**Discursive bias towards skilled migration in Brazil during the Workers Party Administrations: influence of the Knowledge-Based Economy Paradigm?**

**Abstract**

This article sheds light on the existence of a discursive bias towards skilled migration within the Brazilian migratory framework and analyses (1) how this bias might be fed by the local reproduction of the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) paradigm by top-level governmental officials and other relevant stakeholders, and (2) how it reflects the efforts put in place by Lula da Silva and Dilma Roussef’s administrations to reposition Brazil in the Global Order and to change the country’s insertion in the international division of labour. We look at the discourses and official documents produced and circulated between 2008 and 2015, period in which occurred a significant increase of the inflows of both low and skilled migrants towards Brazil as a result of its economic growth and greater international insertion (Uebel, 2017).

Our premise is that the bedrock of the discourses that are called to justify the differentiation between skilled and low skilled migrants has been, more often than not, taken for granted. As we will show, the existing bias towards skilled migration draws on the north-centric paradigm of the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE), which is closely associated with optimistic discourses on neoliberal globalization (Kofman, 2007) and whose local reproduction might not be in tune with the specificities of each country’s productive structure and insertion into the global economy.

1. **Discursive bias towards skilled migration in Brazil during the Workers Party Administrations**

By 2015, Brazil was home to 2 million foreigners, among migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – that meaning 1% of its population. Despite its reputation as an immigration country, its favourable demographic conditions and the window opportunity resulting from the demographic transition, Brazilian migration policies remain quite restrictive and selective, favouring, in a concealed way, the entry of skilled and highly skilled migrants. Unlike the policies of many developed nations, differentiation mechanisms linked to human capital are not made explicit in the Brazilian regulatory framework. Nevertheless, the language of skills became more and more popular in the country during the Workers Party’s Administrations and the discursive bias towards highly skilled migration can be easily traced within the migratory debate[[1]](#footnote-1).

It’s important to mention beforehand that the migratory debate in Brazil is marked by a plurality of views voiced by different stakeholders from the government, civil society and private actors. In the past decade or so, the debate was intensified by the revision of the former Foreign Act[[2]](#footnote-2), and even within the government the topic did not inspire consensus as specific actors lobbied for different approaches (e.g the Ministry of Justice advocated for a more human-rights based framework while the Ministry of Labour and the Presidency were in tune with a more economy-driven point view).

That being said, the bias towards skilled migration in Brazil is reflected in a range of public and private-public initiatives aimed at discussing the migration-development nexus as well as ways to modernize existing policies to facilitate the recruitment of migrants with specific professional backgrounds, mostly linked to IT and science. In 2012, the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs (SAE)[[3]](#footnote-3), created by Lula in 2008, got actively involved in the national debate on migration reform by hiring specialists to research on migration policies as well as by promoting meetings and seminars with relevant stakeholders, often representatives of the migration industry in the country (recruiting agencies, employers, chambers of commerce and industry, etc). One article published by SAE, and titled *Migration Policy, Production and Development*, states that the Secretariat “is working in three fronts to find solutions to expedite the attraction of foreign talents to the national market: diagnostic of the migratory scenario; surveys with enterprises and society; and suggestions for a migratory policy reform.”[[4]](#footnote-4). In addition, a Working Group was also created by SAE to contribute to the studies of the Secretariat aimed at improving the national immigration policy (Juzwiak, 2014) and to ease the recruitment of high-skilled migrants. A news article, published by *The Rio Times*, says that “If recommendations from a presidential advisory group are followed, highly-qualified foreign workers could be given VIP visa treatment [in Brazil]”, just to quote the former Under Secretary of SAE, Ricardo Paes de Barro, right after: “Brazil is now an island of prosperity in the world and a lot of top-quality people want to come. But the line for visas is the same for everyone. We’re not looking at people closely enough to see who will bring in the skills [needed].” [[5]](#footnote-5) To the *Miami Herald*, Ricardo Paes de Barro was even more assertive: "We're not after population; we're after talent and human capital. By opening society, we can accelerate the development process."[[6]](#footnote-6) On his turn, the SAE Secretary, Marcelo Neri, stated in January 2014: “We have an agenda for the attraction of talents, which imply improving migration rules to Brazil. There are several areas where it is needed. We are preparing a transversal law[[7]](#footnote-7) (…) for engineers, doctors, the technology sector.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Throughout the years, other governmental departments and institutions also engaged in events to discuss (skilled) migration in the country. Only in 2015, the Lower Chamber created a Special Commission to discuss the migratory reform in the country[[9]](#footnote-9); in September promoted a Public Hearing to discuss migration with faith-based stakeholders[[10]](#footnote-10); in October promoted the seminar “*Novos Fluxos de Trabalhadores Migrantes para o Brasil - Desafios para Políticas Públicas*”[[11]](#footnote-11). In 2014, The Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) fostered a debate on skilled migration to Brazil[[12]](#footnote-12) and the Brazil-Germany Chamber promoted a seminar to discuss the same topic[[13]](#footnote-13).

At the more visible end of this preference system towards skilled inflows we find the labour migration policies put forward by the National Immigration Council (CNIg)[[14]](#footnote-14). Currently there are only few entrance channels for labour migrants in Brazil: if the person is a national from a Mercosul country she is allowed to work and reside in Brazil directly; if she is an extra-regional she will need a work permit as to get a temporary or permanent visa prior to her entrance into the territory. A temporary visa might be awarded to a variety of professionals coming to develop a temporary activity in the country, such as scientists, researchers, teachers, technicians, sportsperson, or employees of multinationals.[[15]](#footnote-15) On the other hand, a permanent visa is usually granted to directors, high-level managers, investors (who invest US$ 50.000 for a person or US$ 200.000 for an enterprise), and researchers whose activities in the country might last more than two years.

A quick look into the data made available by CNIg (OBMIGRA, 2015) reveals the profile of those who are granted work permits in Brazil: from a total of 18.213 temporary and permanent permits issued during the first semester of 2015, 16.074 were to male and 2.139 to female. Regarding the educational profile, 6.493 had secondary education, 10.434 had a bachelor’s degree, 921 owned a master and 100 a PHD. Most of them worked in the fields of science, arts or were technicians. The 10 main countries of origin were United States (2.539 permits, mainly for persons involved in events/arts); Philippines (1.564, mainly to persons working in boats/ships); South Korea (1.227); UK (1.231); Italy (880) and France (751), India (812); Russia (642); Portugal (667); Japan (590).

But if we only look to the data provided by CNIg we might get the wrong picture of the migratory profile in Brazil. This is so because these data capture mainly the movement of skilled migrants[[16]](#footnote-16), leaving outside all nationals from Mercosul who don’t need a work permit and from other bordering countries (Bolivia and Peru) who more often than not are low-skilled migrants. In addition, these data also don’t reflect the inflow of Haitian nationals who were initially granted temporary residence under humanitarian considerations, most of whom would not qualify as labour migrants neither as refugees according to the existing legal framework.

By looking to the data provided by the Federal Police[[17]](#footnote-17) instead, we could have a better understanding of the diversity of the Brazilian migratory profile. From 2000 to 2014, the Federal Police registered 833.682 permanent migrants, 485.238 temporary migrants and 14.510 migrants with provisory status[[18]](#footnote-18). Among the permanents, the main nationalities are Bolivians, Chinese, Portuguese, Haitians and Italians. Regarding the group with a temporary status, most are Americans, Bolivians, Argentineans, Colombians, Philippines and Germans. Among the provisory, most are Bolivian, Chinese, Paraguayan and Peruvian. However, both databases mentioned above don’t capture the arrival of migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria as they usually come through irregular channels or with a tourist visa and end up resorting to the asylum system as an attempt to regularize their situation in the country.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Having said that, one can note that discourses on migration, issued by governmental representatives linked to the Presidency and the Ministry of Labour in the period analysed didn’t seem in tune with the existing migratory scenario, as a growing share of migrants were arriving from developing countries and didn’t meet the criteria for receiving a working permit or even entering the country regularly. Moreover, these discourses seem greatly disconnected from the actual productive structure of the Brazilian economy and its insertion in the international division of labour, still heavily dependent on the production and export of primary products, natural resources and commodities (Naidin & Ramon, 2014).

As a matter of fact, is intriguing to observe the similarities between the Brazilian migratory framework with the ones of developed nations. It is indeed worth questioning how Brazil and Sweden, so distinct in terms of development, demography and market dynamics, might share similar policies regarding the entrance of labour migrants or how discourses from governmental authorities in Brazil might be so similar to those of their counterparts in the UK. As discussed by Anderson (2010) and Kofman (2007), restrictiveness and selectivity are defining features of most migration policies in Europe. For instance, classification and differentiation in order to select “the best and the brightest” have been openly and strongly pursued in the UK.

Immigration policies must promote British interests. Like other developed states, the UK competes for the skilled, especially those connected with the driving force of globalization (i.e. the scientific, financial and managerial sectors, which has clear resonances with much thinking about the knowledge economy). (Kofman, 2007:130)

In Brazil, the words of the President of CNIg reveal the ambiguity of actual policies and are very representative of the bias towards skilled migration:

(…) it’s legitimate for the country to seek to promote migration, those flows that result more interesting for the country. I'm not saying we will not give documents to certain migrants because they don’t have professional qualifications. If they are here, they are working and living normally, documents should be provided, that's one thing. Another thing is when you go abroad and recruit people to live here, and I think this is a process that places Brazil in the competition for talent, for people who have some expertise and who can make the difference to our country. (Paulo Sérgio Almeida. IN: OBMIGRA, V.1 N.1 2015)

According to Patarra (2011) the growing insertion of Brazil into the global economy in the first decades of the XXI century increased the need of skilled labour, generating a gap that could not yet be filled by the domestic market. On his view “there is clear evidence of the official interest of the government in the so-called qualified migration’, meaning the displacement of people with complete and incomplete higher education. Currently, this modality of migration has been recurrent due to the needs imposed by an increasingly globalized labor market” (Patarra, 2011:374). In reference to Baeninger's (2010), Patarra says that there is empirical evidence indicating the insertion of the Brazilian economy in the international market due to its economic and technological development, which would justify the importance of designing public policies to supply the demand for skilled labor.” However, in 2014 SAE’s Secretary, Marcelo Neri, admitted that although the Brazilian economy had a very low unemployment rate (4.6%) that was true mostly for low-skilled sectors, which was working as a pull factor for low-skilled migrants, mainly Haitians[[20]](#footnote-20). On its turn, when analysing the increase of inflows towards Brazil in the period UELBER (2017) called these migratory movements as “*migrations of perspective*”, as they were closely related to labour and economic perspectives associated to the country’s economic growth, low unemployment rate and economic crisis in core countries. Hence, they were not exactly reflecting market demands for skilled labour but actually a combination of factors that created a phenomenon known as “Brazilian dream”, which attracted migrants from all over the world.

Worth mentioning is the analysis made by Tadeu Oliveira in his article *International Migration and Migratory Policies in Brazil*. Oliveira points out that the history of Brazilian migratory policies, dating from the 18th century to the present, is marked by “a lack of adequate planning and by mistaken readings of the objective conditions in each of the moments in which they were being applied, reason why they did not achieve the desired success, besides the fact of being based on strong racist content and highly selective and assimilationist character” (2015:21). As it happens, Brazil has a long history of combining an utilitarian and racialized approach to migration with projected economic development. This well documented fact is exemplified in Brazilian public policies from the late XIX and early XX century that promoted settler colonialisn by granting land to european migrants. Back then governants argued that this would be beneficial for “technological and economic progress” (Rodriguez, 2018).

The bottom-line is that by adopting a similar regulatory framework and reproducing an analogous discourse to those of developed nations, Brazilian policies restrict regular entry channels to skilled and highly-skilled migrants and force an important group of unprofitable migrants to resort to unsafe routes, perils journeys, irregular entry or stay. But as much as some stakeholders in Brazil would like to limit immigration to highly skilled people and as much as we can see an increase in the educational profile of recent arrivals (OBMIGRA, V.1 N.2, 2015), low skilled migrants will continue to come to Brazil as a consequence of different factors, some of them linked to the inherent dynamic of migrations (e.g. chain migration and network, migrant’s agency, migration lifecycle, migration industry), some linked to the restrictiveness of migration and asylum policies and the recovery of economy in developed countries and others reflecting the nature of the current insertion of Brazil in the global economy[[21]](#footnote-21).

1. **PT administrations and the repositioning of Brazil in the Global Order**

The afore mentioned efforts put in place by top-rank officials as to promote high-skilled migration to Brazil are better understood if proper attention is given to how PT administrations strategically sought to reposition Brazil in the Global Order and to change the country’s insertion in the international division of labour. Country Plans developed by the SAE during Lula’s first and second mandate reveal expectations of how state planning and state led capitalism could bring the country to a new position by 2020.

SAE, a sort of Think Tank, gathered the country’s most preeminent military, intellectuals, entrepreneurs and head of national research centres. In addition to publishing periodic strategic country plans, it produced analyses on a number of issues as to inform high-rank officials and influence long-term decisions – topics of interest ranging from nanotechnology and biofuels, climate change to political reform and migrations. In 2005, the first long term country plan was issued – *Project Brazil 3 phases: 2007, 2015, 2022* – revealing the State’s will to change the “historical destiny of Brazil” (Zibechi, 2014). Differently from former country plans, *Project Brazil 3 Phases* for the first time defined that *knowledge* would be the main axe of all future strategic development actions, not infra-structure for heavy industry like in the past[[22]](#footnote-22). In order to become a major global power Brazil should increase its competitiveness in the global market through direct State agency – basically by providing support to Brazilian’s largest companies so they could compete with multinationals and occupy sectors of the international market usually reserved to companies from developed countries.

The second national long-term plan launched by SAE in 2010, *Brazil 2022* shed light, mainly, in the power gap existing between core and peripheral countries. Mirroring the Chinese process, state planning would be responsible for preventing Brazil from becoming “a mere production and export platform for the mega-multinationals located in developed countries” (Zibechi, 2014). State officials were sure that for Brazil to fulfil its potential the country should be able to expand its internal market and productivity in order to allow capital accumulation per capita and technological development. Among the long-term economic goals indicated by *Brazil 2022* were:

* Increase agricultural productivity by 50%
* Triple investment in agricultural research
* Double food production
* Increase the volume of exports fivefold and increase investment in media and high technology sixfold
* Increase private investment in research and development; increase total spending on research to 2.5% of GDP; achieve 5% of global scientific production
* Triple the number of engineers;
* Dominate microelectronic technologies and pharmaceutical production
* Increase the number of patents tenfold
* Ensure independence in the production of nuclear fuel
* Dominate satellite manufacturing technologies and launch vehicles.

In a nutshell, the governments of Lula and Dilma Rousseff were deliberately trying to reposition the country in the International Division of Labour by changing its historical tradition of relying on the exportation of commodities and natural resources. The official promotion of high skilled migration by state officers would go hand in hand with these long-term goals. With that in mind, we believe it’s pertinent to investigate and unveil the hegemonic paradigm sustaining this agenda.

1. **Knowledge-Based Economy Paradigm and its impact on migration policies**

Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) theoretical and policy paradigms[[23]](#footnote-23), are relevant for our discussion both because, as a hegemonic ideology, it influences our lives in so many ways (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and because it helps us trace back the nexus between the language of skills, economic development and migration. Actually, “analyzing, understanding and explaining the impact of the Knowledge-Based Economy on various domains of our societies; [and] the recontextualization of KBE into other parts of the world and other societies” has already been indicated as an important contemporary research agenda (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Muntigl et al, 2000; Jessop, 2008). Representing a successful economic imaginary[[24]](#footnote-24), the KBE paradigm has performative and constitutive force (Jessop, 2008).

As conceptualized back in the 60s by the creator of the “knowledge economy”, Fritz Machlup, *knowledge* referred to “any human (or human-induced) activity effectively designed to create, alter or confirm in a human mind – one’s own or anyone else’s – a meaningful apperception, awareness, cognizance or consciousness (1962:30).” Acknowledging the subjective dimensions of knowledge, the author classified five types of knowledge: practical, intellectual, pastime knowledge, spiritual and unwanted/accidently acquired knowledge. As one can note, Machlup understanding of knowledge was not necessarily linked to formal qualifications as it is today.

However, in the makings of becoming a policy paradigm the concept of knowledge-economy was taken over and further developed through the lenses of neoliberal globalization, being eventually popularized in a much narrower sense. A business and management consultant, Peter Drucker brought significant change to the studies of KBE with his book *The Age of Discontinuity* (1969) and was, actually, the one responsible to popularize the term “knowledge Economy”, reflecting on the use of knowledge to produce innovation. On the other hand, the sociologist Daniel Bell with his book *The Coming of Post Industrial Society* (1973) brought into the debate the concept of “information society”, which despite being developed within a different discipline in relation to the concept of knowledge-economy, it fed greatly the debate on the role of knowledge in economic growth and development. In 1992, Drucker argued that:

[In the knowledge] society, knowledge is the primary resource for individuals and for the economy overall. Land, labor, and capital—the economist’s traditional factors of production—do not disappear, but they become secondary. They can be obtained, and obtained easily, provided there is [specialized] knowledge.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The parallel development of the notion of “human capital” at that time, with the publication of *Human Capital* (1964) by Gary Becker, provided extra fuel to the emerging nexus between knowledge/productivity and economic development. This intangible form of capital is defined as the result of investments in education, training and health and can result from any activity able to increase individual worker productivity. Eventually the notions of human capital and knowledge economy and society were linked to one another, as the following extract from Becker’s text illustrates.

The continuing growth in per capita incomes of many countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is partly due to the expansion of scientific and technical knowledge that raises the productivity of labor and other inputs in production. And the increasing reliance of industry on sophisticated knowledge greatly enhances the value of education, technical schooling, on-the-job training, and other human capital.[[26]](#footnote-26)

As crucial intermediaries[[27]](#footnote-27) in mobilizing support to the KBE paradigm, multilateral forums and international institutions have contributed to narrowing the definition of knowledge economy that is now affecting migration policies of developed and developing countries. As a matter of fact, several authors (Godin, 2006: 17-18; cf. Miettinen 2002, Eklund 2007; In: Jossep et al, 2008) state that the resurgence of the concept of KBE in the 1990s is owed greatly to the OECD, the reports it has published and the consultants it has given voice to. In 1996, OECD published a key report called “The Knowledge-Based Economy”, which stated that:

Government policies will need more stress on upgrading human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, and especially the capacity to learn; enhancing the *knowledge distribution power* of the economy through collaborative networks and the diffusion of technology; and providing the enabling conditions for organisational change at the firm level to maximise the benefits of technology for productivity. (1996:7)

 If originally the notion of knowledge-economy had a more speculative dimension regarding the future of national economies, nowadays it has acquired a “*quasi-prescriptive* *benchmarking”* of the central features of existing economies, such as: reflexive application of knowledge to the production of knowledge, the key role of innovation, learning, and knowledge transfer in economic performance (Jessop, 2008). It became the recipe of a desirable and unavoidable path towards development, becoming “the hegemonic representation or self-description of the economy as an emerging reality, an object of calculation, and object of governance in contemporary world society. But this does not mean that it adequately describes the dynamics of today’s world market or the role of knowledge in world society” (Jessop, 2008).

As a consequence, the emerging KBE paradigm allocated a decreasing role to low skilled labour based on the (unfounded) belief that manual and non-knowledge based labour would disappear in developed societies (Kofman, 2007). Historically, differentiation mechanisms based on the human capital of migrants were found in the end of the Fordist system. After a period in the 60s and 70s of intense use of Temporary Migration Programmes (TMPs) to recruit low-skilled migrants, western countries started to focus on the need to facilitate the flow of high-skilled people that would bring in money, investments and specialized knowledge without any negative impact for the economies of receiving countries - market needs related to intense or non-knowledge labour would be outsourced. Defying expectations, though, we later saw that low-skilled workers continued to be needed in western countries to perform activities that could no longer be fulfilled domestically, both due to the aging of the population resulting from demographic transition and to the expectations of nationals to perform more skilled jobs resulting from higher educational achievements. In addition, low skilled workers remained necessary to fill in jobs created to serve the needs of the elite (Castles, 2015; Sassen, 2001;2013).

But despite the evidence, regimes of labour migration still reflect nowadays the imaginary of national economies where low-skilled migrants are neither needed nor welcome. Gasper and Truong (2010) remind us that human movement for labour purposes (at all skills levels) is currently understood as a category of trade regulated by WTO-GATS Mode 4, although governments have committed only to the regulation of highly skilled movements in specific sectors of the economy.

What we can see is that existing regulatory migration regimes fostered by the KBE paradigm seem to promote the archetype of the “Davos Man” and favour a “male-dominated corporate sphere of work” (Beneria, 1999. In: Gasper&Truong, 2010). It shows a complete disconnection with the reality of billions of people who live in deprivation and will probably never relate to this mainstreamed imaginary. For Kofman (2007) the way in which the discourse on KBE has restricted the notion of knowledge to science and technology is due to a particular and optimistic understanding of globalization that saw in the fast circulation of knowledge the opportunity for social transformation.

Most of the immigration receiving states have discussed at great length the knowledge economy, how to expand it and use resources such as migrants to do so. Countries such as Australia and Canada have, since the 1990s, oriented their immigration policies towards skilled migrants. In Europe, the UK has pursued this strategy even further by privileging the globalized financial and information technology and communications (ITC) sectors. (Kofman, 2007:122)

The transposition of this specific understanding of knowledge to migration policies is currently reflected in the utilitarian differentiation of migrants’ skills, as the quantification and economization of knowledge can be applied to rank not only institutions but also individuals. As a result, people and things that do not favour the technologically driven growth of national economies should not be allowed to entry its territory. And if allowed, they shouldn’t benefit from the same rights of those who fit in the imaginary of the KBE. In this sense, migrants possess different types of human capital and are therefore entitle to different rights, according to the profitability of their skills (Kofman 2007). As a consequence, defining the skills that matter is a living exercise that reflects global and local material and discursive struggles, priorities and dynamics.

1. **Conclusion**

The existence of a discursive bias that sought to promote high-skilled migration to Brazil during the administrations of the left-wing Workers Party (PT) was the point of departure of this paper. Intertwined with this discursive bias was the deliberate attempt by the Governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff to develop specific sectors of the Brazilian economy (mainly linked to knowledge and technology) in order to reposition the country in the International Division of Labor, preventing it from perpetuating its traditional course of relying mainly on the export of primary products, natural resources and commodities to developed economies. Country Plans developed by the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs (linked to the Presidency) during Lula and Dilma’s administration revealed expectations of how state planning and state led capitalism could bring the country to this new position by 2020. So the official promotion of high skilled migration by state officers would go hand in hand with these long-term goals.

We saw, however, that these discourses were disconnected not only from the productive structure of the Brazilian economy at the time (and in the medium run) but also from the migratory reality that emerged in the first decade of the XXI century. This scenario was marked by a sharp increase on the arrival of both skilled migrants from developed countries – who were scaping the 2008 global economic crisis – but also of migrants from the global south. If nationals from Mercosul countries were better off when it comes to ease of mobility and access to rights, an important part of migrants from Central America, Africa, Asia and Oceania didn’t have the same chance. Brazilian visa policies limited regular entry channels to skilled and high-skilled migrants and forced an important group of unprofitable migrants to resort to unsafe routes, perils journeys, irregular entry or stay.

The analytical nexus between the concepts of development-knowledge-skills-migration were accessed through the lenses of the *Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) Paradigm*, which has been fed by an optimistic view of neoliberal globalization. If originally the notion of *knowledge-economy* had a more speculative dimension regarding the future of national economies, nowadays it has acquired a “*quasi-prescriptive* *benchmarking”* of the central features of existing economies, such as: reflexive application of knowledge to the production of knowledge, the key role of innovation, learning, and knowledge transfer in economic performance (Jessop, 2008).International Organizations, Development Agencies, private actors, civil society, Universities, governmental initiatives and speeches are all vectors of circulation of ideas, concepts and paradigms created in the Political North and implemented at the local level at peripheral countries.

The extent that the economic imaginary promoted by the KBE Paradigm is related to restrictive policies towards low-skilled migrants remain under investigated. How a left wing party historically associated with the promotion of social justice in Brazil adhered to discourses and policies that promote the archetype of the “Davos Man” (Gasper & Truong, 2010) and favour a “male-dominated corporate sphere of work” calls for a more comprehensive analysis that surpasses the scope of this paper. Finally, a more in-depth investigation on the subjects discussed here should also pay further attention to: the plurality of voices and power struggles within the Brazilian government and civil society in order to influence the migratory debate; potential ambiguities between discourse and practice during both Lula and Dilma’s administrations on the topics of migration, development, social justice and human rights; the idiosyncrasies of each administration (Lula vs Dilma) on the migration subject; and to how the new Migration Bill approved in 2017 is being implemented and its impact on actual visa policies.

**ANNEX - Evolution of the migratory scenario in Brazil in the first decades of the XXI century**

**Graph 1 - Evolution of annual immigration to Brazil - 2002 to 2017**

Source: UEBEL, 2018.

**Figure 1 - Map of variation of the number of immigrants by country (2000-2010)**



Source: UEBEL; Iescheck (2014).

**Figure 2 - Map of the stock of immigrants in Brazil according to their nationality - 2007-2015**

Source: UEBEL; Rückert (2017).

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1. Even though there isn’t an intentionally agreed definition of the term ‘low-skilled’, we will adopt here the definition of low-skilled migrant as someone whose educational level is lower than upper secondary. “The definition of "low-skilled" can be based either on the skills required for the job performed, or according to the educational level of the worker. In other words, "low-skilled" can be either a characteristic of the job or a characteristic of the worker.” (OECD 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Foreign Act was written down during dictatorship (1980) and changes in the Brazilian migratory scene increased the urge for a new legal framework, one that would not only ensure greater coherence with Brazil’s traditional positioning and demands on the topic at international forums but would also enable the country to stop seeing migrants as a threaten to national security but as actors entitled to basic-human rights. Fortunately, a more modern Migration Bill was approved in 2017, although reticence remain on how it will be regulated and implemented. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lula created the Strategic Affairs Center (NAE) in 2005, which in 2008 became the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs (SAE). This Think Thank gathered the country’s most preeminent intellectuals, entrepreneurs, military and head of national research centres. SAE became the most important [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Política Migratória, Produção e Desenvolvimento*. (<http://bit.ly/1npUCpC>) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Brazil work visas for foreigner professionals.* (<http://bit.ly/1SLEo7t>) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Brazil looks for ways to attract more immigrants.* (<http://abcn.ws/1ROKNP3>) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Neri was making reference to the efforts at that time put in place by different actors within Brazil to draft a new Migration Bill that would replace the one inherited from the dictatorship. The new Bill was finally approved in 2017 and was the result of complex multi-level debates and negotiations involving government, civil society, congress representatives and international organizations. Although it brought into life a more modern and human-rights driven legal framework for the protection of migrants, there were a number of set backs and restrictions made to the original proposal. Of special relevance for this paper, is the fact that the article that sought to foster de entrance of high-skilled migrants in Brazil was finally not accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. EL UNIVERSAL. *En Brasil cambiarán ley migratoria para impulsar ingreso de profesionales,* 16 jan. 2014. Disponível em: <[http://www.eluniversal.com/internacional/140116/en-brasil-cambiaran-ley-migratoria-para-impulsar-ingreso-de-profesiona](http://www.eluniversal.com/internacional/140116/en-brasil-cambiaran-ley-migratoria-para-impulsar-ingreso-de-profesiona%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://bit.ly/1QukoD3> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <http://bit.ly/1KcxkOv> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <http://bit.ly/1JHnAvN> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <http://bit.ly/1VtX3Tl> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <http://bit.ly/1TpkG0F> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The National Immigration Council (CNIg) is linked to Ministry of Labour and is responsible for the formulation of migration policies through the regulation of migratory issues and the promulgation of Normative Resolutions (RNs). Its administrative branch, the CGI (*Cordenação Geral de Imigração*), is responsible for the issuance of work-permits for labour migrants. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For the full list of categories, please visit: <http://moscou.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-br/vistos_para_o_brasil.xml> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *94,6% Dos Vistos de Trabalho Concedidos no Brasil são para Estrangeiros Qualificados (*[*http://bit.ly/1OZBXbo*](http://bit.ly/1OZBXbo)*)* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Information made available during the Seminar “New Flow of Labour Migrants to Brazil: challenges for public policies”, which took place on 22/10/2015 at the Brazilian Lower Chamber. The video is available at: <http://bit.ly/1NVMNSO> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Migrants who had irregular status and are now processing permanent residence. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. According to the Brazilian asylum law (Law 9474/97), asylum seekers are entitled to freedom of movement as well as access to work, education and healthcare in equal conditions to the nationals. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. EL UNIVERSAL. *En Brasil cambiarán ley migratoria para impulsar ingreso de profesionales,* 16 jan. 2014. Disponível em: <[http://www.eluniversal.com/internacional/140116/en-brasil-cambiaran-ley-migratoria-para-impulsar-ingreso-de-profesiona](http://www.eluniversal.com/internacional/140116/en-brasil-cambiaran-ley-migratoria-para-impulsar-ingreso-de-profesiona%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)>. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. As mentioned by Melde et al (2014:8) ”mobility among countries in the South is likely to continue to increase, as the barriers to immigration in the North are raised higher and many countries part of the South represent emerging economies with greater job and employment opportunities (such as BRICS). [And] new migration corridors have opened in the South-South context such as West Africans crossing the Atlantic to Argentina or Brazil”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Verbete: Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos. Fundação Getúlio Vargas http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-tematico/secretaria-de-assuntos-estrategicos-da-presidencia-da-republica [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For the purpose of this paper we acknowledge the difference between theoretical and policy paradigms, as “policy paradigms derive from theoretical paradigms but possess much less sophisticated and rigorous evaluations of the intellectual underpinnings of their conceptual frameworks. In essence, policy advisers differentiate policy paradigms from theoretical paradigms by screening out the ambiguities and blurring the fine distinctions characteristic of theoretical paradigms. In a Lakatosian sense, policy paradigms can be likened to the positive heuristics surrounding theoretical paradigms. (Wallies and Dollery, 1999: 5. In: Jessop et al, 2008). In the case of the KBE, “theoretical and policy paradigms tend to reinforce each other because theoretically-justified policy paradigms are widely adopted and, more importantly, acquire a performative and constitutive character, then the relevant economic imaginary will be retained through normalisation and institutionalization” (Jessop et al, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In their studies of Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Jessop (2008) explain the concept and construction processes of economic imaginaries, which reflect discursive and material biases of specific epistemes and economic paradigms. In their analysis of political economy, they make a distinction between “(…) the ‘actually existing economy’ as the chaotic sum of all economic activities (broadly defined as concerned with the social appropriation and transformation of nature for the purposes of material provisioning) [and] the ‘economy’ (or, better, ‘economies’ in the plural) as an imaginatively narrated, more or less coherent subset of these activities. The totality of economic activities is so unstructured and complex that it cannot be an object of calculation, management, governance, or guidance. Instead such practices are always oriented to subsets of economic relations (economic systems or subsystems) that have been discursively and, perhaps organizationally and institutionally, fixed as objects of intervention. This involves ‘economic imaginaries’ that rely on semiosis to constitute these subsets. Moreover, if they are to prove more than ‘arbitrary, rationalistic, and willed’ (Gramsci 1971: 376-7), these imaginaries must have some significant, albeit necessarily partial, correspondence to real material interdependencies in the actually existing economy and/or in relations between economic and extra-economic activities”. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *The New Society of Organizations, (*[*http://bit.ly/20uu1WW*](http://bit.ly/20uu1WW) *).* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *Human Capital Theory*. <http://bit.ly/1nAwQrI> [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Other relevant intermediaries involved in the process of legitimizing a given economic imaginary are political parties, think tanks, organized stakeholders such as trade unions, employers associations, social movements and the mass media. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)