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As a consequence of an increasingly urbanizing world migrants head primarily to cities, especially the globalized metropolises. Cities provide better prospects for income generation; they concentrate most support networks which are so crucial to incoming migrants; they are the main entry points to destination countries; and are information hubs on existing opportunities.
Through the scientific contribution of individual authors, SSIIM Paper Series intends to disseminate research results on the urban dimension(s) of internatio-nal migration, both in cities of the global North and of the South.

# MASONS AND MAIDS. CLASS, GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN MIGRANT EXPERIENCES

Edited by
Bruno Monteiro and Faisal Garba

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SOCIAL AND SPATIAL INCLUSION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS - URBAN POLICIES AND PRACTICE

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# MASONS AND MAIDS. CLASS, GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN MIGRANT EXPERIENCES

Edited by
Bruno Monteiro and Faisal Garba

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# FOREWARD

When the Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants (SSIIM) UNESCO Chair was established, in 2008, international migrants across the world, including undocumented migrants, were estimated to be in the range of 200 millions. Ten years later, the number has grown to more than 250 with 25 millions of refugees and asylum-seekers adding to them (UNDESA, International Migration Report 2017).

As we all know, the movement of people, goods and capital is an integral part of present day open economies. As a consequence of increasing economic and social inequalities, migrating represents an essential component of family and community strategies to improve the living conditions of those who migrate as well as of those who remain. International migration is also necessary. With globalisation cities that are, or want to become, parts of the financial and technological flows need to rely on international migrants and their contribution to urban productivity. Migrants in fact are important actors in maintaining or creating the economic dynamism of cities both by filling sectors of the labour market eschewed by the local population and bringing with them innovation. Moreover, the presence of international migrants also makes cities cosmopolitan, hence more attractive to the forces of globalisation.

Cross-border movements of people are growing despite a widespread strengthening of control measures, in contrast with the worldwide liberalization of the movement of goods, services and capital. Notwithstanding the introduction of restrictive admission policies in nearly all countries, international migration is a self-sustaining process doomed to grow in the future, unless major changes in the distribution of wealth between rich and poor countries are implemented. Thus, the question is no longer whether to have international migration, but rather how to manage it effectively to enhance its positive effects and reduce the negative ones.

Most international migrants add to the low-income urban population and in developing counties to the irregular settlements that often represent large part of their cities.

However, inadequate migration policies, or lack thereof, make it

difficult to provide the assistance they need with regard access to education, housing, services and formal labour market. Decentralisation policies have transferred to local government the responsibility of managing urban growth. Though local authorities have very little say over national immigration policies, they inevitably are at the front line in managing the flow of international migration, responding to their needs and promoting their inclusion (immigrant policies). As a consequence, though management of international migration and of the resulting greater multiculturalism is becoming an increasingly crucial issue for urban governance, local governments are seldom prepared to cope with the ad hoc policies needed to integrate people with different cultural, social and religious traditions into the urban society.

Understanding the mobility of population and the social and cultural changes that accompany it is essential for designing effective urban policies to deal with the problems and opportunities offered by migrants settling in the cities of both high, middle and low-income countries.

Since its inception, the Chair carried out a number of research projects, contributing to highlight the importance of local policies and practices in addressing international migration to cities. In so doing, it has raised awareness on the need to guarantee the migrants right to the city by adopting inclusive urban public policies, supporting organizations from the civil society as well as migrants associations. The Chair research projects and training activities have provided new insights on the opportunities and challenges raised by the presence of international migrants in different cities of the global South, as well as in Europe and Italy.

In addition to their research and publishing activities, the Chair's researchers actively participate in training courses at the international, national and regional levels, and support local governments in designing migration policies and actions. By hosting visiting researchers and PhD students from different countries, the Chair provides a widely recognized space for the exchange of experiences on urban policies and practices for inclusive policies.

Finally, the Chair's publication Series is widely circulated among Italian and European researchers, as well as researches from Latin America, Asia and Africa. The papers presented in this volume are the result of in-depth research work carried out by young researchers from different countries on migrants working in the construction and caretaking sectors. The significance of the topics addressed in the different chapters with regards the role migrants play in the city lead SSIIM Chair to publish this Special Issue, inaugurating one more tool for disseminating the results of research on the migration-city nexus.

*Marcello Balbo*
*SSIIM Chairholder*
*And the Chair research team*

# INTRODUCTION

*Bruno Monteiro*
*Faisal Garba*

From Moroccan towns to Dimona in Israel. From the interior of the Portuguese Northwest region to the construction sites dispersed amidst the Spanish countryside. Through Cape Verdean migratory paths to the suburban surroundings of Lisbon. Or from the small villages in Zimbabwe to the South African metropoles. This SSIIM Paper Series' Special Issue maps all these crossed lines that make the lives of construction workers and domestic workers. Albeit being highly mobile and familiar presences in those societies, they remain, too often, off the sociological radar. Grasping the most intimates aspects of the lives of these men and women means understanding the mechanics of the global processes shaping the international economy. This circuit of places, sociologically integrated for their contribution to the shaping of this transnational "proletariat" in spite of being geographically disperse, also shows the importance of cities in everyday life of the contemporary world. The intersection of these biographies over these cities, where they often appear "aliens" while abroad, point to the salience of the political economy of migrations: the construction and the pristine maintenance of the homes of the "natives" imply the dislocation of these migrant men and women.

This special issue gathers a significant variety of cases to understand the experience of construction workers and domestic workers, without exhausting the range of possibilities of the present-day configuration of those workplaces. Focusing on these particular cases, we have the opportunity to analyse the intersection between the class structure and the genderised logics of work. Quite often the composition of the household and, therefore, the matrimonial strategies within the labouring classes are expressions of this very sociological couple between male industrial workers and female service workers. Following a pattern of discrimination that is not precisely overlapping neither the class nor the gender lines, the issue of ethnicity

arises to show the fractal complexity of the labouring classes of today.

Aside from this thematic variety, the texts gathered in this volume appeal to a wide range of methods and techniques. Francisca Mena uses her expertise in media studies to understand the public image of the construction workers, shaped with patterns of political and economic domination. Bianca Tame studies the encounters between the "technicians" of private employment agencies and their female employees in order to highlight the implicit modulation of the behaviours and postures that take place during these moments. Going for a completely distinct approach, Gonçalo Barbosa appeals to the intensive use of statistics to picture the fluxes and the structure of the apparently compact group of Portuguese migrants from the construction industry. Shelly Shaul, for her part, uses oral history methods to access the discursive narratives that immigrant construction workers convey as they make sense of their migration to Israel where they are excluded from the country's idealized and celebrated class of pioneers and laborers. Catarina Sampaio studies the trajectories of construction workers from the Capeverdean origin within Portugal: usually seen as the origin of migrants to other European countries, it should be stressed that in Portugal some construction workers are "immigrants". Antía Perez-Caramés and Iria Vasquez Silva study the presence of migrants in Galicia, giving the construction workers a particular space in their analysis. Through the combination of fieldwork and statistical analysis, they pinpoint significant aspects of the contemporary situation of immigrants in a region also known for being a nest of emigration. Bruno Monteiro shows the everyday life of Portuguese construction workers while abroad, questioning especially the experience of racism and xenophobia. The set of these papers, precisely for being disparate in their thematic and methodological option, can show us the mosaic of situations that lay under these two singular professions. Finally, Faisal Garba highlights the potential tension between citizenship and exploitation, showing the overlapping between political exclusion and economic precarity that compromises the very meaning of democracy for African migrants living and working in Germany.

The starting point for this issue was the seminar "Masons and maids. Class, gender and ethnicity in the construction industry and domestic services", held in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto under the sponsorship of the ongoing research project "Breaking Ground for Construction: Changes in the Portuguese Construction Field and their Impacts on Working Conditions in the 21st century" (POCI-01-0145 – FEDER – 016621), funded by FEDER Funds, through the Programa Operacional Competitividade e Internacionalização – COMPETE 2020 and by Nationals Funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia. A large part of these papers were produced for or improved during this seminar. We also wish to thank to the Erasmus + Programme and, in particular, to the International Affairs Office at the University of Porto, where Ana Castro Paiva and Joana Pinto have done invaluable contributions to ensure the presence of Faisal Garba and Bianca Tame in these academic activities. Of course, the last word of gratitude should be addressed to Marcello Balbo, Giovanna Marconi, Elena Ostanel and Adriano Cancellieri, the "wonder team" that ensures the SSIIM UNESCO Chair.

# AN ANALYSIS OF MIGRANT PRESENCE IN THE GALICIAN LABOUR MARKET

*Antía Pérez-Caramés*
*Iria Vázquez Silva*

This text offers an insight into migrant conditions in the Galician labour market. Based on secondary sources, namely the Labour Force Survey, (EPA in its Spanish initials), drawn up by the Spanish Statistical Office, (INE, in its Spanish initials) it focuses in particular on two sectors that have proved fundamental in the creation – and later destruction – of jobs for migrants: the construction industry and domestic work.

This issue must be addressed within the socio-demographic context of immigration in Galicia. The region is home to more than 200,000 people born abroad, representing almost 8% of the total population (INE, 2017). Between 2004 and 2010 migrant arrivals reversed the negative demographic trend Galicia had experienced in previous decades, although population rates began to fall once again as a result of the economic crisis (Fernández, 2017, Pérez-Caramés, 2016).

Between 1850 and 1930 some 1,700,000 Galicians migrated to America and more than 500,000 never returned (Núñez, 2010). In the second half of the twentieth century, Switzerland, France or Germany became the new destinations for Galician migratory flows. According to data provided by the Statistical Yearbook (INE, various years), during the 1950s the emigration flow from the Galician provinces was four times the number of immigrants, and this latter flow was comprised mainly of returnees from previous migratory waves.

Current migration to Galicia comprises two main groups: migrants from countries to which Galicians migrated in the past, and migrants from countries with no links to the region, in other words, 'autonomous' immigration. Lamela et al. (2005) identify three categories within the first group: returnees, returnee family members, and immigration attributable to perceived bonds with Galicia.

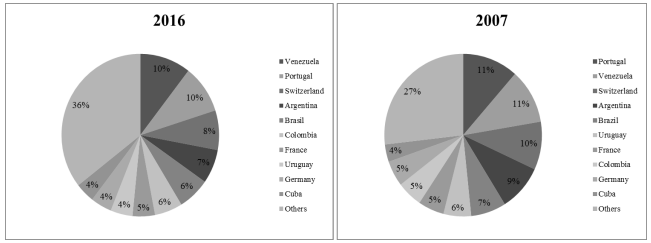
Figures 1 and 2 show that immigration consists not only of people linked to Galician emigration (Venezuela, Argentina or Uruguay, as well as European countries such as Switzerland, France, Germany or the UK) but also 'autonomous' immigration, which includes countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Colombia or Rumania, (Pérez-Caramés, 2017).

**Antía Pérez-Caramés** is PhD in Sociology and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Communication Sciences of the University of Coruna. She is a member of the Research Team on Sociology of International Migration and the Centre for Gender and Feminist Studies at the University of Coruna. At present, she is in charge of the research project "The new emigration from Spain: profiles, mobility strategies and transnational political activism", financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Her research interests include international migration, gender relations and care work, and demographic ageing. She is a co-author with Renée De Palma of the book Galician Migrations: A Case Study of Emerging Super-diversity (2017), Springer.

**Iria Vázquez Silva** is currently Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Vigo. She has recently completed the research project "Immigrant women, language and society. New perspectives for Integration" (2015-2017), *developed* at the University of Vigo and financed by the Government of Galicia. She holds a PhD in Sociology with the thesis *Senegalese Immigration in Galicia: Remittances and Care in Transnational Families* and

specialist in Gender Studies at the University of Vigo. Her current research lines cover the sociology of migration, as well as the sociology of work and gender. She has recently published with Luna Vives (2017) "Transnational Mothering Strategies: Senegalese Experiences", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and she is coauthor with Laura Rodríguez Salgado of the book Muller inmigrante, lingua e sociedade (2017) in the Galaxia publishing house.

*Figures 1 and 2. Foreign population in Galicia, 2007 and 2016.*




*Source: Based on the Municipal Register of Inhabitants, 2007 and 2016, National Statistics Institute (INE).*

**Immigrants labour market: paradigm of segregation**

Between the mid-1990s and 2008, the Spanish economic model allowed for significant increases in the employment of both the native and foreign-born populations. However, the labour market was highly segmented; confining the foreign population to poorly paid jobs, and also displayed a considerable degree of feminisation/masculinisation (Del Río and Alonso-Villar, 2014).

Various studies have analysed the severe impact of the economic crisis on the immigrant labour market in Spain (Oliver, 2013, Alonso-Villar and del Río, 2017, among others) and a number of recent studies have focused specifically on the impact of the crisis on the immigrant labour market in Galicia (Golías, 2016, Oso and Martínez, 2018). In particular, Oso and Martínez reveal how the crisis affected Galicia later than the rest of Spain (the issue will be addressed in detail in the following section); consequently, and as indicated by a number of other authors (Fernández 2017) it was not until 2011 that the negative migratory balance and the onset of a period marked by the emigration of both the autochthonous and immigrant population emerged in Galicia.

A large consensus exists regarding the reasons for the negative impact of the 2008 economic crisis on migrant employment. Golías (2016: 29) claims that migrants were the first to become redundant as they had been on the labour market for a relatively short period of time. In addition, key sectors employing large numbers of foreign workers such as the construction and service industries, were most severely hit by the crisis.

Del Río and Alonso-Villar (2014: 90-91) also explain that during the boom years of economic growth in Spain (between the mid-1990s and 2007), "the labour integration of immigrants was characterised by a high degree of precariousness given the high occupational seasonality and sector specialisation, an over-representation in low-skilled jobs (which did not always correspond to the immigrants' educational level), occupational mobility and consequently a considerable presence in low-salary jobs".

The Spanish economic model was based on a high degree of segregation. The sectors concentrating the foreign labour force, such as domestic care, hotels and catering, and low-skill jobs in the construction sector, experienced extended periods of sustained growth for a long period (Del Río and Alonso-Villar, 2014: 99). When the economic crisis broke out in 2007, migrants were inevitably one of the most vulnerable groups in front of the downturn of the economic cycle.

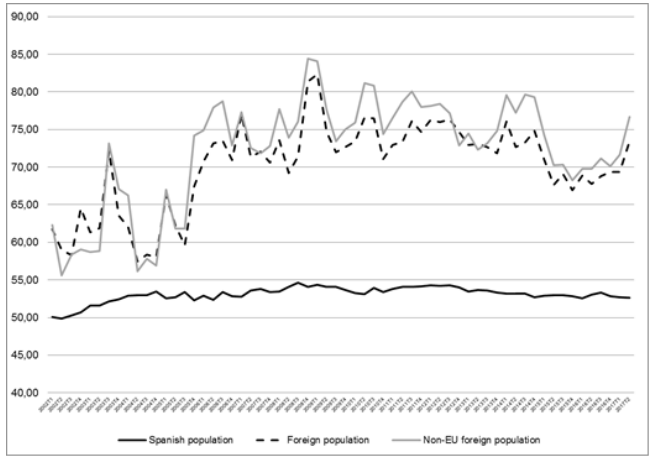
According to Alonso-Villar and Del Río (2017), two out of three foreign women continued to be employed mainly in caretaking activities, the so called catering industry, as shop assistants and warehouse or personal service workers. On the other hand, although significant, the degree of labour concentration of foreign men is lower, and does not exceed 25% of the total, even in those sectors in which their presence is strongest (Alonso-Villar and Del Río, 2017: 146). In this sense, occupational segregation is clearly highest amongst foreign women, which also had a significant impact in terms of income for the period between 2006 and 2016. Specifically, there was an average per capita drop in salary levels of 20%, compared with just under 12% in the case of foreign men and a mere 1% among native-born women. In contrast, native-born men's per capita income rose by around 4% during this period (Alonso-Villar and Del Río, 2017: 152).

**The evolution of migrant and native-born employment in Galicia: the impact of the crisis**

Our analysis is based on secondary sources, in particular on microdata from the Labour Force Survey (EPA), which offers an insight into the immigrants' situation in the labour market. This quarterly survey includes the foreign population resident in Spain for at least one year.

The analysis of this survey reveals that the age profile of the immigrant population in Galicia differs radically from the native-born population. It comprises mainly young active ages, with a very small proportion falling within the so-called 'passive ages', namely those who do not participate in the labour market and are aged over 65 and under 15. As a result, activity rates for the foreign population are considerably higher than those of the native-born population, as can be seen from the information presented in Figure 3.

*Figure 3. Evolution by nationality of the quarterly activity rates of the population residing in Galicia (2002-2017).*

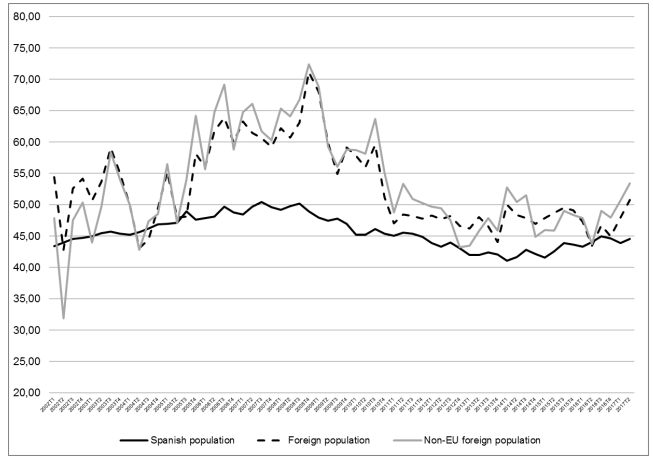



*Source: Based on information from the Labour Force Survey (EPA) (INE, several years)*

On the other hand, the activity rates of native-born Galicians remained steady throughout the period (2002-2017), with figures ranging between just over 50% and under 55%. In contrast, foreign population values fluctuate and are especially sensitive to periods of recession, characterised by an increase in the active migrant population. This is probably due to the need to integrate more family members in the labour market in order to offset the impact of job losses.

Likewise, the evolution and consequences of employment rates for a period prior to the crisis reveal similar differences between the foreign and native-born populations. Thus, as Figure 4 shows, the ratio between employed and active people is more favourable for the foreign population than for the native-born population. The employment rate rose sharply among the foreign population in the early years of the crisis (between 2006 and mid-2009) when severe job destruction was offset by a notable increase in the labour force. Indeed, rates peaked during this period at between 65% and 70%. This increase in the employment rate can also be observed among Spaniards living in Galicia, albeit to a lesser degree. In the aftermath of the most severe period of job losses and although the recession continued, the rates returned to values close to or even slightly lower than those before the crisis, regardless of nationality. This led to a certain degree of convergence between the employment rates of the native-born and foreign populations.

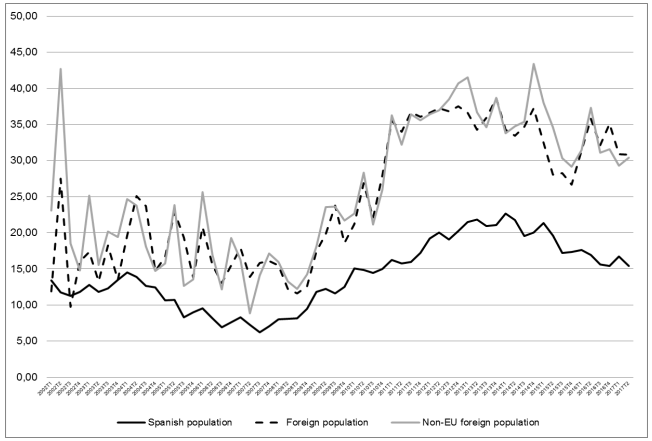
*Figure 4. Evolution by nationality of the quarterly activity rates for population residing in Galicia (2002-2017).*




*Source: Based on information extracted from the Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)*

However, migrants' contribution to reversing labour market trends in Galicia failed to lead to improved integration in terms of employment. Unemployment rates among the foreign population are consistently higher than in the case of the native-born population, as shown in the following figure for the 2002-2017 period. The data indicate a turning point in 2009, when Galicia felt the full impact of the economic crisis, marked by a sharp hike in unemployment rates amongst all segments of the population.

*Figure 5. Evolution by nationality of the quarterly employment rates for the population residing in Galicia (2002-2017).*




*Source: Based on information from the Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)*

Table 1 presents the unemployment rate data according to four sub-periods, offering an insight into the differentiated behaviour of migrants and the native-born population for the various stages of the economic cycle.

*Table 1. Average unemployment rates in Galicia by nationality and sub-periods (2002-2017).*

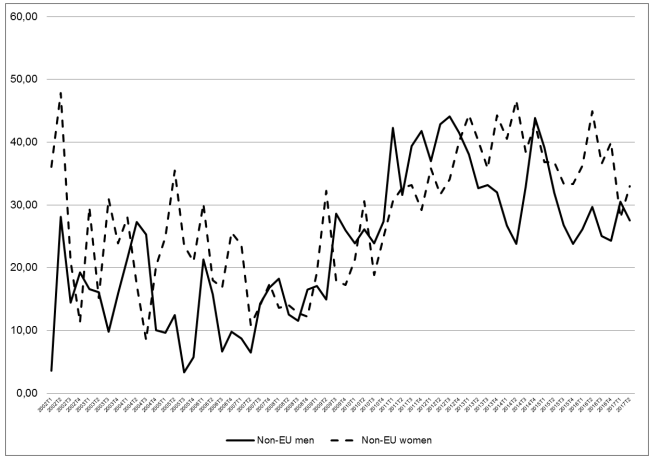
| Stages | Native-born population | Non-EU population |
|---|---|---|
| 2002-2005 (before the crisis) | 11.92% | 20.40% |
| 2006-2008 (recession) | 7.90% | 15.50% |
| 2009-2014 (crisis stage) | 17.52% | 32.37% |
| 2015-2017 (slight recovery) | 17.33% | 32.32% |

*Source: Based on information from the Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)*

At just over 10%, native-born unemployment during the period immediately prior to the crisis was very close to what is usually termed 'structural unemployment'. However, among the non-EU foreign population, unemployment rates practically doubled those of the native-born population. Nevertheless, at the outbreak of the economic crisis between 2006 and 2008, and whilst the rest of Spain was suffering the effects of severe job losses and an unprecedented increase in unemployment rates, Galicia continued to experience the downward trend of previous years. Thus, unemployment among the native-born fell to below 8%, and remained at an average 15.5% for the foreign population. These data indicate that Galicia withstood the initial onslaught of the crisis, although this trend changed radically in the following years (2009-2014), when unemployment among the native-born population reached 17.5% (even though it was still lower than that of the pre-crisis migrant population) and one third of the active non-EU foreign population was unemployed. From 2015 onwards, unemployment rates experienced a slight recovery. Although limited, recovery was greater among the native-born population, with unemployment falling from 17.5% to 17.3%, compared with just 0.05% in the case of migrants.

Differences by gender in the non-EU group are also worthy of note. As Figure 6 shows, overall unemployment among migrant women was considerably higher than among men, with a sole exception between 2011 and 2012 when severe job losses were recorded in essentially male-dominated sectors such as construction. In fact, female unemployment followed a somewhat countercyclical trend, rising in the years leading up to the crisis and widening the gap with men, before falling slightly at the onset of the recession, followed by several years of increase, with higher unemployment rates observed (2016 and 2017) among women than men in the last two years. This countercyclical pattern in female unemployment is explained by the subordinate position of women in a labour market, favouring male employment and resulting in high rates of male employment and female unemployment.

*Figure 6. Evolution by gender of the quarterly unemployment rates of the non-EU population residing in Galicia (2002-2017)*




*Source: Based on information from the Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)*

The crisis took its toll on the migrant population, and for almost a decade one third of this segment of the active population was out of work. As the gap between the native-born population and migrants was already wide prior to the crisis, we can assume that the migrant workforce held a more precarious position on the labour market and was considered more dispensable. Furthermore, they were employed in economic sectors that were hit most severely by the changes in the economic cycle.

**The niches of migrant employment: caught between the housing bubble and ineffective welfare provision**

Two economic sectors have traditionally provided a gateway for migrant employment and therefore played a key role in the 'migratory boom' during the first decade of the century, namely the construction industry and domestic work. Our analysis in this section is again based on the Labour Force Survey, but also considers data obtained from qualitative fieldwork conducted as part of a research project into Senegalese population in Galicia (Vázquez, 2014).

In the period leading up to the crisis, the construction industry had been a major economic driving force, the result of the real estate housing bubble and easy access to mortgages and loans. In fact, according to the Galician Quarterly Economic Accounts (INE, several years), construction accounted for approximately 10% of the Galician GDP in 2000, 2004 and 2008, compared with just 6% in 2016. Its relevance in Galician economic activity overall is similar to the share of the workforce employed in this sector, which stood at around 10% (INE, several years). In line with previous studies (Monteiro, 2014), Portuguese immigrants comprised a considerable part of this workforce, a trend that can be seen not only in Galicia, but also in Madrid and the Basque Country. It must be remembered that the crisis reached Portugal before Spain, in the year 2000. Construction companies and migrants alike detected the opportunity for employment in this sector, which continued to grow in Galicia. The strategy adopted by Portuguese workers was to remain in Galicia during the week and return to Portugal at the weekends (many were resident in the Sousa Valley, in northern Portugal), in an example of paradigmatic cross-border movement (Monteiro, 2014, Ribas, 2014).

However, in addition to Portuguese immigration, the study conducted on the Senegalese population revealed several cases of Senegalese immigrants employed in the construction sector in Portugal who in 2001 re-emigrated to Galicia in the light of the crisis affecting the country. They chose to settle there and work in the same sector. However, a few years later (2009) a new, or rather a similar crisis caught up with them in Galicia. The following excerpt refers to the re-emigration from Portugal to Galicia of a Senegalese person with previous experience in the construction industry in his home country, a sector that was artificially inflated both in Portugal and in Galicia.

> Babou (B): I've been unemployed for six months, I'm a first-rate form setter, I was site manager with Vidal Alonso, I worked for him for many years, but there's no work, ... with the crisis, he always calls me, for...., nothing comes of it, [...] I'm doing a course now; it pays me a subsidy, yes, I'm receiving that [subsidy].
> Interviewer (I): Do you plan to stay in Galicia for a while?
> B: A couple more years, and then I'll go back, I want to go back, I wanted to start a company, my father has a construction company, I was in charge of the company before I gave up everything to come to Europe, I didn't know what I was doing... I thought that here...
> I: When did you come here?
> B: I was in Portugal for 5 years, in Lisbon, [...], yes, I got here in 2001, I arrived in Lisbon in 1997. I worked as a construction worker, I liked it... in 2001 I arrived in

> Galicia, in Vigo, with a work contract, I had Portuguese residency, and I had work in Vigo, with a Spanish company, and that brought me here, and I changed my papers for here". (Babou, a 35-year-old married man, resident in Vigo since 2001, interviewed in Vigo on 03/25/2009).

In turn, domestic employment arose from what we term "ineffective welfare provision": in other words, a context in which shared responsibility between men and women in the distribution of domestic work and care-giving is remarkably low, and the state is incapable of making provision for growing care needs, leading to a situation referred to as "care crisis" (Pérez Orozco, 2006). Many Spanish and Galician women resolved this situation by hiring migrant women. The introduction of the 2007 Dependency Act[1] favoured the increase of monetary transfers to households, since more economic benefits than services are provided, thereby increasing the financial capacity of many households previously unable to hire migrant caregivers (Martínez, 2011), leading to a rise in demand in the sector.

Although both sectors represent labour niches for foreign workers, this is not the case for the native-born population. Thus, the proportion of people employed in the construction sector during a year prior to the period of high job destruction in this area (2008) was very similar for both Spanish and foreign citizens residing in Galicia (11% and 10% respectively). The same cannot be said for domestic work, which was an ancillary activity for native-born workers, since only 2% of employed Spanish nationals worked in this sector, compared with almost one in five migrant women, as shown in the Table 2. Therefore, construction is a labour sector shared by the foreign and native-born labour force, while domestic work is practically exclusive to migrant women.

[1] Act 39/2006, of 14 December, on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons, popularly known as the "Dependency Act", is the main tool for transforming the long-term care system in Spain, setting up a portfolio of services and benefits for dependents which they can access based on their degree of dependency. In Spain, cost-saving and austerity measures of recent years have resulted in shortcomings in terms of the cover provided by this protection system

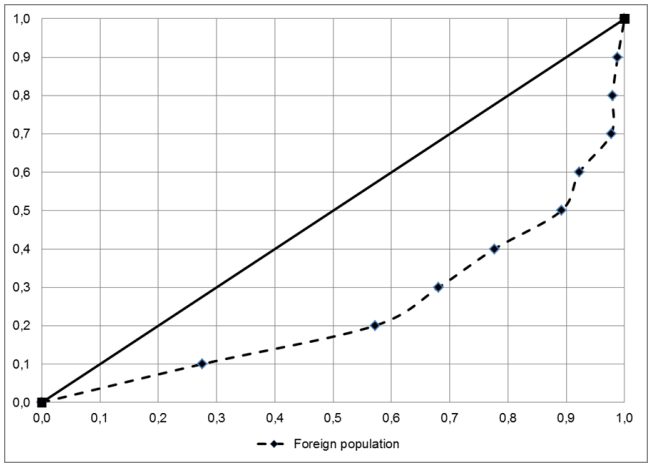
*Table 2. Population employed in Galicia by sector (construction and domestic employment) and nationality (years 2008, 2012 and 2016)*

| Nationality | Employed population | Construction sector | Domestic employment sector | % of total employment in the construction sector | % of total employment in the domestic employment sector |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2008 | | | | | |
| Spanish | 1,131,962 | 125,411 | 26,232 | 11.08% | 2.32% |
| Foreign | 53,680 | 5,512 | 9,826 | 10.27% | 18.30% |
| 2012 | | | | | |
| Spanish | 986,001 | 74,516 | 23,802 | 7.56% | 2.41% |
| Foreign | 42,663 | 2,291 | 9,002 | 5.37% | 21.20% |
| 2016 | | | | | |
| Spanish | 982,006 | 66,483 | 25,304 | 6.77% | 2.58% |
| Foreign | 35,768 | 2,699 | 5,778 | 7.55% | 16.15% |

*Source: Based on information extracted from the Labour Force Survey (INE, several years)*

The underlying reason for this is that occupational segregation in the migrant population is high, as shown in Figure 7, where the segregation curve for foreign workers in Galicia in 2016 is represented as a Lorenz Curve sorted by their greater or lesser importance in the various occupations and compared with the distribution of null segregation, which is represented by the continuous black line, according to Alonso-Villar and Del Río's analyses (2017). The extent to which the curve representing migrant employment is distanced from the perfect distribution curve of occupations is indicative of the existing degree of segregation.

*Figure 7. Foreign employment segregation curve in Galicia (2016)*




*Source: Based on information extracted from the Labour Force Survey (INE, 2016)*

We will now consider how employment has evolved following the onset of the economic recession. Between 2008 and 2012, unemployment rose by 13% in the case of the native-born population and 21% for the foreign population when the highest job destruction rate was recorded. The number of people employed continued to drop between 2012 and 2016, but there were fewer losses, especially among the native-born population, with a 0.4% decrease in the number of employed people, and 16% among foreigners. This confirms the earlier claim regarding the considerably greater impact of the crisis among the foreign population.

As regards the construction sector, between 2008 and 2012 employment rates fell to 10% for Spanish nationals, and was halved (falling to 5.4%) in the case of foreign-born workers. In absolute terms, nearly 55,000 jobs were lost in this sector. Between 2012 and 2016, employment in this sector continued to fall among the Spanish-born workforce, compared with a slight upturn in the number of foreign workers, reaching 7.6%.

As discussed above, domestic employment is a key sector for female migrant workers, representing approximately one in every five people employed. Between 2008 and 2012 more than 3,000 jobs were lost, 10% of the jobs that existed in 2008, a trend that had a slightly greater impact on Spanish-born workers. On the other hand, between 2012 and 2016, when more than 1,700 jobs were lost in the sector, native-born employment increased (6%), but migrant employment dropped, with a third of jobs being destroyed. The increase in native-born participation in household employment has already been observed in other studies (Díaz, 2016), pointing to a strategy by Spanish women to cope with the effects that the crisis had on household economies. What is striking is the sharp drop in domestic work among the migrant population, which may well be due to the depleted resources of employer families, who are no longer able to keep employing caregivers. Alternatively, it could be an unwelcome consequence of the changes introduced into the sector as a result of the enforcement of Royal Decree-Act 29/2012, amending the employment and social security conditions for domestic workers[2], which migrant workers reacted to ambivalently. This is because they could not be hired if their work permit was temporary, and in the case of workers paid by the hour, registering as a self-employed worker was not feasible in economic terms (Briones Vozmediano et al, 2014).

**Conclusions: who will take the blame?**

The crisis that broke out in Spain in 2008 and began to take its toll on Galicia a year later, highlighted a situation that had been building up in Spain as a result of an economic model based on speculation and the real estate bubble. During the boom years, immigrant employment rose based on an exceptional occupational segregation, affecting mainly immigrant women.

The spectacular growth of immigrant unemployment during the period of recession (2009-2014) has reduced the size of this population, with a number returning to their countries of origin or opting to re-emigrate to third countries. However, this has not been the only consequence: job losses have left many labour groups in Spain and Galicia with a lower bargaining capacity, turning precarious work into a long-standing phenomenon. Attention must now be placed on this 'slight' economic recovery, focusing on employment quality and occupational segregation (by origin and gender), which seems difficult to amend given the Spanish labour legislation and the lack of political will in this regard.

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[2] This is Royal Decree-Act 29/2012 of 28 December on improving management and social protection in the Special System for Domestic Workers and other measures of a social economic nature modifies the contribution system for domestic workers and assigns workers employed in the sector to the General Social Security System.

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# ABSENT PRESENCES. NEOLIBERALISM, POLITICAL EXCLUSION AND PRECARITY AMONG AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN GERMANY

*Faisal Garba*

*«The last shall be the first.»*
*Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth*

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## Introduction

This chapter paper sets out to do three things: (1) briefly outline the application of neoliberalism in Africa and attendant migration of Africans to Germany, (2) trace the social location of a category of African migrants in Germany to a sphere of class exploitation and political nativism I call the ademocratic realm of social ordering (3), put forward an alternative model of belonging based on residency and open political community as opposed to the dominant nativist understanding of belonging in Germany. I argue that existing democracies, including Germany's social democratic variant, are compatible with political and social exclusion and extreme exploitation. Accordingly, a fundamentally meaningful democracy would have to set itself the task of challenging all forms of exploitation and exclusion. In the case of Germany today, it is my contention that the place of migrants in the polity and economy means that their struggles for equality must be a *fundamental* – not an *additive* – part of any critique of the limits of growth and the mappings of the outlines of a post-growth emancipatory society.

## Neoliberalism and Contemporary African Migration

Following Harvey (2000), I conceive of neoliberal globalization as a continuation of the long existing relations of capitalist exploitation across space that directs resources from one portion of the world to another and at every locale across class lines. Contemporary migration – whose roots lie in the implementation of SAPs- is a response by ordinary people to dispossession through neoliberal globalization. A dispossession through organized class transfer of resources that leaves ordinary people with little option but to trail the footpaths of capital to the historic and new centers it carves. The movement of proletarian Africans to Europe, North America and portions of Africa is an

act of staking a claim to resources in direct opposition to state and capital erected barriers. This in no way dismisses the micro and actor-based approach to understanding migration that rightly emphasize people's agency and the importance of social networks in the migration process. The approach taken here foregrounds the actor agency within the primary drivers of such movements – a geography of unequal accumulation. Actors, networks and group agency regarding the decision to migrate, where to migrate to, and the initial settlement arrangement is a case of ordinary people acting out their individual and collective hopes and desires.

Contemporary African migration is therefore an instance of a global trend of proletarian movement across the world in response to neoliberal globalization. African migration as part of this constellation is an outcome of the application of neoliberal thinking to public policies across the world. The vulnerable, especially women, who already bear the burden of social arrangements of domination and unequal economic structures, are further marginalized and forced to seek livelihoods outside of their places of regular residence.

**Views of Migration in Germany**

As a result of the longstanding geography of unequal accumulation (Wallerstein, 2011; Harvey, 2005), the age of migration largely follows capitalism's historic patterns of spatial inequality, within limits (Castles and Miller, 2003). Thus, some countries are mostly sending regions while others predominantly serve as receiving centres. Germany was, and remains, an important receiving centre. As of 2010, 19.3% of the entire German population had a migration background while foreigners officially constitute 7.9% of the total population. The figures for net migration for 2012 stood at 369,000 (Körner, Puch and Wingerter, 2013). In spite of the consistently significant in-flow of migrants, and substantial evidence to the contrary, German political élites have until recently insisted that Germany is not a country of migration. The historic roots of this thinking can be located in the 19th century when German nation builders committed to the Volkstum prioritized the control of the immigration of Polish workers. The fear then was two-pronged: Firstly, that the Polish migrants would form an ethnic alliance with German-Poles, a dangerous possibility in the eyes of those committed to building a *Reich* out of native Germans. Max Weber (1893) for example saw the immigration of Polish workers as displacing native Germans from their *Lebensraum*. He therefore provided ammunition to the widespread fear of *Überfremdung* by arguing that the in-migration of Polish workers to portions of East Germany led to the out-migration of native Germans. This was the second fear of migration. To forestall this, workers were recruited via agencies and middlemen from Poland to work in Germany for limited periods of time after which they had to leave the country given the limited validity of their work permits. The limited recruitment initiative was meant to prevent the contamination of the *Volk* by workers of supposed inferior racial stock. The initiative also had another function: it was advantageous to employers as it kept down the cost of labour, especially on the farms, where seasonal employment was the norm and organized workers were struggling for better working conditions and standardized employment (cf. Herbert 1990).

The requirement for cheap labour by employers and the propagation of the fear of *Überfremdung* were jointly responsible for the similar assumption that Turkish, Moroccan, and Tunisian *Gastarbeiters* were a transient source of labour that would have to return to their 'places of origin' at a time when their labour can be dispensed with. This was a calming thought that proponents of the *Gastarbeiter* scheme used to allay the fears of opponents of the scheme uncomfortable with what they saw as the importation of foreigners (Herbert 1990).

Carduck, Kronberg and Nipper (2008) have argued that the lack of a deliberate effort by the German state to facilitate the social participation of migrants in Germany is responsible for the creation of seemingly self-contained national and/or ethnic migrant communities that allegedly interact mainly with themselves. For them, migration denialism and the consequent absence of integration policy resulting from the long-held view by successive German governments that the migrant is only a temporary source of labour who will eventually return to her/his home country, shifted the burden for social participation solely to the migrant. It was in the migrant's hand to navigate the socio-cultural world if s/he desires to be socially active (Kvistad, 1998). De jure this mindset appears to have changed with the introduction of an integration package that includes specialized language classes to facilitate the integration of migrants, among other measures.

**Africans and Germany: absent presence**

The migration of Africans into Germany in significant numbers

is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, Africans have historically lived in Germany since the 14th century. Indeed there was a settlement next to Kassel that was called "Mohrenkolonie Mulag" which was inhabited by Africans, most of whom arrived in Germany as court servants, slaves, or military band drummers (Mazonand Steingroever, 2005). Africans were then revered in the German social imaginary. This was before the rise of eugenics and its attempts to hierarchically rank its phantasmal distinct human races. Further African presence in Germany was mediated by German colonial and imperial expansions in Togo, Namibia and East Africa. The Ghanaian born 18thcentury philosopher Wilhelm Anton Amoo is one example of the early African presence in Germany (ibid).

The sporadic early movements from Africa to Germany took a decisive turn in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Africans reeling under social and economic difficulties and related civil conflicts sought livelihood and refuge outside the continent (Tonah, 2007). Germany became attractive due to its requirement for labour at the time (Adepoju, 2005). For example, significant numbers of Ghanaians moved to the cities of Hamburg and Düsseldorf and created a music sub-culture known as Burger hi-life[2]. To date, the word 'burger' is a status symbol in Ghana, used to refer to someone who lives outside the country and who is perceived to be economically well-off.

Overtime, both the settled and new African migrants in Germany diversified their geographical radii. Cities like Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt attracted substantial numbers of new migrants. Frankfurt in particular became home to a number of African migrants due to its economic strength and a cosmopolitan outlook. Today, Africans reside in and around the city of Frankfurt with most working in different service sectors – from cleaning firms to the post office. A handful run businesses while others simply manage to get by doing odd jobs that are intermittently available (Garba, 2012).

**From precarity to precarity**

The German welfare state is under strain (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa, 2015). The right-wing identifies migrants, the unemployed, and welfare recipients as the culprits. Those of progressive persuasions identify neoliberalism as the driver of the 'Third World' condition present in Germany. While both the right-wing and those of progressive persuasion will consider their views to be in fundamental opposition, they are in reality united by an ahistorical view of the world. For both see the world as disconnected: Germany, and by extension Europe, is perceived as a region of self-generated prosperity while the third world stands for self-incapacitation. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The reality is that the world has been intricately connected prior to the emergence of Europe as a political and economic force. (Boatca 2015; Sitas et al., 2014; Wallerstein, 1978; Rodney, 1973).

The political-economic process that led to the welfare state was partly a product of a global connection that left – and continues to leave – other parts of the world impoverished. The relegation of parts of the world to the export of raw materials is a direct consequence of an active program of industrial development in the centres of capitalist accumulation and underdevelopment in the periphery.

The growth of inequality in Europe, which will continue to rise (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa, 2015), is the logic of the unequal accumulation and distribution of resources that sustains imperialism (Asamoa, 2001). The contraction of avenues for accumulation due to the exhaustion of further profit making openings means the concessions (in the form of an embedded liberalism) that metropolitan capital was forced to make due to working-class struggles will be rolled back if a counter movement is unable to stop it. The curtailment of job and work security is a reality that imperial capitalism has imposed on Third World working classes for more than 400 years.

In South Africa for example, racial capitalism was structured in such ways that workers needed more than 50 years of struggle to gain the legal right to be workers: To organize in unions; to collectively bargain for better working and living conditions. The migrant labour system across settler colonies in Africa and some non-settler plantation-colonies such as Ghana, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast (Asamoa, 2001; Mamdani, 1996) was built on the denial of the most basic civil and labour rights at a time when workers across Europe had secured the same. The profits squeezed on the backs of a captive labour force in Africa contributed to securing the class compromise which is the welfare state. In the case of Germany, the argument put forward is that its relatively short colonial exploits limited its capacity for external accumulation. Granted that Germany was a late-comer in the scramble for colonies, the fact remains that it was an imperialist power with concessions and national capital that was deeply entangled with the national capitals of the pioneers

[1] Burger hi-life is as a music genre combines West African drum music and German instrumentals into a new synthesis. The other dimension of the burger culture is dressing component. Headlined by Pimpinis where men tuck-in to almost to the waist. Men and women wear jerry curls, long gold necklaces and very pronounced rings.

of the scramble. It is these international entanglements of national capitals that hold imperial capital together as a unitary albeit unstable entity (Mazon and Steingrover, 2005).

Datsa, Malsa, Andre, Erti, Dama, and Minamila were working in Africa before moving to Germany. Andre, Datsa, and Minamila resigned from their full-time jobs that were precarious. Andre worked at a plastic manufacturing company in Ghana, earning very little wages. His wage was not enough to pay for his transportation to and from work for the duration of a month. He was only able to go to work by borrowing money for transportation. Datsa, a bookshop attendant in Burkina Faso, had a workers' association to thank for his lunch at work. Minamila was a teacher in a public school in Benin. Prior to teaching at the public school, he left a private school due to irregular salary. It was not any better when he moved to the public school either. Teachers in Benin frequently embark on strikes before they are paid. Even then, they often only get a portion of their accumulated wage arrears. Dama and Malsa were transnational traders along the West African coast before moving to Germany. Malsa sold African movies, chocolates and flip flops. Most of her customers bought the goods on credit. Getting them to pay took a great deal of effort. The unreliable payment means that some of her customers still owe her some money close to a decade after she stopped the business. Yas'an was a civil servant in Togo before leaving the country on account of poor working conditions. Tinashe worked as a maid in a hotel in Harare earning very little. She was unable save enough money to buy a sewing machine in order to pursue her dream of becoming a seamstress.

Kofi was a part-time teacher and part-time professional soccer player before trying his luck in Germany. His income from two part-time jobs was supplemented by his family, and he in turn provided for their upkeep whenever he could. Wagi had worked as a casual labourer for an Italian firm in Libya before moving to Germany. Liaci, Mala, Terfa, Biane, Dictaben, and Yau'arme were unemployed before arriving in Germany.

Precarity is therefore not new for both the previously employed and the previously unemployed. It was the definition of their lives and the reason why they left Africa for Germany in the first place. Upon arrival in Germany they encountered another precarity. The precarity in Germany is the product of the same global process of unequal capitalist accumulation that set the migration in motion. In the case of Africa, its peripheral nature means that the working conditions even for those with secure jobs are below what they require to live decent lives. In Germany they continue to face similar hardships as they had encountered while in Africa. Contrary to what the German right and even not-so-right political formations peddle, it is not their presence that brought precarity and job insecurity to Germany. A global capitalist system which had maintained precarity in Africa is responsible for transposing the same to Germany.

The German state, like other capitalist states, is active in this transposition of precarity. The state provides the legislative framework and administrative basis for the emergence and functioning of temporary, mini, insecure, and precarious working and living arrangements. The series of Hartz legislations created the legal basis for super-exploitative working and living conditions. The state normalizes precarity by disciplining and coercing workers into accepting jobs that are incapable of meeting their basic needs (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa, 2015). Under the welfare laws of the German state a worker who refuses to accept three consecutive job offers could forfeit her/his entitled unemployment benefits as a sanction. The state allows employers to pay below the minimum wage if they prove that paying the minimum wage would have adverse effects on the sustainability of their enterprise. The state commits itself to meeting the shortfall of the wage thereby paving the way for the employer to pay below the minimum wage. It is important to highlight the fact that the minimum wage is incapable of meeting the needs of workers.

The gulf between a minimum wage and a living wage is explained away by the need for the state to arbitrate between the demands of workers and the demands of capital (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa, 2015; Harvey, 2005). Implied in this arbitration role that the state assumes is the need to maintain a democratic balance between, in liberal democratic terms, the conflicting interests of competing social forces (Dörre, Lessenich and Rosa, 2015; Claude Ake, 1996). This is in spite of the fact that the conflicting social forces are not on equal footing. Production relations in a capitalist society necessarily place workers at a disadvantage by the very existence of wage labour. Irrespective of the social pact that the state aims to achieve in its mediation, an outcome that perpetuates the existence of wage labour as the generator of capital it does not own or control necessarily disadvantages workers. This realm of limited, perverse democracy aimed at protecting the privileged position

of capital is not available to the illegalized worker. Democracy in the liberal and social term means low wages. It is perfectly legitimate for exploitative wages to be paid in a democratic manner given that the state has to equally cater to all its constituency - capitalists and workers alike.

**"Ausländer" as Political (non) Identity**

The demarcation and gradation of those who belong from those who do not belong has a long history in Germany. The notion of an exceptional occident as compared to a broad Europe (Boatca, 2015) was constructed by the association of a Volkgeist and history that supposedly animate different groups of people ala Hegel. As stated earlier, Poles in particular have constituted the other of German nation building for a while (Herbert 1990). Today Eastern Europeans in general constitute the frontier within. Africa and Africans have played a similar role in the self-formation of Germany, whether within or outside Germany (Mazon and Steingroever, 2005). Africans were the eternal other from which the *Volk* must distance themselves. They constituted what Europeans must not aspire to in terms of conduct, aptitude and disposition. The numerous names of meals and the many colonial relics that litter Germany's cities and public places attest to this (ibid). The triple association of culture/place/belonging inadvertently construct migrants in general, but for this purpose of this paper, Africans in particular, as those whose alien cultures linked to distant and backward places have no place in Germany (ibid). African workers like Kozi who have spent two-thirds of their adult lives in Germany and formally possess German citizenship report of being viewed as eternal outsiders:

> "Forget about us, even our children who were born here don't get accepted. Teachers in school see them as outsiders and often ask them to tell their classes why their family left their home to come to Germany. They are often referred to as refugees."

The outlook of individuals could influence such treatments. But what Kozi is drawing attention to is the structural relationship that informs how culture, belonging and the public sphere are conceived in Germany[2]. The idea of the *Volk* is not operationalized as having a historicity; it often comes across as an unchanging ontology (Keim, 2014). To belong, one has to trace a continuous lineage to Germany. This is not only a recent historical invention, given the recency of Germany as a unified entity, but the many French Huguenots and Dutch that make up the separate pre-Bismarckian Germany is hushed in favour of a monolith that freeze historical change.

This way of conceiving belonging in Germany allows for the allocation of belonging and political identities that wantonly excludes. Today the *Ausländer* who has no *deutsches Blut* can juridical become a *Bürger*. But socially, she is still an *Ausländer*, albeit a notch above the illegal *Ausländer* who is politically and socially an *Ausländer* and for that matter, outside the broad *Volk* that is covered by practices of democratic participation and decision-making.

An alternative approach, one which African migrants exemplify in their resistance to the ideology of the exclusive *Volk* is the insistence that "this place belongs to us too." The basis of their thinking is the association of belonging to residence and as understanding of culture as ever-changing. In opposition to a view of culture as static and unchanging, African migrants in Germany act out culture as a contested terrain with different sources. Here, 'German culture' will be inclusive of practices of people who have lived, (often moved into) the disparate independent German territories and those who trace origins and relations to Turkey, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and beyond.

**Conclusion: In solidarity towards alternatives**

In the face of the challenges that migrant workers in Germany face, not least an estrangement that militates against their social membership, there raises the question of how they cope with, and adjust to such conditions. This is in the face of Dörre's (2005; 2006) observation that precariety prevents social participation even for locals whose economic conditions limit their life chances thereby estranging them to the margins of society. For migrants therefore, it could be contended that precarity limits their capability to become members of society and to join, or align with others in similar condition in fighting for better living conditions – more so, given the reality that the neoliberal onslaught actively delegitimizes working class forms of organization by attacking unions, works councils and all forms of working class formations. Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) citing the French example, observed that union membership declined sharply because companies resorted to union-breaking strategies such as signing individual contracts

[2] It is important to add that this is not in any way peculiarly German, although the configuration of the triple association has its specificities in Germany.

Credits
and acknowledgements:
I acknowledge the Centre for Humanities Research of the University of the Western Cape for the fellowship award that facilitated the writing of the present article. All credit for DHET purposes for this article is attributed to the CHR at UWC.

with workers and retrenching workers that are active in unions. This, coupled with the nature of flexible, part-time and agency work of differentiated work sites (Standing 2011), demobilizes worker organizations by atomising workers. Following Dörre (2006), it is apparent that precarity has an enormous impact on worker organization, and dialectically, the very act of individuating work contains the seeds of organized workers' action aimed at challenging poor working and living conditions. Precarious African workers in Germany like Dezva gravitated towards their colleagues at work and formed a works council in order to defend their working conditions collectively. Yau' Arme and Wagi see workers as united by their similar fate as labourer against the employer. Nonetheless, African workers in Germany feel excluded from the larger society. They feel they are not just made to feel out of place because of their class position, but also due to who they are as *Ausländer*. While the exclusion that they face is underwritten by an economic arrangement that requires cheap disposable labour, it is secured via a politico-legal regime that delimits belonging on account of origin and an autochthonous model of citizenship. Consequently, it is my contention that any attempt at reconstituting the social fabric in Germany via the creation of a humane alternative society not driven by unending growth must also take seriously the task of fundamentally re-conceptualizing what it means to belong.

A model of social belonging based on political community where anyone who lives and makes a livelihood in a society is acknowledged as a member of such a society is intricate to a counterhegemonic project. Among many political tasks for unions, activists and progressive groupings is to take seriously the question of migrants as a political question instead of a humanitarian concern with saving the desperate. As the epigraph at the beginning by Frantz fanon conveys, it is only when the most despised and dehumanized of the labouring class is placed at the centre of a new sociality that a society begins to fundamentally transform.

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# THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IN PORTUGAL: TRENDS IN PRODUCTION AND LABOUR FROM 2000 TO 2015

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As a result of the 2009 financial crisis, the construction industry in Portugal underwent significant remodelling processes, which culminated with a downfall. This paper offers an overview of the trend the Portuguese construction sector recorded between 2000 and 2015, taking into account economic variables related to labour and production, followed by a presentation of available data on posted workers. The ideas presented in the paper are a first step in the effort to elucidate and measure the intensity of the changes that the construction industry experienced since the 2009 crisis.

The paper presents an analysis of the construction industry in Portugal between 2000 and 2015. The exercise is a first result of a broader attempt to define this sector in the 21stcentury, following on from previous studies that compiled and analysed statistical data from the last decades. The work of Baganha, Marques and Góis (2001) is the best example of using secondary data as a tool for identifying general socioeconomic trends in the construction sector.

The first part of the paper is based on data from National Accounts (*Contas Nacionais*) compiled by the National Statistics Institute of Portugal (INE) focusing on construction companies on the one hand, and on construction workers on the other. The second part looks at the mobility of workers in the European Union, presenting data published by the European Commission on posted workers to and from Portugal, i.e. employees a company sends to work in a different EU Member State on a temporary base.

## The trend in the construction industry: from a strong 2000 to a six-year period of economic crisis

At the beginning of the 21$^{st}$century, Portuguese construction companies were financially sound, as demonstrated by the industry key economic indicators[1].

The sector experienced a favourable trend all along the last decade of the twentieth century, driven as well by a positive domestic economic climate. Between 1995 and 2000, Portugal saw strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates, with

[1] National Accounts series compiled by INE: production, intermediate consumption, gross value added, gross operating surplus and gross fixed capital formation, all of them with published data until 2014

values always above 2%. This was reflected in the annual rate of change in construction between 1999 and 2000: its production grew 10.1% while its gross value added increased by 12.9%.

In the years that followed, the trend reversed, announced by negative annual rates of change in gross fixed capital formation, which suggested a decline in the industry's productive capacity, with 2003 showing for the first time a decrease in the levels of production, intermediate consumption and gross value added, due tithe decline of the country's economy.The-0.9%rate of GDP growth was once again indicative of the pro-cyclical nature of the construction industry.

In 2004, the industry bounced back, driven by a 21% growth in gross fixed capital formation and by a national GDP growth of 1.8%. Aside from 2000, it was the only year that recorded positive rates of change in the five economic indicators under analysis between 2000 and 2014.

It is worth noting what was happening at the time in the construction sector in Spain, a major source of the previous economic growth in Portugal. As noted by Alonso-Nuez, Flores-García and Muñoz-Porcar (2015), during the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21stcentury, Spain endured a continuously positive trend in construction: it represented 6.4% of the country GDP in the final quarter of 1997, growing up to 12% in the last quarter of 2006.In that last year, the construction sector was responsible for 13.6% of total national employment.

For Monteiro (2014), Spain had ideal conditions for the construction sector up until approximately 2008. It also enjoyed a strong relationship with Sousa Valley from where it recruited significant numbers of Portuguese workers, thus helping the national economy as well.

Between 2005 and 2008, the construction industry was plagued by instability, with the sectorial economic indicators fluctuating between positive and negative annual rates of change. The overall domestic dynamic remained positive, albeit with significantly lower rates of GDP growth when compared to the 1995 to 2000 period, reaching only 0.2% in 2008.

With the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, both Portugal and Spain started a period of downturn. What followed was a series of slowdowns in construction industry activity and bankruptcy of a wide amount of construction firms.

From 2009, the Portuguese economy entered a significant cyclical change, both at the national and sector level, as a result of the financial crisis at the time. This was the first of six years in which the construction industry recorded consecutive annual negative rates of change in all the five indicators under scrutiny, with only one exception in 2014.

In 2010 and 2011, the country faced multiple stability and growth plans designed by the Government, aiming at higher tax revenues and lower deficits and public debt. Ultimately, in 2011 Portugal requested a bail-out program of 78 billion Euros from the International Monetary Fund, the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism and the European Financial Stability Facility, further aggravating the economic situation of the country.

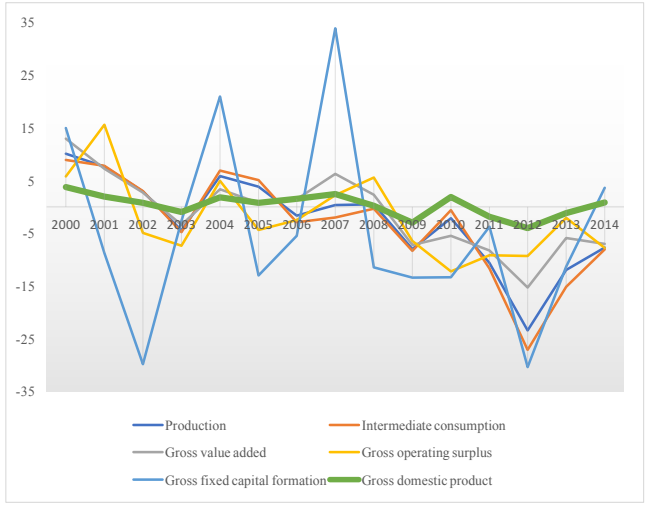
2012 was by far the worst year of this six-year period, with all five indicators recording annual decreases of between 9% and 30%. This is consistent with the trend of the Portuguese economy in that year, as it was the worst one for the country, with GDP falling 4.0%.

In 2013 and 2014, the industry's rate of economic decline was mitigated, despite the persistence of negative annual rates of change, with the exception of gross fixed capital formation in 2014, which grew 3.7%, the first sign that the industry was recovering. It was also in that year that GDP growth rates returned to positive levels.

Figure 1 combines the trends of these five economic indicators during the 2000 to 2014 period, comparing them with the evolution of the GDP.

While this graphic is fairly illustrative of the scale of the economic impact of the crisis in terms of the rates of decrease in the absolute values of these variables, it suggests as well that these indicators faced a harsher trend during the economic crisis than the one found at a national level, since GDP values did not fall so much and recovered more rapidly.

*Figure 1 Main business variables of construction – annual rates of change.*

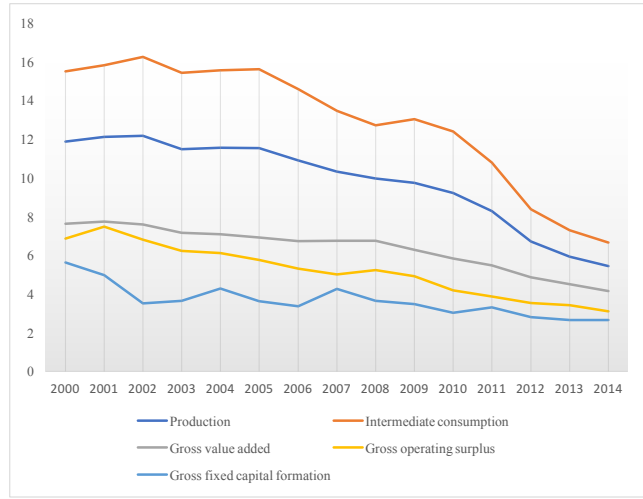



*Source: adapted from INE (Contas Nacionais, 2018)*

The discrepancy between those trends is an argument that justifies analysing as well the evolution of the relative importance of the construction sector in the country's economic dynamics.

Figure 1 also allows to interpret the 2000 to 2014 period as a two act story of the construction sector. From 2000 to 2008, it often shifted from yearly gains to yearly losses which more or less annulled each other when taken together, demonstrating a general trend of small declines or stability in relative values. From 2009 and 2014, construction begun a new period of continuous yearly falls, which in their entirety resulted in an abrupt decline of the sector's importance. The trends in the relative values of these indicators confirm this two-act approach. In2000, the industry accounted for 7.6% of the country gross value added, while in 2008, on the verge of the crisis, it stood at 6.7%, down to 4.1% in 2014.

*Figure 2 Main business variables of construction – percentage of total domestic values.*




*Source: adapted from INE (Contas Nacionais, 2018)*

The same downward trend was observed in production: in 2000, it accounted for 11.9% of the domestic total. In 2008, it had already fallen to 9.7% and, in 2014, it stood at 5.4%.

Figure 2 summarizes these trends, including data from intermediate consumption, gross operating surplus and gross fixed capital formation, all of which followed the same downward pattern, with the losses of importance intensifying from 2009 onwards.

In summary, between 2009 and 2014 the construction sector experienced a significant decline in its absolute values and was hit harder in comparison to the domestic economic situation as a whole.

The year to year negative rates of change were a manifestation of how Portugal was dealing with the recession. In face of a crisis, the Portuguese economy suffered a readjustment, with construction losing a significant amount of importance in the national economic activity.

In other words, Portugal did not record as significant a decline in the absolute values of these indicators vis-à-vis the construction industry and it was able to recover faster, recording positive GDP values in 2014, while four of the construction related measures continued to decline in that year.

Similar patterns were observed between 2000 and 2014 in regard to labour variables, concerning a continuous reduction in the workforce, in the working hours and in the wages of this industry, both in absolute terms and in relation to their relative weight in domestic totals.

Suchlike results emerge from the analysis of five more variables made available by INE, related to the work side: wages, paid work hours, paid full-time equivalents, paid jobs and paid individual persons. A comparison between the 2000 to 2008 and 2009 to 2014 periods will also guide this evaluation.

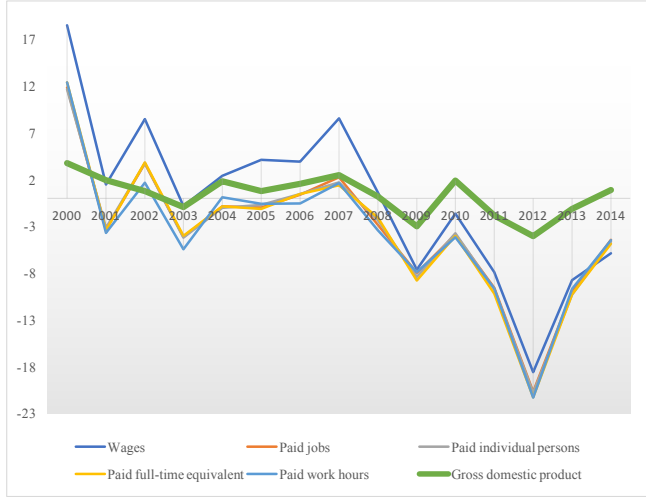
Since 2000, all these variables experienced yearly increases, driven by the strong growth in both domestic and sectorial activity (Figure 3). 2002, 2006 and 2007 also saw all five variables with positive growth rates. Despite that, between 2000 and 2007 there was a general tendency of stagnation, with slight positive and negative yearly variations.

In absolute values, there was a soft reduction in the number of workers from 2000 (469.2 thousands) and 2008 (443.2 thousands) that became dramatic when in 2014 only 239.2 thousand were left. Similarly, the industry relative weight fell from11.6% in 2000 to 6.3% in 2014.

These data demonstrate that, despite a decline in this industry's paid workforce between 2000 and 2008, it paled in comparison to that of between 2009 and 2014, losing a significant amount of weight in the labour market, as is illustrated in Figure 4.

Lallement (2011) notes that countries such as Spain, France or Portugal used initially voluntarist measures aimed at labour markets, through increasing public expenditure related to infrastructure projects and housing. But unemployment numbers inevitably started to rapidly grow. As Lallement (2011) stressed, within OECD countries overall unemployment evolved from a record low rate of 5.6% in 2007 to 8.3% just two years later. In Spain, it increased very quickly, gaining 10 percentage points just between that two-year time frame.

*Figure 3 Main labour variables of construction – annual rates of change.*

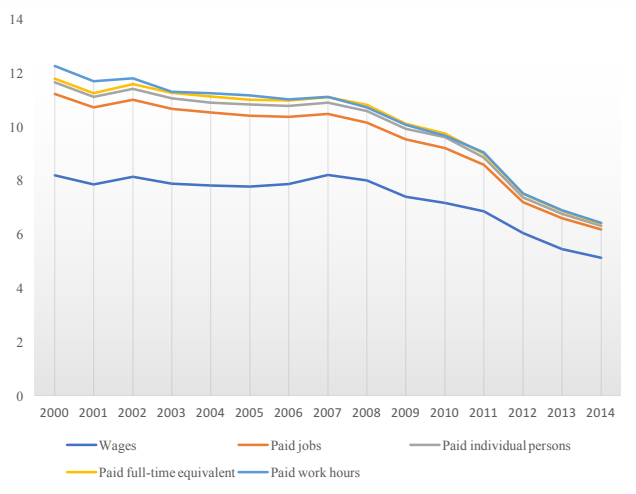



*Source: adapted from INE (Contas Nacionais, 2018)*

The trend in the number of jobs followed that of individual persons employed: the years from 2009 to 2014 recorded the sharpest declines. In 2000, there were 472.9 thousand paid jobs in the construction industry, or 11.2% of the domestic total. Up to 2008, there was some stability: 445.3 thousand paid jobs, or 10.1% of the national total. However, from 2008 to 2014, absolute values fell to 243.1 thousand, and relative values to 6.2%.

In terms of wages, between 2000 and 2008 there was an almost uninterrupted period of continuous positive increase, with the exception of 2003, which fell by 0.8% as a consequence of the decrease in the construction business indicators and a first year of GDP decrease. However, in all the remaining years the rates of change were positive, ranging from 0.6%, in 2008 to 18.5%, in 2000.

*Figure 4 Main labour variables of construction – percentage of total domestic values.*




*Source: adapted from INE (Contas Nacionais, 2018)*

In 2000, construction worker wages represented 8.2% of the national total, a percentage that remained significantly steady until 2008 (8%). 2009 marks the end of the trend observed between 2004 and 2008, as a natural result of the decline in the number of paid jobs available and of paid individual persons, that had already begun in 2007. In 2014, the weight of these wages dropped to 5.2% of the domestic total.

During this period, the full-time equivalent recorded a significant consistency in its behaviour compared to the trend in the number of paid workers and paid jobs. It should be noted that its importance also fell in comparison to the domestic total: from 11.8% in 2000, dropping slightly to 10.8% in 2008, and, in 2014, accounting for 6.4% of the total full-time equivalent in Portugal.

Lastly, the number of paid working hours, which only reached positive annual rates of change in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2007. In 2000, 933.4 million hours were recorded, an amount which, in 2014, was 455.2 million, corresponding to a decline of more than half its value at the beginning of the 21st century. Its domestic weight reflected that change: in 2000, it stood at 12.3%, in 2008, at 10.7%, and, in 2014, at 6.4%.

This second set of indicators goes hand in hand with the arguments made when discussing the first set in relation to the construction industry's significant vulnerability to external events, having been particularly affected by the 2009 financial crisis in terms of the economic growth of companies, in the composition of the workforce and in its respective work hours and wages.

The reduction of its relative weight in the domestic economy suggests that the Portuguese economy sought to adapt between 2009 and 2014, preserving more other sectors while reducing its reliance upon the construction industry.

Between 2001 and 2013 the construction industry stalled after reaching its peak in 2000 and 2001 (Monteiro, 2014). But despite being recognised as one of the most important industries in terms of number of companies and of people employed, it is undeniable that it has since then lost a considerable amount of its relevance in the national economy. Data for the years following 2014 will be decisive in assessing whether the construction industry was able to regain importance in the national economy, with another pro-cyclical evolution and thus mitigating the effects of the crisis, or if the economic readjustment was more permanent, with long-lasting consequences.

The growing trend in the posting of Portuguese workers in EU Member States is another possible indication of the ramifications of the economic crisis, as construction workers try to find work alternatives, while companies make use of internationalization strategies in a European work market, insomuch as it will be addressed in the following section.

## The construction industry in Portugal within an EU framework: posted work between 2008 and 2015

With the economic crisis, migration patterns in Portugal changed very quickly. On the one hand, the number of people leaving the country reached levels similar only to those of the dictatorship-fuelled decades in the1960s and the 1970s. On the other hand, immigrants faced severe economic conditions. As pointed out by Pereira and Esteves (2017), unemployment rates of immigrants in Portugal rose from 16.5% in 2009 to 29.2% in 2013.

In this context of greater difficulty to invest and work in Portugal, it is important to look also at how posted work has shifted in this period of crisis. By posted work, we refer to workers moving abroad in the context of a working relationship with an employer in his or her home country. Bosch, Danijel and Neumann (2013) and Cremer (2010) have suggested that this strategy is used by employers to avoid labour regulation and

hire low-wage migrants in precarious jobs.
Caro et al. (2015) and Arnholtz (2013) note that this form of labour has been flourishing in a EU institutional environment, in a pan-EU labour market framework, that is, a market dynamic driven by autonomous actions from companies. It is a relationship of weak ties with the host country, in a flexible and short-term logic.
The second part of this paper investigates the scale of posted workers in the European Union, focusing particularly on the role Portugal has played in the European labour market with specific reference to the construction industry, and to understand what changes took place as a consequence of the 2009 economic crisis.
It is not yet common practice for countries to disclose national statistics on this type of labour, and the only official source available on posted workers are the figures from 2008 to 2015 published by the European Commission.
In an industry approach, little information is presented with disaggregated data allowing for a separate analysis of posted workers in construction. However, it is possible to collect the percentage of posted workers in the construction industry sent by Portugal, with respect to some of the years in the 2008 to 2015 period.
The lowest recorded value is in 2009, at 53.1%, which means that construction has always accounted for at least more than half of the overall amount of posted workers sent by Portugal. This percentage jumped to 67.5% in 2011, falling again to the 50% range between 2013 and 2015, as presented in Table 1.
In 2013 Portugal recorded the highest number of posted workers in construction (48.551), a significant increase over 2011. That value fell in the following two years, in a trend that reflects the poor performances of the economy in the country and in the construction sector in particular.
Other observations on posted workers can be made, now considering all posted workers sent from Portugal and the participation of the country as a whole in the posted worker community. Summarized as well in Table 1, these data also allow to infer additional aspects of construction workers in posted work.

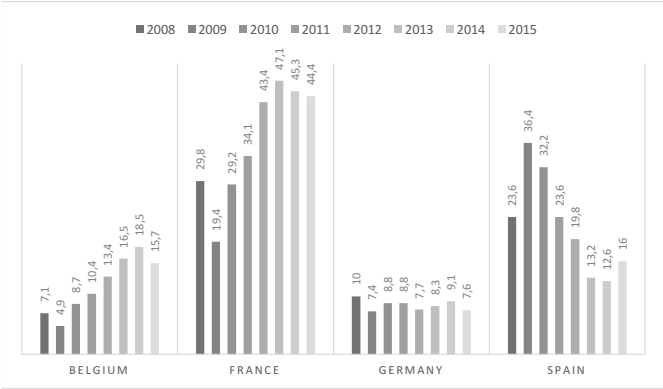
Beginning in 2008, Portugal shows a relative balance between the number of incoming (12.831) and outgoing workers (19.245). Over the years, that gap becomes significantly wider.
This is mainly due to an exponential increase in the number of posted workers from the country, a trend that started in 2009 and peaked in 2013. From within a total of 82.851 that temporarily left the country in 2013, an estimated 58.6% came directly from the construction sector (NACE F).
The growing number of workers looking for jobs in other Member States is one more indicator of how deep the 2009 financial crisis hit the Portuguese economy. The increase in posted workers was not only exponential, but took place also at a faster rate than the overall increase in total workers of the reporting Member States. From 2008 to 2014 the percentage of posted workers from Portugal increased from 1.5% to 5.1 (Table 1).

In 2013 Portugal recorded the highest number of posted workers in construction (48.551), a significant increase over 2011. That value fell in the following two years, in a trend that reflects the poor performances of the economy in the country and in the construction sector in particular.
Other observations on posted workers can be made, now considering all posted workers sent from Portugal and the participation of the country as a whole in the posted worker community. Summarized as well in Table 1, these data also allow to infer additional aspects of construction workers in posted work.

*Table 1 E101 certificates (2008 and 2009) and portable documents (PDs) A1 (2010 to 2015) for posted workers sent/received by Portugal.*

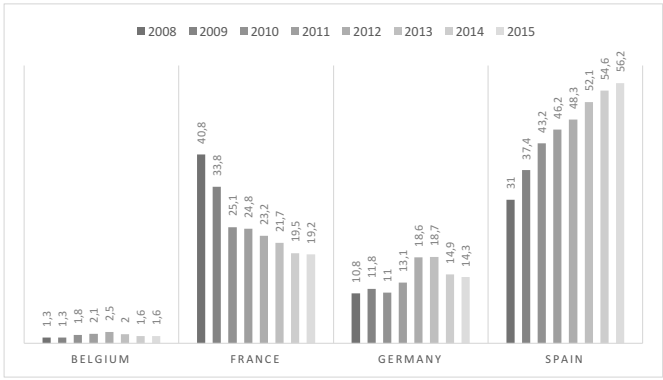
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total of EU reported countries | 1289526 | 1289376 | 1329883 | 1507714 | 1525244 | 1741255 | 1454687 | 1495307 |
| Receiving (PT) | 12831 | 13028 | 12193 | 13345 | 11422 | 10696 | 12833 | 15374 |
| % Receiving (PT/EU) | 1,00 | 1,01 | 0,92 | 0,89 | 0,75 | 0,61 | 0,88 | 1,03 |
| Sending (PT) | 19245 | 65499 | 58948 | 54183 | 55901 | 82851 | 74735 | 64020 |
| % Sending (PT/EU) | 1,49 | 5,08 | 4,43 | 3,59 | 3,67 | 4,76 | 5,14 | 4,28 |
| Balance (Receiving – Sending) | -6414 | -52471 | -46755 | -40838 | -44479 | -72155 | -61902 | -48646 |
| % Sending (PT) of Industry (NACE B to F) | NDA | 95,0 | NDA | 88,8 | NDA | 72,1 | 74,8 | 76,7 |
| Sending (PT) of Construction (NACE F) | NDA | 34780 | NDA | 36574 | NDA | 48551 | 43795 | 34763 |
| % Sending (PT) of Construction (NACE F/Total) | NDA | 53,1 | NDA | 67,5 | NDA | 58,6 | 58,6 | 54,3 |

*Figure 5 Number of posted workers from Portugal (outgoing) (%)*




*Source: adapted from European Commission (2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016)*

*Figure 6 Number of posted workers to Portugal (incoming) (%)*




*Source: adapted from European Commission (2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016)*

Finally, the destination profile of the posted workers is noteworthy. As Figure 5 and Figure 6 show, Spain and France played a major role from two points of view. On one hand, Spain has been the main destination country in 2009 (36.4%) and 2010 (32.2%), replaced by France in the following years. Beginning in 2011, the latter saw a significant increase, reaching values above 40% between 2012 and 2015, while the former fell to the 10% range. This change was very likely due to the economic crisis, whose impact extended significantly to Spain and its construction industry. Together, France and Spain accounted for more than half of the total number of posted workers sent by Portugal in every year of the period under scrutiny.

On the other hand, France and Spain always represented more than 60% of posted workers received by Portugal. France was the main sending Member State in 2008, but in the following years Spain sent more posted workers, in increasingly higher percentages: in 2009, the country accounted for 37.4%, and, in 2015, 56.2%.

## Final remarks

The economic recession that hit Portugal between 2009 and 2014, the effects of the crisis rippled through the construction industry. The pro-cyclical nature of this industry was significantly noticeable, has the sector finished 2014 with a strikingly shrunk importance in the Portuguese economy, especially when compared to the softer decreases of national GDP, which had already registered a positive yearly growth rate in 2014.

The recurring comparison between the 2000 to 2008 and the 2009 to 2014 periods allowed for a better understanding and measurement of the two stages of behaviour of the Portuguese construction industry: a first one of general stability or soft declines, followed by a second one of sharp declines in every production or labour variables.

The economy reacted to the collapse of the industry and readjusted its sectorial distribution, with the construction industry playing a much reduced role than in the previous years. As the construction industry is often work-intensive, it was forced to adjust its workforce, reducing its investment in the number of paid work hours or the number of paid individuals, as illustrated by the evolution of labour related variables.

Construction workers, as discussed by Monteiro and Queirós (2010), have a nomadic orientation, with a fluctuant work life and no stable spatial or geographical place of belonging. Construction sites change, often to long distances, which invite this group of workers to be easily ready and accustomed to move. That work logic helps to explain why these workers were generally dominant within the group of posted workers from Portugal.

Given the socioeconomic context during the crisis, they continued to represent more than 50% of that universe, increasing significantly in absolute values until 2013. Many of these workers saw migration as an option and many companies viewed posted work as an alternative to find new business opportunities.

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The Iberian dimension of the crisis manifested itself in the posting profile of workers sent from Portugal to other EU countries, with Spain losing importance during the crisis period, even falling behind not only France, but Belgium as well in 2013 and 2014.

The figures about posted workers show that the Portuguese migration flows during the crisis period were very significant, expanding the relative importance of the country in the posted worker community. Furthermore, it reveals that those flows were predominantly made up of workers without academic qualifications or those related to low-skilled jobs (Monteiro, 2014), namely construction, which again accounted for more than half of all posted workers between 2008 and 2015.

However, Baganha and Carvalheiro (2001) noted that posted worker statistics should be approached with caution, as posting processes are often fluid and informal, while Cremer and Janssen (2006) argue that undeclared economy in construction is challenging when using official statistics, as those values may be underestimated.

Moreno et al. (2000) point out a set of characteristics of the construction industry that enhance the likeliness of undeclared work, such as the seasonal fluctuations in production, the flexible structure of the enterprises and the labour-intensive nature of construction. For Monteiro and Queirós (2010), it leads to informal work relationships with subcontracting, short-term contracts, or a salary split between the official and the non-official component.

Future studies ought to approach the interconnections between formal and informal construction work markets, specifically through the combination of intensive and extensive empirical data.

Similarly, follow-up research should cross multiple data sources from National or European statistical reports in order to enrich research efforts and to give more scientific robustness to analytical interpretations of construction trends.

Lastly, it is also recommended that additional data from companies and workers be equated, including variables such as the percentage of national or international capital, the medium size of enterprises in employees and revenue, the geographical distribution of construction companies, the sex and age profile of construction workers or its educational levels.

Considering the first positive signs identified in 2014, future research efforts could address the behaviour of the Portuguese construction sector from 2015 onwards, in order to not only understand in greater depth the impacts of the economic crisis, but also to assess if the processes of absolute and relative decline of the industry's relevance were temporary or permanent.

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# CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN DIMONA: AN ORAL HISTORY

*Shelly Shaul*

The mass influx of 700,000 immigrants to Israel in the years 1948–1951, mostly from Yemen, Iraq, Poland, and Romania, doubled the Jewish population of the nascent country (Morris, 1989)[1]. The need to attract mass immigration became urgent with the winding down of the war of 1948, and the growing international pressure on Israel to allow the return of Palestinian refugees, who had been uprooted from their lands in the course of hostilities. The Israeli government decided to prevent the return of refugees and to increase the rate of Jewish immigration, in order to populate the areas that had been emptied, and to ensure control over Palestinian homes, which were officially referred to as "abandoned property" (Hacohen, 2003).

In 1951, with large numbers of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Yemen, and Iraq already settled in Israel, the need to increase the Jewish population of the country subsided. With the decline of demographic urgency and facing economic difficulties, Israeli authorities adopted a more selective immigration policy. The ideal immigrant could be reshaped to fit the Zionist ethos. People deemed "unproductive" and "economically burdensome" were not welcome. The Jewish Agency, a quasi-governmental organization predating Israeli statehood, decided in November 1951 to terminate the previous policy of mass immigration and to institute a screening process targeting especially the Jews arriving from North Africa (Picard, 2013a)[2]. Jewish immigrants from Morocco and nearby countries were to be allowed in, but only in accordance with the priorities and requirements of the Zionists movement. Immigration was encouraged, but quotas were set and strict criteria established that rebuffed many would-be immigrants.

Most Dimona residents are Mizrahi, a term referring to Jews who trace their origin to the Middle East and North Africa. They are officially entitled to the full rights of Israeli citizenship, and to certain privileges by virtue of belonging to the Jewish majority. In reality, however, Mizrahi Jews occupy a socially, culturally, and economically marginal position in relation to Israeli citizens of Ashkenazi, or European, origin[3].

**Shelly Shaul**
is a historian who studies immigration to Israel from Morocco. She has produced an ethnography of the Israeli town of Dimona, analyzing the life stories of residents within the historical contexts of both countries.
Her contribution to this volume is a work of oral history that is drawn from that research. She recently earned a master's degree in history from Tel Aviv University, graduating with academic distinction. She continues to focus her scholarly work on Israel's Mizrahi population, a term referring to Jews who trace their origins to the Middle East and North Africa.

[1] Meanwhile, 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled the country during the Arab–Israeli War of 1948 and its aftermath (Morris 1989).

[2] Morocco's Jewish population, which was the largest among the Jewish communities of the Islamic world, made up about a quarter million of the country's eight million residents in 1948.

[3] The term Mizrahi refers to a social-cultural reality, but it is inaccurate from a

historical and geographic perspective. Literally, Mizrahi means "eastern" in Hebrew, but Morocco is part of the western Islamic world and is located far to the west of Israel. Gerardo Leibner, "HaTikva Encampment, 2011: The Ambiguous Agency of the Marginalized," Current Anthropology, 56 (2015), p.160, n. 3.

[4] The interviews referenced in this article were conducted in Hebrew as part of an oral history project focusing on the town of Dimona, Israel, in collaboration with former Dimona residents Amit Botbol and Ofir Itah, as well as community activists. All translations were done by the author.

[5] I have been especially influenced by the work of Alessandro Portelli, who has shown unique scholarly potential of oral history. The written word alone, he argued, does not capture enough, especially not the underlying meaning people give to their lives (Portelli 2006).

This article focuses on the period of the 1950s and 60's and explores the memories and life stories of Moroccan immigrants who worked as construction workers in Dimona. I analyze how the experience of immigration and settlement in a remote town in the Israeli desert shaped their self-definition. At the core of the research is the collection of life stories of Dimona residents from North Africa and India – as captured in dozens of interviews[4] conducted in 2011–2015 – dealing with a period that begins in Morocco of the late 1940s and ends in contemporary Dimona. Oral history methodology guides my analysis of these interviews, as I attempt to reveal the hidden meanings behind the collected narratives. Treating the subjective – viz. memory, self-characterization, and the impact of past experiences on present-day consciousness – as historical will help to explain the events and processes that emerge from the interviews[5].

Upon their arrival in Dimona, Mizrahi immigrants experienced cultural, social and financial impoverishment. Israeli society was stratified in a settler colonial fashion with European Jews at the top and the remaining Palestinians at the bottom. In this hierarchy, Jews were slotted according to ethnic origin and Mizrahi immigrants were relegated to the lowest rung. At the core of the Mizrahi experience lays a tension between their dependence and marginalization, on the one hand, and their formal acceptance into the group of Jewish citizens in Israel. I explore how the construction workers I interviewed deal with this tension in their life stories. How did they conceive of their place within the political project in which they were incorporated? Did they see themselves as laborers with limited options, as pioneers of the Zionist project, or both, and if so – in what ways?

Current research about Mizrahis in Israel, whether celebratory or critical, tends to focus on institutions and policies. Otherwise, a few prominent individuals are considered – as a rule, political leaders, generals, or powerful administrators. This leaves out the "objects" of official policies. Moreover, their experiences and subjectivity can hardly be reconstructed from the official written records. Few historians have so far ventured to deal with memories, experiences, and aspirations of people and the way they tell about themselves. But a fuller understanding of historical events requires examining the way they were experienced and interpreted by the individuals who were impacted by them.

Initial conditions for the first groups of immigrants who arrived in Dimona were severe. It was a remote spot in the desert with paltry living facilities and no infrastructure. They homes were metal shacks. There was no decent road connecting Dimona to the nearest city. Here is how living conditions were described by Morocco-born David Zana, one of the first immigrants to be settled in Dimona:

> "We came from Morocco and arrived at the port of Haifa. They took us by truck. The whole way, it went: bump, bump, bump. What can I tell you? A shitty truck. We left Haifa at ten, arrived at four. That evening we were thirty families. What was there in Dimona? Mountains and hills [...] Empty, just one dog in Dimona, there was one dog in Dimona. There was no one there. At night you're shivering at home – there's no power. Water – just barely. What we went through... What can I tell you? It was insane. On Friday evening, as it became Shabbat [the Jewish Sabbath starts at Friday sundown], there was no bread. We were without food for Shabbat until midnight. Someone drove to Be'er Sheva [the nearest city to Dimona and its only connection to basic services]. They brought us bread, and it was two in the morning. After that, we moved into permanent housing. It took six months for us to move into the permanent housing. Also no electricity... Eventually, they started telling us – [there would be electricity for] 2–3 hours a day. There was a generator. What can I tell you? That's what we went through."
> (David Zana, 23/07/2013)

David Zana and his wife were among the 32 families brought by the Jewish Agency in September 1955 to a spot in the desert called Dimona[6]. As part of the "Ship to Village" plan, the trucks carrying the immigrants would depart the port of Haifa and make no stops until they reached their destinations, thus minimizing the chance of resistance.

The Jewish Agency used this tactic in order to confine immigrants to designated specific sites of settlement. Israeli officials commonly deceived the immigrants, intentionally misidentifying or mischaracterizing the place where they would be settled (Picard, 2013b).This policy, officially in place from August 1954 until October 1956, succeeded in maximizing control over the movement of immigrants and confining their settlement to the towns founded in that period. The experience of immigrants interviewed for this study suggests that the policy

[6] After one year, Dimona reached a population of 500, after five, 5,000 and after a decade, 20,000. Only in 1969 was Dimona designated a municipality. The ethnic makeup of Dimona remained largely the same throughout this entire period: the vast majority were Mizrahi, and only a minority were European- or Israeli-born. Two thirds of residents were settled there by the government and a third arrived of their own volition (Reich 2011). Today, about 33,000 people live in Dimona.

may have continued to exist unofficially for some years.
In 1955, the head of the Jewish Agency's Immigrant Absorption Department, Giora Yoseftal, explained to his colleagues how he carried out the policy of dispatching immigrants to live in remote locations. He described a mechanism that disorients them and forces them to comply:

> "[The immigrant] climbs aboard a ship, goes through a sorting process, and gets a slip. He disembarks from the ship and there's a bus waiting for him, and he's given all sorts of slips. He cannot escape the administrative system of slips, and instructions, and appointments. And then one day he finds a house, furniture, and cookware [...] They have no idea what we did to them."[7]
> Yoseftal explained the Jewish Agency's operation more succinctly on another occasion: "This is a Prussian bureaucracy imposed upon primitive people. The signatures are worthless. These people have no idea what they are signing."[8]

Dimona is one of several dozen locales known as "development towns" which were established in the country's remote rural and desert regions soon after the founding of the state. At the time of its founding, Israel's population was heavily concentrated in the greater Tel Aviv area, along the country's central coast. Smadar Sharon's research has revealed that the government sought to increase settlement in the rural periphery of the country and drafted plans for the development towns. Only once the plans were drawn did the government seek out the immigrants to populate them (Sharon, 2012), a fact that casts the Israeli government's claim about the need to save Morocco's Jews from persecution by Muslim rulers in a cynical light. The purpose of dispersing immigrant populations was to "Judaize" areas inhabited primarily by the country's Arab population, such as the Bedouin of the Negev desert. The policy was designed to bolster the state's hold on the land, and to place the immigrants as gatekeepers near the country's borders. But settling Dimona with immigrants also served another goal: the creation of a labor pool for industrial development (Cohen, 2007).
In the early years, the only jobs available to Dimona residents were in forestation, construction, and Dead Sea mining operations. In 1958, Kitan Dimona, the first textile plant in the region, was established. Local residents, including women and youth, began working there. Dimona also began supplying unskilled labor to the nearby Nuclear Research Center, Israel's classified atomic reactor whose construction had started in 1958.
In all my interviews with Dimona's male residents, they frame their life stories – after leaving Morocco and settling in the town – around their work as laborers. Their memories tend to be organized around their employment history, and all other major life events radiate from the central narrative of *working*.
Asher Abukasis, born in Casablanca, Morocco, recalled that when new residents arrived, they were immediately put to work, building stone structures for their own habitation. They were tasked with building permanent housing to replace the shacks that housed them at first.

> "After that, they came and said: Who wants to work? The only work is construction, so my dad and everyone went to work in construction. They built... all the first ones built... I am telling you this now, and of course, that about every month, every month and a half, a new delivery of immigrants arrived [...]. Something like 20 families [...] Meanwhile, the veterans built the homes we lived in... and then Ha'Arava Street or Baba Sali Street as it is known today – all the stone houses."
> (Asher Abukasis, 06/01/2014)[9]

The immigrants I interviewed described having no choice of vocation. Their prior professional experience – usually as craftsmen and merchants was rendered worthless in Dimona, where the local economy was concentrated in a few industries and depended on a handful of private and state-run companies. Miriam Dahan relayed how her father, who came from Sefrou, Morocco, tried to maintain his socioeconomic status by establishing himself in cities such as Be'er Sheva and Lod, but he failed to move out of the working-class town of Dimona. She described how he eventually succumbed to the system that settled him in Dimona, accepting the professional rung he was offered.
"So they told him, 'Listen, I have got no job postings at the Nuclear Research Center, except for janitors. You want to work as a janitor? I'll send you to the nuclear center.' [He responded:] 'How can I do that? Me, who had apprentices, who had my own carpentry shop? A Moroccan man working as a janitor?' So they let him be in charge of the clinic. At the clinic, sometimes, there was a nail to hammer down or something to fix, something. That was his job for twenty years, until he retired."(Miriam Dahan,

[7] As quoted in Sharon, 2011, p. 120

[8] Ibid.

[9] Meital Abukasis is the filmmaker behind the 2015 documentary Father Land, which focuses on her father Asher Abukasis, who was also interviewed for the present article. Asher worked at the Center for Nuclear Research near Dimona for 41 years. The film explores the code of silence surrounding the high rates of disease among those who have worked at the Center.

13/10/2013)

Davar, then a major daily paper in Israel, reported in September 1955 that following lengthy preparations, the Zionist movement had founded a new Zionist settlement called Dimona. Infused with pathos, the news story describes how the Jewish Agency shuttled immigrants directly from the ship that brought them to Israel. The treatment of immigrants is described in detail, as is the projected future development of the town. A selection from the report reads:

> "The Jewish Agency's screening team, working in the immigrants' countries of origin, has made every effort to ensure that Dimona will be settled by young people who can work and who possess professional training in construction. They were brought from a region whose climate is similar to that of Dimona. [...] The first immigrants to arrive will be given work constructing permanent housing, consisting of one- and two-bedroom units, for themselves. At a later date, they will work at the nearby development factories."[10]

The mainstream Zionist newspaper explained who the immigrants were and how they would be directed into working-class lives. The government argued that the geography of Dimona would be familiar to them, and that the work available was suited to their backgrounds. This seemed to the officials to be the most natural way of furthering the Zionist plan to settle the land.

In fact, however, most of the immigrants in Dimona, including Miriam Dahan's father, had no experience or skills in construction. Some were educated, many were craftsmen or merchants. Most came from a capitalist labor market. Whatever the reality, such newspaper reports shaped the common image of Moroccan immigrants as construction workers. Indeed, fellow Israelis would come to perceive their Moroccan-born compatriots as "natural laborers" who were not equipped to join the professional class. With the help of such reports, a connection has been established between supposed underdevelopment in the immigrants' countries of origin, and their subordinate position in Israel, thus rationalizing a policy of proletarianization. Israeli academics likewise argued that the poverty experienced by Mizrahi immigrants was the result of their poor qualifications upon arriving in Israel. In contrast, Israel was presented as having a comparatively higher level of economic development. No wonder that these immigrants did not adjust well to modern life, as they were supposed to have come from "primitive societies." That is how authorities rationalized the over-representation of Moroccan immigrants in lower socioeconomic positions (Bernstein & Swirski, 1982). These preconceptions regarding immigration from Morocco persisted, despite the fact that government data available at the time contradicted the official view. Shoshana Maryoma-Marom has analyzed publications issued by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, and used the data she found to refute the notion that Moroccan immigrants came to Israel uneducated and ill-equipped. A survey of mass immigration in the 1950s shows that 5.9% of all immigrants lacked professional training of any kind, with the rate among Mizrahi immigrants being only 1% higher than that among immigrants from Europe and North America (2010).

In those years, modernization theory dominated public and academic discourse in Israel, leading to the widespread belief that for Mizrahis to achieve equality, they must shed their supposedly oriental traditions and adopt so-called Western cultural and economic values (Khazzoom, 1999; Tsur, 2003). The theory prescribes immersive Western education for the youth and employment in the market economy for the adult immigrants. "Modernizing" the newcomers would ostensibly narrow the perceived "gaps" between immigrants of European descent and those of Eastern descent, and thus solve Israel's "ethnic problem." Shlomo Swirski has used government data to argue that Israel's economy became "modern" (*i.e.*, characterized by an industrial economy with a sophisticated management structure) only after the arrival of the Mizrahis. In other words, Israel became "modernized" by exploiting the labor of its Mizrahi population. The country's nascent agricultural and construction sectors, which began to expand in the 1950s, depended on a labor force that was largely Mizrahi (Swirski, 1989). Advocates of modernization theory in government, the press, and academia located the root of the problem in the immigrants themselves. The theory's proponents were, in fact, fabricating a justification for the state's treatment of Mizrahi immigrants, and for the policy of relegating them to lower socioeconomic strata, as happened in Dimona (Shohat, 1988). Moshe Butbul, who was one of the first immigrants to be settled in Dimona, recalled having limited employment options:

> "The next day, he arrived. The manager from the Agency...

[10] "Ir Ha'Atid Dimona – Me'Ata Yehafkhu Ha-khayyim Bamakom Hashomem," [Dimona, City of the future – life will be transformed in the desolate place],Davar, September 20, 1955.

[Yigal] El Al. He told us, 'There are jobs at Solel Boneh, in phosphates and at the Dead Sea.[11] Each of you pick where you want.' I chose... It's next to my house. Solel Boneh. Let it be Solel Boneh [...] I worked at Solel Boneh as a carpenter, making wooden formwork molds and pouring concrete. Formwork is all about carpentry... you make a slab, a sort of scaffolding for pouring concrete. You build molds, walls, all kinds of pillars. That's formwork. I studied [construction] plans and... became a foreman. I was a senior foreman by the time I left Solel Boneh." (Moshe Butbul, 14/8/2014)

As his recollections show, Butbul was eventually promoted to be a foreman, a more senior position than many of his peers held. Butbul expressed pride in his contribution to the founding of Dimona. He outlined a narrative that positions him as the master of his own fate with his choices having alone defined the course of his life.

However, his narrative of personal autonomy comes into tension with another experience he recalled.

"For the first time, I heard the name "Dimona." That's how I realized... If I had never heard of it, how could it be that it's 15 minutes away from Haifa? Already back then, I knew it was a trick, but there was nothing I could do."

Here, he expressed the hopelessness he had experienced while settling in Dimona.

It seems that it was only from a distanced perspective that Butbul could see some degree of autonomy in his choice of working in construction. Moreover, from his criticism of the deception that brought him to Dimona, it seems that he keeps the state out of his narrative of personal success.

Abraham Itah was employed under similar circumstances when he arrived in Dimona in 1962, a few years after Moshe Butbul.

"In '62, I started working. The moment I arrived, I went out. I went out into the world exactly in '62. Someone told me, 'Sir, do you want to work?' He was a foreman. I told him, 'Yes.' It was some unknown contractor, I don't remember him. He said: 'Dig for me from over here to over there. I'll pay you.' Ok, I dug. He said to me, 'What? You finished? Do you want another one?' He gave me 102 Liras [Israeli pounds]. 102 Liras, do you know what that is? It's half a month."
(Abraham Itah, 31/10/2013)

In the 1950s, Israel's construction industry was experiencing rapid growth, aided by the new immigrants who formed a cheap and ready labor pool (Swirski, 1981).Statistics show that 70 percent of workers employed in the industry were classified as "temporary."They suffered from low wages, poor work conditions, and lack of job security (Shafir, 2002; Swirski, 1981). In all the testimonies collected for this study, residents of Dimona recalled how they were routed to jobs that were alien to them and to their dreams. Two tenets of Zionism, a movement that proclaimed the need to create a "rehabilitate" the Jew in his historic homeland, were behind the ideological rationale for this policy. The first is the establishment a Jewish labor forces to the exclusion of Palestinians (*kibbush ha'avodah*), and the second is territorial expansion and "taming the land" (*kibbush ha'karka*). These ideas were deployed as the flagship slogans of the Zionist Labor movement during Israel's pre-state period and later adopted by the Mapai party, the movement's incarnation as the ruling party of Israel during the state's first few decades (Sternhell, 1998). And yet, the ideological prestige that was attached to "pioneering work," or carrying out Israel's national projects, did not extend to Mizrahi immigrants. They did not share in this ideological framework and they were assigned a secondary position in the social and economic hierarchy of Zionist colonization (Shafir, 2002).

Geographically isolating the immigrants and routing them into low-wage and unskilled employment were policy goals that created optimal conditions for social control by the government. David Zana's interview demonstrates how the authorities used their power to try to draw the boundaries around people's consciousness:

"The bathroom was outside. It was small. A small toilet, a shower. You see snakes passing by [...] We had no money. They gave us vouchers. We'd go to a small general store. We'd buy bread, food, sugar. Then I started working at Solel Boneh. I worked at Solel Boneh for thirty years... I became disabled in my hand... I fell down. What can I say? This is the story I am telling you."
(David Zana, 23/7/2013)

[11] Solel Boneh was the state-owned construction company that employed large numbers of manual laborers. The other option for many residents of Dimona was working for the salt mining operations at the Dead Sea.

In order to get a fuller picture of his life, I asked David Zana to lay out the "important stages" in his life. This question proved equivocal, because in Hebrew, the word for "stages" and "stations" is the same. He misinterpreted my question, and assumed I was asking about his encounters with *police* stations. "No, nothing ever happened," he responded, "I wasn't one to wander about. Straight home from work... there's nowhere else to go." He became defensive. He was also defensive when I asked if he was involved in the town's political issues. "No, no, honey," he said. "That type of thing–not me. I put in my eight hours, came home, ate, and quietly went to sleep."

David's wife, Yakut Zana, who interpreted my question in the same way as her husband, interjected and reaffirmed her husband's response. "Not even once," she said. "57 years we have been in Dimona. We don't have a bad name with the police. God bless them, my children. [They work at] the Defense Ministry, and everywhere."

David Zana made sure to emphasize that the couple succeeded in meeting the expectations of the authorities, and did not get into trouble. Their children even managed to enter state agencies such as the Defense Ministry, thus apparently proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that they were loyal citizens. The line about going "straight home from work" represents an internalization of a normative lifestyle that was convenient for authorities and employers. Having children who work in the national security apparatus is a realization of their goal of fitting into Israeli society.

Ya'acov Haliwa had worked as a merchant in Morocco. In Dimona, he tried to avoid becoming a manual laborer, but eventually, like many others, he began working in construction. This is how he described his employment history:

> "At first, they suggested I study at an ulpan [Zionist Hebrew language school for new immigrants] because I knew how to read and write and speak only in French. And I saw that at the *ulpan*, there was no way that I could get a decent enough stipend to make a living ... so I told them that I'd look for work in my profession, the one I had abroad. Oh, how good and how pleasant.[12] At the time, it was difficult to find jobs in that profession, hard to get them. Only in places, like, say, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, but even then not exactly, not everything the profession entails, only part of it. So I decided to go work for the country's public infrastructure projects. I decided to work for the Jewish National Fund." (Ya'acov Haliwa, 13/10/2013)

In Casablanca, Morocco, Ya'acov Haliwa had worked as a retail merchant for a department store, and had begun building an independent career in trade. But working in that profession was impossible in Dimona at the time of his immigration. With limited employment options offered in the area, many immigrants were forced to abandon prior skills and experience, and start anew.

In declaring that he "decided" to find a job in public works for the nascent Israeli state, Ya'acov appears in retrospect to grant himself agency, while also assigning patriotic, logical significance to his actions. His own narration of the events leading to his decision, however, seems to indicate that he had little choice in the matter. Working for the Jewish National Fund meant doing difficult physical labor and earning meager wages and sometimes only vouchers. Moreover, having a job did not always mean having full-time employment. The national government allotted each development town a finite number of workdays to distribute among its residents. Workdays would then be granted to each head of household based on family size. Ya'acov Haliwa and others recalled their inability to sustain their families on the pay they received (Reich, 2011; Swirski, 1981).

After working for the national infrastructure projects, Ya'acov eventually settled into the construction job he would hold for several decades. The work he found at Solel Boneh, the state-run construction firm, again involved difficult physical labor. Ya'acov's story contradicts the widespread rhetoric of that period that Israel was a modern country with a mechanized and industrial economy.

> "[The foreman] told me, 'Listen, our work is hard. Pouring concrete, digging holes for foundations, for erecting pillars, and that way, the building will have foundations to stand on.' Back then, there was nothing, everything was done by hand. [...] He told me, 'Listen, there are 32 holes here, for a building. You're paid per hole, and you're the subcontractor.'"

When I asked him what he meant, Haliwa explained that the pay was based on the number of holes he dug. He was positioned at the bottom of the chain, where his wage would be a factor of

[12] The phrases he used is interesting since it is taken from Psalm 133:1, which is part of Songs of Ascents. The full sentence in the scripture is, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" This verse has been rendered as a folklore song in Israeli culture. Since he invoked the verse before telling of his failure to obtain his favored profession, his choice of words may be a rhetorical device to set up the story for the eventual disappointment.

his immediate output. His greatest professional pride was that he was promoted to be a foreman after a few years, a role that was usually reserved for people who were brought in from the country's urban center.

> "So God bless... I studied. My manager recommended me. They used to bring a project completion manager, a manager to finish the building... they used to bring them from Tel Aviv, not even from Be'er Sheva or somewhere else. That's because only senior managers that were brought in especially would get expenses paid, travel, lodging...and whatever's needed. He'd come from Tel Aviv, hang out all week. They'd give him a place to sleep. He'd buy food, buy this and that, and they would pay for all his expenses."

Ya'acov Haliwa viewed his professional promotion not only from a personal perspective, but also as an accomplishment for the residents of Dimona, a shattering of a barrier that was holding them back. He expressed this sentiment while excitedly describing how he earned his promotion, and the events leading up to that moment. He told the same story in a short introductory interview, showing that this was a memory that had been processed previously, and shared many times. Ya'acov had worked for Solel Boneh for 30 years, at which time he decided to take severance pay and retire. The reason he gave for his relatively early retirement reveals that he held onto his original professional ambition: the dream he had brought from Morocco but buried when confronted with conditions in Dimona.

> "I raised the kids, the girls, until they all got married. Aywa ['Yes' in colloquial Arabic], at that point, when I retired, I told my wife, 'I am going to open up a store.' [...] A business. I rented a shop. I wanted to buy one, but couldn't find any, so I rented one. I opened a grocery store. I ran it for 14 years."

Here, Ya'acov's words suggested that he had reclaimed his ambition and had pursued his original vocation as a merchant, a vocation he had chosen back in Morocco. After 30 years as a construction worker, Ya'acov attempted to realize the dream that he had been denied. It appears that he wanted to use the abilities and knowledge he gained in Morocco, and apply them in an Israeli context. This decision can be read as a way of granting himself agency over life events that were largely dictated by outside forces. Over the course of his life, he was compelled to deal with his secondary and marginal role in the Zionist project. His words reflect an attempt to resolve the tension between his experience of downward economic and social mobility, and the image he tended to present as an authentic Israeli pioneer.

Yossef Hadad, who was born in Casablanca, Morocco, was among the first group of immigrants settled in Dimona. An injury he sustained at work left him with a disability, recognized by the state as a 30% impairment. He held many jobs, including as a construction worker building the textile plant for Kitan Dimona, a company founded as part of the local industrialization policy. Hadad also seems to have framed his life story along the lines of official narratives that flaunt heroic Zionist pioneers. He opened the interview by saying:

> "I am Yossef Hadad, son of Zohara and David of blessed memory. I was one of the founders of Dimona. On the first day, I arrived with the 36 families. I was a young man, a boy."
> (Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

He recalled his attendance at every event of significance in the official, collective history of the town, marking a tendency to situate his story within the Zionist framework. Here he is recalling his participation as a student, in 1956, at the opening ceremony for Retamim, the first school in Dimona:

> "They needed to build a school. So who did they pick? They picked me. Me... and another girl [...] I greeted Golda Meir [who was labor minister and would later become would be prime minister] with a flag. And she greeted me with flowers. They wanted to place a corner stone... I already had my trowel. My signature is still there today.
> (Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

Yossef Hadad continued, recalling the recognition he had received from the Zionist establishment:

> "There weren't even rocks. We built our homes on our own. We did it ourselves [...] Later, a few years after

that, they invited us to Jerusalem. Two presidents. One – Herzog. And the second – Navon. Now, I was there too... I have pictures with Ben Gurion [Israel's "founding father" and first prime minister]. I'll show you in a moment."
(Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

Even when recalling his process of proletarianization, Yossef's narrative seems to fit within the heroic narrative of Zionism's reclamation of manual labor. The following portion of the interview, describing the construction of the textile plant, exemplifies his tendency to describe work in patriotic terms:

"At Kitan, 10 meters deep in the ground. 74 meters lengthwise and again 10 meters deep. I entered the duct from here, and I came out the other side, doing work inside as I went. Why? What's the story? The story is that as they started working... they started everything from scratch. The sewage did not even start operating yet. And the erosion came and smacked Kitan. There was nothing to block the flow. All this dirt and these rocks swept into the duct. Work was stopped. They brought a firehouse and firefighters. I told them, 'I'll go in.' It's 40 degrees [Celsius] and I am underground. What could I do? This is what I did. I took a length of jute canvas and tied a rope to it. I grabbed one side and someone else grabbed the other, and we worked. I think I have a photograph of it."
(Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

The story is told in the narrative model of a war story, describing the bravery not of battle, but of work. This can be seen as an attempt to compensate for not having served in the military due to his disability, as conscription in Israel is mandatory for most citizens. And indeed, in another part of the interview, Yossef expressed regret for not having enlisted in the Israeli army.
Yossef's wife, Suzanne Hadad, who was also present for the interview, prodded him toward certain topics that she deemed more appropriate. She often "summarized" Yossef's recollections. Her words at the end of the interview may offer some insight as to how she wished to shape the narrative of her husband's personal history.

"They didn't have roads. There were sands and... chaos. It was chaos. They suffered... a lot. But still, they held on and here we are [...] And the result – look, what a city. And he lit a torch for Independence Day. Here in Dimona."
(Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

Suzanne offered to conclude the conversation with broader context about Yossef's story, which elevates the residents of Dimona from their typical role as victims. In her retelling, the immigrants who arrived in Dimona made big sacrifices ("they suffered"), in order to further the Zionist vision of settling Dimona. She casts Yossef in the role of the pioneer, and like the original Zionist pioneer, he was granted recognition by the state at an official torch-lighting ceremony. Like the other interviewees in this oral history project, Suzanne concluded her description of the hardships they experienced on an optimistic note. She insisted that her testimony is not a criticism of the government, but rather an account of the period that highlights the magnitude of their voluntary sacrifice. She said she wanted to emphasize her pride in Dimona's contribution, however marginal, to the story of pioneer heroism in Israel. What emerges is a version of the events, that ends with a declaration of pride, while apparently absolving the state of its responsibility. This sentiment is not uncommon among the founding generation of the town.
Other parts of the interview seemed to reveal hidden sides to the main narrative expressed earlier by the couple. Here is Suzanne correcting her husband:

"But it was full... Dimona was already... Not the way he's telling it. He suffered... but they had a good experience. Everything was open, they used to sit and tell stories, jokes... No television, no radio. Nothing. Complete darkness. They had nothing. And yet they had fun... they would light up the kerosene stove."
(Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

Although Suzanne had previously emphasized how the government recognized her husband as a founder of Dimona, here she expressed a different sentiment. She described the government's neglect, while praising Dimona's founders. They persevered, she explained, even though they were abandoned with no electricity, and they fostered a sense of community and humanity. Forced to survive without means, since "they had nothing," they still found a way to enjoy life. They were "open"

with one another and mutually accountable.
Yossef might have boasted about the official praises he received – he got to meet David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir, two of Israel's legendary leaders – but he also recalled an experience of collective perseverance. His community may have been created through the deceit of the authorities, but it did survive the hardship of the initial conditions they encountered. As a community, his narrative seems to suggest, Dimona's founders survived and reclaimed their dignity, despite the state's disregard for their dreams and ambitions. Here are Yossef's recollections about Charlie Biton, who was with Yossef when they were settled in Dimona in 1955:

> "First of all, in the name of Biton, whose memory be blessed, I will open with him... because he helped us a lot... He would give every ounce of himself, night and day. When we arrived in Dimona on two trucks, there wasn't even a road connecting Dimona to Be'er Sheva. On September 19, 1955, we are in the back of a truck on a very bumpy ride... There were pregnant women yelling, and children. And the road was only a trail. There was no road. The moment we arrived in Dimona, we were hit with a sandstorm."

The government officials, who were responsible for these immigrants, brought them to a place where "there wasn't even a road." Crammed the whole way like cattle in the back of a truck, the immigrants weren't greeted by Ben Gurion nor Meir, but by a sandstorm. That was the moment they decided to take their fortunes into their own hands. After talking about his friend Charlie, Yossef mentioned other people who were critical to the survival of the community during that initial period. His account entailed innumerable anecdotes of solidarity within the community of immigrants. He gave the authorities no credit for any of the accomplishments in establishing Dimona. At one point in the interview, Suzanne underscored the meaning of Yossef's story.

> [Yossef Hadad:]
> "There were no showers. You showered outside. We got what we got–only water. We bathed. The toilet –there was a toilet in the field, like in the military. Once a month, a truck came to scoop it all up. There was no sewage, nothing. But we sat and we laughed and sang."
> [Suzanne Hadad:]
> "...Family."
> Suzanne emphasized the pride they felt for being united as a "family." At another point, Yossef returned to the "dignity" he felt, owing to his strong connection to his neighbors.
> [Yossef Hadad:]
> "We came to this country like everyone else and we had our mutual respect."
> [Suzanne Hadad:]
> "There was one key, for all the shacks. Everything was open."
> [Yossef Hadad:]
> "An open wallet. No one worried about anything."(Yossef Hadad, 28/7/2013)

Yossef bookmarks his story with the official accolades he received for his life's work. But a close reading of his story seems to suggest that the state is marginal or entirely absent from his recollections of his life in Dimona. The recognition he received late in life serves as proof that he succeeded despite the government and not because of it.
In many of the interviews, Dimona residents credited bonds of solidarity for the community's survival. David Zana offered another example:

> "From the very beginning, it was difficult to live, but in the end, it worked out, slowly everything worked out. Dimona developed. Everything in abundance. There are stores, cinemas, a theater... all kinds of establishments. Everything worked out for the best."
> "The thirty of us together were like one big family. We'd sit outside, talking, playing cards, for an hour or two, and then each to their own shack."
> (David Zana, 23/07/2013)

In another instance, he added:

> "Things were good and not good. There weren't many people. We were all one family."

Whatever price they had paid by moving to Dimona and whatever the personal and collective sacrifices, the people of

Dimona seemed to be satisfied, in retrospect, with the fruit of their labor.

> "Dimona was... it was very hard to live there. Only in Be'er Sheva, could we buy things. And then suddenly, the stores started popping up. Slowly, slowly, slowly, the families started coming, we got to know them, we made friends. And we carried on. [My husband] started working. I raised the kids. Six kids."
> (Ester Itah, 31/10/2013)

On the surface, it seems as though the immigrants were simply proud of Dimona's contribution to the Zionist project. But there was a constant tension in this narrative. Though their pride was connected to the dominant national story, that feeling appeared to originate in the autonomy they had claimed. By focusing on their perseverance as a community and as individuals who endured their immigration process in the face of official neglect and abuse, this "inner narrative" suggested a distance from the Zionist narrative.

**Conclusion**

The participants in this oral history study, all of whom are working-class Moroccan immigrants living in Dimona, expressed a complicated, conflict-ridden relationship with the Zionist project and their role within it. They appeared to have met the state's vocational expectations for them. Although they criticized the governing establishment and its policies, they always appeared to refrain from outright condemnation. In the interviews, they tended to express patriotism and a strong identification with the state and generally expressed contentment with where they had ended up in life.

While expressing acceptance of their assigned roles, they invariably emphasized the fact of having made their own choices in life and achieving autonomy. They almost invariably attributed their successes to personal, familial, and communal sacrifices, never to assistance by state authorities. Even when relating their efforts to assimilate into the mythology of the Zionist project, they consistently maintained that these efforts were not aided by or aligned with government policy. This hidden narrative of self-sufficiency, not connected with the Zionist narrative, suggests that they did not see themselves fully in the role of the Zionist settlers, but as immigrants who overcame challenges in their lives. Nor did the immigrants identify as helpless working-class victims, because they did manage, in their view, to achieve a meaningful degree of autonomy within this process.

In other words, their narratives implied an identity outside of the prevailing national or class archetypes. In their narratives, the residents of Dimona invoked an autonomy that defied their experience of oppression. From this unique position, they lay a stake in the national narrative, expressing their contribution to the establishment of Dimona but in terms they themselves created, and not abiding by the national and class boundaries the state has shaped for them.

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**List of interviews**

The list indicates for each person interviewed name, city he/she immigrated from and date of interview.
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Ester and AbrahamItah, M'hamid, 31/10/2013
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Moshe Butbul, Zagora, 14/08/2014
Ya'acov Haliwa, Midelt, 13/10/2013
Yossef Hadad, Casablanca, 28/07/2013



# THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS IN PORTUGUESE NEWSPAPERS (1997-2017)

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**Francisca Mena Gómez** is a Chilean journalist and diploma in International Relations from the University of Chile and Master in Sociology in the University of Porto, Portugal. During her work throughout the years, she has developed interest in areas as social communication, medias, migration and international relations.

Nowadays, when it seems that the media and new technologies have taken over public opinion, it is important to analyse and reflect on the role played by social agents and how they have built their position within the public space.
This study is based on the analysis of 1,151 news articles that appeared between 1997 and 2017 in the nine most prominent newspapers in Portugal, sourced from the press archives of the Union of Construction Workers of Portugal.
Observing how construction workers are represented in different Portuguese newspapers can help us understand the perspectives adopted by the media in their coverage of working conditions and labour laws affecting the sector. Although the present sample is not homogeneous, it is significant enough to allow for a qualitative analysis. The objective of this research is to understand the positioning of the media on social conflicts and power struggles involving the construction sector.
Political economy, interpreted as the field of study analysing the social dimension of productive processes, is the starting point for understanding the symbolic and social power behind the way newspapers treat construction workers in Portugal.
As posited by Bourdieu, public opinion is a social and media structure consisting of various spheres of knowledge disputing a society's notion of common sense. Therefore, the media's portrayal of social conflicts in the labour world is relevant when reflecting on the contradictions in which the latter is inserted.
Media coverage is problematic in and of itself, since the production, selection and filtering of information ultimately produces and disseminates a deceitful structure of truth that conditions the political debate.
The complexity in distinguishing journalistic practice from the political context in which it is carried out means the news cannot be analysed in isolation; it should instead be analysed as a phenomenon wherein various journalistic and social interests intersect in a battle over the symbolic public opinion space.
The performative aspect of language folds mass media into the dispute over common sense, resulting not in simple discourse,

but in political positions that condition the very development of the social conflict in which it is immersed.
In the face of this scenario, two similar approaches present themselves: one by Pierre Bourdieu and another by Patrick Champagne.
Both authors reveal similar perspectives of the limitations regarding the extent to which public opinion, and the press in general, can be true tools of social transformation due to the very nature of the field of journalism. This space is utilised by power groups to legitimise their decisions, discourses and/or policies, all of which, of course, have been pre-fabricated and reside in much more limited spheres of power.
However, these perspectives diverge at one central point: while Bourdieu's approach assumes that the media participate in the same system of interests as society in general, Champagne's approach argues that the role of the media is to extend and reproduce opinions that have already been established by public opinion, acting as a mere "ventricle" for these ideas.
In this symbolic struggle, the media seek to legitimise their position by reorganising public debate in accordance with their own editorial lines, political interests and pressures and communication strategies to influence the symbolic and material struggle within the social space.

> "[...] In brief, in saying that public opinion does not exist, I mean it does not exist in the form which some people, whose existence depends on the illusion, would have us believe. At present, there is, on the one hand, mobilised around a system of interests, and on the other, certain inclinations, opinions in an implicit state which, by definition are not really opinions, if by opinion we mean a formulated discourse with a pretention to coherence."
> (Bourdieu, 2000)

It is not coincidental, then, that discourses acquire political and ethical dimensions, becoming capable of reconfiguring and representing interdependent relations and structural domination within society by playing either for or against them, according to their own interests.
That being said, it is necessary to understand that the discursive constructs produced by the field of journalism also face epistemic contradictions typical of the profession: the practice itself, the techniques used in the collection of data, the creation and editing of the news, editorial lines and conflicts of interest are just some of a multitude of factors that condition news production and leave journalists at an epistemic crossroads, unable to disengage from their own conditions of production.

> "One might conclude that the newsman's organisational experience prejudices him against possibilities which counter his pre-existing expectations. From the point of view of the newsmen, though, their experiences with other organisations over a period of time validate their news judgments and may be reduced to common sense. By 'common sense' the newsmen mean what most newsmen hold to be true or take for granted."
> (Tuchman, 1999)

The cycle that traps the production of information ultimately legitimises instruments and structures of truth at the service of the interests that operate it, at the same time as it disengages the central points upon which social conflicts are established, by either making them invisible or discrediting them in public opinion.

> "Certainly, as a proposition, the division between true and false is neither arbitrary, nor modifiable, nor institutional, nor violent. Putting the question in different terms, however - asking what has been, what still is, throughout our discourse, this will to truth which has survived throughout so many centuries of our history; or if we ask what is, in its very general form, the kind of division governing our will to knowledge - then we may well discern something like a system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, institutionally constraining) in the process of development."
> (Foucault, 1992)

As the Argentine semiologist Eliseo Verón explains it, the "reading contracts" established between the media and the audience are an implicit agreement in which the viewpoint presented is already known, thereby positioning the information within the audience's existing construct of reality.

**Workers in Portugal: Beyond representations**
Faced with these structural limitations in media depictions

of social conflicts, it is necessary to deepen and describe the identity of these workers and their issues in order to configure a point of reference within the media analysis.

Historical tensions and complexities can still be seen in the construction sector, which preserves class relations and dependency between the social groups that comprise it (owners of capital, workers, and government as a regulatory entity) in as much their economic position as their social and cultural capital. Although the concept of class could theoretically be discarded in an analysis of the identity and representation of workers in the media, it is difficult to ignore the economic character of the social and cultural perspectives of this group, especially taking the enormous existing social class inequalities into account.

Considering this, it becomes imperative to carry out an integral analysis of these representations, viewing workers not only as a productive force within a socially-vulnerable group, but also as another element within the symbolic and physical dispute in which this social group is immersed.

> "(...) The analysis of social inequalities has spread to several areas and domains (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.), no longer restricted only to those resulting from the position occupied in the relations of production. This enlargement is not in itself a negative factor. A multidimensional conception of social inequalities does not imply diminishing the relevance of social class as a concept, it rather has the merit of adding dimensions and concepts indispensable for a sociological understanding of the (re)production of inequality, in opposition to the lines of argumentation defending the idea that society is open in its essence and that opportunities are available based on mechanisms of meritocratic recognition.
>
> Finally, even when the concept of social class is used, analyses often take an exaggerated culturist perspective that denies its economic dimension. In contemporary capitalism, the distinctions between culture and economics have been diluted and cultural aspects have become more relevant than economic ones in understanding society. "
> (Carmo, 2013)

The conflict becomes even more acute when we understand that the portrayal of workers is underpinned by a commonality across the observed relations of power in the construction sector and in society at large. Indeed, Portuguese construction workers belong to the lowest and most vulnerable social class, with lower incomes, fewer labour rights and less cultural capital. According to the socio-professional indicators derived from the class analyses of Almeida, Da Costa and Machado (1994), Portuguese social stratification takes the shape of five main groups: entrepreneurs, leaders and professionals (EDL); professional and technical workers (ETP); self-employed workers (IT); white collar employees (EE) and labourers (O) (Carmo, 2013).

The social classes are divided such that those with the fewest years of formal education belong to the social class with the fewest resources:

> "Despite having a structure similar to other southern European countries, Portugal is characterised by lower levels of education, especially among the subaltern classes (workers and employees). [...] Thus, the gap between those with higher qualifications and workers with lower levels of schooling is higher than in other countries, creating a pattern of reproduction that has been carried over from previous political regimes."
> (Carmo, 2013)

Notwithstanding the social and educational reforms driven by the return to democracy, which included improved funding and access to higher education, certain social dynamics persist in maintaining inequality as one of the main characteristics of Portuguese society (in 2015, the Gini coefficient in Portugal reached 34%).

> "Even though some traits of modernity can be found in Portugal, there is still a duality that leads to a disarticulation between different social groups due to the different underlying statutes and the distances between them [...]"
> (Carmo, 2013).

However, the conditions of inequality in which the working class finds itself have more than an economic dimension. The stratification of Portuguese society has succeeded in devaluing the labourer's social and symbolic status. The connection to a particular social group emerges as the result of specific

messages sent by various symbolic structures that devalue and also blame the individual for his own socioeconomic conditions. Established as a part of neoliberal discourse, meritocracy and performance ethics appear to disrupt the social conflict and vulnerable conditions to which workers are subject, obscuring and depoliticising the social context of production from the inequalities in which they are immersed.

In this context, it would seem normal to find reactive phenomena within the working class; while older workers maintain a certain "class pride", some younger workers have an incipient need to deny and erase the brand of class to which they belong by concealing their identity through fashion and ostentatious consumerism, diluting their place within the working class.

Consumerism as a means of concealing social origin and/or work status can be seen more clearly in Bruno Monteiro's "Armar estrondo", where this phenomenon emerges as a product of the progressive symbolic devaluation experienced by the Portuguese labourer.

> "In these circumstances, the emergence of unprecedented modalities of 'life styling' among young workers confirms the intensity of the deterioration of the locally-rooted worker's greatness. Therefore, it translates into feelings of (self) aversion to factory occupations and working manners associated with their own social class. [...] However, these attempts at styling life are not only considered culturally inferior and illegitimate, but also seen as savage and dangerous, and therefore criminalised (Monteiro, 2013).

Despite the different phenomena influencing the identity component of the Portuguese working class, it is still possible to affirm the presence of a strong social structure, based mainly in workers' organisations, that sustains workers' struggle for their rights and continues to fight attempts to devalue their work and make it more precarious. This ongoing politicisation of the social conflict means there is still a space where the work is being defended as a social unit, with full awareness of the current inequalities in labour negotiations.

In this context, the historic social narrative linked to working groups becomes even more relevant, since it further demonstrates the political stance the media take as participants in the struggle for the representation of social conflicts.

**Analysis of media discourse in selected publications**

As previously mentioned, it is important to note the epistemological and methodological limitations of the samples used. Both our research and the filters we used were conditioned by the selection of publications collected by the labour trade union of Porto, which clearly has consequences for both the temporality of the samples and the continuity of the media coverage. These limitations prevent us from taking a more quantitative analytical approach, but still allow for a qualitative analysis of the approaches and themes found in Portuguese newspapers.

The first transversal thematic axis in the coverage of the Portuguese labourer is the narrative and successive description of complaints and information regarding the precarious working conditions affecting construction workers. The information generally concerns labour abuses, the absence of on-the-job safety and workplace accidents, as well as irregularities in employment contracts that particularly and negatively impact immigrant workers.

**Labour precariousness: the body as a starting point**

The trajectory of the narrative on working conditions cuts across the coverage of almost all newspapers. The labourer's identity is built through publications related to job insecurity, acquiring a public connotation as being a receiving agent of the structural violence in which they are inserted.

Thus, the collective imagination regarding the labourer is based on a succession of complaints that demonstrate the social vulnerability to which they are exposed. In this sense, the biological and symbolic relationship established under capitalist production according to Marx is confirmed: the worker's sale of his labour is an act that at once incorporates both the provision of a "work force" and the sale of available time in exchange for a salary, effectively accepting the premise of time as a commodity and making the exploitation of workers the cornerstone that sustains the process of production.

Marx thus defines the worker's body as raw material for exploitation, domination and subjugation by the bourgeoisie and corporate interests. "The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and extent. The worker becomes an even cheaper commodity the more commodities he produces. The devaluation of the human world grows in direct proportion to the increase in value

of the world of things. Labour not only produces commodities; it also produces itself and the workers as a commodity and it does so in the same proportion in which it produces commodities in general." (Marx, 1976)

However, Marx's explanation of the sale of labour is insufficient if we consider that, in this case, and under a political structure that is greater than merely its economic or labour dimensions, the sale of labour also means making the worker's body available as a tool of work. Marx's conception of the body is limited to its role in the process of production and how it is moulded to fit within this process over the course of its life through education and the "technical division of labour", creating – from the body – categorisations perpetuated in social structures.

In the case of the body, the worker is not only conditioned by his own vulnerabilities, but also, due to this fragility, by the bio-political structure that compels him to risk his physical integrity, which has already been moulded and categorised under other power structures.

On the other hand, Foucault refutes the Marxist stance by arguing that workers not only remain on the fringes of a productive structure, but are also subjected to a political order wherein they accept that their biological categorisation prevents them from exerting enough power to exercise their basic rights.

> "The human body is, as we know, a force of production, but the body does not exist as such, as a biological article or as a material. The human body exists within and through a political system. Political power provides a certain space for the individual: a space to behave, to adopt a particular position, to sit in a certain way or to work continuously. Marx thought – as he wrote – that work constitutes the concrete essence of man. I think that is a typically Hegelian idea. Work is not the concrete essence of man. If man works, if the human body is a productive force, it is because he is forced to work. And he is obliged to work because he is surrounded by political forces, trapped by the mechanisms of power" (Barrera Sánchez, 2011)

For example, entrusting private parties (the employer) or a public entity (the government or another fiscal body) to maintain safety conditions, to protect (or not) workers' physical integrity while performing their duties, reveals a complete lack of worker autonomy over their own bodies. As a result, it is worth noting that social violence related to labour precariousness has material consequences for workers, not only in their life choices and conditions (which are already diminished and limited), but also because their bodies become another vehicle for exerting the coercion to which they are already subject.

In the case of occupational accidents, the simultaneous use of the body and the risk of injuring it present a paradoxical situation: although the body is exposed to "transitory" exploitation, the consequences of the body's appropriation within this political establishment persist even when the body is removed from it. Thus, were the body to suffer the consequences of a workplace accident, social insecurity and discrimination, it would be the physical body that would receive the blame and punishment that society has pre-established, forcing it to move within these structures without any decision-making capacity.

Taking this into consideration, we find that the media depicts this group by tying the worker's identity to the labour dimension and the trade union's interests. Therefore, the representations are limited to the characteristics of the area itself, insinuating that common violations suffered by the exploited bodies are their only identity-defining element, which creates an invisible and vulnerable working class, rendered helpless and, above all, subjected to a predetermined future.

The representation of workers as only existing within the labour or physical dimension, where their body as a tool of labour defines them as such, and precarious working conditions are the elements at the beginning and the end of the social violence that manifests itself in the work place.

Therefore, the categorisations made by the media refer mainly to workers' physical characteristics: old/young, able/injured, legal/illegal, migrant/national. There is no need to create a social fabric beyond that of the trade union's identity, nor a symbolic value outside of the worker's body, as if the abuse suffered by the exploited body is the only common element.

There is no deeper analysis related to the various overlapping identities within the working class. For example, descriptions of the worker's body correspond to a patriarchal structure, or the creation of identities related to masculinity, while simultaneously negating or limiting other identities within the diversity of the labour movement, which may not serve the pre-established public opinion.

**Political position of the media**

In the face of social conflict arising in the construction sector, the media express their viewpoint in either an implicit or explicit way, by respectively omitting or highlighting specific aspects in their production of information.

All media outlets we analysed, except for the weekly newspapers "Sol" and "Expresso", assume a position that is openly pro-worker and pro-labour rights, although they differ in their approach and scope of coverage. While the coverage of these outlets is primarily focused on exposing and reporting, the newspapers "Sol" and "Expresso" deliberately emphasise issues and interests linked to company owners and potential investors while completely ignoring any social conflicts related to the workers.

In this context, it is understood that the target audience of these newspapers comes from a privileged social and economic class, quite removed from the general public, therefore representing the most entrepreneurial and business-related vision of public opinion. At the same time, these publications deliberately disregard conflicts of interest and ethical considerations.

An example presenting a conflict of interest in "Expresso" is the placement of an advertisement for XLReal Estate [name changed] next to a news article about the increase in residential housing construction. On the other hand, the newspaper fails to report on social issues related to illegal immigration and the possibility of social unrest due to high levels of unemployment – these issues are dismissed, as they represent a danger to the status quo.

The remaining media outlets adopt a critical viewpoint regarding working conditions, pointing to short- and medium-term solutions and accountabilities, but with no consideration for structural terms.

Público is one of the few newspapers that publish opinion pieces with deeper and systemic analyses of the social, economic and labour conditions faced by the working class. There are also spaces to reflect on the evolution and needs of the labour movement through trade unions, opening the public debate on social organisations, their perspectives and junctures, which democratises and politicises the social space for workers. Along the same lines, coverage related to the leader Alvaro Cunha demonstrates a clear attempt to imbue his work with a social dimension. Beyond his contributions, coverage is structured around the popular acknowledgement of his persona in a narrative linked to the creation of Portuguese social history.

**The role of trade unions**

Within this context, and considering the coverage analysed, it is relevant to highlight the role of trade unions, at least at a symbolic level. These are organisations that stand up to the injustices that workers suffer, alongside media reports denouncing their precarious working conditions. Through their labour leaders, and with the participation and cooperation of some media outlets, labour unions are able to provide support and legal aid to workers.

In contrast, trade unions and workers' organisations are portrayed as strong and highly politicised institutions, focused on the protection of the rights of the working class.

Persistent media coverage, particularly linked to trade union issues, seeks to strengthen an identity that has been diminished by the obvious abuses workers have suffered in trying to reshape the social space to afford workers more protection. Consequently, unions are portrayed as institutions capable of containing and channelling the working community through strikes, protests, denunciations and workers' political participation. The familiarity and frequency with which the trade unions find themselves in some publications serves to demonstrate their strong presence in the media.

The relationship between journalists and some high-profile labour leaders, particularly in newspapers from the Northern region of the country, reveals a repetition of news sources and frequently-published information.

In this type of news coverage, we can observe the communicational conscience of the trade unions and their leaders as they influence and use the media to position themselves in the public space, while at the same time trying to socialise the needs of the group they represent.

The aim is to make the voice of unions, collective organisations and workers heard, and to present them as active agents within public opinion to disrupt the narrative put forth by entrepreneurs and contractors. On the other hand, and within the conflicts outlined, companies, the lack of state control and the state itself as a regulatory entity are all pointed to as the main culprits behind the problems faced by labour.

**Conclusion**

The challenge in reading and interpreting the information produced regarding workers is that one must not only consider the social or material conditions in which they are found, but

must also understand how public opinion is structured and how the media play a role in the political game, wherein forces and interests are leveraged by different power groups within society. It is according to this logic that the journalistic portrayal of Portuguese workers in the press becomes another way of perceiving their realities as depicted through the media. Of course, this portrait has material consequences within the symbolic struggles faced by each group. According to this line of analysis, it is possible to identify three main themes of journalistic behaviour:

– Analysis of the biopolitics of the working classes in labour conflicts, which reveals the political order underlying the social and economic order that subjugates them.

The political position developed by the media through their coverage of these conflicts is achieved by either omitting or highlighting social constructs related to the interests and viewpoints that a particular newspaper represents.

– Although the coverage of many of the publications analysed demonstrates a social and class position in defence of the worker, it cannot be said that these portrayals stimulate a more balanced and less vulnerable identity. On the contrary, many news articles reinforce common perceptions of the working class and its social and economic disadvantages. By the same token, and within the same coverage, it is not possible to find a worker narrative beyond the social problematic or one originating outside its symbolic failure.

– The communication strategy of trade unions within the media works as an example of class organisation; using public opinion not as a space for symbolic domination, but as a way of socialising the precarious work and social conditions in which construction workers are immersed.

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# ESTABLISHING AND PERFORMING AN INTIMATE WORK CULTURE THROUGH IDENTITY NICHING IN SOUTH AFRICA'S DOMESTIC SECTOR

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The use of private employment agencies (PEAs) for recruiting, hiring and placing domestic workers in private households is a widely researched theme internationally. This article focuses on permanent placements made by licensed PEAs. Although not a new practice in South Africa, the use of PEAs in the post-apartheid era remains fairly under-researched. Scholars writing on domestic work have noted this gap, but highlight their concern regarding the infamous labour practices of informal agencies operating in the sector that challenge the state-led initiative to protect domestic workers' rights (Ally, 2009; Fish, 2006). Overall, these developments are generally understood as employers' reluctance to comply with labour legislation. Yet PEAs represent an important job-seeking strategy and have the potential to promote a culture of regulatory labour compliance in a vulnerable sector. Focusing on female transnational migrant domestic workers from Zimbabwe, this article explains why and how Zimbabwean women struggle to gain access to work through PEAs operating in Cape Town's domestic sector.

I focus on Zimbabwean nationals for two main reasons. Firstly, a key aspect regarding the recruitment and hiring practices of domestic workers globally is the international but racial division of reproductive labour (Glenn, 1997; Parreñas, 2001). This literature raises important questions concerned with who performs domestic work, for whom domestic work is performed, and the affordability of reproductive labour provided by transnational migrants. For this reason, transnational migrant workers are generally depicted as the "light infantry of global capitalism. Vast numbers vie with each other for jobs. Most have to put up with short-term contracts, with low wages and few benefits" (Standing, 2011:113). Since work opportunities available to migrant workers are frequently precarious, they are also typically characterised as a homogenous group who are "hireable on demand, available on call, exploitable at will, and fireable at whim" (Foti, 2005). Their disposability, often acute because of their migrant status, plays an important role in channelling them away from 'decent work' – quality work that offers workers full employment, socio-economic

security, worker rights and opportunities for strengthening social dialogue (ILO, 1999).

Secondly, my focus is on Zimbabweans because it relates to the fairly recent development around the perceived increase of foreign nationals in South Africa's domestic sector. In South Africa, major employers of foreign nationals include the mining, construction, agriculture, security and hospitality sectors. But unlike these sectors and the livelihood strategies that migrants engage within the informal sector, little is known about foreign labour in the domestic sector. Ally (2009:18) notes that, "[w]hile the extent of illegality makes it difficult to ascertain accurately the number of transnational migrant domestic workers in South Africa today, there is a pervasive feeling that the phenomenon has intensified in recent years".

Academics have responded to this gap by beginning an important dialogue on what Nyamnjoh (2006) refers to as "flexible mobilities" in southern Africa (see also Ally, 2009). Focusing on Zimbabwean women who search for domestic work in Botswana, Nyamnjoh's work represents an important contribution to the south-south migration literature that accounts for transnational flows within Africa. Since the 1990s, South Africa has become a major migration hub in the continent because of labour market transformation, economic or ecological conditions, and political restructuring or crises as a result of structural adjustment programmes in the home countries (Segatti, 2011). Various recent studies have revealed that women from countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi and Zambia find work in South Africa's domestic sector (Peberdy & Dinat, 2005; Ally, 2009). With low barriers to access women often find employment in the domestic sector. The most notable migrant groups seeking work through PEAs are Zimbabwean nationals.

Scholars writing on domestic placement agencies in Canada, France and Hong Kong have documented how domestic placement agencies tend to invoke gender, racial and ethnic stereotypes. These stereotypes are embedded in bureaucratic practices related to the selection process for hiring and placing domestic workers (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995; Scrinzi, 2011). "As mediators, agencies also reflect the stereotyped images held by their clients" (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1995:321). If there is demand for a specific ethnic group, agencies tend to cater to employers' requests. Tyner's (1999) examination of web-based recruitment strategies among agencies in Asia for example, revealed that women were classified according to their personality types associated with their ethnic identity. Certain ethnic profiles were considered more favourable with employers. In South Africa this practice is no different. PEAs have noted that there have been great results with Zimbabwean nationals among their clients in the last decade.

Garcia Castro (1989:122) explains that while employers buy workers' labour power, they also buy the domestic workers' identity. In the context of PEAs, I argue that the identity sold is that of a 'comfortable other'. I develop the concept comfortable other to describe the demand for an identity that aligns with employers demand for an intimate work culture. Through various processes PEAs ensure that quality candidates are selected, hired and placed because they are deemed suitable for the intimate workplace. This decision-making process is by and large determined according to the way a worker works and therefore highlights an identity that is not limited merely to race, ethnicity and/or gender biases but reflects an intimate work culture. I focus on the relevance of an intimate work culture (its construction and the way it is commodified) since this remains an important aspect of the employment relationship. Shifting attention to intimacy in the workplace allows for a closer examination into, not only *why* employers and workers are approaching PEAs, but also *what* services are offered and *who* is placed in private households. In relation to the last, which is the focus of this article, I demonstrate how migrant domestic workers establish and perform an intimate work culture that is sought after.

This paper is structured as follows: (1) a brief discussion of the major legislative developments in South Africa's domestic sector and the implications of transforming the private household into an intimate workplace; (2) an overview of an intimate work culture; (3) the rationale for proposing the concept identity niching as opposed to ethnic niching; (4) how workers practice their identity as comfortable others to earn a reference letter, and (5) the ways in which narratives of self and work performance demonstrate the value employers attach to an intimate work culture.

This article draws on my research on PEAs operating in Cape Town's domestic sector. In this project I explore the process of identity niching by taking into consideration the demand for, and services of, PEAs. In-depth interviews were conducted with reputable PEAs, employers and Zimbabwean migrant domestic workers during 2013-2014.

**Intimate workplace restructuring from above**

Unlike the post-apartheid era, the domestic sector under apartheid was characterised as a "toxic cocktail of informality, personalised dependence on employers, and the failure of recourse to state institutions" (Ally, 2009:94). In 1993, when the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) was extended to domestic workers, it was considered a major victory moving forward under the new democratic dispensation. Domestic workers were afforded the same rights as workers employed across various sectors. With specific amendments to the BCEA in 1997, the right to an employment contract, detailing working hours, conditions of accommodation and leave for example, granted domestic workers an opportunity to be recognised 'like any other worker' (Jacobs *et al*, 2013).

According to du Toit (2010), employers have reacted to restructuring from above implemented by the state with "indifference or resistance". Some opt to reduce costs by employing workers on a part-time or *ad hoc* basis while others bypass labour legislation altogether (Ally, 2009; du Toit, 2010). In the context of the proliferation of PEAs two specific employments arrangements stand out in the domestic sector. Clients can outsource their employer responsibility by opting to 'rent a maid' to avoid the hassle of drawing up employment contracts, paying a minimum wage, registering their domestic worker for benefits such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and if need be, dismissing a worker unfairly without penalty. As a symbol of the 'rent a maid' phenomenon, the triangular employment relationship generally foregrounds employers' reluctance to comply with labour legislation. From this viewpoint emphasis is placed on the changes to the employment relationship and the way in which work is organised both because of state intervention and through PEAs.

But in terms of placements, where clients retain their employer status, alternative rationales stand out. These include recognising that clients require assistance with fulfilling their responsibilities as employers, and that 'making the right match' holds new meaning for prospective employers entering a long-term employment relationship. Triandafyllidou & Marchetti (2015) for example, argue that employers of domestic workers are unlike other employers. Grounded in the context of the intimate workplace, this perspective resonates with the point raised above regarding the appeal of agencies offering triangular employment arrangements to avoid interpersonal relations. However, recognising that not everyone is trained to manage workers and may lack experience as managers in the intimate workplace, insight and expert knowledge from agencies is an additional service clients seek (Triandafyllidou & Marchetti, 2015; Souralová, 2015). For clients in South Africa, understanding and fulfilling their responsibilities as employers is not simply about ticking a check-list to demonstrate they are fulfilling their regulatory obligations as employers. Instead, for most, it is also about coming to terms with the social relations that underlie the working conditions in the intimate workplace. Since laws even with the best of intentions do not change social relations, 'making the right match' holds new meaning for clients using PEAs. Hiring and firing norms that were typical during apartheid have been disrupted. Employers who accept workplace regulation adopt a pragmatic approach by relying on intermediaries to advise and assist them with selecting a worker deemed suitable for *their* intimate workplace. Ideally this is an individual they feel comfortable with in their private space and can manage through job descriptions and employment contracts in accordance with labour legislation. Additional considerations may include their race, ethnicity, gender and skills level.

Drawing on employers' former recruitment and hiring experiences underscores their demand for a comfortable other and the appeal of engaging the services of PEAs. Prior to approaching a PEA, employers reported that they used informal recruitment and hiring strategies. This included the word-of-mouth hiring strategy (tapping into employer and worker networks) and posting online requests on platforms such as Facebook or Gumtree to widen their search among the employer and job-seeking community.

There were three striking similarities all employers described that informed their rationale for using PEAs. Firstly, their ignorance of labour regulation in the domestic sector, which was either absent or poorly applied throughout their hiring history. Secondly, although a few employers reminisced of at least one domestic worker who was "wonderful", "fantastic" or "amazing", almost all who eventually approached a PEA were mostly unsatisfied with the quality of domestic workers they found informally. The most commonly cited reasons related to encounters that made them feel uncomfortable because of theft or pilfering, a poor work ethic or etiquette and their discomfort with workers inventive work culture associated with personalism

because of their everyday social reality. For those seeking long-term employment relations employers were particularly concerned with issues of honesty, reliability, industriousness and 'competence'. Thirdly, when these aspects of an intimate work culture were absent, employers lamented the difficulty of managing or confronting workers. Rather than following due process (for example issuing letters of warning according to labour regulation) they often opted to 'retrench' workers under false pretences to avoid the conversation regarding theft/ pilfering and a poor work ethic.

**An intimate work culture**

If we turn our attention to the intimate workplace culture in private households – what it is and how it emerges – we gain an understanding of the work-based identity that workers construct for themselves. It is within this context that the conceptualisation of comfortable others as an ideal type intimate worker is situated. To understand these connections it is important to note that workplace culture is considered a system of values that emerges from workers rather than those imposed by managers (Benson, 1986). In this sense workplace culture is often viewed as a form of resistance because it emerges as a response to poor working conditions or oppression.

In the extensive literature on domestic work globally, workplace culture has certainly been articulated as a learnt behaviour and a form of resistance (Ally, 2009). Given that domestic work has a long history of falling outside of the status of paid and productive labour, it is not surprising that workers have developed various strategies, such as using the tropes of intimacy, to negotiate workloads and manage unrealistic job tasks. While work culture may not be imposed by employers, it can be shaped by them, especially when considering the expected norms and values associated with intimate work. Therefore, although work culture may be seen as a form of resistance or survival strategy to certain work conditions, it can also emerge as a learnt behaviour that anchors the desired work-based identity of a worker in a specific work context.

This means that the way a worker works is not only about responding to harsh working conditions. Although it can be, it is also closely intertwined with the expectations that employers have regarding the type of work conducted and the way work is expected to be performed. For example, to be a successful candidate or to excel at one's job entails responding to the sometimes unspoken but expected norms of certain work-related behaviour. These work-based practices, which form part of workers' work culture and their work performance, can also aid in solidifying a sense of group-based identity as ideal type intimate workers.

Stereotypes associated with work-related behaviours are relevant because they are part of the socially constructed intimate work identity and culture discussed in this study. The stereotypical attributes conveyed through the common description 'hardworking, honest, and reliable' for example, emerge as some of the key characteristics of a comfortable other. These stereotypes are commonly associated with Zimbabwean nationals. As Stuart Hall reminds us, stereotypes reinforce racialised or in the case of my study, ethnicised regimes of representation. He adds that "stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes difference" and "[i]t symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything which does not belong" (1997:258).

I argue that the work-related stereotypes mentioned above should be reframed as a reactive aspect of a negotiated intimate work culture. It is reactive because it is a response to poor working conditions. However, at the same time, it is also a long-term strategy used to escape the limits of informal hiring practices in the domestic sector. It is a learnt, strategised and performed work culture that arises from struggle. For job-seekers it is a necessity because the intimate work culture has become an institutionalised requirement established by PEAs attempting to meet the demands of both clients and employers searching for a comfortable other. By this I mean that PEAs, as is the case globally, exercise various gatekeeping practices to ensure that the candidates they select demonstrate the attributes associated with a comfortable other.

Institutionalised practices include, for example, recruiting candidates who have a minimum of two years' work experience coupled with a contactable reference who can verify their work etiquette (Constable, 2000). The domestic work identity sold is based on whether former employers considered the job-seeker to be honest, reliable, and skilled with the right attitude for the intimate workplace. These practices may vary and are often articulated as racial or ethnicised regimes of representation through stereotypes. However arbitrary these representations may be, PEAs in South Africa attempt to promote the commodification of comfortable others as a response to the dilemma of managing poor quality candidates.

[1] See, www.supernannies.co.za/useful-numbers/criminalchecks/

The screening process demonstrates not only what PEAs search for but also how they institutionalise a process that produces comfortable others for placements in private households. Candidates without a reference letter are often turned away. Those who are flagged as trouble-makers or former criminal offenders are entered onto a database. Since reference checks are not a foolproof strategy, PEAs also encourage clients to conduct a polygraph test. This is an additional cost for the client. In fact, more recently, a few PEAs have responded to the demand for quality candidates by investing money in state-of-the-art software to screen candidates for criminal records. Super Nannies informs prospective clients that "[they] run [their] criminal checks using an Ideco Automated Fingerprint Identification System AFISwitch digital fingerprint scanner. The scanner takes digital fingerprints which are then electronically submitted through software to the South African police".[1] The (AFIS) has a turnaround time of approximately 48 hours.

With such measures in place the initial screening process is designed to ensure that quality candidates suited to intimate labour are selected. One of the main reasons clients approach PEAs is to ensure that they avoid hiring someone with a criminal record. Perceptions of, and/or personal experiences with, domestics who have stolen or are part of gang-related syndicates that 'clean out' houses, circulate in the media, among PEAs and employer networks. With these concerns in mind, employers eagerly, but sometimes grudgingly, pay pricey placement fees for peace of mind – even if these strategies are not foolproof.

**Identity niching**

To advance the discussion on how workers learn and construct their identity as comfortable others I use the concept 'identity niching'. I use this concept as opposed to ethnic niching, which features prominently in the migration scholarship, to give primacy to the intimate work culture of domestic work rather than other forms of social identity such as ethnicity, gender and/or race. In terms of the international literature, ethnic niching is defined broadly by Schrover *et al.* (2007:535) as "...a process whereby an association develops between a certain economic sector and an ethnic group". In SA it's not uncommon to read about 'Zimbabwean' farm workers, 'Senegalese' street traders or 'Somalis in the small business sector.

International literature tells us that the 'niching' phenomenon is inextricably linked to the social networks of both migrants and employers (Waldinger, 2000). Taking this into account therefore, the process of niche formation can be influenced by all actors and the public class knowledge they generate (Sitas, 1983). This process allows for an ethnic group to develop an association with a sector of employment. As such, to explore how niching takes place entails examining how a "sense of group identity is embedded in stable networks and patterns of hiring, recruitment, and mobility" (Waldinger, 2000:30). Essentially, the shift towards 'renting or recruiting a maid' who belongs to a specific ethnic group not only represents the emergence of a niche but also points to an ideological or cultural shift embedded in hiring practices.

But it is important to point out that understanding ethnic niching from this viewpoint (the international approach), means that despite home country differences, such as the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups from Zimbabwe, groups are 'niched' objectively as 'Zimbabweans'. This is similar to how 'Mexicans' and 'Cubans' have been niched in the USA. This is a shortcoming because the group identity of a worker rather than the various identity-related factors that allow for niching to occur always remains the central focus. This includes, for example, the race, gender and/or ethnicity of a worker. For this reason I argue that identity niching, as a broader conceptual tool, is more apt for describing variances in hiring and recruitment practices. Fish (2006), for example, acknowledges the relevance of these primary constructions of difference but also notes the importance of secondary constructions of difference, such as age, skill, work experience, geographic location – all of which influence hiring patterns.

Identity niching is embedded in work experience and practice (work performances) and sought after in the recruitment and hiring phase. Ideas of what constitutes a model intimate worker circulate among the various actors. By focusing on identity niching emphasis is placed on the recognisable way a worker works, namely their work culture.

**Earning the status of comfortable other**

Employment trajectories are shaped by multiple factors of which both networks and workers' dispositions play a significant role. With the exception of a few, most migrant women entered the labour market using traditional hiring methods and/or informal agencies before finding employment through PEAs. Without

work permits or asylum status, work experience and contactable references, many women are restricted to informal job-seeking strategies. Framed in the context of their vulnerable status as 'maids from Africa' and linked to the discourse on ultra-exploitation theorised by Cock (1980), Nyamnjoh (2005:182) asserts that

> [n]ot only are maids often victims of ultra-exploitation, they enjoy little legal protection and even their basic human rights are always in jeopardy, thanks to inequalities generated through the intersection of race, geography, class, gender and citizenship. Maids in Africa are indeed as a rule powerless and extremely vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.

Based on this premise Nyamnjoh (2005) critically deliberates on how women cope individually and collectively under deplorable conditions, arguing that maids can and do exercise agency *in* the employment relationship. Nyamnjoh explicitly states that "[n]etworks are very important for them, if they must have accommodation, do more than piece jobs, be informed of job opportunities at the earliest, and earn a reasonable amount of money before their stay expires or before they fall prey to one of the routine 'clean up' campaigns organised by the police". Here networks are described as a celebratory outcome of transnational social formations that occur in the receiving country and between the receiving and sending country. However, the 'far flung' nature of these networks and its link to the mobility of women from Zimbabwe to Botswana and/ or South Africa, in search of work, highlight not just diverse employment trajectories but also informational flows related to job-seeking strategies. In addition to exercising agency *in* the employment relationship to counter difficult working conditions, women also exercise their agency when making *informed* decisions, based on shared information about job opportunities in different countries.

All who eventually secured employment through a PEA described their employment trajectories as a "terrible struggle". In the context of PEAs, their struggle is multifaceted since it is not only about "inequalities generated through the intersection of race, geography, class, gender and citizenship" as argued by Nyamnjoh (2005:182). It includes the expectations associated with the institutionalised processes embedded in PEAs' hiring and placement practices. A defining feature of PEAs' gatekeeping role is illustrated through the function of reference letters. Job-seekers are expected to present a reference letter outlining their previous work experience, job description, the reason for their contract ending and a comment related to their performed intimate work culture.

Since PEAs consider candidates with two years' work experience, many had to endure difficult working conditions to earn a reference letter that establishes their identity as comfortable others. Newcomers were encouraged by other migrants to persevere in the informal domestic sector so that they could access better working conditions through PEAs. In the process of earning a reference letter, migrant workers were subject to exploitation. This included low wages, long working hours and a general disregard for their working rights. Newcomers found themselves at the mercy of their employers as they set out to earn a reference letter. This meant that they had to perform an intimate work culture that employers demanded despite harsh working conditions. For this reason they described their search for employment through a PEA as a "terrible struggle". Not having a reference letter was a reminder of what they had to endure in order to become an agency recruited worker. For many women reference letters were symbolic of their struggle. Once they earned a reference letter it usually served as a rite of passage to better working opportunities.

Given the emphasis placed on the screening and hiring process, PEAs as institutions, serve as a 'human technology' of control in the domestic sector. Human technologies have the following features: they are controlled by people, have an institutionalising impact, function to achieve certain ends such as education, production or adjustment, and through knowledge and various methods aim to transform human conduct (Rose, 1996). Curiously, very little attention has been placed on the role that reference letters, as a method of transforming and controlling human conduct, play in fostering and promoting discipline in the domestic sector. Part of the reason for this is that with labour brokering states and agencies that export workers to other countries, job-seekers are often new recruits to paid domestic work (Constable, 1997). Instead of submitting reference letters they submit letter-formatted essays. These essays are addressed to prospective employers. The letters inform them of their economic desperation, hardworking capabilities and willingness to be "honest and obedient" with every intention of fulfilling a two-year

contract (Constable, 1997). Unless there are state-sanctioned flexibilities in place, some recruitment agencies insist on two years' work experience from applicants (Constable, 1997).

Like work permits and the sponsorship system, reference letters can limit workers' mobility in the labour market. As Anderson (2010:310) explains, referring specifically to work permits and the sponsorship system, "employers are handed additional means of control" over workers whose residency can easily be jeopardised by employers who feel that their workers are performing poorly. In the case of earning a reference letter or certificate of service, labour retention is a clear advantage and means of control over workers. Furthermore, cultivating a desirable intimate work culture forms part of the disciplining effect that the screening process has over workers. In this way, the common description associated with migrants' work ethic (Anderson, 2010) and, in particular, an intimate work culture cannot be separated from the level of dependence workers have on their employers to obtain reference letters. With this line of reasoning migrant worker's struggle for work, even if poorly paid, represents their short-to-medium term strategy for escaping such working conditions. But, more importantly, their perseverance or "disciplined self" (Constable, 1997) allows for a work identity to develop that gives rise to their collective representation as "reliable, honest and hardworking workers".

**Narratives of self and work performances**

> Wendy: This white people they are looking for Zimbabwean ladies to work for them because Zimbabweans, we are hardworkers. We work and the Xhosa, if she finish at 4 o' clock, then she puts the mop [down] at 3 o'clock. That is why they don't like Xhosa people. And the Zimbabweans, we wait for 4 o' clock. Or it's half past 4. That is exactly when you start making yourself so that you are preparing yourself so that you are going. That is why they do not like Xhosa. They want Zimbabweans. We are hardworking and we can work. And we don't steal. They know that because Xhosa people they carry big bags to work.
>
> Author: So you have a small bag?
> Wendy: Yes! I've got a small bag because the Xhosa people they know that today she is not going to buy meat. She's going to take from the fridge. Washing powder they don't buy, Sta-soft, everything, they don't buy. [...] We Zimbabwean ladies, we say, "Hai [No], I can't do this because I've got children to look after at home. She can fire me because of salt and washing powder. What is that?
>
> Wendy, Zimbabwean domestic worker, 28.04.2013

When Zimbabwean nationals described their intimate work culture they often spoke about their collective representation and/or self presentation in relation to South Africans. This was informed by specific markers of identity based on their manner and appearance as ideal domestic workers. These ideas were learnt through domestic training courses or through social interactions with their former employers, PEAs and workers. When such markers of identity are adopted and exploited for specific situations, ethnicity is described as situational (Cohen, 2006). But, ethnicity is also considered relational when ethnic groups are understood in terms of 'us' vs. 'them' (Wallman, 1979). Both ways of understanding ethnicity can be used in ways that are linked to the presentation of an intimate work identity. This was typically reflected through the maxim and practice of being 'hardworking, honest, and reliable'.

Drawing on Wendy's narrative above, she discusses an intimate work culture based on her understanding of what work behaviour employers *don't* want and inevitably *who* they don't want. For example, she begins by stating that white employers want Zimbabwean women because "we are hard workers". She then draws a distinction between Zimbabweans' work behaviour by describing who leaves work early and who works until the end of day. She uses the example of who puts the mop down at the right time to indicate how employers want their domestic worker to work. Wendy invokes the collective representation of Zimbabweans' appearance and manner as hard-working in comparison to Xhosa women. It is important to note that both groups are African Black women but their national identity is different. According to Wendy, putting the mop down at the right time is indicative of a productive worker rather than, as she implies, a lazy worker. By meeting the basic expectations of the employer through consistent actions that included being punctual and leaving work at the correct time, women were engaging and establishing their identity as comfortable others through impression management (Goffman, 1959).

Wendy adds: "*And we* [my emphasis] don't steal". Her statement that "Xhosa people they carry big bags to work" is juxtaposed to

"I've got a small bag." Employers and PEAs alike emphasised the value attached to trust and finding an honest worker. This formed an important aspect of what and who constitutes a comfortable other. Workers generally discussed their status as trustworthy in relational terms. Here they differentiated between 'us' vs. 'them' by drawing on the commonly held stereotypes associated with theft/pilfering that employers lamented on prior to approaching a PEA. While referring to her work identity in individual terms she elaborates on the collective representation of Xhosa people as pilferers by later detailing the different items they may take from the household. She adds, "We don't do that" by asserting Zimbabweans' work culture. Lastly, she concludes with the point that such behaviours are not worth losing a job over. This is important in light of the advice women gave and received from each other – cling to your job wholeheartedly. This suggests, in addition to persevering through tough work conditions to create a recognisable work identity, women also had to embed their status as comfortable others by exercising their situational identity.

Women were not only 'doing gender and ethnicity' as domestic workers they were also 'doing difference' (Lutz, 2010). By doing difference their work culture embodied the way they worked as intimate labourers (Sitas, 1983). Implicit in Wendy's statement, "I have got a small bag", is her self-conception of her work ethic as an intimate worker. This is based on her socially derived understandings of what constitutes a comfortable other, an understanding that is informed by social interactions among workers, employers and PEAs.

There are a number of encounters that occur between the client (both prospective employer and job-seeker) and PEA. This includes: registering with one or more PEAs; gaining access to candidate profiles or CVs to review and select; interviewing selected candidates; undertaking a trial work period with one or more candidates; and, finally, selecting a candidate for employment. The interaction among all three actors is intensive and the process itself is similar across all reputable PEAs operating in South Africa. The process is designed to ensure that employers make the right match. This is not a decision that is made lightly. As mentioned earlier, employers and PEAs acknowledge domestic workers' rights and recognise the private household as an intimate workplace. Their need to make the right match takes into account the profound nature of the employment relationship and the tension that often arises when workers use intimacy to de-emphasise servitude (Parreñas, 2001). The use of personalism is one such strategy. It is a widely acknowledged expression of domestic workers' inventive work culture that is used to exercise control over their working conditions (Ally, 2009). Yet, in an effort to seek a comfortable other through PEAs, employers strategically select candidates that perform and narrate a self that coincides with their idea of a desirable intimate work culture. This often amounts to a rejection of the personalism associated with domestic workers' inventive work culture.

Making the right match therefore involves an exercise of reviewing candidates and comparing them according to their work-related performance *and* narratives of the self. This exercise is most pronounced during the interview process and the trial work period. In this way, engaging the services of PEAs is not merely about selecting a Zimbabwean national because of commonly held stereotypes that include their "good English". Instead it is about selecting a candidate who persuades them that they have the characteristics associated with an intimate work culture. To illustrate the importance of intimacy and an intimate work culture in the household, I draw on a narrative to highlight employers' impressions of candidates' work performance and the significance of workers' narratives of self. When asked what made her choose her current domestic nanny over the other two candidates she interviewed, Mrs Nkhuta explained:

> Well the first thing she did when she walked into the house was wash her hands which people seem to not think is important with an infant. [...] So I was like, tick box, she understands it's essential when you around an infant. Secondly she was very keen to like, "May I hold him, may I play with him?" So he was very happy to play with her. It was more the comfort she had with the baby immediately that made her stick out and be the favourite candidate.

Apart from reviewing CVs Mrs Nkhuta's was impressed by the best candidate's work-related performance that depicted her professional know-how regarding hygiene and thus infant care. This performance was observed during the interview which took place in her home. As mentioned earlier, and a practice commonplace among PEAs globally, training courses tend to mould and produce the work ethos demanded by employers

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under the banner of professionalising domestic work (Scrinzi, 2010; Lan, 2016). Zimbabwean nationals noted the advantage of learning how to perform these idealised expectations during the interview process and the intimate workplace. The benefit of creating the impression of an ideal worker, at least through PEAs, is that often they gained access to middle- and upper middle-income households (the targeted clientele of PEAs) that could afford to pay them market-related salaries that were well above the minimum wage prescribed by the state.

The most striking reaction employers reflected and acted upon was workers' inventive work culture. Employers were reluctant to embark on a long-term employment relationship with a candidate who presented social issues. In most cases social issues were tied to the possibility of personalism whereby workers use the ambiguities of intimacy to negotiate better working conditions or gain access to material assistance (Ally, 2009). Any tell-tale signs of social issues resulted in employers opting for a candidate who presented a 'sound' life that was less likely to affect the employment dynamic. The common social issues employers described related to their experience with South African domestic workers who were single mothers and/or had multiple dependents relying on their income. Sympathetic employers tried to help "with whatever we could: funerals, her family, with some additional food, with some additional clothes". However, being too familiar with their domestics' personal situation often challenged their role as employers because the professional and personal relationship became blurred. In this regard Zimbabwean candidates often came across as belonging to stable families with family support.

## Conclusion

These findings bring to the fore the ambiguities of intimacy that represent workers' inventive work culture which is at odds with the work culture that employers demand. The right match is not simply about selecting a candidate according to their national identity but rather securing a worker who is less likely to challenge employers' role as managers of intimate workers. The common description 'hardworking, honest, and reliable' is better understood when reframed as a reactive aspect of the intimate work culture. In practicing this workers set out to earn a reference letter that enables them to apply for, and potentially secure, better working conditions through PEAs that target middle- and upper-middle class clientele. By asserting their worker identity and invoking an "us" vs. "them" narrative worker's strategically practice their agency through identity niching which invariably involves the presentation of 'self'.

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# ON "RACE", RACISM AND "CLASS RACISM": RESEARCH NOTES ON PORTUGUESE MIGRANTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

*Bruno Monteiro*

The most recent wave of Portuguese migration has its invisible areas. Despite representing an important proportion of all Portuguese migrants (Peixoto *et al,* 2016), the most socially fragile migrants tend to receive the least public attention. This restricted symbolic representation is on par with their situation of "social disqualification" (Pinto and Queiroz, 1996). This paper focuses on the migratory pattern of a specific type of migrant from that group – the Portuguese construction workers. Particular attention is given to those that come from the traditional and labour-intensive industrial sectors of the Sousa Valley, which makes them particularly sensitive to negative economic cycles like the "crisis" that started at the beginning of this century (Silva, 2010). Their life trajectories are often marked by little formal education and early entry into the most precarious labour markets, which places them within the most economically and culturally deprived segments of their original society and has a strong impact on their subsequent migration experience. Although these migrants are often able to rely on extensive networks of familiar and vicinal ties, their personal and collective migration experiences take place under conditions of relative economic and cultural constraint. Here, according to Nicolas Renahy, we are dealing with the "migration of precariousness" (2009): the geographical mobility of these migrants preserves their exposure to situations of relative economic scarcity as members of the "working classes".

Within Portugal, migrant construction workers are traditionally perceived as "ignorant", "dangerous" or prone to illness – as evidenced by a vast array of expressions from both erudite and popular culture. Their coverage in the media is often only in connection with accidents, illegalities and other negative events, and their own self-representation is not much better, frequently being tainted with stigmatised descriptions about themselves. Their personal accounts of the migratory experience indicate that they also experience racial prejudice and discrimination in their "destination communities". This paper aims to explore the circumstances under which the status of these migrants as

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"white", "European" males does not always benefit their everyday experiences, as detailed in their reports of discrimination based on physical categories and behavioural codes that they consider to be typical of relationships between different "races". These migrants appear to live a contradictory experience of enjoying the bodily appearance of the ethnic "European" worker, while being subjected to informal interactions and institutional treatment that emphasise the idea that they belong to a distinct "race". Our research explores those situations, wherein the professional precariousness or subalternity of these workers tends to result in a (self-) perceived change in their racial labelling.

Our interviews and other ethnographic materials tell us that, although workers see themselves as "European" and "white", their experiences can change their perception of their skin "colour". For some, there is even the feeling of being transparent while in the public space – an invisibility that, as in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, only exists because "people refuse to see" them (1999: 9). Taking this perspective, we show that the social construction of racialised categories and practices is inextricably linked to the power asymmetries embedded in particular places of sociability and socialisation, such as construction sites and other workplaces. Needless to say then, it is neither necessarily nor exclusively based on workers' physical or ethnic characteristics. Their relatively scarce economic and cultural resources make these migrant workers more prone to selective perceptual and pragmatic behaviours based on "racialised" categories – behaviours that use social indicators such as poverty, illiteracy, or proneness to work accidents as blatant proof of their supposed "racialised" condition[1]. The consequences of occupying specific social places in society in general, and in construction sites in particular, include the threat of exposing these workers to accentuated racial labelling within their "destination communities".

## Defying the obvious: European migrations, structures of power and internalisation of racist violence

> BM: Let me start by asking you how you came to Spain...
> R: I was just moving around from place to place and not finding anything to do when the opportunity came along. My parents always told me that if ever I wanted to have something, I would have to do it at my own expense. I found myself in a tight spot and a friend offered to help... I gave it some thought because, I mean, we're talking about Spain, but a guy needs money for stuff, so I accepted and went. (...)
> BM: Did you find it difficult to deal with?
> R: Yes, everything was hard! It was a shock to me. The Spaniards don't do the crappy work and the Portuguese go there to do it, you see? I was there, but it was humiliating. You see, they have all the benefits we don't have here, because they stop in the morning for a good while, then they stop again in the afternoon for some time too, but we have to work our butts off like negroes! It's not good, man, not good at all!

During the very tense interview from which this excerpt was taken, Roberto's voice was choked with grief and he used an accusatory tone to show, through verbal poetics heavily charged with (self-) irony and rage, that mechanisms of power can sweep away the most visible attributes – such as skin colour – whilst prompting expressions of exclusion that seem typical of exposure to racist acts and words. Focusing on discrimination not based on any obvious biological markers, such as that which "white" European migrants to the United States of America experienced a century ago, allows us to more easily avoid the supposedly obvious arguments that support controversies surrounding "race" (such as skin colour) and, conversely, make it appear a "public fiction" (Jacobson, 2003, 2). This type of transfiguration, through which Portuguese workers become "negroes" or, at least, a different shade of "white", demonstrates the plasticity of racist thought and practices. These racist practices and thoughts can define and redefine the colour scale used to shape discrimination, so that it can be used to mediate power struggles between physically similar workers; Jacobson, for example, describes precisely the existence of "a system of 'differences' by which one might be both white *and* racially distinct from other whites" (idem, 6).

Skin colour, as such, is only an index; if necessary, it may be emphasised and distinguished into as many shades as the social divisions considered significant at a certain moment in time require. As Wittgenstein notes regarding the "common sense" of a "tribe of colour-blind people", the concept of colour is not a merely physiological or psychological construct. Our perception of colour is learned and applied according to cultural principles adopted by a specific way of life (1987: 127-128). It is not mere

[1] This paper is heavily inspired by Victor Karady's work on "anti-Semitism", which introduces the need to equate the historical process of genesis and transmission of that "ideological construction" with "the category of obsessions, beliefs, self-fulfilling prophecies or constitutive pieces of mental and dispositional habitus (...) as unquestionable convictions generating attitudes and various forms of (anti-Jewish) actions and behaviours" (2012, 85).This peculiar relationship between physicality and discrimination in which "physical differences, however real they may be (...) could not justify the anti-Jewish discriminations without the pre-constructed image of the Jew as radical alien" (idem: 97-98) on the basis of Christian heritage, their later exclusion from emerging national communities, or the idea of the racial division of humanity nurtured via Social Darwinism (idem, 96-97). On the contrary, "the less and less significant distinctiveness of Jews in terms of their anthropological culture, tended to be reinterpreted as more or less monstrous forms of otherness" (idem: 98), thanks to the "projections" of the system of perceptual and behavioural classifications that were internalised by the surrounding population. Therefore, "Jew-hatred, generated through such excessive attention to the significance of perceived (supposed or projected) tiny differences, could actually operate even without the demonstrable existence of such differences, due to pre-established prejudice" (idem: 98). Among our Portuguese peers, the theoretical lens used in Fernando Luís Machado's survey of Guinean migrants in Portugal (2002) was also very influential. According to Machado, there is a "space of ethnicity" structured around a pair of axes synthesising, on the one hand, the cultural proprieties of migrants, and on the other, their social proprieties in comparison with the Portuguese overall population. Throughout this paper, the word "native" is used simply as a heuristic notion to distinguish between Portuguese migrants and the population of the "receiving countries".

coincidence that Portuguese workers occasionally see or present themselves as "negroes" or "moors"; they use labels with marked racist connotations to express their particular experiences within the construction site labour hierarchy, namely those involving "native" workers, foremen or managers. This reasoning seems to show that, regardless of their actual skin colour, these workers see themselves as having another, less *valuable* colour (or having no colour at all; *transparent*, so to speak). The fact that these workers describe themselves as "negroes" and "moors" shows that they, too, adhere to the same racial prejudices embedded in these racial categories. These categories are, therefore, metaphorical expressions that these workers use to illustrate their social subordination, while simultaneously demonstrating that they also share a racialised vision of the social world. In fact, the assumption that "races" exist at all, and that they are ranked according to an implicit hierarchy, is one that is shared by the very same Portuguese workers who must suffer its consequences. These workers will most likely go on to replicate these same processes of racial discrimination with yet other groups of subaltern workers they interact with.

Racism can, therefore, be seen as a particular case amidst a large variety of symbolic relations of subordination or supremacy that separate individuals and groups with contrasting power positions within the same community ("we" – "they"), where everyone competes for valuable, and sometimes scarce, local resources and rewards, using not only material and institutional means (i.e. legal authorisations or technical credentials), but also racial stereotypes to establish their reciprocal situations. In this case, the idea of "race" can be viewed as a symbolic operator, or better still, as a given fact or a tacitly and unquestionably accepted truism, like the principles of "doxa" (Bourdieu, 1998). As such, it constitutes a perceptual and intellectual automatism for many of the participants in debates on racism. This notion threatens, therefore, to become a "pre-conception" taken for granted in the debate on racism and racial prejudice. Since this reasoning accepts the idea of "race" from the start, it becomes a vicious circle that ultimately tends to spontaneously confirm its initial premises: the conviction of the inescapable existence of "races" as homogenous, substantial and innate entities.

As with the invention of "nationalities" or national "origins" (Noiriel, 1995), it is important to consider the historical processes that drove the amalgamation of individuals with perceived similarities into distinct "races". Regardless of the varying economic and social circumstances that characterise each individual and segment within the group in question, they are still subsumed under the same "racial" label. Among these Portuguese workers, for instance, we can detect internal distinctions that have been created through multiple social cleavages, such as: the variable integration of the group's members in the labour market (technical qualifications, wage relations and social protection);whether they are included or excluded from the dominant linguistic or behavioural norms; their degree of isolation, alienation and anonymity in the community; or their legal rights and status to deal with public matters (police, labour inspection, and so on), among many other socially relevant aspects (see also Sayad, 1999). Additionally, "race" is more than a transcendent, "pure idea"; it inspires and articulates itself with a range of *racist practices* that are sensitive to everyday, immediate and "normal" contexts of action and enunciation (Peukert, 1987) – "race" is paired, in this case, with a *practical state of racism*, which does not even need to be verbalised to be expressed. Summarising multiple somatic expressions, the notion of "race" pervades the atmosphere of interactions between working bodies, involving not only verbal cues, but also the senses of touch and smell. On those occasions, and recalling Toni Morrison's descriptions in *The Bluest Eye*, it shows itself as either disgust or fearful grimaces when standing before the "ugly" (i.e. "lacking in Whiteness"), or as the distracted gaze directed towards insignificant presences (Morrison, 1999). Even if such aspects are not analysed here for the sake of brevity, we take note of some features of this entanglement between the socially relevant proprieties of these Portuguese construction workers (who are likely to occupy a particular place among the social structures in both the country of departure and the country of destination) and the symbolic discrimination they experience in their everyday environments as migrants, to give our perspective on the historical construction, social structure and practical stances that comprise the notion of "race".

For "nationality" or "race" to become markers or labels that can be used, at least tacitly, to legitimise the distribution of workers in the workplace system of the construction site, with its technical and hierarchical levels and divisions, they need to be constantly sanctioned, reproduced and materialised through relevant criteria such as the distribution of economic benefits, statutory privileges and signs of respect. According to Nicolas

Jounin (2006), the exposure to greater danger, being subjected to precarious labour protection or earning lower wages justify, in retrospect, the "coloured" thresholds that initially imposed them, since they converge to produce the very phenomena that were predicted and anticipated with the enunciation of nationalist or racist biases. Following this chain of circular effects, "nationality" or "race" have come to act as implicit criteria that allow or prevent, at the construction site, access to advantages and privileges that will later justify that initial division along national and ethnic lines, especially since those asymmetric resources tend to stimulate or impose behaviours and attitudes upon those workers that conform with expected patterns of racialised thought. The system of opportunities and constraints at the construction site perpetuates the belief that certain nationalities or "races" automatically attract woes and handicaps, while others seem to confer a palliative or prophylactic nature upon any of those events (vd. Holmes, 2006).

On a broader level of analysis, the "end of borders" in Europe has not ended the symbolic alchemy that they give rise to them: administratively controlled or not, borders continue to be institutional mechanisms that convert workers into "foreigners" as soon as they cross them. The social value attached to the "foreigners" thus created is not, however, randomly attributed. From our research, we can raise certain hypotheses that beg further research. Firstly, depending on the hierarchical relationship between the "country of departure" and the "country of destination" within the cultural and economic international system, the migrant can expect either more or less positive evaluations (see Sayad, 1999). The transmutation that occurs at the borders is also dependent upon migrant profiles in terms of cultural and economic indicators, meaning that their status as "aliens" can be accentuated according to the degree to which their individual and collective attributes display significant social "strangeness" in comparison with the "receiving country". Encapsulating these multiple indicators of subordination under the sole notion of "race" tends to highlight racially-motivated divisions between migrants and "natives" within the "destination communities" and, at the same time, contributes to legitimising these power relations through their "naturalisation" in the allegedly pre-existent, irreducible and inherent characteristics of migrants.

**The social embeddedness of racism**

When dealing with migrants recounting experiences of racism, including their allegations of skin metamorphosis or the reduction of their presence to invisibility when standing before "natives" in residential areas or construction sites, it is also important to note the impact of social structuring principles beyond the strictly racial ones. Thus, for the cases considered here, it is important to mention the notion of "class racism", bearing in mind the consequences suggested by Claude Grignon's work regarding the mechanisms of imposition and sublimation that sustain racist practices and categories. We are highly tempted to view these accounts of Portuguese migrants as solely the result of their submission to inherently "racist" populations of the "destination communities" in other European countries. There is the danger of re-essentialising "race" as the sole cause of social structuring. This pitfall seems to present itself in interpretations that isolate "race" as a unique, exceptional and self-contained principle, separate from multiple other social connections and its very process of historical construction, but it can be controlled by taking note of the social position of the apparently racist segments of the "native" population within the local structures of power – where, according to some migrants' accounts, those segments also seem to occupy precarious and marginal positions, leaving them in direct competition with incoming migrants.

For Claude Grignon, the political and media accusations about "popular racism" (i.e. racism of the "popular classes") as the sole trigger for these situations may be, in itself, partially a product of "class ethnocentrism". Grignon suggests another way of thinking about that specific type of racial discrimination, treating it as a specific mode of domination that "is simultaneously a fact of the erudite culture and a fact of power" (1991, 5). "It is necessary, then, to see in racism the anomic form that social repulsion takes in societies, where that which contributes to the separation of groups, and more particularly the preparation of a separate order for those in a dominant position, cannot be manifested through a direct and open action in the name of the hierarchical principle; from this standpoint, there is no difference between the nature of class racism and that which is currently understood as racism" (idem: 9). Speaking directly about "popular racism" without questioning the social embeddedness of its verbal and physical expressions may become a specific form of "racism" in itself. According to Claude Grignon, "racists"

are all those who insist on automatically applying the principles of a vision organised exclusively around an idea of "race" that they have themselves internalised as "common sense". Being thus ready-made interpretations of the social world, they avoid or inhibit taking any critical stance towards latent convictions about the pre-existence of "races". Those interpretations seem to repress, therefore, any questioning of the social and economic conditions that explain the conversion of power struggles (normally limited to the social arena of the subaltern segments of the workforce) into struggles with straightforward nationalistic or ethnic contours.

> BM: But what happened then?
> J: We were going down the road, the four of us, easy going, minding our own business and not talking to anyone. Just the four of us, talking to each other, walking down the road; then a guy came out of a bar... and approached us and just asked F. [another Portuguese migrant] if he had gone to the fair, - it was something that happened at the fair, something to do with girls, I don't know, something – and the guy just asked "have you gone to the fair?", and suddenly, he punched him right there and then... (...)
> BM: Did you go to the police?
> J: We went to the police and the police said: "Do you know them?", "No, we don't know them", "So, what do you want? We cannot do anything, we don't know who he was either, or why he did it"...
> BM: And that was the police's answer?
> J: That was what they said, nothing more. We were the ones who got punched... That was on a Sunday. On Monday morning, my head was in bad shape, but I still went to work. I was talking to a fellow Portuguese guy from Ovar [a coastal city in Portugal's North region] who worked there, and I told him what happened. Afterwards, he talked with the other English guys [in the company], and with the [English] foreman, and the foreman told him: "These guys from here don't even like themselves" and also said: "We realise that this happens non-stop, we don't want to talk to them and we are English as well"... (...)
> BM: Why do these problems happen with the Portuguese?
> J: The problem is simple, they don't like the Portuguese at all, you see? There was that... How can I put it...? They were racists. There was racism there, so they would see Portuguese and it would get ugly... (...) All the Portuguese that have their Portuguese cars there, they scratched the paint, dented them and slashed the tires...

These excerpts from the interview with Joaquim, whose migratory journey took him across a number of European countries (Luxembourg in the 1980s, Spain and the United Kingdom in the 2000s) and professions (such as factory worker),despite his experience in the construction industry, precisely show that the use of terminology filled with motifs and practices of stigmatisation with a marked nationalist or racial emphasis are intimately associated, in their immediate contexts of enunciation, with situations of high competition for scarce resources that characterise the most precarious social circles in the "destination communities". These Portuguese migrants and these local (sub)proletarians are both immersed in the same circumstances of physical violence and statutory anxiety (see Charlesworth, 2001). This racist and nationalistic reaction to the arrival of "foreigners" seems inextricably linked to the pressure of having to defend, preserve and value their (few) benefits and rewards in places where economic and symbolic opportunities are already scarce for them as "natives". A vast array of factors seems to endorse the "threat" that "foreigners" represent for the "natives" forced to compete with them, and even makes it plausible. The increase in household costs, the over crowding of public services (such as child care facilities or job centres) in communities where the State has held back or preferred to use repressive strategies (Wacquant, 2008) and increasing pressure on wages, together with increasing precarious labour contracts, all seem to provide reason for competition among the different segments of the local popular classes. All in all, as a result of this narrowing range of available options, the disadvantaged local population tends to symbolically and physically compete, sometimes violently, with other impoverished segments of society, "alien" or "native" alike. In accordance with our interviewee's account, certain "natives" fight and insult each other, and are even seen by other segments of the "native" population as troublemakers ("These guys from here don't even like themselves").

That same competition for valuable resources that immigrants experience with the "native" population can also occur with

other migrants, which means that "the Portuguese", particularly those Portuguese migrants who are already established in the community and are trying to parlay their less recent arrival into social integration, can represent "the worst race", to use another expression from this interviewee, for their own countrymen. Such cases show that spatial proximity or national belonging among migrants is counterbalanced by the emergence of criteria of inclusion and exclusion related with community ancestry. Therefore, in these cases, we see that the integration of migrants amongst themselves is not spontaneously or necessarily created, but is rather susceptible to cleavages between the "established" and the "outsiders" among them (Elias and Scotson, 1993). In the following excerpt from Joaquim's interview, other Portuguese workers who arrived earlier on and are settled relatively well in Luxembourg saw the newcomers as a potential threat to their (precarious) position within the community.

> BM: Why were those older Portuguese workers complaining about the newcomers?
> J: They didn't want the newcomers to go there because they were afraid that they wanted to earn a good salary by working harder. And they wanted to live a nice life and have nothing to do with the newcomers; and anything that we asked to learn, to tell us how it was done, they... There was one [Portuguese migrant] there that even started talking in French or Luxemburgish or whatever, and I told him that I didn't understand...
> BM: But was he Portuguese?
> J: He was Portuguese, from Gaia [a city in the North region, close to Porto]... And I came up to him... I had seen him talking to other Portuguese guys before, because I know those guys were Portuguese... (...) And I came up to him and [asked]: "What is the name of that? Where can I find it?" And the guy replied: "I don't understand", and I told him: "That's fine". After a while, I caught him speaking in Portuguese to another guy and I told him: "Thank you", and he said: "What?", [and I reply:] "What? You don't understand Portuguese, but you speak Portuguese? You are a son of a bitch!".

**The racialisation of the controversy**

The racialisation of the social world through principles of thought and action that establish "race" as the primary premise of belonging and exclusion, conceals its long history of internalisation in the human body and its materialisation in the social world. Given that it was translated and imposed over the very structures of the social world that would later dictate its everyday manifestations, "race" sustained the appearance of its own "naturalness" under the guise of common sense and was, unintentionally, even assimilated by the "collective unconsciousness" of intellectual communities. Walter Benjamin, in his essay *Charles Baudelaire. A poet in the era of high capitalism,* focuses on the historical emergence of the vision of class struggle as a collision of races, emblematically represented in the Baudelairian opposition between Cain and Abel. Formulated in 1838, the "racial theory" of Granier de Cassagnac, which saw the proletariat as a "class of sub-humans" originating from the "crossbreeding of bandits and prostitutes", could have been transferred to other "racial" visions of the social classes, essentialised in their nature and mutual opposition (1974, 523-524). This implicit worldview reappears in other erudite transcriptions that have embraced the existence of compact and incommensurable "identities" connected with "races", "religions" or "cultures" as being self-evident. Exploring the case of French politics on migration issues, Benoit Bréville (2015) notes the replacement of the "social approach" with the "ethnic angle", which converts "labour conflicts" into "cultural confrontations". For Bréville, this means that, at another level, political attention and pressure is changing from the "struggle for equality" to the "struggle against discriminations". The most simplified versions of the discourses on "race" that permeate the media, politics and academia tend towards an uncontrolled reification of the idea of "race" as a transcendent substance; exactly the opposite of what research on the historical and social processes of "race" categories and practices has shown us. The univocal attention paid to only one, albeit important, principle of organisation of the social world could become – as with the "economist" readings of so-called "vulgar Marxism"– an epistemic obstacle in itself. Especially when it prevents us from questioning the structures of power that sustain, legitimise and reproduce such organisation, thanks to its allegations of unquestionability or neutrality, as Everett Hughes tells us has happened with the statistical artefacts that, imbued with racist definitions, conditioned German statistical categories in the 1930s (2009,516-523). The essentialisation of the notion of "race" (or "class", or "people" or "nation") bars, in such cases, scientific

research from advancing beyond the limits of the thinkable that those notions trace, since such an essentialist reading sees them as matters of dogma or accepts them as unquestionable and "obvious" realities.

The logic of racialised reasoning serves, under circumstances such as those of the aforementioned "class racism", to stigmatise members of the working classes as inherently xenophobic and racist, refusing to understand the impacts of intensified competition, disaffiliation and precariousness that the popular classes of contemporary societies are subject to and, in particular, the emergence and diffusion of stigmatizing stereotypes in the political arena as acceptable definitions for these groups. The discourses that nowadays promote a vilified vision of the allegedly parochial, savage and prejudiced "masses" (i.e. the notion of "white trash"), seem to collude in a "jargon of authenticity", in which concepts "are untouched by history" (Adorno, 2003, 5). These judgements on the supposed "racism of the working classes" not only exclude any serious questioning of its own historical inception within the ideological cosmos, but also ignore the changes in the structures of power that affect all working classes, "native" and "foreign" alike, putting them in a social place particularly susceptible to this imposed labelling.

## Conclusion

The discrimination felt by these workers, who see and feel it as conveying racist prejudices and actions, is only satisfactorily explained through a form of reasoning that refuses the essentialisation of categories and taxonomies usually mobilised either in the racist and nationalistic narratives or (though with completely reversed political intentions) in certain versions of "multiculturalist" thought (Taylor, 2010).[2] Through episodes of racism devoid of the supposedly most visible indicators of "race", this paper shows that the possibility and plausibility of these specific experiences of racism are also connected with the competition for scarce resources taking place within territorially circumscribed systems of power relations, which lateralises conflicts between the segments of the working classes and symbolically marginalises these Portuguese migrants. The asymmetries of these power relations are legitimised and reproduced through a racialised representation of the world, as seen in the recruitment procedures or the technical and professional hierarchies described by Nicolas Jounin regarding construction sites in France (2006). This mutual entanglement between the social structure of power and racial segregations and divisions give particular resilience to the idea of "race".

As a kind of tautological reasoning, where the economic and cultural precariousness of migrants seems to support the imposition of racial discrimination and vice-versa, the process of racialisation is especially highlighted in the seemingly counterfactual case of Portuguese migrants, since it short-circuits the crude correspondence between social and biological attributes placed at the bottom of "racism" in common sense discourses. This relationship between structures of power and symbolic violence occurs at various levels, morphing itself to adapt to the peculiar shape of local contexts or workplaces, such as the construction site. The agricultural workers studied by Seth Holmes (2006) expressed this empirical superposition between the occupational hierarchy organised along racial lines and the hierarchies of suffering and danger of the farm. This superposition makes the accidents and illnesses that, given their social place, touch those migrant bodies, seem simple expressions of their intrinsic ethnic nature. The absence of marked physical evidence is not an absolute obstacle to the imposition of racialised discrimination. We can also detect the prevalence of racist mechanisms and behaviours combined with the absence of the most notable biological markers. As a particular case of symbolic violence, the idea of "race" legitimises the social asymmetries of power, making them appear as the "natural" order between distinct beings. In contrast, since it neutralises any reflection on the social asymmetries and struggles that underscore the racialised mode of domination, this idea of "race" appears as transcendent, which is precisely the issue whose genesis and relevance deserve to be understood in social and historical terms.

By thinking not only with concepts, but also about them (Ryle, 1965), we can understand apparent paradoxes such as the variety of racism that apparently does not need to appeal to the most obvious biological and cultural traits ("skin colour", religion, gastronomy or clothing, among many others), or the accounts of Portuguese migrants who insist that their countrymen, especially the ones who have been settled the longest in the "communities of destination", are "the most racist" against them. This approach suggests that we must think critically about those discourses as well, insisting on taking all methodological precautions needed when addressing the issue. Since this would imply conducting a dual critique on the

[2] The line of thought that insistson the incommensurable nature of distinct "cultures" has a strong historical connection with the tradition of "irrationalism" and even "anti-enlightenment" (see Sterhnell, 2010).

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symbolic violence encapsulated in the racialised categories and, at the same time, the social structures of power that organise the patterns of resource distribution in our societies, such an approach would prevent us from ignoring both the specificities of ethnic discrimination and the relevance of the objective relations of power. The reciprocal critique between symbolic domination based on the idea of "race" and the reading of power structures is, in conclusion, a productive way to mutually correct our own epistemological limitations – and it is also a heuristic device for research in the field of racist practices and representations.

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# THE CITY UNDER CONSTRUCTION: CAPE VERDEAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN LISBON

*Catarina Sampaio*

Starting from the second half of the twentieth century, the migratory mobility of the Cape Verdeans had Lisbon as their main destination.

This essay examines how the history of Cape Verdean immigration to the AML (Metropolitan Area of Lisbon), since the middle of the 20th century, depended on the political options and their consequent urban changes, and how it morphologically transformed Lisbon. Focusing on the everyday life and work of these immigrants, and on the relationship created between the expansion of the city of Lisbon and the arrival of construction workers from Cape Verdean origin to Portugal, it is verified that knowledge of the migratory mobility and its consequences to the urban space is essential to understand the city in its complexity."

The population of Cape Verdean origin gathered in the AML, helping to "create" a strip of informal urban sprawl on the border between the municipality of Lisbon and the counties of Oeiras, Amadora and Loures. The promotion of a series of works and the creation of infrastructures by different governments enabled the arrival of a large number of Cape Verdean workers, which led to the formation of be largely marginalized communities that grew in the informal neighborhoods under construction in the perimeter of the city, such as in the case of Bairro 6 de Maio (Sampaio, 2013). One resident of this neighborhood states:

> "[...] Specifically, the Cape Verdeans were the greatest builders of all the Portuguese area.
> The biggest builders ...
> Some were killed, some were crippled ...
> I'll say one thing, the first major company I knew in Portugal that filled the first bankruptcy was J. Pimenta.
> He built the tax office building at Reboleira (...)
> Or José Monteiro, who built that neighborhood of the Benfica cemetery.
> The Cape Verdeans were the ones that built the neighborhoods.

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[1] Interview with Adriano in December 2011

> The Cape Verdeans were the largest African community
> to work in construction here in Portugal.
> And today sometimes they suffer a treacherous censorship.
> They suffer censurorship that they do not deserve.
> Do you understand? [...]"[1]

Taking into account the context of the Cape Verde archipelago, and the demand for labor in Portugal both due to the recruitment for the Colonial War and the emigration to France, representatives of several portuguese construction companies moved to the archipelago with the goal of hiring workers. In Portugal, Cape Verdeans worked mainly as masons, carpenters, and in preparing the iron subgrade for reinforced concrete, etc. (Carreira, 1977:168). Accordingly, different periods show the different moments of immigration of Cape Verdean construction workers to Lisbon and their relationship with the different construction sites in the city.

Considering that the majority of Cape Verdean men work in the construction industry, the flow of these workers to Lisbon is closely related to the various stages of consolidation and affirmation of this city as an urban project. The different urbanization and infrastructure consolidation operations that have taken place over time in Lisbon – from the second half of the twentieth century to the present – designed and redefined the presence of construction workers in the urban space, thus making these workers into active elements in the definition of Lisbon as a capital city and center of power and, at the present moment, one important touristic center. In this way, several periods of the history of the immigration of Cape Verdean construction workers can be defined according to their relation with different construction sites and their timelines in Lisbon.

**First phase, 1960-1973**

Many construction workers were needed in order to carry out large-scale urban operations, which took place in Lisbon since the 1940s. These operations included urban upgrading and expansion works, such as the construction of the Lisbon metro – the first line was inaugurated in 1959 –, the construction of the Salazar bridge, later renamed the 25 de Abril bridge, inaugurated in 1966 –, and urbanization projects – such as the Olivais complex – in the 60's – and Alto do Restelo designed by the architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, in 1972-1973; and the Chelas complex, in the beginning of the 70's. The lack of labor in Portugal, due to emigration to France and compulsory recruitment for the Colonial War, at a time when some dynamics of economic development were visible, and an increase in industrialization reinforced by the expansion of public works and construction in the civil society, fostered the arrival of natives from the then Cape Verdean province to Lisbon in order to fill this gap.

The first phase of the migratory flow to AML, between 1960 and 1973 (França, 1992), coincided with a first moment of land occupation for illegal housing construction in the outskirts of the city. The first immigrants who arrived in Lisbon worked in construction and public works. In fact, Portugal in the 60s was characterized by an increase in civil construction and public works, which attracted Cape Verdean workers (Batalha, 2007:31):

> "Cape Verdean emigration to Portugal accelerated rapidly in the 1960s, when some Portuguese construction and public works companies were contracted to build desalination, electrification, fountains, roads, airfields and ports in the then colony of Cape Verde. These companies began to offer work to Cape Verdean workers in the capital city. "(Batalha, 2007:31)

Although these immigrants traveled on personal initiative, their travels were, to a certain extent, protected by government entities. This protection was reinforced in 1972 by the creation of a department dedicated to the support and professional referral of these workers, called the *Nucleo de Apoio aos trabalhadores Migrantes Cabo-verdianos*. At this time, the main employers were the companies J. Pimenta, Pereira da Costa and the Douro da Margueira. Civil construction, mines – from Panasqueira, Aljustrel, etc. –, cleaning services in the city and suburban areas and other sectors of work required immediate labor to avoid paralysis.

In this period, Cape Verdean workers were considered Portuguese, because Cape Verde was not yet independent from colonial rule. The majority of the Cape Verdean community in Lisbon was made up of men, mostly peasants from the interior of the island of Santiago, who had to adapt to urban life in Portugal. In spite of moving from peasants to workers, they did not renounce the "fundamental values and social representations of Cape Verdean rural society" (Batalha, 2007:30). These workers settled

in Lisbon – Campo de Ourique, Estrela, Camões, Conde Barão –and in their peripheries, like Amadora, Reboleira, Carnaxide. In these areas, they formed, through the self-construction of their dwellings, informal city streets in order to guarantee housing for themselves and their families.

**Second phase, 1974-1992**

During the phase between 1974 and 1976, after the process of decolonization, there was a flow of Cape Verdeans from the former colonies, including many who had fought on the Portuguese side during the Colonial War. In Portugal, most of them continued to work in civil construction (França, 1992).
With few exceptions, the many immigrants who arrived in Lisbon during this period did not find a place in the urban housing context, either as a result of the price of housing or of practices of discrimination. Consequently, it was more advantageous to them fit into the housing dynamics of the informal city. The occupation of the land on the outskirts of Lisbon for construction continued therefore intensify since April 1974:

> "These neighborhoods were places where poor post-colonial immigrants – construction workers, men, and housekeepers or fish sellers, women – who had difficulty accessing the housing system because of poor income or racist practices of landlords who did not rent houses to them, solved their housing problem."
> (Ascensão, 2012:10)

In this way, the "informal city", in the axis of the Portas de Benfica to the station of Damaia, was consolidated with the arrival of new inhabitants who self-build their houses, generating the growth of these districts in extension, constructive density and population increase. The houses grew in height and the empty sites along the *Estrada Militar* – among other territories – continued to be occupied for the self-construction of houses. In the Cape Verdean migratory scenario, Portugal has operated since the 50's as a "turntable" or gateway to other destinations – Europe or the United States, for example – where there was a need for construction workers. The independence of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, and the ensuing civil wars - which did not occur in Cape Verde – caused long migratory flows to Portugal. This exodus had the AML as its primary destination. In the period between 1976 and 1992, Cape Verdean workers appeared as foreign workers working in construction and public works (France, 1992). During this period, it was usual for these immigrants to work in precarious working conditions, with no employment ties, that forced them to adopt non-legal forms of stay in the Portuguese national territory, and in some cases, to develop forms of a parallel economy for their own subsistence and of their families:

> "The adoption of 'hidden forms of labor' through illegal employment and escape from social responsibilities towards workers finds fertile ground in civil construction and public works, with special use of Cape Verdean workers, who, as immigrants and foreigners, are in a more fragile situation and are subject to accept working conditions which, in general, Portuguese workers tend not to accept. "
> (França, 1992:78)

This period of the history of immigration in Portugal coincides with the signing of the application for membership of the EEC in 1977 and becoming a member in 1986:

> "The arrival of these new migrants responds to the need for labor for the construction of urban infrastructures after the entry of Portugal into the European Economic Community in 1986, enabling a number of professional occupations in the field of civil construction throughout the country."
> (Martins, 2012:51)

The post-entry period of Portugal in the EEC was, therefore, fertile in the construction of infrastructures and other symbolic buildings of a Lisbon that wanted to be "European". This gave rise to numerous construction works which were aimed to give a new standing to this city, in a process of "urban rehabilitation" that tried to bring it closer to the European counterparts. The urban interventions of the time in Lisbon were mainly characterized by renovations of the infrastructures and the construction of several emblematic works in the city. Among these significant interventions are the reconstruction of Chiado after the great fire of 1988, the Centro Cultural de Belém started in 1988 and completed in 1993; and Casa dos Bicos – now the José Saramago Foundation - rebuilt in 1983 for the

XVII Exhibition of Arts, Science and Culture.
The flow of workers to these construction jobs also meant a large occupation of the informal neighborhoods on the outskirts of Lisbon. There was an acceleration of the occupation of the houses already built – by means of loan or sub-lease – and of the construction in this urban interstice, as well as an increase of population density. In those neighborhoods, the population grew to accommodate workers that had come during the previous migratory flows and workers that arrived in this new influx of immigrants, both working mainly as construction workers.

In fact, the high population density in these informal neighborhoods, together with their strong community ties, makes them into recruitment places for workers in civil construction. In this social and geographical context, the hiring of workers is done by word of mouth, among family, friends, neighbors and other Cape Verdeans.
The daily life of these construction workers is structured in contexts of informal work, characterized by the absence of employment contracts, exclusion from the social security system, long working hours, high geographical mobility and high turnover of employers (Machado, 1993). The Cape Verdean community of AML accepts this labor precariousness as part of their daily life.

**Third phase, 1992 – 2004**[2]
The construction of large public works in Portugal during the eighties increased during the nineties. A good example is the Expo 98, an international exhibition in Lisbon organized to celebrate the fifth centenary of the voyages of the Portuguese navigators of the XV and XVI centuries. It was thought of as a specialized international exhibition, built in an enclosure of about 50 hectares, located in Lisbon. The eastern part of the city was chosen, in a vast area considered degraded and polluted.
The years from 1994 to 1998 were the consolidation and construction of this event. The site of the future exhibition was "cleaned" of the buildings considered obsolete, and the place of the exhibition gained shape, as the construction of the North and South International Areas, the Portugal Pavilion, the Pavilion of the Future, the Pavilion of the Knowledge of the Seas, the Oceanarium or the Oriente Station. The construction of the Vasco da Gama Bridge - between 1994 and 1998 - and the construction of the Regional Internal Circular of Lisbon (CRIL) in 1991. These big public works gave signs of Portugal as a prosperous country with many working opportunities, and thus the country attracted many immigrant workers. However, according to Fikes (2009), the integration of Portugal into the European Union (EU) has increased the precariousness of labor relations and the marginalization of the PALOP immigrants, changing the daily relationship between them and Portuguese citizens, with impact on the urban dynamics and sociability processes.
Immigrants from Cape Verde continue to arrive and joined the continued informal settlement on the periphery of Lisbon – in neighborhoods such as Fontainhas, 6 de Maio and Estrela d'Africa -, which led to further construction and occupation of houses in a massive way, in these neighborhoods. To answer the demand for workers, the Portuguese government created a protocol to facilitate immigration to Portugal in 1997:

> "The D. L. No 60/97 of 19 November 1997 approved a protocol between the Governments of Portugal and Cape Verde aimed at facilitating "the emigration of Cape Verdean citizens to Portugal, for a limited period of time, with a view to the exercise of temporary activities "[...]. This emigration was dependent on the pre-existence of an employment contract with a maximum duration of one year, extendable up to a maximum of three years (article 1 and 2 of the Protocol). In addition, the Protocol establishes the conditions to be met by Portuguese employers wishing to hire Cape Verdean workers".
> (Baganha and Marques, 2001:54).

In 2004, Portugal received the European Football Championship. The organization of this event required large investments in infrastructures in order to meet all the necessary conditions required by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). The construction or remodeling of ten stadiums spread across the Portuguese territory and the improvement of accesses, implied infrastructural projects in roads, railways and airports. Another consequence of this event was the urban redevelopment operations in the cities that were the scene of the competitions. If, during that period, the recruitment of construction workers was essential, this population would later have to leave Portugal to ensure employability.

[2] In 1998 the districts of Lisbon and Setubal held 90% of Cape Verde's population, consisting in about 70,000 people. Of the active population, about 67% worked in civil construction, or in related jobs. In "Study of characterization of the Cape Verdean community living in Portugal", Embassy of Cape Verde in Portugal, 1998.

**Fourth phase, 2004 -2017**

Since 2008, the international economic crisis had major consequences on migration worldwide. Unemployment among immigrants increased exponentially, especially for those whose activities were connected with the ones which had been most affected by the recession as was the case of construction. However, before 2008 the unemployment rate in immigrant communities was already significant, affecting mainly male unskilled labor in construction (Peixoto *et al*, 2011).

During this period, the mobility of Cape Verdean construction workers was intense. Some of them returned to Cape Verde, others travelled to France and the Netherlands looking for new job opportunities. Portugal went on being the axis for the mobility of these people, as an important point of departure to other countries.

Nowadays, after the crisis of the real estate sector, the urban regeneration of Lisbon associated to the 'touristification' process of the city is one of the biggest sources of work for these workers:

> "Construction, after the collapse of recent years, has recovered from the crisis and is already lacking in workers – 23,000 jobs were created in the first quarter of this year alone, but it will take 80,000 workers in the next two to three years. The sector, which has lost 200,000 jobs since 2010, shortly before the arrival of the troika, is being driven by the growth of tourism and urban rehabilitation, closely linked to local housing. Last year 11 thousand new buildings and 6 thousand urban rehabilitation were licensed. By 2014, at the peak of the crisis, only 8955 buildings had been licensed and real estate rehabilitation dropped to a low of 5435 by 2015. And since the beginning of this year, the construction production index has not stopped growing, having increased only 1.6% in April."[3]

New partners from the archipelago are now joining the large number of Cape Verdean construction workers in the city. These usually alternate construction work during the week with different types of work at weekends performing as musicians or porters bouncers in small bars and nightclubs scattered throughout the city.

Lisbon are is now interspersed by an uncountable series of construction works. While the public policies in the city have been focusing on urban reordering, such as – as it is the case of the redefinition of the road system, of the parking system and the environment – there is not only a large number of buildings to be requalified in the city center now – mainly with *Airbnb* – but also the rehabilitation of old buildings for new purposes , also connected to the hotel industry. In this context, the human landscape of the city is now marked by two evident dynamics: the immense circulation of tourists and the movement of construction workers' movement.

While it is true that tourism has pushed urban rehabilitation to such an extent that there is already a shortage of labor, it has also opened doors to greater clandestinity and the increase of illegal practices regarding workers rights. In fact, these illegal practices are increasing in this sector with the growe urban rehabilitation and immigrant communities and heavily affected by them. Immigrant status has in itself a stigma difficult to overcome in the world of work. The situation of being an immigrant imposes on these Cape Verdean masons a condition that makes them live their everyday life in precarious situations. In this sense, the absence of political and civil rights associated with processes of social and economic marginalization, poor housing conditions, low access to health and education and precarious working conditions are indicators of the vulnerability and precariousness of these workers in Portugal (Sarró and Mapril, 2011:31).

Changes in organization modes and work dynamics, as well as the results of political and economic constraints of a neo-liberal tendency, have given rise to policies where labor flexibility is a growing tendency, at a time in which xenophobic positions are also increasing. Immigrant workers from the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), especially in the construction industry, are the most affected by this context.

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[3] "Construção precisa de 80 mil operários nos próximos anos" in www.dn.pt/dinheiro/interior/construcao-precisa-de-80-mil-operarios-nos-proximos-anos-8561195.html, consulted in June 2017.

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**List of Acronyms**

AML - Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
PALOP – Portuguese-speaking African countries
UEFA - Union of European Football Associations
EU - European Union
EEC - European Economic Community
CRIL - Regional Internal Circular of Lisbon

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