jaworsky (2008) underline that migrants are continuously embedded in multiple sites and layers of the transnational field. This highlights how social life can take place across borders, while also emphasising the boundaries of the nation-state (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2008,

p.130). Furthermore, the notion of transnational migration accentuates the various ways in which migrants can engage with their country of origin and the spaces they inhabit, allowing for a transnational perspective (ibid.).

The transnational migration framework highlights the various processes, forms and incorporations that migrants engage with. It questions central migration concepts such as locality and ethnicity, illustrating that other factors also influence migrants' identity construction (Caglar, 2022). The emergence of transnational migration ties is not exclusive to the country of origin and the host country, it also hints at the flow of "people, money and social remittances" that connect the two (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2008). Levitt uses the term "social remittances" to refer to the diffusion of ideas, norms, practices and identity-shaping factors (Levitt, 2001 as cited in Levitt & Jaworsky, 2008). Therefore, transnational migration highlights individuals who move across borders, while maintaining ties to the country of origin in the economic, social, political and cultural fields. One relevant feature transnational migration ties, is that they may foster migration routes, boosting further migration.

B. Social networks enable migration flows

The emergence of transnational migration ties facilitates migration by making migratory routes visible and enabling connections to be established between the country of origin and the host country. Another aspect that enables migratory trajectories is framed by social networks, which embed individuals in a complex set of social ties including with the people left in the country of origin.

The theory of "social networks" of migrants relies on the role of multiple interpersonal ties: "Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey, 1988, p.396 as cited in Keskiner et al., 2022, p.4)." However, Keskiner et al. (2022) argues that while this specific definition provides insight into the role of social networks in migration, it overlooks the fact that social networks extend beyond interpersonal relationships and are also influenced by specific structural contexts.

Placing the concept of social networks within migration theory acknowledges that individuals are affected by the decisions of those around them (Bilecen & Lubbers, 2021). Within the

established New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory, migration is presented as a strategic choice to increase income resources through the utilisation of an individual's mobility, which can be related to a household's strategic plan, highlighting economic incentives that can arise due to migration (Oso et al., 2022). This highlights the collective social dynamics that enable migration flows, demonstrating that migration does not occur in isolation.

Social networks are a fundamental aspect of migration because they enable and facilitate further migration (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022). According to Fu & Hao (2018) migration patterns are initially shaped by the decision-making process of an individual, and are then influenced by the decision-making process of their social network. They highlight the interconnection between individual choices and social networks choices, which can trigger and further cause migration (ibid.). Here, social networks accelerate migration processes.

The role of social networks in migration is essential; they can be enabling factors that further channel migration flows. While introducing this notion emphasises the social forces that enable migration, focusing on this specific aspect shows that migration is not only solely enabled by external and structural factors.

C. International labour migration: Is labour driving migration flows?

While studying migration, it is crucial to focus on labour migration - an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in a globalised world. Theories surrounding labour migration focus on the redistribution of the workforce from low productivity areas to high productivity areas. This suggests that the movement of people aligns with specific market and labour conditions (Oso et al., 2022, p.118). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2021), "international labour migration" refers to the movement of people across borders in relation to economic incentives and market dynamics. While this remains an overarching definition, it highlights the link between the market dynamics and labour mobility.

Scholarship has hinted at the segmentation of labour, highlighting a division between low- and high-skilled workers and reinforcing a hierarchy of skills that neglects certain professions and their essential societal role (Farris & Bergfeld, 2023; Ferguson, 2019). Vigouroux (2017) questions skill classification, due to its hierarchical structuring of the workforce, particularly

affecting migrants working in the low-skilled sector. Migration policies targeting low-skilled workers are frequently temporary in nature, and usually do not lead to the grant of full rights to migrants (Kuptsch & Martin, 2011).

International migration is a transnational phenomenon that enables specific demographic shifts related to the labour market (Piper & Withers, 2018). Therefore, within the context of transnationalism, labour migration remains a key factor in enabling and shifting these flows. Migrant workers who migrate due to labour conditions, whether skilled or unskilled, often share one thing in common: they are granted fewer rights (ibid.). Employing migrants, therefore, takes on a political-economic dimension, as migrants' rights are often limited, leaving them in more vulnerable positions (Lusis & Bauder, 2010). Transnational migration is intertwined with labour migration, reflecting political and economic incentives.

2. The political economy of global migration

Migration and political-economic factors have always been intertwined. Phillips (2011) emphasises that the international political economy is interrelated with global migration, and drawing these links allows the agency of economic factors to unfold. Examining the foundations of the global economy makes it easier to understand how they interact (Phillips, 2011). Schierup and Castles (2017) observe that migrant workers are disproportionately affected by the lack of labour rights protection and the deregulation of labour markets. As they occupy certain positions within the labour market, migrant workers remain directly affected by changes within the global political economy (ibid.). This interconnectedness also highlights the interaction between migration policies and economic market dynamics. Furthermore, Phillips (2009) highlights how governments and policies enable these migratory flows. The political economy of global migration illustrates the complex interplay between political and economic factors affecting the “openness” of national borders. Therefore, to understand the evolution of migration relations, it is necessary to study the intertwined political and economic factors.

A. Different layers of migration governance

The term “migration governance” encompasses all the different actors and processes involved in shaping migration patterns and flows. It is crucial to understand that migration governance

not only responds to ongoing migration, but also contributes to shaping migration flows (Geddes, 2022). The difficulty with migration governance terminology is that it involves many stakeholders, such as “local governments, national governments, the private sector, regional organisations, and international organisations (ibid., p.313)” in the decision-making process, so establishing specific migration policies remains challenging. The IOM defines migration governance as follows: “The combined frameworks of legal norms, laws and regulations, policies and traditions as well as organisational structures (subnational, national, regional and international) and the relevant processes that shape and regulate states’ approaches with regard to migration in all its forms, addressing rights and responsibilities and promoting international cooperation (IOM, 2019, p.136 as cited in IOM, 2019, p.2).” This shows that, although migration governance often remains within a national context, agenda setting and policy making involves a multitude of actors that should be considered.

Although countries have different migration governance practices, they are often subject to different levels of governance that influence the design of the internal migration policies. In Portugal, for example, the framework of the EU constitutes one layer in the multi-level governance system that influences migration policies. The peculiarity of residing within the EU is that it allows the free movement of its citizens and has established a common migration and asylum policy (Börzel & Risse, 2017). Another challenge within the EU migration governance scheme is the complex interaction between various actors. This can be understood as a network of interactions between “different Member States, supranational institutions, and various non-state actors (Geddes, 2022, p.317),” which shapes the migration policy agenda. The 2015 European migrant crisis highlighted a general flaw in the EU migration governance, with the Dublin Regulation resulting in refugees and asylum-seekers residing in the country of entry (Guiraudon, 2017, p.154). Although there are national approaches to migration governance, EU migration governance remains an overarching framework that influences migration flows.

B. Immigration policies: Permissive policies as a means of filling labour gaps

Migration policies continue to be motivated by various factors and can reflect multiple approaches, ranging from openness and supportive, to restrictive and limiting (De Haas, Natter & Vezzoli, 2016). Although migration policies vary along this spectrum, migration remains intertwined with economic needs. Regardless of what approach they reflect, such policies are often driven by economic, political, and social factors (Castles, 2004).

This research employs the term “permissive” immigration policies, which can be considered an open migration approach. Permissive immigration policies refer to a more fluid approach facilitating migration processes. According to Sur and Kalir (2012), these policies reflect “regimes of permissiveness” that facilitate lenient conditions, and that often allow informal migration to emerge (p.19). According to the above definition, permissiveness allows for more immigration, but it can also lead to an increase in informal migration. Here, Sur and Kalir (2012) position this in opposition to protectionist policies.

Permissive immigration policies therefore tend to limit regulatory migration control and the mobility of migrants. Such “regimes of permissiveness” tend to exploit the irregular status of migrants and benefit from “implementation deficiency” in ensuring the proper execution of immigration policies (Sur & Kalir, p.14). Although this responsibility should fall on the state, they can often fail to do so successfully (ibid.).

Employing permissive immigration policies also involves adopting a “*laissez faire*” faire approach towards migration. This approach acknowledges the emergence of informal practices due to a lack of precision and unwillingness to clarify expectations for migrants (Pickus, 2014). While such open approaches view mobility as a fundamental aspect of human life and aim to facilitate it, they also reflect certain utilitarian perspectives by regarding migration as an economic benefit and seeking to fill specific labour market gaps (Velasco, 2016; Bartram, 2010).

C. The contradiction of open immigration policies

By “open immigration policies”, I refer to policies that favour and enable migration. One example of this could be high-skilled visa schemes that advocate for workers under specific conditions. Such schemes demonstrate the interaction between selective market demands and the establishment of immigration policies.

One challenge arising from open and permissive immigration policies is that they selectively protect migrants depending on economic needs (De Genova, 2015). Importantly, while open borders are essential to allow migrants to immigrate, adequate immigration integration policies must be set up. While open immigration approaches are certainly important, it is also necessary to establish adequate integration policies that contribute to the proper integration of migrants.

According to Anderson (2013), immigration policies themselves already distinguish between citizens and migrants.

Anderson (2013) describes the process of “bordering”, whereby immigration policies are designed and borders are set by selecting the aspects deemed necessary by the respective society. While openness reflected in established immigration policies might allow for more migration, this remains a selective procedure that contributes to a distinction between the citizens and migrants.

Overall then, the manner in which immigration policies are established reflects a highly selective and political approach. Therefore, adopting an open immigration approach can enable specific types of migration to emerge. A lack of control and regularisation can lead to an increase in irregular statuses (Baldwin-Edwards, 2008). A challenge encountered with open policies is the lack of control and the reinforcement of implemented immigration policies.

Additionally, another consequence of open immigration policies is the commodification of migrants within market dynamics. McGovern (2012) emphasises how immigration policy has become essential for addressing economic shortcomings. Specifically, to address labour shortages in professions associated with “low status” and physically demanding work (McGovern, 2012, p.490). In specific industries, migrant labour are often favoured due their status and fewer rights (King & Rueda, 2008).

Openness towards migration is certainly a strategic instrument that facilitates specific migration. Therefore, it remains crucial to advocate and ensure open immigration policies. However, open immigration policies can also reflect an utilitarian approach that considers specific market needs.

Chapter 4: Theoretical framework: The Push-Pull theory, a book with missing pages?

The push-pull theory of migration attributed to the influential work of Everett S. Lee (1966) examined migration through a two sided framework, which qualified migration into “pull” and into “push” categories. This new perspective in the migration landscape focused on the motives behind the aspirations of mobility. In comparison to other timely theories it provided a more

balanced perception of the factors that contribute to migration, showing that migration could be enabled through various push and pull factors (Lee, 1966).

The novelty of this framework is that it allows for a more nuanced perception of what enables migration (Krishnakumar & Indumathi, 2014). Initially, the theory offered a broader focus on the place of origin and place of destination, thereby suggesting migration to be driven by those two strands. The push factor may be linked to hardship in the country of origin. The pull factor may be associated with the opportunity of a better future in the country of destination (Van Hear, Bakewell & Long, 2020, p.4). The framework distinguishes between positive and negative factors confronted at the place of origin and destination, and attempts to qualify different factors contributing to mobility (Hoffmann et al., 2019).

Whilst this theory offered an insight into a wider spectrum of drivers of migration, it has been contested, due to its static view of migration processes (De Haas, 2011; Garelli & Tazzioli, 2020). De Haas (2011) argues that an important factor to consider is that motivations, circumstances or trajectory often change during the migration process. Another criticism is that it contributes to the lack of acknowledgement of the agency of the migrant, rendering them invisible by disregarding their internal motives to migrate (De Haas, 2021). “Push-pull models tend to be static and tend to portray migrants as ‘passive pawns’ lacking any agency (which can perhaps be defined as the ability of people to make independent choices – to act or not act in specific ways – and, crucially, to alter structure) and fail to conceptualize migration as a process” (De Haas, 2010 a, as cited in De Haas, 2011, pp.8-9). As illustrated, a contested aspect of the push-pull model remains the lack of agency attributed to the migrants. Mezzadra and Nunes (2010) emphasize the autonomy of migrants as a critical response to the classical established logics of push-pull theory. The lack of agency attributed to the migrants remains a central critique towards the push-pull theory, as it contributes to reinforcing the perception of migrants as passive actors (Mezzadra & Nunes, 2010).

Another missing piece within the push-pull theory is the lack of mention of temporality (Hao, 2012, p.11). Hao (2012) argues that migration, being a procedural phenomenon, is therefore inseparable from the notion of time. Due to individuals experiencing migration over time and being of unfolding nature it would require the incorporation of some sort of temporal element. Another expansive attempt to the push-pull theory hints at the inclusion of power or

hierarchical structures. Scholarship emphasizes the salience of the presence of power within migration processes (Fernández-Molina & Tsourapas, 2024; De Haas, 2008).

1. Understanding migration through pull actors: Agency and structure, the missing pieces

The terms of agency and structure cannot be utilized without referring to the theory of structuration established by Giddens (1979). This theory, being essential within the sociological discipline, explains the relationship between individuals and external social forces that act upon them (Lamsal, 2012, p.113). Through the lens of the structuration theory the central components are the presence of structure and agency. The aspect of agency within the theory is qualified as: “the basic human acts and resulting activities (Lamsal, 2012, p.115).” Therefore, the term of agency is associated with action performed by an individual agent. Additionally, Giddens highlights the duality between structure and agency, as human actors remain the enablers of the societal structures by establishing values and norms. While Giddens qualifies structure into different categories, in this research the notion of structure will remain associated as a set of rules and framework that guide human action (Lamsal, 2012, p.113).

Giddens’ theory (1979) also distinguishes between various actions contributing to the creation of agency and different processes of structures, the definition of agency and structure that will be utilized in this research will be defined below. It is salient to recognize that the interaction between agency and structure derives from this theory. Furthermore, this interaction remains a central focus of this research.

After having dissected the core of the push-pull theory and critically assessed its limits this research will utilize the notion of pull factors while looking at the phenomenon of migration. Pull factors refer to the attraction exercised on migrants by a specific region or country (Urbański, 2022, p.1).

In this research, one notion associated with the pull factors is the formation of transnational ties. as this theory focuses on the agency of migrants and on the manner that the creation of social networks contributes to migration. The other theoretical frame for the research will allow us to examine the structural dimension of the permissive immigration policies; it can also be

seen as a pull factor of migration. The reliance on the pull aspect of the push-pull theory is justified by the focus of this research on the country of destination, Portugal. This study does not analyze the push factors that remain present in the country of origin, Nepal; therefore, the push aspects remain unaddressed by this research.

A. Agent perspective: Transnational migration ties, a pull factor?

Within the sphere of migration, a foundational aspect to consider remains the agency of the migrants in forging transnational migration ties. According to the IOM (2010), the concept of transnationalism remains essential to understand ongoing cross-border exchanges between the country of origin and destination. Furthermore, the transnational lens in migration studies focuses on the connections between individuals, societies and communities. This contributes to the emergence of transnational migration ties (IOM, 2010, p.1). Transnational migration demonstrates the interconnection between migration and global capitalism by identifying migration as being enmeshed in labour market dynamics (Glick-Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1992).

After having conceptualized the vastness of transnational migration ties, it remains fundamental to forge a definition of agency that will allow to justify the focus on the migrant while being part of the transnational migration tie. The definition of agency that will be utilized is the following one:

“To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degrees of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree (Sewell, 1992, p. 20, as cited in Bakewell, 2010, p.1694,) .”

The quote above elaborates on the ability of choice and control within social relations. This definition remains essential to understand the emergence of transnational migration ties as it puts emphasis on the aspect of agency.

The definition of transnational migration that will be central to this research is characterized as: “ [...] the cross border processes of migrant groups whose social relations and practices form a connection between two or more states (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995, p. 48, as cited in,

Jakubowicz, 2012, p. 5).” An important complementary aspect of this definition is the emphasis on the migrant’s agency in the formation of a tie. It stresses that the formation of a tie is a direct result of the migrant’s active decision-making process. To differentiate the formation of a transnational migration tie from other forms of cross-border phenomenon, Portes et al. (1999) highlight that it must involve a significant number of people migrating, occur regularly and represent a new route (p.219).

As the theory of transnational migration employed here refers to the formation of specific links, it remains essential to complement the aspect of social networks that remain of value for this research.

Social networks being understood as migration instruments highlight the importance of human connection that remain central to migration and contribute to its increase (Deléchat, 2001). Social network theory has gained prominence in migration studies as it is a central instrument for explaining how specific migration flows have emerged (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022). From an analytical point of view, a social network can be understood as the social links of individuals that spread throughout society, influencing each other’s behaviour (Mitchell, 1974). It explores the interconnection of individuals that roam in the same network.

The aspect of agency being associated with the creation of transnational migration ties through social networks remains a central theoretical component within this research that will guide the data collection process.

B. Structure: Permissive Immigration policies as a pull factor?

The other crucial aspect of this research remains the term “structure”. While structure remains a central theoretical notion within social science, it becomes challenging to understand what it includes. To avoid any definitional dilemmas, the definition of structure that will be utilized here is the one where structure refers to the “[...] abstract organization of reciprocally defined social categories that are seen to comprise some social whole (Martin & Lee, 2015, p.713).” To refer back to the structuration theory Giddens defines structure as a set of rules, norms that organizes human action within society (Lamsal, 2012). In the dichotomous relation between

agency and structure, structure remains the factor that can constrain human agency (Chatterjee, Kunwar & Den Hond, 2019).

The conceptual importance of structure in this research stems from the role immigration policies play as structuring factors that organize and enable migration. In this research then, structure will be considered as synonymous with immigration policies, as it remains a structural force enabling and organizing migration. Accordingly, the term of permissive immigration policies will be utilized as defined in our hypothesis. To understand what this entails, we will lean on the general definition provided by De Haas and Czaika (2013). They define immigration policies as the: “[...] rules (i.e acts, laws, directives, regulations and measures) national states define and implement with the (often only implicitly stated) objective to affect the volume, origin, direction, and internal composition of immigration flows (De Haas & Czaika, 2013, p.3).” As the quote suggests immigration policies remain formulated and designed by entities, such as national states, to guide migration flows.

Permissive immigration policies refer to immigration policies that take an approach which contribute to the enhancement of opportunities facilitated through specific policies (Lopes, 2014). This terminology has been consciously chosen due to its opposition towards the terminology of restrictive immigration policies. Overall, the term implies that the immigration policies remain more favourable of ensuring smoother migration processes (Sur & Kalir, 2012).

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter will account for the various methodological choices that have been made in this thesis to answer the research question. This study uses qualitative research methods to inquire about the increase of the Nepalese-Portuguese migration tie. This analysis aims to identify the pull factors and to understand the significant increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal. The twin-fold approach allows to merge two central factors contributing to the increase of migration: first agency, presented through the formation of social networks, and, second, the structural element, reflected through the national immigration policies in Portugal.

These two aspects are qualified as pull factors that contribute to the enablement of migration, both from an agency perspective and from the point of view of the structuring environment, as determined by the permissive migration policies

A. Qualitative Research Methods

This analysis will use qualitative research methods to examine both the semi-structured interviews and migration policies. Qualitative research methods are useful here, as they provide a means to question and identify intangible factors, such as the presence of social norms, or other invisible factors (Mack et al., 2005, pp.1-2). These factors shape human behaviour and institutional practices.

Due to its broad nature, it remains challenging to find an all-encompassing definition of what qualitative research is. However, a definition provided by Miles and Huberman (1994) manages to flesh out a comprehensive construct: “Qualitative analysis with its close-up look, can identify *mechanisms*, going beyond sheer associations. It is unrelentingly *local*, and deals well with the *complex* network of events and processes in a situation. It can sort out the *temporal* dimension, showing clearly what preceded what, either through direct observation of *retrospection* (p.147, Miles & Huberman, 1994).” As the quote highlights, qualitative research methods aim at demonstrating and identifying patterns. It remains a tool to focus closely on numerous dimensions while observing one specific event.

Another aspect of qualitative research methods is that it regroups various data collection practices, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. These remain effective methods to collect data (p.2, Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative research methods are defined by their intention, often through the formulation of open-ended research questions (Mack et al., 2005). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is flexible and, therefore requires an in-depth procedural analysis through which a specific phenomenon can be understood.

Specifically in field of public policy, Maxwell (2019) emphasises the importance of utilising qualitative research methods by highlighting three key points: “(1) meaning matters, (2) context matters, and (3) process matters (p.181).” These three aspects suggest that qualitative research allows to gain an understanding that goes beyond numerical proof but instead provides the tools to identify patterns and mechanisms (p.183, Maxwell, 2019). Ultimately, qualitative research methods have been proven as the appropriate and relevant methodological tool to understand the formation of a transnational migration ties between Nepal and Portugal.

This research employs an inductive coding approach. Inductive research is understood as a research approach that focuses on generating theory from the collected data (Williams & Moser, 2019, p.47). Specifically, when discussing inductive coding, it highlights how the coding procedure allows to identify and build a specific theory from the gathered data. Therefore, coding remains a tool to identify and categorize specific ideas and to demonstrate a potential pattern (Gibbs, 2007).

This analysis employs semi-structured interviews as its chosen data collection practice. The reason that semi-structured interviews remained utilized is due to their relatively loose structure; consisting of open-ended questions surrounding a specific area to be explored (Britten, 1995). Semi-structured interviews remain the preferred data collection method when the research goal is to understand the emergence of a specific phenomenon (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This methodological choice reflects the appropriate instrument to answer the established research question and to identify specific patterns explaining the increase of Nepalese migration to Portugal.

The Semi-structured interviews are analysed in combination with a policy analysis. Policy analysis is a multidimensional investigation process that intends to critically assess the establishment and the results of specific policies (Dunn, 2015, p.2). Here, it offers the possibility to evaluate the intention behind an established policy. Consequently, in the context of the increasing Nepalese migration to Portugal, a policy analysis is included as it aims to investigate the migration policies. The policy analysis, therefore, offers the possibility to understand whether the migration policies in Portugal are permissive and contribute to the increase of Nepalese migration to Portugal.

B. Sampling and methods

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with four experts. The first was a scholar proficient in the Nepalese transnational migration tie. The second was the head of the *Solidariedade Imigrante* association in the Beja region. The third was a Nepalese intercultural mediator in Fundão. The final semi-structured interview was conducted with a member of a civil society in São Teotónio. These four semi-structured interviews each lasted around one hour and a half, and were based on a set of questions appendix at the end of the research. Due to geographical constraints all these interviews were conducted online. The question

concerned the formation of the Nepalese transnational migration tie and the manner that social networks contributed to it.

The analyzed policies were selected based on the number of mentions in academic literature. Moreover, the policies needed to have a relation to the process of granting residency, naturalization processes and economic activity.

C. Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded through the Otter application, transcribing all the recorded data. Afterwards the content was coded and analysed qualitatively, while using the theoretical framework. The establishment of patterns between the theoretical notions explained in the theoretical framework were identified. These interview codes were generated inductively.

The selected policies are analyzed through the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework.

D. Ethical considerations

The central ethical concern of this thesis is that it indirectly involves a vulnerable group, the Nepalese immigrants in Portugal. Even though there was never direct contact with the migrants in question, it is essential to recognise that they are the ones “analyzed” and to acknowledge their indirect involvement in this research. This research, however, is conscious of the fragile and precarious situation that migrants are subject to. Furthermore, it ensured that migrants are in no way stigmatized or discriminated against during the research process.

Prior to conducting interviews, each participant was informed about the research and signed a consent agreement. The recording of the interview just passed through consent and respondents were always given the choice not to answer questions that generated discomfort. The participants remain anonymous and are only referred to via their function. The data is safely stored on a computer that I am the only one to have access to.

Chapter 6: Case study: Contextualising Portugal

1. Case study: Portugal as an immigration hub in the landscape of the EU?

Portugal's position within the European Union adds another dimension to its immigration policies, as it contributes to its appeal to non-EU nationals as a gateway within the EU (Esteves, 2022). Simultaneously, it contributes to the creation of friction between national and EU immigration policies (Correia-Lopes, 2014).

According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), an index that measures the integration of migrants across areas such as labor market mobility, education and accessibility of nationality, Portugal was ranked as the third best country regarding its policies towards the integration of migrants (Huddleston, 2020). This distinguishes Portugal as having a comprehensive approach to integration and having easily accessible immigration policies, in comparison to other EU countries.

Additionally the fact that Portugal has remained relatively open while other neighbouring countries moved towards a more restrictive approach has allowed to promote Portugal as an attractive destination. Consequently this has contributed to its attractiveness as an immigration destination, within its geographic localisation (Cook, 2018). As a post financial crisis move, Portugal has demarked itself as offering various visa possibilities that enabled different migration flows and mobilities possibilities, such as the Golden Visa scheme, offering residency in exchange for a high amount of capital invested (€500, 000) or alternatively, the introduction of the D Visa granting residency to non EU citizens with a stable passive income (Cojocaru, Gaspar & Wang, 2025, p.2). While these are privileged migration routes, they demonstrate Portugal's open migration governance approach. This exhibits Portugal as representing a specific approach towards migration which distinguishes itself in the context of the EU.

2. Increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal

Nepalese migration to Portugal has emerged as a recent and developing phenomenon. Pereira et al., (2021) found that of the Nepali population that left the country, 85% relied on the services of recruitment agencies to reach their destination country (p.502). Specifically, the migration journey to Portugal, had an average cost of 9600 € (ibid.).

The Servico de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) reports that the Nepalese population continues to be concentrated in the Lisbon area, representing the third-largest foreign nationality (2020). While the general trend is for Nepalese migrants to be concentrated in urban areas, data shows that within the coastal area of the Alentejo, 95% of the Nepalese migrants reside in the municipality of Odemira (PORTDATA, 2020). The municipality of Odemira is home to large agribusinesses and is considered as the main producer of raspberries in the region (Dias, 2015). As exemplified in the research of Pereira et al. (2021) the inflow of Nepalese migrants to Portugal is related to the phenomenon of labour migration, as Portugal is experiencing labour shortages in certain industries.

3. The Qualitative Analysis

In this qualitative analysis, this research will investigate the two hypotheses established at the beginning of the paper. This analysis aims at understanding the increase of Nepalese in Portugal. Through the two-fold hypotheses, two aspects are identified as contributing to the significant increase of Nepalese migration to Portugal.

The first hypothesis explains this increase through the formation of transnational migration ties enabled by the widespread use of social networks. This hypothesis has been explored through semi-structured interviews, examining the factors contributing to the emergence of the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese migration tie, with emphasis on social networks.

The second hypothesis and aspect focuses on the permissive national immigration policies in Portugal. Understanding the landscape of immigration policies that facilitate migration remains crucial to understand the structure enabling the emergence of this transnational migration tie. This section investigates the way immigration policies are enmeshed with the labour market, and accommodate the market dynamics. Finally, the permissive immigration policies will be discussed.

Due to the leading twifold hypotheses the analysis is, therefore, separated into two sections that aim at offering a vast explanation of the significant increase of Nepalese migration. The combination of these two aspects are to be associated with the pull factors of the push-pull theory established by Lee (1966). As mentioned in the theoretical framework, this research

does not solely rely on this theory, more so, it highlights the essential pull aspect. The combination of these two aspects aims at investigating the various nuances of pull factors.

***A. Qualitative research methods: The semi-structured interviews:
Transnational migration enabled through social networks?***

The qualitative-analysis of the interviews shows relevant factors that contribute to the formation of the Nepalese-Portuguese transnational migration tie. This section explores the formation of transnational migration ties through three factors: the presence of associations, the creation of businesses and the specific temporality.

Transnational migration refers to migration that connects the destination country to the country of origin. Migrants indeed retain a link with their country of origin although they are connecting with their country of destination. This tie can be enabled through various means. Monetary aspects or even social capital can explain why migrants keep the link with their relatives left in their country of origin while settling abroad (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2008). While the monetary aspect linked to the requests from those left at “home” can be a central component of transnational migration it should not be the sole aspect. Aspects such as social capital and social remittances, referring to the exportation of ideas and manners remain a central component of social networks (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2010, p.3) or this diffusion of economic and social remittances, social networks play a prominent role. This research focuses on the emergence of the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese migration tie aims to identify which factors have contributed to it and shaped this specific tie. These aspects remain relevant as they are associated with the notion of agency that reflects the backbone of the structuration theory established by Giddens (1979).

The concept of agency remains central to our analysis, although it has somewhat been neglected in the push-pull theory. The pull aspect that this research puts forward is linked to the existence of social networks for migrants, and they explain the agency aspect in this research.

- i) Transnational bond maintained through the presence of Nepalese associations?*

Transnational migration ties are formed through a cross-border interaction between the country of origin and the country of settlement. It creates an interaction and a sustained tie. This interaction and solidified social network can take various forms. While social networks are often connected to family relations, it also goes beyond and refers to an organized network (Keskiner et al., 2022). Associations remain vast and encompass a multiplicity of organisations, ranging from school chorus to trade unions. The associations all rest on a voluntary basis and reflect some sort of kinship (Moya, 2005, p.834).

“So, for instance, in Portugal, there are at least three Nepalese associations of immigrants. From these three, two are women Nepalese association organizations. Okay, we can say it's not usual, for example Indians and Pakistani don't have specific associations for defending their rights as women.”

The quote stems from an NGO member in the rural part of Portugal, focusing on migrants rights specifically towards agribusinesses that employ them. Among the Nepalese associations, one focuses on being a Nepalese migrant in Portugal and the two women associations defend women rights. These associations intend to raise awareness around specific issues regarding the Nepalese population in Portugal. As mentioned by Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2010) social networks can manifest into various forms: some result from direct family ties and others can exist to foster an environment where information wanders. While migrants often have a precarious status, the creation of associative spaces permits to bring some clarity regarding the specific concerns that the respective group shares. Those spaces also permit the circulation of information specifically looking at migration processes (Moya, 2005).

The creation of associations fostering information on the visa conditions of Nepalese in Portugal triggers further migration, as they facilitate the access to relevant knowledge regarding these processes. According to Bilecen et al. (2018) established cross-border structures which can be understood in relational terms remain identifiable through the transmission of social networks. These networks contribute to the enablement of new waves of migration, as they make possible the diffusion of social capital and social remittances (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2010). Bilecen et al. (2018) also identified the creation of specific groups and associations, raising awareness surrounding the safety of a specific community.

“I think they have their own mechanisms to defend them from mafia. They participate in many associations like Solidariedade Imigrante and our leaders and members have a very good relation with those Nepalese associations in Lisbon.”

The excerpt of the interview above stems from the head of the Solidariedade Imigrante Association, in the region of Beja, located in the Southern part of Portugal. The quote hints at the organizational capacity of the Nepalese community through the creation of associations. According to Melo and Silva (2009) the importance of associations results from their role as a tool to branch out a specific community in the destination country.

Similarly, Góis and Marques (2023) recognise that the presence of organisational structures facilitating action and awareness remains a central aspect to the maintenance of a tie with the country of origin. The maintenance of the transnational bond allows the reinforcement of a shared identity. Góis and Marques (2023) go further in the analysis by showing how different associations provide diverse types of information and demonstrating that associations focusing on migrant rights and labour rights increase awareness on these specific aspects. The “transnational practices”, (p.24) that Góis and Marques (2023) identify as a form of sharing information across borders contribute to the enablement of further migratory patterns. Therefore the maintenance of a tie between the migrant community and the country of origin raises awareness on the migration processes and can therefore be associated as a pull factor, enabling migration. The creation of spaces that transmit information concerning migration procedures contributes to the sustenance of migration.

An additional aspect is that the creation of associations remains a defensive mechanism against potentially harmful and exploitative practices. As migrants occupy vulnerable positions, associations for migrants can serve as protection mechanism. The quote taken above from the interview with the head of the Solidariedade Imigrante Association, located in a rural area of Portugal hints at the presence of specific challenges within that specific region. Fauser (2024) has shown the salience of the migrant associations that provide reinforced engagement across borders and help to mitigate the difficulties encountered in the country of settlement. Camozzi (2011) demonstrated how the migrant associations served as a platform for migrants to assert and get their civil and political rights “recognised” (p.480). Therefore, these associations represent a space in which the specific cultural perspective remains discussed. Additionally,

Camozzi (2011) recognized that one of the main contributions of associations was the provision of proper information to the respective migrant community.

Overall, the presence of associations helps organizing the structures allowing smoother migration processes. The provision of adequate information firstly, contributes to connecting the country of origin with the country of residence. Secondly, it can enable an increase of migration flows due to sharing adequate information. Therefore, the presence of associations can be seen as a pull factor. The presence of diverse Nepalese associations demonstrates a strong and relevant organizational capacity within the Nepalese community in Portugal, which potentially extends into numerous other fields. It strengthens the formation of the Nepalese-Portuguese transnational migration tie.

ii) *The solidification of the transnational tie through the creation of businesses*

Social networks that contribute to the reinforcement of transnational migration ties can take charge of various dimensions including the economic one through the creation and sustenance of transnational business networks (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2010). Transnationalism that is often associated with monetary remittances can also take an economic dimension if linked to the development of businesses often with cross-border effects (Harima, 2022; Sandoz et al., 2021; Pereira, 2020). The structure of transnational business networks involve activities that establish an economic tie between the country of origin and the country of destination.

“When I came back during our economic crisis, the only migrant community that increased [...] was the Nepali community. We wanted to understand why this migration was increasing, counter economic cycle. And we realized part of it was the very strong transnational networks that this community had and that sustained their businesses. So they could come here, they could find niche businesses, and then they could be sustained and funded by international or transnational networks and family, friends, contacts, people from the same ethnic group who would help them and fund them to open their business and to bring the products and so on. So that's how it started. So it was socio economic sociology, as a starting point, because we realized that the businesses were actually sustained by transnational networks.”

The quote, extracted from the interview with an expert in the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese tie, emphasises the central presence of social networks in the formation and sustenance of businesses. The establishment of business' ties further incentivize the creation of additional enterprises that thrive in the community (Herman, 2006). The common idea that migration is enabled and encouraged through "kinship, family and ethnicity" must not deny the economic and business dimension to migration, as these ties translate into the creation of businesses (Massey et al., 1993). The economic opportunities remain an enabler of migration processes.

The quote from the interview backed by the above research shows how the presence of transnational ties reinforces and enables businesses to thrive. Elo et al. (2021) recognize how social networks are a central component to the formation and the sustenance of transnational businesses. Economic incentives remain a central pull factor in the increase and guidance of migration and create a safety net (Urbański, 2022). Therefore, economic channels remain central in triggering migration.

"So the networks are very active. There are also families that have charities registered in the UK, and then all the businesses in Europe are connected with that charity, and the charity funds the businesses and so on. They have complex schemes to fund the businesses, also money exchange, shops and so on. So, they have different ways to fund the businesses in the European space."

The quote (extracted from the interview with the expert in the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese tie) illustrates the presence of cross-border ties between various European economic businesses. These cross-border business ties link the Nepalese migration in Portugal with other migration-related developments in various European cities. The quote exhibits how social networks remain a central component in the creation of transnational businesses. These businesses can be seen as an enabler of migration as it offers a migration opening (Munshi, 2020).

The businesses that reconnect ethnic communities in a cross-border manner, lead to new forms of economic transnationalism (Pereira, 2020). Overall, the existence of previous businesses motivates the respective community to settle as well. This triggers additional migration, and the Nepalese migration in Portugal is a relevant example of this trend.

iii) *Social networks shaped by an ephemeral temporality?*

The temporal aspect of migration is often neglected. The component of time and temporality, however, is central within migration processes. The aspect of temporality that is associated with migration defines the impermanence that lies behind migration. Contrary to permanent settlement, migration is characterized by a relatively ephemeral temporality, tempo and timing (Griffiths, 2021, p.317).

The social networks enabling migration towards Portugal might have a temporary nature, and migration processes might be of transitory nature. The migration process can be motivated by the search for permanent settlement but can also be temporary and of a cyclical nature (Griffiths, 2021). Migration can thus reflect a transitory and impermanent nature (McGarrigle & Ascensão, 2017).

“There are a lot of problems with this situation of Nepalese coming because they want to have programs to integrate people, but they cannot work with people for a long time because it’s a seasonal situation because of the work [...]. People stay for a while, and then they go away, and then new people come. So it has become very difficult to work on integration with people for a longer period, because it changes a lot.”

The quote above stems from a member of a civil society organisation in São Teotónio, a rural area in Portugal. It can be explained by specific challenges associated with the labour industries residing in that region: the work provided there can be very seasonal.

The connection between migration and time has become more relevant and significant due to the surge of “short-term, temporary and fragmented (Boese, Moran & Mallman, 2021, p.358)” migration. The new migration trends are more temporary because of the work proposed by specific labour segments that are attached to seasonal conditions, such as the agriculture and tourism industry. This then has consequences for the specific migration tied to that respective industry, contributing to a transitional settlement.

“What contributed was, we're in economic crisis, and they realized they could have flourishing businesses even during our economic crisis, with the help of the transnational networks. The fact that the word spread that in Portugal, that the laws allowed for documents even after two or three years, but would eventually allow for documents in the Schengen area and it was an exception in Europe for a long time. [...] A good slice of these people who come here after they get the passport or so on, they always have plans to move to a Northern European country.”

This quote comes from the interview with an expert in the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese tie. It illustrates the temporary nature of migration to Portugal, as the Nepalese moving to Portugal stay only for a limited time. The quote highlights how the Nepalese moving towards Portugal, after obtaining the right documents, can benefit from roaming within the Schengen zone. Their research investigating the longitudinal component in relation to the social network theory hints at the dynamism of social network and migration (Ryan & D'Angelo, 2018, p.150).

“If you see now we have more people from all Portugal coming here for seasonal work. In the winter time, there's less people here in Fundao. Because of a lack of the job opportunities, because we don't have any agricultural work then.”

The quote taken from an interview with a Nepalese cultural mediator in the region of Fundao, in the centre of Portugal, explains the temporary nature of the Nepalese migration in that specific region. It emphasizes the interconnection between migration and seasonal work prospects, depending on the job availability in that specific region.

Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson (2013) recognise how mobility can be associated with phenomena such as “repetition, simultaneity, seasonality and cycles (p.17).” Those authors highlight how the patterns of mobility often reflect impermanence, because of the specific working conditions. Numerous factors contribute to the explanation of the length of settlement and the cyclical nature of the tie, however, the interviews show that the temporary nature of this migration into Portugal is a central feature. This is related to two central aspects, firstly, the specific labour segment that is conditioned through seasonal aspects and, secondly, the geographic position of Portugal within the EU.

B. Policy analysis: Permissive immigration policies contributing to an increase in migration?

This section of the paper analyses two specific immigration policies that influence migration processes by setting a structural construct. As already discussed, these permissive immigration policies have been associated as migration pull factors in this research. This translates in the reinforcement of the Nepalese-Portuguese migration tie. Two contested policies have been identified as associated to permissive immigration policies. The two prominent policies selected here for the analysis are the requirement of an “Expression of Interest (EI)”¹ and the introduction of cultural mediators as part of the reception centres, such as the Local Support Centres for Immigrants (CLAI’s), often present at municipal level (Sabino, Abreu & Peixoto, 2010, p.28). These two policies are relevant for this research as the EI remains a contested immigration policy. Because it accelerates immigration, it has been revoked in 2024 (PICUM, 2022; Portugal Gov., 2025). Equivalently, the introduction of intercultural mediators has contributed to Portugal’s exhibiting an integrative approach within their immigration policies (Cook, 2018; IOM, 2023).

i) The Expression of Interest (EI): On a national level

The EI policy was previously an immigration policy that allowed non-EU immigrants to obtain residency after entering Portuguese territory, even if they had entered on a tourist visa. To undergo the procedure, it was required to possess a Portuguese Social Security Number (NISS) and a Tax Identification Number (NIF). The submission of an expression of interest could be initiated to secure residency and undergo first steps towards naturalization (PICUM, 2022, p.4). This policy was established under the articles 88 and 89 of Law No. 23/2007 (SEF, 2007, p.79), initially established as a mechanism to allow migrants already living in Portugal to apply for residency. The process of accessing a regularized status consisted of various steps. Firstly, handing in a request towards the SEF (previous migration entity in Portugal). Secondly, presenting the required documents, such as “an employment contract or a promise of an employment contract (Gaspar, Cojocaru & Carone, 2024, p.22),” and proof of entry into the

¹ The expression of interest immigration policy was revoked in June 2024, due to increasing challenges in the regularization process; this aspect will be further discussed in the limitation section.

country. According to Malheiros and Peixoto (2023), access to legal status remained a pending procedure, depending on a personal interview (p.115).

The policy had numerous purposes, such as countering irregularity and integrating migrants in the formal economy (Malheiros & Peixoto, 2023). Further scholarship qualified Portugal's immigration policy approach as “expansive” aiming to attain economic objectives by distancing itself from strict immigration control (Carvalho, 2017, p.502). This policy clearly connects migration to economic activity, underlining the necessity of being a member of the formal economy to access regularized status.

De Sousa (2024) highlights that the EI was initially established as an exceptional mechanism to counter irregularity and individuals engaging in the informal economy, however, its usage remained “flexible”. Due to the flexible use and lack of oversight of this immigration policy it has been criticised as a “pull factor” further enabling migration flows (Gil, 2022, as cited in, De Sousa, 2024, p. 26). As Pereira et al. (2021) detected in their research surrounding Nepalese migrants in rural areas of Portugal, this policy remains a prominent policy allowing first the application for residency and then regularization. The policy therefore encourages migrants to seek employment and integrate into the labour market.

SEF (2010) emphasizes that the creation of this immigration policy ensures the participation of migrants in the formal economy. Receiving residency through securing employment remains a stepping stone in the process of reaching regularized status and afterwards initiating the process towards naturalization.

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, Portugal’s permissive immigration policies define structural conditions that contribute to the facilitation and enablement of migration. The flexibility of these immigration policies leads to an increase of immigration. Other scholarship emphasizes how Portugal's immigration integration stands out as the most accessible in the EU, therefore, facilitating migration within the Schengen area (Cook, 2018). Within the EU landscape Portugal's immigration policies remain the most comprehensive and integrative by tying it with labour market dynamics (Huddleston et al., 2011). Portugal’s immigration policies are thus enmeshed in market labour dynamics, allowing for an increase in migration if there are specific labour segments that necessitate workers.

The EI policy, therefore, facilitates regularisation by requiring migrants to seek employment to secure residency. While it actively counter irregularity and allows many opportunities for migrants to remain in Portugal it can also be questioned to what extent the procedure remains associated with exceptional use (De Sousa, 2024).

The EI is a key instrument in Portugal's immigration policy in preventing immigrant workers from being trapped in irregular working conditions, having entered without the appropriate visa. This mechanism facilitated migration by avoiding migrants from being employed in irregular activities and by reducing bureaucratic procedures (De Sousa, 2024). Originally designed as a policy to counter irregularity, it has transformed into a more utilized policy due to its accessibility (De Sousa, 2024). The revocation of this policy in 2024 was due to a high number of pending cases, emphasizing its fundamental and central role in facilitating migration procedures (Ullah, 2024).

As defined by Sur and Kalir (2022), permissive immigration policies reflect a more open approach towards migration procedures. The EI policy reflects an accessible and sped up regularization process, therefore enabling migration. The policy can be understood as a pull factor within the context of the push-pull theory, as this policy distinguishes itself through the fact that it allows for people to enter without having the necessary visa in advance (De Sousa, 2024). The pull factor discussed in the theoretical framework highlights how the national permissive immigration policies do contribute to an increase of migration. The immigration policy therefore can be associated as an opening for migration towards Portugal.

ii) Introduction of intercultural mediation: On a regional level

Another crucial immigration policy that distinguishes Portugal is the reliance on intercultural mediation. Intercultural mediation is defined as a “[...] problem solving activity that deals with the communication breakdown caused by cultural difference (Liddicoat, 2015, p.355).”

According to the IOM assessment report (2023), intercultural mediation processes are organized by the High Commission for Migration (ACM) and remain a central component of immigration practices in Portugal. These intercultural meditations were part of the National Centres for Migrant Integration (CNAIMs), located in Porto, Lisbon, and Faro. These centres were established with the intention of offering support to migrants in accessing knowledge

regarding rights and insights into educational and health-care services (IOM, 2023). Another salient aspect of these intercultural mediation practices is that they rely on staff with a migratory background so as to overcome cultural and language barriers (IOM, 2023). Overall, the IOM stressed that the establishment of intercultural mediation in the CNAIMs offered an understanding of the possible improvement of immigration policies to respond to specific challenges encountered by migrants (2023).

While analyzing the effects of the use of cultural mediation, the IOM highlighted how intercultural mediation could be an instrument of advocacy, informing migrants about their rights (Erdilmen, 2021, p.6). Intercultural mediation facilitates the migrants' access to migration procedures, public health services, educational institutions and existing social services (Erdilmen, 2021). Further, it allows for the transmission of adequate information regarding migration procedures and access surrounding the information of rights. An additional purpose behind the establishment of this immigration policy is to enhance and encourage dialogue between migrants and the local population (Padilla & França, 2016).

Overall, the use of cultural mediation remains foundational to bridge cultural differences and to facilitate communication. Therefore, it must be seen as a mechanism to navigate immigration processes and to facilitate immigration practices. Portugal stands out as having immigration policies that are designed to foster integration, as intercultural mediation remains implemented to navigate cultural barriers and to ensure adequate provision of information (Vieira, Marques & Vieira, 2024). Furthermore, Ladmiral and Lipiansky (1989) emphasize the necessity of enforcing adequate communication within spaces that accommodate to various cultures, which can only be accomplished if it is intercultural. A fundamental aspect of immigration policies is to ensure that proper intercultural mediation is offered to reinforce multitopic translation and the welcoming of migrants (Vieira, Marques & Vieira, 2024).

Portugal has integrated intercultural mediation in the reception centres, and this aspect of their immigration policy favors integrative practices relying on the transmission of proper information. This policy indicates willingness and awareness surrounding existing intercultural barriers that hinder adequate access to valuable information. Specifically in the immigration context it remains essential to ensure proper information regarding immigration procedures. As pull factor this policy exhibits an integrative approach to migration practices and policies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion & limitations

A. Conclusion

This research has demonstrated a recent increase in Nepalese migration towards Portugal and attempted to understand it through a dual hypotheses focusing on one side, the transnational social networks approach and on the other hand on the structural aspect imposed by the national immigration policies. Through the collection of qualitative data, combining semi-structured interviews and policy analysis, this study stands out as having designed a context-specific theoretical framework, combining a focus on a hypothesis relating to individual agency and on a structural migration dimension. The established hypotheses offered a nuanced explanation to why there is an increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal, whilst challenging traditional migration theories that often neglect the agency component. Therefore, this research has demarked itself from the traditional push-pull theory by merging a new theoretical framework.

Social networks central to the Nepalese migration

This research has proven that social networks remain a central vehicle in the formation of this transnational migration tie. The Nepalese community in Portugal demarked itself as being particularly shaped by the pre-existing social networks that contribute to the increase of migration. These social networks manifest into three aspects: the presence of Nepalese associations, the role of businesses and the temporal nature of this migration tie. The role of associations and business remains essential in the maintenance of the transnational migration tie. The specific temporality of the migration flows characterized by seasonality also reflects a relevant point: the Nepalese migration to Portugal seems to be of a transitional and cyclical nature. This could be explained through seasonal economic activities or long-term integration challenges, contributing to the moving of Nepalese migrants, as discovered through the interviews. Overall, social networks remain a decisive component in forging the migration tie, and their effects rely on various channels and factors, such as the associations, the businesses and the contribution to temporary settlement.

Permissive immigration policies

In the policy analysis, focusing on two contested policies allowed to understand the immigration structures in Portugal. As analysed, the EI remains a central vehicle in the facilitation of migration, even though originally destined as a tool to counter unregularized

migration, it has shown its potential into forging migration channels towards Portugal. This explains why this policy was revoked in 2024. The flexible use of the policy contributed to the revoke of this policy as it allowed for an increase in migration.

Additionally, the established immigration policies with the role of intercultural mediators exhibit a concrete act of fostering integrative immigration policies and an open migration approach. Portugal is ranked as the third best country regarding immigration integration policies, as measured through the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), an index that measures the integration of migrants across areas such as labor market mobility, education and access of nationality (Huddleston, 2020). This reveals that Portugal fosters policies that allow for adequate immigration and has been praised numerous times for its comprehensive and integrative immigration policies (Niessen et al., 2007; Huddleston, 2020). This can be understood by looking at the implementation of the intercultural mediator on a regional level. This contributes to Portugal having a comprehensive approach to integration and easily accessible immigration policies, in comparison to other EU countries.

Overall, what can be observed is that the combination of social networks and immigration policies contributed to the increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal. Solely focusing on the policy dimension does not make it possible to depict the complexity of the way social networks shape migration flows. A critique towards traditional migration theories is the fact that they overlook human agency and the individual based perspective shaping migration flows.

Push factors ignored?

While having dissected the push-pull theory in the theoretical framework it is essential to mention that ignoring the push factor limits the full understanding of why there remains an increase of Nepalese migration in Portugal. Completely overlooking the push aspects raises questions of legitimacy, which are of valid concern.

However, it remains essential to understand that this research is trying to focus on a specific context, the immigration of Nepalese people to Portugal. The main reason that the push factors have been neglected, is due to the central focus on structure and agency.

Social networks and permissive immigration policies as a co-construction

The research shows that the combination of the social network theory and the focus on the permissive immigration policies remain central forces in shaping the migration flows. This research is therefore able to explain how the increase and persistence of migration flows is due to an interaction between individual agency and structural factors, such as immigration policies. This leads to the central observation that the Nepalese migration tie to Portugal has been enabled through the strong transnational social networks that solidify the sense of community and the structural setting as determined by the immigration policies. Overall, the analysis of the specific case of the Nepalese in Portugal and the increase in the transnational migration tie reveal a co-construction process shaped by the transnational social networks and the national immigration policies in Portugal.

B. Limitations:

This research faced numerous limitations. A general limitation would be the fact that the push aspects remained completely unaddressed in this research. Utilizing the push-pull theory through a very pre-selected lens certainly limits the reliability of this thesis. An additional limit is that due to ethical reasons there was never a direct contact with the Nepalese community, which limits the collection of data. Finally, the fact that the EI was revoked in June 2024 makes this research time and context specific and hinders the anticipation of future migration flows.

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Annexe

Annexe 1: Semi-structured interview questions:

I. Professional and background check-in:

1. First, could you please explain what you do and what position you hold in your organisation?
2. To what extent are you involved in projects involving migration?
 - a. How involved are you with the Nepalese migration community in Portugal?
 - b. What do you know about the Nepalese migration community in Portugal?

II. Understanding Portugal's national immigration policies

3. How would you overall describe Portugal's immigration policies?
 - a. Would you qualify them as permissive or restrictive? Elaborate on this.

4. How would you describe Portugal's migration governance system?
5. To what extent do immigration policies overlap with market needs?
6. How would you evaluate the implementation of immigration policies?
 - a. Is there a mismatch between policy design and practice?
 - b. Are there tensions between national and regional immigration policies?

III. Changes to Portugal's national immigration policy

7. Recently, there has been a change to Portugal's regularisation process with articles 88 and 89 of Law No. 23/2007, known as the Expression of Interest (EI), being revoked?
8. What do you think the short- and long-term consequences of this revocation will be, especially with regard to Nepalese migration to Portugal?
9. How would you qualify this Expression of Interest Immigration Policy?

IV. Social networks and the creation of transnational links

10. What role do social networks play in the process of Nepalese migration to Portugal?
11. How would you explain how this migration link emerged?
12. What factors contributed to the formation of this specific migration tie?
13. To what extent do you believe social networks are central to the increase in Nepalese migration to Portugal?
14. In what ways, do these Nepalese migration ties manifest themselves?
 - a. Do they remain central for setting up businesses?
 - b. To what extent do you think these transnational links contribute to increased migration?
15. Why is Portugal an attractive destination for Nepalese migration?
 - a. Can you give specific examples to illustrate Nepalese migration?
16. Are there many Nepalese associations in Portugal?
17. To what extent do you believe social networks remain central to the creation of businesses?
18. Is the Nepalese migration to Portugal a long-term migration or is it more of a temporary nature?

V. Immigration policies

19. How would you describe Portugal's immigration policies?
20. What distinguishes Portugal's immigration policies from those of other EU countries?
21. What explains the change in Portugal's immigration policies?
22. What factors do you think shaped the creation of the transnational Nepalese-Portuguese migration tie?

VI. Final questions

23. Why do you think Portugal has become a destination for Nepalese migrants, especially in comparison to other EU countries?
24. How do you think the Nepalese Migration Tie will evolve in the next years?
25. Do you think that the immigration policy changes will affect the Nepalese migration to Portugal?
→ Is there anything you would like to add?

Annexe 2: Ethical Review Form

MA Thesis Proposal Ethical Review Form

Student Information

Full name: Ellinor Strowel

Email Address: estrowel@student.ibei.org

Program of Study: Erasmus Mundus Global Public Policy

Research Overview

Tentative Thesis Title:

What explains Nepalese migration into rural Portugal?

A case study examining the relationship between flexible immigration policies and labor market dynamics

Research Question(s):

‘Preliminary’ and still vast Research question *What factors explain the increasing migration of Nepalese migration into rural Portugal?*

Study description *A case study exploring the relationship between Portugal’s flexible immigration policies and the development of Nepalese transnational migration networks.*

The twin-hypotheses

- 1. Portugal’s flexible migration policies aim to address specific labour gaps.**
- 2. Social networks have contributed to the development of a transnational Nepal – Portugal migration tie.**

Research Objectives:

This research uses the Nepal-Portugal migration link as a case study to explore how transnational migration ties are established within broader global labor dynamics. While focusing on national migration policies in Portugal, this study aims to uncover migration

patterns enabled by flexible migration policies and labor market demands. By focusing on this case study, the research seeks to exemplify how labor market dynamics and social networks facilitate and sustain transnational mobility.

Methodology (including research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques):

Mixed-methods approach: Combination of qualitative fieldwork and policy analysis.

• **Semi-structured interviews**

- Policy makers & NGO's to interrogate the designed policies versus their implementation
- Nepalese Associations in Portugal

• **Policy Analysis**

- Portuguese migration policies (2020-2024)
- EU migration policies

Ethical Considerations:

1. Does your research involve human participants? (Yes/No)

If yes, briefly describe the nature of their involvement and the methods of data collection:

Yes, Semi-structured Interviews with Policy makers and NGO members.

2. Does your research involve collecting, using, or disclosing sensitive data or information? (Yes/No)

If yes, briefly describe the nature of the sensitive data or information:

Yes, as I want to investigate the lack of policy compliance ("flexible" migration policies) with the National Migration Policies in Portugal. However, I will interview people who are not directly concerned by these policies but rather professionals who are proficient in the field and knowledgeable about the proper implementation of these policies.

My research will mostly be focused on policy makers and NGO members that will be interviewed, as these individuals know about the implementation procedure.

3. Does your research involve vulnerable populations? (Yes/No)

If yes, identify the vulnerable population(s) and explain why they are considered vulnerable:

No not directly, I do not intend to interrogate personal experiences of the Nepalese community residing in Portugal who are directly affected by the migration policies. However, it could occur that while I interview a policymaker or an NGO member, they might have directly been directly affected by these migration policies.

4. Is there a potential for physical, psychological, or emotional harm to the research participants? (Yes/No)

If yes, describe the potential risks and how you plan to mitigate them:

No, I do not intend to investigate personal experiences of people directly affected by the migration policies. I am researching the policy side of it and less interrogating the lived experience.

5. Are there any additional ethical considerations specific to your field (e.g., International Security or International Development)? (Yes/No)

If yes, describe the specific ethical considerations and how you plan to address them:

Yes, acknowledging the positionality of the interviewee, as depending on where they remain situated, they relate differently to the cause. Therefore, in my analysis and limitations, I will mention this aspect.

Informed Consent and Data Protection:

1. Explain how you will obtain informed consent from the research participants (if applicable):

Before conducting interviews, I will send them the consent form and ensure that they read through the paper.

2. Describe the measures you will take to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants and their data:

I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality by never sharing the names of the people and never sharing any information regarding their position.

Declaration:

I declare that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that providing false or misleading information may result in the rejection of my thesis proposal or other disciplinary actions. If any ethical considerations arise

during the course of my research, I commit to informing my supervisor and the IBEI ethics coordinator immediately.

Student Signature: *Ellenor Strowel*

Date: 22.05.2025

Please submit this completed form to **Tutku Ayhan (tayhan@ibei.org)** for further review by the IBEI ethics coordinator.

This section is to be completed after review only

Thank you for your application. We have completed the review process and can offer a favorable opinion, contingent upon the supervisor's continued guidance in the research and development of interview questions, as well as the student's use of the provided informed consent form during participant recruitment.

Name of reviewer: Tutku Ayhan
Date: 22 May 2025

Annexe 3: Informed consent form



Information Sheet

Objectives and duration of the project:

The goal of this study is to investigate the national migration policies in Portugal by examining the Nepalese-Portuguese transnational migration tie. The project is has been ongoing from 31 January 2024 to the 31 July 2025.

Methodology and participation:

This research reflects a mixed-methods approach: a combination of qualitative fieldwork and policy analysis. The research benefits from semi-structured interviews with policy makers and NGOs to interrogate the designed policies versus their implementation.

The semi-structured interviews will take one hour, which will take place mostly online.

The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. They will be stored in a confidential folder on my computer to which no one else has access to.

Inclusion criteria for participation:

The participants are knowledgeable about the migration policies in Portugal.

Privacy:

In order to protect your privacy, I will not disclose the collected data with your name or personal information, but instead will assign you a number (for example, interviewee 4).

In order to ensure proper confidentiality, I will store the information on my computer in a file that only I have access to.

In the event of data publishing, such as a quote from the interviews, it will remain anonymous and there will be no identifiable links to you.

Risks and benefits:

Participating in this study does not entail risks greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

We cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any benefits from this study.

Voluntary nature of participation:

Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis and you may withdraw from the study at any time without having to justify why.



Informed Consent Form

Title of the thesis: What explains Nepalese migration into rural Portugal?

Principal investigator: Ellinor Strowel; estrowel@student.ibei.org

Institution: Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

I HEREBY CONFIRM that:

- ☐ I have received enough information on the project,
- ☐ I am above 18 years of age.

I UNDERSTAND that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from or opt out of the study anytime without any need to justify my decision. I UNDERSTAND that the research is being conducted for an individual master's thesis project, and my personal data will not be kept, stored, or processed in any way. I UNDERSTAND that my participation is completely anonymous and confidential.

- ☐ I GIVE MY CONSENT to participate in this study.

First and last name(s):

Signature:

Place and date:

Annexe 4: Thesis report

Thesis Report
Wordcount: 6444

Ellinor Strowel

(Current) Thesis question:

*Does a relative lack of regulation lead to the
crystallisation of migration flows in rural
Portugal?*

Case Study: Migration flows established
in rural areas to meet the demand for
agricultural labour

Methodological framework

1. Introduction

- A. Relevance
- B. Research question

2. Migration in a globalised world

- A. The fuzzy definition of the term « migrant »
- B. Forced Migration versus Voluntary Migration
- C. Labour migration, a synonym for agricultural labour?
- D. The emergence of transnational ties

3. Neo-colonial labour structures

- A. Migrants less than second-class citizens?
- B. Migrant labour: The Other?
- C. Labour exploitation

4. Methodology

- A. Critical Discourse Analysis
- B. Sampling and Methods
- C. Ethical hurdles

5. Case Study: Why Portugal?

- A. The use of a case study
- B. Geographical influences that have contributed to Portugal becoming a migration hub
- C. Colonial ties
- D. Agriculture in Portuguese History
- E. Portugal within EU Migration Policies

6. Analysis

7. Conclusion

- A. Discussion and reflection

1. Introduction

Migration is a hot topic, often at the forefront of the current electoral climate, and a source of excitement and debate. Within the European landscape, countries are affected differently by migration and the variation in the migration attractiveness depends on a variety of factors. These include aspects such as the geographical location and established migration policies, that either facilitate or hinder migration. Due to different policies and geographical location, migration flows are not evenly distributed and tend to be concentrated in certain countries and regions. One EU country particularly affected by migration is Portugal. This “silent” transformation of Portugal into an “immigration hub” can be explained by the relatively loose migration policies, linked to obtaining employment and then applying for residence (Makan, 2022, p.1). Although many parts of Portugal are favourable to migration an important shift can be observed: Migration flows tend to shift towards rural areas. This shift can be explained by the establishment of large agricultural enterprises in these specific parts of Portugal. The vastness of the rural areas, the climatic conditions and the fertility of the soil in Portugal allow for intensive agricultural practices. Work in the agricultural sector is often synonymous to hard physical labour and low wages. In order to avoid these working conditions, the younger local generation has left the countryside and moved to the cities, a phenomenon called rural exodus, which has been taking place in Portugal since the 1960, due to the unfavourable working conditions in the agricultural sector. As a result of the internal mobility of the native population, the supply of agricultural labour has been severely reduced, creating a labour gap that is now being filled by relying on migrant workers (Almeida, 2023). Agricultural work carried out by migrant labour is not a new phenomenon, nor is it exclusive to Portugal, but it is a common practice in many other countries. By exploiting the precarious situation of migrants, this power dynamic can be maintained, and the agribusinesses can benefit from the lax migration policies that enable and maintain migration flows. It is seen as a solution to fill cheap labour positions with people who have fewer rights and are, therefore, vulnerable to exploitative working conditions. The lax migration policy is disguised as a welcoming gesture, but serves as an utilitarian approach to fill empty jobs. The precariousness and the powerlessness of migrants in Portugal contributes to feeding the exploitative ‘machine’ and meeting the demand for labour.

A. Relevance

There is a large body of literature on the topic of highly concentrated migrant labour in the agricultural sector, with a particular focus on the southern countries of the EU (King & DeBono, 2013; Corrado, De Castro & Perrotta, 2017; Corrado et al., 2018; Papadopoulos & Fratsea, 2016; Gertel & Sippel, 2014). This phenomenon is not exclusive to EU countries, but can be observed in many other countries around the globe, other large ones being North America and the United Kingdom (Martin, 2019; Otero & Preibisch, 2015; Milbourne & Coulson, 2021). Existing research focuses specifically on southern EU countries, as they can accommodate agricultural enterprises due to their climate and soil conditions, therefore, they offer many employment opportunities. However, existing research focuses specifically on Spain and Italy, as these two countries have a large influence in the agricultural sector within Southern Europe. This is related to their large territorial dimension, which sustains and allows them to exert influence in the agricultural sector (López Sala, 2016; Domsodi, 2019; Avallone, 2014). The fact that agricultural work is associated with exploitative working conditions is a widespread phenomenon that affects many countries with intensive and dependent agriculture (Bruzeliuss & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2023; Avola, 2022). While this insight is not novel, it has not been fully explored within the context of Portugal. It remains a country in transition, where the body of research is slowly growing but still underexplored. In the specific context of Portugal, the phenomenon of migratory flows shifting from urban to rural areas remains a more recent and understudied development. The change in migration dynamics is characterised by the ongoing rural exodus of the younger generation, moving from the periphery to urban regions or emigrating towards other EU countries, generating a labour gap. It is migrants then that fill the labour gap, due to their precarious and often choiceless situation. The knowledge gap that this thesis aims to fill is that within this specific case study, the shift of migration waves from the city to the periphery is a recent development. Due to the contemporary involvement of this phenomenon, it becomes an interesting case study to observe a shift within the dynamics of migration. Portugal, which stands out from other EU countries with lax migration policies, can highlight the changing nature of migration flows within the country.

B. Research question: the hypothesis

My hypothesis is that the current lax migration policy in Portugal reinforces labour exploitation in rural areas by relying on migrant labour. As labour migration is a common practice and widespread phenomenon, it is beneficial for agribusiness and local governments to facilitate it to meet the labour demand. In order to understand the connection between labour demand and migration, I would like to give start with a general overview of terms related to migration in a globalised world. Then with reference to neo-colonial labour structures, I will highlight the emergence of second-class citizens, in the context of migration. This term encompasses the systemic marginalisation, inequality, and discrimination that certain members of society face continuously. In our research these members of society are migrants, as they often face systemic barriers and are deprived of certain rights, even when they have legal status (De Haas et al., 2019). Then, I will draw on the theoretical concept of “othering”, as established by Frantz Fanon, pivotal figure in de-colonial movement. It is a fundamental concept in the neo- and postcolonial movement, used to create a distinction between the former coloniser and the ex-colonised. Finally, I will define the term of labour exploitation to highlight the practices the unethical working-conditions within agricultural work. Using these three definitional frameworks, I will analyse the specific phenomenon of the migratory flows in rural parts of Portugal due to the presence of agribusinesses. By looking at this specific case study, I will highlight the particular case of Portugal as an example of a new trend of migration, from city to the periphery. This thesis aims to illustrate the links between market dynamics, rural exodus and remaining neo-colonial labour structures that are connected to migration.

2. Migration in a globalised world

Migration, as a general phenomenon describing the movement of people, can be seen as a shaper of human history. To understand human history, it is important to recognise that it is intertwined with human mobility. Although human mobility is not new, it has recently increased. This can be linked to the emergence of a variety of determinants provoking migration and increase access to transportation. Due to the development of the transportation systems migration has been facilitated and therefore has risen. The range of motives is varied and cuts across many sectors, such as economic, industrial and social reasons that have further triggered human mobility (Casa-Cortes, 2014). Specifically, the increase in socio-economic inequalities, advanced means of transport and environmental factors have contributed to triggering new waves of migration (Castles, 2013; Esses, 2018).

Due to different determinants generating the movement of people, different forms of migration have been distinguished. One form of migration often referred to is “international migration”, which describes the movement of people across borders. From a nation-bound perspective there exists also the phenomenon of “internal migration”, which describes the movement of people within national borders (Castles, 2013). The danger of the term migration is that it is an overarching term that encompasses various forms of human mobility and, therefore, reflects a multitude of motives that influence the movement of people (Esses, 2018). The challenge reflected by this umbrella term is that it does not differentiate enough and lumps together a variety of motives for movement, such as “labour migration, family reunification, refugees, asylum seekers, emigration for retirement (Canoy et al., 2006, p.7)” which vary exponentially in their motives. Not only do the motives vary, but so do the legal implications and public perceptions of these different types of migration. As migration is a politicised and mediatised phenomenon, the public perception of migration has a crucial impact in shaping the migration policies and the atmosphere towards the reception of migrants. The debate and the vocabulary used further influence the migration policy agenda and have political consequences (Canoy et al., 2006). Although the phenomenon of migration is framed as taking place exclusively in advanced industrial countries, it should be noted that the human mobility can be observed in many regions of the world (Kivisto & Faisl, 2010). The simplistic view that migration flows are only directed towards industrialised nations is a dangerous perception as it overlooks many types of ongoing migration and shapes the political narrative. In order to understand the different dynamics behind migration, I will define the different definitions of human mobility, as they carry legal baggage and are subject to different policies.

A. The fuzzy definition of the term “migrant”

While there are different types of categories to distinguish the motives of human mobility, migration research is wary of relying on these specific categories, as the underlying distinction between types of migrants can lead to polarisation. The phenomenon of migration is multidimensional in its nature and the determinants of human mobility cut across multiple domains. Moreover, the term “migrant” is an umbrella term which accommodates a wide range of human mobility factors, and motives can also change over the course of migration, which challenges the categorisation of the movement (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017). The reason for the criticism expressed by academics is that the distinction between ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ is an oversimplification that cannot be applied to the actual movement of people, as the determinants of mobility can hardly be categorised into specific compartments. During the migration process,

these two defined categories often express the movement of people who travel together and arrive together in a particular host country (ibid.). These concepts, introduced to facilitate the determination of legal status, can also contribute to harming people on the move.

Migrant status offers less international protection as it is country and case-specific, and it encompasses a wide range of actors who fall under this broad category. The distinction of the term “migrant” and the political attributes associated with it, are more varied, as “migrant” is a broad term that can include people on the move in a variety of situations. Within specific settings, the definition becomes particularly broad as it remains unclear who does not qualify as “migrant”, given the breadth of the term. The use of this vast category continues to result in differential treatment. The broad term can cause harm by reflecting inaccurate data and pushing for specific, exclusive policies that do not address the various motivations of migration (Anderson & Blinder, 2015).

The challenge with the fuzzy definition of the term “migrant” is that it contributes to the juxtaposition of “refugee” versus “migrant”. In research in Germany, this variation in the use of the term has been accompanied by differences in perception and policy, reflecting peoples’ different attitudes (Wyszynski et al., 2020). The definitional baggage that comes with the vocabulary of migration can lead to further polarisation and create a simplistic view of a complex issue. The danger of discussing “refugees and migrants” side by side is that it raises concerns for a variety of reasons, questioning who falls into this category of migrant, and further questioning the legitimacy of protecting migrants (Carling, 2023, p. 399). The use of the term “refugees and migrants” then also reflects the component of choice in the category of migrants, which then distinguishes them from refugees who are perceived as being choiceless (ibid.). In order to avoid definitional errors in this thesis, I will use the term “migrants” to describe the people in question, since they are not granted the protective legal status and can therefore be more easily exploited.

Ongoing migration in Portugal is characterised by access to employment as a first step towards being granted residence and is therefore distinct from the legal status of “refugee”. The problem with this route is that there is often a lack of legal protection regarding labour exploitation, and that the situation of migrants is further aggravated by too harmful perceptions. The distinction made can call into question the legitimacy of the move. As emphasised by Carling, the creation of a specific definition should not describe only one phenomenon to the exclusion of the other (2023). These definitions should not be seen as distinct and static phenomena but should incorporate different nuances and case-specific context. Understanding that these terms should

not represent two separate poles allows for a better comprehension of a more inclusive approach toward receiving migrants and protecting their rights.

B. Forced Migration versus Voluntary Migration

As outlined in the previous section, the creation of the terms “refugee” and “migrant” creates a binary between what are in fact distinct movements and undermines the diversity of peoples’ motivations for migrating. Scholars have questioned the dangers of such strong distinction, emphasising that it can further divide people on the move and ignore specific contextual aspects and motivations. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) distinguishes between voluntary and forced migration by stating that voluntary migrants move of their own free will, while involuntary migrants did not intend to move but were forced to do so by specific circumstances (2008, p.17–18).

Another distinction made by the IOM is that forced migrants stay with a desire to return, whereas voluntary migrants do not (2008, p.17–18). The creation of two poles that qualify certain motives, as voluntary or forced, disregards the complexity of the situation that shapes human mobility. The distinction between forced and voluntary mobility is proved problematic and challenging, as one group of people has the freedom to leave, and the other is penalised by their actions. These opposing dynamics may reflect different perceptions of agency (Kuhnt, 2019). Establishing one set of conditions that justify a move and another that is labelled as voluntary, ignores the factors that limit mobility. Often these concepts overlap and are interlinked, so that forced versus voluntary migration can be dangerous as it represents a polarisation between different types of mobility (ibid.).

While a new, broader understanding of different types of movement is emerging, such as the terms “complex mixed migration”, “transit migration” and “survival migration”, forced and voluntary migration movements are still the two basic concepts used to categorise movement (William, 2019; Betts, 2013 as cited Kuhnt, 2019, p.2). Forced migration is often associated with some kind of conflict that could determine the reason for the movement, while voluntary movement is associated with social and individual motives (Kuhnt, 2019). The danger of these two definitions is that some are considered as justified, and others are not, contributing to further polarisation and de-legitimation of human mobility. Another criticism of the distinction between these two categories of migration is that while there is a definition of forced and voluntary migration, there

remains a lack of detail and nuance,— Zetter argues that this contributes to an decrease in “protection gaps” and in “protection space” (2015, p.1).

In discussing these categories, there are numerous challenges associated with the definitional distinction, one being the lack of protection and the granting of the right status. The other is the difficulty of political and social perception that comes with it. The narratives surrounding these categories further contribute to a dangerous, distinction between those who have the right to stay and those who must leave. Bakewell shows that the distinction between voluntary and forced departure is inherently blurred and that the existence of such a distinction comes at a high cost, as it establishes a hierarchy of urgency (2021). The distinctions are introduced to facilitate the understanding, but they can do harm in delegitimising the determinants of mobility and failing to capture the bigger picture that motivates movement. As they have legal consequences, they also affect the status that migrants obtain and the employment that they can access.

C. Labour migration: a synonym for agricultural labour?

The search for cheap labour drives and shapes migration flows, a phenomenon to be observed in many sectors and at different levels. Due to the nature of intensive agriculture, which often creates a demand for labour as the local population avoids these jobs, migration clusters are common in areas where agricultural industries are located (Krissman, 2000). The trend towards employing migrant workers on farms is common, as the European Economic and Social Committee has observed: of a total of 9.2 million workers in European agriculture, 2.4 million, or 26% are foreign seasonal workers (EESC, 2024). The figure is probably higher, as it does not include the number of irregular migrants. The irregular migrants who are not registered or who are deprived of secure working conditions, e.g. because they do not have a work contract, and are therefore forced to stay and work illegally are not included in the figures. Their marginalisation forces them to accept the physically demanding working conditions and insecure contracts. International labour migration (ILM), i.e. migration shaped by the economic activities that a migrant can pursue, used to be more concentrated in cities, where there was generally a higher demand for labour.

Recent observations have shown that in Europe there has been a shift in ILM, which used to be more city-centred and is now moving towards rural areas (Rye & O'Reilly, 2021). Thus, the term that encompasses labour migrants can be loosely defined as “moving in and out of the labour market” (Salt et al., 2004, p.12), meaning that their movement is shaped by the demand for labour. Broadly speaking, whether migration is concentrated in particular regions depends on employment

opportunities. One sector that is particularly dependent on labour migration is the intensive food production, which requires flexibility, low wages and is targeted at people with few or no alternatives (Rye & O'Reilly, 2021). A powerful actor in the ILM phenomenon are the large agribusinesses themselves, as they employ workers, provide employment opportunities and direct the migration flows to rural areas due to the labour demand (Gadea et al., 2016). The presence of large agricultural companies in rural areas then shapes market dynamics and leads to an opening of the labour market. This generates and concentrates migration flows in these smaller agrarian towns. We can therefore observe the phenomenon of international labour migration which is now concentrated and clustered in smaller rural places.

D. The emergence of transnational ties

One type of migration that is gaining traction is the concept of transnational migration, which encompasses the idea that migrants create links and social connections between their country of origin and the country of settlement (Schiller, 1992, p.1). The term 'transmigrant' describes a migrant who maintains links between several societies and the emergence of multiple identities (Schiller, 1992). The emergence of different migration trends has also led to the concept of transnationalism. The term encompasses the phenomenon of migrants establishing links across national borders with more than one nation-state. The term "transmigrant" encapsulates the act of developing a set of practices between the space of destination and the space of origin (Peixoto et al., 2019, p.52). Often, transmigrants are integrated into the local labour market of the destination country and participate in its political life, but are still tied to their country of origin (ibid.). The interesting aspect of transnational migration is that it has created paths of migration routes between the country of origin and the country of destination, so that certain regions may reflect specific routes that migrants consistently take. These routes can then be used by other migrants who follow them. I will further investigate this concept, as it encapsulates well the migration flows occurring in the rural regions in Portugal.

3. Neo-colonial labour structures

Neo-colonialism, the concept that defines the continuation of power hierarchies between former colonial powers that retain control over ex-colonies in a variety of forms, is still embedded in social structures and dynamics. Compared to postcolonialism, neo-colonialism goes further and highlights the internal link between the political economy of ex-colonies and former colonial

powers (Rao, 2000). An important figure and shaper of the term neo-colonialism was the former Ghanaian political theorist Kwame Nkrumah (ibid.). As he was one of the first to define the term neo-colonialism, I will use the definition from his book “The Last Stage of Imperialism”, which succinctly describes the phenomenon:

“The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside (1965, p.9).”

In the above quote, Nkrumah emphasises that neo-colonialism arises from the dependence of ex-colonies on former colonial powers. This is often linked to economic systems and certain goods circulating in the market. Neo-colonialism can be visible through direct financial dependence of ex-colonies trapped by their former colonial power, but it can also be present through other structures that are less traceable, such as residual political ties and political dependency. The remaining power that the former colonial power has over the ex-colony can manifest itself in many ways, such as humanitarian aid, misrepresentation, and domestication of the colonised (Fujita, 2020; Chowdhury, 2023; Briones-Vozmediano et al., 2020). In discussing this phenomenon, I begin with an analysis of labour structures and the maintenance of systems of domination that are still shaped by former colonial hierarchies. The emergence of neo-colonialism goes beyond purely monetary links can be seen in the maintenance of specific labour dynamics.

In order to understand the internal links between neo-colonial structural dynamics that persist in the labour market dynamics, it is necessary to observe the market by distinguishing between different economic activities: the formal and the informal. These two economic activities are illustrated by the dual market economic system, which shows the coexistence of these two economic sectors. The formal sector is characterised by growth, and while the informal sector is defined by the source of labour supply (Skott, 2022).

Through the lens of the dual economy, there remains a separation between two differently skilled labour flows, characterised as primary and secondary workers. Having distinguished between the formal and informal sectors within the economic landscape, this separation is linked to the citizenship theory, which distinguishes between two types of citizenship. These are linked to the labour dynamics and therefore provide a link between economic market dynamics and citizenship status, as these are correlated. To understand the treatment that migrants are enduring it is important to highlight the intersections between the legal status attributed and the exploitative working conditions. To further establish the link of de-alienation of migrant workers, it is necessary to look at it through the lens of “othering” as postulated by Frantz Fanon. To make matters even

more complex, it is necessary to define the way in which the power of the former coloniser is exercised over the ex-colonised, which can be achieved by defining labour exploitation.

A. Migrants less than second-class citizens?

In order to understand the emergence of the theory of second-class citizenship, it is necessary to consider and understand the nature of the citizenship theory. Although there is a large body of literature on citizenship theory, the idea is rather simple: the concept involves the accrual of a set of rights through membership of a particular membership base, often associated with, but not exclusively tied to, the national territory (Crowley, 1998, p.168). A key figure in defining the concept of citizenship was the sociologist Marshall. The concept introduced by Marshall encompasses, in its simplest and most primitive form, the concept of belonging to a particular membership base that is endowed with a set of rights and benefits provided by the welfare state (Marshall, 1950). Marshall suggests that it is not rights that arise from being part of a membership base, but that the membership base arises from possessing a set of rights (Crowley, 1998, p.165). Although the definitions that explain the complex nature of citizenship are dated, they are still fundamental in the way they shaped who policy is aimed at. Another perception of the reality of citizenship is that it is conferred as a position or status with rights and privileges attached. In accord with Marshall, scholar Asen argues, that citizenship can be translated into a property that can be owned (2004). This perception of citizenship raises the question of who are the beneficiaries of citizenship status and who are the dispossessed.

Situating citizenship in the context of migration adds a new dimension to the concept by highlighting the exclusive and limited nature of accessing the benefits and rights. On the other hand, it illustrates how being a migrant often means being deprived of certain rights or having access to limited rights. By locating it in this field, it highlights the limitations and shatters the idea that there is a climate of full political inclusion and equality among all citizens (Bauböck, 2006). It shows a different dynamic between citizens and non-citizens and the different rights attributed to them. Another characteristic of the phenomenon of citizenship is that it is established between “insiders” and “outsiders” (Bauböck, 2006, p.19). This specific aspect can be used to understand the political dimension that this phenomenon can take, as it has the power to differentiate between those who are part of the membership base and those who are not. In these broad, dichotomous definitions of citizenship, the challenge remains that there is little room for anything in-between and the continuum that exists in being a citizen is ignored. The notion of second-class citizenship

is then linked to those who face structural violence and oppression and who are often denied the full range of rights, but somehow are still granted a limited set of rights, which encompasses the category of migrants. Second class citizens is a category of people who are treated differently, even though they fall under the category of citizenship. An example that illustrates the prevalence of this phenomenon is in the context of the US, where African Americans, as part of the membership base of American citizens, are not granted the same rights and are considered “less worthy”, which is often linked to structural racism and socio-economic discrimination (Kingston, 2019, p.189). Despite being a part of the American citizenship category, they face structural violence and are treated differently by being deprived of certain rights, which in the US context describes the systematic violence exercised by the police (Kingston, 2019). It is therefore important to note that second-class citizenship can emerge while being part of the citizenship base, but experiencing a different kind of treatment. This concept can be utilized to describe the lack of protection that migrants receive regarding exploitative working conditions. The concept of second-class citizenship carves out a category within the citizenship base that makes the structures of oppression visible. These power hierarchies are intertwined with social status, that can be linked to economic activity. I argue that depending on which market stream one belongs to, one’s category of citizenship is also tied to.

The reason for discussing the second-class citizenship in this section of the paper is to understand the links between the labour market and its associated social status. In practice, the dual market economy is characterised by a distinction between a “centre” and a “periphery” economy (Hodson & Kaufman, 1982, p.728). The concentration of capital then takes place in the centre spaces, which are distinguished by their different types of labour flows. This distinction can also be observed within labour flows, as there is a formal and an informal economy. These two coexisting spaces are marked by their oppositional nature, as the informal economy is characterised by its “low productivity sector” and offering fewer “net benefits” compared to the formal economy (Gutiérrez-Romero, 2021, p.2). Wealth is concentrated in the formal economy, and individuals who are part of the informal economy will show interest in moving into the formal economy (Gutiérrez-Romero, 2021). The distinction between the formal and informal economy can be linked to the theory of second-class citizenship, as the separation of labour flows between the formal and informal economy, primary and secondary workers. These two dichotomous flows are linked to the category of citizenship an individual belongs to. By drawing a distinction between the two markets and activities, I want to highlight that migrants have only access to the secondary market and therefore remain stuck in the category of second-class citizens. While establishing this

assumption, it is necessary to distinguish between regular and irregular migrants, as irregular migrants remain completely unprotected and therefore delivered towards exploitation and unprotected working conditions. Due to their lack of status and protection, they endure inhumane and exploitative treatment and tend to fall below the second-class citizenship category. The concept of second-class citizenship, which is synonymous with migrant workers, can be used to measure differences in treatment and deprivation of rights. Through the lens of second-class citizenship, the lack of full rights can be highlighted and the tendency towards exploitation can be identified.

B. *Migrant Labour: The Other?*

The concept of « Othering » can be identified within the field of neo-colonialism and post-colonialism; cultural perceptions of “the Other” are generated under certain socio-economic relations between the European coloniser and the colonised non-European people. It is used to create a de-alienation between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’. Frantz Fanon, a key figure in the decolonial movement, shows that the “Other”, which is often synonymous with the black embodiment, is dependent on the “Self”, which is synonymous with the coloniser (Mironcuka, 2023, p.202). The concept of “Othering” then shows a link between the “Other” and the “Self”, reflecting a link between the coloniser and the colonised. The emergence of « Otherness », which is synonymous to blackness, is always in relation to the « Self », which represents whiteness: “[f]or not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (Fanon, 2008, p. 90 cited in Mironcuka, 2023, p.202). “Othering” creates a hierarchy in which the emergence of the category of the “Other” illustrates and is perceived as being less than the “Self”. The “Other” is also characterised by being perceived as different to the “Self”, therefore, being opposed and compared to each other (McAllum & Zahra, 2017). The practice of “Othering” is perceived as a tool to create a deviation from the “Self” that is characterised as the main. Another definition that illustrates the process of othering is that it is “a process (...) through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship (Crang, 1998, p.61, cited in Brons, 2015, p.70)”. The established definition exemplifies the opposition of identities that consequently then create a hierarchy. As it is a process in which there is a “Self” and an “Other” that remain opposed to each other.

Furthermore, Brons argues that it establishes an unequal distribution of certain desirable traits that the “self/in-group” possesses and the undesirable traits that the “other/out-group” possesses (2015, p.70). Therefore, the process of “Othering” establishes hierarchical dynamics between the

different groups and establishes desirable/undesirable qualities to have. It is through the opposition of these different groups that the unequal power relationship is created. Another aspect that is often present in the process of “Othering” is that the unequal distribution of power and the “superiority/inferiority” status is never addressed or acknowledged but rather indirectly implied and present (Brons, 2015, p.70).

In the field of migration, the process of “Othering” occurs frequently as there is a juxtaposition between the migrant and the non-migrant. These two statuses, oppositional groups are then accompanied by specific characteristics that further reinforce and oppose the two distinct sides. It is through a binary logic that consistently highlights and legitimises differences, often through oral discourses that reinforce polarisation (Akbulut & Razum, 2023). The migrant status is not the main and only aspect that contributes to the process of “Othering”, but is accompanied by other categories of differentiation, such as “ethnic-cultural identity” and “religious affiliation” (Akbulut & Razum, 2023, p.1112). Therefore, the status of migrant is shaped by many other aspects that contribute to “Othering practices”, it is important to acknowledge that “Othering” can then occur on multiple levels simultaneously.

C. Labour exploitation

In this section I will need to work on and integrate more aspects that combine labour migration and the tendency towards exploitation. As this is a common practice, I will need to look at literature that defines the phenomenon of exploitation and explain the commonality it regarding migrant labour in the agricultural sector.

4. Methodology

In this section of the thesis, I will explain the methodological choices made in order to test the established hypothesis. In order to understand the shift of migration flows from urban to rural areas in the context of Portugal, the thesis will engage in a qualitative case study. To investigate the theoretical definitions, set up in the theoretical framework, I will focus on the factors influencing Portugal’s ability to accommodate high numbers of migrants and the shift of the migration flows will be measured. To properly grasp the entangled nature of migrant labour and

neo-colonial labour structures, I intend to analyse the case study through the conceptual frameworks of “second class-citizenship”, “othering”, and “exploitative labour conditions” where and if applicable. The analysis of this thesis aims to combine the study of migrant labour present in the agricultural sector and the origins of the shift in migratory flows, while investigating the established migration policies in Portugal. The thesis combines analytical research of the established migration policies with testimonies from local NGOs working to protect migrants. It analyses the continuation of exploitation through a neo-colonial lens.

A. Critical Discourse Analysis

The methodological framework utilized for the analysis of this thesis will be the critical discourse analysis (CDA). This analysis will be carried out through the presentation of interviews conducted with NGOs familiar with the exploitation of migrant labour in Portugal, and through the analysis of existing migration policies. By combining these two sources of information, I hope to understand how migration policies work in practice and to what extent they are implemented or not. By incorporating interview material from NGOs familiar with the sector, it will be useful to understand how these policies are implemented or respected, and whether they strengthen and enable the protection of migrants.

Critical discourse is a form of analysis that, through the process of analysis, establishes a prior set of assumptions, often linked to a prior political hierarchy (Antaki, 2008, p.434). By using the lens of critical discourse analysis, various forms of discourse, surrounding established structures are analysed, and persisting social inequalities are interrogated (Meyer & Wodak, 2001). Critical discourse analysis also interrogates the “operation of power” (Antaki, 2008, p.432), that is transmitted through the use of words. This analysis aims to understand the relationship between relaxed migration policies and the labour exploitation of migrants in the agricultural sector, as well as to understand the shifts in migration flows that are taking place related to the labour demand. The analysis will be conducted around the interview information provided by the interviewees combined with the administrative information surrounding migration policies. Through the analysis I am trying to understand the power structures vis-à-vis migrants and the continuation of labour exploitative practices in the agricultural sector.

How will the qualitative research be accomplished?

The interviewees:

Semi-structured: Doxastic Interview

- Interview with NGOs on the ground
 - Lisbon Project: <https://www.lisbonproject.org>
 - Council Portugal Refugees: <https://cpr.pt>

- Interview with elite actors
 - Local NGO*
 - Inês Carreirinho at the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)

 - Academia*
 - **General** Rainer Munz Professor at CEU (Migration and Migration Governance)
 - **General** Dr. Boldizsar Nagy “International and Refugee Law”
→ gathering hints and advice!

- Interview with local actors: Migrants working within the agricultural sector in rural Portugal (**ethical approach**)

To be continued....

Food for thought: Encountered Dilemmas

- While writing the report I already put myself in a corner as my preliminary research question implied that the migration policies are established to employ migrants within the field of agriculture (I left no room open for it to be otherwise). Therefore, to let the research guide me again, I need to broaden the scope again. This I will do by shifting my focus less on exploitation, but more on the migration dynamic that is ongoing in Portugal. I intend to focus more on terms such as **transnational ties, transmigrants, and on the specific communities settling in rural regions.**
- Due to specific rural villages accommodating to a specific community, I want to research specific communities such as the Nepalese community, that is characterised as a big community moving towards Portugal. This phenomenon being connected to the transnational ties theory could be very interesting to analyse, I would want to **identify the different dynamics in different rural villages.**
- Second-Class Citizenship is a concept that I encountered while researching migration flows, as my focus will shift, I am not certain whether this frame will be of great use in the analysis. I believe that the concept is interesting as it linked to the market activity, and often migrants have no choice but to fill the labour demand and work as second-class workers. The frame remains relevant, but since my scope will broaden again, and I will focus more on the migration dynamics, **I will put this concept on hold or will shrink the space it takes up.**
- An aspect that I want to delve in as well would be the seasonal nature of agricultural work which can be tied to “exploitative” working conditions as it already presupposes unreliable labour, **so while delving into the concept of labour conditions, I can further investigate that concept.**
- While focusing on the “Othering”, I find the concept of body politics also very interesting as some bodies are deemed, more valuable than others. Some are exploited to a wide extent, which is an aspect I find very interesting to invest in the context of agricultural labour, as its intensive physical labour that is executed by migrants (most of the time) and

their physical struggle. **The concept of body politics could also be utilized as a frame to analyse the exploitative working conditions.**

- The way the labour market is currently proceeding, e.g. that certain sectors are predominantly filled with migrant labour due to the intensive physical or low paid wages, is a form of neocolonialism that is happening in many European countries. **The labour market being dependent on migrant labour for specific industries highlights an ongoing neo-colonial power dynamic.** I would like to analyse and understand this aspect further.
- Within the Case Study part, I **will meticulously analyse the current migration policies, as I always mention the lack of regulation, but do not present the policies.** This will be done in the case study section.