

PERMANENTLY PROVISIONAL. FACTS & FIGURES OF PORTUGUESE IMMIGRATION IN SWITZERLAND

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of the main demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Portuguese immigration in Switzerland. Firstly, it outlines the political and economic underpinnings of Portuguese migration flows to Switzerland. Then, it analyzes the demographic and sociological composition of these flows, the composition of the Portuguese population in Switzerland, as well as processes of economic and cultural integration. It is notably argued that the enduring Portuguese "ideology of return migration" has played a central role in the patterns of integration of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland

INTRODUCTION

In 1964, an experts' committee commissioned by the Swiss Government strongly advised against the recruitment of foreign workers in so-called "distant areas" that included, among others, Portugal. Workers from these areas were considered too different culturally and socially, would be unable to get used to Swiss ways and customs, and above all, would generate hostile reactions among the Swiss population (Cerutti, 2005; OFIAMT, 1964: 183). Forty years later, Switzerland had the fourth biggest population of Portuguese immigrants in the world, just after such bigger countries as France, the United States, and Canada (OECD, 2009)¹. In 2007, there were 193,300 Portuguese nationals in Switzerland, a country of about 7.7 million inhabitants (OFS, 2008).

Despite its importance, Portuguese immigration to Switzerland has attracted little scholarly attention (see, however, Marques, 2002, 2006) as compared to other migration flows in Switzerland (Italians, Spaniards) (Buechler, 1987; Wicker, et al., 2003) or to older Portuguese migration flows to other countries (Brazil, the United States, Canada, France) (Leeds, 1987; Klimt, 1989; Baganha, 1990; Brettell, 2003). This article provides an overview of this phenomenon and its economic, social and political underpinnings, and outlines some explanatory factors to account for its characteristics. It mainly draws upon data published from the Swiss population census, various retrospective databases provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, and recent literature on immigration and immigration policy in Switzerland.

The article is structured as follows. The first section outlines the main characteristics of the Swiss model of integration of immigrants with regard to the economic and cultural domains. The second provides a short history of Portuguese migration to Switzerland taking both push and pull factors into account, and the third outlines the main characteristics of Portuguese flows and population as regards broad demographical indicators: numbers, age and gender structure. The fourth investigates the insertion of Portuguese migrants in the Swiss labour market, and the fifth provides some indicators on the cultural integration of the Portuguese

population, with a focus on the second generation. The final section outlines some hypotheses to account for the main characteristics of Portuguese migration in Switzerland, and notably the “Portuguese ideology of return migration” outlined by Caroline Brettell (2003).

THE SETTING

Throughout the twentieth century, Switzerland has been one of the countries with the highest share of international migrants: in 2007, 22.1 per cent of the population living in Switzerland were foreigners (OFS, 2008). Switzerland has displayed a specific model of immigration which has typically kept a double face: open for migrants that are considered “functional” for the economy, but restrictive and exclusionist with regard to their integration at the political and social level (Haug, 2005)². The characteristics of this “integration model” have strongly influenced Portuguese migration flows into the country, as well as the patterns of participation of Portuguese immigrants in the economy. The main elements outlined here are the segmentation of the labour market, and a defensive model of citizenship.

As in other countries in Western Europe, migration flows in Switzerland have been traditionally channelled towards the lower segments of the labour market, but this trend has been particularly accentuated in this country due to a specific economic and institutional structure. More precisely, the Swiss labour market has been significantly segmented between high human capital jobs mainly in the export economy (banks, watches, the pharmacy and chemicals industry) and low human capital jobs in the sheltered domestic economy (personal services, health, construction, tourism) (Flückiger and Nejedan, 1999). This can be partly explained by a dual economic policy promoting free-trade on the one hand, which allowed competitive industries to export their products without trade barriers, and various measures of selective protectionism geared to the protection of traditional economic sectors from foreign competition on the other (Bonoli and Mach, 2000). For a long time, immigration policy in Switzerland has been implicitly aimed at providing cheap and abundant labour to these latter sectors that otherwise would not have been able to survive, which has tended to maintain a significant proportion of jobs that were unattractive for Swiss nationals in the traditional economy (Afonso, 2007). As will be shown below, Portuguese immigrants have been strongly concentrated in these sheltered economic sectors, like in tourism and construction.

Furthermore, labour market segmentation has been fostered by a specific system of various work permits which conferred different social and economic rights to foreigners according to their length of stay in Switzerland, and limited their professional and geographical mobility. Up to the late 1990s, seasonal work permits allowed an immigrant to work in Switzerland for nine months a year, mainly in sectors such as agriculture, construction, and the hospitality trade without right to family reunification. Workers holding this type of permit were not allowed to change their activity or move from one canton to another. After 36 consecutive months of work in Switzerland, seasonal workers could eventually obtain renewable annual permits

which allowed family reunification and permanent residence. Finally resident permits, which were given after five or ten years of stay in Switzerland -- depending on the worker's country of origin -- gave immigrants roughly the same rights as Swiss citizens, with the exception of political rights.

A second dimension of this model was a rather exclusionist and defensive model of citizenship. This materialised for instance in the *jus sanguinis* principle, according to which children born in the country have no automatic right to Swiss citizenship, and have to go through demanding naturalisation requirements to obtain Swiss citizenship.³ Although integration processes of immigrants have indisputably taken place during the last 50 years, the Swiss institutional apparatus has surely not displayed the most welcoming context of arrival and integration for immigrants (Cinar, et al., 1995). As Ireland (1994: 148) puts it -- maybe with a little exaggeration -- "since World War II, Swiss governments and institutions have worked (...) earnestly (...) to keep foreigners out of host-society politics and divided among ethnic lines". This defensive identity has been notably expressed at the political level by far-right political groups who have used the tools of direct democracy to put the Government under pressure to limit immigration (Mahnig and Piguët, 2000: 5). In the 1960s, these pressures constrained the Government to set up immigration quotas which supplemented an already existing system of legal discrimination designed to protect Swiss workers. To obtain a work permit for a foreign worker they wished to hire, employers had to prove that there was no Swiss worker available on the Swiss labour market, which has tended to accentuate segregation effects between Swiss and foreign workers.

HISTORY

Portuguese migration to Switzerland is a recent phenomenon when put into perspective with the general history of Portuguese population movements. Emigration has been a recurring phenomenon throughout Portugal's history, dating back to the fifteenth century, due to chronic agricultural poverty (Brettell, 2003: 60). In the second half of the nineteenth century, this phenomenon underwent an important quantitative growth, involving much greater numbers of people, most of whom were peasants. Portuguese first migrated overseas, mainly to Brazil and, to a lesser extent, to the United States, Canada, then massively to France in the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s (Baganha, 2003: 145).

Portuguese emigration in the nineteenth and twentieth century was at the same time a consequence and a central instrument of reproduction of the Portuguese social system, especially during Salazar's *Estado Novo*. On the one hand, emigration was the only channel of upward mobility for the Portuguese peasantry in a rigid and hierarchic social system characterized by high levels of inequality. Emigration was thus a means to overcome this system and achieve social ascension (Brettell, 2003: 65). On the other hand, emigration also contributed to the elimination of social tensions that could have destabilised the social and political order. This notably explains the rather ambiguous posture of Salazar's Regime towards emigration, that is, not favouring it but not preventing it effectively either (Pereira, 2004).

Portuguese immigration is also relatively recent in relation to the history of immigration to Switzerland. Immigration to Switzerland -- stemming essentially from Germany and Italy -- became a mass phenomenon in the middle of the nineteenth century, as a result of an early industrialisation process and a structural labour shortage (Arlettaz and Arlettaz, 2004). Before World War I, Switzerland was already among the countries with the highest share of foreigners in Europe, before it quickly decreased in the interwar period. After World War II, the Swiss economy, which had been spared from the damages of the war, resorted again very quickly and massively to foreign workers. These first came from Italy in the immediate post-war period, then from Spain in the 1960s to respond to the strong increase in the demand for Swiss goods from the reconstructing countries of Europe (Flückiger, 1992).

Portuguese immigration, together with Turkish and Yugoslav migration, features among the most recent migration flows that took place mainly during the 1980s. The start of massive Portuguese migration to Switzerland in that particular period can be explained by international as well as domestic factors. By contrast to France, Portuguese immigration to Switzerland had been very low during the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, according to census data, there were only a little more than 3,000 Portuguese in Switzerland in 1970, many of whom had migrated on political grounds. Besides the strong attraction that France exerted, the ethno-cultural stereotypes that underlay Swiss migration policy also discouraged migration to this country. Hence, during the 1950s and 1960s, the Swiss authorities limited the recruitment of foreign labour to near countries, whose nationals were considered -- quite arbitrarily -- "assimilable" by Swiss society. As mentioned above, Portugal was classified among the "distant countries" that did not satisfy this condition.

After the sudden recession caused by the oil shock of 1970s, most European countries closed their doors to labour migration, and enforced defensive migration policies. This phenomenon notably had a dramatic impact on Portuguese emigration to France, which had become the main destination country for Portuguese emigrants in the 1960s. Portuguese emigration to this country dropped from 135,000 in 1970 to 7,000 in 1978 (Baganha, 2003: 156-157). In Portugal, however, emigration pressures remained strong. This period was characterized above all by strong economic and political instability in the aftermath of the 1974 carnation revolution. Wages and living standards remained the lowest in Western Europe, and unemployment strongly increased, partly due to the return of several hundred thousands of returnees (*retornados*) from the former colonies (Baganha, 2003: 154). With the lack of sizeable migratory networks functioning in other destinations in Europe, Portuguese potential emigrants were left with no alternative. Accordingly, some scholars declared the "end of the Portuguese Migratory Cycle" (Paiva, 1985), which did not remain true for a long time. New migration opportunities opened, notably in Switzerland.

Indeed, the ethno-cultural stereotypes mentioned in the introduction, which guided Swiss foreign recruitment practices, were ruled out by economic needs. Whereas most countries of Western Europe were experiencing mass unemployment, this phenomenon remained extraordinarily low in Switzerland, partly thanks to a system of precarious work permits that had allowed to "export unemployment" during the oil

shocks of the 1970s (Flückiger, 1998). Indeed, even if 330,000 jobs were lost between 1973 and 1976, this did not result in an increase in the unemployment rate. Over the same period, the number of foreign workers dropped from just under 900,000 in 1973 to 650,000 in 1976. In the absence of compulsory unemployment protection, foreign workers who lost their jobs had no other choice than leaving the country.

In the second half of the 1980s, Switzerland needed foreign labour again owing to an expansionary cycle that took place essentially in the domestic sectors of the economy (services, construction, retail trade) (Bonoli and Mach, 2000: 143). By that time however, Italian and Spanish workers had become less disposed to come to Switzerland, owing to the general increase in living standards in their countries. Swiss employers turned to countries that had been hitherto considered too “culturally distant”, like Portugal and Yugoslavia. Portugal, in the meantime, also abandoned authoritarian rule, became a democracy and joined the European Community in 1986. Considering that a significant part of emigration in the 1960s was clandestine, this also incontestably facilitated the movement of labour where jobs were available. Joining the EC notably contributed to the closer economic and political integration of Portugal in Europe, and loosen links with former colonies and America.

In the second half of the decade, Portuguese and Yugoslav workers increasingly substituted Italians and Spaniards in low-skilled employment in Switzerland, and migration from these countries increased very quickly. Whereas immigration from Portugal accounted for only 1.5 per cent of total immigration to Switzerland in 1975, it represented 16.7 per cent in 1990 (Swiss Federal Foreigners Office, 2001). In 1991, the Swiss Government established a policy of so-called “three circles” that defined regions of recruitment that should be privileged. Although Yugoslavia had become an important source of labour in the 1980s, it was placed on the “third circle”, whose nationals were considered undesirable in Switzerland. Quite ironically, Portugal, that had joined the European Community in the meantime, was this time classified on the good side of the “cultural barrier”. Despite the economic downturn that hit Switzerland as from 1991, since it was no longer possible to obtain work permits for Yugoslavs, the decrease of Portuguese immigration was slowed down because the demand for low-skilled labour shifted from Yugoslav to Portuguese labour (Marques, 2002).

MIGRATION FLOWS AND POPULATION

Similarly to older migration flows to Switzerland, Portuguese migration essentially took place within guest-worker programs. A large proportion of Portuguese immigrants first came to Switzerland with seasonal worker permits. In the beginning, Portuguese migration was thus almost exclusively a labour, essentially male, migration. However, as in most other countries which have established similar temporary migration programs, “guests” tended to become permanent residents, and logics of stabilisation and multiplication of immigration operated. Seasonal workers obtained the right to permanent permits that allowed family reunification, which tended to increase female and youth migration. The bulk of Portuguese migration took place within a dense

network of family and friendship relations that allowed a quick diffusion of information about job opportunities, work and living conditions in the destination country (Marques, 2002: 129). One of the major distinctive characteristics of Portuguese migration flows to Switzerland is their intensiveness in a relatively short period. Indeed, it is striking to note that half of the total Portuguese immigration to Switzerland between 1970 and 2000 took place within a period of 6 years, between 1989 and 1994 (Piguet, 2005: 78). During this period, around 100,000 Portuguese entered Switzerland. The proportion of Portuguese nationals among the foreign population increased from 2 per cent in 1980 to 9.5 per cent in 2000.

Since the entry into force of the bilateral agreement on the free movement of workers between Switzerland and the EU in 2002, which grants full access to the Swiss labour market for EU workers, there has been a second migration wave from Portugal. Taking advantage of facilitated access to Switzerland, Portuguese immigration flows after 2002 have greatly increased again (Figure 1). After 2002, Portugal has come to become the second largest sending country to Switzerland after Germany. This has resulted again in an increase by about 50'000 in the Portuguese population in Switzerland between 2000 and 2007 (Figure 2).

<Figure 1 about here >

In contrast to migration flows from ex-Yugoslavia or Turkey, which started off at about the same time but also partly took place within the framework of political asylum seeking, Portuguese migration has been strongly correlated with the economic situation. Indeed, the Portuguese who came to Switzerland were essentially unskilled workers who came at first to work in the traditional sectors of the economy. As mentioned above, family reunifications increased in the 1980s as a proportion of the total Portuguese migration to Switzerland, and declined more slowly than labour migration when labour market conditions deteriorated. By contrast to Turkey and former Yugoslavia, the fact that Portugal was a member of the EU has maintained an important level of labour migration as well, whereas labour migration from outside the EU has been severely restricted.

As regards the geographical distribution, Portuguese immigrants are strongly concentrated in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Hence, in 2002, 64 per cent of the Portuguese lived in a French-speaking canton, whereas these cantons only accounted for 25 per cent of the overall Swiss population.⁴ The most important Portuguese communities are found in the cantons of Vaud and Geneva. This can be possibly explained by a greater cultural and linguistic proximity, and notably the similarities with France, which has exerted a strong attraction for Portuguese migrants. Even if there are no encompassing data on the geographical origin of immigrants within Portugal, a sample of interviewees constituted by Marques (2006) pointed to the North and Centre of Portugal as being the main sending regions, even though there is a significant population from Algarve and Alentejo, which is somewhat new with respect to previous emigration flows in the 1960s and 1970s (Marques, 2006: 246-7).

The gender and age structure of the Portuguese permanent population in Switzerland has been strongly influenced by the motives and timing of migration flows. First, these were in a majority directed towards sectors of the Swiss economy where jobs were essentially masculine, like construction. Hence, according to data provided by the censuses of 1980 and 1990, there was a significant imbalance in the sex ratio of the Portuguese population in Switzerland, women accounting for 38 per cent in 1980 and 42 per cent in 1990. During the 1990s, however, the increase of family reunifications and the decline of labour migration caused an evening out of the sex ratio: in 2000, women accounted for 47 per cent of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland. This is a general pattern of Portuguese migration to northern Europe, as already noted by Klimt (1989: 48) for Germany.

<Figure 2 about here>

Second, the age structure is typical of a recent labour migration flow, the Portuguese population being significantly younger than the overall Swiss population. Hence, besides an overrepresentation of very young children, one can notice above all a strong overrepresentation of persons of working age, between 20 and 50. This overrepresentation is strikingly strong among people in their thirties, whereas the proportion of Portuguese above 50 is very small. Only 5 per cent of Portuguese immigrants were above 50 in 2000, whereas people above 50 represented 33 per cent of the overall population in Switzerland. This can be explained by the fact that Portuguese immigration is recent, but also by the fact that its rotation ratio is high. Despite the fact that stabilisation patterns are observable, the average length of stay of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland has remained low in comparison with most other immigrant communities in Switzerland. In 1998, Portuguese immigrants had spent on average 7.9 years in the country, as compared with 5.5 years in 1980. In comparison, Spaniards had spent 14.3 years in Switzerland in 1980, and 23.7 years in 1998, which shows that Italians tend to be much more prone to settle permanently than the Portuguese, who tend to return to their home country after a few years (Piguet, 2005: 139). This pattern will be explained below.

PORTUGUESE IMMIGRANTS ON THE SWISS LABOUR MARKET

In 2000, 82 per cent of Portuguese nationals in Switzerland were professionally active, as compared with 68 per cent for all foreigners and 63 per cent for the total population (Wanner 2004). Hence, whereas Switzerland already displays one of the highest employment ratios in Europe, the employment rate among Portuguese immigrants is even higher -- actually the highest among immigrant communities in Switzerland. This can be mainly explained by the high proportion of persons of working age, and the very small number of people above 50. As regards unemployment, although unemployment rates among Portuguese immigrants have been higher than among Swiss citizens, they do not significantly differ from older immigrant communities such as Spaniards or Italians. In comparison, unemployment rates among Yugoslavs and

Turks have been at least twice as high during the 1990s, partly owing to discrimination mechanisms⁵.

As mentioned above, the overall economic and institutional context in which migration to Switzerland has taken place has strongly influenced the modalities of integration of Portuguese immigrants on the labour market. Hence, Swiss employers resorted to Portuguese migrants to fill gaps in activities for which qualification requirements were low. Hence, these tend to occupy functions that are to a large extent abandoned by Swiss nationals, mostly in the same sectors for which seasonal workers were required. According to Pigué, the Portuguese, together with Yugoslavs and Turks, displayed the highest segregation ratios among immigrants in Switzerland in 1990, which means that the positions they occupied in the economic system were very different from those occupied by Swiss nationals (Pigué, 2005)⁶. In 2001, the economic sectors in which the Portuguese were the most represented were hospitality (21%) and construction (17%) (Swiss Federal Foreigners Office, 2001). In comparison, only 2.8 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively of Swiss workers worked in these two sectors (OFS 2004). A strong differentiation can also be observed as regards the position in the profession: whereas 67 per cent of Portuguese workers were unskilled workers, this was the case for only 11.5 per cent of the Swiss.

<Figure 3 about here>

Recent research provides evidence of the fact that the mobility of Portuguese immigrants on the labour market has increased in recent years, although segregation levels remain very high. Hence, Portuguese immigrants tend to leave the economic sectors in which they had been recruited as seasonal workers (hospitality) to other sectors in which wages are higher, mainly construction, trade or other services, but whose wages and working conditions are nevertheless unattractive for Swiss workers (Pigué, 2005: 190). The characteristics of the economic integration of Portuguese immigrants in the Swiss economy are strongly linked to the average educational attainment of Portuguese immigrants, which remains much lower than the overall population living in Switzerland. In 2000, 82 per cent of the Portuguese had no or only obligatory education, whereas this category only represented 28 per cent among the Swiss and 51 per cent among foreigners.

<Figure 4 about here>

ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Cultural integration can be conceptualised in various ways, and a wide variety of indicators can be taken into account to measure it: language use, intermarriage, naturalization, or many other factors (Waters and Jiménez, 2005). Above all, the definition of integration remains a subject of controversy scientifically and politically.

This section provides some indicators that can be linked to cultural integration, but does not pretend to provide a comprehensive picture as to the cultural integration of the Portuguese in Switzerland.

First of all, similarly to other West European immigrants, the Portuguese seem to be well accepted among the Swiss population. An opinion poll conducted in 2002 showed that 82 per cent of respondents had a rather positive or very positive image of the Portuguese.⁷ In comparison, extra- or east-European immigrants were the subject of rather hostile sentiments from the Swiss population. Only 15 per cent and 19 per cent of respondents had a good opinion of Serbians and Albanians respectively. The Portuguese, just like Italians and Spaniards, are perceived as culturally closer. The acceptance of Muslim communities has proved to be more problematic, as exemplified by a recent referendum vote which resulted in a ban on the construction of minarets. As regards concrete practices of acceptance or discrimination, a recent study on the ethnic discrimination of second generation migrants in job applications also provides empirical evidence that the Portuguese do not suffer from significant deliberate discrimination on the labour market (Fibbi, et al., 2003, see note 4).

However, despite the fact that Portuguese immigrants do not seem to suffer from hostile sentiments among the population or among employers, many indicators suggest that integration specificities exist nevertheless, especially in comparison with comparable immigrant communities, notably Italians and Spaniards. Indeed, elements provided in the domains of naturalisation, intermarriage and language use suggest a relative isolation of Portuguese immigrants with regard to the host society. According to a study on naturalisations between 1985 and 1998, the naturalisation ratio among Portuguese immigrants has been extremely low as compared with most other nationalities. For the periods 1985-1991 and 1992-1998⁸, only 0.42 per cent and 0.52 per cent respectively of the Portuguese obtained Swiss citizenship yearly, as compared with 0.67 per cent and 1.33 per cent for all foreigners (Piguet and Wanner, 2000). During this period, only Spaniards have been less inclined to obtain Swiss citizenship, whereas Yugoslavs have displayed a much higher naturalisation ratio. Besides the differences in the political and economic situation in the countries of origin, this can also be interpreted as a consequence of specific migratory projects that will be outlined later. This trend is similar as regards the proportion of mixed households, which can be considered an indicator of the proximity between immigrant communities and nationals. According to the census conducted in 2000, 6 per cent of the Portuguese in Switzerland lived with a Swiss partner, as compared with 16.5 per cent of all foreigners in Switzerland. The propensity to speak another language than that of the host country at work is a little higher among Portuguese and Spaniards than among the overall immigrant population in Switzerland. As has been shown above, the strong concentration of Portuguese immigrants in specific economic activities is a major explicative factor for this trend. In many construction sites, the majority of workers are of Portuguese nationality.

THE SECOND GENERATION

The socio-economic characteristics of the Portuguese second generation in Switzerland are different from that of their parents in the sense that there is some upward social mobility, even if its indicators of educational achievement still differ substantially with those of the Swiss, Spaniards and Italians (Fibbi, et al., 2005). The limited time-span makes it difficult to assess if those differences are just transitory and embedded in a classical assimilation path whereby differences will progressively fade (Alba and Nee, 2003) or inscribed in a phenomenon of “segmented assimilation” whereby socio-economic differences persist over many generations (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997).

The proportion of individuals with low education levels among the Portuguese youth remains high as compared with Swiss nationals and “older” immigrant communities (Mey, et al., 2005: 83). Drawing upon data of the 2000 census, 40 per cent of the Portuguese second generation between 20 and 24 had not gone beyond obligatory school, as compared with 7 per cent for the Swiss, 15 per cent for Italians and 16 per cent for Spaniards. On the other hand, around 9 per cent of them hold a tertiary degree, as compared with 25 per cent of the Swiss. The subgroup of young Portuguese/Swiss double nationals displays fairly different results, the proportion of holders of a tertiary degree being even higher than the Swiss (29%), which can be explained by the selection patterns linked to naturalisation. Young immigrants with a good education background ask more often for Swiss citizenship than those with a poor one (Fibbi, et al., 2005: 23).

As regards the professional activities of the Portuguese second generation, it appears that they remain to a large extent confined in specific low-skilled economic activities, although they slightly differ from those in which their parents work. Hence, for the Portuguese between 20 and 39 born in Switzerland, the main sectors of activity were craft and industry (18.7%), construction (14.6%), hospitality (13.7%) and health (10.2%) (Mey, et al., 2005: 106). According to data from the 1990 census, the second generation of Portuguese born in Switzerland tend to perform fairly different activities from those of their parents, but these activities remain in the lower segments of the labour market as regards educational requirements and working conditions (Piguet, 2005: 192).

UNDERSTANDING PORTUGUESE MIGRATION IN SWITZERLAND

In his recent study of immigration flows in Switzerland in the last 50 years, Piguet points out the specific integration problems faced by the latest immigrants flows, namely Turks, Yugoslavs, and Portuguese with regard to educational and occupational mobility (Piguet, 2004: 109). It can be argued that the low education levels of Portuguese immigrants, a less favourable economic context than for previous migration flows, and a specific “ideology of return” are determining explanatory factors for the limited social mobility of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland.

First, the characteristics and the low occupational mobility of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland can be explained by their education level that remains very low. As

already pointed out by Fibbi (1993), the low education level of foreigners in Switzerland is largely due to the patterns of foreign labour recruitment which favoured low-skilled immigrants: immigrants are often low-skilled because they have often been hired at first as seasonal workers. This explanation is particularly valid for the Portuguese, who have constituted a major source of seasonal labour. But this low education level of Portuguese immigrants can also be broadly related to the poor education standards in Portugal in comparative perspective. OECD surveys have notably pointed out poor human capital as one of the major weaknesses of the Portuguese economy, which now faces growing competition from emerging low-wage countries for low-skilled activities, as in the textile industry (Guichard and Larre, 2006: 5). Concerning the second generation, social reproduction mechanisms seem to have strongly limited convergence processes with the native-born, since the average education level of their parents is significantly lower than that of the Swiss.

Second, the period in which the bulk of Portuguese migration to Switzerland took place proved to be certainly less favourable to integration than the previous decades, at least as far as labour market conditions are concerned. During the 1950s and 1960s, a quickly expanding economy and the importance of the industrial sector allowed Italians and Spaniards to integrate successfully and achieve social ascension in spite of low initial professional skills. After the oil shocks of the 1970s and the economic stagnation of the 1980s, the overall restructuring of the economy changed this landscape. As argued by Zhou (1997: 981), "the growing "hourglass" economy, with knowledge-intensive, high-paying jobs at one end and labour-intensive, low-paying jobs at the other, has taken away several rungs of the mobility ladder that are crucial for enabling immigrants, especially those with little education and few job skills, who started from the bottom to climb up". This statement made for the United States may also be valid for most industrialized countries, including Switzerland. Besides the specific institutional factors highlighted in the first section, the economic downturn of the 1980s in this country, characterized by higher unemployment and growing social tensions, also contributed to exacerbate hostile sentiments towards immigrants. The rise of the national-populist *Schweizerische Volkspartei* in the 1980s, that became the biggest party in Switzerland in terms of votes, is certainly the most significant expression of this phenomenon at the political level.

Thus far, the two first factors outlined are not specific to Portuguese migration. They account to a large extent for the difficulties of integration encountered by the most recent immigrant flows in Switzerland, namely Turks and ex-Yugoslavs. However, Portuguese migration displays different generic characteristics in relation to these nationalities. First, Portuguese are EU nationals, and do not face significant discrimination problems on the labour market, as compared with extra-EU immigrants. Second, naturalisation ratios are significantly lower among the Portuguese as compared with Yugoslavs, for instance. Portuguese immigrants thus display a few specificities in the domain of cultural integration. It can be argued that this specificity consists in the "ideology of return" shared by the Portuguese diaspora in northern Europe, for which returning to the homeland is a less costly process than for immigrant communities in North America or more distant countries. As demonstrated by the work of Brettell (2003) and Klimt (1989) the idea of return is deeply embedded in the

migratory project of Portuguese emigrants, and the migration process is mostly perceived as a temporary, transitory experience. Hence, a majority of Portuguese emigrants do not migrate to build a life abroad, but to save money to build a better life at “home”. “Life in the migratory context is understood as a time of sacrifice and postponement” (Klimt, 1989: 48). Consciously or unconsciously, the main aim of the emigration process is as much to improve one’s living conditions as to show to those who have stayed in the sending area that one has achieved social ascension. A central idea of this process is that the social capital accumulated in the migratory experience is essentially valuable in the sending country, where those who have left have to show that they are better off whereas they often occupy socially disqualified positions in the destination countries. Portuguese migrants “identify their natal communities as the arena in which they can best achieve recognition and status [...]. The friends, neighbours, and extended kin in Portugal provide the key validations of the migrants’ accomplishments” (Klimt, 1989: 64-5).

The implications of this specific cultural representation can be observed at the macro-level in the average length of stay of Portuguese immigrants in Switzerland, which, as mentioned above, has been one of the lowest among immigrant communities in Switzerland. The Portuguese, more than other foreigners, tend to return to their home country after a few years of stay, and the turnover ratio is high. To some extent, this ideology can also be understood as a factor hampering the further integration of those who stay in Switzerland in the long-term, since the idea that immigration is temporary -- even if the date of return is constantly delayed due to the schooling of children or other factors -- may contribute to maintain a state of “permanent unsettlement” that may hinder integration processes.⁹ This does not mean that successful integration must imply cutting all links with the country of origin, but in this case, the perspective of return tends to reduce incentives to participate socially in the host society, and to invest in one’s integration. Portuguese immigrants tend to stay in their community, and links with Swiss nationals may be rare, partly due to the strong segmentation of the labour market. In the workplace, social contacts with Swiss nationals are often essentially hierarchical (Dorner, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this article was to outline the main social characteristics of Portuguese migration in Switzerland, as well as some possible explanatory factors for these characteristics. However, empirical work is still to be done. Besides testing the hypotheses outlined here, the impacts of the “ideology of return” are still to be studied as regards the integration of the second generation, for whom the construction of identity is rather problematic. Indeed, most children of Portuguese emigrants do not share the return aspirations of their parents, but are socialised in this specific culture of return and closure, which generates substantive conflicts (Hily and Oriol, 1993, on the French case). This problematic construction of one’s positioning between the immigration legacy and the long-term integration in the host society could possibly be an element involved in the difficult integration of the Portuguese second generation. Other immigrant communities in Switzerland, such as Spaniards and Italians, seem to

have succeeded in constructing this positioning. This may not involve a choice between the host country and the country of origin of the parents, but rather involve a transnational identity where both cohabit together (Bolzman, et al., 2003).

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¹ This draws upon OECD statistics which only provide information on immigrants born in Portugal, which underestimates actual numbers with respect to the second generation. Because of different types of data collection across countries, these statistics should be considered with caution.

² Statistical sources mostly consider immigrants as people with no Swiss citizenship independently of the fact that they are born in Switzerland or not. It is important to note that 23.6 per cent of foreigners were born in Switzerland in 2002. By contrast, foreigners who obtain Swiss citizenship are no longer counted as foreigners in the statistics.

³ Most notably, 12 years of permanent stay are required, but it may vary between cantons, and even between communities. See Steiner and Wicker (2004). Klimt (1989) points out to a similar exclusionary integration model in Germany in the 1980s.

⁴ These include Vaud, Geneva, Wallis, Neuchâtel, Fribourg and Jura.

⁵ By sending job applications where only the name and nationality were changed, Fibbi et al (2003) showed that young Turks and Yugoslavs faced high discrimination rates (30% and 59% respectively in German-speaking Switzerland) whereas significant discrimination could not be observed for Italians and the Portuguese.

⁶ *Segregation* should not be mixed up with *discrimination*, which is a deliberate attitude. See Piguet (2005: 189).

⁷ Sixty-one per cent considered they "did not cause any problems" and 21 per cent considered they "constituted enrichment". Only 1 per cent considered they "had nothing to do" in Switzerland and 7 per cent considered they "were sometimes a cause of worry" (Raymann, 2003).

⁸ The two periods are analysed separately because of an important modification of naturalisation rules in 1991, which introduced facilitated procedures.

⁹ See notably Cordeiro (2004) and Klimt (1989).







