

# The role of satisfaction in labor diaspora dynamics: An analysis of BREXIT effects

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## Abstract

In diaspora research, people's international mobility is often understood as a response to pull-push forces on an economic macro-level or as part of diasporic waves. However, labor diaspora formations are also influenced by micro-level (i.e., individual perceptions) drivers related to work per se, such as satisfaction. This explorative qualitative study takes a novel angle and focuses on the role of Portuguese nurses' satisfaction with the evaluation of the Brexit scenario and its effects on this labor diaspora's mobility and stability. The findings illustrate that satisfaction, although affected by uncertainty, mainly relates to perceived working conditions and legislation and the possibilities to communicate with locals and other diasporans. This paper provides suggestions for future research and contributes to the development of theory on staying and human stickiness, explaining the dynamics of exit and entry in (re-)migration decision making.

## KEYWORDS

Brexit, entry and exit decision, expatriates, human stickiness, labor diaspora, satisfaction

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) created a common labor market, enabling cross-border workforce mobility, and providing transitional solutions for labor mobility (Kultalahti et al., 2006). Equally, laws, regulations, policies, and institutions shape the overall structure for migration. In this context, the United Kingdom (UK) EU membership referendum and regulative concerns influenced various context-specific pull and push factors that affected labor migration dynamics (e.g., Read and Fenge, 2019; Cohen, 2008; Kultalahti et al., 2006). Namely, as the UK went through a period of public discussions, ultimately leading to its abandonment of the EU in 2020, the factors that previously operated as pulling elements became pushing elements (Jancewicz et al., 2020). Accordingly, this situation challenges the basis of staying and human stickiness versus re-migration as part of the global war for talent (Tjadens et al., 2013; Ndikumana et al., 2019). Therefore, this

unprecedented circumstance deserves further disentangling in the decision making processes within the labor diaspora. As such, the objectives of this explorative study are: on the one hand, increase understanding of the labor diaspora dynamics; and, on the other hand, to specifically address entry and exit dynamics through the role of satisfaction, trying to portray in which way it can work as a threshold in the individual decision-making process embedded in a labor diaspora context.

Satisfaction represents an individually perceived sum of diverse elements (i.e., individual and contextual factors), which can be defined as “the attitude towards one's work and the related emotions, beliefs, and behaviours, results from complex interactions between on-the-job experience, organisational environment, and motivation” (Peters et al., 2010, p. 8). Contemporary labor diasporas differ from the colonial and indentured labor diasporas; today, labor diaspora represents those who “move across international borders to work in one country

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while remaining citizens in another” (Cohen, 2008, p. 61). Labor migrants forming contemporary skilled labor diasporas, for example, medical labor diasporas, share, and transfer tacit knowledge on work conditions and opportunities and countries and other life-related issues. Such tacit knowledge related to professional context can be decisive and directive for migration per se (Guo et al., 2018; Karppi, 2006). As diaspora is an evolving state, a stance, and a claim (Brubaker, 2005), it is necessary to incorporate its processual nature over time since its effect and role potentially varies on the individual level and in relation to the context. Labor diasporas can be seen as transitional with “station in life” approaches to their location, not representing permanently settling immigrants, making their mobility a highly relevant concern for labor retention today (Cohen, 2008, p. 78). This means that understanding diaspora dynamics becomes of capital importance.

The purpose of this article is to employ the lens of satisfaction (regarding life satisfaction, see more in Diener et al., 1985; and Gross & John, 2003) to explore migrants’ decisions regarding exit and entry in post-migration context and their becoming part of a labor diaspora (i.e., belongingness) and hence advance research. We adopted the definition of migrant employed by the United Nations by which a migrant is a person who moves to a country other than that of his/her usual residence for at least 12 months (e.g., Anderson and Blinder, 2011). We see migrants as mobile workers who are part of a labor diaspora (Cohen, 2008). The term ‘diaspora’ is applied as it captures the dynamics and embeddedness of the migrants and also addresses the idea of potential return (see more in Brinkerhoff, 2009, see also Cassarino, 2014). In addition, we theorise and advance Karppi’s (2006) model on migration by introducing the concept of satisfaction and its evolution over time as a micro-dynamic of labor diaspora formations.

Diasporans are migrants who settle in a place, move on and then regroup; while may also be dispersed, as a group, they ‘are in a continuous state of formation and reformation (Cohen, 2008, p. 141). This study focuses on one of the critical areas of concern for governing migration, that is, talent retention in the health care sector, and particularly the well-trained, skilled workers who migrate from the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) more-affected countries of the European South to exploit work opportunities in the European North. In particular, the problem is amplified because these migrating skilled workers create a brain drain in their home countries where the inflow of such professionals is not sufficient to counterbalance the problem (cf. Ndikumana et al., 2019). Furthermore, nurses are needed in both home and host country contexts. As Kultalahti et al. (2006) point out, while certain professional groups are more transferable, labor diasporas cannot be expected to act as homogeneous migrant groups while their migratory dynamics may shift rapidly (see Cohen, 2008).

Next, the individual and family levels provide a suitable level of analysis for professional groups such as medical professionals and nurses. For this study, we selected Portugal as the sending country due to its long-standing tradition of migration (Silva et al., 2013), leading positions in emigration in the last years in the EU (Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018) as well as the theoretical relevance

through the magnitude of talent outflow. Furthermore, we chose nurses as representatives of one of the critical types of skilled mobile labor (e.g., Kultalahti, 2006; Tjadens et al., 2013). Finally, the UK has been selected as the receiving country as it is one of the most crucial host countries where contemporary labor diaspora communities have evolved due to the recent country-specific restrictions and uncertainties associated with its exit from the EU (Read and Fenge, 2019).

The remaining of the study is structured as follows: first, we review the extant literature and present our theoretical framework that introduces a model of dynamics and forces influencing the diasporans’ decisions. Second, we describe the context and analyse the cases. Third, we discuss and present the conclusions of the study.

## 2 | LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The literature background gives an overview of theory lenses and framing that are discussed when addressing contemporary labor migration and diaspora. In terms of migration theory, mainly flows, directions, and stocks of migrants matter. The current lens employed to address the direction of migration flows often focused on macro-level aspects and economic drivers, particularly concentrating on flows from developing countries to developed countries and the economic interplay and dynamics (e.g., Wescott & Brinkerhoff, 2006; Tung, 2008; Kuznetsov, 2006, 2008; Kuznetsov & Charles, 2006).

However, these flows may be better explained through the exploration of micro-level contexts (Cohen, 2008). Contemporary labor migration is not forced; it has agency; it is deciding and selecting the destination and the length of stay there. For example, Zikic et al. (2010) studied migrant career orientation in cross-border contexts and formed a typology of orientations of qualified migrants. In a similar vein, migration and expatriate research has illustrated the meaning of individual agency and motivation, but also embeddedness in a social setting such as diaspora (Elo & Leinonen, 2018; Ndikumana et al., 2019). Thus, understanding labor diaspora in the current era of war for talent has become increasingly important and deeply connected with the global mobility of people developing their careers and improving their lives. Whether this mobility is self-initiated or corporate driven, the decision-making remains on the individual level (Habti & Elo, 2018).

Diasporas are both outcomes and effects, that is, decisive elements for migratory dynamics (Cohen, 2008). There are several definitions and discussions on the term diaspora (cf. Safran, 1991; Brubaker, 2005). In economic discussions, diasporas are discussed as “transnational populations living in a country other than their country of origin, but with ties to the country of origin” (Usher, 2005, p. 47). The evolving and heterogeneous nature of diasporas relates to Brubaker’s notion of diaspora as a “project, claim or a stance” (2005, p. 12). According to Brubaker, “we should seek to bring the [diaspora] struggles themselves into focus, without presupposing that they will eventuate into bounded groups” (2005, p. 13). The idea that diasporas are influential but not deterministic groups supports the reasoning of this study to understand the satisfaction and dynamics of diasporans

struggling and coping with the outcomes of the current regulation problems and uncertainty arising from Brexit. Diasporans are, as a consequence, pondering the factors related to staying versus re-migrating. The fact that skilled workers are also socially embedded relates not only to their families but also to their co-ethnics, their expatriate bubbles and other social formations. For example, skilled nurses, due to their family embeddedness and collegial relations as are less mobile (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013; Ndikumana et al., 2019). This is an important reference and peer group that is involved in the decision making and represents one layer of their diaspora embeddedness once abroad (Elo & Dana, 2019).

The flows of skilled migrants are discussed regarding both labor markets and career development. Under the influence of globalisation, the lowering of immigration and emigration barriers to the movement of people and the emerging concept of boundaryless careers have all contributed to the phenomenon of brain circulation, also referred to as “triangular human talent flow” (Tung, 2008). Talented and skilled diaspora human resources can also be conceptualised as “transferable brains” as they represent brain drain or brain gain (Wescott & Brinkerhoff, 2006) for the sending and receiving countries, but they may continue to be mobile also in the diaspora. Then, they are conceptualised as circulating resources (McLaughlin et al., 2011). The number of skilled people who have become mobile via self-initiated expatriation, corporate-driven expatriation, or other routes is increasing as part of the global mobility and increasing country comparison (Habti & Elo, 2019).

Skilled labor is dynamically responding- also by re-migrating- to labor market needs and contexts with its updated skill-sets. The context in which re-migration decision making happens is relevant as the institutions and regulations govern international mobility, and in the context of this study, the initial membership of the UK in the EU has opened the borders and thus enabled the mobility of nurses and medical personnel. Re-migration is a follow-up migration (cf. Karppi, 2006), and in the case of repatriation, it highlights the need for the home country to offer a satisfactory preparedness to reintegrate the returning labor force which is often problematic (Cassarino, 2014). If the home context is not attractive, a third country-directing becomes an alternative, especially when it is supported by the information provided by relevant networks (e.g., Cassarino, 2014; Leinonen & Elo, 2019). While the job opportunities in social care services in the UK is on the rise, the recruitment and retention of skilled workers are facing many issues (Read and Fenge, 2019; Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the entry and exit behaviour of individuals as the talent flow effects are influencing both countries and the individual mobility trajectories in aggregation (cf. Kuznetsov, 2006, 2008).

We synthesise that it is important to understand the dynamics of diasporas that consist not of short-term expatriates but of professionals settling (i.e., staying, see Tjadens et al., 2013) in a new host country and becoming sticky as the updated skills are often pulled elsewhere (Cohen, 2008; Ndikumana et al., 2019). Current research has thus far identified four factors that influence brain circulation: (a) industrial arrangement in home and host countries (b) trust,

learning and entrepreneurship c) the status of financial infrastructure for start-ups, and (d) the role of the state (Talib et al., 2012, pp. 240–241). These four factors interact with one another in comparisons between home and host country settings shaping the dynamics. The first three are mainly influencing medical professionals indirectly. The fourth factor, the role of the state, is more regulatory as it provides the formal framework for migration and is challenged by Brexit uncertainly shifting their formal identities as skilled labor diasporans (Elo et al., 2021).

Conditions are continuously assessed; the country settings and opportunities provided are part of the stimuli. Typically, the sending country of origin (COO) offers less attractive conditions (i.e., generate push forces), such as economic crisis and unemployment (Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018), than the receiving country. The country of residence (COR) may pull skilled individuals with its employment advantages and diversity. It is important to notice that these factors are subject to change over time as individual perception is deepened and more comprehensive or the balance shifts (Brubaker, 2005). Moreover, the decision to exit the COO and enter a new COR is facilitated by formal and informal sources of information that transmit the perceptions and views of the extant labor diasporas. In fact, migration movements become more complex, mostly due to a multifaceted nature that demands structural elements and individual features to be taken into consideration. For the Portuguese case, a full approach to the understanding of its dynamics calls for convergent elements to interact one over the other. Cultural bonds and historical connections play an extraordinary relevant role (Teixeira & Silva, 2019), along with the role played by economic reasons, in a structural coupling process as proposed by Luhmanns (1992).

Moreover, the existence of prior diasporas, historical relations (cf. “normality”) and gravity effects (Karppi, 2006) may further foster the interest of potential migrants and assist in decision making. Karppi (2006) links three stages in migration from the triggering stage to the decisive state and to directing state where the dynamics are interconnected to deprivation in the sending context and the existing networks in the receiving context. This highlights the meaning of networks, such as diasporas abroad, in the directing stage. The idiosyncrasies of the Portuguese migration movement (Góis & Marques, 2018), the so-called Lusophone migration movement, should be analysed in an intertwined way within the Western European migration system. The existing Portuguese labor diaspora in the UK can constitute an important element in the decision making as a form of information source and a pull effect for migration, or even re-migration when other information influences the interplay between potential migrants, migrants, and migrants in third countries. All this makes the analysis and comparison of alternatives easier and enables an interested individual to develop their expectations of external sources and can thus influence their post-migration satisfaction and adaptation (see also Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). Similarly, the COO-based social ties may also trigger diasporic re-migration dynamics, given that the situation worsens.

In line with the previous claim, Leinonen (2012) has pointed out the diverse origins of satisfaction related to migration that may not

stem only from economic benefit but also from family ties and partnership, which is in line with Granovetter's (1973) views on social ties and their strength and on the family embeddedness (Ndikumana et al., 2019). Therefore, satisfaction is not a rational, measurable, or easily quantifiable influence factor due to its emotional dimensions as "money is not everything" (Leinonen, 2012). Contextualising satisfaction in its embedded setting and the entry-exit behaviour in the life cycle of diasporans (Elo & Leinonen, 2018) may assist in increasing the relevance and reliability of the findings when researching migration decision making. This is especially true in the context of the professional group of nurses, one of the professional groups more frequently referred to in the news (Elo & Silva, 2015), not only because of their low salaries at home, but also concerning the lack of professional progress opportunities in the COO (Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018).

The research on the satisfaction of labor diasporans and their decision-making regarding entry and exit has received less attention in comparison to the expatriate literature (cf. Chung & Tung, 2013; Elo & Jokela, 2014; Gill & Bialski, 2011; Leinonen, 2012; Marschan-Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 1999; Zikic et al., 2010; Habti & Elo, 2019). To address this lack of research, we built on the work of Karppi (2006), who conceptualised the special properties of migration and introduced the three key elements of migratory decisions (see Figure 1), and whose model on the "two-phase chain of successive migrations" for migratory decision making includes the impulse by the prior stage and the actual intrinsic decision (Karppi, 2006, p. 105). Overall, we argue that labor diaspora satisfaction over time is decisive for staying vs migration, and it is affected by numerous factors that guide their (re-)migratory decision-making.

### 3 | METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 | Research strategy

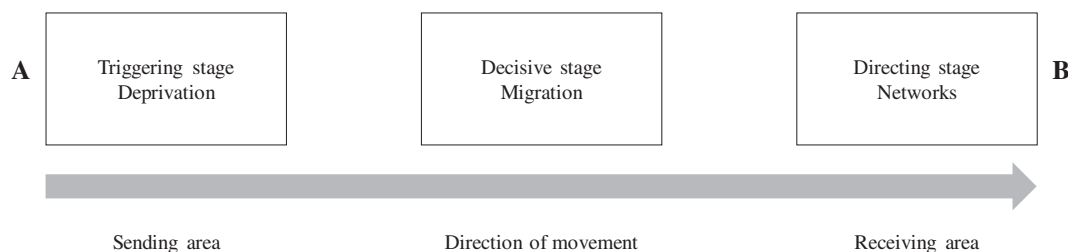
Understanding the dynamics of a labor diaspora and its inherent decision-making process requires analysis of the forces and settings that cause people to develop boundary-less international careers and migratory paths. As Gehman noted (2018, p. 289), "there is no best way to perform process research" as it depends on research objective and interest. Considering that we are interested in events (i.e., Brexit) and how individuals' interpreted and evolved over time under the

influence of those events, we combine Eisenhardt (1989), and Langley (1989) approaches.

In order to identify, understand and analyse the role of satisfaction in labor diaspora, we performed explorative multiple case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), which enabled us to develop and reconnect the theoretical links as well as to investigate whether results can be replicated among cases (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Saunders et al., 2015). In order to be eligible for the study (Fletcher et al., 2018), cases had to be Portuguese, skilled healthcare workers who migrated to the United Kingdom before the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum was announced in 2016. For the purpose of this study, Portugal represents a particularly relevant setting. Namely, although Portugal represents a developed EU country, due to the consequences of the GFC, it represents a sending country. In fact, while in the past, waves of migration in Portugal were mainly of non-qualified migrants. The wave that took place between 2006 and 2015 is characterised by high qualified migrants (Elo & Silva, 2015). According to Education at Glance Report (2015), around 83% of Portuguese migrants had a university degree. Furthermore, a similar finding was presented in a study conducted by Martins (2016), in which out of 201 inquired migrants, almost 13% had a PhD degree while more than 50% mentioned having a master's degree. So, as never before, many high-skilled individuals left Portugal, which pushed for uncovering the reasons behind the migration of highly qualified workforce.

#### 3.2 | Data collection

The first data were collected through in-depth, personal semi-structured interviews conducted in 2015 before the Brexit vote occurred and in 2019 after the resolution of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union became more certain. We continued with the third round of interviews in early 2021 to collect a follow-up of their professional life and decision-making regarding the implementation and fulfilment of Brexit. At the time of the first interviews in 2015, all the selected cases (initially 6) agreed to participate voluntarily and further be interviewed in the upcoming period. However, at the moment of the second interview - performed in 2019, two interviewees denounced the willingness to further participate in the study. The overview of the selected cases is presented in Table 1.



**FIGURE 1** Spatial properties of the three key elements of migratory decisions

**TABLE 1** Details of the selected cases

	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male
Age (interview 2015)	28	23	35	25
Education	Bachelor	Bachelor	Bachelor	Bachelor
Country of origin	Portugal	Portugal	Portugal	Portugal
Country of residence (2015)	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
Year of expatriation	2014	2014	2012	2012
Country of residence (2019)	Portugal	Portugal	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
Year of return/migration (if applicable)	2017	2019	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Knowledge of the English language (2015)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Knowledge of the English language (2019)	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced

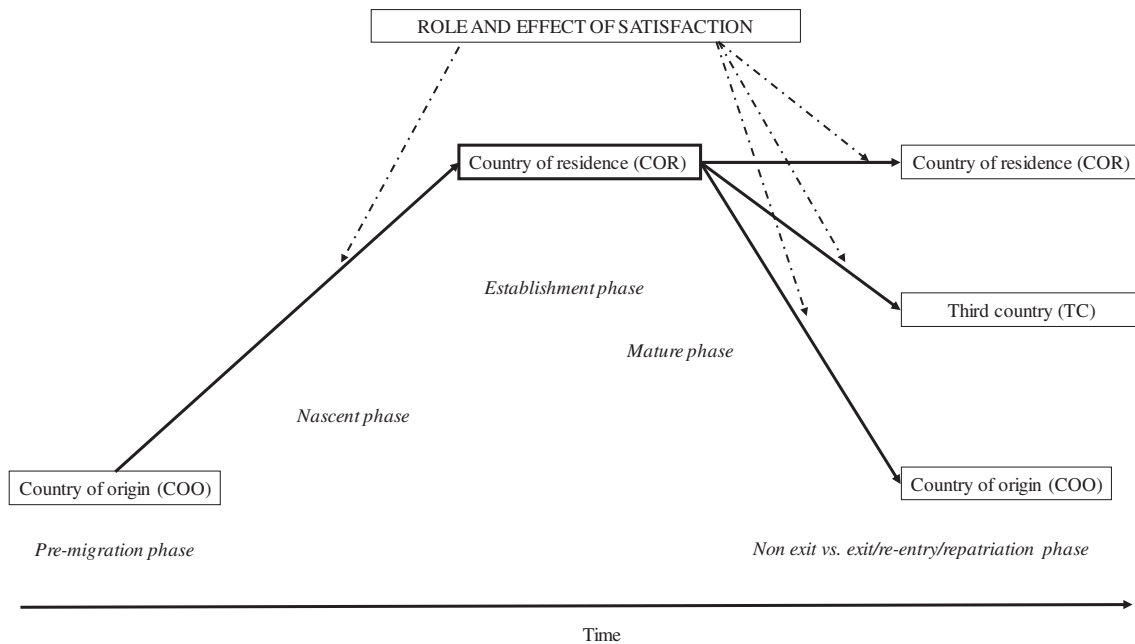
The collected longitudinal (2016–2021) qualitative material on four individuals offers deep insights and allows us to compare within the cases and across the cases how Brexit has influenced their career and labor diaspora status over time. In-depth, personal semi-structured interviews have previously been used with success in studying diasporans entry-exit trajectory and important life decisions (Elo & Leinonen, 2018) and allowed us to collect rich accounts of the interviewee's perception and their mindset (Welch and Piekari, 2006). Rich personal views on the main reasons that led the Portuguese nurses to leave their COO, remain in the COR or return to the COR were obtained through interviews. In total, we conducted 14 interviews (6 cases were interviewed in 2015 and 4 in 2019 and in 2021) with Portuguese nurses working abroad in the UK but having options also in other countries. The interviewees were aged between 23 and 35 years old. The sample included two females and two males, out of which two interviewees remained in initial COR, and the other two returned to COO after the Brexit. In terms of education, the Portuguese diaspora of health care workers in the UK is constituted mainly by highly qualified people (with university degrees and good levels of foreign language skills), i.e., highly/skilled workers, and contemporary first-generation immigration (see Table 1). Hence, the diaspora embeddedness mechanisms are also contemporary and not historical. A sample of the main questions asked during the interviews is provided in the Appendix. The duration of the interview varied between 40 and 90 minutes both in 2015 and in 2019, while in 2021, we used e-mails and the computer-assisted telephone interviewing technique as interviewees expressed lack of time and availability due to increased workload caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim in a word processor. All the interviews were transcribed within 24 hours after each interview. The Portuguese material and the interviews were collected by a Portuguese native speaker, while the analysis was carried out by an international team of 4 members (e.g., Salmi, 2010). The guiding questions are based on the theoretical constructs found in the extant literature and diaspora research (see the interview guide in Appendix).

### 3.3 | Data analysis

Qualitative methodologies are vastly employed in health care research due to their suitability to explore complex phenomena encountered among nurses, patients, policymakers, among others (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). We employed qualitative content analysis. To examine and reflect narrative materials collected from semi structured interviews stemming from embedded individuals, we coded the transcriptions into influence factors, categories, and time periods. The contents were then organised processually in connection to their entry-exit events representing the higher-order headings (Halinen, Törnroos & Elo, 2013). Essentially, the employment of content analysis enables the identification and reporting of themes that spread across the interviews and transcend sets of interviews (Vlačić et al., 2020). This study portrays the migratory dynamics of labor diasporans through the period from 2015 to 2021. For deeper sense-making of their migratory dynamism, the findings from the first interview round have provided reflection points and guidance for the second and third interviews (e.g., critical events, driving forces), i.e., we have conducted an intra-case reflection over time and a horizontal comparison of the cases (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016).

This processual comparison allowed for a better understanding of the reasons, motivations, and behaviours related to expatriation and diasporas. By doing so, the relevance and trustworthiness of the interview material are advanced as each round contributed further through the more abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2014) based on a priori theoretical constructs (i.e., spatial properties of the three key elements of migratory decisions available in Figure 1 based on Karppi (2006, p. 105), the individual cases were reflected in the overall context of Portuguese migration and diaspora in the UK (representing the overall storyline of the phenomenon). For interviews conducted in 2015, the emerging influence factors related to push and pull factors as well as satisfaction with the host country, the employer, and personal life were formulated. Regarding the data collected in 2019, as this period referred to after the Brexit vote, the influence factors were reflected again and synthesised regarding perceptions of previously identified push and pull factors as well as current satisfaction with the



**FIGURE 2** The role and effect of satisfaction on migration dynamics

host country, the employer, and personal life under the light of Brexit vote. Finally, for the interviews conducted in 2021, which refers to the post-Brexit era, the influence factors were reflected regarding the perception of Brexit, satisfaction towards the UK, satisfaction with the current country of residence and work, the opportunities related to global career and mobility in post-Brexit era and overall satisfaction with personal life. The three periods provided rich understandings from the triggering to directing dynamics of the decision making of the nurses (cf. overall storyline). Finally, the processual comparison of events and decisions were reflected with the emerging theoretical underpinnings and the previous models, which fostered the development of the framework presented in Figure 2. that introduces the role of satisfaction on migration (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

## 4 | FINDINGS

Talent circulation is one of the guiding principles of the free and open European Union and is thus absolutely fundamental for the European idea of its labor markets. Since the global crisis (GFC), a notable number of Portuguese workers have taken advantage of these guiding principles and left Portugal (Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018). Health care workers in Portugal were one of the professional groups that suffered the most from the effects of the GFC. This group had very poor working conditions in Portugal before the crisis -their country of origin-, which was only further deteriorated afterwards. Therefore, health sector employees had strong work-related reasons to look for new opportunities abroad. During and after the crisis, the health care system in the UK (national health system NHS) was one of the key destinations in terms of employing Portuguese health care workers, such as nurses. This suggests that the setting of the study is

of particular interest and relevance for human capital recruitment and retention.

In 2021, there are over 20.000 nurses working outside Portugal, with 1.230 left during 2020, that is, during the pandemic. This is quite interesting, as it shows that the mobility of the labor diasporans in the medical and health sector has not stopped despite the Covid-19 restrictions. This development goes in line with what the nurses who are currently in Portugal experience: they keep on receiving invitations to work abroad.

The viewpoints from the interviews illustrate that although the career and competitive work and salary are important and the local diaspora embeddedness offers additional life-value and satisfaction, there is an ongoing assessment of the satisfaction and wellbeing. The Brexit may have been the last nail in the coffin for those that were missing their family and friends a lot and were considering a return to Portugal to improve their overall life satisfaction. They returned with the sensation of mission accomplished but decided that it was about time to go back to their homes, which still represents Portugal. However, it cannot be said that it was Brexit alone that triggered motivation to return, but it amplified the decision-making for those who were rethinking their stay in the UK. For others who stayed, this was no reason for them to return as they were satisfied with their lives. Interestingly, the labor diasporans who stayed pointed out that opportunities in the UK never ceased to exist, as a matter of fact, this is precisely the reason why they like staying in the UK. Hence, the Brexit-driven changes were reshuffling the opportunity frameworks on both sides and opened new doors both for leavers and stayers.

Another important aspect concerning the current scenario of health crisis emerged. The profession of a nurse has become an extremely hot currency in the international labor markets, and nurses have the luxury to choose. This does not automatically translate into



**TABLE 2** Summary of the interviews conducted in 2015

Before Brexit	Push/pull factors	Satisfaction with the host country	Satisfaction with the employer	Satisfaction with personal life
Case A	<p><i>Push:</i> The interviewed emphasised that, despite having started to work after graduation, he did not have a contract, he was poorly paid (10–15€/ day), and to sum up, she had unacceptable working conditions. Also, there were any prospects of a future career. As such, he contacted several recruitment companies, and in the interviews he has done, he was the only nurse with previous experience.</p> <p><i>Pull:</i> The UK is known as a country that welcomes PT nurses by providing them with good working conditions. He and the other nurses were given 4–5 weeks of intensive training upon arrival.</p>	<p>“The country has a greater advantage, which is the language, and the large community of Portuguese people. Income and working conditions are appealing.”</p>	<p>“I am very satisfied with the training provided, as well as with the recognition given to my knowledge and skills by the doctors and colleagues. Also, the fact that the salary is 3–4 times higher than the one earned in Portugal, and the fact that the employer-provided 3 weeks' period of holidays is great.”</p>	<p>“I enjoy having new friends, learning a new culture/ reality, and improving my English.”</p>
Case B	<p><i>Push:</i> The main reasons for leaving Portugal were seeking a better salary, career progression and better quality of life.</p> <p><i>Pull:</i> The main reasons that made her go to the UK were the easiness with the language, having friends who were already working there, and the proximity to Portugal (2 hours flight)</p>	<p>“Firstly the salary is much higher than in Portugal, then in the UK, the workload is 37,5 hours/week, instead of Portuguese's 40 hours/week. Secondly, the overtime work is paid, and if they work night shifts and Saturdays they earn 30% more per hour and if they work on Sundays and Bank holidays, they earn 60% more per hour.”</p>	<p>“I am very satisfied with the current organisation, has been very welcomed by my bosses, who appreciated the PT nurses' job very much. My job is recognised, which did not happen in Portugal.”</p>	<p>“I am happy with the experience. I noticed that British people are very different from the Portuguese, since ‘in Portugal, the community is always very welcoming, here is the opposite’, they are introverted, and just mind their own business, which is not a very pleasant experience for someone who has just moved, but one can easily adapt.”</p>
Case C	<p><i>Push:</i> The reasons that made the interviewee leave Portugal are the feeling of frustration, the fact that there was a foreseeable upgrade on her career, and financial motivations.</p> <p><i>Pull:</i> The UK was the chosen country due to the knowledge of the language and the fact that she already has friends working there.</p>	<p>“Overall, I am very pleased with the country, the infrastructure is good, and despite the cost of living being high, the salary and the respect that is shown towards nurses compensate for it.”</p>	<p>“I am ‘fairly satisfied’, having ‘proper salary and easy access to accommodation’ plays a role.”</p>	<p>“It is not an easy city to make friends, but in the end, I managed to have several contacts that helped me out feeling more welcomed.”</p>
Case D	<p><i>Push:</i> The reasons that made the interviewee leave Portugal are the lack of opportunities and stress with the overall situation.</p> <p><i>Pull:</i> The UK was the chosen country due to a better quality of life, career progression and better salary.</p>	<p>“I am very satisfied with the current situation in the UK.”</p>	<p>“I am very satisfied with the employer and organisation, the overall experience and the possibility to make progress in the career.”</p>	<p>“I am satisfied with my personal life. Although many things are different overall, it meets my routines and requirements.”</p>

better salaries. Although their usefulness is recognised and appreciated, the Portuguese context does not offer yet the necessary compensation, which translates into a prolonged push and pull situation between the UK and Portugal (Silva & Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, 2018). The UK continues attracting Portuguese nurses, while other Portuguese nurses keep on working in Portugal due to their social embeddedness and satisfaction that is not related to salary. Interestingly, many of the human resource practices employed in Portugal were not serving or taking into consideration those who considered the return (e.g., Cassarino, 2014). For instance, candidates for positions claim that interviews are being conducted in person. This is very problematic for many reasons; due to the attraction measures from the UK side, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the international hurdle of travel.

Regarding the way the nurses initiated their expatriation process, we observed three options; (a) two interviewees moved on their own (i.e., self-initiated expatriation), (b) one interviewee was contacted by the agency and (c) one initiated the contact with the agency proactively. We identified several reasons and motivations that led the nurses to leave Portugal in the first place: some are push factors that discourage them from continuing to look for a job in Portugal; others are pulling factors that attracted them to a foreign country and its labor market (see Table 2). As for the main types of migratory driver, our interviewees referred to: difficulty in finding a job, unacceptable working conditions, seeking for better/acceptable salary, no prospects for a future career/career progression, seeking a better quality of life, a feeling of frustration, seeking professional recognition, developing foreign language skills, and seeking new experiences/travelling (in this order).

Regarding the satisfaction of Portuguese nurses with the situation in the host country (post-migration phase), and following Silva et al. (2013), we divide the main motivations into three groups: satisfaction with the host country, satisfaction with the employer, and personal life satisfaction before the Brexit vote (see Table 2) and after the Brexit (see Table 3).

*On the host country level*, the Portuguese nurses in the UK were unanimous in stating that the UK is a good host country for Portuguese nurses (“The UK is known for inviting Portuguese nurses to work there and for providing good work conditions...” – interviewee 1), which provides good jobs, good working conditions, better salaries, good training, and good working contracts. Indeed, labor-related factors were cited as being the most relevant factors attracting interviewees to the UK. After the good labor conditions of the country, Portuguese nurses mentioned that the language is familiar to them in the UK. Other factors that pull nurses to the UK are the proximity to Portugal, which leads to a lower cost of travelling and increases their chances to visit their relatives and friends (“I’m just 2 hours away from Portugal...” – interviewee 2). Having friends already working in the UK was also mentioned, which increased the trust and information that many potential migrants (cf. pre-migration) look for when making decisions about expatriation. This illustrated social pull and diaspora gravity effects.

The findings pointed out a perceived good relation of living costs and income, comparatively better regarding Portugal. “The cost of living, considering the salary that we earn, is much better than in Portugal! We have money for bills, rent, and food, and I still can save money each month, a considerable amount!”: said interviewee 2. The nurses found the location good as it was easy to travel around and find various sources of entertainment.

*On the level of employment*, the satisfaction of Portuguese nurses with the work and employment in the UK was enhanced by financial benefits and favourable working conditions. The fact that overtime was paid and training was provided increased satisfaction as Interviewee 1 said: “In the UK nurses are given 4 to 5 weeks of intensive training upon arrival.” Further, their knowledge of the local language (English) and the existence of a large Portuguese diaspora community of other nurses nurtured their satisfaction in work. As for the satisfaction with the employer-organisations, Portuguese nurses in the UK were satisfied with the training provided by their employers, the job recognition, and valorisation. The nurses pointed positive aspects out, such as appreciation; “The doctors in the UK know what we nurses know, and even request our opinion regarding the medication for the patients...” (interviewee 1); “I feel recognised here as a nurse, something that rarely happens in Portugal.” (interviewee 2); appropriate compensation; “We start with a basic salary that meets our qualifications, and every year the salary is increased...” (interviewee 4); decent working conditions and the time for work-life balance; “We are given a 3-week period for holidays in the beginning...” (interviewee 1). Regarding organisational onboarding and support, the structured system upon arrival that enrolled them in a preceptorship program that helped integrate them and provided training generated satisfaction. “Once you start in a new hospital, you take part in a preceptorship program, where your preceptor will help you in your first six months, and you are given all the training needed for your daily activities.” (interviewee 4).

The findings suggest that a preceptorship was a common practice in the UK, where graduates (that graduate with one year less schooling than the Portuguese nurses) only receive practical training after their graduation, which is normally provided by the hospital that hires them. Although all newcomers in a hospital were provided with this training, some directors had considered allowing Portuguese nurses to skip these courses because they had already learned earlier what the training contained. The interviewees seemed to like this period of training which may work as an acculturation procedure: despite not providing anything new in terms of professional knowledge, it is good to learn about the practices in a new hospital, including the way it is organised and the way people work. After this period of practical training, nurses were normally given a vacation period that provided a short break for Portuguese nurses to visit Portugal and thus avoid homesickness.

*On the level of personal satisfaction*, Portuguese nurses in the UK were satisfied and considered themselves happy with their situation in life. This is mainly due to the possibility of making new friends, improving language skills, and learning a new culture/reality. The



**TABLE 3** Summary of the interviews conducted in 2019

After Brexit Votum	Perception of previously identified push and pull factors to the UK	Satisfaction with the host country	Satisfaction with the employer	Satisfaction with personal life
Case A	"I left the UK because of Brexit. Since the very beginning, his experience in the UK was set to last just a short amount of time. He mentioned that he could have stayed one or two extra years if it was not the changes in the political scenario after Brexit"	"I could have stayed one or two extra years if it was not the changes in the political scenario after Brexit"	"Since I returned to Portugal, I am very pleased with the situation. It took me 4 to 5 months to get this new job. However, in the meantime I was able to keep doing some work in the UK: Working there for one or 2 weeks, in an intensive way, while spending in Portugal the rest of the time and looking for a job"	"While I was in the UK, I was able to get out of my comfort zone and challenge myself with this experience. It was, overall, very good. I pushed myself hard and I learned how to deal with different cultures since I returned to Portugal, the overall things are also changing for the better and I am feeling very comfortable being back in Portugal."
Case B	"I believe that I can get a better job now in Portugal with current qualifications and also because the situation in Portugal is better: More opportunities to find a job and a working load of 35 instead of the previous 40 hours per week"	"I am not displeased with the UK or London. However, I feel that I can have a better quality of life in Portugal at the moment"	"As I am now much more experienced and proficient which is highly appreciated in Portugal now, I had no difficulties finding the job and I am very pleased with the current employer".	"I did not return home because of Brexit, but because I was missing home and family a lot and also because I wanted to stay with them more often. As a matter of fact, I really wanted to come back."
Case C	In Portugal, there were few chances for a nurse to exert this career. Here I was expecting to have better chances. And that effectively happened. In the UK is much more easy to find a job and also to progress in the career.	"As a matter of fact, I am not worried about that because I am working at the moment. I am here for 8 years and I am appreciated for my competences. I am not displeased with the UK or London. The cost of living here is, of course, expensive. But the salaries are better.	"I am very pleased as I made substantial progress in my career and the financial situation improved"	"I feel more cosmopolitan now. I am always learning new things and I enjoy living here because of it widens my horizons."
Case D	I stayed in the UK, because of both the pushing away from Portugal factors and the attractive conditions in place in the UK. I learned a lot and I grew professionally and personally. I even learnt some Spanish because I shared an apartment with one. There are much more opportunities here than in Portugal, that is for sure.	"I do not think Brexit will impact me. Everything is still very uncertain, I have doubts that this will affect any of the foreign nurses working here because the UK misses qualified nurses a lot. As soon as the information about the results of the pool came out, pound/euro exchange rate was affected. However, since then nothing happens and honestly, I do not think it will affect me."	"I am very pleased with the experience and I appreciate the possibility to progress in the career. I am currently attending graduate school in management as well, and the employer is paying the fees."	"I am able to know people from all over the world. It is easy to travel. In fact, initially, I was travelling to Portugal very often. Now, I go to Portugal on average just 3 times a year: For my birthday, for Christmas and when there is a wedding, for instance."

extant and pre-existing, but also the emerging Portuguese diaspora community was relevant to their wellbeing and satisfaction. The size of the diaspora community played a role: "The Portuguese community in the UK is pretty big. We have more or less 200 Portuguese people working in my city, which makes it much easier for newcomers..." (interviewee 2), and an adequate diaspora made the adaptation process easier for the newcomers. British people were perceived to be more introverted than the Portuguese, and making friends among them might be more difficult. Here, the Portuguese labor diaspora

embeddedness in the UK functioned as a retention and life-satisfaction mechanism.

#### 4.1 | Before Brexit vote- satisfaction

Perceptions before the Brexit vote were favourable to remaining (cf. staying) in the UK (Tjadens et al., 2013). Despite the underlying assumption of diasporic return in prior work on diaspora formation

and return (Cohen, 2008), these nurses were not considering that option as the primary choice, nor were they anxious to leave the diasporic life in the UK. When asked in 2015, the interviewees did not intend to return to Portugal in the following period of their life. The contemplation for the reasons to return indicated mainly external economic- and non-economic factors. They said they would consider returning home if they were offered the same conditions they had in the UK: "I know that I will be more selective in the job role that I'd want in Portugal. I know I'll want the same conditions that I have here in the UK..." (interviewee 2). They also addressed the importance of non-economic triggers, such as relatives' illness and maternity leave to return home. The interviewees visited Portugal frequently and regularly, maintaining a strong bond with their COO. Visits took place for holidays, birthdays, Christmas, and special events, such as anniversaries, weddings etc. They did not discharge the opportunity of returning to their birth countries per se, but they only considered that if a really interesting job opportunity would appear, which they did not foresee happening, or when they grow old and go for retirement.

#### 4.2 | After Brexit-vote satisfaction

A different picture emerged during the follow-up interviews tracking the actual events in their lives after the Brexit vote. When interviewed again in 2019, the conviction of staying had turned into a return for half of the interviewees, as the balance had changed between the UK and their country of origin. Although their satisfaction on all three levels had been high previously, the situation had changed, and their decision making reflected perceived satisfaction after re-migration, that is, return to COO. "I believe that I can get a better job now in Portugal with current qualifications and also because the situation in Portugal is better: more opportunities to find a job and a working load of 35 instead of the previous 40 hours per week." (interviewee 2). The perception of push and pull actors, as also identified in 2015, altered their satisfaction. The cases that returned to Portugal noted that the overall turn of the situation in the UK, such as Brexit (interviewee 1), and factors as homesickness (interviewee 2) diminished their satisfaction and affected their decision making to return home.

Based on the experience and the events that occurred during their life in the UK, they contemplated the development of satisfaction. They would share with potential migrants and newcomers' perspectives on the satisfaction that stems from the life experience, new opportunities to make new friends, new experiences, and possibilities to improve oneself both personally and professionally. Especially, interviewees mentioned the opportunity to know a new culture and its habits as a source of life satisfaction: "Embrace the country and the culture. It's an amazing ride!" (interviewee 2). Having a group of good friends in the diaspora was important for satisfaction. Interestingly, the dissatisfaction emerged mainly from their homesickness and nostalgia that acted as the major obstacles for staying and were now amplified by uncertainty and changes towards legislation that prevent talent circulation and free migration. Interestingly, the problems

reducing satisfaction and triggering return took place on the country- and individual level, not on the organisational level (Table 4).

#### 4.3 | Post- Brexit satisfaction

The post-Brexit interviews in 2021 illustrate two responses, one where Brexit triggered, among other reasons, the return process and another where the staying nurses found even more opportunities partly caused by Brexit and the need for nurses and partly due to Covid-19. Both responses consider career and life satisfaction very carefully, and here the social relations played a big role. If they were already deeply embedded in their labor diasporas and local professional context, they did not see a reason to be concerned by Brexit. This was further highlighted by their formal settlement status in the UK that gave them privileged staying possibilities in comparison to newcomers. Interestingly, the Brexit process had increased the awareness of their opportunities and career possibilities in different countries, also beyond the EU. All respondents could clearly perceive the market value of their skills. This turned the idea of labor diaspora into a more positive "accomplishment" and empowered them professionally.

### 5 | DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 | Implications for theory

It seems that adequate satisfaction can create a "sticky" diaspora, a group of satisfied diasporans who do not wish to return or leave elsewhere, that is, re-migrate to a third country, even if the primary reason of entry has been work-related and not social ties or such. Naturally, this stickiness could be nurtured by the signals of crisis in the home country as the migrants automatically compare contexts. In addition to the individual-level behaviour and career-building, this phenomenon of diaspora nurses is deeply linked to the formation of a professional labor diaspora community due to its togetherness. Therefore, despite their individual agency in migration, these dynamics are not explainable solely through theories of work satisfaction or self-initiated expatriation but is linked to social and relational gravity (see Karppi, 2006; Al Ariss and Syed, 2011). The nurses formed labor diasporas that were contextual geographically and temporally but shaped by both economic and non-economic features that are worth simultaneously analysing.

The assumption that a labor diaspora is driven by economic gain and benefit<sup>1</sup> (Cohen, 2008) is broadened and complemented with novel insight suggesting that on an individual level, the gain and benefit are reflected through the overall satisfaction lens (consisting of country-, work/organisational- and individual life- satisfaction) (Silva et al., 2013). On the organisational level, stability, good working conditions and respect for professional qualifications were important for satisfaction, not simply higher wages (in line with Leinonen, 2012). Moreover, the satisfaction provided by the country-level and local

**TABLE 4** Summary of the interviews conducted in 2021

Post-Brexit	Perception of Brexit and their satisfaction towards the UK	Satisfaction with the current country of residence and work	Global career and mobility in post-Brexit era	Satisfaction with personal life
Case A	<p>“If I were living in the UK I would be most definitely dissatisfied in which I still am because I do feel for my European colleagues and friends. Now, for me, while living in Portugal it does not influence me in any form. For my professional future it does not affect me at the moment since I do not plan to return to the UK anytime. But choices always change and if one day I would consider going back first I would consider going to another country within the EU without the restrictions that Brexit brings.”</p> <p>Re-pull to Portugal: Being away from family and friends.</p>	<p>“I've returned to Portugal last year like I've answered last year. Since then I have not given a thought about going back. I've always known that I would return to Portugal one day and I feel my goals were achieved in the UK.”</p>	<p>“At this point in my life I do not plan on migrating. At the moment the big consideration is my family and friends. Like I've said before I've reached the goals I've wanted to reach in my almost 5 years in the UK.”</p> <p>“No, I do not wish to continue a global career.”</p>	<p>“Since I returned to Portugal, I am very pleased with the situation. It took me 4 to 5 months to get this new job. However, in the meantime I was able to keep doing some work in the UK: Working there for one or 2 weeks, in an intensive way, while spending in Portugal the rest of the time and looking for a job”</p>
Case B	<p>“I returned to PT when Brexit was announced and after that, it already occurred to me to go back to the UK, considering the lack of motivation of being a nurse in PT. I also felt that due to the lack of recognition of our work and because of the excess of dominance of health leaders and health managers in PT.”</p> <p>“Brexit was the reason that made me return to PT. I thought about the possible consequences of that mainly the new ideology that could bring about - I saw it happen when Brexit campaign was airing in the UK and I fear what could come after.”</p>	<p>“At this, moment of time I have a stable situation in Portugal. If I had to consider a future change right now, it would be for life, in a more definitive way. I am not considering this possibility right now.”</p>	<p>“As I mentioned, for the time being I have a stable career in PT and with good growth perspectives. However, the desire to develop further one's life leads me to think about possible ways to improve constantly. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Germany, Sweden, Norway and even the US appear to me as very appealing.”</p> <p>“I get constantly job offers in the UK. I would say on a weekly basis. They keep on calling me. But no, at the moment, I am not interested</p>	<p>“Yes, overall I am [satisfied]. I just feel, sometimes, that I want to go back to the UK for the reasons I just mentioned. “The most difficult thing is the need to leave everything back: Family, friends and routines.”</p>
Case C	<p>“Not at all [considering return]!!! Even though Brexit brought uncertainty, Portugal is not yet in my near future plans, both professionally and personally. Professionally speaking, I still do not think that the reason that made me leave Portugal has been solved (career progression and salary) and would bring me more anxiety and depression. “</p> <p>“Because I live and work in England for more than 9 years, I have received my settled status. I do not feel that professionally I have</p>	<p>“Yes and no. Covid19 brought us ridiculous challenges, and whilst I did not have face to face contact with covid19 patients, my trust (NHS Blood and Transplant) is involved in the largest research of convalescent plasma for covid19. The challenges were huge, train several new members of staff to open new clinics, increase of hours in most donor centres, new procedures, changes of location, etc. while I feel exhausted and overworked, I do feel we are involved in something massive that I am</p>	<p>“Right now, my thoughts of migration will be likely on a personal level, having a partner, starting a family, things like that. Professionally I am with a permanent contract, I can eventually relocate to anywhere in the country if I wish (and vacancies allowing) ... If I move out of the UK, the likelihood of Portugal being my next stop is still small. But I have learned never to say never...”</p> <p>“I wish to develop my skills and keep them up to date. I do not think London is my last</p>	<p>“I still feel that not much has changed. I acknowledge there was some ‘bullying or similar’ when Brexit was voted but the need for nurses is greater than ever. Covid and the impact it has been having in the UK could easily and understandably make anyone want to move out, however, that had no impact on my decision to remain in the UK.”</p>

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Post-Brexit	Perception of Brexit and their satisfaction towards the UK	Satisfaction with the current country of residence and work	Global career and mobility in post-Brexit era	Satisfaction with personal life
	anything to lose, considering the exodus of nurses in the past 18 months... However, there were moments that it was clear the shortage of specific goods every time a supposed Brexit deadline was near. Miraculously, a deal was agreed, not that I have a slight clue of how good it is, but to be fair, the subject and the population reaction for me was a bit comic (maybe most Europeans felt the same...). So, not really satisfied, but it actually shows that England, like several other countries, has opposite mentalities: If you live in a massive city like London vs life in a rural area.”	proud of. On the other hand, we belong to the NHS but are likely the ones with the least access to covid19 tests, and likely will have to wait a while for the vaccine”	city, but I do not know if it will be outside the UK. I see me moving to Wales or Scotland when I get older, but I do see myself in Australia as well. Considering that all countries in the world (I assume) have a blood donation service, I am sure that I can continue my skills in several countries and give input about the UK experience in the field.”	
Case D	“Not much has changed. I have not considered returning at all. I feel that my career and personal development will happen here in the UK. So, I do not have any plans to go back any time soon.”	“So, for me personally the Brexit did not influence any of my decisions. I got full settle+E4 status because I have been here for 9 years now. So, in terms of professional and personal situation that has not influence any of my decisions of staying or going back.”	“Yeah, I have thought about migrating again at some point, but it will all depend on economical offers, so let us see if there is any kind of managerial role that I could be able to do in a different country. This would probably be in a Middle East. Apart from that I have never considered any other place. Otherwise I will remain in the UK.” “so, if I carry on a global career I would probably go to the Middle East: As for settling the UK is a good option.”	“Yes, I am very satisfied with my current employer I work for the NHS and at the moment I undertake a nonclinical work that was actually this current employer allowed me to due to a shift from a clinical role: From a nurse to a project manager role. So, I am very satisfied with the opportunities they have been giving to me.”

diaspora level circumstances in the host country that included good communication possibilities (in nurses' professional and private lives), satisfying social environment, and other Portuguese colleagues in work, clearly offered reasons to continue diasporic work-life before Brexit. The nurses were transformed from SIEs to diasporans over time; however, the events that occurred affected them to reconcile their initial decisions (Habti & Elo, 2018). The findings indicate diasporic characteristics, such as (1) group-based exit behaviour after studies in Portugal, (2) collective characteristics in behaviour, and (3) emerging of collective labor diaspora and respective social gravity effects (e.g., Ali, Tagi & Krishnan, 1997; Kultalahti et al., 2006). We may conclude that self-initiated expatriates and labor diasporas can represent distinct phases of boundaryless career building (Tung, 2008) and introduce satisfaction as the threshold explaining decision making related to exit and entry behaviour.

Moreover, the socially embedded character of individual diasporans reduces the individualism in decision making and involves “external” forces, that is, family and COO originating forces, that influence the decision making regardless of the situation in the COR and/or the diasporan's personal satisfaction with their work and circumstances. Serious illness, disability and other such negative developments may influence the effect of satisfaction. Such COO-based problems may reduce satisfaction from a distance, for example, when stemming from the family context. The findings illustrated that the decisions to repatriate have collective influence factors that could also be labelled negative COO pull factors.

For theorising, we produced a model that includes the role of satisfaction advancing the dynamics of the deprivation-directing framework (Karppi, 2006). It frames migration decision-making dynamism to further categories: (a) departing from a country of origin; (b) staying and becoming part of the institutionalised labor diaspora; (c) chain

migrating to another host country and (d) repatriating to the country of origin (see Figure 2). In this model, we integrate the explanatory factor of satisfaction and multiple migrations as the post-migratory experience and expectations are recognised as highly significant factors in successful migration (see more in Kultalahti et al., 2006 and Firth et al., 2014). As satisfaction is universal and is felt regardless of the origin or type of migration form as it relates to people's basic needs (cf. Elo, Benjowsky & Nummela, 2015), we propose that:

P1: The overall satisfaction of labor diasporans is the key element regulating their entry and exit behaviour, and thus in regulating the individual-level dynamics of brain circulation.

P2: The satisfaction is influenced by local context and by diasporans, for example, via career information, comparisons of conditions and social embeddedness.

In that line, we theorise with the introduced framework and explain the satisfaction effect on the first exit from the country of origin to the new host country (in Figure 2, see the COO arrow on the left side) and the respective staying, re-migration to a third country and repatriation to the country of origin (in Figure 2, see the respective arrows on the right side). The broadening of the understanding of the multiple directions of flows per se is important as the single-country perspective provides too limited a picture (cf. Elo, Täube & Volovelsky 2019 on multiple migrations).

## 5.2 | Implications for practitioners

Organisations dealing with members of a labor diaspora and their employers need to understand the holistic lifecycle of the diasporans and attempt to increase flexibility in family and COO issues that may develop into critical events in individuals' lives (see also Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011). Some organisations already have prepared solutions that provide a collective-style labor diaspora allowing social ties to be "imported" with the employees, and there are attempts to appropriately match the professional level of expertise with the tasks and the professional development plans. Transnational HR management, social tie management and information sharing supplement the discussion on expatriate ties and their usage (Harvey, 2008). However, the managerial focus needs to be broader and should include the maintenance of family and social ties in the COO, not just in the host environment, for example, through vacation. The greatest concern of these labor diasporans was the wellbeing of their family members (i.e., health, need for assistance) who stay in the COO despite the fact that the classic remittances are no longer an instrument related to this concern. Still, this threat is particularly vivid if the crisis-hit society is unable to cover the needs of family members, such as elderly parents back home. The findings illustrated that although good conditions and wages were a significant stimulus for COO exit, similar stimuli might be more limited in their effect concerning the re-entry or repatriation because then the satisfaction is reflected from a more holistic point of view (Cassarino, 2014). The reduced mobility (Brexit & Covid-19) made individual decision-making more fundamental and highlighted

the maturity stage element in their migrations (Figure 1), still, the idea of a global career and mobility -although reduced- was not excluded as they perceived their value more clearly (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). The long-term impact of Covid-19 on health sector mobility may change structures, behaviours and overall competition on labor.

## 5.3 | Policy-making implications

Migration processes provide continuous stimuli for countries to stay competitive and attractive. The following two arenas of policy-making are involved in this study: COO and COR that could enable a triple-win scenario (Tung, 2008; McLoughlin et al., 2011). On the country level, a country suffering from brain drain is expected to provide easy access for its foreign-based diasporans who wish to repatriate, including incentives for repatriation. If families are established in diaspora, they need special policy instruments to ensure they do not encounter barriers or impediments when returning as various family systems differ, there are yet issues with home country preparedness in receiving returnees (Cassarino, 2014). In particular, social security, pension, taxation, and other systems influencing the lifecycle and professional career are often complicated and not clear in their implementation or interpretation. This creates uncertainty and planning difficulties. Moreover, it is evident in expatriate research that the more expatriates and diasporans settle down and have families, the more the family members (often spouses) also need employment opportunities; the children's educational services and future prospects can also present conflicts (see for example, Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011). We conclude that this family embeddedness and its complexity is often not reflected in receiving country institutions and policies, thus creating individual and family problems inhibiting both entry and returning (e.g., Cassarino, 2014). Effective media communication regarding incentives and policies is required to influence these flows (cf. Hepp et al., 2011).

## 6 | CONCLUSIONS

While this study is limited to selected in-depth cases and thus refrains from making larger generalisations, it is still among the first studies to address the methodologically complicated and challenging role of satisfaction on the labor diaspora decision making that acknowledges the individual worker embedded both in-home and host country formations. We find that both work context and social/diaspora embeddedness influence the stages in Karppi (2006) model (Figure 1) and explain the entry-exit decisions, especially the more mature phases become more sticky and decisions have a more permanent or long-term nature. We argue that based on these influence factors and mechanisms shaped by both the pull and push factors, the role of satisfaction is a central explanans for labor migration, for the primary and secondary migration and beyond. Thus, satisfaction requires further and deeper understanding to capture better such threshold situations

like Brexit. Brexit did create a reflection process on the individual staying and leaving decision-making, it has also inserted the seed of more global career in a third country as the nurses have perceived that their skills are needed and welcomed in many countries. Interestingly, their thoughts on further global careers indicated culturally distant countries with competitive opportunities, such as Norway or Saudi Arabia (see Figure 2.). The study shows that human stickiness and global talent retention in the host country context relates to appreciation at work, their professional and labor diaspora embeddedness (decisive and directive stages), and to the broader than work satisfaction, namely life satisfaction (cf. Figure 1.). Hence, we propose that future research avenues address such sectoral (medical/health care) and threshold settings (Brexit) as instrumental developments.

We argue for an updated and more holistic understanding of these contemporary labor diasporas. First, the definitions are often static while the lives of labor migrants may turn into diasporans or returnees, that is, they evolve over time, and the mobility-embeddedness interplay needs more attention. Second, theorising needs to conceptualise better the pull and push and re-pull and re-push forces as they do not originate solely from individual countries but also depend on the individuals' comparative perspectives and have different levels of analysis. Third, the dynamics of a labor diaspora are also linked to various levels (i.e., micro/meso/macro), and each of these levels acts independently of each other while being intertwined for the decision-making (Silva et al. 2013). In particular, the micro-level family issues matter greatly, even if they do not stem from the actual work context. Fourth, methodological issues related to data collection and analysis require additional discussion. Since satisfaction is a concept that is perceived and reflected individually and also constructed in the socio-cultural and temporal setting, it is highly important to collect data qualitatively with open-ended questions based on a more emic-style approach to ensure that the responses are not limited in scope or pre-directed. There are considerations limiting the reliability when unsatisfied labor migrants facing many problems are interviewed because success stories are more acceptable and even expected, while problems and returns may be socially less acceptable or considered a failure. Thus, it is vital to ensure a non-discriminating atmosphere and to secure high standards of research ethics.

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Cohen (2008) also discussed historical-political formations of labor diasporas where the gain was not necessarily individual but tied to a larger setting.

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## APPENDIX

## Outline of questions asked during the interviews

**Before Brexit (interviews conducted in 2015).**

What motivated you to leave the country of origin?

Are you satisfied with the country of residence (i.e., infrastructure, cost of living, socio-economic factors)?

Are you satisfied with the country of residence organisation (i.e., training, matching between their need and competencies, salaries, fringe benefits, organisation providing the conditions to practice that did not exist back home, etc.)?

How is your overall personal satisfaction (i.e., the experience of living, language improvement, international experience, creation of a new circle of friends, engagement in new relationships, etc.)?

Do you have any plans to return to your country of origin?

Do you have any other plans to keep working abroad, after this experience, before returning to the country of origin?

Do you have any further comments regarding the experience of living abroad and messages for newcomers?

**Post – Brexit Votum (interviews conducted in 2019).**

Could you describe your perception from this point of view regarding the factors that motivated you to come to the country of residence?

Are you satisfied with your current employer?

How did the recent events in the country of residence (such as Brexit) affect the overall perception regarding your future?

Could you describe your satisfaction with the country of residence at this moment?

Could you describe your satisfaction with personal life and overall fit with the culture in the country of residence?

Since the last time we spoke (in 2015), have you considered going back to the country of origin? Why?

Could you identify certain positive factors of migration from the current point of view, taking into consideration the past period (since your arrival to the country of residence?)

Could you identify certain negative factors of migration from the current point of view, taking into consideration the past period (since your arrival to the country of residence?)

Do you have any messages for the newcomers?

**Post – Brexit (interviews conducted in 2021).**

Since the last time we spoke (in 2019), have you considered returning to the country of origin, or did you actually return? Why?

Are you satisfied with your current employer?

Are you dissatisfied or satisfied with the way Brexit is influencing you? Explain what it makes you feel and think.

How did the recent events in the (current or past – as some returned) country of residence (such as the Brexit deal) affect your overall perception regarding your professional future?

Could you share your thoughts regarding possible future migration? Do you think you will migrate again at some point? Explain what makes you consider staying in one place or migrating again; what is really important for you to decide? What are your thoughts regarding your current and future mobility? Do the Brexit deal outcome, and the related

discussions influence your profession, and your life location somehow (e.g., re-frame your opportunity base) or are this all less relevant after all?

Could you tell us more about your Brexit experience and job opportunities in the UK? How did you feel/change your long-term plans and aspirations?

Do you wish to continue a Global Career, that is, develop your professional talent/skills and work abroad/in other countries? If yes, where would you like to continue your global career?

If you returned to Portugal to work, are you looking for opportunities to return to the UK for short term assignments given the

COVID pandemic and further necessity for professionals? Or also for a long-term career?

Are there fewer or more opportunities for a career for you in the UK after Brexit? What do you think?

Could you identify certain positive factors of migration from your current point of view, considering the past period?

Could you identify certain negative factors of migration from your current point of view, considering the past period?

Do you have any message for the newcomers in the UK or for those who consider migrating now to the UK for work?