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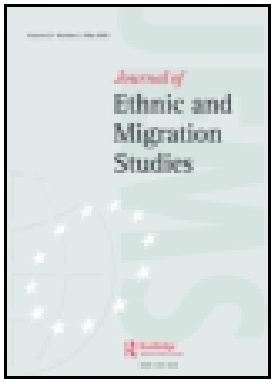

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The Times of Migration

Saulo B. Cwerner

Abstract *Time and migration have become fundamental themes in recent debates about modernity, globalisation, mobility and other contemporary issues. However, the relationship between the two has rarely figured as an explicit object of research. And yet, the analysis of the mutual implications between migration and time can be crucial for the understanding of several theoretical and practical problems associated with immigration, nation-states and multicultural societies. This article examines some of the complex temporal dimensions of the migration process. It reveals that time has often appeared as an important dimension in various accounts of immigration. On the basis of empirical research conducted with a particular immigrant group, namely Brazilians in London, the article suggests a number of conceptual tools for the analysis of the temporal aspects of migration. This conceptual framework is based on the development of the notions of the* strange, heteronomous, asynchronous, remembered, collage, liminal, diasporic *and* nomadic *times of migration. Finally, I briefly discuss the relationship between these times, the nation-states' responses to immigration, and the constitution of new forms of transnational social and cultural practices.*

KEYWORDS: TIME; MIGRATION; BRAZILIAN MIGRATION; LONDON; TRANSNATIONALISM; GLOBALISATION

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Both time and migration have become dominant themes in studies of contemporary global processes, yet very little has been said about the various dimensions of their relationship. In order to fill this gap, this article will explore twin issues: the idea that migration has crucial temporal dimensions, *and* the often overlooked fact that times *migrate* with people, that is, the time perspectives and symbols of immigrants affect in many ways their predicament in the 'host' society.[1]

Human migration has been largely understood as a phenomenon intimately associated with *space*, more precisely as a process unfolding *in* space. This may result from an intuitive definition of migration, which reflects the semantic field of its Latin root. As a consequence, 'the process of confrontation between time conceptions and perspectives, the attitudes towards time and the temporal habits of migrants and those of the host society' (Elchardus *et al*. 1987: 139) have occupied a secondary place in the sociological research on migration.[2] But if, as has been recently noted, migration constitutes 'a process as much concerned with time as it is with space' (Roberts 1995: 42), then a comprehensive analysis of those temporal dimensions is essential for a better understanding of migration processes.

The first section of this paper will show that, while some temporal aspects have indeed found their way into migration studies, these have generally been treated in isolation. On the other hand, the social study of time has mostly

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overlooked migration. The second section works through some of the major theoretical presuppositions that bear upon this study, with emphases on the multiplicity and complexity of both time and migration. I will also briefly describe the immigrant experience that grounds my conceptual analysis – the case of Brazilian immigrants in London. A third section provides an interpretative framework for the study of the times of migration, as well as a number of examples from that immigrant group. In the final section, I will discuss the importance of the ideas developed here in the context of the challenge posed by migration to increasingly globalised political, social and cultural processes.

Mutual implications

Despite the relative absence of migration in the sociology of time, and the fact that 'various aspects of time have been scarcely touched upon in studies concerning migration' (Elchardus *et al.* 1987: 138), hints as to the relationship between migration and time can be found scattered across both literatures. In fact, some studies of migration have provided explicit analyses of some of the temporal dimensions of migration processes.

On the one hand, the sociology of time has often pointed out the need to look at different temporal perspectives within particular societies. For instance, Sorokin noted the 'different rhythms and pulsations, and therefore different calendars and conventions for the sociocultural time' of each national and cultural group 'within the same territorial aggregate' (1964: 195). A more recent contribution to the debate has emphasised the 'coexistence of different temporal orientations and actions, that live together at the heart of a complex temporal architecture' (Gasparini 1994: 420).[3] More particularly, Zerubavel's important work on the sociology of time has been concerned with the role of temporal references (especially calendars) in the constitution of social identities and differences, and in the construction of group cohesion (Zerubavel 1981). However, these analyses have almost invariably overlooked the place of immigrants and immigrant groups.

Some important conceptual elements for assessing the relationship between migration and time can be drawn from contemporary social theory. Giddens' notions of the 'absent others', the 'disembedding of social relations', and 'time–space distantiation' clearly provide some abstract theoretical tools with which to approach the temporal condition of immigrants. By referring to the 'complex relations between *local involvements* (circumstances of co-presence) and *interactions across distance* (the connections of presence and absence)', Giddens (1990: 64; original emphases) points out a general characteristic of modern life that can be said to be particularly crucial to the experience of immigrants. However, Giddens and other theorists have been more narrowly concerned with the technological and institutional devices that enable a new set of spatial and temporal configurations in contemporary social life, and, hence, have overlooked some social and cultural consequences of increased human mobility. Giddens' attempt to show that 'time and space are recombined to form a genuinely world-historical framework of action and experience' (1990: 21) has provided little acknowledgement of the role of immigrant groups in such a recombination.

Other contemporary social theorists have accorded special roles to both time and migration in contemporary social processes. Lash and Urry (1994: 171–92, 223–51), for instance, discuss both the transformation of time and the increasing

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mobility of subjects as fundamental aspects of the new social landscape of flows and signs. However, despite paying attention to some of the implications of those changes, such as the increase in cosmopolitanism, the constitution of imagined global communities, and reactions to 'the progressive annihilation of temporal and spatial barriers' (Lash and Urry 1994: 278), they do not systematically establish the connections between these processes.

On the other hand, studies of migration have been more successful in tackling, more or less directly, the issue of time. Indeed, temporal dimensions have been occasionally discussed in a variety of studies that focus on different aspects of migration. One set of such studies has approached immigration from a socio-economic perspective, focusing, among other things, on the relationship between migration and the international division of labour, the constitution of labour migration flows, and the insertion of migrants as labourers in the host society. Piore (1979), for instance, has analysed how time perspectives and orientations of immigrants affect their position in the job market in the host country. He stresses that, very often, the temporary nature of labour migration predisposes immigrants to take on jobs under conditions deemed by native residents to be unacceptable (Piore 1979: 54). But he also noted that such perspectives change over time, as the once-transient migrants increasingly become permanent settlers. As people 'develop a more permanent attachment, their time horizon expands: instability of employment is no longer a matter of indifference' (Piore 1979: 64). With time, the immigrant community displays values and aspirations that are similar to those of the native population, especially *in relation to* time.

Three fundamental, interrelated temporal dimensions are revealed by Piore's analyses: first, the subjective expectations of migrants as to, among other things, the time of permanence in the host country. Second, the existence of a sort of immigrant 'career' marked by a standardised sequence of stages, as well as points of passage between them. Third, this particular form of labour migration exposes many of those involved in it to extreme and highly flexible working conditions, including high job insecurity, long working shifts, and the need to engage in a number of different jobs at any particular time. Castles and Miller (1993) also analyse similar patterns developing over time, which seem to relate to a whole variety of experiences of labour migrants, emphasising the rate of stability of social networks constituted at varying stages of the labour migration process.

These issues regarding the specific dynamics of the constitution of immigrant groups as emerging communities have been taken further by Roberts (1995). Following in the steps of Piore (1979) and deploying Merton's idea of 'Socially Expected Durations' (SEDs; Merton 1984), Roberts has focused on the role of the expectations regarding the duration of stay in the process of adjustment of immigrants to the host society. He has shown how temporal expectations, through their influence on present behaviour and future outcomes, affect not only the economic behaviour of immigrants, but also the cohesion of ethnic and family groups, as well as other immigrant networks. Temporal expectations such as to how long one is prepared to stay in the host country, or how long it will take before one achieves economic independence, are fundamental for the coordination of activities within those networks, families and communities.

Roberts argues that the 'temporariness' of immigration creates a typical ambivalence that is expressed in the conflicts between ethnic identity and the pressures to 'assimilate', as well as in the usual instance of family separation. He

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draws an interesting distinction between 'cultural exiles', who do not envisage a quick return home and are thus able to establish long-lasting links with the host society, and the 'transnational ethnic community', whose 'immediate prospect of return discourages their making long-term commitments, economic, social and cultural, in their host country' (Roberts 1995: 63).

Time has also figured in studies that focus on the legal and political dimensions of international migration. Within these spheres one finds not only the complex web of legal statements concerning the status of immigrants in a particular country, as embodied in citizenship and immigration laws, but also the agencies and institutions responsible for their implementation and enforcement, such as immigration offices, juridical systems, and the police. One can also discern specific political consequences of migration, which express themselves not only at the level of parliamentary discussion and government policy, but also in patterns of inclusion and exclusion, practices of discrimination and struggles for organisation and emancipation of immigrants.

The webs of legal and political practices and discourses concerning international migration have the major aim of constructing categories of 'alienship' that distinguish not only between the nation-state's citizens and those who are deemed to be 'foreigners', but also between different modalities of the alien 'other' (Cohen 1994). These constructions are suffused with a temporal language. Indeed, time is a central variable and tool used by immigration law, policy and control. Foreigners are categorised in terms of the length of legal permitted stay, and of whether they are entitled to temporary or permanent residence. Once allowed into the host country, immigrants are often subjected to forms of control that set up temporal conditions for renewing permits and other legal documentation, and for seeking changes in their immigrant status. Very often, 'illegality' stems directly from overstepping those temporal regulations. Hammar's (1994) model places legal time of residence at the heart of the attribution of status to immigrants. He distinguishes between three successive 'gates' at which the nation-state deploys its controlling, gate-keeping powers, which range from border control to naturalisation policies. Each of these 'gates' or moments is associated with a general status, namely those of the alien, denizen and citizen. Whatever the case, 'in most states, some significance is given to the length of stay in a country' (Hammar 1994: 193).

Likewise, temporal considerations lie at the heart of citizenship issues. The general principles of citizenship (see Çilar 1994: 56ff) can be said to reveal distinctive modalities of time. *Ius sanguinis*, whereby citizenship is contingent on the membership to a specific ethnic group, emphasises blood (sometimes 'race'), which links the contemporary problem of citizenship to a time of origins rigidly rooted in the distant past. *Ius soli* confers automatic citizenship to children born to non-citizens. Even when the law refers to the children of the second generation of immigrants (*double ius soli*), the temporal horizon implicit in it is still within the generation time that is usually part of the lived experience of immigrants. Thence, 'members of the polity share with each other a common childhood rather than a common ancestry' (Bauböck 1998: 324). The mythic time of ethnic origins and the lived or narrated experience of generation time, incidentally, also play important roles in determining potential citizenship for the children of immigrants in relation to the homeland of the latter. With *ius domicili*, it is regular residence in the host country that counts and, again, length of time of residence is crucial. Citizenship is often a much more complex issue

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than this brief analysis can convey. However, I have shown that several temporal dimensions lie at its core, especially in relation to the allegiances and identities that define its problematic nature.

The issue of the temporal aspects of the membership of immigrants to host nation-states is taken up by Bauböck (1998). Focusing on continuity and discontinuity in historical time, he discusses the challenges posed by immigration to the time horizons of democratic polities. By tentatively distinguishing polities from both cultures and societies, Bauböck is able to suggest a notion of 'democratic polity' that is based on shared pasts and futures, stable values and long-term commitments. His main problem is, therefore, how to normatively define the ways in which these democratic time horizons become more inclusive of the experiences of individual immigrants, their families, networks and institutions. Since polities are all too often constructed around exclusive national histories and expectations, particular immigrant memories would seem to be systematically excluded. As an alternative to both exclusionist practices and the 'short-termism' of a conceivable universal denizenship, Bauböck argues for a democratic polity that builds on the memories and expectations of present and past immigrant groups. Time (viewed here as the construction of collective pasts and futures, that is, historical time) is thus established as an important dimension of the relationship between migration, citizenship and democracy.

More recently, there has been a renewed interest in the cultural aspects of migration. One major concern has been with the ways through which contemporary migration flows have re-shaped the cultural maps of the world, creating new cultural formations from the consolidation of communities of immigrants and their descendants around the world. These processes have been analysed through concepts such as multiculturalism, hybridity, diaspora and ambivalence. They are in many ways indebted to a stream of classical studies of the 'stranger', the archetypal social character often associated with immigrants (Park 1967; Schutz 1964; Siu 1991).

Explicit connections between the cultural and temporal aspects of migration have been suggested by a number of scholars. In the late 1940s, Eisenstadt and others conducted an empirical study of perceptions of time and space in a context of culture contact following a particular migration flow, that of Jews from Jerusalem's Old City to the Western part of the city, following Israel's war of independence (Eisenstadt 1949). The basic assumption of that study was that such situations of culture contact provided the ideal social environment where elements of social disorganisation (Durkheim's *anomie*) could be isolated and their effect on spatial and temporal perceptions thus observed.

The main effect, argued Eisenstadt, was a fundamental discontinuity in spatial and temporal perception. Among those families that did not manage to assimilate to the new social environment, social activities were temporally disorganised, with no

> definite temporal sequence and pattern […] Every 'moment' of time acquired a characteristic of its own, becoming disconnected from other moments. There was no continuity of moments – neither continuity of social relations nor of temporal perception. (Eisenstadt 1949: 66)

Each moment was lived according to shifting needs and pressures. They appeared to be totally disconnected. This pattern of perception was reflected in

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orientations toward the future, which featured neither continuity nor hierarchy of goals.

Eisenstadt believed that such temporal effects were particularly salient in situations of culture contact because people usually faced different sets and patterns of roles, values and social behaviour. In the end, what accounted for differences in the migrants' spatio-temporal perceptions was the ability to relate to the 'ultimate values and identifications of the social system' (Eisenstadt 1949: 67). Specific forms of displacement tend to create situations in which time is perceived as discontinuous and disorganised. The reverse assumption is, obviously, that assimilation to the social order implies a perception of time as continuous. These ideas are important in that they point out the relationship between temporal disorientation and the marginal status of displaced, marginalised migrant groups. The problem with such functionalist analyses is that they measure all temporal perception against the background of assimilation to society's dominant set of values. Although such dimension is by no means unimportant, it misses out a whole set of specific perspectives that may develop within the group and that, despite stemming from its marginal character, cannot be described simply *by reference* to the temporal orientations of the wider society in which migrants establish themselves.

A more complex attempt to theorise the relationship between time, culture and migration is the pioneering essay by Elchardus *et al.* (1987). The authors' objectives are to provide a theoretical approach for the study of the different temporal aspects of the migrant experience and their consequences. They have in mind the particular process of migration from rural areas to industrialised urban centres. Of course, the rural–urban pattern by no means exhausts the multiple character of contemporary migration processes, but their scheme does offer an important contribution with which to analyse some of the temporal dimensions of international migration.

They spell out six factors that influence the relationship between time and cultural identity in the migrant experience. First, they emphasise the actual 'abrupt transition' between two places, often expressed in the contrast between cyclical and linear conceptions of time, and between rigid and flexible value systems (with their implications for temporal values). Second, the authors discuss issues related to the perspective of, and desire to, return. As they put it, 'the paradox between the migrants' will to return … and the forever delayed return creates a particular problem and exercises a direct influence on their time perspective' (Elchardus *et al.* 1987: 146). The migrants' attitudes to their homeland may be deeply affected by their economic and social achievements in the host society. The issue of return (projected, planned, desired, postponed or impossible) thus plays a fundamental role in the migrants' temporal experience.

Third, the migrants' temporal aspects of action become important elements of the assertion of their cultural and social identities. Those differences, often leading to situations of confrontation, are accentuated in contexts of immigration. Moreover, the cultural and religious links with the homeland play an important role in such conflicts. Fourth, and following the previous point, they identify 'the religious, ideological and cultural developments in the country of origin and their significance for the experience of cultural identity' (Elchardus *et al.* 1987: 144) as a further factor that influences the relationship between time and culture in migration processes. It implies the issues of loyalty to, and nostalgia

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for the homeland, which are expressed, for instance, in the use of alternative calendars and the celebration of national and ethnic holidays.

A fifth factor that deserves attention is the set of formal and informal reactions of the host society towards the migrant communities, with the aim of assimilating the latter. A whole series of temporal arrangements in everyday life, patterns of synchronisation of activities, and the weight of clock time and punctuality norms are imposed on the life of migrants, eliciting particular forms of resistance and opposition. Finally, the authors point out the minority status of migrant groups, which often results in the feeling of living under constant threat, danger and insecurity. These feelings, in turn, reveal a series of attitudes towards time.

The study by Elchardus *et al.* is a pioneering attempt to examine the relationship between time and migration. On the other hand, it tends to emphasise the factors that lead to the confrontation of different temporal values, rather than exploring the particular temporal forms that the migrant experience might entail. Moreover, when suggesting the temporal nature of such confrontation, the authors make assumptions about the differences between 'rural' and 'urban' times that are problematic. Since their main object is migration from rural to urban areas, they rely heavily on traditional dichotomies such as cyclical/linear and natural/clock times, sequential/synchronised activities, and symbolic/functional uses of time, as expressing essential differences between rural and urban times. Such a dichotomised view of time has recently come under fire (Adam 1990: 46; Harris 1991). Indeed, as Adam has suggested, time must now be seen from a perspective that 'stresses the mutual permeation and thus inseparability of … dichotomies', uniting the global and the local, difference and universals (Adam 1995: 158–9).

Not unrelated to the theme of migration, there are a growing number of studies that focus on diasporas as defining social formations of the contemporary world. The debates about diasporas have revealed a great dose of both contention and liberty in the use of the concept. It has been both a concept of mobility and a mobile concept (Peters 1999). In a move to expand the semantic field of the term beyond the traditional associations with, say, the Greek, Jewish, and even Armenian experiences, contemporary studies have focused on recent or ongoing migration flows and crises as constituting new diasporas (Van Hear 1998). In this analytical move, the subject of time did not escape those attempting to draw out the implications of diasporas for the cultural and political foundations of the nation-state.

Diasporas are said to question the dominant logic of origins and history (Chambers 1994: 16–17) and propose alternatives to the temporalities of both the nation-state (Clifford 1994: 308) and modernity (Gilroy 1993: 194). Of course, the role of collective memory is often highlighted in both the definition of diaspora (Saffran 1991) and the particular ways through which it problematises territorialised notions of identity (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993). Summing up the trend, Lavie and Swedenburg speak of diasporas constituting a 'third time–space', which is neither a time of absolute origins, nor of nomadic contingency (1996: 17): a time of constructing a home away from home. In his seminal analysis of life in exile, Said also stressed the temporality of exile, 'less seasonal and settled than life at home' (1990: 366).

More recently, Westin (1998) has provided an interesting analysis of the temporal and spatial dimensions of migration and multicultural societies. In the process of migration, he identifies, among other things, the different pace of life

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and temporal symbols that characterise immigrant groups, the times associated with mobility, and the protracted nature of the process of integration to and participation in the host society (Westin 1998: 63–6). While Westin does not integrate these processes into a conceptual framework, he does theorise the spatial and temporal differences between various social formations, such as nation-states and diasporas, and the way that they articulate the diversity and mobility of cultures that characterise the contemporary world.

In this section of the paper, I have shown that studies of both time and migration have on various occasions suggested their interconnections. It has been particularly in migration studies that the mutual implications have been directly or indirectly acknowledged. In these studies, however, temporal aspects or dimensions have been treated in isolation. Although temporal perspectives (the past and the future), the pace of life, time perceptions and symbols (continuity/discontinuity, cyclical/linear), and other aspects have all been analysed, very little has been done to investigate these various dimensions simultaneously. These, arguably, are part of every person's temporal experience. The next section will examine the basis of this complexity. It will also point out the limitations of the framework suggested in this article.

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Migration and the social theory of time

The contemporary social theory of time is characterised by a multiplicity of perspectives and themes. This diversity in part reflects the theoretical affiliation of the analyst to one of the many families of social and philosophical thought. Ultimately, however, it perhaps also reveals the multiple nature of time itself, which may preclude the success of a unifying or totalising theoretical project. These issues lie at the heart of any attempt at portraying the complexity of the temporal experience of particular individuals and social groups.

Temporal experience includes all temporal issues that bear upon social life and are thus defined meaningfully in various social contexts. It expresses itself at the various levels of feelings, concepts, language, tools and social organisation. It belongs to the whole scale of social life, from the individual to social systems. Regardless of the perspective and moment adopted, social life must be seen as consisting of an *intersection* of various times. These times comprise: perspectives of, orientations towards, and horizons limiting the future, the present, and the past; temporal norms referring to the sequence, duration, timing and tempo of socially expected patterns of behaviours, actions, careers and life paths; symbols used in the communication and transmission of knowledge associated with the change and permanence of events, objects and processes; a quantifiable resource that is allocated, bought, hired, wasted, co-ordinated, and used for various purposes; an 'environment' in which human action can be located and change measured; behavioural rhythms and practices that express cultural identities and differences; narratives (religious, moral, historical) that express the origins, direction and end (or endlessness) of individuals, peoples, nations, nature and the world; and embedded times, characteristic rhythms of natural and technological processes, and their far-reaching social and environmental consequences.

The scope of empirical determinations of time should neither surprise analysts nor preclude more comprehensive analysis. A common objection to this view is that it expands the range of temporal experience to such an extent that the very

idea of time becomes too thin and general to deserve focused attention. If time is everywhere and so many things, then how can we proceed to study it? This is an important objection that needs addressing in order to justify the more specific theoretical formulations concerning time and migration. One can identify three sets of issues here.

First, times *are* indeed everywhere. Time does not belong only to particular social processes. Human life is lived in and by various times. It is constituted by finite and evolving organic processes characterised by both pre-programmed *and* learned rhythms. Human groups have also learned to harness the various natural rhythms they encounter around them through technology and social organisation. In this process, they have created their own temporal symbols and other ways to make sense and use of the flow of things, its continuity and discontinuity, progress and arrests. This has included the specific technology of producing and storing information about past events that we call history. As social relations have become increasingly complex, they have become entangled in a myriad of temporal rhythms. Human migration is a central part of this story as it has made it possible for people to experience the diversity of those rhythms and histories.

Second, the ideas of multiplicity and complexity are fundamental in order to avoid essentialising particular experiences of time. Thus my analysis of the times of migration by no means intends to draw a metaphysical map that cuts immigrants out of their ordinary, everyday existence, nor does it suggest a *sui generis* temporal experience that is not (and cannot be) shared by other people, the 'non-migrants'. The very substance of categories such as 'migrants' and 'immigrants' is contentious and contested. Migration should be seen as a set of particular experiences, however central to the life course of the individuals concerned, not as a totalising social condition that crucially determines every aspect of social and cultural life.[4] The times of migration conceptualised here by no means intend to exhaust the temporal experience of 'immigrants' in their other roles, contexts, and identities. Conversely, what is described here as the times *of* migration are modalities of temporal experience that are similar to other social contexts where social and geographical mobility, as well as cultural estrangement, are central features of social experience.

Third, although time is constitutive of nature, and therefore of human social life as an element of nature, the study of time is arguably more crucial in situations where time is itself problematised by individuals and social groups. In these contexts of crisis and radical change, what is normally taken for granted, the normal rhythms and flows, sequences and frequencies, the duration of activities and the pace of daily life, the social narratives and the works of memory, all become problematic. Migration is one of such contexts where much of social life is potentially disrupted. By revealing the interplay between ruptures and continuities, old rhythms and new routines, a focus on the temporal dimensions of such experiences can provide a critical anchor for understanding the process, dynamics and possibilities of the migration process. In this sense, time should *not* be seen as a detached aspect of social activities, but as a constitutive element of the immigrant experience, one from which a great deal of meaning is derived.[5]

Multiplicity and complexity are also defining characteristics of migration flows in the contemporary world. As Castles and Miller remind us, contemporary international migration involves people from various social backgrounds

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and walks of life (1993: 3). In the previous section I underlined the fact that migrations can be studied from different perspectives, namely the legal-political, socio-economic and cultural dimensions. Factors associated with the complex grid of immigrants' identities can also be singled out, such as gender, 'race', age, as well as the various institutional and informal commitments of immigrants in the host society (health provision, educational prospects, family life and social networks, to mention a few). The complex world of migration cannot be subsumed under a single analytical perspective, and the same can be said about its times. For instance, refugees fleeing political upheaval or environmental disaster, many of whom can be characterised as 'forced migrants', will often experience the ruptures and the contingency characteristic of 'catastrophic time' (Game 1997), where the temporal normalcy of behaviour and the synchronisation of social activities are usually *suddenly* interrupted. This temporality will not be typically part of the experience of other forms of migration.

As a consequence, it is impossible to provide a framework with which to analyse all potential times of migration. Again, all that one can do is to choose a particular perspective and try to give as complete a picture as possible of the complexity of times experienced by a particular group of immigrants. By simultaneously looking at details of immigrants' lives and acknowledging their particularity, it is possible to avoid essentialising time and migration. The diversity of the times of migration stems from the increasing complexity of contemporary social life. The concepts used here derive from both general and particular aspects of migration. It is the role of empirical research to back up their usefulness for other contexts and immigrant groups. On the other hand, the times of migration have been here conceptualised in tandem with theoretical developments in migration studies and related areas of research. Therefore, various widespread aspects of migration have also been dealt with.

The scheme that I suggest below is based on research undertaken with Brazilian immigrants who have lived in London during the past 15 years or so. Generally from a middle-class background, they are typically young, single emigrants (in their 20s or 30s), although the impetus for emigration has come from various sources. There are no homogeneous economic 'push' or 'pull' factors, although the steady constitution of transnational immigrant networks tends to 'pull' further prospective immigrants out of Brazil. Adventure and a desire to 'see the world' are frequently cited as reasons to emigrate. Indeed, many of the immigrants I interviewed had steady jobs or careers *prior* to emigration. The recent Brazilian emigration wave, which started at the end of the 1980s, is now reasonably well documented (see, for instance, Margolis 1994). Most emigrants have moved to either the USA or Japan, while there has also been a more regional stream of Brazilians crossing the borders to neighbouring countries in South America. London has, arguably, the largest Brazilian community in Europe.

Their move is usually seen as temporary and return is nearly always envisaged. Some Brazilian immigrants have dual nationality (mostly Italian, Spanish or Portuguese), but most secure the status of students in the UK, which allows them to work legally in the country under certain conditions. There is also, of course, the 'immigrant élite', composed by those associated with Brazilian diplomatic and business representations, as well as various professionals. Despite that, most 'abuse' the terms of their immigrant status, and 'illegality' haunts a great number of them. Because of that, and because of the temporary

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nature of most sojourns, it is virtually impossible to know the exact number of Brazilians who were living in London at any particular moment at the end of the twentieth century. Informal estimates range from 15,000 to 50,000. At any rate, there is a lively Brazilian community in London.

This immigrant community has seen a sharp increase in its numbers over the past two decades. One can loosely infer that from the British Censuses of 1981 and 1991. If one compares the official number of UK residents born in South America in both years, the figure one gets is of a 28.7 per cent increase, compared to the increase of the total British Population of only 2.4 per cent (Office of Population Censuses and Survey 1983: 3; 1993: 26–7, 78–85). These figures reveal the migratory effects of the economic and political upheavals in the 'lost decade' (the 1980s) that engulfed most of South America. Also, the 1991 Census shows a specific figure for Brazilians, which was not the case with the previous Census, in which Brazilians were simply grouped with fellow South Americans. That, together with the fact that much of Brazilian emigration occurred after 1991, and the fact that a very high proportion of Brazilians were then living in London, provides a less imprecise measure of the growth in the Brazilian immigrant community in that city.

One interesting aspect of this migration flow is its flexibility. Expectations as to the duration of stay vary immensely with time. Individuals planning to spend just a few months abroad end up staying for many years, often settling permanently in the country. In order to avoid or circumvent strict immigration laws and procedures, Brazilians in the UK (who do not have a relevant second nationality that enables them to work and live indefinitely there) can try to acquire work permits, although, far more often, marriage to a UK national is seen as a more viable alternative. Whatever the circumstance, however, the shifting temporal horizons of immigration constitute one of the most fundamental aspects of this migration flow.

I have focused on the experience of immigrants and the way that they perceive, temporally, their situation. Immigration, however, is not just a reality for immigrants. It is also constructed (often as a 'problem') in the midst of discursive practices, government policies and other social processes (see Diken 1998). The very conceptual construction of an 'immigrant group' as a bounded category has, very often, ideological connotations. So, the times of migration have different values according to the perspective adopted. An immigrant's impatience due to unforeseen delays in the plans to return home may be seen as wilful protraction by some members of the host society. In the context of the theoretical and methodological limits imposed by the complexity and multiplicity of both time and migration, it is possible to propose a number of equally valid alternative schemes to the one suggested below. As a consequence, I will build on the approaches suggested in the previous section, while expanding the range of temporal experience that deserves analysis in the context of the immigrant group among which my research was undertaken.

The times of migration: a conceptual framework

The following scheme is based on the assumption that immigrants, immigrant groups and immigrant communities do experience particular cultures of time, that is, complex clusters or articulations of a diversity of temporal perceptions, representations, rhythms and organisation. As shown above, there is enough

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suggestion in the literature for holding such assumption. But where do these times of migration lie? What is their status *vis-à-vis* other, mainstream temporalities? Are they specific to the migrant experience? Mercure (1979) has pointed out that one corollary of the assumption of the existence of a multiplicity of times is the existence of rifts between different temporalities, which entail a certain 'temporal distance' between different social groups. This temporal distance constitutes a world of links and ruptures, of multiple distortions and adjustments, and of latent and manifest conflicts. Such discordant temporalities produce 'perturbing' effects over the lives of individuals, who then display characteristic 'difficulties to "pass" from one time to another' (Mercure 1979: 274). Although these are general aspects of contemporary societies, immigration may offer a privileged case to study such conditions.

The description that follows should be read as an interpretative framework to be used in the process of understanding the times of migration. It provides a conceptual tool that intends to frame the temporal predicament of a particular type of immigrant, as explained in the previous section. Each set of times described represents particular temporal issues that face immigrants in their experience *qua* immigrants. They do not reflect the totality of the temporal experience of immigrants, since immigrants are also ordinary people whose experience in many respects does not differ from that of 'native' residents. But in several other respects their experience does differ, and it is those fault lines, in which new temporalities are inscribed, that I set out to describe.

The order below does not represent any hidden logic, and all sets of times bear upon the lives of immigrants *simultaneously*. Having said that, their individual importance is contingent upon the social context and reflects particular circumstances (such as the loss of a job, the renewal of a visa, or the coming of a national holiday). As a consequence, one could read different articulations between them. One of these is given by looking at immigration as a process unfolding in time, with a series of typical sequences, from the point of view of the individual. Seen as a linear process of self-development, adaptation and participation, these sequences of a Brazilian immigrant 'career' in London are faintly implied in the order chosen below. However, it should be noted once more, there is an inevitable bias in this presentation of immigration as a linear progression, as various other immigrant 'narratives' can also be construed.

On the other hand, the immigrants' decisions are determined by a series of contingent and conflicting constraints, expectations and memories associated with particular institutions (such as immigration control enforcers) or social groups (the family, the networks of friends, or the homeland/nation). Their actions are caught in a myriad of temporal perceptions and evaluations that characterise the contemporary world, at the same time individualised and globalised. Because there are so many temporal factors in the immigrant context, every immigrant will tend to experience a different totality (thence individualisation). At the same time, those times are determined by, but also shape, a series of transnational processes, flows and networks (thence globalisation). As a result, although it is possible to talk about some typical dimensions of the times of migration, one should beware of simply generalising the following framework to every immigrant experience of time (and even to every Brazilian immigrant in London).[6]

The first three sets of times described here, namely the *strange*, *heteronomous*, and *asynchronous* times of migration, are concerned mainly with the practical

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and symbolic levels of immigrant adjustment to the host society. They express some pressing issues that many immigrants face from the moment they land in a foreign country. They basically refer to the process of immigration seen as displacement, uprooting, and the rupture of daily routines. They also reflect the condition of immigrants as 'alien others' (not the least in the legal sense inscribed in immigration law).

The times that I have termed *remembered*, *collage*, and *liminal*, although possibly present right from the start, become more expressive as the immigrant experience develops. The reason for this is that they reflect the increasing ambivalence of the immigrant situation. Immigrants are not just aliens with no connection to the host society, or natives from a far-away land eager to assert their original identities. As these identities become increasingly problematic, their immigrant condition becomes increasingly uncertain. Immigration gradually becomes a part of their lives and identities, rather than just a contingent circumstance.

Finally, I see the *nomadic* and *diasporic* times of migration as parts of a long-term temporal outlook in the experience of immigrants, whereby the temporality of migration increasingly defines the life course of individuals and communities. Immigration, from the vantage point of this time scale, expresses processes of radical individualisation of the life paths of nomads and intense socialisation in the collective life of diasporas. Here we see some of the creative and transgressive possibilities of migration flows in the gradual proliferation of transnational life projects and cultural practices.

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Strange times

From the start, immigrants are faced by a multitude of times that seem strange, unfamiliar, 'other'. They almost literally arrive with a *temporal baggage* comprising codes, symbols and dispositions that cover a whole range of elements, from the pace and sequencing of various modalities of social interaction to the broad temporal organisation of social life. Some aspects of the new temporal environment, such as commercial hours, are easily learned. Others may take much more time. Levine points out that 'adjusting to an alien pace of life can pose as many difficulties as learning the foreign language itself' (1988: 39). The pace of life is embodied in habits such as greeting, walking, eating and turn-taking. These aspects of what Lewis and Weigert (1981: 436) call 'interaction time' have to be learned in order to avoid ill feelings, embarrassment and indifference. Other aspects that express such temporal disjunctions include varying emphases on punctuality, and the patterns of activity and meanings associated with night and day, weekends and holidays. As Zerubavel (1987) puts it, there is a whole semiotics of time that has to be internalised.

In order to adjust to the host society, new immigrants may rely on the experience of 'veterans', but interaction with locals is always the best tutor, and it usually takes time for the strangeness of times to be partially dissipated. Since those unconscious temporal dispositions are hard to get rid off, the differences that remain will be used in the construction of stereotypes regarding, for instance, body language and modes of interaction. Conversely, the successful internalisation of the practical knowledge and explicit rules associated with the normalcy of everyday life will tend to heighten the immigrants' self-awareness of their own temporal dispositions.

The rhythms and pace of daily interaction are not the only set of temporal

realities to which immigrants are called upon to adjust. There are also the cyclical or rhythmical features of natural and calendar times. Patterns of day and night (with the respective significance of light and darkness), work and leisure, weekdays and weekends, months, seasons, years, decades and generations, are all suffused with meanings that may appear strange to immigrants. This is the case because, despite the standardisation of clock time, the week and the year across various regions and countries in the world, these cycles retain a local degree of flexibility or elasticity. This is usually expressed in differences in meaning, memory and expectation. As Sorokin pointed out, 'within a week, the days have a different physiognomy, structure, and tempo of activities' (1964: 190), and these may vary across cultures and countries.

One of the main aspects of the strangeness of time for Brazilian immigrants in London is the relationship between time and the weather.[7] The relative length of day and night and other weather features are common preoccupations in the lives of these immigrants. One aspect of their influence is the physical effects that the strange weather has on people. It is said to affect people's mood, health, even sociability. An issue of the Brazilian immigrant magazine *Leros*, published in London in Portuguese, feels it important to bring to the community's attention the reality of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), which can arguably 'provoke symptoms such as insomnia, lethargy, anxiety, desire to eat too much or loss of sexual drive' (Webb 1994: 16). SAD is said to derive its effects mainly from the diminished sunlight during the winter months, and supposedly affects many immigrants.

Far more often, however, the weather is used as a repository of metaphors about cultural difference in the immigrant context. Olavo, from Rio de Janeiro, who comes from an Anglo-Brazilian family, but who only recently migrated to England, speaks about the virtual impossibility of meeting people, by chance, in the street:[8]

> You have to call them, you have to arrange everything. I quite like it, sometimes you have to arrange a month in advance, but this stuff of informality, of bumping into each other by chance, that doesn't exist, because there is no street culture, staying outside, you have to go into the *pubs*, into the houses.

For Brazilians living in London, both the weather and British pub culture become signifiers of a complex grid of cultural identifications based on rhythms and temporalities. This grid provides a specific temporal language of cultural comparison. On one pole, Brazilians and Brazilian life are seen as spontaneous, fleeting and 'warm'; while, on the opposite pole, Englishness or Britishness are seen as organised, enduring and 'cold'. Rhythmicity, repetition and malleability are seen as the defining features of the 'Brazilian personality', for the good as far as personal relations, music and dance are concerned, for the bad when politics and social divisions are mentioned. Systems of cultural classification like this, present in any society, are heightened during the immigrant experience, providing everyday explanations and rationale for action in the host society. They account for several of the difficulties encountered there, from finding work to developing personal relationships.

Heteronomous times

Some temporal aspects of immigration will be experienced as oppressive. They

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will typically effect *closures* of time in the lives of immigrants, and the ensuing feeling is one of *temporal alienation*. One's time will be perceived as lying beyond one's immediate control. The strange times of migration can in part be avoided, if one keeps away from interaction with the members of the host society. In the long run, they tend to be conquered by habit, learning, and practice. Heteronomous times are to a large degree inescapable, and it is far more difficult to get rid of their grip.

The overarching, pervasive presence of immigration control is the main example of the heteronomous times of migration. For a large period of one's immigrant life (sometimes for the whole of its duration), the inescapable alien status is bound to dominate many of the times of one's immigrant experience. The issue of temporary visas and permits and the constant fear of immigration control affect not only undocumented immigrants but also those who, despite their current legal status, are constantly on the edge of legality.

When this element is combined with the willingness to work long hours in a flexible work environment, with the usual mix of temporal flexibility and job insecurity, there develops a strong sense of alienation whereby time seems to be rarely under one's control. Not only time as an empty category to be disposed of, but also the future. Because of such limitations, the future becomes dissociated from the present while one's power of planning it decreases (Eisenstadt 1949). Immigrants typically face a constant re-examination of their objectives, which are now contingent on external factors.

One of the consequences is the development of a 'temporal panic … a reaction to the nearing time which is approaching faster than the person's ability to finish the present act requires' (Lewis and Weigert 1981: 436). Immigrants then seem caught in a series of *time traps*, which contrast with the relative freedom of choice that prompted the decision to emigrate. This sensation is heightened in the case of individual immigrants who had greatly exaggerated expectations before emigration, or who had very imprecise information about the place of destination. From the perspective of these time traps, immigrants are individuals with a relatively small degree of 'time sovereignty' (Elchardus 1994).

The immigrant status of Brazilians in London varies a lot. There are those who managed to acquire citizenship of another European Union country by virtue of being the children or grandchildren of immigrants in Brazil. Indeed, there are a number of lawyers or other 'immigration and nationality consultants' who specialise in tracking documents and helping individuals in their quest for a second passport (legally or illegally procured). There is a scarcely researched citizenship market out there, affecting an increasing number of people. A great number of Italian–Brazilians, Spanish–Brazilians, and other holders of dual nationality choose to come to England, which they see as culturally interesting and more economically rewarding.

However, the vast majority of Brazilians enter the UK *as* Brazilians *and as* tourists. The challenge of those who do not see themselves *as* tourists is to renew their leave to remain in the UK after the initial period, usually six months. Most do it by enrolling in one of the many English language schools that have sprung up in and around London in the past two decades. If they register for a 15-hour course they can ask for permission from the Home Office to work. But even for these, their 'legal' status can never be taken for granted. Many do not attend the courses. Indeed, many of the schools have become 'visa factories' in a world of immigrants desperate to stay a bit longer. But the immigration system in the UK

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gives too discretionary a power to individual officers. As a result, nobody can be absolutely sure that his or her visa will be renewed and termination of the immigrant experience (or the risk of staying illegally) always haunts these Brazilians.

Immigration control has another, far more insidious facet: even if it cannot reach everyone, many immigrants in those circumstances live in fear of deportation. Stories of dawn raids by immigration officers abound, and close escapes are legendary. Time is at premium in the life of Brazilian immigrants in London. Some boast about receiving unusually generous 'terms', while others, although temporally relieved, have already to start thinking about the strategies to be adopted when the next renewal is due. In light of these difficulties, it is not surprising that many willing immigrants are prepared to risk other strategies. A few Brazilians have applied for the status of refugees, although most have shunned this avenue because of the increased risks and similar temporal constraints. Many others have secured marriages with British or EU nationals. Although some of these are what in tabloid language can be called 'bogus' marriages, some have made long-term family and relationship commitments. Indeed, debates about the reality of other immigrants' 'love' for their British spouses are customary in Brazilian immigrant circles.

Economic and cultural marginalisation adds to the temporal closure effected by immigration control. Most Brazilians are employed in highly flexible, low-pay jobs. The do not have time or money to enjoy London's cultural life, one of the city's main attractions for immigrants. This creates a paradox that haunts a great number of Brazilians living there: while immigration started as, and largely remains, a conscious and free decision, much of what it entails is determined against the wishes of immigrants. These are doubly trapped: on the one hand, by the desire to stay longer and see more; and, on the other, by the reality where day-to-day reproduction and the constant need to 'buy' the elusive time in which to realise their projects are the only preoccupations.

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Asynchronous times

One of the basic problems facing immigrants is how to extend the scope of the 'imagined community' of their nation. Benedict Anderson has said that the constitution of the nation-state presupposes a certain temporality, the heterogeneous time of the 'meanwhile', a 'traverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment but by temporal coincidence, and measured by the clock and calendar' (quoted in Bhabha 1994: 158). Several developments contributed to that process, from technological innovations, such as the telegraph and the railway, to discursive innovations such as history and mythical narratives. However it is only recently, with the development of global communication and information systems, that it has been possible for immigrants to extend that temporality of the nation to their communities abroad.

In order to do that, immigrants deploy a series of strategies, all geared to *keeping in touch* with the homeland. Telephone calls, letters and email are but a few of the personal methods involving mediated contact with people in the homeland. The periodicity of such contact depends on the socio-economic background of the immigrants, and also on their economic success in the host country. Of course, each of the media referred to above has its own temporality,

and it is a combination of all those that are present in the lives of individual immigrants that is particularly interesting for analysis.

The business of 'keeping in touch' is not merely individual. The flow of collective life in the host city helps to maintain the sense of belonging to the homeland's flowing present. Leda, from São Paulo, describes some instances of the process of 'resynchronisation' between immigrants and their homeland:

> Sometimes I buy *Veja* [a Brazilian weekly magazine], there's *Leros*, of course, every time something happens, they tell us. We have a lot of contact with Brazilians, we are always telling each other … When Renato Russo [a Brazilian pop star] died, we told each other, we spread the news; when the aeroplane crashed [a passenger carrier fell over a residential area in São Paulo in 1996], which happened close to where I used to live, a friend rang: 'turn on the TV!'… Everything that the TV shows about Brazil, we call each other, and every time someone sends a letter, the first to read it spreads the news. Sometimes my mother calls, and says 'this happened', [I say] 'I already know'. Of course, just the most important things. There are a lot of things you never hear about. That's why it's good to buy *Veja* once in a while.

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Leda's account reveals with clarity the rifts that exist between the flow of events in the homeland and the everyday reality in the host society. For many Brazilians, telephone calls are very expensive, although their cost has decreased considerably in the past few years. At present, only very few have direct access to the Internet (at home or at work). Of course, the Internet will gradually change the way those rifts are experienced. As immigration increasingly finds its way through cyberspace, the changing times of contemporary society will tend to reframe the problem of asynchronicity.

While the community grows in numbers, the density of commerce with the homeland also grows, and various cultural products will appear in London with a decreasing time lag in relation to when they first appear in the homeland. Brazilian immigrants can purchase videos with weekly highlights of the major TV networks in Brazil, while real-time media exposure (through the Internet or satellite TV) will become an increasing reality. Homeland artists will include the cities where those communities live in their world tours. Ultimately, however, only the occasional trip back home can re-install the wholeness of the feeling of belonging and, thence, renew the temporal synchronisation of one's life path to that of the homeland.

One important strategy of resynchronisation is the celebration of the homeland national festivals. The immigrant community, mostly in the form of immigrant networks and a few immigrant organisations, gets together to insert their own highlights into the calendar of the host society. For Brazilians in London, however, it also means celebrating carnival indoors, in the winter. The homeland's calendar of festivals and holidays provides a different beat to the year by placing meanings, expectations and memories along a more familiar temporal reference. It is also the time when many immigrants are visited by their relatives and friends from Brazil. Opportunities like these help to strengthen the transnational networks established by immigrants, which link various societies and nations.

Boyarin suggests the distinction between 'simultaneity', which refers to the 'sense that others are doing at the same time things that are meaningfully related to your own experience', and 'meanwhileness', a 'mere awareness that there *are* others going about their separate business at the same time as you are' (Boyarin 1994: 17; original emphasis). It is thus possible to say that one of the challenges

facing immigrants is to transform the grey sense of meanwhileness into a vivid sense of simultaneity. The process of synchronisation, therefore, celebrates a national identity that is grounded in one and the same flow of time.

Remembered times

When synchronisation is only dimly achieved, it is memory that provides the major link with the (imagined) homeland. Immigrants' memories, however, are under constant pressure from the passage of time. Because the host society usually throws a veil of silence over the images of the homeland, immigrants face the ever-present danger of forgetting. To counter that threat, many will display an over-zealous concern with detail and icon. Photographs, bygones and memorabilia will be displayed for prompt and daily reference. These items are conspicuously out of the public sphere of the host society (Robbins 1995), so remembering will usually happen in solitude or in small gatherings.

These intimate artefacts of the self, as much as they preserve individual memories, also help to articulate the collective memory of the immigrant community, which in turn provides the basis for the display of national and ethnic identities. Moreover, memory is embodied. Its fragments exist in, and are activated by people's gestures, movements and senses (Lash and Urry 1994: 241). The smell of national food, the sounds of national music, the rhythmic expression of national dances, are all essential for the continuity of memory. Immigrant communities, therefore, construct distinctive smellscapes, soundscapes and touchscapes (Rodaway 1994) that are crucial for individual and collective practices of remembering.

Memory cannot be dissociated from the feelings it supports. For most immigrants, the experience in the host country is a continuous struggle to overcome nostalgia. This is even more pronounced in the case of temporary migrants who often indulge in nostalgic feelings, while settled immigrants, with the bonus of periodic trips to the homeland, will often manage to circumscribe nostalgic feelings within tamer forms of remembering. Nostalgia and homesickness, or rather, their Portuguese/Brazilian cultural variant *saudade*, is a major feature of the immigrant experience. *Saudade* is often talked about as a substance that builds up with time, a sometimes uncontrollable overflowing of particularly sad emotions. It is no wonder that the Portuguese language invented the term *matar a saudade*, 'to kill nostalgia'.

However, only *saudade* for certain particular items can be 'killed'. For instance, Diva, who now lives in High Wycombe, a small town north-west of London, twice a year invites scores of her Brazilian friends (and their Anglo-Brazilian families) from all over Britain for a special, eagerly awaited lunch. The food is *feijoada*, a Brazilian dish based on black beans and pork, and the main drink is *caipirinha*, a typical cocktail made with rum and lime juice. On such occasions, *saudade* is ritually killed, marking the culmination of a temporal cycle consisting of an original lack, a growing yearning, and a seasonal consumption of a much-desired item. Other objects of *saudade*, however, cannot be so easily retrieved.

Over time, another important subject of remembering tends to develop: the memory of immigration itself. This memory will be fundamental for the constitution of the immigrant's self-image, and also for 'teaching' new immigrants about the problems and facts of immigrant life in the host country. For those

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who return, the memory of immigration becomes the source of their new identities as returned migrants. It carries the experience, status, wisdom, but also the tragedy associated with having once been an immigrant. The memories of immigration are expressed in individual and collective narratives and stories of displacement and adaptation, success and failure, settlement and return.

Very often, narratives of immigration become crucial features in a continuous re-elaboration and constant justification of present and future projects. Personal and collective accounts are also used to create distinctions within the immigrant community. 'Veteran' immigrants often speak about their pioneering spirit, their tribulations and hard work at a time when there where very few Brazilians living in London. Those who arrived and settled in the early 1980s are in this category. Milena, from Rio de Janeiro, sums up the spirit:

> It was not easy twelve years ago, you know, you didn't have all the help that people coming today have. There were few Brazilians here in London, there was nothing … Nothing from Brazil … When I look back today, I realise how much I struggled, you didn't have people to help with accommodation, jobs, these things … When friends come to live here, I show them everything, I tell them: 'you must do this, you shouldn't do that' … It's much easier today.

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Collage times

One of the effects of the globalisation of communication and information systems is the constitution of *collage* times. By this I mean the juxtaposition of images and representations about countries and cultures in an almost random sequence in the news and other products of popular culture. It is related to the phenomenon that has been conceptualised as *video-time* (Lash and Urry 1994: 244). Although the collage effect permeates the various forms of popular culture, therefore having an impact on almost everyone, immigrants experience it in a most distinctive way.

After moving abroad, immigrants' memories and narratives are challenged by alternative representations of their homeland. They are faced by a series of images and ideas about their identities and lifestyle, which circulate in a diversity of ways, from specialist documentaries on TV, through the action of ecological or development groups, to the more diffused stereotypes disseminated by the media and everyday conversation. In the context of the host society, the imagined community to which immigrants belong may be viewed and represented in altogether different ways from those that they were used to at home. Far more than in their homeland, immigrants are exposed to stereotypes and caricatures of themselves, which results in unease and anger. They feel that the narratives that give integrity to their cultures and identities have been broken down and only bits of them are revealed. Indeed, 'a world in migration eventuates … in a heightened emphasis on the stereotyped, on the clichéd and proverbial and sloganish, in discursive usage' (Rapport 1995: 280).

Most crucially, those images and ideas circulate in a distinctive time of their own: they constitute a piecemeal reconstruction of life in the homeland based on some selected topics, usually following a rhythm characterised by a few days of maximum exposure (in cases of natural or other disasters, for instance), and large periods of total absence from the media. As part of the global cultural flows, representations about a country, or any of its aspects, are fractured, non-sequential, highly selective, and distributed among different media and

associations. In particular, they flick across the television screen, with a teasing and disconcerting speed, in news broadcasts and advertisements.

Immigrants have to contend with the fragmented Brazil that is represented in the British media. They know that they must come to terms with it if they are to achieve any recognition of their identity. It is very common for Brazilians to complain about the alleged one-sidedness of the representation of Brazilian society and culture in Britain. Some say that only the 'bad' aspects of Brazil receive attention. Others bemoan the British interest in the 'exotic' features of their identity. As Brazilians strive to be recognised both as a relevant *minority* and as ordinary people in British society, they witness their integrity being undermined by so-called 'biased' accounts in the popular media. These, often oscillating between images of poverty and violence (against children, Indians, peasants, prisoners and, last but not least, nature) on the one hand, and carnival and the beach on the other, have to be responded to, justified, denied, or merely absorbed.

Because coverage of Brazilian affairs is so rare in the British media, reactions to it are nearly always disproportionate. A good example of this was the aftermath to the broadcast of a documentary on BBC2, on 28 February 1995. *Carnival – The Biggest Party in the World* portrayed the famous Rio de Janeiro parade through the eyes of a deaf woman who lives in one of Rio's many *favelas*. Carnivalesque scenes alternate with images of poverty and crime. A heated debate within the immigrant community, which lasted for weeks, followed the broadcast. Even the Brazilian ambassador in London felt it necessary to intervene. Most deplored the programme's bad taste and bias, although some congratulated its 'realism'. What *Carnival*, with its cleverly articulated ambivalence, achieved was a dissection of the fears and passions of those Brazilian immigrants caught in the fractured rhythms of collage times. Some felt outraged, others were vindicated, but everyone seemed affected by such an effective mirroring of a troubled, ambiguous identity. Perhaps more than most national societies, immigrant groups, especially those marginalised by the host society, feel the need to cling to an image of cultural integrity, which is persistently eroded by the effects of desynchronisation and collage.

Furthermore, collage times alternate the exposure of various nations and cultures around the world in ways that reflect the interests of the cultural producers in the host society. The immigrants' own country becomes a piece in a temporal mosaic of images following each other with no apparent connections. Their homeland is just an ingredient in a media salad prepared to an almost arbitrary recipe. Its features can be broken down and rearranged in various ways alongside the features of other countries and cultures. Earlier in the day, there might be a piece of news on the killing of street children, while, later in the evening, TV will show a documentary about the frenzy of carnival. In the host society, the homeland exists in seemingly disconnected fragments. In addition, these alternating images are often presented in a language that immigrants often barely understand. Not only are these images perceived as disturbingly discontinuous, incomplete and one-sided, but also many immigrants, in the first place, do not really know what the media items are trying to express. This challenges immigrants by creating an ambivalent situation, with a negative reaction to the partiality of the host society's media coverage and of the stereotypes encountered among the native members of the host society, but also an exposure to alternative views about oneself and one's own country.

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Liminal times

Immigration can also been seen as comprising a series of processes marking a transitional stage between different statuses. When it is deemed temporary, it is always seen as a transitional stage or condition. Temporary immigrants, seen from this perspective, are always 'making up their minds'. For their own bewilderment, and for the despair of those they left behind, their actions and decisions display no temporal consistency, reflecting their ambivalent status in the host society. Their condition is suffused with liminality. They are 'betwixt and between' all the recognised fixed points in the space–time of structural classification (Turner 1967: 97). Their actions invite confusion as to their intentions and they seem to be placed outside the usual obligations of social life, at the same time as they establish and shun commitments in both the homeland and the host society.

Indecision, confusion, incompleteness, underachievement and eternal expectation: these are some of the emotions and mental states that accompany the liminal times of migration. The future is uncertain; the present seems to be leading nowhere; and the past cannot be relied upon as a guide for action. Many Brazilian immigrants in London live in a kind of limbo in which a transitional identity develops. Normal temporal norms cease to apply. Careers started at home risk oblivion. Indeed, they may be just replaced by the 'immigrant career', with specific steps delineating the development of the immigrant experience. As Roth wrote, 'one way to structure uncertainty is to structure the time period through which uncertain events occur' (1963: 93).

Many Brazilians who have lived in London at some stage during the past twenty years have had to constantly review their plans and projects. They are part of a new migration pattern that benefits from the establishment of formal and informal transnational networks across the world's borders. It is not uncommon to find immigrants who came for a few months sojourn, perhaps to improve their English and experience a new way of life, but then stayed for many years, some indeed settling in the UK. This is not the traditional labour migrant's 'career' that has been analysed by authors such as Piore (1979) and Castles and Miller (1993). As far as the liminal times of migration are concerned, this new migration pattern is rather formless: people seeking a 'break' in another country end up revising their actions as the immigrant experience unfolds. To be sure, this temporal flexibility is in part conditioned by the heteronomous controls that fashion the typical state of political and economic marginalisation that besets many of those immigrants. However, one cannot underestimate the passion and the desire that keeps immigrants on their feet even under the most adverse circumstances. Finally, increased opportunities for migration and temporary settlement have further undermined the stabilising powers of traditional family and community structures. Many immigrants are ultimately on their own, drifting between informal networks of friends and fellow immigrants, lacking the most basic citizenship rights, and just managing to hang on the periphery of the new economy of the global city.

Liminality is not only about transition. Its fundamental ambivalence creates a time 'out of the ordinary', when anything can happen. The old rules do not apply, while the new ones are still to be internalised. In this situation, many immigrants can endure living circumstances that would not be envisaged were they living in their own country or had they settled in the host society. The

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temporary nature of their experience also makes it easier to evade long-term commitments in areas as diverse as jobs and personal relationships. A more manipulative personality tends to develop when the temporal outlook is decidedly limited to the short term. Liminality introduces a time where various masks can be worn and identities disguised.

Being struck by fundamental uncertainty, their condition favours ambiguous forms of temporality: uncertain, contingent and episodic. They see their current state as one characterised by incompleteness, and are frequently waiting for something to happen. Their liminal character stems in part from their marginality, and in part from the temporariness of their experience. For many, these liminal times remain with them even after they return, a situation that often prompts another 'return', this time away from the homeland itself, intensifying the feeling of being 'neither here nor there' (Turner 1967: 97). There are many cases of Brazilians who returned to Brazil only to find out that they somehow did not 'belong' there anymore.

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Diasporic times

Diaspora, as a transnational, multi-lateral socio-economic, political, and cultural formation, should be seen as a heterogeneous social space comprising communities, associations, networks of various kinds (family, friendship), cultural producers and ethnic businesses, as well as the multilateral links established among the host societies, and between these and the homeland. It is the cumulative effect of the activities of those social groups that creates the social basis of diasporic practices. Immigrants come and go, and associations are formed and disbanded, but the material and psychological basis of those 'communities abroad' gradually forms a sediment of sociability. Friendship networks are essential in this process because they give the material and psychological support that allows for the fast circulation of information and exchange of practical knowledge (Boyd 1989). Those networks are also, and crucially, where immigrants usually spend much of their free time.

Diasporic associations compete for the individual's time and commitment, but the latter may simply choose to exercise the 'right to be apathetic' (Moore 1963: 105). Diasporas thrive, however, when immigrant communities partially, but successfully, recreate the rhythms of social life of the homeland at the heart of the host society; they do this in many ways including, for instance, celebrating holidays and establishing meeting places where social interaction can resume its familiar paces, timings, sequences and durations.

Diasporas also create a public sphere where the vast heterogeneity of immigrants may voice their opinions. This public sphere in various ways complements that of the homeland, and often articulates the latter with global institutions and practices. Diasporas are, in many respects, the showcase of the homeland for the world, as well as the showcase of the world to the homeland. They become important mediators between various national, cultural and global identities, entailing a new global dynamics of cultural production. Diasporic times are thus associated with the times of long-term settlement and commitments. However, the issue of cultural reproduction is also related to a temporality of origins, ethnicity often being a central feature of diaspora. In this sense, the diasporic times of migration place individual immigrant experiences in a pre-

dominantly cyclical framework that links the homeland/sending country to future generations.

In London, Brazilians have struggled to create institutions and organisations that could underpin the continuity of the immigrant community. There are a number of social and cultural organisations geared to the promotion of all things Brazilian. Some of the most prominent ones are the *Escolas de Samba* ('Samba Schools') which have added their colour and rhythm to the now traditional Notting Hill Carnival in August. There have also been attempts to organise immigrants with the aim of seeking recognition of an ethnic minority status in British society. In 1992, for instance, the *Brazilian Support Centre* was set up to provide advice, information and support on a number of matters related to immigration and settlement in the UK. This organisation struggled against the short-termism that characterises most immigrants' commitments in London, and had to disband a few years later. It has become mainly the task of the Brazilians who are permanently settled in the UK to create the institutions needed for the production and reproduction of Brazilian diasporic identities. A couple of weekend schools and playgroups have been set up to cater for the needs of mainly Anglo-Brazilian families who want their children to develop cultural skills such as the Brazilian Portuguese language, dance and music.

Diasporas, by effecting a collective kind of synchronisation (similar to the one discussed above), also tend to de-territorialise national times and narratives. The point here is no longer that of the re-insertion of the individual into the historical narrative of the nation, but this very history is displaced as the nation-state increasingly becomes a part, albeit a central and focal one, of a developing transnational diasporic community. Individual life paths incorporate such a transnational scope that is heightened in subsequent generations. Diasporas, through the articulation of collective and individual memories of displacement, reinstate the familiar times that were uprooted by emigration.

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Nomadic times

Within these diasporas, immigrants should also be seen as the bearers of new time conceptualisations and practices that transcend the circumstances of their marginality. The ambivalence of liminality often dissipates to open up a field of conscious temporal experimentation. Many immigrants could thus be seen as a particular category of *time pioneers* who are able to problematise dominant temporal conditions and devise new forms of thinking and using time (see Hörning *et al.* 1995). Their pioneering effort is directed not only at questioning the dominant relationship between time and money, but also at displacing the dominant sequential nature of careers and life paths. In that they resemble Nowotny's cultural Uchronians, who experiment with time by freezing the dominant temporal order with the aims of experiencing 'other' times, discovering other rhythms, and developing an openness for the unexpected (Nowotny 1994: 137–8).

Often the decision to emigrate implies a break with what immigrants were doing before, their education, jobs, and even well-delineated careers. Although the initial expectation is often of an eventual return to the same life paths designed before, many immigrants soon fall under the grip or magic of the immigrant experience, which makes them rethink their previous engagements with time. Immigration can then become a way of life, never settling, never

contemplating the definitive return. Indeed, even a return to the homeland will sometimes be perceived as another leg in a nomadic journey that must never end.

Despite enduring living and working standards well below those they enjoyed in the homeland, many immigrants are happy to keep going. After some time, it is not only a matter of saving money, for there are alternative motivations that keep them 'on the road', never really knowing when exactly is the time to return or to move on. They collect experiences and sensations, as well as postcards and letters. These nomadic times are the discontinuous and heterogeneous times of adventure, of uncertainty, of 'having fun' (Jankélévitch 1963). They strategically use their economic and legal constraints to experiment with their life paths and self-development. They celebrate 'time-out' as a lifestyle, the duration of which is as uncertain as it is further protracted. Thus nomadic immigrants lead highly individualised lives. They view the global society as a stage for the reflexive performance of their desires, interests and fantasies. Regardless of national borders, they move on in search of new experiences. Despite the difficult relationships between their 'nomadic' form of temporary migration and issues of citizenship (see Bauböck 1998: 334), they preview, in my opinion, the temporal possibilities that can be opened by a truly global free movement of people, in which personal biographies become almost totally dissociated from the narratives and histories of nation-states.

Veronica, from São Paulo, who has been living in London since the late 1980s, provides a very good example of the nomadic spirit that has engulfed a number of people. She recalled her decision to quit her job held for over 16 years:

> Of thirteen friends, ten left Brazil. I was the third to go … Until then, I was used to buying tickets to Europe for my bosses … You say, it looks as if you couldn't do it, as if it wasn't accessible to you. Then the first friend goes, he stays for a while, writes, sends a cassette, says 'it's great' … You must experiment too. Then, if your friend did it, you can also do it. Things become a bit closer to you.

Veronica, who is in her mid-forties, has married a gay male friend in order to legalise her situation in the UK. She works as a domestic cleaner, like many Brazilian women do in London, and is currently saving money into a pension scheme back in Brazil. Her project is to enjoy early retirement in Brazil after a few years. She is just one of many immigrants who have self-consciously manipulated whatever resources they have available to them in order to trace highly individualised global life paths. She has inscribed her life into the nomadic times of migration by successfully shunning *national* immigration controls and socio-economic regimes. Her use of the word 'experiment' is crucial for understanding the dynamics of this form of migration as, in Portuguese, the word *experiência* means both 'experience' and 'experiment'. She is clearly referring to the latter as the basic foundation of her overall immigrant experience.

Conclusion: time, nation and migration

For the most part, it has been traditionally the anthropologist's job to examine the cultural and ethnic dimension of time perspectives and symbols. Their analyses, however stimulating, have treated their study groups either in relative isolation and, to some extent, outside time and history, or within a largely assumed scale of evolutionary time (Fabian 1983; Harris 1991). Either way, these

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discourses have resulted in the implicit denial of the fundamental *coevalness* not only of researcher and researched subjects, but also of various ethnic groups in an increasingly interconnected world. Migration is a major factor of the coevalness of contemporary cultures and times.

Time has been analysed as a major element and factor of social division. According to Zerubavel, time frames clearly work as social demarcations, and a 'temporal order that is commonly shared by a group of people and is unique to them functions both as a unifier and a separator' (1982: 288). A study of the temporal experience of immigrant groups may reveal a more complex facet of the social and cultural determination of temporal experience, behaviour and symbols in the contemporary world. Migrants' often ambivalent, hybrid experience can reveal shifting, porous and uncertain *temporal borders* within contemporary globalised social formations. The times of migration can, therefore, constitute vantage points from which to analyse the complex nature of contemporary global cultural maps. Within this emerging global context, clashing views on time (which symbolise and embody different rhythms of social and cultural life) may be at the root of much ethnic prejudice. Coser and Coser believe that:

> the inability to understand a group's time perspective not only makes it more difficult for the observer to comprehend the general orientations of the group, but it will lead to gaps in social communication between the different constituent groups of a society (1963: 640).

A focus on the temporal aspects of migration, because of the complex web of temporalities that constitute contemporary social life, can also provide a privileged perspective from which to assess the degree of *temporal reflexivity* displayed by people in everyday life. Lash and Urry have argued that 'people increasingly come to understand that there are many times and many spaces and not just their *own* society and its rhythms and history' (1994: 227; original emphasis).

Most crucially, perhaps, the times of migration are intimately associated with the changing temporal and spatial narratives that ground the existence of nation-states. One of the consequences of the process of globalisation, it has been argued, is that local, regional and national identities have been reconstructed in the global arena (Buell 1994: 9) through the interplay of several factors such as travel, tourism, migration, and global communication and information systems. Immigration, on the one hand, has played a pivotal role in the process through which this local/global dialectic is undermining the rigid narratives of nation-states. On the other hand, immigrant groups have helped to redefine the cultural basis of nation-states. They have provided the symbolic and material bases on which a growing set of transnational practices has cut through traditional allegiances and identities. This phenomenon is particularly crucial in the practices of 'transmigrants', who have been defined as those 'immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships … that span borders' between societies of origin and settlement (Basch *et al.* 1994: 7). As I have shown, the widespread emergence of new diasporas (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996) and exile cultures (Naficy 1993) has not only reconfigured the narratives of national pasts and futures, but has also redefined the spatial basis of contemporary cultural practices. Time, expressing a crucial dimension of these practices, is an essential perspective from which to assess those processes.

This article has delineated several dimensions of the times of migration. The migrant experience has often been regarded as the quintessential modern

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experience, and many of the current debates in the social sciences about borders, hybridity, ambivalence, creolisation and post-colonialism have centred upon the lives of contemporary international migrants. I have argued that such debates have hardly been taken on board by contemporary discussions in the social analysis of time, despite the growing realisation of the need to account for new time dimensions brought about by the globalisation of social activities. The relationship between the flow of people and the opening of new temporal dimensions has been left relatively unexamined.

The times of migration, by increasing the number and intensifying the nature of *temporal borders* between and within nations, various social groups and individuals, reveal fundamental aspects of the global cultural geography that is being shaped by a growing set of transnational social practices. They reveal the slow deconstruction of dominant temporal patterns at a global scale, and the problematisation of sanctioned careers and life paths. They embed alternative narratives, memories and projects at the core of global simultaneity, de-territorialising national and world histories alike. They introduce the unexpected into everyday life in the places affected by international migration, simultaneously re-enforcing stereotypes (Rapport 1995) and breaking up temporal conventions.

The focus on the temporal experience of migrants can illuminate the nature of migration itself, its twists and turns, meanings and ambivalence, and the way that, in a diversity of ways, it dis-places and re-embeds people and communities around the world. And it does so by dismembering histories and restating narratives, by fracturing temporalities and re-embedding rhythms. The diversity of the times of migration, which was tentatively conceptualised in the previous section, demonstrates the complex nature of global flows of people. The temporal parameters of their actions, as shown from the perspective of immigrants' accounts of their experience, reveal the multiple dimensions of desire, cognition, constraint, recognition, control, contingence, exchange and opportunity, all of which are fundamental for the understanding of contemporary forms of international migration.

Some of these issues have been phrased in terms of the challenges posed by immigration to both the sovereignty of nation-states and to citizenship rules that establish the bases of their membership (see Joppke 1998). The former result in the decrease of the nation-state's power to control immigration flows due to the consolidation of international law concerning, among other things, the human rights of immigrants and refugees, but also to the increase of privatised transnational flows of professional workers and personnel of transnational corporations. The effect is what Sassen (1998) calls a *de facto* transnationalising of immigration policy. To these factors one could add the increasingly sophisticated market of illegal transportation of people across borders (for example, the 'smuggling' of immigrants).

The challenge to the exclusionist model of citizenship found in contemporary nation-states is posed by models of post-national citizenship and by the politics of multiculturalism. Although Joppke (1998) attempts to relativise these developments, there are scholars who are more positive about the decline of the citizenship model of the nation-state and the increasing deterritorialisation of identity (see, for instance, Jacobson 1997). As shown in this article, the nomadic and diasporic times of migration are crucial elements in the articulation of these new discourses. While communication technologies shrink time and space, immigrants expand them by creating new distances, memories, projects, etc.,

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and above all, by creating new interfaces in which a variety of those memories and projects, and also calendars and rhythms, can interact. In his visualisation of a democratic polity inclusive of immigrants, Bauböck believes that 'in societies which have become irreversibly involved in migration, listening to the migrants' stories, respecting their cultural affiliations and taking into account their options for the future should become a widespread democratic habit' (1998: 341).

As Castles has argued, immigration policy is much too often concerned with short-term issues (1995: 306). In cases where temporary illegal or semi-legal immigration is either encouraged or merely tolerated, there is little concern for the marginal status of these immigrants. And, at any rate, attempts to prevent permanent settlement are rarely effective. The problem becomes one of dealing with the temporal contingency of much of international migration, which, in turn, raises the issue of more flexible, post-national forms of membership to those collectivities that we call (nation-)states. A highly pluralist response would be to frame the new temporal determinations of the migrant experience in a highly flexible form of *ius domicili*, combined with a differentiation of citizenship rights and the existence of far more porous borders than the present international system will allow (Castles and Davidson 2000: 25).

To deal with the new temporal borders and encounters is, in my opinion, one of the main challenges facing contemporary studies of both migration and time. It is the challenge of cultural diversity and social complexity, of those contexts in social life where social action is caught at a crossroads of rhythms, calendars, memories and anticipations. It is also a challenge for more inclusive policies aimed at regulating migration flows across borders – policies that do not lead to the temporal closures analysed in this article, and which are able to incorporate the projects and desires of contemporary individual migrants and their communities. In Melucci's words, it is related to the concomitant practical challenge of constructing 'an experience of time which may enable us to pass through variety and multiplicity without losing ourselves in the process' (1996: 22). As immigrants are at the forefront of the constitution of these new temporal realities, the study of the times of migration is thus relevant for tackling those challenges, and for theorising the temporal dimensions of the changing cultural and political geographies of the world.

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Notes

1 This article is based on the first part of my PhD thesis (Cwerner 1999). The times of migration discussed here were conceptualised in the context of an empirical study of Brazilians living in London undertaken in 1996–97.

2 It should be noted, however, that the theme of migration was instrumental in the early development of the time–geographical approach of Hägerstrand (Carlstein *et al.* 1978: 117). In time–geographical studies, the emphasis is on the 'individual's path in space–time', and on the migratory patterns that constitute those paths, especially in the context of the life-cycle of individuals. Time, however, is in this work mostly seen as a 'physical dimension' along which behaviour can be analysed (Hägerstrand 1975: 200). Although individuals' projects have become an essential dimension within time–geography, some of their temporal dimensions have yet to be fully investigated.
3 Translations from foreign language passages are all mine.
4 Although, it should be noted, one can discern a variety of discourses that *do* totalise migration in this way. On the personal level, there are stories about how migration became a turning point in one's life trajectory, the feeling of being born-again following migration, etc. At the societal level, we find anti-immigration and racist discourses that essentialise the reality of migration as well as the character and identity of immigrants. Needless to say, these discourses are almost invariably structured in various narrative styles that reveal sets of typical temporalities.
5 Adam (1998) has suggested the notion of 'timescapes' in order to convey the complex nature of the relationship between the environment and industrial society. By looking at the hidden times and rhythms of natural and technological processes, she can shed a critical light on the nature of risks, hazards and crises associated with modern economic, industrial and political institutions. I would like to argue that, the same way that an awareness of these temporal determinations is crucial for an understanding of the consequences of industrialisation, an analysis of the times of migration is equally important for understanding the social and cultural implications of the migration process.
6 It is important, at this stage, to say a few words about the fieldwork that supports this article. During my study of Brazilians living in London, I made use, principally, of participant observation, extensive interviews, and textual material (consisting mainly of monthly magazines produced by and for that immigrant community). The major aim was to construct textual and ethnographic material from which references to time could be drawn. Since people's talk and activities are suffused with such references, it was not necessary to problematise time *at the time* of empirical data collection.
7 As in some other languages, the Portuguese word for 'time', *tempo*, is also used for 'weather'.
8 Fieldwork interviews were conducted in Portuguese. All quotations from interviews were translated into English by me, while all words originally used in languages other than Portuguese were italicised. Personal names have been changed.

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