Original Article

Routes to the First World: Brazilian migration journeys after the September 11 attacks

Gustavo Dias[1]

[1] Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros (Unimontes), Montes Claros, MG, Brasil.
E-mail: tentonidias@hotmail.com

Abstract: This paper examines how Brazilians remodeled their international migration routes to the "First World" after the September 11 attacks. It explores the connections between the temporary suspension of Brazilian migration to the United States and the rise of the United Kingdom as the main destination. To shed light on the production of new routes by Brazilians, the paper unfolds personal migration journeys performed to overcome border controls set by the UK. The empirical data at the basis of this article come from a broadly qualitative, ethnographic approach, which comprised multi-sited fieldwork in the UK and Brazil, and two sets of oral histories conducted with migrants, travel agents, and returned migrants between 2010 and 2016. Based on these sources, the article shows how migrants developed tactical border crossing movements to negotiate with institutions and structures of power that control and constrain their movements with threats.

Keywords: Brazilian migration; September 11; Border Regimes, Migration routes

Rotas para o Primeiro Mundo: Jornadas migratórias brasileiras após os ataques de 11 de setembro

Resumo: Este artigo examina como brasileiros remodelaram suas rotas migratórias internacionais para o "Primeiro Mundo" após os ataques de 11 de setembro. Ele explora as conexões entre a suspensão temporária da migração brasileira para os Estados Unidos e a ascensão do Reino Unido como principal destino. Para lançar luz sobre a produção de novas rotas migratórias, buscou-se compreender como essas viagens são realizadas individualmente com o intuito de superar o regime de fronteira do Reino Unido. Nesse sentido, os dados empíricos que fundamentam esse argumento são provenientes de uma abordagem etnográfica qualitativa, que incluiu trabalho de campo no Reino Unido e no Brasil (entre 2010 e 2016). Ademais, contou com entrevistas focadas em história oral conduzidas com migrantes, agentes de viagem e retornados. Com base nisso, o artigo explora como migrantes desenvolveram mobilidades táticas de fronteira migratória com o intuito de superar regimes migratórios.

Palavras-chave: Migração brasileira; 11 de setembro; regimes de fronteira, rotas migratórias.

"No matter how hard you try,
you can't stop us now"[1]

Introduction

This paper examines how Brazilians remodeled their international migration routes to the 'First World'[2] after the September 11 attacks. I particularly explore the connections between the temporary suspension of Brazilian migration to the United States and the rise of the United Kingdom as the main destination.[3] To understand the production of new routes by Brazilians, I argue that it is fundamental to examine how their tactical migration journeys are performed to overcome border controls set by the UK.[4] This papers dialogues with scholars who focus on the relationship between migration, border regimes and criminality (Balibar, 2004; Bhatia, 2020; Perera, 2009; Khosravi, 2010; Stumpf, 2015; Van der Woude et al. 2017; Côté-Boucher, 2008, 2015). The links between these issues are far from new. However, the rise of neoliberal policies, in the 1990s, and the increased facility in moving goods, capital and desirable people around the globe has also changed the structure of policing at domestic and international levels (Bowling and Sheptycki, 2015; Van der Woude et al., 2017). For instance, border control at airports has come to focus more on criminal than administrative procedures, and to involve military rather than civil procedures. Thus, this paper aims to enrich our understanding of the dynamics behind migration routes after 9/11.

By tracking individual itineraries of Brazilians who journeyed to the UK, I argue that migration routes result from the multifarious tensions between border crossing and border reinforcing. Migrants, in this social context, are empowered subjects in negotiating with the border controls positioned throughout the routes. To accurately examine how their migration routes to the First World have been remodeled, this article considers two empirical questions: What border-crossing tactics and locations are involved with Brazilian migration to the UK? Is this new migration route somehow connected to the well-established migration routes to the US?

To answer these questions, this paper is organized into four main sections. First, I explore how respondents developed a hierarchical structure regarding the First World and the countries it includes. Based on interviews with travel agents, returned migrants, and Brazilians in the UK, the second section examines how Brazilian migrants develop migration tactics to enter the US and the EU. The third section presents two different routes that connect Brazil to the US as a legacy of 9/11. The final section focuses on routes to the UK and the possible adaption of tactical border-crossing movements from the two previous routes. It particularly focuses on how migrants deal with and struggle against border regimes to shape routes. After 9/11, Brazilians developed cunning tactics to reinvent their journeys in negotiation with institutions and structures of power that control and constrain their movements with threats. Considering this process, this paper shows how migration routes are produced by Brazilians with experience in border-crossing movements developed to exploit the porosities of border regimes.

The empirical data at the basis of this article come from a broadly qualitative, ethnographic approach, which comprised multi-sited fieldwork in the UK and Brazil, and two sets of

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[1] Verse of the song Renegades of Funk originally written by Afrika Bambaataa, Arthur Baker, John Miller & John Robie (1983) and recorded by Rage Against the Machine (2000).

[2] This is an emic perspective further explained below.

[3] Brazilian migration to the UK began in the late 1980s (Torresan, 1995; Martins Junior and Dias, 2013). However, just after the 09/11 attacks, it sharply increased as an alternative option.

[4] My analysis covers the period between 2001 and 2015 – that is, between the September 11 attacks and Brexit.

oral histories (from 2010-2016). Twenty-five oral histories were collected in this period. I opted for oral history and personal testimony as a method to allow undocumented migrants themselves and their communities in Brazil to present their own experiences and understandings about border regimes and how their migration routes have been redesigned since 09/11. Following Thomson's (2002) observation, they provide an essential record of the hidden history of migration. I conducted the first set of interviews with undocumented Brazilians in London.[5] The second set of interviews was conducted in three towns of Minas Gerais state[6] with relatives of migrants and travel agents. Both sets of interviews helped me to understand the migration journeys (considering struggles, fears, aims, and expectations) and the tactical border crossing movements developed by these Brazilians (Thomson, 2002; Penner, 2019; Ghandehari, 2022).[7]

The First World and its internal hierarchy

Since the late 1980s, international migration has become an important phenomenon in Brazil. We have witnessed a type of migration dominated mostly by Brazilians in search of what they define as a better life. High formal unemployment, a rising cost of living, and a lack of prospects are among the factors behind this movement (Reis and Sales, 1999; Martes, 2000). Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that more than 4 million Brazilians live abroad (Brazil, 2021). Nonetheless, accurate numbers are difficult to find, particularly due to the intense international mobility of Brazilians and because, in some countries, many of them are undocumented.

In the North, the US (1.775.000) has always been the main destination, followed by Portugal (276.200), the UK (220.000), Spain (156.439), and Japan (211.138). However, the numbers are not stable. Migration to the UK became intense in the early 2000s. According to the literature and the findings presented in this paper, the number of Brazilians in the UK has changed over the years (Kubal et al., 2011; Martins Junior, 2020; Silva, 2020). I highlight that this demographic transformation intensified after the September 11 attacks.

My interlocutors in Brazil and the UK emphasize that migration has a clear goal: to reach metropolitan cities in central countries. Thus, in North America, New York, Boston, and Toronto; and in Western Europe, London, Lisbon, Madrid, and Barcelona are the main destinations they seek. These are cities they define as 'First World', and here lies an important finding.

According to this emic perspective, the First World is not homogeneous. It is a developed world far from poverty, unemployment, and violence. Nonetheless, the countries there are not the same. There is a hierarchy among them. The US is the leading international destination for Brazilians. Cities on its East Coast in particular are considered the best places to emigrate. As Margolis (2013, p. 17) emphasizes, "*by saturating the Brazilian public with representations of a good life, American style, the Brazilian media [also] played an inadvertent role, in the massive migration of Brazilians*". While some First World countries can allow them to attain high living standards, others enable Brazilians to live in a proper global world, connected to the frontiers of technology and consumption and

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[5] Through my two initial key informants – Adriano and Claudio – I met Brazilians in their 20s and 30s who had been living in the UK for more than five years. Later, this group (15 in total) put me in touch with travel agents, returned migrants, relatives and their friends living in Minas Gerais.

[6] They are in the mesoregion called the *Triangulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaiba* of Minas Gerais state.

[7] The research was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Goldsmiths, University of London, before it began. To protect the data from border control agencies, the names of respondents in this paper were changed.

to send home substantial remittances. And this seems to be what they were looking for at the time of the fieldwork.

Sara (2012), a returned migrant who had lived in the US for more than seven years, states: "*life here brings you down. We were living in this small house, my husband was a carpenter and I was a cleaner. However, friends were working and living in the First World [US]. We could see by the pictures what living in the North could be like*". So it is important to understand how these Brazilians identify and locate themselves in this hierarchy of the Global World and the influence this hierarchy has on their migration routes. They come from small towns considered by them as places with a traditional mindset and averse to innovation. They want to ascend socially, leave the Third World behind, and head to the First World. The US, in this conception, occupies the top of the hierarchical framework, which was affirmed not only in the interviews but also by products in stores and the architecture of houses and cemeteries in their towns (Figure 1).[8]

Figure 1 – "The American Houses".
Source: Gustavo Dias, 2012.

In the towns, I saw what they define as "American houses", massive two-story houses, with large wooden windows and pillars supporting the roof, which allude to US mansions. The architecture is different from the local standard in Brazil. There was also a particular case tragically highlighted by locals. It is the grave of a young Brazilian who died in the UK in 2006 and is buried in the town. "*You can go to the cemetery to see it. It's easy to find*", Guilherme comments. The grave is actually different from any other grave there. His parents built an "American House" on it – as respondents refer to it.[9]

However, migrating to the First World is not a movement that migrants take individually. The routes are collectively built. As this paper explores below, migration involves contacts with people tactically located along the routes, as well as knowledge, skills, and luck.

The rise of skilled travel agents connecting Brazil to the First World

Travel agents are crucial actors behind the routes to the 'First World' that have been journeyed by these Brazilians since the late 1990s. What made these actors especially salient for this paper is the fact that they do not provide common travel and tourism-related services to the general public. They are returned migrants who specialize in helping migrants cross

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[8] As in other regions in Minas Gerais state, residents have historically chosen the US as their main country for emigration.

[9] This unusual grave actually causes confusion among the local inhabitants. Some people said that the young man was living in the US, while others suggested that his parents did not know the difference between the US and the UK.

through border control regimes. This is the case of Clarice (2012), who had lived in the US. "*This is a common practice here… actually, in Minas Gerais as a whole. Travel agencies belong to people who were [living] out of Brazil and then returned. […]. Laerte was the first. He knew how to travel abroad and how to pass through passport control*". The first migrants saw a "great opportunity" in this business. "*We left in the 1990s and it was not that easy to leave Brazil. Air tickets were still […] more expensive than nowadays*". However, the picture dramatically changed in the 2000s, when these Brazilians began to return.

Clarice (2012) added that international travel became more accessible to the local population.

> I think that the country [Brazil] gave ideal opportunities to different social classes to travel abroad in those years. But it also made it easier to open small travel agencies like mine. With a small amount of money, a computer, and the internet you could start this business.[10]

She understands that this helped returned migrants invest in this business to focus exclusively on the large number of young people who wanted to live in the 'First World': "*Well, we combine business with pleasure…*".

Laerte migrated twice to London, where he lived for a total of five years. Both trips were made in the late 1990s, when international migration was still not a common social practice in their towns and therefore required a search for travel agencies in other cities in Minas Gerais. At that time, he emphasized, people who wanted to migrate had to go to cities such as Governador Valadares and Uberlândia, where this migration industry was already established (Margolis, 2013; Fazito and Rios-Neto, 2008). According to Laerte (2012), they "*specialized in producing fake passports and stuff like that. So, I had no doubt. I went to Valadares to buy these documents and the tour packages organized by these travel agencies, which knew how to deal with migration [officers]*".

In Minas Gerais state, travel agents specialized in border crossing play the skilled role of 'border people' (Papadopoulos et al., 2008; Khosravi, 2010). They had a profound knowledge about their clients and how to prepare a safe journey through border controls. This is capital acquired by the travel agencies owned by returnees and those who are in transit or "living on the borders" (Khosravi, 2010).

It seems that the first type of knowledge that agents held is about the profiles of their clients. Like the Brazilians presented in this study, travel agents were part of the Brazilian lower middle class, who also saw in international migration a way to access a glamorous world that, in their imagination, involved the circulation of people, goods, and remittances to Minas Gerais. While Laerte is a returned migrant who had lived in the UK, Clarice and Romulo migrated to the US. "*I was young like these people who believe that migration offers a great alternative to leave this [place] behind. I thought the same. I think that in the 1990s, life was more tedious here. Now it is easier to travel around*", Laerte (2012) observed. Agents knew their market intimately, often through their own experiences.

In fact, the respondents in London stressed that they opted for these particular private retailers not only because it was practical to deal with a travel agency from their own town, but also because of the skills the travel agents had. Claudio (2012), for example, recalled that Laerte is a travel agent who successfully managed to get his clients through airport border controls. He emphasized that Laerte's ability was not just due to the fact "*that he was the first one to open a travel agency in my town, but because he knew what we wanted to do very well and is a person who is very easy to talk to*". That closeness makes "*the life of the one who is going to face the unknown more comfortable*". Moreover, Claudio (2012) said that Laerte, as well as other returned migrants who opened travel agencies, "*were guys*

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[10]For further discussion about the economic and social transformations experienced by Brazilian society in the 2000s, see: Sales (2007), Yaccoub (2011); Borges (2013); Singer and Loureiro (2016).

from our social class and had the right balance to read what immigration [border control] is looking for".

Another aspect of this knowledge is the fact that travel agents who were returnees were aware of the expenses involved in these international journeys, which made them very conscious of the financial efforts taken by their clients to invest in international travel. Clarice (2012), for example, mentioned a few men from a rural area who spent their savings on journeys she had arranged.

> […] Most of my clients have never been in big cities, even in Brazil. […] You can see how humble they are. Sitting in these chairs [pointing to three chairs close to us], they obediently listen to all the details about the costs of the tour package, the passport issuance and so on (Clarice, 2012).

The proximity between clients and travel agents showed that the businesses were managed in an amicable way. Romulo (2012) reinforced this by saying that since he knew most of his clients, he very often proposed "*good deals and tour packages for them*".

The second kind of knowledge these agents have is related to the social spaces connected by the routes. The travel agents understood the power relations at airports, and their meaning for those who have to negotiate their mobility with border controls. The airport setting involves airline company desks, electronic airport schedule boards indicating flight departures and arrivals, waiting rooms, baggage trolleys, and the shopping and eating areas that supply the "*scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it*" (Goffman, 1969, p. 19). According to the agents, frequenting airports involves certain behaviors and body language that clearly shows if a given person is accustomed to that social space. Romulo (2012), again, emphasized that

> it is a big responsibility sending these people abroad. We have to explain how an airport operates. […] They do not know how to walk there and where to go. Most of my customers do not understand the sign boards displayed in the terminals or when to present the passport.

So each part of the airport needs to be described to their clients. The baggage terminals and passport checks, departure lounges and security clearance gates have an important role and specific influence in the airport where travelers wait for their flight. Any mistake or delay could mean being refused permission to embark, missing the flight, or even deportation.

The reflections produced by migrants and travel agents through their stories reveal how social class plays an "occult" key role in this tactical maneuver (Thomson, 2002; Penner, 2019). Transforming lower middle-class Brazilians into middle-class tourists is considered a fundamental tactic for overcoming border controls. Moreover, race also has a prominent role in this process of producing a trusted traveler. Their town are in a region that received a considerable number of migrants from Italy and Portugal during the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, respondents try to take advantage of the historical ties that connect Brazil to these Southern European countries by using their Italian/Portuguese surnames as well as their Mediterranean skin tone to cross borders.

Therefore, agents prepared package tours in the way that would best help their clients successfully go through the passport controls at any international airport. The purpose was to create a Brazilian tourist character, who is travelling on holiday. Clarice (2012) adds:

> Tell me, who would, on their own, leave Brazil without speaking a single word of English, booking a hotel or having little notion about the place where they had just arrived? That is exactly the type of traveler that border officers like to put back on the plane and send back!

The luggage was also carefully prepared. "*If you are going as a tourist, you have to carry enough clothes for the number of days described in your tour package. Nothing else*", Clarice (2012) explained. In addition, international credit cards, money, and health insurance are, according to her, fundamental details that a migrant must carry in case border officers ask for more details in an interview. Laerte said that this tactic aims to

convince a passport officer that the traveler has enough money, and will not stay at the country's expense while they are visiting.

Travelling over or below into the US

Romulo (2012) added that "*it was easy to send people to the US in the beginning. A client who wanted to migrate there did not have much to do. I would organize the trip and send them there without any sort of complication*". According to him, preparing the trip consisted mainly in following the same procedures that should be made with tourists. By the time of the interview, Romulo (2012) noticed that "*Brazil is a country whose tourist is very much appreciated. We are characterized as someone who likes to buy clothing, consume electronic goods… so, we spend a huge amount of dollars in the US*". In general, Brazilian tourists tended not to face many complications entering the US.[11] "*Because of that most of the travel agencies opted for designing a package tour for these young people who wanted to live in the US for a while*". The stories presented by respondents show that there were two ways to travel to the US, known as: *travelling over* and *travelling below*.

Various respondents presented, in their own stories, the term *'travelling over'* to explain to me that, at first, the route between Brazil and the US was by air. It worked effectively for more than ten years, and was the main route used by the travel agencies in Minas Gerais state. Laerte (2012) recalls that it was not difficult to organize the trips for his clients, especially with the good image that Brazilian tourists used to have in the US: "*there was no bureaucracy to send these guys. Simple package tours, a few days in New York, or…. well, any place they wanted to go and it was done!*". In fact, Clarice (2012) observed that the trips to the US did not demand much effort. "*We booked flight tickets, hostels, then gave information about the tourist spots in those places... in case people needed help with passports, we also provided support […] We followed a script that could not fail*". Using their knowledge about border control at international airports, they would transform Brazilians into tourists who would spend a few days in the Northeast of the US. Their clients did not have to do much apart from "*learning a few sentences in English, explaining to the border agency at the passport control that they were going to spend a few days in the US visiting some tourist [spots]*", according to Clarice (2012).

However, *travelling over* directly to the US became more difficult after 9/11. Laerte (2012) comments that

> there were always cases of customers having their visa refused at US airports. But I remember that after 2002, 2003 the numbers increased. Passport control agents started refusing visas and sending people back to Brazil for any reason, I could do nothing.

Hence, he observes that the "*number of people flying directly to the US drastically reduced*". It affected not only his business, but also the other travel agents from the same towns. Travel agents who managed to find new routes survived. In his town, Laerte (2012) says that "*all the [other] travel agencies closed their doors. To give you an idea, we are the only one currently working over here. And because of that, we cover a few towns*

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[11] Folha de São Paulo shows that, in 2012 alone, 1.8 million Brazilian tourists visited the US. In Miami, for instance, there were 690,000 tourists, while New York received another 816,000. "*One out of every 13 tourists who went to Manhattan was Brazilian, in 2012. Brazilians spent around $1.9 billion (R$ 3.6 billion), putting our country [Brazil] in the third position of those who spent the most there, behind the UK and Canada. With goods costing less than a third of the value in Brazil, 95% of Brazilians visiting the United States are shoppers, according to the report of Usitic, the international trade committee of the country, released this year*" (Sampaio, 2013). Obama's administration ordered the State Department, for example, to increase non-immigrant visa-processing capacity in Brazil by 40%. Moreover, it ensured that 80% of tourist-visa applicants would be granted interviews within 21 days, and also simplified and sped up the process for those classified as "low risk" applicants.

around the area". Clarice (2012) believed that the increased rejections might be related to the September 11 attacks. "*After that, selling tour packages to the US became worse*".

In fact, Clarice's statement is supported by the fact that the US government dramatically increased restrictions on the mobility of people across its national borders after 9/11. Just six days before 9/11, Bush had received Mexican President Vicente Fox at the White House to announce a new episode of immigration reform. "*By the time he signed the landmark homeland security legislation 14 months later, Bush was telling reporters and lawmakers that "the front of the new war is here in America*" (Devereaux, 2021, p. 2). Since then, apart from potential terrorists, illegal migrants increasingly became seen as a threat to national security. In 2001, the US government signed the *Canada-US Smart Border Declaration* with its northern neighbor, also called the 'North American zone of confidence'. In this document, and in other policies and bilateral border security agreements, undocumented noncitizens were assimilated to terrorists. "*From this moment, illegality is officially seen in North America as a security risk to be managed and averted*" (Côté-Boucher, 2015, p. 81). Moreover, the USA PATRIOT Act was enacted in the same year to help investigators identify, dismantle, and disrupt terrorist plots. Section 414 titled Visa integrity and security (The US Patriot, 2001, p. 353), for instance, concerns the implementation of an integrated data system about entry and exit at airports "*as specified in section 110 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (8 USC 1365a), with all deliberate speed and as expeditiously as practicable*".

Five years later, Brazil was included among the Latin American countries whose citizens were required to apply for non-immigrant visas, which are clearly designated as visas for those who wanted to visit, work, or study for a temporary period. Criminalizing migration is also a racial project to curb the entrance of Latin Americans into US territory. The policies implemented after 9/11 compose a set of hostile practices designed to manage/filter out racialized 'others', that involve denigration, punishment, and banishment (Bhatia, 2020). US "crimmigration" infrastructure expanded into Brazil through the transfer of governance sovereignty – regulation of crime, migration, security, and race – from airports to its consulates in Brazilian territory (Stumpf, 2015).

Brazilian passports have become machine-readable to comply with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Document 9303 standard. The Brazilian government had to include this security technology to meet standards imposed by the US government after 9/11. Through biometric data that is stored in databases, Brazilians can be monitored throughout the entire journey (Côté-Boucher, 2008; Amelung, 2021). So, before arriving in US territory, all Brazilians had to apply for a visa at an embassy located in Brazil. This created costs and a pre-selection process that did not necessarily guarantee entry. It rather generated a preliminarily approved visa that had to be presented at US airports, where a final visa may or may not be granted. The fact that the US increasingly began to resort to criminalization as a way of disciplining, excluding, and indeed expelling migrants or those seen as presumptively unentitled, reveals a racial project.

Brazilians could be holding a visa in their passports that is refused and thus become unwanted foreigners before setting foot in any airport in the US. Clarice (2012) recalls that visa applications "*started taking a long time and without any guarantee. Any simple misunderstanding in the visa application could be a reason for a visa refusal and put the entire travel at risk. Your time has gone; your money as well*". Migrants from Minas Gerais would have to go to Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo for interviews at a US consulate. If their application is rejected, they lose the large amount of money invested in that trip and, moreover, get a refusal stamp on their passport. This forced the travel agencies to rethink their initial border crossing tactics, which mainly focused on preparing tour packages to the US. So, the route and tactics for tourist travel to the US had to be reconstructed. The immediate alternative was to explore traditional routes that passed through Mexico

before arriving in the US. In this new context, travel agents began to work along with other border actors well-known among Latin American migrants: those known as coyotes.

The tactic remained the same: to travel as a tourist, "*but now with a tour package to visit the Mexican capital*"; and from that point, migrants had to *travel from below*, as the respondents classified it in their interviews. Unlike the first option where migrants would fly to the US, now they journey from Mexico to the US by land. Romulo (2012) explained that

> […] became a fever. There were young men who did not care about the risks of being caught by the US border police and trusting in Mexican coyotes. They used to pay for a tour package to Mexico City and from there meet a coyote, whose meeting was also previously arranged here.

According to the stories, this alternative route consisted in breaking down the initial air route into a shorter air journey followed by other pathways and in partnership with coyotes. So, to avoid the interview and pre-selection process at the US embassy in Brazil as well as the passport controls at US airports, a journey through Mexico was taken. Travel agents categorically refused to provide me further information about the negotiations behind this form of mobility. They just said that their role was getting their clients through the Mexican passport controls. From that point, the coyotes were the border people in charge of the journeys. So, the alternative solution I found to learn about this *travel from below* was to interview returned migrants who had journeyed via this route.

These efforts involved not only the travel agents' skills but also the endurance and courage from migrants, who became fully dependent on the coyotes while moving through Mexican and US territories. Carolina (2013) spent 22 days journeying from Mexico to the US. She explained that they "*depend exclusively on the coyote's decision. It is not like travelling over, where a travel agent organizes everything and you just fly… no! The picture is different. You have to follow the coyote, without speaking a single word. You are dominated by their will*". Andre (2013) is another returned migrant. His journey through the Pacific coast and the Sonora desert lasted 14 days. He confirmed that confidence in the coyote was weak and could be broken at any time. Both returnees said that personal rings and watches, for example, were used as 'money' to buy the coyote's friendship, and thus guarantee some protection while on the journey. As Andre (2013) observes, "*if you are not sure about that, it's better you stay [in Brazil]*".

In fact, the situation became more serious in the towns after one person from the region was kidnapped near Monterrey, and a group of ten men disappeared while travelling through the Sonora desert. Romulo (2012) says that the region was very impacted by these stories. "*Obviously it affected the business again. First, because only men had the courage to travel. Then the number of clients was reduced. Second, the families no longer provided support and started questioning the validity of this trip*". Therefore, new routes had to be created and other countries from the 'First World' accessed. The UK became the new goal.

The emergence of the UK as a new destination

> I always wanted to move to the US. I have relatives over there. But the idea of crossing a desert without any guarantee that I would survive at the end was too much. That was very risky and expensive. I changed my mind. I opted for London (Adriano, 2012).

I open this section with a key excerpt from Adriano's interview, which helps to understand how London re-emerged as a destination for Brazilians after 9/11: it was a cheaper and safer journey, and was paid for in British pounds. At the time I interviewed Adriano, he had been living in London for five years. He explained that many people from his town who wanted to travel to the US had their visas refused before leaving Brazil. The travel agency suggested going to European capitals instead. This appeared to be the best option. Portugal and Spain were the two initial countries considered because of their languages and the supposedly

easy entry. But low salaries and stories of racism lowered these countries in the hierarchy. At that time, the British government did not demand a pre-approval visitor visa for citizens from Brazil (United Kingdom, 2012). Brazilians could apply for a visitor visa at the passport control points at any UK airport. So there was no need for a preliminarily approved visa, and that definitely transformed the mobility of Brazilians. Thus, a new migration geography was remodeled in the years following the September 11 attacks.

The border crossing tactics would change again. If at first Brazilians could rely on the travel agents' skills to design a package tour, travelling to the UK soon revealed itself to be difficult. Although travel agents have the skills to create the character – a Brazilian tourist – and the story – travelling on holiday to Europe – the migrant must put the plan into practice. It is the migrant who provides the necessary vigor to the tourist character drawn up by their travel agents. According to Laerte (2012), *"the client has to be committed to the story of holidays that we create here and also incorporate the tourist. Otherwise, it fails"*. Migrants are travelers who have to learn to improvise to overcome the uncertainties that may arise as they go through the border controls. Out of necessity and not for pleasure, migrants must perform as tourists to manipulate and overcome boundaries.[12]

Being aware of the large number of Brazilians who are deported every year from Heathrow airport, respondents emphasized that the journey cannot be a direct flight to London. According to Lucio (2012), "*the control at this airport is very strong. This is because it is an airport that receives people from different parts of the world*". Moreover, it is the British airport where direct flights from all international Brazilian airports land. Therefore, there were many Brazilians coming and going. Especially on the 'All other passports' queue for overseas non-EU travelers, which usually has long lines. The research informants thus considered Heathrow to be risky since there was a high chance that other migrants, including Brazilians, would be there. In Lucio's word (2012), "*you have Brazilians of different types arriving there. Most of the people who migrate here [the UK] land there. There are also those who are deported […] when you are deported from London that is the airport from where they send you back to Brazil...*"

This visibility associated with the passport queues and the potential presence of other Brazilians are seen as threats. Hence, in travelling to the UK, the other design aspect is for migrants to fly first to other European countries located in the Schengen Area before landing in the UK. This large single jurisdiction under a common visa policy serves as an important platform that connects the route between Brazil and the UK. Despite the fact that it operates with no strict internal border controls, since the creation of FRONTEX (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency), the EU has strongly focused on the ports of entry of the "Fortress Europe" (The Migrants' Files, 2022). Migrants are included in the crime-fighting package that strengthens the common judicial system and police cooperation (Van der Woude et al., 2017). In other words, FRONTEX is a paramilitary border-policing agency responsible for coordinating the activities of national border guards to ensure the security of the EU's borders with non-member states.[13]

According to the The Migrants' Files (2022) project, from 2002 to 2013, the EU spent 225 million euros in projects to protect Europe's borders. This includes military-grade technology supplied by privately held companies. The European Commission has created a working group focused on this topic, and four European arms manufacturers participate in the working group: Airbus (formerly EADS), Thales, Finmeccanica, and BAE. There are also technology companies in the group such as Saab, Indra, Siemens, Diehl, and others.

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[12] Travelling to London was rarely done alone. The migrants tended to travel either as a couple or as classmates. This way they could prompt each other if one of them forgets what to say, does not know how to answer, or becomes afraid.

[13] They also establish partnerships with countries like Brazil to speed up reintegration services to nationals returned to their countries of origin.

In fact, migration management is a profitable sector. Airports accessed by Brazilians in the Schengen area have been transformed into filters regulated by administrative law to detect unauthorized people in the technology war employed at passport controls. Known as *Smart Borders*, airports gained a vast 'technological paraphernalia' with large-scale IT systems to manage and restrain overseas migrants, treating them as potential criminals rather than as travelers exposed to considerable risks on their migratory journeys, and therefore deserving of protection (Pickering et al., 2015). Arriving luggage is carefully checked by 3D baggage scanners, metal detectors, and a team of detector dogs. In the case of Brazilian migrants holding a non-EEA passport, as I will explore below, it is necessary to be interviewed at the passport control desks to explain the reasons for their visit and present papers with supporting evidence.

Nonetheless, I realized during the interviews that neither the travel agents nor the migrants were aware of the existence of the Schengen Area. While they were narrating their mobility through the airports, I specifically asked them if this tactic of border crossing had any relationship with the idea of exploring this European area. Their answers clearly showed a total lack of knowledge about it. However, they did know how to take advantage of the encouragement promoted by Schengen. So, the group exploited the fact that Brazilians do not need to apply for a tourist visa to enter the Schengen Area before leaving Brazil. Spending a few days in the European continent before landing in London is understood to be a way to bolster the image of the tourist. The package tours used by these Brazilians include various destinations. The people researched observed that this tactic provides Tourist Visa Stamps on their passport. Claudio (2012) emphasized that the stamps "*show to the [UK border control] in London that we are coming from other countries as proper tourists. They see our hostel reservations, our passports and can be sure that we are just passing by, we are not going to stay*". Airports in Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, and Italy, for instance, were constantly used for these Brazilians' flight connections. The UK, in this tactical border crossing movement, is represented as just one more country where they will spend a few days during their tour around Europe.

Crossing the FRONTEX and glimpsing the 'First World'

Presenting reservation letters from hostels or hotels and their tourist itinerary, proving they were guests on a short-term basis, and explaining why they were passing through that specific country were some reinventions Brazilians used to secure their border crossings. However, passport controls at airports in the Schengen Area were normally quick, and once officers heard that they were heading to other countries, there were only a few routine security questions. "*It's nothing very serious. They just ask what we are doing here, how long we are going to stay, and what the next country is*", Gisele (2012) recalled.

Likewise, Pedro (2012) said that the border control at Malpensa airport, in Milan, raised few questions about their travel. He travelled with a friend and their itinerary was to spend three days in Milan, then go to London where they would spend four days, and then go to Paris. "*We were lucky because my friend had lived in Spain before and because of that he could speak Spanish*". The officer then asked some questions regarding their motives for being in Europe, and how much cash they had. "*So my friend said that as both of us had got into university, our parents had decided to pay for a trip to Europe. It was sort of a gift*" (Pedro, 2012). Denise (2011) recalled, "*I took the opportunity to visit Amsterdam before landing in London. I always wanted to visit this city and its canals. [...] It's a beautiful city… small, but still beautiful with its little houses positioned side by side. I loved it*". For them, spending a few days in other European countries before heading to London is the best, if not the only, opportunity to visit some of the European cities that, in their perception, make up the image of a glamorous 'First World' filled with history and opulence. According to Paula (2011), "*visiting some of these cities before arriving*

in London is a great opportunity to see what it [Europe] looks like. If they are really like what we see on TV or hear people say". Claudio noticed that the customer decides if they want a package tour that includes two or three countries. The rest, buying coach and flight tickets, booking hotels, and preparing the answers that will be given at passport control, was organized by the agents.

In addition, making connections through the Schengen Area also ensured that Brazilians did not reveal a typical migration route from Brazil to London. This finding was confirmed by Adriano. His journey to the UK was different from his colleagues. "*It's a good way to avoid Heathrow, but also to outwit the immigration [officer]. […] because nobody repeats the same trip. I think that confuses them [the passport control]*'' (Adriano, 2012).

The map below shows how the movements produced non-linear patterns (Figure 2). The Brazilians began to be mapped at the check-in desk at one of the two international Brazilian airports where the journey starts – either in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo – when the biometric database stored in the travelers' e-passports was read by the computer system, and they were registered as having left Brazilian territory. This biometric system of authentication can efficiently read potential migrants. However, it cannot understand the reasons for their movements. And that is the main idea behind this tactical border crossing movement presented in the routes to the UK. The map shows how the subjective choices and multiple flight combinations behind their journeys are based on a meshwork of options, which aim to be difficult for the UK passport control to track and manage.
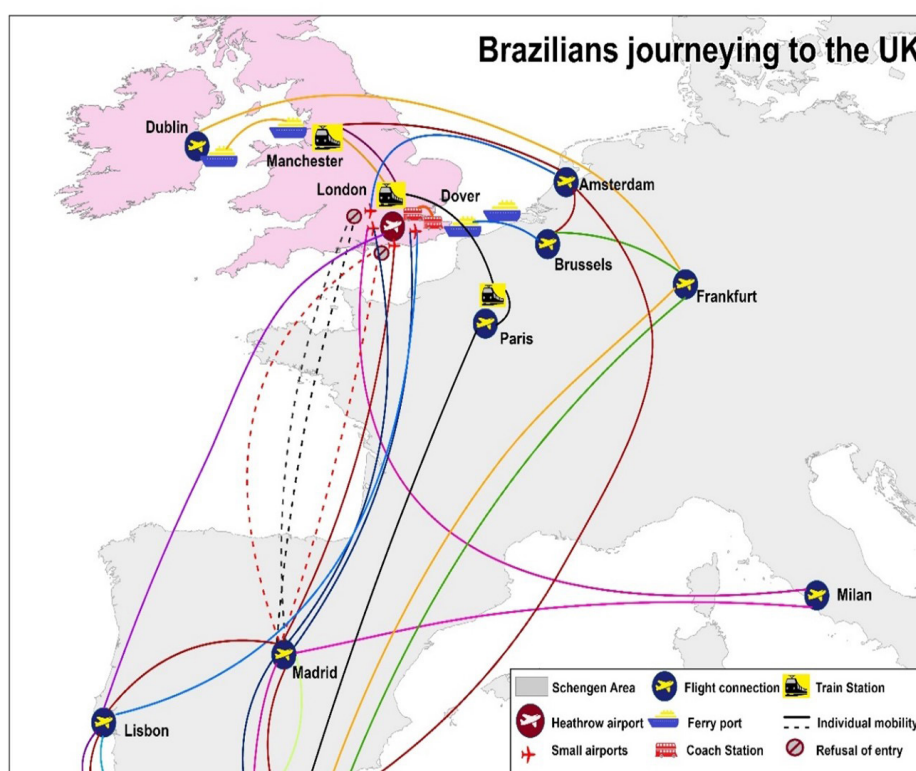

Figure 2 – Migration journeys.
Source: Map provided by the author (2022).

Each line on the map represents the journey of a pair of Brazilians involving a route from Brazil to the UK through the Schengen area. This map portrays a mesh composed of distinct journeys whose combinations are rarely repeated, as they are based on subjective choices and have to avoid similar routes. The paths drawn on the map goes from city to city

in the Schengen Area before producing the final movement: crossing the English Channel and reaching the outskirts of London. They are tactical movements that take advantage of the different EU transportation systems to enter the UK. Apart from airports, train stations and ferry ports were other options presented by respondents. These are some peripheral endpoints that could be defined as *the UK porosities*: places that provide good connections with the European continent. So, behind the journeys, we see a route that consumes more of these Brazilians' money and time, but also guarantees a better meshwork between Brazil and London, rather than using one-way flights straight to Heathrow airport.

Nonetheless, this paper focuses on the main option accessed by them: *the small airports*. This is an emic definition presented in their stories, and it is not related to airport size, but rather to the circulation of Brazilians there. While Heathrow airport is the main entry point into the UK, *small airports* are the alternative gates for reaching the country without attracting attention from the border control agency. The contact with border officers at the *small airports* is less tense inasmuch as the number of overseas migrants – including Brazilians – is smaller. Gatwick, Luton, Stansted, and London City were airports with few Brazilians going through their passport controls. Lucio (2012) explains that in these airports "*you will find exclusively Brazilian tourists who are coming from other European countries. It makes it easy to cross the immigration [border control] as there are not many Brazilians to alarm the officers…*".

For Lucio and other respondents, the constant presence of Brazilian tourists in these social spaces worked in the migrants' favor. It reinforced the stereotype of a traveler for passport controls. "*What type of Brazilian arrives in London through these airports?... Tourists, of course! Migrants tend to come from the other airport [Heathrow], and the UK [border agency] knows this difference…*" (Lucio, 2012). So, due to the small and particular circulation of Brazilians in these airports, the Brazilians in this research also defined any UK airport other than Heathrow as a *small airport*. In addition, Paula and Pedro noticed that the majority of European domestic flights carry mainly EU citizens. As a result, the 'All other passports' queue for overseas non-EU travelers tends to be shorter, and there were not many overseas migrants trying to cross. Pedro (2012) tells me that "*the wait in the queue is shorter and this makes it easier because we do not run the risk of catching [border] officers tired and grumpy*".

Meeting the UK Border Agency[14]

Nonetheless, the idea of arriving in the UK through the *small airports* did not eliminate the risk of going through a border control. There were also negotiations on this last leg of their trip: with requirements to fill in the landing card for the UK border control and an interview at passport control. Acting as tourists required that these Brazilians remain mentally and physically attentive to maintain their role throughout the entire journey. They had to be prepared for possible questions and remember the correct answers that they were taught by the travel agents in their towns, as British authorities also used interviews to identify and ascribe legitimate and illegitimate identities to those moving across borders.

Adriano commented that after copying what other travelers were filling in on their respective arrival cards, he and his pretend girlfriend managed to find the right queue to be in to be interviewed. Their flight coming from Madrid landed at Stansted Airport. "*Well…after waiting for 40 minutes in the 'not European citizenship' queue, we were finally called*" (Adriano, 2012). They moved toward the passport control desk and the "officer immediately asked for our passport, he turned the pages, looked with a grumpy face, and then asked how many nights we were planning to stay". As Adriano was the only one of the

two who could speak a little English, he did not hesitate to answer the question. *"I got what he said… so I answered 5 nights and showed my five fingers to make it clear [laughing]… then he asked something else…I did not get. He made a sign with his hand showing that there was no problem… he stamped our passports and I got in…"* (Adriano, 2012).

Valeria, on the other hand, recalled that at London City airport the queue for 'All other passports' was relatively quiet, while the 'European' queue was full. According to her, the tactic was to say that she and the girl travelling with her were classmates who were on holiday. "*We had [Tourist Visa] stamps from Paris…*" The two Brazilians waited briefly before the British passport officer called them. "*He saw our passports; I think he saw the stamps too. Then he asked something in English. I said we could not speak it. After a while somebody speaking Portuguese came to help. Well, we said what we wanted to do in the UK*". Valeria (2011) told them that they would spend only three days in London and then visit Madrid, before returning to Brazil. Without understanding clearly what the two border officers were saying to each other, she recalled that the queue began to grow behind them.

> We got nervous…we did not know what they were talking about. In Brazil we always hear stories about migrants that are separated in rooms to be rigorously interviewed" She concludes that "the one who spoke Portuguese kept asking questions regarding money, then asked what we wanted to do in London… I repeated the whole story again […] Well, at the end, the plan worked. I guess they got tired and allowed us to pass through (Valeria, 2011).

The border controls in the UK can also refuse permission to enter British territory. During my fieldwork in London and in Minas Gerais, I interviewed four migrants who had been refused entry into the UK. Curiously, the tactic of travelling first to European cities in the Schengen Area works as a migratory platform for some of these young migrants. In the case of being deported from the UK, that is the place where they will return. Thus, it gives them the opportunity to reorganize their journey from that European city to London. This is the case with Lucio, whose friends lived on the outskirts of Madrid and were kept informed about his movements. According to him, this plan was crucial in helping him avoid returning to Brazil. He said that Barajas airport was the first European place on his journey, and from there he and his dummy girlfriend caught a plane to Gatwick airport, where they were refused permission by the passport control. "*They refused our visa. According to them, we did not have enough money to stay in the country for two weeks*" (Lucio, 2012). Both Brazilians tried to argue that they would afterwards be going to Paris, in order to confirm their temporary stay, but were sent back to Barajas airport.

However, Lucio's cousin who was waiting for them at Gatwick airport realized that they had been refused permission to enter the UK. "*When she became aware that I did not pass [through the UK border control], she contacted their friends in Spain. They picked me up at Barajas airport*" (Lucio, 2012). His dummy girlfriend did not want to stay in Spain and decided to return to Brazil, while he spent the next six months living and working in Spain. After this time, he changed his trajectory. Lucio arrived as a tourist at Luton airport, where he did not have any problems at the border control.

Nonetheless, succeeding at the UK border control at any British airport did not conclude their negotiations with the UK border regime. After crossing them, these Brazilians began a new journey in their lives as migrants. Soon their tourist visa expired and they became undocumented in the 'First World'. So, they had to deal with and struggle against the UK's inner borders, which were already aware of their presence on British soil.

Final considerations

This paper explored how Brazilians redefined their migration routes to the 'First World' after the 9/11 attacks. By examining personal migration journeys produced by Brazilians and their travel agents, it showed how the route to the UK has been forged by tactical

border crossing movements. Moreover, this route was produced with previous knowledge developed from experience with the migration route to the US. This strongly suggests that a migration route is not composed of linear paths between the points of departure and arrival. It is necessary to understand its duration, *how* and *why* it is produced, what social places and social actors are entangled in it, and *what* type of negotiations migrants must enter with border regimes to navigate the route. In the case of Brazilians presented here, routes do not lead to a specific country, but to the 'First World', which is seen to be composed of a hierarchy of developed countries and cities. Therefore, their migration routes are constantly being remodeled.

The stories and testimonies of these Brazilian migrants also bring another important element that helps understand border regimes after the 9/11 attacks. Although borders are regularly improved to try to detect and remove migrants from the edges and from within the territories, respondents show that migrants are still empowered social actors. The findings concur with studies that recognize that 'borderlands' are not impenetrable territories (Balibar, 2004; Papadopoulos et al., 2008; Perera, 2009; Khosravi, 2010). Acting as a *Leviathan* whose eyes are far from the ground, the EU still struggles to comprehend and capture non-linear movements produced by migrants. Borders have porosities that allow overseas migrants to enter the countries. By porosities, I mean loosely patrolled borders such as those at domestic flight connections – *the small airports* – between the Schengen Area and UK airspace. These are gaps that give migrants the chance to play certain characters when they appear before border agents. I have explored how Brazilians create what I define as tactical border crossing movement to provide an efficient route through the porosities of the Schengen Area and the UK borders.

In this sense, migration routes to the 'First World' are not experienced similarly for each traveler. They are dynamic because each journey produces distinct experiences. Some migrants can fail, while others can succeed. Collecting and analyzing each of these Brazilian journeys reveals the ingenuity of this movement between Brazil and the US, and afterwards to the UK. My findings indicate that the tactic of incorporating and acting out characters is not just produced by travel agents, but also by migrants who personally face airport border controls. For this reason, we can affirm that migration routes are produced by movements that use travel agents' knowledge to facilitate connections between places, and travelers' ability to play the role of tourists. A migrant's ability to improvise can also make a difference in the negotiation with border-control agents. Migrants are players who give life to the tactics developed by those with experience crossing borders to explore their porosities.

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