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## School pathways and economic practices of Portuguese Ciganos: some continuities and changes

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to offer a comprehensive perspective to a better understanding of the actual situation of Portuguese Ciganos.<sup>1</sup> In Portugal, the lack of recognition of Ciganos (Roma) and the sometimes incorrect 'knowledge' about them which are reflected in images that are limitative and distorted, suggest inferiority and are full of disdain, all of which negatively affects and restricts the life of Ciganos persons. This article intends to presents some of the main results of two qualitative studies conducted between 2004–2010, one of which sought to get to know Ciganos' representations of domains, practices and situations perceived as discriminatory, while the other looked at the social integration paths of these persons. These studies produce new knowledge about both individual academic and occupational trajectories, and some of the main intergenerational changes that have occurred among Portuguese Ciganos. In addition, the article offers a new view about some social policies in Portugal and its impacts on Ciganos singularities. In fact, it's possible to conclude that the universalism of the national social policies has not produced the desired effects in terms of a reduction in levels of poverty, exclusion, discrimination among Portuguese Ciganos.

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## 1. Introduction: overview about the social situation of Portuguese Ciganos

In this section we introduce a comprehensive analysis about the social situation of Portuguese Ciganos. Then, the focus will be on the relationship between Ciganos and school, taking into account the social policies that have contributed to the increase of their schooling levels. Ciganos have been living in Portugal for more than five centuries, however they are still a group that is relatively unknown and unrecognised. They are not recognised as either a national minority or an ethnic minority, but they are considered Portuguese citizens with equal rights according the Portuguese law. The lack of recognition of Ciganos and incorrect 'knowledge' about them are frequently reflected in a distorted perceived identity, suggesting inferiority and full of disdain, all of which negatively affects and restricts the life of Ciganos and can be classified as another form of oppression (Taylor, 1999, p. 45). The non-recognition or inadequate recognition of what it is to be a Cigano

and his way of life by institutions and public policies and their social invisibility (Bastos, Correia, & Rodrigues, 2007) in the public space have adversely affected the Ciganos, depreciating their capabilities (Sen, 2010). There are possibilities or opportunities for functioning which must be thought about together rather than separately and which would allow individuals to take responsibility for their lives. Additionally, there is no statistical information about Ciganos citizens because the Portuguese constitution prevents ethnic identification.

Over the last few decades, most of the Ciganos who live in Portugal have become sedentary, although the commonplace social representation of a Cigano is that of a nomad, free from all commitments and bonds except blood ties. To be a Cigano is equivalent to being *cunning, astute, bohemian, a wanderer, a driver of hard bargains, sly, sharp, a haggler, a trickster, subtle, a trafficker, a vagabond, a rogue*, etc.<sup>2</sup> These descriptions possess an essentially deprecatory nature, which indicates the continued existence of a negative representation that is full of preconceptions (Silva, Sobral, & Ramos, 2008). However, it's possible to highlight a number of attributes that display the supposed psychological domination of non-Ciganos by Ciganos, such as 'cunning', 'the art of deceit' and so on (Mendes, 2012).

Ciganos are seen in ways that are persistently essentialist and stigmatising; usually there is a tendency to treat them as equal, as a homogeneous set. They are associated with a certain parasitism and are said to have forms of behaviour that are thought of as destructive of the 'social edifice'; this is a decadent group that has not developed or evolved; they are considered '*atrasados*' (a term that combines the senses of behind the times and mental retardation), suffer from a certain anachronism (Lopes, 2008), with a social difference and are therefore condemned to disappear, are lost in today's world and have failed to modernise. Furthermore they are considered to live in a permanent state of idleness, exuberantly and openly occupying public spaces as a group and constantly refusing to submit to the requirements of work and schooling. Public opinion also recurrently links Ciganos to traffic of drugs (Corkill & Eaton, 1999) or other illegal activities.

Ciganos are often accused of causing the deterioration of the 'social climate' (Lopez & Fresnillo, 1995), non-Ciganos no longer want to associate with them due to a fear of their supposed links with drugs, physical attacks and delinquency. They are attributed a condition of 'strangeness' and difference (Bochaca, 2003) – an attitude based on discriminatory and segregationist desires. The technicians and the political and social institutions feel that it is offered to Ciganos multiple opportunities for integration, but they are systematically accused of not taking advantage of these, turning their backs and not wanting to integrate; they are said to refuse integration and not to follow the social rules and to insist on living in a kind of separate micro-society, governing themselves by their own rules and laws (Lopez & Fresnillo, 1995). This perspective suffers from a linearity that fails to take account of the different life situations of different Ciganos families – all Ciganos are tarred with a uniform brush.

The hostility and rejection displayed towards Ciganos take diverse shapes, which are manifested, for example, in the visibility of the social and ethnic segregation of which they are the object in the rehousing operations conducted in peripheral and suburban areas (Mendes, 2012; Parliamentary Committee, 2008). The media tend to construct an image of the Cigano as a transgressor against the social order – an image that contributes directly and indirectly to the rejection which, in various ways, is a key element in the

relations between Ciganos and their immediate environment. It is thus comprehensible that society in general shares a stereotype and a distorted image, one remnant of which in the collective mind is the threat used to get children to eat their food: 'Eat up, or the Cigano will come with a sack and take you away!' (Campos, 1997, p. 2).

Ciganos find themselves in situations that are poles apart from the majority society, embodying a strong social contrast or even social rejection. These are people who show signs of being in apparently paradoxical positions that entail not only aspects of opposition and differentiation (contrast) – in terms of the affirmation of their cultural traits and their lifestyle, for example – but also continuities and aspects of similarity or proximity, as in the case of daily interactions with non-Ciganos in various social contexts (Magano, 2014; Montenegro, 2012; Nicolau, 2010). Sousa's (2010) analysis recognises that Ciganos and non-Ciganos can live together developing a complex and a dense conviviality.

Many Ciganos assume a position with a high degree of contrast in relation to Portuguese society. They do this through their religious affiliation (the most part are Catholics and Evangelicals, Blanes, 2006; Rodrigues, 2013), the use of their own languages (Caló or Romanó), a strong endogamy, and also specific features of their lifestyle – particularly the intensity of their intra-ethnic sociability and solidarity (based on a strong social organisation in which the keystone is the family). Ciganos live a situation of 'strong ethnicity' (convergence in a minority group of multiple dimensions that present social and cultural contrasts with the surrounding society) and 'in overall terms, to the combined effects of all these dimensions of contrast' (Machado, 1992, p. 128). However, many other Ciganos in their daily lives are almost indistinguishable from non-Ciganos and it is possible to see common points and similarities between them (Magano, 2014).

Other dimensions concern *geographic and socio-demographic structure*. There is a certain heterogeneity in the cultural practices of the various groups that are socially identified as Ciganos and live in Portugal. In addition to the fact that their fixed places of residence are scattered right across the country, Ciganos continue to display a certain geographic mobility, although some authors believe that this is forced on them because they are prevented from settling in the areas in which they make their seasonal circuits (Castro, 2007). Where their *insertion into the labour market* is concerned, there is both a major Cigano presence in informal segments and a growing insertion into the formal sector. It is also possible to observe slow processes of occupational mobility, with a combination of insertion into very specific formal sectors of the labour market and a lack of other professional alternatives. Ciganos also predominantly occupy an autonomous professional insertion situation (as either employers or self-employed) and tend to possess low levels of academic and vocational qualifications, while the results of the structural impact that social policies – e.g. the Social Insertion Income (*Rendimento Social de Inserção* or RSI) – are producing are still incipient (Branco, 2003).

Ciganos tend to display a lifestyle that can be called 'conviviality'; they live the present intensely; and their sociability networks are highly intra-ethnic, which are demarcated from those that characterise the non-Cigano population, and the adoption of forms of behaviour marked by a degree of exuberance and ostentatious consumption (in some individuals) (Mendes, 2012).

Ciganos' *institutional relationships* are marked by a simultaneous relative dependency on and maximisation of benefits, and a position of autonomy and domination in relation

to practices and measures employed by socio-institutional agents. The prevailing feature of their *exercise of citizenship* seems to be a feeling of relative marginality in relation to the state and a passive exercise of citizenship (the contrast between formal and substantive citizenships) (Marshall, 1967).

Notwithstanding the existence of some social and economic transformations among the Portuguese population, there are persistent problems of exclusion and poverty among Ciganos – the ethnic group that is considered to be the poorest, to possess the worst housing conditions and the least schooling, and to be the primary target of racism and discrimination in modern societies. In a 2011 survey which the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights carried out in 11 Member States, 80% of Roma respondents belonged to households that were at risk of poverty, with the highest levels in Portugal (nearly 100%), Italy and France (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012).

The concern about the situation of racism and discrimination against Roma people in the European Union has been a constant in recent years. In an attempt to bring the Member States to develop specific intervention plans, the Commission proposed the definition of national strategies for integrating Ciganos or, if such policies already existed, that they be adapted in such a way as to achieve EU goals with regard to the integration of this ethnic group (European Parliament, 2011). These goals are centred on four fundamental domains, which are also the key axes in the Portuguese National Strategy: access to education, to employment, to healthcare, and to housing (ACIDI, 2013).

The National Study on the Roma Communities carried out under the National Strategy for the Integration of Ciganos Communities confirmed through interviews with key informants that school trajectories are still very short, marked by absenteeism and early school leaving. Mainly girls but also boys still rarely finish more than six years of education. Among the respondents, those who cannot read or write dominate and more than half did not complete four years of schooling, with their school careers marked by absenteeism and early school leaving.

Equally distressing are the results obtained through a questionnaire applied to 1599 Roma. In terms of income there is a high number of dependents in the family, as well as people whose main source of income comes from RSI. The number of unemployed persons, including those seeking their first job and those who have never worked, is significant (Mendes, Magano, & Candeias, 2014).

## 2. Method

The two research areas presented here are focused on issues relating to Ciganos' representations about domains, practices and situations that Ciganos perceive as discriminatory (2012)<sup>3</sup>; and on the social integration paths of Ciganos (2014).<sup>4</sup> Data emerged from interviews, ethnographic observations, and supplementary texts. Qualitative research methods offer a framework with which to identify and understand contexts, experiences and personal interpretations, without the presumption that the findings are universal (Schutt, 2014). The use of in-depth interviews allows, to a large extent, the understanding of the phenomenon at great length and intensity (representations about practices, areas and discrimination situations), as well as the identification of important key issues which are reflected in the processes and dynamics of social facts. This gives us an ongoing understanding, which is reflected in the

valorisation of the qualitative methodology. The initial strategy of recruiting participants was based on the researcher's personal network of contacts (snowball technique), and it was later extended to contacts gathered during the field observations.

In the first research, 40 interviews were conducted with Ciganos residents in the municipalities of Greater Lisbon and Setubal region<sup>5</sup> between 2003 and 2006; and in the second study, 21 interviews were held in the regions of Bragança, Braga, Coimbra, Lisbon and Porto, between 2007 and 2008. Taking into account the theoretical and methodological challenge which aimed at uncovering social representations about discrimination situations and contexts and paths of integration of Ciganos, in the selection of the interviewees, various criteria were considered (gender, habitat type, schooling level, endogamous and exogamic marital relationship and labour integration in different sectors of activity). All participants are Portuguese and they have an average age of around 30 years.

Interviews intended to be fluid and open-ended, and questions were intended to show how participants understood and interpreted their perceptions, relations and interactions with non-Ciganos. Questions also focused on issues of identification and identity, belonging, integration strategies and contexts and situations of discrimination. All conversations were audio recorded and lasted 50–240 minutes. A context analysis was made of the 61 narratives and the findings will be explored in detail and excerpts from the transcripts are used as exemplars to illustrate findings.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. *Academic paths: obstacles and motivations*

Despite the improvement in levels of educational qualifications, there are still inequalities between Ciganos and non-Ciganos but also between Cigano men and women (Magano, 2014; Mendes, 2012). This is an indicator of a structural character, and the case of Cigano education reflects the accumulated deficit from previous generations (Almeida et al., 1993, p. 316). The compulsory 12 years of education is far from being achieved, especially among Cigano women. Gender inequality is reproduced in the early dropout of girls, usually aged between 11 and 14 years. The boys leave school later, aged between 16 and 18 years (Mendes, 2012). Notwithstanding the positive effects of measures such as the ISS (Social Insertion Income) in terms of return to and maintenance of children, youths and even adults of both sexes in the school system, it is still limited and incomplete. The data collected by the National Study show the existence of strong contrasts at the level of school education between Roma and non-Roma people and between Roma men and women. Thus, about one third of the respondents do not exceed primary education or has never attended school and only 2.8% have finished secondary and higher education (Mendes et al., 2014). Education is important for the social and cultural rights of individuals (Velho, 1999) and a key dimension to social mobility.

The literature has showed that levels of schooling among Portuguese Ciganos are generally very low (Cortêsão, 1995; Mendes, 2012; Nicolau, 2010) – a result that corroborates those of earlier studies<sup>6</sup>: in the first study, 11 respondents had never been part of the education system, and seven of these could not read or write. A large majority of the interviewees had gone to school somewhere between the first and fourth grades. This low level

reaches more worrying proportions among women, most of whom had not crossed the barrier of the First Basic Education Cycle (EB1).<sup>7</sup> No woman in the study had been beyond the Third Cycle, in contrast to the men, three of whom had gone beyond compulsory education, including two who had completed a higher education course.

In Portugal the data for the 2003/2004 school year show that of the 8324 Portuguese Cigano children and young people who were enrolled, 86.7% were in the First Cycle. In secondary education (including technological courses) enrolments of young Ciganos were 'residual' (Parliamentary Committee, 2008).

Access to schooling was made easier by the broadening of the sedentarisation process from the 1980s onwards, which was itself to a large extent brought about by the rehousing policies and the economic restructuring processes that above all affected the Ciganos living in the interior and rural areas of the country. These tendencies can be vouched for by the data obtained in the second study where the principal criteria for the selection of the interviews was occupation in the labour market. In this case inasmuch as all the men who were interviewed had gone to school,<sup>8</sup> and it is worth noting that one had graduated (*licenciatura*) and two held master's degrees. In the case of the women, schooling levels were quite a lot lower,<sup>9</sup> albeit three had completed the ninth grade (Third Basic Cycle), and one higher education. Having said this, the educational levels of these female interviewees are higher than those generally recorded in studies that normally look at Portuguese Ciganos (Bastos et al., 2007; Santos et al., 2009). In the second study only one woman interviewed could not read or write. It should be noted that men have higher levels of education than women and different schooling trajectories: in the case of women the levels achieved were due to the impact of social policies. For men there are also cases in which the schooling was due to adult education cases but there are also linear trajectories in terms of achieving the levels of education and that are not related to recurrent education or social policies. This finding brings us to an understudied reality which is the existence of Gypsies who distance themselves in terms of their life paths that are most commonly characterised in studies – the most visible socially, or the poor and excluded. For example, António was 48 years old and told us that when he was a child he did actually go to school a few times, but so rarely that he never learned to read or write, as his parents' lifestyle continued to be markedly nomadic while they were living in the Alentejo. He acknowledged that this way of life did not mix well with regular, assiduous and successful school attendance. It was only when he got married that António and his family settled in one of the council areas on the Setúbal Peninsula (near Lisbon), where they had now been living for more than 20 years. He recalled that:

in the old days we had no destiny, see? The Cigano was like a bird, a pigeon, go here, go there, no fixed perch, one moment they could go to school, a day or two, but then they used to say: we're off, we have to go somewhere else . . . now people are different, we're here, we're there, but well, we already have our home. (age 48, market vendor/pedlar)

From an intergenerational perspective, in the case of the first study, only three persons have less education than their parents, and only five obtained the same volume of academic capital. The rest present an ascending school trajectories, apart from anything else because more than half of these interviewees' parents could not read or write, and the younger generation represented a notable reduction in illiteracy levels (from 23



individuals to 7) From a comparative perspective, the next generation has gained at least four years in terms of the volume of their academic capital. At the level of their discourse it is clear how much the interviewees valued and attached importance to school; however, there are indications at the level of their practices that contradict this discourse. When we crossed the interviewees' schooling with their age group, we were unsurprised to find that it was among the younger ones that there was a larger number of individuals who had gone beyond the fourth grade – a tendency that fell off from the age of 30 onwards. This matches the trend observed among the rest of the country's citizens, in that since the 1980s there have been noteworthy improvements in terms of a rise in overall school attendance rates. The fact is that one of the processes that are most closely linked to social mobility trajectories in contemporary Portuguese society involves the rapid increase in educational levels (Almeida et al., 1993), which plays a key role in the dynamics of modern societies. Average levels of schooling and illiteracy rates are still more worrying where Ciganos are concerned, and this suggests that the process of rising educational levels is slower and more circumscribed in their case. The asymmetries between Ciganos and non-Ciganos at the level of academic qualification achievement are thus still very marked. To a large extent the younger generations continue to reproduce the situations of inequality that they in principle inherited from their parents. We should recall that the level of education attained is first and foremost a structural indicator, and that in the case of the Cigano population it ends up 'reflecting' not only 'the shortfall in schooling accumulated over the last few decades', but also, and seen from a broader point of view, our country's 'unequal development logics' (Almeida et al., 1993, p. 316).

Since 1974, and with the level of compulsory education increasing, Portugal has implemented various promotion measures of education that involve both Ciganos and non-Ciganos. In the 1990s, acting via the Intercultural Secretariat (SE), the Ministry of Education sought to organise a database with annual surveys on the multicultural demography of public schools. The SE has since been abolished and the last available data are for the 2003–2004 school year. Also in the 1990s, the Ministry of Education also mounted the Intercultural Education Project (PEI), which was designed to promote the creation of Intercultural Education Modules with the publication of educational material to include some features about Cigano culture. The impacts of these initiatives are unknown, given that they were not continued over time, nor were they mandatory for schools or education professionals. More recently the Priority Intervention Education Territories (TEIP) programme has existed for several years at schools located in socially problematic geographic areas all around the country. The last TEIP programme report tells us that more than 10% of the students incorporated into these interventions are Ciganos, and that generally speaking, half the families whose children attend these schools are receiving the RSI (Pinto et al., 2012, p. 14).

Another programme that existed to encourage adult education was 'Novas Oportunidades' the (New Opportunities Program). The goal of this programme was to promote reinsertion into the education system, above all of adults, by placing them in adult qualification programmes that were suited to the promotion of the inclusion of disadvantaged social groups (Gomes, 2013). We have no data on the effective results of this programme, but empirically know that the mandatory nature of this type of training for RSI beneficiaries<sup>10</sup> means that there are Cigano men and women who participated but the number of cases are very limited.



Another programme that is presently beginning its sixth generation is the Choices Programme (PE), which is targeted at children and young persons from marginalised and problematic social areas and seeks to use access to recreational and vocational training activities to incentivise school attendance. The evaluation report on the fourth generation programme says that 16% of the young people involved were Ciganos, who were present in 69 projects and represented the mobilisation of 1956 children and young persons (Saint-Maurice, 2011). The link between the projects and school allows further strengthen the school support and mediation with families.

### *3.2. Social and professional trajectories and economic activities*

The information gathered in the two studies contradicts the stereotype which the majority has constructed in relation to Ciganos – that they don't work, have no occupation and live off social security benefits<sup>11</sup> or illegal and socially illicit practices. We should note that the activity rate for the full group of interviewees in the first study attained two thirds of the total. Thus among the interviewees, the number of active men (15 individuals) was relatively higher than that of the women (9). In earlier studies, which covered the council areas in the Lisbon diocese (Diocesan Secretariat of the National Project to bring Pastoral Care to Ciganos – SD-ONPC, 1997), around 70% of the population aged 16 or over engaged in a professional or occupational activity. In the second study, all interviewees were employees in the formal labour market, albeit with a perceptible tendency towards more qualified jobs for the men and less qualified ones for the women – a distinction that is directly linked to the levels of schooling and training of the two sexes. The main professions were: trainer or teacher, consultant, sociocultural mediator (more than one of each; both sexes); kindergarten teacher, hospital orderly, cook, bakery worker, gardener (one of each, all female); petrol station employee, waiter, auditor, cleaner, police officer, night watchman.

The female activity rates seem to reveal a self-underassessment by the women of the work they do outside the domestic sphere. This is further added to by the multiplicity of the tasks in the latter domain that are performed by them alone, with almost a third of the female interviewees classifying themselves as 'inactive'. The importance of the patrilineal line and the fact that women possess 'less strength' within the clan make the division of domestic tasks between man and woman something that is unacceptable and cannot be admitted to, at least publicly. What is more, and given that we are generally dealing with large families, women are overburdened with tasks, in that they are not only responsible for looking after and educating the children, but also perform a variety of tasks linked to the maintenance of the family group (making meals, housework, laundry, etc.). In the Cigano group, women emerge as the main 'guardians' of Cigano traditions. However, and despite the fact that they simultaneously perform a multiplicity of roles, in their discourse they tend to undervalue the woman's function in the world of work, which in reality goes beyond a mere complementarity and the provision of support for the itinerant retail trade engaged in by her partner, with the wife actually being the main active agent in this type of activity in most cases.

Among the set of interviewees in the first study carried out in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, it is possible to outline a clearly defined pattern of social and professional insertion: more than half the group were market vendors/pedlars (selling at fairs and markets), with a

much smaller number of employees in the administrative, retail (formally working for employers such as shopkeepers) and services field. This observation is even clearer among the men. However, we should remember that while some Ciganos engage in itinerant retail trade as their main professional activity, there are others who join them in this work on a complementary, second-job basis, probably at the weekend, during certain months of the year, or part-time. Four of the interviewees were employed in the administrative, retail and services sector but said that they would never completely abandon itinerant trade, which they saw as a constituent element of their Cigano identity. Despite the fact that in some cases it has become a secondary activity, itinerant trading continues to persist as part of these people's lifestyles.

Besides this, there are situations – albeit one-offs and circumscribed cases – in which there are male individuals who are technical, intellectual or scientific staff or mid-level technicians and specialists; and, the second study confirms, there is a whole range of Ciganos individuals who have no experience of the trading life, along with others who, although they may have taken part in that trade when they were very young or teenagers, ended up abandoning it in order to pursue more advanced studies:

In terms of childhood, I think I had a normal childhood of a normal Cigano – i.e. I went with my mother selling things. (João, age 36, graduate)

Gender inequalities in both opportunities and rights and duties is thus quite a marked phenomenon, and this is due to the way in which the Cigano group is structured internally (a hierarchy established in accordance with age and gender). Both the perpetuation of this situation and the social reproduction of the group and the preservation of ancestral practices and values are largely dependent on the actions of the women themselves, a large proportion of whom are unqualified retail workers.

The woman, poor thing, is going to be wretched all her life. Only if they run away like I did. If they do stuff, their parents hit them, go looking for her, and she runs away. Only if it's like that. And you'd better believe that any boy must be a Cigano. If not . . . if your state of mind can't handle being there with them . . . (Rita, age 45, cannot read or write)

Working for third parties is still seen as a subordinate situation, which is undesirable for Ciganos as it facilitates practices that involve disrespecting and exploiting individuals who have been taught from an early age to prize their freedom and autonomy in relation to non-Ciganos. If this situation is not easy for men to accept in both personal and group terms, it is even more difficult in the case of women, who are supposed to remain under close family, social and group control. Only two of the female interviewees were formally employed by third parties and worked outside the in-group, and there were no women at all in the more qualified and prestigious social and professional groups (first study).

In the first study, when it comes to intergenerational trajectories we see that more than half the interviewees (23) presented stationary social trajectories, while 13 appear to be characterised by classist paths which, if we were to subject the numeric data to a superficial and inflexible interpretation, would seem to be inclined somewhat downwards. However, it is important to note that eight of this subgroup of 13 were protagonists in substantial changes, inasmuch as they began to exercise a more qualified professional activity than their parents, and unlike them earned fixed incomes, and also possessed more

academic capital. Despite this, the truth is that these individuals had lost the freedom and autonomy their parents had enjoyed in the work they did; however, they benefited from the fact that they had left behind an activity that was precarious and provided an income that was both irregular in time and varied in amount – the case of the dominant economic activities of their parents' generation. This is why we feel that these paths are marked by a relatively upward movement; and why, although we are aware that the concept of social class is not sufficiently flexible and thus malleable, we must again ask ourselves to what point it would be legitimate (or, on the other hand, forced or even abusive) to 'transfer' the class typologies and classifications used for the general population (the majority) to this particular group. Having said all this, there were already four interviewees who presented social trajectories that were ascending due to schooling and to professional insertion into technically demanding and socially more prestige-generating professions (lawyer, manager, kindergarten assistant, professional musician and so on). The same tendency is visible in the second study, in which in general the interviewees of both sexes possessed a higher level of schooling than their parents, with some social mobility processes due to this aspect, which enabled them to gain access to jobs that require academic qualifications.

The fact is that it is possible to note a number of changes within the Ciganos in the last 20–30 years, with consequences that were already visible in the generation preceding that of some of our interviewees. These changes of school, professional, economic and housing levels have already caused some members of this parental generation to abandon a nomadic lifestyle (the case of the parents of eight of the 40 interviewees) (Mendes, 2012).

In the previous generations there were still various forms of work and expedients to which people could resort in order to arrange means of subsistence and which went hand-in-hand with a more markedly nomadic way of life, such as seasonal agricultural labour, trading cattle or 'beasts' (horses, donkeys, mules), or selling door-to-door, particularly bric-a-brac, sticking plasters and other products.

The first study reveals processes of migration from the Alentejo Region to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and the Setúbal Península that took place in around the 1970s. This is probably directly linked to the fall in the importance of the traditional mule trade. In structural terms this was related to other dynamics of change – namely growing industrialisation and urbanisation, the intensification of internal migratory movements towards coastal areas, changes in the agricultural sector (less need for manpower and less use of animals, in favour of greater mechanisation, for example), the decline in artisanal production and the evolution in the needs in the consumer universe, as well as the imperatives inherent in the economic rationale, which also conditioned the sedentarisation and 'professional readjustment' of the Ciganos (Mendes, 1997).

Glória was 37 and it was only after she got married that she settled in the Amadora municipality. She said that when she lived with her parents, her lifestyle was a nomadic one:

I have other brothers . . . sometimes they start talking about the things of the past and you can see that people suffered in villages, little by little they stopped here, they stopped there . . . in the old days you know, that was the Cigano's life . . . these days no, these days everyone already works and has their studies . . . for example, I have my children, they all study, they're all studying. (can read and write, receive the SII)

In the current generation, although we did not come across any landowners or horse and mule-sellers, some of our interviewees did say that their parents had engaged in those activities, which have apparently disappeared in the space of a generation, albeit this type of trader does still exist in other, more provincial cities, such as Bragança (second study). Ciganos with these origins display a certain sense of superiority about their social origins, as we can see from Cristiana's discourse:

I'm a real Cigano, it's just that my parents were landowners. My deceased father was a horse rider. My grandparents were landowners. They had absolutely nothing to do with the Cigano ethnicity, or let's say they had nothing to do with Ciganos customs. They were pure Cigano, it's just that they were very rich, they had the biggest fortunes among Ciganos and non-Ciganos, they had the biggest fortunes in the Alentejo. (ninth grade/third cycle, receives the SII)

Although a high proportion of family groups lived from income from work, some of them still depended on social benefits: 10 lived on the RSI cash benefits and other family allowances; two survived on retirement pensions; and one on unemployment benefit (first study). We should note that some of those who received the ISS (RMG or RSI) invested a small percentage of it in products they then sold at markets and fairs. In these families the RSI benefit is the main form of sustenance, which is then complemented by the income from the itinerant trade. Dolores was 32 and talked about the need to retain this dual source of income: 'I also live just from the Income, to tell the truth. I receive the Income, I buy a few small things for sale, I pay the rent, water and electricity, and keep the rest' (fourth grade/first cycle, receives the SII, market vendor/pedlar). According to data released in 2008 by the Social Security Institute, 3.9% of Ciganos households received the RSI. The impact of this measure has had effects among the Ciganos that are still poorly known. For example, it has allowed some women to take part in literacy actions, thereby raising their levels of schooling, providing their children with access to crèches and preschool education, and freeing them up to do other things, such as training or paid work. As we can see from the case of an interviewee who, after receiving the Social Insertion Income benefit, discovered a taste for learning, continuously went to school, and questioned a number of cultural 'patterns' because she was the mother of five children.

I did up until the fourth grade, I was in the fourth but I didn't finish the fourth, so that's how it is! Then, last year I went back to studying in the evening and I got the fourth and then, this year, I continued again. (Liana, age 36, in the fifth grade)

Some of the interviewees found it difficult to pay their fixed monthly expenses, and for example were putting off buying medicines. Cristiana said that she had

three prescriptions to fill, which I am waiting for and there's no way. I have an eye in this state, I can hardly see anything. My face is all swollen. My arm is hard to move and I have trouble combing my hair ... (43, ninth grade/third cycle, receives the ISS, market vendor/pedlar)

Other interviewees admitted that they were in arrears with basis expenses like rent, water and electricity. Sara was 68 and hadn't paid her rent for three months, or the water and electricity bills for two (fourth grade, retired). Five of the interviewees who were employees in the administrative, retail and services field complemented the fixed income from

working for a third party with income from itinerant trade at the weekend or on some weekdays (Mendes, 2012).

In the second study, all respondents had their work income, however, some of them worked on weekend fairs to support the costs. Others received simultaneously social support, whether in terms of RSI or in food products. That is, sometimes, income derived from wages is not sufficient to ensure the basic needs of families.

#### 4. Final remarks

Both presented studies indicate clearly that school and professional qualification disparities between Ciganos and non-Ciganos (and between men and women) continue to persist in the Portuguese society. In other words, this means that the universalism of Portugal's social policies (designed to achieve equal dignity for all citizens) has not had the desired effects in terms of reducing levels of poverty, exclusion, discrimination and racism where Ciganos are concerned. 'Ciganophobia' persists (Bastos et al., 2007). In the analytical domain we are looking at here, municipalities can thus play a key role in the adoption of local socio-territorial intervention plans and projects that are marked by diversity and singularity. In our view, there is an indispensable need for the pursuit of proximity policies that rehabilitate other forms of environment (family ones in particular) (Cefai, 2009). In reality, the failure by public institutions and policies to recognise, or their incorrect recognition of, what it is to be a Cigano, and their social invisibility (Le Blanc, 2008) in the public spaces of today's societies, have had a negative effect on Ciganos. The latter's capabilities, which represent operational possibilities or opportunities that must be seen as a whole and not separately, have not been adequately valued (Sen, 2010). When one has these *capabilities*, an individual is able to take responsibility for one's own life and to ensure a defined life project. Despite the fact that studies on Ciganos in Portugal have experienced a certain dynamism in the last five years, with a clear increase in the number of publications, especially master's and doctoral theses on the subject, we still do not know what the results of the implementation of social policy programmes in Portugal have been. For example, we do not know what impact Social Insertion Income or the New Opportunities and Choices Programmes (schooling and vocational training) have had. In addition, the areas of intervention and the goals of the National Strategy for the Integration of Ciganos Communities (ENICC) are simplistic and unambitious. For example, they seek to ensure basic schooling for children (it is expected that 40% of Cigano students will complete basic education by 2016, and 60% by 2020), vocational training that will permit access to the labour market, a reduction in the inequalities in access to some public services, such as health, and to housing, especially via social housing (ACIDI, 2013).<sup>12</sup>

The implementation of a policy of difference with compensatory programmes and special opportunities could also have perverse and undesirable effects (favouritism, segregation, and isolation); but recognition of Portugal's Ciganos in the public sphere and the attachment of value to cultural diversity could contribute to respect for their cultural self-determination, and it would thus be possible to develop and pursue policies that incorporate the various dimensions of privation and inequality, investing in the empowerment of Ciganos' capacities for self-organisation, self-representation and advocacy (IRS, 2008).

This could be a way in which to face up to and overcome the consistent discrimination which has historically and socially existed in relation to Ciganos and which generates a combination of defensive (forms of conduct marked by a degree of closure and a greater separation between real and virtual social identities, including explicit allusions to the 'group secret' as demonstrated by Ciganos) and offensive (visible expression of revolt, including resort to options that can give rise to fear on the part of the majority and can be manifested in the shape of an exteriorised loss of emotional control, verbal and/or physical violence and so on) strategies in them. In parallel, Ciganos continue to react with social and cultural resistance which, as Axel Honneth (2010, p. 215) rightly says, are formed in the context of moral experiences derived from a breach of deeply rooted expectations of recognition. The development of these forms of action in a context marked by a historically systematic discrimination by the majority is fundamental to an understanding of the survival of the Ciganos as an autonomous social and cultural collective within the context of European societies (Bochaca, 2003; Guy, 2001; Lucassen et al., 2001; Stewart, 1997; Tong, 1998).

## Notes

1. We maintain the term used in Portugal and it could be translated as Gypsies or Roma.
2. Tertúlia Edípica (1995, p. 307).
3. 40 in-depth interviews of Ciganos persons living in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area were conducted in 2003–2006.
4. This study included 21 in-depth interviews of socially integrated Ciganos men and women that took place in 2008 and 2009 in various places – some rural, some urban – in Portugal.
5. Nuts are the Territorial Units for Statistics Portugal and intend to designate the statistical sub-regions into which it divides the Portuguese territory. In Greater Lisbon and Setúbal region, the field work was conducted in some municipalities, such as Amadora, Cascais, Lisboa, Loures, Odivelas, Oeiras, Sintra, Vila Franca de Xira, Mafra, Alcochete, Almada, Barreiro, Moita, Montijo, Palmela, Seixal, Sesimbra e Setúbal.
6. In the study by the Diocesan Secretariat of the National Project to bring Pastoral Care to Gypsies (SD-ONPC, 1997) the illiteracy rate among persons aged over 16 was 50.3% ( $N = 6043$ ).
7. Some of these observations have been confirmed in more recent studies – e.g. in the Bragança Council Area, the total number of Gypsies attending the First Basic Cycle in 2005/2006 was 53, with high rates of academic failure (45%) and dropping out (15%) (Nicolau, 2010). These data are in line with those obtained in relation to 'integrated Gypsies', where the women also presented levels of schooling well below the men in the study (Magano, 2014).
8. Two had completed the fourth grade; one the sixth grade; one the ninth grade; two the twelfth grade; and one had taken a technical/vocational course.
9. It should be noted that only one had no schooling; four had completed the fourth grade; and one had completed the fifth grade and was taking vocational training (Magano, 2014).
10. The Social Insertion Income (RSI) was first implemented in 1997 (at the time designated, Rendimento Mínimo Garantido, RMG). Its aim is to reduce extreme poverty by decreasing the intensity of the poverty among the most vulnerable sectors of the population. The RSI consists of a special allowance paid by the solidarity subsystem of the Social Security system, and of a social integration programme. RSI's effectiveness in reducing the poverty rate is clearly low: only 0.5 points (from 17.3% to 16.8%) (Rodrigues, 2009).
11. Gypsies are accused by non-Cigano society of being benefit-dependent. Having said this, in 2008 only 5275 of a total of 135,428 families receiving the Social Insertion Income (RSI) were of Cigano origin (ISS, IP 2008).
12. This document falls short of expectations, embodying a list of priorities and goals that are atomised, lacking in audacity and with an essentially quantitative bent.

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