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Impact of the Economic Crisis on
Inter-Regional Migration

Economic Crisis and the Return of Brazilians from the USA

- **United States**
 - try to recover from the downturn of 2008/2009
- **Brazil:**
 - Grew as its fastest rhythm in more than two decades in 2010 and -
 - Unemployment is at historical lows, despite the recent slowdown.
 - Reached the place of sixth-largest economy in the world.
 - However, recently, the impact of the crisis in the country begins to gain greater visibility, interrupting this period of confidence.
- Thus, should Brazilian immigrants stay in the United States or should they return? Did the crisis affect their jobs? How? Will they have better jobs and opportunities in Brazil? Are Americans willing to take their jobs under the same conditions?

- Economic crisis and its consequences:
- According to Ghosh (2011), economic crises usually generate unemployment, growth of border restrictions, reduction of migration flows, low values of remittances, increased deportations and increased number of returnees.

labor market takes longer to recover than the economy, which is directly reflected in the patterns of migration policies. In times of crisis

- IOM - migration has shown its resilience in the face of economic downturns and can be expected to grow further in size and complexity over the next few decades

- The latest annual report on International Migration conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2012), based on data from 2010 and 2011, states that the fall in the flow of legal immigration that has occurred in recent years due to the global economic crisis is coming to an end. Immigration for the 23 OECD countries fell in 2010 for the third consecutive year. However, the decline was more modest (3% compared with the previous year, compared to 7% in 2009, the study says).
- Nonetheless, to the International Labor Organization (ILO), a record 202 million people could be unemployed across the world in 2013

Unemployment is on the rise again as economies around the world lose jobs and the fragile recovery is threatened by "incoherent monetary policy" in the U.S. and Europe

Brazil

- The OECD report insists on the slow increase of international migration and also notes this trend towards Brazilian immigrants.
- According to the Brazilian Census 2010, the number of Brazilians who decided to return corresponds to 174.597 and the majority came from the United States (43.600). In the Brazilian Census 2000, the total number of returnees was 143.600 and 29.591 were Brazilians returning from the United States. The last Census also says that the United States is still the main destination of Brazilians, corresponding to 117.104 (23,8%).

- The most recent data published by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) says that unemployment rate was estimated at 5.7%, which is the lowest rate for March since the beginning of the series (March 2002), and it did not change in relation to the results of February (5.6%). The unemployed population (1.4 million people) was stable in relation to the previous month and decreased 8.5% (127 thousand people) in relation to March last year.
- Despite the flurry of Haitian migration to Acre, there is very modest presence of immigrants in Brazil. Foreigners were over 1 million in 1970, 606.000 in 1991 and only 433.000 in 2010, according to IBGE. Including illegal immigrants, not even 2% of the national population.

- **Brazilian data about returnees**

- Despite some initiatives to evaluate the impact of the economic crisis on the return of Brazilian emigrants, most data published in the country correspond to the period prior to 2011 and are insufficient to illustrate the reality. Brazilian studies about the return have focused on the cause and circularity of migration, based on the Theory of Social Networks and are concentrated in certain regions of Brazil, such as Governador Valadares and Ipatinga.
- A Brazilian research tried to measure the impact of the crisis on the return from the United States and Portugal and the conclusion says that the golden era of Brazilian emigration has come to an end.

- But on the other hand, the data also shows that most immigrants don't mention the crisis as the most important reason to return. The majority says the reason was related to their family (either because they missed it, or because some close relative was a sick).
- According to the same research, several academic works have pointed to an increase of the feminization of international migration. The possibility of greater permanence of women at the destination via the maintenance of their work in time of crisis (mostly domestic), compared to the difficulties encountered by men, can be one of the biggest factors that indicate the higher number of male immigrants between returnees. The Brazilians interviewed used to work predominantly in the market and services sector in Brazil, before living, and in the services and civil construction sector in the United States. Most of them decided to go to the United States to save money, to have a better quality of life and better job opportunities.

- Despite the stricter enforcement of irregular immigration, the main negative aspects of international crisis - in the opinion of the returnees - were the reduction of working hours, cutting overtime, rising inflation and the devaluation of the dollar, thus resulting in lower financial gain. The majority of migrants regretted returning to Poté, because there are many difficulties associated with reintegration into the labor market in the city in Brazil.

- **United States**

The unemployment rate in the United States is today higher than Brazil at 7.6 percent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported last March. Employment grew in professional and business services and in health care but declined in retail trade. Both the number of unemployed persons, at 11.7 million, and the unemployment rate, at 7.6 percent, were little changed.

Following the statistics of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the highest number of Brazilians removed from the country was in 2005, when there were 32.112 of them deported. One year later this number decreased to 2.957. In the year of the beginning of the crisis, 2008, it starts to increase again, corresponding to 3.814, but it is now slowly reducing again.

It is largely publicized that there are about eleven million irregular immigrants in the U. S. According to the OECD, labour migration accounts for almost 40% of immigration flows into the European Union, compared with only 6% in the United States. In the U.S. there is little permanent (green card) labour migration, because its system, which is based on numerical limits, favors family migration. The U.S. has the largest share on family migrants in the OECD - about three out of four new permanent immigrants are in this category. Overall in OECD countries, in spite of some decline, family migration continues to be the main category for permanent migration in 2010, accounting for 36% of the flows.

- Researching:
- It is not easy to deal with migration statistics. Numbers can differ greatly from one another and they aren't very precise, mostly because of the great number of irregular immigrants. This is also the case of returnees. The numbers available are a combination between consulate registrations, the department of Homeland Security in the US, Non Governmental Organizations and others academic researches. Most academic researches work with the "snow ball" methodology, which is quite common in recent migration studies, because of the large existing methodological obstacles (Margolis, 1994; Anicio; 2011).
- Therefore, to get closer to the returnees themselves, I decided to collect the first data of my research at the International Airport of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The initial proposal was to apply questionnaires to Brazilians that are returning from the United States. For those who have lived there, I would make questions in order to trace a profile, including: reasons for living in the United States; their occupation and income in Brazil (before traveling) and in the United States; living conditions in both countries; remittances; and reasons to return. The flights from United States are concentrated in the morning period at both airports. From 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM the flights usually come from Miami, Detroit, Dallas, New York, Newark, Atlanta and Washington.

- I have spent ten days at each Airport and I have contacted at least 50 people a day. But the number of people that I found who were really retuning was surprisingly irrelevant (less than 1%). Thus, right at the beginning I decided to apply not only the questionnaires to the returnees but interview all the people who were coming from the United States, including the family who were waiting at the arrivals. Therefore, I found out that most of them were coming back from a tourist travel (73%); business trip or conference (7%), or they were young people returning from their exchange program or academic studies abroad (4%).
- About 15% of them were returning only to visit Brazil. Those people have a stable economic situation in the United States and, according to them, they don't were really affected by the crisis. Their professions were: housewife, hairdresser, flight attendant, manicurist, cleaner, teachers, bank clerk, model, military soldier, advertiser, administrator, and consultant. Talking to them I found out that they are living at least for three years in the United States (some are abroad for more than thirty years) and don's think about returning to Brazil. They also have a regular status and they can come and go whenever they want . For the few returnees the crisis didn't influence their decision and they had already a job or studies arranged in Brazil. I have decided to stop the research to reformulate its method and validity after this preliminary experience.

- **Final considerations**

- All the information and data found demonstrate that the current situation is still uncertain. The job market is really taking longer to recover and I doubt about the resilience of the immigration. Even if there is a recover, things have definitely changed. After the crisis is it clear that an important number of Brazilians living in the United States, especially those with an irregular status, have their jobs affected. At least a fifth decided to return but it is not clear if the Brazil's great economy is enough to keep these people here and to assure an adequate job market insertion. The cost and quality of leaving in Brazil are a problem that all returnees face uncomfortably.
- There are also subjective aspects that are relevant when we think about the impact of the crisis. When returnees do not mention the crisis as the main reason, one should consider the difficult to assume failure in the migration process and other aspects like the feeling of homesick. This is what Sayad (2004) calls the constant desire of return, and when it materializes, it seems to be associated by the individual to a single reason. There are important studies about it that should dialogue with more macro ones.

- It also seems that the United States has a demand for some kind of activities that Americans are not willing to fulfill, something that is getting more evident each day, as we can see now in the rural area of California.
- It is clear that there is a strong necessity of deeper researchers and data to evaluate the facts. It is important to understand the impact on different regions in Brazil and United States and also between the rural and urban area. This meeting is a great opportunity to exchange opportunities and expand the possibility to strengthen the subject of migration and labor market.