

Ethnic Housing Segregation and the Roma/Gypsy population: A Portuguese Perspective

Sónia Alves¹

Abstract: Questions of spatial segregation and over-representation of ethnic minority groups with weak connections to the labour market are central to the political and policy agenda across Europe and academic studies in the fields of housing and urban regeneration. In some countries, the spatial concentration of ethnic minorities is considered in itself an indicator of socio-spatial disadvantage, accentuating pathological discourses related to ethnic communities but in turn providing more resources for these areas. In other countries, where policies have a less preventive character and only intervene during phases of advanced urban decline, the existence of ethnic enclaves and concentrated poverty has led to housing demolition and rehousing, in many cases with controversial results. The relevance of the link between ethnic segregation and integration is known. On the one hand, people create and modify places, on the other hand, spaces in which people live and work affect their social relations, and individual fortunes (*eg* educational attainment, income levels, reputation). The over-representation of ethnic groups in some areas has been considered a problem where it hinders opportunities of social integration, and when it amplifies processes of stigmatization and the inter-generational transmission of disadvantage. However, it has also been recognized that the concentration of ethnic communities may actually be an advantage for developing relationships of solidarity and the preservation and affirmation of cultural identities. This paper aims to contribute to this debate. It focuses upon the ethnic housing segregation of the Gypsy/ Roma population in Portugal, and asks if ethnic clustering on a number of housing estates is the result of a voluntary impulse towards aggregation (therefore perceived positively by residents), or the result of a lack of choice (thus an ‘institutionalized’ or deliberate political choice to put the Gypsy/Roma people at distance). In the first part, I review the literature on the factors that underlie the social construction of ethnic segregation; in the second part, I review literature that presents the empirical results of research conducted in different locations of Portugal but has in common processes of rehousing of the Gypsy/Roma population in urban areas. I compare these results with those I obtained in field work in Porto where I interviewed Gypsy/Roma people regarding their preferences given models of concentrated housing relocation or more dispersed neighbourhoods. Focusing upon the Portuguese case, I offer some answers to the following research questions: Is the spatial segregation and concentration of the Gypsy/Roma population on a number of housing estates a voluntary choice or a lack of choice given institutionalized political decisions taken by local authorities or bureaucrats? How does the Gypsy/Roma population feel about segregation and concentration? Do they wish to live in segregated areas, have they been able to choose between more concentrated or dispersed patterns? What are the consequences? Do they believe that spatial segregation reproduces inequality and separation?

Keywords: *housing policy, Gypsy/Roma population, ethnic segregation, Portugal.*

¹ Universidade de Lisboa, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, sonia.alves@ics.ulisboa.pt.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW: ETHNIC MINORITIES, HOUSING POLICY, AND ETHNIC SEGREGATION

There is a vast literature on socio-spatial segregation, housing policy, and ethnic minorities that sees ethnic segregation as a socio-spatial product of social relations marked by inequality in power relations.

The increasing concern and debate over ethnic minority concentration and segregation in cities, with heightened attention paid to their perceived, positive and negative, effects (Powell, 2013), has been developed from a socio-spatial perspective, and recognizes that social relations are frequently correlated with the spatial organization of social groups in the residential structure, influencing social interaction and community cohesion (Alves, 2017a).

The degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment, along lines of social class and ethnicity, etc. (Andersen *et al.* 2000), is relevant because social distances can be seen making intercultural dialogue more difficult while the place where we live is likely to influence access to public and private services.

The over-representation of ethnic groups in some areas, and their underrepresentation in other areas, has been discussed from the perspective of their causes and effects. Voluntary or forced causes of ethnic segregation have been at the centre of the debate, with segregation being explained as:

- a deliberate or voluntary choice of aggregation, related to preferences for class, religious or ethnic affiliation, and preservation of networks of social support and aspects of cultural or religious identity (Schnell and Ostendorf, 2002);
- a matter of resource constraints: of financial resources (*eg* income, security of income, and capital assets), cognitive (education, and knowledge of the housing market); political and social power, related to the contacts people have that might help to influence decisions, for example to access housing in certain areas (Fortuijn *et al.* 1998);
- a matter of (more or less) subtle forms of racism and discrimination by host society/institutions towards people perceived as belonging to different racial or ethnic groups (Peral and Ramos, 2014), for example in the private and social rented housing market.

While the first explanation emphasizes the preference for living close to people who are like ourselves, while avoiding other specific groups, the second and third emphasize the lack of choice in housing markets, the latter emphasizing institutional practices and ethnic or cultural discrimination.

Knox and Pinch (2010) claim that segregation is the result of mechanisms involving the market, the state, and civil society: “(patterns) reflect hostility among the wider population, discrimination in employment and housing markets, and clustering for defence, mutual support and cultural preservation” (Knox and Pinch, 2010: 185).

In a paper entitled “Neighbours: determinants of whom Europeans want to keep a distance”, in which Peral and Ramos (2014) examine the individual (*eg* social values, trust, threat perceptions) and the

contextual (*eg* national economic performance, immigrant flows) determinants of social distance, prejudice – which is defined as an average or hostile attitude towards a person who belongs to a group simply because they belong to that group- is identified as a key reason for the negative social attitudes of host societies towards immigrant or minority groups.

In his analysis of the connections between class, ethno-racial division and state policies (*eg* police staff, welfare offices, housing authorities etc.), Wacquant claims that in an era of triumphant neoliberalism, in which the structure of social space has been objectified in the built environment, the spatial concentration and stigmatisation of poverty is in itself a factor that reinforces inequality and disadvantage (see Wacquant *et al.* 2014 and Wacquant, 2014). This argument is further developed by Powell (2013) for the case of Gypsy-Travellers whose spatial confinement in marginal sites (in the UK, as in Portugal and other European countries) has limited everyday social relations and encounters.

The segregation of ethnic minorities and migrant groups has also been explained by the characteristics of housing policies and markets, in terms of the condition of housing tenures, for example in terms of price levels, vacancy rates, and allocation rules. Andersen *et al.* (2013) identify several specific elements of national housing policies to explain housing patterns of immigrants in four Nordic capital cities. One important conclusion of this study is that “the ethnic tenure segmentation of these housing markets is only partially explained by their income segmentation, existing elements of policies that have special consequences for immigrants, along with the effect on income groups” (Andersen *et al.* 2013: 40). The unequal distribution of incomes and processes of discrimination would explain the filtering effects of housing markets.

The context-dependent nature of segregation is also emphasized by Malheiros (1998) who has interpreted the spatial organization of immigrants and ethnic minorities in southern European cities. Regarding the metropolis of Lisbon, his work has shown (Malheiros and Vala, 2004) that, on the one hand, until the 1990s ethnic minorities largely relied upon the informal housing market and, on the other, they showed a strong suburbanization pattern, “comparable to some French metropolises, especially Paris” (*ibidem*: 130).

Hoekstra (2017) has also shown that: “migrant policies – and other urban policies – are informed by broader and locally specific understandings of the real and imagined city that shape what (and who) is perceived as a policy problem and how it can and should be addressed” (*ibidem*: 15).

A good illustration of the way in which (explicit and implicit) understandings of urban reality inform policy discourses and practices is how housing and land-use planning policies deal with questions of ethnicity and social class.

In countries where the concentration of less well-resourced families is seen as a factor hindering opportunities for social integration while favouring processes of urban decline (such as Germany or the Netherlands), governments have formulated and implemented strategies of social mix to prevent or reduce spatial segregation. These strategies have varied significantly in their rationales, purposes, modes of implementation and territories of intervention (Rose *et al.* 2013), inviting different kinds of criticism (Markovich, 2014). In other countries, such as Portugal, where the spatial concentration of immigrants or

minority groups is not considered a problem per se, housing policies and urban planning, have not sought to prevent or break up concentrations of poverty, but have reinforced processes of socio-economic and ethnic segmentation of housing tenures and housing estates. A paradigmatic example of this claim is the Special Rehousing Programme (PER) created in 1993 to relocate residents of shanty towns² living in the metropolises of Lisbon and Porto. The construction of new housing estates for the rehousing of families, reproducing the socio-economic and ethnic composition of original areas, has led to the concentration of citizens with high economic needs in large suburban social housing estates.

For Mustafa Dikeç (2011), urban politics as has been the case in France, has contributed to the political construction of the periphery as the periphery-as-urban-outskirts. By designating the suburbs as separate territories and their inhabitants as different, French urban policy has consolidated an unjust spatial order and a source of stigmatization.

While Piketty (2014) also emphasizes the importance of the social composition of areas of residence, as regards opportunities of social mobility and dynamics of socio-spatial inequality³, the empirical investigation conducted by Alves (2017b) in critical urban areas in Porto demonstrates that political discourses and strategies have reinforced processes of social and spatial segregation (or of ghettoization) that are precisely part of the problem of marginalization of these areas and their occupants.

Discrimination against the Gypsy/Roma, also called 'Romaphobia', has been discussed in various ways. While Kabachnik (2013), Greenfields (2008) and Greenfields and Smith (2010) criticize the adoption of political discourses and practices that aim to repress the nomadic ways of Gypsy/Roma families, Sigona (2011) and van Baar (2011), address the discriminatory attitudes that have impeded or delayed this population's ability to settle, and Slaev (2007) and Kovács (2015) that have confined them to the least desirable social/public rented housing. Van Baar (2011) claims that the nomad theory, which argues that Gypsy/Roma are 'nomads' who can only survive in segregated camps" (van Baar 2011: 207), isolating them from mainstream society, has contributed to marginalize or even dehumanize this population. He points out that they have been the object of centuries of exclusion and mistreatment which has limited opportunities of social integration and social mobility. This is an opinion shared in Portugal by Castro who affirms that nomadism is: "one of the most publicized stereotypes about the gypsy population" (Castro, 2013b: 52). According to Castro (2013b) nomadism serves to support specific options in terms of habitat (eg nomadic shelters) which aim to reject the right of Roma families to housing. The very creation of nomadic shelter parks outside the urban perimeter seeks to avoid conflict and prevent clandestine camps near the city.

² The shanty-towns' expanded dramatically during the 1960s and especially the 1970s following the independence of ex-Portuguese colonies, when the return of thousands of Portuguese families and Portuguese-speaking African immigrants (from Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Moçambique) led to the construction of slum-like neighbourhoods on the periphery of Lisbon and Porto (Alves 2017b).

³ Piketty argues that, in addition to the level of education and parental income, the chances of social mobility among children are substantially dependent upon the average income of areas of residency. He also argues that the chances of school success depend more upon the quality of classmate than the quality of teachers, especially at the basic and secondary levels. "Sending a trained teacher to a difficult neighbourhood does not greatly improve the chances of school success. On the other hand, sending pupils from the suburbs of difficult districts to a Parisian school can considerably increase their chances of success" (my translation) (Piketty, 2014: 98).

2. FINDINGS OF OTHER STUDIES CONDUCTED IN PORTUGAL

Empirical studies carried out in Portugal on the preferences of gypsy families in relation to housing (typologies, social relations in the neighbourhood context etc.) stress that, in general, the living standards of the Roma are well below those of the rest of the population. They often live in dwellings of poor quality in segregated areas, sometimes without basic services (such as indoor toilet, bath, or shower).

Whilst in Portugal there are no official statistics on the numbers of families/individuals of Gypsy/Roma origin, as the Portuguese constitution allegedly does not allow citizens to be accounted for according to race, colour, or religion (therefore census data are not broken down by ethnicity), surveys and studies conducted by Castro (2013b: 41) estimate that the number of Gypsy/Roma in Portugal is around 40,570 individuals, of which about 40% still live in non-classical housing (*ibidem*: 43).

In 2008, a survey carried out by the municipal housing company of Lisbon (GEBALIS) counted 760 families, composed of 3,296 individuals of Gypsy/Roma origin living in social housing in Lisbon. Whilst this is a relatively small number, accounting for only 4.3% of the total population inhabiting the Gebalis housing stock, which totals 80,000 residents, due to unequal spatial distribution of these families across the housing estates (as they are represented in only 38 out of a total of 66 housing estates), in some neighbourhoods they are considerable over-represented, equivalent to 1/3 of the total population (Santos, *et al.* 2013, Pereira and Rebelo, 2013).

The main explanation for such uneven distribution, and that “Gypsy/Roma families are often kept in substandard housing and degraded or dispatched to the urban peripheries” (my own translation) (Reis, 2001: 76), are strong, negative prejudices towards Gypsy/Roma (eg claiming that they are asocial, involved in criminal activities, or unwilling to integrate), leading to discriminatory practices towards them:

The hypothesis of rehousing the Gypsy/ Roma in a scattered way in the urban fabric is seen as "problematic" [...] because the proximity between Roma and non-Roma is seen as threatening” (my own translation) (Castro, 2013b: 49).

Some of the families in my unit of observation were able to live in one of the less stigmatized and stigmatizing social districts of the city of Porto, despite subtle manifestations of displeasure by the population living in the neighbourhood.” (my own translation) (Casa-Nova, 2009: 120).

3. AIMS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The literature review shows that there is a deficit of studies inviting the opinions of Gypsy/Roma concerning their preference to live in more or less segregated areas (Schnell and Ostendorf, 2002), and of studies examining the effect of different patterns of residential segregation on Gypsy/Roma social and economic prospects and well-being.

The aim of this paper is to fill a gap in the international literature on the preferences of Portuguese Gypsy/Roma families regarding more concentrated or dispersed models of rehousing, envisaging that the findings presented here will be of interest to urban planners, sociologists, public housing managers, and local housing authorities.

The findings presented here are predominantly drawn from a research project conducted between 2007 and 2011 scrutinizing the effects of area-based initiatives that targeted different neighbourhoods (centrally located and peripheral ones) on vulnerable social groups in Porto (Alves 2010). Whilst the initial research did not focus upon families with Gypsy/Roma backgrounds⁴, the fact that the São João de Deus neighbourhood (hereby SJD) targeted for demolition was well represented by Portuguese of Gypsy/Roma background and these were object of evictions and forced displacements (Alves 2017a), justifies the focus of this paper.

In terms of data collection, the results here presented are based on 8 semi-structured in-depth interviews, which lasted between one and two hours, with residents, NGOs, and public officials. An additional interview was conducted in March 2017 with a mid-level public administrator who works in Domus Social, the municipal agency responsible for the provision and management of the stock of social housing in Porto⁵. The aim of this additional interview was to inquire if the spatial concentration of the Gypsy/Roma population in some social housing estates (such as Cerco, Lagarteiro, Aldoar), after the forced displacement from SJD, was the result of a voluntary choice by these families or the result of a lack of choice given institutionalized political decisions taken by local authorities or bureaucrats. In short, this interview sought to access stakeholder views regarding the hypothesis of segregation as a result of a range of discriminatory behaviours based on prejudice and negative stereotypes towards the Gypsy/Roma population.

All the interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of each interviewee and subsequently transcribed. The theoretical foundations for the analysis of interviews were generally located within realistic evaluation and social constructivism that sees discourses, as discussed by Manzano (2016), as statements that incorporate judgements, ideologies, and ideas.

⁴ In 2011, the Gypsy/Roma represented 34% of the total population, while 7% were of African background.

⁵ Domus Social manages 12,617 dwellings distributed among 48 social housing neighbourhoods, and where 29,221 individuals live.

4. THE GYPSY/ROMA POPULATION AND THE SJD

SJD is a peripheral neighbourhood, which, like other social housing estates built on the outskirts of Porto, “was born poor” in terms of urban planning, social occupation, and location. The neighbourhood was constructed in a marginal area, with an incipient urbanization process and very low or nonexistent economic and social opportunities (such as jobs, social and private services, etc.) (Alves, 2017a: 385)

In 2000, the population of the SJD was officially estimated at 2,600 inhabitants, 34% of which were of Gypsy/Roma origin. The history of the SJD developed in phases. The first housing blocks were built in the 1940s, while in the 1970s, in a context of housing shortages related to population growth and rural-urban migration, expansion of the neighbourhood occurred with the construction of shacks (*barracas*). In the 1990s a project funded by the National Programme against Poverty, and funded by national and local resources, enabled the eradication of illegal housing and the construction of 12 new blocks of multi-family housing - in total, 270 dwellings, as well as the construction of equipment and services for youth, the elderly, and the unemployed. At the end of the project, disagreements between the representatives of the municipality's housing department and the person in charge of the project (a local priest), regarding the way the rehousing had been carried out resulted in abandonment of the area.

The residents stopped paying rent and private and public spaces were not managed, leading to increased drug trafficking and abuse, with increasing numbers of people entering the neighbourhood to buy/sell drugs, which in turn led to a spiral of social and physical decline. Relationships once characterized by trust and solidarity gave way to tension and internal division, for example, among the Roma/Gypsy community between: “families who sell drugs and had more financial resources, and those who live from work at fairs, which were less profitable than the former” (Mendes, 2005: 59). In December 2001, the election of a new mayor and a right-wing political party in the municipality led to demolition of the neighbourhood. Between 2003 and 2005, and in a context of pronounced police intervention, 25 blocks of multi-family housing were demolished (a total of 562 housing units), leading to 162 forced evictions and the displacement of 430 households to other social housing neighbourhoods.

Alves (2017a) shows that the effects of displacement and relocation were not the same for all sub-groups of the population. Two significantly divergent positions were identified. On the one hand, a group reporting high levels of satisfaction regarding the new housing conditions, in terms of housing quality and dimension, and the state of the neighbourhood, namely in terms of crime and conflict. On the other hand, a group of tenants experienced limited opportunity to negotiate with the housing authority and new housing, like the neighbourhood, worsened in terms of size, quality, and infrastructure. The right to housing was denied to many Roma/Gypsy families, contributing to their further marginalization and impoverishment, and creating new problems such as isolation of the elderly and an increase in the school dropout rate among the Roma community.

5. THE PREFERENCES OF GYPSY/ROMA FAMILIES

To more fully convey the experiences and perspectives of respondents concerning models of concentrated or dispersed rehousing of Gypsy/Roma families, direct quotes from longer verbatim narratives are presented in Table 1. The main aim of presenting direct quotes is to allow respondents to speak in their own words and the reader to get a better idea of the arguments presented by respondents regarding the question above.

The qualitative information collected during interviews revealed the presence of positive aspects in the SJD, such as the presence of networks of reciprocity and friendship between the Gypsy/Roma population and non- gypsies, as well as the resilience shown by residents facing tensions and dilemmas related to the long-term institutional abandonment of the neighbourhood.

In general, the results show a heterogeneous Gypsy/Roma population regarding preferences and discourses related to more concentrated or dispersed models of rehousing. However, there seems to be a general consensus that the concentration of ethnic communities has not been voluntary, as Gypsy/Roma families have been channelled onto the least attractive housing estates, locations refused by others.

Whilst residents, NGOs, and public officials recognize that living in the vicinity of close relatives is a factor influencing the choice of Gypsy/Roma families that seek to provide support to their senior relatives and children, they consider that the patterns of segregation of Gypsy/Roma families is mostly unwelcome, as large concentrations of Gypsy/Roma families in the same area does not favour social integration and may feed the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage and processes of social and territorial stigmatization.

As explained by one respondent, a senior Gypsy/Roma individual, more balanced Gypsy/Roma residential distribution may be an advantage for integration, since it would prevent unwanted social conflicts between opposites while preserving cultural traditions:

"My advice is that there should be one, two in each neighbourhood so there is no confusion. For example, one in each block, so that there are not many together, because it is better for integration, for conviviality. If we get together at weddings, I invite my friends and we have eight days of partying, that's ok, but living together every day does not work. We are very united in the gypsy community. We have many positive things like all of us gathering at the door of the hospital when someone is sick, or parties. But when there are clashes between 'contraries', no one should be involved in or be blamed for what others do" (R1).

Other interviewees commented on the problem of school segregation, as children of Gypsy/Roma families tend to go to schools located near their 'ghettos', the residential concentration of Gypsy/Roma families tends to create school segregation, that is seen as a factor that produces poor school results, reduced opportunities of social interaction with children from other cultural backgrounds, and therefore, the delay of social integration and opportunities (*eg* in the employment market) of families of Gypsy/Roma origin.

6. CONCLUSION

One of the key challenges in planning and housing policy today is social polarization and social segregation, with institutional and individual discrimination raising several issues concerning social justice and human rights. While this paper seeks to raise public awareness of these matters, it also attempts to present some empirical findings related to the segregation of Gypsy/Roma families in contexts of rehousing. Some general results emerging from this study are as follows.

Whilst patterns of residential segregation in a city can be attributed to a range of processes, such as individual preferences for certain dwellings and locations, or for certain types of social composition (eg. for social homogeneity vs. heterogeneity), individuals or social groups lacking economic resources are more dependent upon structural conditions, such as those related to prejudicial attitudes and behaviours inscribed in state planning and housing policy towards socially endangered groups.

Considering that systems of housing and urban planning have a remarkable impact on the spatial ordering of social relations in cities, conditioning opportunities for different ethnic and socio-economic groups, the social composition of neighbourhoods, therefore opportunities for everyday social interaction, it is important that deliberative democracy in the form of collaborative planning favours the construction of more harmonious societies, embodying more just principles and outcomes.

When making planning decisions, planning practitioners and housing administrators should bear in mind that large concentrations of Gypsy/Roma families on some social housing estates do not match either this group's preferences and expectations, or scientific knowledge and recommendations for the improvement of policies (Castro 2013a). Also, as pointed out by Le Galès and Therborn (2009), more powerful social classes are the motors of spatial segregation, as they have more resources to oppose the mix of social classes and ethnicities. While the majority tend to be defensive regarding minority groups, namely towards the Roma/Gypsy population, putting pressure on public officials to keep them at a distance, minority groups develop processes of creative adaptation to local living conditions. It is important that public officials and policy-makers work closely with local Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/Gypsy families, aiming to develop processes of learning, dialogue, and exchange of knowledge, so that policies ameliorate socio-economic and spatial inequality and create healthier, more inclusive spaces that favour the integration of minority groups.

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1.1 TABLES

Table 1 - Some direct verbatim quotations

R1	“The dispersion of the gypsies into various neighbourhoods is bad for the parents and good for the children, and is a form of integration for the children of today because tomorrow they will be divided. This change will be good for the integration of the Roma in the future.” (71-year- old, pensioner of Gypsy/ Roma origin).
R2	“I understand this is very beautiful when we are 20, 30, but then we come to 50, 60 we need someone close. I think that the gypsy tradition is to have, at least, the son or the father nearby. With the rest, it is indifferent.” (60-year- old, pensioner of Gypsy/ Roma origin).
R3	“The rehousing should be better done, sending the direct family, parents, children, siblings from the same neighbourhood, unless the person says I do not want to. But usually most want, most of them...” (48- year-old, security guard, of Gypsy/ Roma origin)
I1	“There are gypsies who do not like to live near gypsies. However, they all have a conception of life and habitability a bit different from ours. They need ample spaces. Of course, there are some of them who have adapted perfectly to our habitat and like it. I am convinced that the majority like to live in a gypsy community.” (resident of the SJD, public official in local parish, of non-Gypsy/ Roma origin).
I2	“There was some cohesion among the gypsy community, but the relationships ended up being very tenuous, the illegal activities of the neighbourhood eventually weakened the relationships - the conflicts were mostly related to the businesses that existed between them, and with power relations.” (social worker, ONG in the SJD, Fundação Filos).
I3	“There were many conflicts within the community, fights, gunfire, and misunderstandings among them associated with trafficking. There were even gypsies who said they did not want their children in classes with gypsies. We tried to make them see that things could not be like this, but they are extremely spiteful.” (teacher at local primary school, the SJD).
I4	“The city council do not know, did not know, and do not want to know anything about the gypsy community. It creates a discourse that the gypsies are all the same [...] The gypsy community is favourable to the social mix in order to produce cultural interactions, and social integration. Dispersion would not be a problem and would be accepted by the community, but the gypsy population is obliged to submit to poor dwellings, low rents. Gypsies are cantoned in segregated peripheries.” (psychologist, researcher at the university of Gypsy/ Roma origin, and representative of the Roma Community in Porto/União Romani).
I5	“There are divergent views on the issue of aggregation or dispersal of Roma (to integrate or separate them?). This is the big debate; should you make neighbourhoods for gypsies? This is considered shameful and discriminatory. There are strong conflicts and contrasts with normal lifestyles, but should we put them apart? Are we creating ghettos of gypsies?” (civil engineering, public official in Porto municipality).
I6	“In general terms, those who obtain access to a dwelling have been on the waiting list for longest, but displaced tenants are given priority over regular house seekers. Based on the match with housing size, income, we make them several offers that they will accept or not. If they turn down three properties in a row, they have their priority status displaced. The stock of social housing in the city of Porto is small when compared to demand. In 2017, the Domus social waiting list comprises 1,050 families. On average, 400 dwellings of social housing are allocated per year, which means that we cannot answer many on waiting lists. [...] We are more concerned for the principles of equal treatment and equal responsibilities and rights, irrespective of the ethnic features of the tenants.”

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