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**Contextual reasons for emigrants' electoral participation in home country
elections: the Portuguese case**

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Abstract

Although emigrants represent an increasing share of the electoral population in many democracies not much is known about their participation in home country elections. Aiming at contributing to fulfil this gap, this article longitudinally and exploratory analyses the contextual factors of Portuguese emigrants' participation in national elections (1976-2015), a country with one of the highest emigration rates of EU today. First, it presents a longitudinal analysis of the electoral participation of Portuguese emigrants, and then analyses the conditions underlying levels of participation. By using aggregate data covering the main fifteen destination countries, this study compares institutional, socio-economic and political contextual factors for voting. Findings indicate that the lack of political participation of emigrants is first demonstrated by the very low registration rates, although it varies according to the country, and that voting methods and socio-economic factors in the destination country are the most relevant to explain voting in home country elections.

Keywords: external vote, migrants, electoral participation, transnationalism, Portugal.

Word count: 8591 words (including: acknowledgements, endnotes, tables and figures).

Introduction

The analysis of the electoral participation in home country elections of citizens living abroad remains a relatively understudied phenomenon. The literature is dominated by theoretical-conceptual and juridical-normative works, often based on case studies of particular countries (eg. Archer 1991; Levitt and Dehesa 2003; Barry 2006; Bauböck 2007; Lafleur and Martiniello 2009; Caramani and Strijbis 2012; Hartmann 2015). Empirical research has focused mainly on the voting behaviour of emigrants in host country elections (see eg. Berger et al. 2004; Fidrmuc and Doyle 2004; Bevelander and Pendakur 2009). The relationship between emigrants and their countries of origin has been under-valued, and what work exists on this topic tends to lack extensive empirical grounding (cf. Bauböck 2007, 2396-2397; and as an example, Lafleur and Chelius 2011), and/or tends to be merely descriptive (e.g. Fierro 2002).

Among the scarce research that has been developed, some works give important contributions, as for example: Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004) on the Czech and Polish cases; Lafleur and Chelius (2011) on the Mexican case; Lafleur (2013) on the Mexican and Italian cases; and Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen (2015) that develop a comparative analysis among four European countries. The first study uses an explicative model at an aggregate level that mainly focuses on the level of democracy in the host countries as the core explaining variable, but disregards the institutional characteristics of the the so-called “external vote” (see eg. Bauböck 2007, 2398-2399). The second is centered on political and institutional independent variables using a qualitative approach on the 2006 Mexican presidential election. The third study is supported in survey data from four host countries in order to explain Bolivian emigrants’ vote in the 2009 presidential election, focusing in sociodemographic characteristics and in variables related to the migration experience. Finally, Ciornei and

Østergaard-Nielsen research compares French, Italians, Romanians and Croats' external vote reporting to a single election in each case, and focusing in institutional and political variables as explaining factors, not taking into account the socio-economic context. In all these case studies it is not possible to comparatively assess the importance of the main independent variables to explain the vote, as usually done in national electoral research.

Regarding the Portuguese case, there are few studies on emigrants and their relationship with home country politics, especially about their electoral participation, and those that exist are essentially descriptive and outdated (Malheiros and Boavida 2003; Lobo 2007).

The reason for such a limited number of studies on explaining emigrants' voting behavior seems to be related to the motivations and challenges that such a research encompasses. Home country political parties and leaders tend to attach little importance to the electoral participation of emigrants. In Portugal, this issue is rarely publicly debated and is practically absent from the political programmes and electoral platforms of the main political parties. The lack of interest of parties and political leaders is apparently related to the usually limited impact that the external vote has on election results. For example, in the highly disputed Mexican presidential elections in 2006 that took place after the introduction of external voting, less than 1% of the Mexican expatriate electors cast a ballot. In general, "in the growing number of countries that do enfranchise non-resident citizens, turnout among external voters has been consistently lower than among domestic ones" (Hutcheson and Arrighi 2015, 884, 886). Similarly, in the Portuguese case the external turnout was 12% in the 2015 parliamentary election, representing less than an half of the in-country turnout.

The weak political-electoral relevance, associated with difficulty of access to empirical data, helps to explain why so little research has been done on the external vote (the exceptions are Chelius 2003; Fidrmuc and Doyle 2004; IDEA 2007; Collyer and Vathi 2007; Lafleur and Chelius 2011; Lafleur 2013; Arrighi et al. 2013; Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2015). However, the global spread of democracy, heightened expectations regarding the performance of democratic institutions, and increasing migration flows are contributing to increase interest in the political role played by emigrant populations. The impact of the Eurozone crisis on the re-emergence of outflows contributed in the last years for a renewed interest in European and Portuguese emigration. Indeed, there is growing recognition of the political importance of nationals residing abroad, as highlighted by policies adopted in various different countries (Levitt and Dehesa 2003; Hutcherson and Arrighi 2015; Hartmann 2015).

If we look at the weight of the Portuguese diaspora in terms of individual participation in home country elections, we see that emigrants account for approximately one third of the electoral population residing in Portuguese territory, and that Portugal is today among the EU countries with the largest emigration rate (Pires et al. 2014). By the end of the 2000s, Portuguese emigration increased significantly, led by important pull factors such as unemployment, underemployment, deterioration of working conditions, low wages, reduction in welfare benefits and the lack of positive prospects in the home country. According to OECD data, Portuguese emigration increased 17% in a decade (DIOC Census data, 2001/2011), and the Portuguese Emigration Observatory indicates that there are currently about 2,3 million living abroad. Considering their offspring as well, the number stands over 5 million.

Furthermore the incentives for the external vote are relatively important since Portugal is one of the few countries in the world that allow emigrants to directly elect

members of parliament for the emigration constituencies (cf. Fierro et al. 2007, 28-29). Among these countries, five are European: France, Croatia, Italy, Romania and Portugal. In France there has been no direct election of representatives by French emigrants but rather by selection of the 150 members of the *Conseil Supérieur des Français de l'Étranger*, elected by French emigrants. Only in the 2012 parliamentary elections the French emigrants elected MPs representing recently created constituencies for the expatriates. In Croatia, the number of representatives elected by the Croatian diaspora depends on the percentage of national vote (it results from the division of the national votes by the external votes). Regarding Italy, the effect of the 2003 legislation broadening the voting rights of Italian expatriates was particularly felt in the 2006 parliamentary elections. For the first time (18) representatives elected by the expatriates took seat in the Italian parliament (Tarli Barbieri 2007; Battiston and Mascitelli 2008; Mascitelli and Battiston 2009, 513). Romania also reserves a number of seats in parliament for the representation of external voters.

In Portugal external vote was recognized since the establishment of democracy in 1974 and emigrants voted for the first time in 1976. Since then the external vote accounts for the election of four of the total 230 deputies who are elected to the Assembly of the Republic: two for the “European constituency” (corresponding to the European countries); and two for the “extra-European constituency” (the remaining countries). Their impact on electoral results invariable has been of little significance; and there are only occasional international references to their relevance (as in the case of the Italian legislative elections of 2006, the Cape Verdean presidential elections in the same year, and the Romanian presidential elections of 2009, the results of which were only known after the emigrant vote had been counted).¹

Portugal holds three different types of national level elections: legislative

elections, to determine the composition of the executive; presidential elections that elect the head of the state (which enjoys specific powers, such as the ability to dissolve the parliament or to veto parliamentary bills); and European parliamentary elections. In the present research we take into account these three kinds of national level elections and examine them since the external vote is applied, and for which data is available. The study covers the period between the first elections (in 1976) following the Portuguese transition to democracy,² and the most recent legislative elections in 2015, and encompasses the main fifteen destination countries of Portuguese citizens. To assess the electoral participation of emigrants we develop a quantitative data analysis based on a three dimension model (on the model see: Fidrmuc and Doyle's 2004, Geys' 2006; Lafleur 2013), which encompasses institutional, socio-economic and political contextual factors for each national election. Although being limited by the number of effective voters, and consequently the conclusions to be reached are predominantly exploratory, this approach has never been used in a comprehensive way to understand the contextual constraints to emigrants' electoral participation.

The article begins with a systematisation of the main contributions to this topic in the literature. It then reports the methodological issues and data sources. Finally it presents the descriptive and longitudinal analysis of the electoral participation of Portuguese emigrants in home country elections, and discusses the explanatory model for electoral participation among these voters.

Emigrant Electoral Participation: Contextual Factors

In the literature, the main determinants of electoral participation can be generally divided into two groups: individual and aggregate level factors. The classic studies of electoral participation are based primarily on the first set of factors, focusing on

variables such as the socio-economic status or the social environment of voters (see e.g. Lipset 1960; Blais 2007; Karp and Banducci 2007). Other individual level indicators on social context or based on rational choice theory are also important in the explanation of the external vote, by reference to factors such as the length of stay in the host country (which points to greater or lesser levels of integration), and geographical areas of insertion (dispersion versus concentration of emigrant populations). Although these factors may be crucial, the unavailability of individual empirical data about the emigrant population in the Portuguese case makes it impossible to engage in analysis at this level.

Besides individual level factors, migrants' political practices seem to be shaped by the context and institutions of the origin country and as well of the host country, and by global politics, such as human rights and the nature of the regime (Jones-Correa 1998; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2015). This makes the aggregate approach particularly appropriate to study emigrant's political behaviour. Due to limits to individual data access, our analysis explores the influence of institutions and contextual characteristics in explaining the external vote. We mainly concentrate on aggregate level variables of the destination countries which is a less frequently adopted approach, but potentially important where emigrants are concerned (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 770-771; Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2015).

The literature outlines three key dimensions among the aggregate variables that explain electoral participation: institutional, socio-economic and political (see, for instance, Geys (2006), Cancela and Geys (2016), and Blais (2010) on voting in general; and Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004) and Lafleur (2013) on the external vote). These three dimensions serve as our theoretical foundation, as in other similar studies (Lafleur and Chelius 2011, 116-117).

Generally speaking, the institutional dimension includes the characteristics of the political system (the electoral, government and party systems), electoral rules and administrative procedures. For the authors adopting an institutionalist focus, the assumption that “institutions matter” (Jackman 1987; Lane and Ersson 2000; Przeworski 2009) means that any alterations at the institutional level can bring about a change in voting behaviour. This has been demonstrated, for instance, in a comparative study on Latin American countries (Pérez-Liñan 2001), or in research on transnational political engagement of migrants and refugees (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). However, neither studies on political participation have focused on the broad set of institutional variables (usually focusing on electoral rules), nor the impact of this set of factors has been considered together in the comparative analysis of external vote.

The direct impact of institutional factors on the propensity of individuals to vote is related to their *voting facilities* in particular. Prior comparative longitudinal research on variations in electoral participation has found that voting facilities have a significant impact on levels of participation (Perea 2003; Bloemraad 2009; Przeworski 2009). In the case of external voting, there are institutional specificities at play, especially administrative rules and voting logistics when voting from abroad, which must be taken into account when trying to explain the level of participation of emigrants (Bauböck 2007, 2403; Fierro et al. 2007, 32-33; Lafleur and Chelius 2011, 111-116).

One of the most important factors to consider is the type of voting. While the in-person vote is considered to have a higher individual cost, other modalities (such as voting by post, by proxy, or through the internet) seem to favour higher levels of participation. Other factors relate directly to the facilitation of voting for emigrants, such as: the number of voting booths available and their geographical location; access to

information about electoral procedures; or logistical arrangements to register voters (Bauböck 2007, 2403-2407).

Although these indicators appear to be important in studying the external vote, there is no information available that would allow us to assess their significance. At the institutional level, therefore, our analysis focuses on two fundamental variables: the type of election and voting methods³. According to Downs' rational choice approach, external voters are expected to be more mobilised to vote when more important elections are at stake and when the costs of participating are lower (Downs 1957); that is the case of first order elections (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010), when compared to second order and when postal vote is available. Our first hypothesis is therefore that first order elections (legislative, as compared with European or presidential elections, see Magalhães 2007, 265 for the Portuguese case) and the availability of the postal vote account for higher levels of electoral participation among Portuguese emigrants (H1).

As regards the second, socio-economic dimension, the variability of conditions that emigrants experience in their host countries over time is very broad, and it is assumed that these conditions shape their political attitudes and, consequently, their electoral participation (Putnam 2000; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Fidrmuc and Doyle 2004, 20; on minorities see Bevelander and Pendakur, 2009), as the socio-economic status model assumes at the micro-level (Powell 1982; Topf 1995; Norris 2002). It is expected that, through their vote, emigrants should transfer to the electoral arena their sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the economic and social performance of the country they live in.

A number of variables are relevant at the socio-economic level, first among them the specifically economic characteristics of the host country, such as the rate of GDP growth and unemployment (Fidrmuc and Doyle 2004), and the flow of emigrant

remittances (Collyer and Vathi 2007). The socio-economic factors also include social welfare benefits received in the host country, and the Human Development Index (HDI). This set of indicators is expected to reflect social and economically the environment in which emigrants live their daily life and, for that reason, likely influences their political practices. In the case of electoral participation, the expectation is that the better the social and economic context, the higher the external turnout. We also add an indicator of social integration, taking into account the rate of trade unionisation in the host country, being the expectation that higher levels of unionisation in the destination country increases the probability of emigrants to vote in home country elections, as a reflex of a context of likely higher political mobilisation. Finally, the electoral constituency and the year of the election are also considered, in order to include geographical and chronological elements.

Our second hypothesis claims that the greater the level of social and economic development, and unionisation, of the host country, the greater the tendency for emigrant voters to participate in elections (H2).

Finally, the intensity of participation may be related to factors of a political nature, such as the number of competing parties, the level of political polarisation, or the competitiveness of the election. These may significantly influence an individual's involvement in electoral acts, with the most competitive elections attracting more voters to the polls (Lijphart 1999; Pérez-Liñan 2001; Franklin 2004; Geys 2006, 646, 649-648). When there is only one case study under consideration, aside from the competitiveness of elections, the other factors tend to be constant, so we do not take them into account here.

The existence of a capital of discontentment can also lead to political disaffection, and concomitantly to demobilisation (Lijphart 1999; the assumption that

lower levels of trust in institutions correlate with greater abstention among minorities has already been demonstrated by Berger et al. 2004). Conversely, a tradition of civil liberties and of participation and civic engagement can mobilise emigrants politically (Fidrmuc and Doyle 2004). The expectation is that the existence of incentives for the political mobilisation of citizens generates a higher level of electoral participation among emigrants (in accordance with Przeworski's (2009) recognition of the historical importance of political incentives)⁴, based on the assumption of an "assimilation effect" of the political culture of the host country, which may lead individuals to vote or to abstain from home country elections.⁵

Our third hypothesis states therefore that the higher the level of democracy (as measured by Polity IV) and the greater the indices of electoral participation in the host country the higher the level of electoral participation of emigrants in home country elections. Additionally, when the competitiveness of national elections is higher, this may also encourage higher levels of participation, since competitiveness increases voters' perception of the utility of voting (Downs 1957) (H3) (see Table 3 below for the operationalisation).

Methodological Issues and Data Sources

The research on external vote encounters various methodological difficulties, such as: the general absence of disaggregated data on the characteristics of the voters under study and the underlying limitations to individual analysis, as already noted above, and the constraints resulting from the non-mandatory nature of emigrant voter registration.

The legal requirements for voter registration are seen as a key to explaining levels of electoral participation, since this is the first hurdle. When registration is not automatic, as is the case of the Portuguese external vote (and of most European

countries, see Arrighi et al. 2013, 30-31), the act of registering on the electoral roll suggests that an individual has attained a basic level of political commitment. The relationship between voluntary registration and voting has already been established (Lijphart 1997; Gimpel et al. 2007, 365-367), although it is not fully consensual. Norris (2004) has demonstrated that registration procedures seem to have little impact on lowering levels of abstention.⁶

Figure 1 and 2 ABOUT HERE

The low level of Portuguese emigrants' registration⁷ is the most important methodological constraint in the study of the external vote: the fact that the proportion of voters results from the ratio between the number of voters and the number of emigrants who have registered to vote. This ratio is rather low regarding the destination countries under study (see also Figure 1) although the number of registered emigrants have been significantly increased in the 2000's, which might be explained by two main factors: first, the emergence of a new cycle of Portuguese emigration, with a greater diversification of both individual profiles and destination countries; second, the informatization of the consular network (see Figure 2).⁸ For this reason, that ratio cannot measure the actual electoral participation of the emigrant population, but only a part of it: namely, the proportion of those who voted among those who registered to vote. This is a basic reason why results must be interpreted cautiously, and it must be admitted from the outset that the abstention rates of the emigrant population are probably substantially underestimated.

Apart from the typical constraints that emerge as a result of the discrepancy between actual and official electoral participation, which come about because the

electoral roll is not updated regularly (Geys 2006, 638-639), another problem has its origin in the administrative and logistical complexity of the act of voting. In the Portuguese case, the entity in charge of the electoral process is the Ministry of Interior Administration, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also plays a role through its diplomatic and consular network. In practise, each consulate manages the registration process more or less efficiently, depending on its resources. Consequently, problems may arise when it comes to validating the data on electoral participation of citizens residing abroad, particularly when one is comparing the situation of different host countries.

To obtain a good representation of the emigrant population we selected a sample of the fifteen countries with the highest number of Portuguese citizens living there, either registered or not (see Figure 1). Taken together, the countries under study represent more than 90% of the external vote in Portuguese election. We cover the period from 1976 to 2015 in our descriptive analysis of the levels and evolution of the external vote, which is one of the largest timespans for this kind of analysis, since Portugal is among the countries that first admitted the external vote in the world⁹. The analysis compares the two electoral constituencies abroad – in and outside Europe. To carry on the analysis an original dataset was conceived, being the total sample size 315 cases across fifteen destination countries. Although this sample size is still rather small, it covers all the elections in the Portuguese democratic period, corresponding to a total of 21 elections over almost 40 years, which allows reaching original insights on the Portuguese emigrants' voting participation.

As regards our explanatory model, due to the nested structure of the data we undertake a linear regression mixed-model analysis (Heck et al. 2012) to compare the three contextual dimensions (institutional, socio-economic and political) of the electoral

participation of Portuguese emigrants over time, from 1983¹⁰ until the last national elections in 2015. This approach is adopted at the aggregate level for the fifteen countries in the sample, and for each kind of electoral contest, so as to include first order (legislative) and second order (presidential and European) elections, covering a total of 21 electoral contests.

In the next section, we offer a descriptive analysis of the evolution of emigrant electoral participation since 1976, after which we look at the explanatory model covering their electoral participation.

Electoral Participation of Portuguese Registered Voters Living Abroad, 1976-2015

The political mobilisation of emigrants contributes to attaining the goal of political equality in democratic regimes, of allowing all citizens to participate in the election of their representative as equals. Thus, the first issue to analyse is the differences between the level of electoral participation of emigrants (registered to vote) and of citizens residing in the national territory.

The right to vote from abroad was initially granted for legislative elections (through the postal vote), and it was only later, with the accession of Portugal to the European Community, that this right was extended to include the elections to the European Parliament (in 1987, through a postal vote until 2004, and thereafter by in-person voting), and later to presidential elections and referenda (in 1997, with in-person voting). We chose to focus on legislative elections in this section because they are first order elections for which levels of participation are therefore higher.

Figure 3 ABOUT HERE

The data in Figure 3 show that, with the exception of the 1976 elections in which the participation of registered citizens residing abroad was greater than of those living in Portugal, the level of abstention within emigrant constituencies is invariably much higher than for those living in the national territory. Although the rate of participation from abroad follows the same pattern as domestic participation, its decline happened a lot sooner and was more marked than the fall in national level participation, particularly up until 1987. In the following elections, in 1991, contrary to what one observes for the national territory, the external vote rose slightly, and the rate of decline decelerated thereafter.

There is also a tendency for emigrants living in non-European countries to abstain in greater numbers than those residing in European states. For trans-Atlantic emigrants it is harder to maintain ties and contacts with the community of origin given the geographical distances and the costs associated with keeping up the connection with Portugal. The expectation of returning home in the future has been cited as an explanation for the greater levels of electoral participation of emigrants living in Europe as compared to those living elsewhere (Archer 1991). Moreover, it is particularly difficult for political actors to inform voters who reside in the more distant countries about their political orientations and to mobilise them to participate in elections. Further, the emigrant communities in the European countries tend to include more temporary emigrants, so that the stimulus to remain involved in the political life of the country of origin is greater.

Table 1 ABOUT HERE

If one observes the average levels of participation of registered emigrants in legislative elections (shown in Table 1), we notice a clear declining trend over time. Turnout rate in overseas constituencies is not only substantially lower than in the national territory, but it has also declined faster, especially in extra-European countries. The countries that present the most significant variation in terms of absolute levels of participation are Brazil, Canada and the United States. Yet there are interesting differences between countries that deserve to be explored. For example, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom and Switzerland display relatively higher levels of participation. Moreover, there is no deterministic trend towards declining turnout, as the evidence from China or South Africa shows. Finally, it is also worth noting that there is variation even within countries. In other words, participation scores between one election and another vary, thus making indispensable to shed more light on the causes of this phenomena at the macro level.

As expected, the data for second order elections (not shown here) – which in general do not mobilise the electorate as much – tend to be more negative than those for legislative elections. The evolution of the electoral participation of emigrants since the external vote was allowed in European elections (1987 onwards) mirrored the national tendency of decline up until the last European elections in 2009, reaching in that year levels close to zero. A similar trend occurs regarding the presidential elections of 2001, 2006 and 2011 (for which the external vote was allowed), in which the participation of registered emigrants was around 10%.

In effect, the electoral participation of Portuguese registered emigrants has undergone a gradual decline since the establishment of the external vote in 1976, which has been more accentuated than the decline at the national level. The lack of interest in Portuguese political life is particularly marked for the extra-European constituency,

which includes 75% of all Portuguese emigrants and their descendants but has a level of registered voters that is the same as that for the European constituency as well as a higher rate of abstention.

Electoral Participation of Portuguese Registered Emigrants

The model we developed to explore the contextual factors behind the Portuguese external vote assumes the importance of the three abovementioned analytical dimensions for each national election between 1983 and 2015 (including legislative, presidential and European elections).

Table 2 shows the operationalisation of and sources for the variables included in the model; and Table 3 displays the results thereof. The dependent variable is the rate of electoral participation, determined by the percentage of registered emigrant voters who actually voted.

Table 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 ABOUT HERE

Three main conclusions can be derived from the model. First, the institutional factors that were considered – namely, type of election (legislative versus other types) and voting modalities (postal versus in-person), particularly the latter – are among those that contribute most to explain Portuguese expatriates electoral participation. These results confirm previous comparative studies (on national elections) that pointed out the importance of postal voting for increasing electoral turnout (Banducci and Karp 2000). The impact of the early 2000's Italian legislation guaranteeing Italian voters overseas the right to postal voting also provides overwhelming evidence of its importance

(Battiston and Mascitelli 2008). The significance and robustness of both variables remain even after introducing all the blocs to the model, offering substantial support for H1.

It should be noted that although currently the postal vote can only be exercised for legislative elections, this voting modality is not exclusive to this type of election. The postal vote was used in the first European elections in 1987, until the electoral contest of 2004. If one considers the above analysis of electoral participation, there was in fact a marked fall in electoral participation after the in-person vote was instituted by the European Parliament, which reinforces the importance of postal voting method as encouraging electoral participation.

The second conclusion is that the social and economic context of the host country contributes significantly to explain the electoral participation of emigrants. The theoretical expectation is that socio-economic conditions and unionisation in the host country will affect the mobilisation of emigrant voters. In the second bloc of the model, the host country rate of unemployment, social welfare benefits, HDI and the rate of unionisation support this supposition. We attempted to introduce a control variable in this bloc, by including remittances, which reflect the economic conditions of emigrants by reference to their capacity to generate savings and to send them to Portugal as a result of the economic conditions offered by the host country. The data show that this variable can only be considered by lowering the bar in terms of what is considered statistically significant, acting however in the opposite direction to what we expected: an increased flow of remittances is associated with lower levels of electoral participation. Another study at the individual level by Marcelli and Cornelius (2005) had reached a similar conclusion.

Thus, for the socio-economic dimension, apart from the rate of unemployment and social welfare benefits, both the other more socially-oriented variables remain statistically significant after the introduction of the third bloc. In general terms, the results support H2: the external vote seems to be related with the social and economic development of the country in which emigrants live. Emigrants living in countries with better social, economic and human living conditions (and higher unionisation) tend to participate more in home country elections. That may be in part explained by the transference to the national level, via the vote, of feelings of satisfaction with the economic and social performance of the country they live in.

The electoral constituency and the year of the election (if we lower a bit the requirement for statistical significance) reinforce the above analysis: the tendency for emigrants to participate in elections has declined over time, and emigrants living in Europe tend to participate much more in elections than those living outside it. We have already explored the reasons for these results, although other causes should be considered when explaining the accentuated increase in abstention among this voting population, particularly at the micro-level.

As regards the third conclusion, which touches on political conditions in the host country, the theoretical expectation is that when host countries have higher levels of democracy and electoral participation, this would encourage emigrants to vote in greater numbers. This is only the case for the level of democracy: this variable correlates significantly with higher levels of emigrant electoral participation in home country elections (similarly to what has been found for French external vote; see Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2015, 14-15). Note, however, that this result is not completely independent of the fact that emigrants' turnout is higher among European countries, which are high ranking consolidated democracies (as measured by Policy IV) while

some non-European countries in our sample are non or low ranking democracies (such as China, Angola, or Venezuela). Finally, against expectations, emigrants do not tend to vote in greater numbers when national elections are more competitive. The competitiveness of national election has been demonstrated to be an inconstant factor in explaining expatriates turnout (Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen 2015, 13-15). Thus, the decision to vote appears to be associated with aggregate level political causes pertaining more to the host country level of democracy, than to the national party-political arena. In light of the conclusions, H3 is therefore partially supported.

Conclusion

Mobility across the world has been increasing over the last century. As elections are generally held in a territorial basis, mobility of people raises obstacles to the fully accomplishment of the democratic principle of political equality. The expansion of the external vote has come to cover such a democratic demand. For instance, in the European Union, all states have external voting rights, for at least some of their citizens living abroad at some level, mostly in national legislative elections (Arrighi et al. 2013, 21-26). However, the levels of political participation among emigrants are extremely low, and the general tendency seems to be of an accentuation of such low participation. Although constituting in many cases large extra-territorial electorates politically mobilisable, in practical terms their electoral expression is mostly unnoticed. For these reasons, this research was driven by a main general research question: what are the reasons for such low levels of electoral mobilisation among emigrants?

We answer this research question by looking at the contextual factors (institutional, socio-economic and political) that may potentiate the external vote among Portuguese emigrants, mostly in the settlement country. We covered a broad array of

national elections (21) between 1976 and 2015, and examine electoral results in the fifteen countries with the highest number of Portuguese emigrants. Although being limited in its conclusions due to the low portion of those living abroad who register to vote, our research makes a contribution to a better understanding of the external vote through an exploratory aggregate level analysis.

The descriptive analysis shows that the tendency towards abstention among Portuguese emigrants increased faster and more markedly than at the national level. This has been particularly notable over the last two decades among Portuguese emigrants living outside Europe (especially in Brazil). The level of participation is clearly lower for second-order elections, being exceptionally low in European elections. If we consider the assumption that the democratic societies should be inclusive at all levels, at the least this alienation of the Portuguese living outside the country limits that endeavour.

In order to explore the contextual factors behind emigrant abstention, we looked at a set of variables covering three dimensions: institutional, socio-economic and political. The results allow one to suggest that these dimensions have different levels of relevance and that within each, some variables are particularly relevant. In comparative terms, the institutional factors seem to have the greatest impact on electoral participation. Within this category, the voting method (the postal vote) is that which best explains the external vote. This finding reinforces government's responsibilities in such negative trends in emigrants' electoral participation: the harder it is to cast the vote, the fewer emigrants are willing to "pay the price".

The social and economic characteristics of the host country have also a significant impact on voting in home country elections. The unemployment rate and the HDI of, and social welfare benefits received in, the host country were particularly

relevant, which suggests that emigrants living in the countries with better living conditions are more easily mobilised to vote. The level of unionisation in the destination country has as well consistently shown that it increases the tendency of emigrants to vote in home country elections, as a possible consequence of a context of high politisation and subsequent relevant political mobilisation. Finally, as regards the political dimension, only the level of democracy correlates significantly with higher levels of emigrant electoral participation in home country elections.

When one moves from the individual to the aggregate level, it is necessary to interpret cautiously the impact of individual variables on global levels of participation registered for any given country (Franklin 2004), especially since social changes normally manifest themselves over the medium to long term, so that the global impact is limited in terms of the variation in participation. These transformations tend to be even slower in the case of migrant populations because the social rootedness of the latter tends to be lower; and it varies according to the time emigrants have lived in the host countries, and depending on whether there is an individual plan to return to the home country or not (Portes 1995). For these reasons, our findings are particularly important, as they suggest that even in circumstances of lower social rootedness, the social and economic context of the country where emigrants are living is important to explain their political participation.

Because there is so little work on the external vote from the perspective adopted in this article it is very difficult to comparatively assess the results. Nonetheless, this study provides some important clues about how to develop of this area of study, and the replication of this sort of analysis for other cases is essential to consolidate results.

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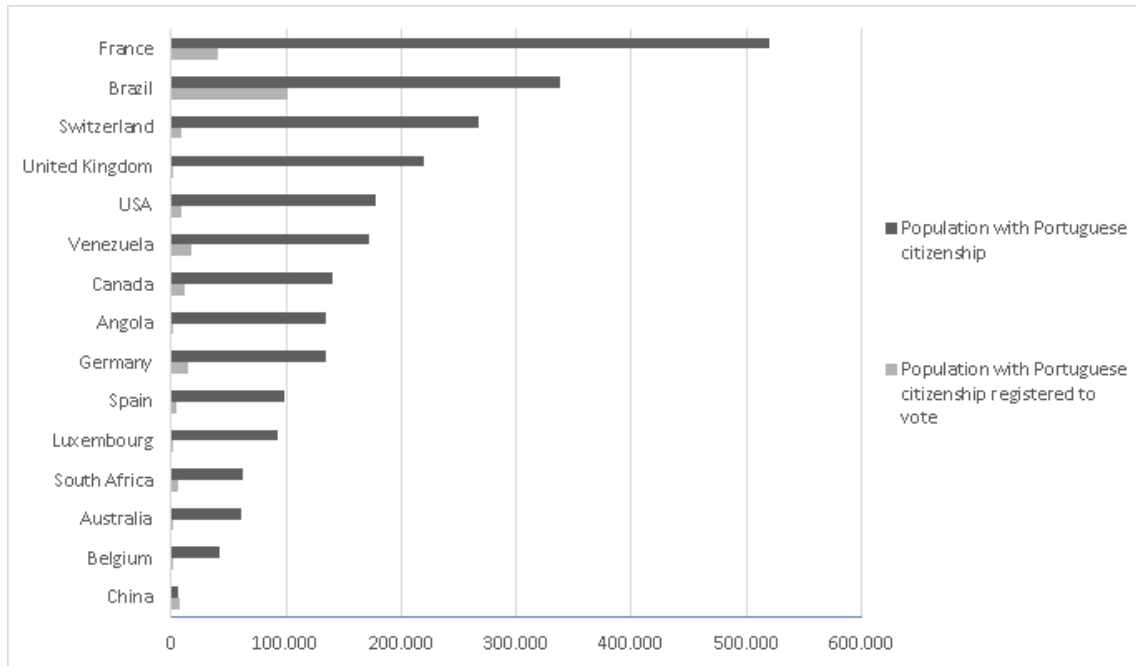
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TABLES AND FIGURES:

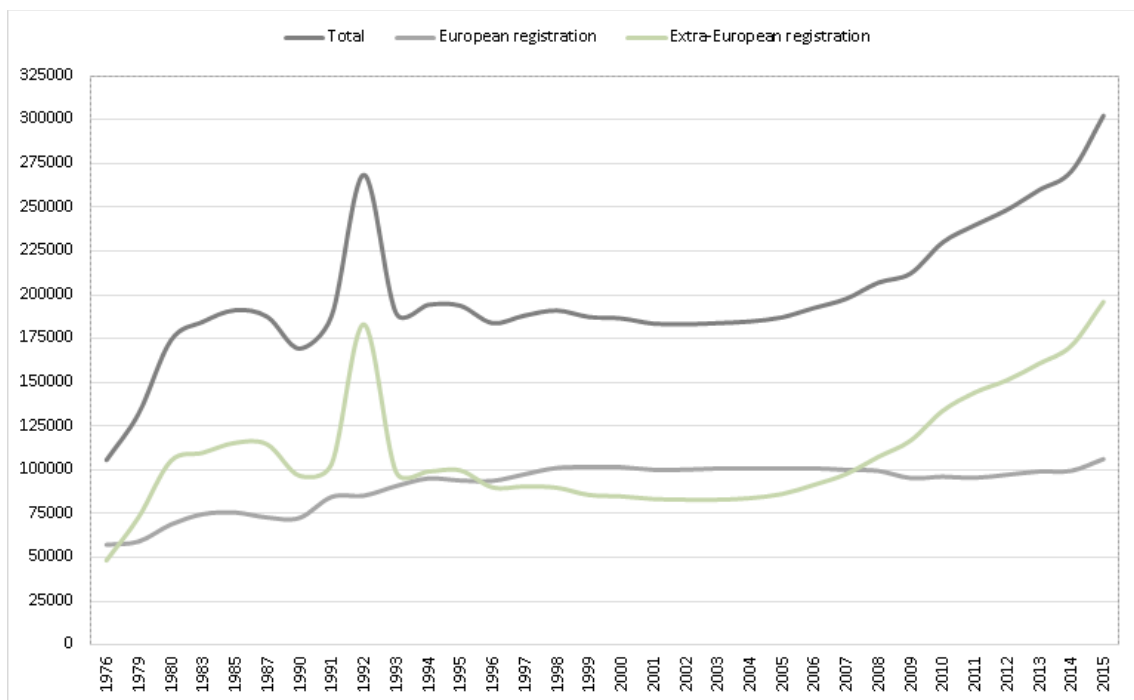
Figure 1: Population with Portuguese citizens in top destination countries (2015 or last year available) / registered to vote (2015)



Source: Population with Portuguese citizenship: data from statistical institutes of destination countries gathered by the Portuguese Emigration Observatory (OEm); Population with Portuguese citizenship registered to vote: data from DGAI.

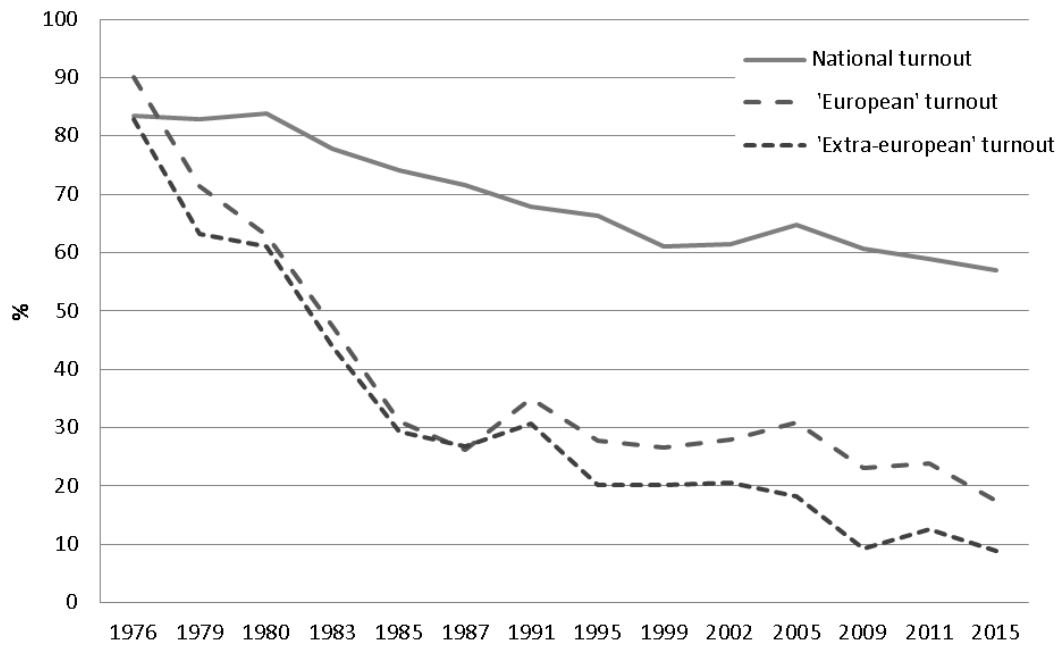
Notes: Data report to different sources: in Angola, to consulate registration; in Australia, to foreign population born in Portugal; in Brazil, to 2012; in Canada, to foreign population born in Portugal in 2011; in China, to 2011 for Macau and Hong Kong territory, and statistics do not include individuals with chinese ancestry even with Portuguese citizenship; in South Africa, to consulate registration in 2012; in the USA, to foreign population born in Portugal; and in Venezuela, to consulate registration.

Figure 2: Registration of Portuguese resident abroad in electoral rolls (1976-2015)



Source: DGAI, 1976-2015.

Figure 3: Electoral participation in legislative elections by citizens residing in the national territory, in European and in extra-European emigrant constituencies (1976-2015)



Source: DGAI.

Table 1: Evolution of electoral participation from abroad in legislative elections (1976-2015)

| | Period | Number of Elections | Average | Standard Deviation | Regression (B coefficient) | Variation (percentage points) |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Australia | 1983-2002 | 7 | 22.0 | 11.19 | -1.39 | -30.1 |
| Belgium | 1983-1987 | 3 | 41.0 | 8.76 | -4.26 | -17.1 |
| Brazil | 1983-2015 | 11 | 26.3 | 15.91 | -1.35*** | -50.3 |
| Canada | 1983-2015 | 11 | 28.2 | 9.81 | -0.66* | -38.5 |
| China | 1983-2015 | 8 | 20.8 | 10.28 | 0.06 | 10.0 |
| France | 1983-2015 | 11 | 24.4 | 7.44 | -0.50* | -24.0 |
| Germany | 1983-2015 | 11 | 38.3 | 11.13 | -0.58 | -28.6 |
| Luxembourg | 1983-1987 | 3 | 33.7 | 7.24 | -2.47 | -14.1 |
| South Africa | 1983-2002 | 7 | 29.7 | 13.44 | -0.89 | -19.0 |
| Spain | 1983-2015 | 6 | 20.0 | 7.41 | -0.54* | -20.2 |
| Switzerland | 1991-2015 | 8 | 35.7 | 9.50 | -1.04** | -31.2 |
| United Kingdom | 1983-1987 | 3 | 38.3 | 7.65 | -3.73 | -14.9 |
| United States | 1983-2015 | 11 | 25.8 | 9.74 | -0.71** | -36.0 |
| Venezuela | 1983-1991 | 4 | 13.4 | 6.22 | -1.28 | -12.3 |
| European countries | 1976-2015 | 14 | 38.7 | 11.17 | -0.47*** | -72.7 |
| Extra-European countries | 1976-2015 | 14 | 32.0 | 11.42 | -0.52*** | -73.9 |
| National average | 1976-2015 | 14 | 69.4 | 11.75 | -0.49*** | -26.5 |

Source: DGAI.

Notes: 1) Angola is not represented in this table because data is only available for the 1983, 1985 and 1987 legislative elections. 2) Differences between countries are significant at 0.001 level (eta coefficient: .578); 3) *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table 2: Operationalisation and Sources of the Variables

| Independent Variables | Coding | Source |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Institutional Factors | | |
| Type of election | 1 = Legislative 0=Other | - |
| Voting method | 1=Postal 0=In person | - |
| Socio-economic factors | | |
| GDP growth rate | - | United Nations Statistics Division (UNDP) http://unstats.un.org/unsd/databases.htm |
| Unemployment rate | % of the active population | Comparative Political Data Sets (CPDS) http://www.cps-data.org/ |
| Remittances | Remittances from the host country to Portugal | Bank of Portugal |
| Social welfare benefits | % of GDP | CPDS |
| HDI | Human Development Index | UNDP http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/ |
| Rate of unionisation | - | CPDS |
| Electoral constituency | 1=European 0=Extra-European | - |
| Year of election | - | - |
| Political Factors | | |
| Level of democracy | From 0 (low) to 10 (high) | Polity IV Project www.systemicpeace.org |
| Electoral participation | % of voters in national elections | IDEA http://www.idea.int/ |
| Electoral competitiveness | The difference in the number of votes won by the two main parties | Directorate General of Internal Administration (DGAI) http://www.sg.mai.gov.pt/Paginas/default.aspx |
| Dependent Variable | | |
| Electoral participation | % of registered voters who voted | DGAI |

Table 3: Explanatory model of the electoral participation of Portuguese emigrants, 1983-2015 (linear regression mixed-model analysis)

| | Institutional factors | Sig. | Socio-economic factors | Sig. | Political factors | Sig. |
|---|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Institutional factors | | | | | | |
| Election type | 2.90 (2,82) | .307 | 8.47** (0.03) | .008 | 8.36** (2.73) | .004 |
| Voting method | 13.95*** | .000 | 11.21** (3.38) | .002 | 12.49*** (3.11) | .000 |
| Socio-economic factors | | | | | | |
| GDP growth rate | | | 0.13 (0.32) | .689 | -0.11 (0.49) | .817 |
| Unemployment rate | | | -1.16*** (0.29) | .000 | -0.50 (0.30) | .110 |
| Remittances | | | -0.05 (0.03) | .079 | 0.01 (0.01) | .217 |
| Social welfare benefits | | | 0.86*** (0.28) | .003 | 0.44 (0.35) | .219 |
| HDI | | | 0.23* (0.09) | .012 | 1.76** (0.52) | .002 |
| Unionisation | | | 0.37*** (0.08) | .000 | 0.55*** (0.09) | .000 |
| Electoral constituency | | | 3.16 (1.82) | .088 | 9.31*** (2.40) | .000 |
| Year of election | | | -0.57 (0.37) | .177 | -0.91 (0.42) | .054 |
| Political factors | | | | | | |
| Level of democracy | | | | | 5.47* (2.13) | .014 |
| Electoral participation | | | | | 0.09 (0.07) | .240 |
| Electoral competitiveness | | | | | 0.13 (0.14) | .366 |
| <i>2 Restricted Log Likelihood</i> | 1377,928 | | 393,010 | | 346,699 | |
| <i>Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)</i> | 1381,928 | | 397,010 | | 350,699 | |
| <i>Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC)</i> | 1388,390 | | 400,950 | | 354,399 | |

Sources: see Table 2.

Notes: Values are fixed effect estimates; in parenthesis are standard errors. The remaining figures report to the significance. *p < 0.05; ** p< 0.01; *** p < 0.001.

¹ On the low electoral relevance of emigrants, see Fidrmuc and Doyle (2004), Tarli Barbieri (2007), Lafleur and Chelius (2011) or Hutcheson and Arrighi (2015).

² The first elections held in Portugal after the revolution of 25 April 1974 which led the country to democracy, were the elections for the Constituent Assembly of 25 April 1975. The first legislative, presidential and local elections were held in 1976, in April, June and December of that year, respectively.

³ The type of vote varied in Portugal regarding European elections: it started being postal and then changed to in-person voting in 2004. Multicollinearity is thus prevented.

⁴ On the importance of the agents of political mobilisation see the classic by Rosenstone and Hansen (1993), as well as Pérez-Liñan (2001). These factors were particularly important to explain different levels of political participation among Italians in Latin American countries (Tintori 2011).

⁵ Another important element relates with the presence and dynamics of political parties abroad. Depending on how, when and where the electoral campaign is organised, voters may feel more or less motivated to participate in elections (Geys 2006, 646-649).

⁶ Other aspects related to institutional norms can affect the mobilisation of the electorate, such as: the requirement for a minimum number of external votes (in Portugal, the election of two deputies for each of the electoral constituency depends on there being at least 55,000 votes per constituency); the existence or not of limitations on the number of deputies elected from abroad; whether the vote is counted in national constituencies or in others specifically established for the external vote, among other factors. Since this is a study of the Portuguese case only, these indicators are constant, so they were excluded from the analysis.

⁷ According to our own calculation based on the available figures for Portuguese citizens living abroad and those registered in electoral rolls per country, the percentage of registered population is in average 7 per cent in 2015 among the fifteen countries under study, corresponding to almost 15.500 individuals.

⁸ After Ireland and Japan, Portugal is the country with the greatest proportion of emigrants among the non-registered voting population (60 per cent; see Caramani and Strijbis 2012, 15-16).

⁹ On the process of implementation of emigrants' voting rights in Portugal see: Lisi et al. 2015.

¹⁰ This is the year from which data for the host countries is available.