

## Migration: A Process of Search - London A Case Study

Nubia Zulma Nieto Flores

University of Guerrero-Mexico

Correponding Author: Nubia Zulma Nieto Flores (email: continents.sky@gmail.com)

### Abstract

TV news, social media, and newspapers continue presenting migrants as a threat to the rich economies. However, the richness of cosmopolitan cities is the migration. London, the capital of the United Kingdom, is a case in point. In this context, the present article is guided by the following research question: what are the main causes of migration to London? This text has as objective to explore the drivers behind of migration to London. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that people who migrate to London have different motivations and not necessarily economic reasons. This work uses qualitative and quantitative materials, such as face to face interviews, data reports and statistics on migration and direct observations. This article is divided in four sections. The first one exposes some outstanding theories on migration. The second one describes the methodology applied. The third one offers some personal experiences of migrants living in London. The fourth one presents some results about the main drivers of migrants to London, and finally some conclusions are offered, which consider that there are subtle causes of emigration which are usually underestimated, such as learning English as a personal achievement, acceptance of different sexual orientation, cultural diversity, and relative political stability are among the most representative.

**Keywords:** migration; London; United Kingdom; cultural diversity

### Introduction

The process of migration has been condemned in recent years as a result many people feel shame to define themselves as migrants. Xenophobia, discrimination, classism, isolation, racial attacks, bullying, sexism, social exclusion, marginalisation, physical, social, and mental abuses are the most common experiences among emigrants when arriving to a foreign country.

The stereotype of migrants in wealthier countries is full of prejudices spread by the media and by politicians who know how to exploit the stigma against migrants to their

political benefit. Many far-right extreme movements have flourished recently all around the world. In the US, Donald Trump (2017-2021), former US president, is well known due to his narrative against Latino communities, particularly Mexicans who were called by Trump “as criminals, drug dealers, rapists” (Gabbatt, 2015). In Europe, anti-migrant feelings have been encapsulated by nationalist movements. Meanwhile in France, it is the National Front (FN); in Spain, the Vox Party; in Italy, the Five Star Movement and in Germany, Alternative for Germany (AfD). In the United Kingdom, it is the UK Independence Party (UKIP), promoter of the

Brexit; in Austria, the Freedom Party (FPÖ); in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats (SD); in Finland, the Finns Party and in Poland, the Confederation Party. Furthermore, in Hungary, it is the FIDESZ party; in Slovenia, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS); in Greece, the Greek Solution and in Australia, the New Guard Organisation (BBC, 2019a).

A new wave of far-right politicians has flourished around the world and they are getting closer to the mainstream of public policies, using the anti-migration narratives to blame for economical setbacks, unemployment, criminality and other social problems. The United Kingdom like many other countries has experienced an increase on anti-migration feelings reflected in many policies. The Brexit, as reference of the withdrawal process of the UK from the European Union (EU), is one of the most aggressive social expressions against European migration.

The Brexit as a result of the referendum launched on 23 June 2016, and put in place on 31 January 2020, contributed to create a divisive society and reinforce anti-migration policies. The illegal Migration Bill introduced in March 2023 by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Suella Braverman (2022-2023), which considers “people who arrive illegally after the 7 March 2023 have no right to be in the UK” (Gower, 2023). In this new context, the UK government also launched on 14 April 2022 a five-years scheme trial to process asylum seekers claims in Rwanda, which means that asylum seekers would be sent to Rwanda on a one way ticket, and claim asylum there or being resent to their origin country (BBC, 2023).<sup>1</sup>The current UK

government of Rishi Sunak (2022-currently-May 2024), following the pressure of the anti-migration groups has announced his commitment to curb migration and reduce arrivals, focusing on refugees and asylum-seekers (Picheta, et.al., 2023).

The anti-migration feeling continues being high in the UK and London as cosmopolitan capital fights against anti-migration groups. Paradoxically, one of the most important sources of pride of British people is the richness offered by the multicultural diversity groups living in London. In this framework, the purpose of the research is to shine a light on the main drivers which motivate people from different parts of the world and social, economic and cultural background to move to this capital. Certainly, economic causes are the most prevalent, but there are also other psychological, cultural, artistic, and personal motives which drive people to London, which this text pretend to analyse. It is also important to mention that this paper aims to contribute to demystify the supremacy of north-south relations or rich versus poor countries, which contribute to increase the prejudice against immigrants, considering them as illiterates, poor and dangerous people.

## **Theoretical Discussions**

The process to move from one place to another has been constant in the history of humanity. According to United Nations-Migration Agency a migrant is “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is” (UN, 2020) This is a broad definition which offers different spectrum of possibilities to abandon the born-country. However, this perspective considers the

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<sup>1</sup> This initiative has been proved to be highly controversial. Recently in June 2023, charities and other activists won an appeal, after judges at the court of appeal ruled in favour of campaign groups and 10 affected asylum seekers, considering Rwanda is not a safe country to send refugees. However, the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, announced plans to appeal at the Supreme Court against this decision, insisting that Rwanda is a safe country for asylum seekers to have their claims processed (Quinn, et. al., 2023).

migration as a movement limited from the south to the north, from developing countries to developed ones, as if migration were a movement solely determined by factors of economic development.

For Bhugra and Becker (2005), migration can be defined as “the process of going from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another. The duration of this new settlement varies”. These authors put the spotlight to individuals, who relocate either semi-permanently or permanently to another country and they may move en masse or singly, delimiting the migration as movement through a geographic space.

De Hass proposes a wider definition considering “migration as an intrinsic part of broader processes of economic, political, cultural, technological, and demographic change embodied in concepts such as social transformation, ‘development’ and globalisation”. For De Hass, migration is a social process that cannot be seen in isolation from the broader processes of change (De Hass, 2021, p.12)

According to De Hass, the concept of migration also includes the factor of freedom in its own right, as he defines human mobility not by the criterion of actual movement, but as people’s capability (freedom) to choose where to live (De Hass, 2021, p.22)

Another important factor analysed by De Has in his research on migration is the advance of digital communications, which have improved in recent years, giving people’s general life expectations based on wealthier countries, particularly in young people who are more exposed to social media and digital technology communication (De Hass, 2021, p.17).

Another important contribution in the understanding of migration is offered by Castelli, who in line with De Hass, considers that the communication technology plays an important role in the process of migration. Castelli envisages the migration research in two factors. The first one is the “meso-factors”,

which compile the communication technology and *diaspora* bonds. The second one is the ‘micro-factors’, such as education, religion, marital status, and personal attitude toward migration as key elements in making the final decision to migrate (Castelli, 2018, p.1)

Castelli demystify the image of the stereotype of the illiterate, poor and rural migrant reaching the borders of affluent countries, since poor people from developing countries do not have the financial resources and the mind set to migrate. The expectations of poor people in developing countries, when consider migrating, is to the capital of their own country: “The poorest people simply do not have the means to escape war and poverty and remain trapped in their country” (Castelli, 2018, p.1).

The study of Castelli contrasts with the economic perspective, which underlines that economic factors are the only drive forces to migrate. Harris and Todaro are some of the represents of this migration theory. They interpret migration under the logic of income and other opportunities between country origin and country destination. This model assumes that people make rational decisions based on economic profits to maximise income and utility (Harris and Todaro, 1970).

These authors add important elements to the study of migration, such as flows of resources: money, goods, working conditions; however, the economic perspective has a reductionist character by ignoring other variables which are also important in the process of migration. This theory also reinforces the perception of unequal relations between the north and the south, where the first represents the rich countries and the second, the poorest ones. Under the economic perspective, people are driven to migrate on the grounds to find better economic opportunities in the country destination. Certainly, the economic variable continues being valid to encourage migration. However, this is just a part of the whole picture.

From the anthropologist perspective, migration is driven as an historical movement which has accompanied the human development condition. From this overview, the study of migration is a social, political, economic, and cultural process. The migration process under this perspective adds important insights in the understanding of this phenomenon such as the concept of “transnationalism” which explores interconnected relations of migrants with their home countries (Brettell, 2003).

Robin Cohen also goes in the same line, since he considers that migration is part of the human history. “The phenomena of hunting and gathering, seeking seasonal pasture and nomadic were part of the human social organisation itself. Flight from natural disasters, adverse climatic changes, famine, and territorial aggression” (Cohen, 2019). Therefore, migration is not a new phenomenon of aggression or threat from the south to the north or from the poorest to wealthiest, rather than an historical feature of human development.

For the purpose of this text, the migration is considered under the perspective of the sociology and anthropology, as an interactive process, which takes into account historical, social, cultural, economic, geographical and culinary factors of individuals, who cross local and international borders in search of their own expectations. From this perspective, the migration is a creative and challenging process, as migrants need to put in place all their creativity and resourcefulness to recreate a new version of themselves in a new environment full of challenges and adversities.

## **Methodology**

The text follows a quantitative and qualitative methodology selected due to the nature of the study. Regarding qualitative data, an ethnographic framework was implemented

through personal observations, personalised interviews and cross data collected from respondents living in London during many years. This text does not pretend to answer all questions around migration, rather offering a humble contribution in the understanding of a complex phenomenon.

In terms of quantitative data, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2022), London is one of the most diverse ethnic<sup>2</sup> societies worldwide due to the migration of individuals from all over the world. The number of people arriving in the UK in 2022 hit a record of 1.2 million people, and about half that number leaving. The net migration, which represents the difference between the number of people arriving and those leaving, meaning the long term migration reached 606,000 for the same year, while in 2021 were fewer than 500,000 (Lawless, 2023).

Since the Brexit referendum in 2016, after seven years, the far wing has campaigned to reduce migration. Certainly, EU migration reached less than 51,000 in 2022, while the non-EU nationals represented 662,000 in the same year (Harding & Duncan, 2023).

Following to the Migration Observatory, at the end of June 2021, about half of the UK’s foreign-born population (48% in total) were either in London 35% (3,346,000) or the South East 13% (1,286,000). Northern Ireland, the North East and Wales have a low share of the UK’s total foreign-born population, at 1–2% each. On the other hand, in the same period, only 10% of the UK-born population lived in London (The Migration Observatory, 2022).

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<sup>2</sup> Ethnic groups are composed of people who may or may not share the same race but do share common cultural characteristics, including history, beliefs, values, food and entertainment preferences, religion, and language. Ethnicity typically incorporates both race and culture. Race is based on biologic constructs, such as sharing certain physical attributes; it may or not be also a social and political construct, then ethnicity is a source of social identity. And cultural identity include religion, rites of passage, language, dietary habits, and leisure activities (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Following the same report released by the Migration Observatory in 2021, the most common reason that non-EU migrants gave for having originally moved to the UK in 2021 was family (46% of non-EU born), followed by work (23%). On the opposite, the EU migrants were more likely to have moved for work reasons (48%) (The Migration Observatory, 2022). In the report of the UK Office for National Statistics in 2022, one out of every 12 non-EU migrant entering to Britain was an asylum seeker, meaning that only 8.33% non-EU migrant come to UK looking for political asylum (Harding & Duncan, 2023).

According to the census data for England and Wales 2021, the most ethnically diverse region in the UK was London, since 46.2% of residents were identified with Asian, black, mixed or "other" ethnic groups, and a further 17.0% with white ethnic minorities. London had the smallest percentage of people who identified as British (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

It is necessary to mention that in the category "other ethnic" groups, the largest groups reported are Sikh (77,000 persons, representing 0.1%), Hispanic or Latin American (76,000, 0.1%) and Kurdish (76,000, 0.1%). The report also includes other backgrounds: White constituted by White British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller and other; Black includes Black African, Caribbean, and other. Asian comprises Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and other. Mixed group considers White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, White and Black African or any other mixed race (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

UK government acknowledges that the category of ethnic group is multi-dimensional, complex, and subjective, since a person may choose to be identified with different ethnic groups, for example as "sikh" person can also be identified as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh. The ethnicity is a personal choice based on elements in common such as ancestry, elements of culture, identity,

religion, language and physical appearance (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

## **Life Histories of Migrants Living in London**

London, as one of the most important centre of migration from all over the world, is also the centre of the most intriguing hubs to collect personal histories of people, who decide to create a family, partner, enterprise, job, discovery, inspiration or simply a place to call home.

There are hundreds of reasons why people move to London which go beyond imagination and contradict the media stereotypes. Some histories are kindly shared through some friends, acquaintances or people who offered the author their support when they knew the nature of this text. Some names were changed due to the will of the interviewees.

### *Family*

I come from Peru. My aunt was married with an English man. She had two kids. She and her husband were working at that time. They needed someone to care of the kids, while they were working, she proposed me to care of her kids in exchange of paying my English school fees, house accommodation, food, and some little money. After three years. I came back to Peru, where I met an English guy, who later I would marry and having two kids and then we came back to London again to join my husband's family and my aunty family (Andrea, 2023).

### *Sexual Expression*

Hi. My name is Kemal. I am 35 year-old. I am an IT technician. I come from Turkey, where homosexuality is legal, but socially misperceived, and my parents were not very happy with my choice, many times they



introduced me some beautiful girls, but I was tired to refuse them and I didn't want to hurt anyone. So one day I met in Turkey someone from London, who told me about the London Gay Pride and the Gay community. Then I contacted them by social media. I came once as a tourist and then I decided to move and to live here. I feel better living here because I am anonymous, I don't feel judged and I can walk hand in hand with my boyfriend and no one cares (Kemal, 2023).

### *Job*

As a Hungarian person, and trained as a medical specialist in Spain, I was fascinated by the British culture, long before my decision to move to London back in the 2000s. The feeling of being respected and considered as a valuable asset by the managers of the NHS hospital, who paid me accordingly, boosted my self-confidence. Not forgetting, the warm welcome of my peers that made me feel that I made the right career move. My needs were seriously considered when the job plan was scheduled and mutually negotiated, an expression which still raises eyebrows in Spain. Working hard, sometimes without being demanded, was greatly rewarded by the work flexibility reflected on my work schedule. This effectively means that I could spend a few weeks from time to time travelling around Europe, even spending a considerable amount of time with my family in Hungary and Spain. A healthy work balance between job related stress and well deserved relax time was one of my objectives to work in London. If tell you the truth, I say frequently to my friends that I loved being a health care professional in the UK, but I would rather be a patient in Spain. What I enjoy the most from London is to be exposed to all kind of cultures, a truly unique melting pot (Norbert, 2023).

### *Religion*

I am from Egypt, most of the population is Muslim, my husband and I, we are Christian-Catholic. The living conditions were not very well for us. Job expectations were null. I am teacher and I had always bad positions due to my religion. We knew that if we wanted to have family, Egypt was not a good place for our kids, so we move to London, thanks to a Christian organisation that gave us some help at the beginning. After eight years, I have a baby and I work as teacher assistant and my husband as a taxi driver (Kara, 2023).

### *Political Grounds*

Well, my family including my parents, brothers, and sisters, we arrive to the UK in the 1990, due to the genocide in Rwanda. I was a child. We didn't have anyone in the UK. It was quite difficult time, we didn't speak English, we learnt on the ground. My father worked in the Rwandan government, but no one could be saved from the prosecution of the Rwandan Civil War. My mom sometimes reminds us how we left from Rwanda. We left without anything just our passports to avoid suspicious of our departure. UK held a refugee program, so we came to London to rebuild our lives. Today, all my brothers have jobs in different sectors. One is a doctor, another and IT engineer, another one a linguist and I work for global consultancy Sector Company, and I have my own family living here in London (Mugabo, 2023).

### *Artistic Career*

I am from Mexico. I studied Opera. I have a school of languages well established over there. I have my house, car, and some money, but I was feeling that I needed to pursuit my life passion which is the opera and in Mexico, there are not many opera events during all

year, while here there are many opportunities. The theatre, comedy and artistic life are quite dynamic sectors. For an artist, London is the equivalent to Broadway-New York as it represents the highest level of artistic expression. I've already won an important award here. This is the reason what I want to continue living here (Maria, 2023).

#### *Freedom of Expression*

I was a journalist in Nigeria, I used to work for a national newspaper, but there are some topics quite sensitive such as religion and politics, but as a journalist you must talk about it, even if politicians don't feel comfortable. The Nigerian media is not formally controlled by the government, but there are groups with a lot power in alliance with criminals. I received several dead threats, and then I came to London 12 years ago. I continue writing, but not for Nigerian media, but for a UK media consortium as a freelance (Peter, 2023).

#### *Climate Change*

I come from Punjab, in Pakistan, my parents used to produce basmati rice, but in recent years the land is not productive as it was many years ago, and water scarcity is getting from bad to worse. The crops and profit are unpredictable, the rains are not seasonal anymore and water supply is becoming more expensive. I studied at the University of the Punjab agriculture; but my parents didn't want that I continue farming as the family business, because the weather makes agriculture more difficult, and the work and money invested were not compensated any more the effort. They encourage me to leave Pakistan and I came to London ten years ago, since we had some friends already living here. I work a taxi driver. I hope one day to return to my lands if they survive the droughts (Muhammad, 2023).

#### *Studies*

I came to London in 2006, I was just finished my master degree in Economy in Italy. One day, my lecture told me that I would have great job opportunities in Italy if I spoke English. Italy as part of the European Union, and in that time, UK had arrangement for European nationals to come to the UK without visa to study, work and moving with the same freedom and entitlement than being in the rest of the Euro zone. After 17 years, I continue living in London, I am married, and I have a great job in one of leading digital tech companies worldwide. Not as an economist, but as part of the security staff. I was seduced to live here, because I was young, I met great people during my journey (Giacomo, 2022).

#### *Improving English Language*

My name is Manjari, I come from Calcuta, India. I came to London 10 years ago. I am a nurse. I worked as a nurse in India, but I wanted to improve my English. In India, I learn English since I was young, but it is never the same. So I had a friend, who encouraged me to come to work here, but for doing that I needed to make some administrative procedures to make recognize my qualifications, then I focused to study and improve my English language. Besides, when you go back to India speaking English with English accent you feel different, perhaps it is a kind of unconscious inferior feeling, inherited by our colonial past, but I wanted to know better this country. Today I work as a nurse in the NHS (National Health Service) (Anukul, 2022).

#### *Making Friends*

Hi. I come from a small town in the Netherlands. I came to London 12 years ago, because I wanted to meet people from different part of the world and London is a

great city for young people as there are always events, concerts and many outdoors activities, many of them are free. I am a writer. I wanted to meet people, who have the courage to leave their countries either for the comfort where they come from or for the needs they pursuit. My advice. Beware that people come to London to make money. It most likely will be challenging to find and make friends as a lot of people don't have time, however, eventually you will find friends by doing the things you enjoy and probably through work. If you come from a warm place, don't expect warm and hot weather everyday! I would suggest having a sense of humour, having a positive mindset and being resilient - will make you enjoy London and survive the harshness of the city as well. Get an oyster card, learn the bus routes, and study the transport for London map. These things will save you! (Volka, 2022).

### *Love*

I was very young. I was 18 years old. I am German and I met a British boy in my country then we started to date and I felt in love. Then I move to London to live together. The relation didn't prosper, but I am still in London after 30 years. I love this city, except the living cost that makes my life more difficult and isolated particularly in recent months, after the Russian-Ukrainian war, everything becomes more expensive and I feel now more tied financially to enjoy this city. I work as yoga tutor (Hannah, 2023).

### *Women Freedom*

I come from Mexico as international student at the Metropolitan University to study interior design. I came here eight years ago. The first thing that I remember was the freedom as a woman that I experienced here. I remember to see other women to use miniskirts and necklines, walking with confidence on the streets. In Mexico, due to the machismo and

violence against women, which have caused millions of women deaths, this scenario is unthinkable. Living in London I feel in total confidence to go out from my house dressed as I want and no one cares. This is the reason why enjoy to live here, even if I don't have the same comfort that I could have over there (Tatiana, 2023).

### **Results: Diluting Borders**

The migration flow is the result of a combination of different drivers which may be internal or external factors that not necessary are linked to the economic causes. Certainly, the economic drivers continues being prevalent reflected in job opportunities, improve income or profit revenue, but even these elements could be associated to other variables such as job flexibility, work conditions, job mobility, employees cultural diversity or work environment. This may help to explain why some overseas employees like to work in London.

Another of the most frequent argument of the far-right movements, when attacking the migration is the idea that all migrants arriving to UK, and London in particular, are asylum seekers and social benefits searchers. This is quite relative statement, because most of the people arriving under this status are educated people who run away from their countries, due to their political engagements or personal choice. Some of them are university students, journalists, teachers, nurses or doctors, as it is reflected in the interview statements mentioned in the section of life histories of migrants living in London, which demystify the stereotype of "ignorant asylum seekers".

The factor climate change as a driver of migration is not anymore a myth, it is a reality. Hundred, thousand and soon millions of people are abandoning their home countries due to water scarcity, food production, and land infertility as one of



the interviews suggests. In this sense, instead of criminalise migration in the west; developed countries should invest more to reduce climate change effects and share their technology with undeveloped countries, because there is still an unbalance in the climate change bill. For example, United Kingdom accounts among the countries with the highest water waste with 20 trillion gallons per year (Marsh, 2018) in comparison with Ethiopia where water scarcity oblige to people to use all drops of water that they can get carefully.<sup>3</sup> Or even worse the rich countries continue using the poorer nations to put their waste out of sight and out of their territories (Varkkey, 2019). According the interview statements mentioned in the section of life histories of migrants living in London one participant – Muhammad from Pakistan- already mentioned climate change as cause to migrate to the UK.

The political factor is without any doubt another driver of migration to the west, almost all continents face war, bloody conflicts, political instability, human rights infringements, and some countries have also dictatorships. Certainly, the developed countries have less political instability than the less wealthy economies. There is no secret that political stability is correlated to economic growth.<sup>4</sup> It is not a coincidence either that failed states are also influenced by political instability, economic set back, and

colonial past (Tusalem, 2016).<sup>5</sup> The trend migration driven by political reasons is also related to recent interventions of some of the west countries, such as US, UK, France, and Belgium among some cases. Political instability in the Middle East: Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq. In Africa: Mali, Gambia, Congo, Nigeria. Not to mention the political instability caused by organised crime in Latin America: Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti and so on. Political migration has caused the increase of migration figures. In the UK, asylum and resettlement comprised an estimated 6% of overall long-term immigration in 2018 (The Migration Observatory, 2022). According the interviews statements mentioned in the section of life histories of migrants living in London Peter from Nigeria is a journalist who moved to the UK due to political instability and threats to exercise his job.

Furthermore, emigration caused by religious motives is usually mixed with other political drivers such prosecution, political harassment, torture or killings. For example, Catholics and Christians run away from Muslims majority populations or Muslim civilians are killed by Burmese army or Hindu groups. These kinds of events continue making the headlines of the news.<sup>6</sup> The infringement of civil rights is also a cause for political migration, such as women rights or

3 China is at the top of the countries with the highest water waste with 362 trillion gallons per year. United States: 216 gallons/ year. France: 20 trillion gallons/year. Canada: 19 trillion gallons/year and Australia 12 trillion gallon/year (Marsh, 2018).

4 According to the U.S. News & World Report, the top 10 stable countries are also the richest ones in the world: Switzerland is classified as the most politically stable with a GDP per capita of \$77,324. Followed by Sweden (GDP per capital \$59,324), Denmark (GDP per capital \$64,651), Germany (GDP per capital 57,928), Belgium (GDP per capital \$58,931), Australia (GDP per capital \$55,807), UK (GDP per capital \$49,675), Canada (GDP per capital 52,085), Norway (GDP per capital \$79,201) and Netherlands (GDP per capital \$63,767) (US. News & World report, 2023).

5 Tusalem analyses how the colonial past may have led to substandard institutions and problematic state-society relations. He finds that state failure is largely a mix of variables, such as the type of colonial rule and duration of colonial control. The state failure in the modern world is influenced by the historical process of colonialism and its institutional legacies (Tusalem, 2016).

6 For example, two Ethiopian Christians were killed by police for building a church on a Muslim area (BBC, 2019b). On the other hand, several people from Rohingya Muslim minority were killed, women raped and extra-judiciary arrests by the Burmese army in Myanmar due to religious hate crimes (BBC, 2016). Another case in point was the Gujarat riots, in India, where 1,000 people died, mostly Muslims, as well as many women were reported to be raped during the riots (BBC, 2004).

difference sexual orientation. Unfortunately, poor governance, lack of transparency, inappropriate function of the rule of law, impunity and high levels of corruption contribute to nourish this type of migration. Following the interviews statements mentioned the section of life histories of migrants living in London ,there are two people – Kemal from Turkey and Tatiana from Mexico- who mentioned that sexual orientation and women freedom rights were the main drivers to move to the UK.

The migration continues being motivated by better education opportunities. According to the Migration Observatory, study is one of the major reasons that people move to the UK, in the academic year 2020/2021 around 605,000 international students both EU and non-EU came to study in UK higher education universities (The Migration Observatory, 2022). This figure contrast with the image which media and far-right movements spread about international migrants who are portrayed as illiterate and poor people that do not have anything to eat in their home countries. As Castelli (2018) mentions, some migrants are more educated than their peers left behind in their origin country. Sometimes, they are even more educated than their peers in the destination country.

The educational international migration constitutes an asset for the destination countries, as they receive qualified, skilled, and creative people. On the opposite, the poor and middle-income countries, they lose key people for their development, this phenomenon is known as “brain drain”, which is without a doubt a lost for developing countries.

For example, according to Nigerian officials, at least 5,600 Nigerian medical doctors have migrated to the United Kingdom (UK) in the last eight years, and 200 Nigerian doctors moved to the UK in one single month between 31 August and 30 September 2022 (Tolu-Kolawole and Adejoro, 2022).

According to the interviews statements mentioned in the section of life histories of migrants living in London there are nurses, doctors, students and artists, who are qualified people, that moved to London, UK, due to different purposes, but ultimately they are contributing to the UK economy.

Historical factors and family links are also important drivers of migration, as the migration statistics continue showing, there were in 2022, 48,107 family-related visas granted, three quarters (76%) of family-related visas granted were for partners, with the remainder being for children or other dependants, even if this recent information shows that in 2022, there were 14% fewer family-related visas than 2019 (Office for National Statistic, 2022).

Another factor influencing the migration destination is the relationship between empire and colony. As Mahmud indicates “the immigrant is lured by the cultural homogeneity, linguistic commonality, shared history, a sense of belonging” (Mahmud, 1997). This theory makes sense in the relationship of Latin American people, who want to migrate to Spain. Algerians or Senegalese eager to go to France, or Indians, Nigerians or Jamaicans address their interest to the UK. In fact, according to the Migration Observatory of the University of Oxford (2022), at the end of June 2021, India, Poland, and Pakistan were the top three countries of birth for the foreign-born, accounting respectively for 9%, 7% and 5% of the total. Certainly, Poland was not a British colony, but India and Pakistan continue being countries with high immigration presence from the old British Empire in the UK. According to the interviews statements mentioned in the section of life histories of migrants living in London, there are interviewees, who come from India and Pakistan and feel a great attachment to the UK.

Today, the trace of colonialism<sup>7</sup> is still present in most of the migratory trends. The far-right movements and government should consider the historical roots relations that hold with emigrants, rather than condemn this human movement that has been the origin of the richness of the west, since they were the first to invade immigrant's lands.

## **Conclusions**

Migration is a controversial subject in most of the countries. The phenomenon of migration is driven by different internal and external factors, which influence people's decision to migrate, and economical drivers are not necessary the most determinant variables that motivate people to migrate, as most of the media and far-right groups want to portray. The migration is a complex and historical phenomenon which goes beyond to a political agenda. Migration from village to village, from towns to cities, from countries to countries is a constant in the human development history.

Certainly, the inequalities from the north to the south are present in process of migration. There are also historical roots triggered by the colonial dominance which influence migration destinations. Citizens from the west, particularly from colonial past need to be educated to assimilate migration as part of their own historical identity. For example, some British people feel proud of the colonial expansion, but they refuse to integrate people from their colonies on equal basis. This identity conflict continues inflicting pain, exclusion, marginalisation, and violence to migrants from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. People, who condemn migration, also deny themselves the opportunity to meet

different people and broaden their vision of the world and the planet, where we live and share.

It is not a secret that UK and many other European countries experience high levels of ageing population, and they do not have enough young people to take care of this population. Not to mention, the lack of contributions to maintain the pension scheme, which need to be nourished by young people, through taxes.

Qualified and unqualified migration are also economic drivers for recipient countries, as qualified migration increases expertise, talent and cutting-edge predominance, while low-skills migration is also essential for social care, community maintenance and keeping running cities.

Migration is also an asset for the host country since it helps to increase productivity and boosts market and economic expansion. For instances, "the Covid-19 pandemic (2019 to 2022) has cause one of the worst job crises since the Great Depression" (OECD, 2023), which creates a crisis and a real risk to increase poverty and widen inequalities, and the UK is not the exception of this situation. Even worse, the Brexit effects are also reflected in the demand for workers across different sectors. Skill shortage mainly in nursing, social care and medical services is agonising the NHS services, where average waiting time for a treatment is 13.9 weeks, almost the double to the Pre-covid time, that was 7.2 weeks (BMA, 2023). Without forgetting supermarket food shortages, staff shortages at the UK airports, lack for lorry drivers, staff shortage in accommodation, construction, and many others. In resume, migration is a process that brings retroactive benefits and challenges for both sides. The recipient countries and the origin countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Colonialism can be defined in this text as "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods (...) and as the takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation" (Loomba, 2015, p. 20-27).

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