

Reverse brain drain – a real threat or a speculative narrative? The case of the United Kingdom and the United States

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This article constitutes an attempt to conduct a cultural studies analysis of the issue/phenomenon known as ‘reverse brain drain’ (the outflow of highly qualified and specialised workers from highly developed countries). The field of analysis has been restricted to the markets of the United Kingdom and the United States, countries standing on the threshold of major changes caused by preparations for the UK leaving the structures of the EU and the highly controversial figure of Donald Trump assuming the office of US president, respectively.

Introduction

On 22 February 2017, *Today*, the morning news programme on the British station BBC Radio 4, broadcast a short report concerning the culture of science, more specifically, the manner in which it is practiced in contemporary science of the first decades of the 21st century (BBC Radio 4, 22 February 2017).¹ Although the analysis chiefly concerned British traditions, it also included references to the practices of other highly developed countries. Its conclusions contained the statement that, similarly to other areas of modern life, there is a tendency here also towards creating a spectacle, thus presenting the results of research in order to secure reception as groundbreaking, unique and innovative, thereby winning renown for the authors and often, as a consequence, financial emoluments.

The rivalry involved in gaining the attention of an audience, the so-called target group, if it does not violate the norms in force in a given environment, is an understandable and widely accepted activity. There exist, however, contrary cases in which the breaking of rules is one of the unethical methods employed in order to achieve a goal.

¹ The programme segment was broadcast at 7.35am GMT.

In an information leaflet, the multiplicity of broadcast announcements (including those which are scientific), ‘catchy’ phrases, metaphors or images constitute an effective element of persuasion, frequently referring to – even if not indirectly but directly – emotions, such as one’s hopes, fears and uncertainties. Media stories² broadcast during the second half of 2016 concerning the changes related with ‘Brexit’ and the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections abounded with extreme comments. For some, the perspective of Brexit is the perspective of regaining greater independence for a country seeking self-determination while, in the case of the Trump presidency, the hope for rebuilding the strength and position of the USA as a world superpower and, at the same time, getting even with the so-called ‘leisured classes’, meaning the American establishment at the beginning of the 21st century. Opponents of Brexit interpret it in economic and social terms, as well as political regression, while those opposing Trump view him as a sign of turning away from democracy, broadly conceived liberalism and social empathy.

Extremely different attitudes, albeit concerning different phenomena, indicate the particularly strong polarisation of the internal socio-political scene, both in Britain and America.³ At least, this is the picture which emerges from both domestic and foreign media informing us of the development of the situation. Indeed, a situation which complicates matters additionally is the problem, growing since the 1990s, of refugees or, if more broadly considered, world migrants. Both Britain and the United States have been confronted with waves of immigration, with less-developed countries as their main source. While it is true that this includes highly qualified individuals, this is much lower than the flow of a poorly educated labour force (Legrain 2006).⁴ Insofar as both countries benefit from the importation of specialists, generally in the public sphere, however, questions concerning migration constitute a serious problem giving rise to frequently strident social opposition.

The media image of migrants, constructed through a specifically formed narrative, has a significant impact on the way of perceiving and interpreting the phenomenon of migration. On the one hand, it can be presented positively, and on the other hand – pejoratively, depending on the ideological framework of specific media. A similar approach is taken in terms of main actors – immigrants, refugees, newcomers, foreign workers etc. Applying a cul-

²This refers primarily to the following media sources: CNN, ABC, CBC News, BBC, Sky News.

³It should be emphasised that these are not the only examples of social polarisation in the political sphere. Similar divisions may be found in France, Germany, Spain and Poland.

⁴The United Kingdom has imposed an obligation regarding financial security for British citizens wishing to bring spouses into the country not in possession of a British passport: source – BBC Radio 4, *Today*; date of broadcast: 22 February 2017.

tural study analysis (combining sociological, political, cultural and linguistic perspectives) of media discourse facilitates to shed light on specific language, semantics, rhetoric, text structure and composition of *messages* that circulate in society as encoded symbolic representations of events and their interpretations (Gerbner 1985:14). *Messages* - let us add – proposed or imposed on the reader by the *messenger*. While elaborating on language and social change in the 1990s, Norman Fairclough stressed three dimensions of discourse analysis: 1. discourse as text, 2. discourse as discursive practise and 3. discourse as social practise (Fairclough 1992). The approaches further developed by the Fairclough himself and by other researchers, inter alia: Lilie Chouliaraki (1999, 2002, 2008), Teun van Dijk (1985, 1997a, 1997b, 2012), George Gerbner (1985), Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss (2003, 2013, 2015) provide a useful selection of tools and methods applicable in analyzing of the socio-cultural context in which reverse brain drain occurs as part of contemporary migration flows.

Trends in world migration at the beginning of the 21st century

Contemporary migration processes analysed on a global scale have provided the following conclusions: they are not homogeneous in terms of their course; have various causes; are multidirectional; and occur at an uneven pace. Moreover, the ways of migrating (individual or as a group) remain varied, as do the physical, psychological, social, financial and health costs, both for the individuals taking the decision to become refugees and for societies, meaning those which receive and those which send out refugees.

One thing, however, remains a common factor: regardless of whether migrations are legal or illegal, they continue and will continue as this is human nature. From the dawn of human history, humankind has roamed the earth and had it not been for its leaving Africa nearly 100,000 years ago, our species would not have settled in Europe, America and other places. On his journey, *homo viator* (man on the way) overcame many obstacles of a biological, climatological and geographical-spatial nature. During more modern times, cultural and political obstacles were added to these. It is characteristic that goods, services and capital move more freely than people themselves. Restrictions concerning migration, residence, asylum or those regarding taking up employment or family connections, constitute a serious factor hindering the free movement of people. Of course, this has its own justification in the form of arguments concerning the protection of one's own market or ensuring public safety, especially during times so strongly displaying postmodern terrorism

directed towards the masses, increased unpredictability, resulting from spontaneous acts carried out by suicide attackers, so-called ‘lone wolves’.

Regulated by law to a greater or lesser degree, the possibility of movement has led to the marking out of territories with a greater degree of human mobility and those in which migration is obstructed. In the diagram below, apart from the main migration routes, the areas with liberalised rules regulating the crossing of borders have been indicated.

Figure 1. The main migration routes during the second decade of the 21st century.



Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-32912867>

An OECD report from 2016 concerning world migration trends emphasises the phenomenon of increasing waves of migration due to the influence of armed conflict (of various scales) destroying countries such as: Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Serbia and Kosovo, Albania, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2015, these countries became the source of the greatest number of refugees (OECD 2016, p. 30).

Although the causes of one leaving their family home do not constitute homogenous push factors, the remainder are dominated by the following: climate change (e.g. Tuvalu); overpopulation (e.g. Bangladesh); chronic poverty

(Kosovo); natural disasters (e.g. Haiti, Tibet) or persecution with a political, cultural or religious basis, or due to one's world view.

In the highly developed countries belonging to the OECD, the number of applications for asylum filed in 2015 reached almost 1.65 million people which comprised nearly a 100%-rise when compared with the previous year (OECD 2016, pp. 10, 32).⁵

Of interest is the fact that the number of applications in relation to the population of the society receiving them was greatest in: Sweden (16,000 applications per million inhabitants); Hungary (17,000); Austria (nearly 10,000); Norway (6,000); Finland (5,000); and Luxemburg (4,000). In Germany, the statistics indicate a figure of 5,500 which seems to be low, considering information from (domestic and foreign) media.⁶ They present crowds of immigrants, mainly young men travelling by sea, then also by land – by train, bus, car or on foot – thousands of kilometres in order to reach the gates of an affluent Europe. Indeed, the Federal Republic of Germany, thanks to its economic attractiveness and additionally strengthened by the invitation issued to refugees by Angela Merkel, became the destination for most of them, a symbol of a better world and the opportunity for a good life. One must, however, remember that, apart from Germany, other highly developed countries, conducting a more or less stricter verification of new arrivals, decided to take in those needing protection. Among others, a strict selection process is employed by the United States and Britain where the numbers of asylum applications filed reached 400 and 600 per million inhabitants, respectively (OECD 2016, pp-30-32). As one may observe, this is very little in relation to other OECD members.

Apart from becoming a refugee for purely valid reasons (to save one's life or health), the migration of labour forces clearly occur, intensified not only by the state of economies (growing or stagnating)⁷ but also due to the ever-developing passenger transport network. European countries, including those belonging to the European Union, constitute a great example of this by building an infrastructure facilitating the movement of workers resulting in the better use of human capital resources. Although for the so-called 'new EU members', the transition period (with transition regulations) limited the mobility

⁵ In 2014 the number of applications for asylum in OECD countries reached 832,670 and 822,300 in 2015 (OECD 2016, p. 32).

⁶ The OECD report contains two pieces of data: in the table on page 32 the figure of 5,471 is given while on the previous page we find a note that this figure is probably too low and may even reach 13,500 due to the running of so-called simplified registration (the EASY system).

⁷ Although economic collapse, recession or stagnation are typical push factors while economic growth and development constitute pull factors), they do not on their own cause the intensification of migration processes.

of labour forces, following its conclusion the taking up of employment abroad became decidedly easier (in the cases of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic countries, among others). United Nations' estimates from 2013 have determined the number of world migrants, including refugees, at over 230 million.⁸ Almost half of them chose to settle in ten countries, namely in order: the USA – 46 million;⁹ Russia – 11 million;¹⁰ Germany – 9.9 million; Saudi Arabia – 9 million; the United Arab Emirates – 8 million;¹¹ the United Kingdom – 8 million; France – 7.8 million; Canada – 7.6 million; Australia – 7 million and Spain – 7 million.

Most of those within these groups comprise so-called 'economic migrants' who, depending on the country of destination, are confronted with greater or lesser restrictive legal regulations determining the legal status of their residency or employment, both for the immigrant themselves and for any possible family members accompanying them (OECD, pp. 42-44). These regulations – despite their differences according to country – are characterized by a tendency towards gradual simplification, forcing the need for a systemic improvement of procedures concerning the acceptance of immigrants. Many arguments favour this, such as the reduction of the financial cost of administrative operations, the shortening of the time of processing applications and issuing decisions and, where this is positive, the swift introduction of the immigrant in the labour market. One should emphasise that the changes introduced by those countries frequently chosen as destinations for immigrants, namely highly developed countries (including France, Denmark, Germany, Canada, the USA, Japan, South Korea), clearly favour a highly qualified labour force. This is a phenomenon which is entirely understandable in the context of a strategy of building competitive economies in the 21st century based on modern technology and highly specialised human capital. It seems unnecessary to prove how crucial this is as a source of income for a country and society, as well as a guarantee of economic competitiveness in a global market. For these reasons, specialists may count on legal solutions ensuring them attractive working conditions, including remuneration (e.g. the lowering of the tax threshold in Japan, South Korea and the United States, among others), or facilitation in the accommodation of families. However, it will not be possible to take full advantage of human capital, even including those who

⁸ (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-32912867>)

⁹ Chiefly Mexicans -13 million; Chinese – 2.2 million; and Indians – 2.1 million: (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-32912867>).

¹⁰ Mainly due to immigration from Ukraine, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics.

¹¹ This case is quite peculiar as immigrants constitute 84% of the population (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-32912867>).

are the best educated and trained, if they are not guaranteed the appropriate infrastructure to allow them to function, both professionally and privately.

The political implications of (e)migration

Apart from those already listed, among the factors stimulating one's decision to migrate, in the modern view of this phenomenon, a characteristic syncrisis of political and media elements appears more and more often. The increasing mobility of people is a consequence, not only of a better passenger transportation system but also of widely available information (thanks to the development of telecommunications) regarding the possibilities for migration, potential destinations, opportunities and threats. In an age of the mediatisation of social life, the universal presence of mass media, especially in highly developed civilisations, information concerning the spatial fluctuations of populations are quickly disseminated. Frequently, they become the leading subject of news bulletins, feature programmes and documentaries, even artistic programmes, delivering the meaning of a performance for postmodern societies addicted to often-simplified images. Debordian societies of the spectacle do not crave complicated transmission – on the contrary – they react to simple messages not demanding much effort in their decoding, otherwise a labile meaning.¹² In this way, migrations constitute a 'rewarding' subject, both for politicians, journalists and columnists as, thanks to these, they may build a narrative resulting from the beliefs, and thereby, the activities of the recipients of their message. The political campaigns of recent presidential and parliamentary elections, namely in the United States (2016), France (2017) and Britain (2017) abounded with slogans raising the questions concerning migration. Presidential candidate and subsequently US president, Donald Trump, bluntly indicated the necessity to immediately limit the influx of so-called coloured immigrants, particularly from Latin American and Arab countries. British Prime Minister, Theresa May, made statements in a milder tone but with a similarly sceptical view of immigration while, in strong language, the leader of the French National Front, Marine Le Pen, running in the French presidential elections in May 2017, determined immigration to be one of the economic, social and cultural causes of crisis, not only in France.

The current anti-migration feelings – albeit of various intensity – present

¹² Guy Debord presented the phenomenon of the ever-broader creeping in of simplified images to community areas, put simply, pictograms replacing verbal communication for society. He developed this idea in *La société du spectacle* (1967) and *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (1988).

de facto in every European country and also in non-European countries based on the foundations of Western civilisation (the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) have heterogeneous bases and various causes. Such reasons are provided by conditions related with: the economy (such as France and Britain); society – linked with high numbers of immigrants (such as France, Germany and Italy); culture – resulting from differences in the ways communities lives together (such as Sweden and Poland); psychology – rooted in fear, dread and anxiety concerning others, the little-known or completely unknown ‘Foreigner’ (such as Poland and Finland).

Although the arguments outlining the positive benefits of migration are many (such as Legrain 2006, Dustmann and Frattini 2014, Banaś 2010), a negative narrative has dominated the political and social discourse regarding the question of the shaping of regulations determining human mobility. The media, including social media, by mediating the message and simultaneously moderating the discourse, plays a crucial role here through which the transmission of positive (mainly neoliberal media) or critical (mainly conservative media) judgements of this phenomenon are made.¹³ One of the most employed arguments, seeming to have a universal function, is the position that immigrants, insofar as initially necessary for the labour market, after a certain period of time during which there has been a stream of immigrants, deprive native-born workers of their jobs. In the collective oblivion, it seems appropriate to employ the counter-argument that in many cases so-called foreign workers perform activities which lie outside the scope of interest of the native-born population – most often low-status, low-paid and low-skilled jobs.

A report produced by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2015 concerning the worldwide reception of the phenomenon of migration, contains data depicting an almost equal division of supporters and opponents of migration for the above-mentioned reasons. Information gathered in the period 2012-2014 in 142 countries from 183,000 respondents allows one to state that 27% of those surveyed considered immigrants to be necessary workers taking up vacant positions which native-born people do not want. The contrary view was expressed by 29% who stated that foreign workers take jobs from local people (IOM 2015).

These percentages, as with every general statistical comparison based on

¹³ Selected examples from the conservative or conservatising (C) and the liberal or liberalising (L) American and British media are as follows: Press; (US) *The Wall Street Journal* (C), *The Washington Times* (C), *National Review* (C), *The Weekly Standard* (C), *The American Spectator* (C), *The New York Times* (L), *Time* (L), *The New Yorker* (L); (UK) *The Guardian* (L), *The Independent* (L), *Metro UK* (L); television (US) Fox News (C), Bloomberg (L), ABC (L), CNN (L); (UK) Sky News (L), BBC (L); more information may be found at <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/>.

averaged values, obscure the true picture somewhat. It therefore turns out that in highly developed economies support for immigration during the examined period was significantly higher (58%) than strong criticism of it (17%). In the case of the countries constituting the main subject of discussion, namely the USA and Britain, 68% and 66% of respondents, respectively, recognised the utility of immigrants in the labour market.

Political changes linked with the formation of new administrations, whether parliament and government or the assumption of presidential office, are frequently opportunities to employ the phenomenon of migration in the battle for votes, as well as (im)migrants as an engine driving the domestic economy (more rarely) or as a characteristic threat to it (more often), also understood metaphorically and literally. In the second case, employing people's fears and anxieties, this narrative is not conducive to building and strengthening positive relations between the majority population and the incoming population. It rather strengthens mutual dislike, distance and even hostility to a greater or lesser degree. The decisions of migrants to continue the process of moving until they find a place where there are acceptable conditions for living and working in their view are understandable, therefore. Nevertheless, not everyone manages to do this which may result either in a return to their homeland or choosing a 'wandering' life, meaning life on the margins of society.

The moment Britain made the decision to leave the structures of the European Union through a general referendum which took place on 23 June 2016, it became a symbol for the market/economy of great uncertainty both for immigrants, as well as some native-born British, namely individual firms employing foreign labour (such as the hotel, agricultural and manufacturing sectors). Also among the group of those opposed to Brexit were academics perturbed by the reactions of their continental colleagues. Indeed, it turned out that the vision of Britain's leaving of the European Union had given rise to serious doubts concerning the point of embarking on cooperation with the British in situations when academic research was to be financed by EU sources. An example of this, in a fairly extreme way, was the case of Paul Crowther, a professor at the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Sheffield, whose team was excluded from a newly forming European Network consortium. The reason given was, in fact, the uncertainty and doubts of colleagues from the continent whether the preparation of a grant application would have a chance of securing funding (Coocson 2016).¹⁴

¹⁴ Another telling piece of evidence of this emerging tendency is the case of the University of Ghent in Belgium which recommended the following to its scientists when creating a consortium: "A strong consortium is crucial. If any UK partners are involved, we advise to add a risk

Similar types of incidents also occurred at other third-level institutions, namely in Staffordshire (Keel University), Cambridge (Cambridge University), Sheffield (Sheffield University), Coventry (Coventry University) and Newcastle (Newcastle University) (Glosh 2016).

Brain drain-diverted

The problem of both ‘exclusion just in case’ and the possible departure of a number of scientists from the British Isles has been observed by the non-governmental organisation, *Scientists for EU*, among others. Its activists, who are also scientists, are involved not only in agitation regarding EU membership but also monitor the departure of those active in the field of science. In the opinion of Mike Galsworthy, one of the organisation’s founders, within two months of the referendum, there were 41 cases of foreign researchers resigning from academic posts, 371 cases of abandoning or limiting cooperation from non-British entities, tens of incidents of the departure of scientists from Britain due to plans for Brexit, as well as complications in the preparation and carrying out of already-secured grants as part of the Horizon 2020 programme (Coocson 2016).

The unease expressed by scientists corresponds with the warnings of financial institutions operating globally but with their headquarters in the United Kingdom. A report by the supranational auditing firm EY (formerly Ernst & Young) from May 2017 uncovered a trend which seems to be growing, especially following the invoking of Article 50 which initiates the procedure for Britain (*de facto* the United Kingdom) to leave the European Union.

Among 222 firms, namely banks, investment funds and insurance companies, over one quarter declared they would relocate their companies. Among them could be found such entities as Goldman Sachs Group Inc., JP Morgan Chase & Co. and Deutsche Bank AG (EY 2017, Fino 2017). According to the consulting firm Bruegel, in London itself one may expect a reduction in banking jobs alone of about 10,000, financial consultants of about 20,000 with the possibility of these figures increasing even to 200,000 (Finch 2017, Bruegel 2017). These predictions may not necessarily turn out to be correct but in the psychological sense they are so crucial that they may provoke a certain way of thinking and behaviour leading to an action typical for a group. History

management paragraph to project proposals, thereby showing awareness of the situation, consideration for its potential consequences, as well as alternative solutions, should the need arise.” Quoted in C. Coocson, *Brexit Briefing: Scientists feel the effect*, Financial Times, 9 August 2016.

provides numerous examples of collective imitation (the mechanism of the so-called speculative bubble, among others).

Behavioural finance as a specialisation concentrating on the behaviour of individuals functioning in a given group (here banking, investment, insurance etc.) indicates that a rationally thinking individual adapts themselves, and frequently comes out against the expectations of their environment. Perhaps this results from a purely rational calculation or, on the contrary, emotions explained in a quasi-rational manner. This is why the narrative around the potential scenarios concerning the consequences of Brexit in sectors dependant on highly qualified workers, often of an immigrant origin, does not remain insignificant for the situation as a whole, as well as the variants of its development. The predicted emigration of specialists, including scientists, may indeed occur but not on a scale which would threaten the British economy.

Although reverse brain drain is not an unknown or rarely encountered phenomenon, it does in fact occur on a smaller scale than the opposite process (Commander, Kangasniemi & Winters 2004, Kuhn & McAusland 2006, Agrawal, Kapur & McHale 2008). In the experience of countries of post-colonial origin we find examples of the return of highly trained workers to their homelands. The reasons are various: including those which are sentimental (return to one's roots); personal (such as getting married and starting a family); professional-financial (being sent as a company representative and the associated salary) or community-based reasons (such as providing help by sharing one's knowledge and skills). An example of an economy benefitting from reverse brain drain is that of Pakistan which gains approximately 5,000 graduates of British, American and Canadian universities annually (Badruddin 2016). It is important here to emphasise the word *gain* as psychological-financial arguments and, more exactly, their display are extraordinarily important for effectively attracting those with talents combined with specialist skills. Institutions, firms and organisations dealing with facilitating the return of ex-pats to their country of origin have been set up especially for this task.¹⁵ The process of attracting, or in other words, directing highly qualified human capital home begins with an appropriately devised information campaign aimed at emigrants (as well as their descendants). Later, this is achieved through suitably tailored programmes supporting the setting up of businesses, legal assistance and even financial aid for so-called start-ups. These strategies are practiced in India, Pakistan, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Israel and Mexico (Badruddin 2016, Arp 2014).

Although for obvious reasons, the outflow of a highly qualified labour force

¹⁵ Examples of such entities are the Pakistani *Pakathon*, the Indian *Make in India* and the Israeli *Israeli Tech Challenge*.

is a loss for the economy of the country it leaves, it may be of benefit for the country which receives them. Perhaps, therefore, a basic condition must be fulfilled, namely the appropriate infrastructure for it to be taken advantage of. If the receiving economy does not have proper organisational-infrastructure and financial solutions, the potential of the labour force will remain unused or only partially exploited. That which is unused accumulates financial, social and frequently individual losses (disappointed expectations, aspirations, damage to one's professional career etc.).

The United States of America, as one of the most frequently chosen destinations by highly qualified specialists, bases its economy on continuous innovation and advanced technologies. This is made possible by the high levels of financial and infrastructural investment in research and development work which, in turn, demand suitably skilled human capital. This is accumulated in universities and Research and Development (R&D) centres, as well as networks of centres working on and implementing innovative solutions, such as in Silicon Valley in California.

Due to the immigrant origin of an American society formed in a relatively short process of nation-building (when compared with Europe), the negation of migration seems to be manifestation of a lack of understanding of the elementary phenomena of human reality. The results of public opinion surveys conducted by Gallup, Inc. (2006-2016), indicate a generally positive attitude of respondents to the phenomenon of migration as both useful and necessary, albeit not on the scale examined up to then (Newport, Brands 2016). The necessity for drastically reducing the influx of foreigners, especially those illegally crossing US borders, was stated by 45% of those surveyed (July 2016), with 51% taking the position of introducing effective solutions concerning illegal immigrants residing on US territory, while 4% had no opinion. The question arousing the greatest controversy and emotion, namely the building of a wall along the US-Mexican border as a method to halt undesirables, was viewed in negative terms by most of those surveyed with 66% being opposed and stressing their very strong opposition (44% of those opposed).

This concept declared by then-presidential candidate, Donald Trump, was combined with two further demands, altogether creating a reservoir of demands, slogans and buzzwords employed in Trump's election campaign. The position of the subsequent president concerning the most important problems and challenges facing the federal and state administrations was clearly defined, in comparison with his predecessor, Barack Obama, as starkly conservative. The manifestation of this were the declarations issued by Trump himself concerning the introduction of laws allowing the deportation of so-called 'illegal' immigrants, especially those who had committed crimes on the

territory of the United States, as well as Muslims not in possession of American citizenship. Especially the latter demand caused a wave of violent opposition among neo-liberal circles seeing in the proposals clear characteristics of discrimination against both individuals and groups on religious grounds. However, 52% of respondents categorically rejected the above-mentioned solution, with 31% supporting it, while 17% had no opinion (Newport, Brands 2016), which is important as a significant large group constitutes an 'area for development', both for Republicans and Democrats. The battle for the minds of voters, the formation of their beliefs and attitudes and their consequent decisions seem to be a never-ending story. History, understood here as a story based around several key aspects (migration, the economy, international security, the information war), is played out in bravado post-political manner, albeit in classic conventions based on black and white characters. The post-political components of this narrative are performance, spectacle, with the opponent but also the voters reaching for more shocking arguments, the manipulation of emotions, predominating over well-balanced arguments (Banaś 2012).

The American elections of 2016 and their course in the narrative field, provided a wealth of material regarding the analysis of American political culture and the ways in which it is practiced. It displays, therefore, the values which are important for a particular society and around which community life is built. Observing the case of America, one may point out that both for those governing (also referring here to those running for office) and the governed, stories giving rise to uncertainty, fear and anxiety constitute a serious and frequently effective argument. Just as Trump spread a vision of threats and losses regarding national security and society through, among other things, a lack of drastic anti-migration solutions, his opponents supporting the Democratic Party candidate, Hillary Clinton, and comprising a layer of highly trained and educated people, declared a readiness to leave US territory. Leaving the United States as a sign of protest regarding the election of Donald Trump as president was announced on social forums and it was also covered by the media which gave an impression of the widely held nature of this position or, at least, its dominance. Other countries quickly reacted (either seriously or superficially) to such declarations, such as Canada, China and Australia, addressing offers regarding attraction working and living conditions at potential migrants, namely specialists. Such activities are part of the strategy of building competitive economies, oriented towards the production of 'ideas' (in the sense of technological solutions) rather than the production of goods or services.

Pull factors in the form of campaign information of foreign countries were

strengthened by the statements of Trump himself, as well as his campaign workers, regarding the necessity of primarily using the potential of native-born scientists and experts before using immigrants (so-called push factors). Steve Bannon, one of the closest advisers to the 45th president of the United States, suggested that in Silicon Valley there were too many specialists originating from Asia, while ‘a country’s more than an economy. We’re a civic society’ (Washington Post, 15 November 2016).¹⁶ Bannon’s statement, subject to various interpretations, resulted in an increase in objections to the direction of development of immigration policy as signalled by the federal government, as well as employment policy, as a direct consequence of the first of these.

Considering the position of the Trump administration concerning the need to modify decisions to issue H-1B-type visas allowing American entities to employ highly specialised foreign workers, fears regarding the maintenance of conditions up to now are growing. Even if, from a rational point of view, they prove to be premature or unjustified, they do appear on social forums, in news bulletins and media commentary.¹⁷ Regarding the changes announced by the American administration, Robin Li, the Executive Director General of Baidu, the Chinese search engine (a competitor of Google), issued an official invitation to all those who, as specialists, feel unnecessary or unwanted in the United States.¹⁸

In terms of the observable dynamic of change occurring on a global scale and also affecting the location of centres of innovation and development, the process of the movement of highly qualified specialists from highly qualified countries to weaker economies is becoming more real and visible. Although in 2018 it was not yet obvious, with time this may grow and turn out to be a negative trend for today’s economic and political leaders, as well as a beneficial change for so-called emerging economies.

Instead of a Conclusion

The phenomenon of brain drain (BD), in its two variants: gain and loss, leaves a significant footprint on societies and economies in question. The beneficial brain drain BBD (Kuhn, McAusland 2006) may modify social, financial,

¹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-bannon-flattered-and-coaxed-trump-on-policies-key-to-the-alt-right/2016/11/15/53c66362-ab69-11e6-a31b-4b6397e625d0_story.html?utm_term=.310f98767347

¹⁷ Examples include: <http://fortune.com/2016/11/13/donald-trump-immigration-wall-2/>; https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/us/politics/executive-order-hire-buy-american-h1b-visa-trump.html?_r=0; <https://www.quora.com/How-will-the-H1-B-visa-process-change-due-to-a-Trump-presidency>;

¹⁸ <http://fortune.com/2016/11/18/baidu-ceo-overseas-tech-workers-silicon-valley-china/>

cultural and psychological aspects of individual and collective life while returning (e)migrants bring new ideas, new approaches, attitudes and even values to their countries of origin. Beneficial effects for less developed economies & communities may result from reverse brain drain (RBD) when highly skilled specialists chose to leave favourable environment of countries with strong economies. Such decisions may be triggered by a set of factors linked e.g. to politics, political changes and political resentments (the case of the US) or uncertainty about the future in the light of complex, complicated and slightly unpredictable EU exit process (the case of the UK). Both examples, however, provide an opportunity to raise a question whether the process we observe – the outflow of highly skilled specialists – should be called a reverse brain drain. Considering the context of predominantly political forces, the phenomenon in question seems to deserve a more precise name of a diverted brain drain (DBD). This may help identify real incentives, agents and animators of the process that shape contemporary, highly competitive societies and knowledge-based economies.

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