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Institutional Perceptions of Internal Security on the Relationship between “Sensitive Urban Zones” and Immigrant Criminality

Maria João Guia ^{1,*} and João Pedroso ^{2,†}

¹ University of Coimbra Institute for Legal Research (UCILeR), Pátio da Universidade, 3004-528 Coimbra, Portugal

² University of Coimbra, Centro de Estudos Sociais, Colégio de S. Jerónimo, Largo D. Dinis, Apartado 3087, 3000-995 Coimbra, Portugal; jpedroso@fe.uc.pt

* Correspondence: mariajoaoguia@fd.uc.pt; Tel.: +351-239-859-819

† These authors contributed equally to this work.

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Abstract: The Portuguese social sciences literature has recently begun to make references to so-called “sensitive urban zones” (SUZs), described as vulnerable zones on the outskirts of big cities (e.g., Lisbon and Setúbal) where the population suffers from poor socioeconomic conditions. The same literature has also described these zones as being areas where migrants, especially people from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), and the unemployed tend to congregate. Since the beginning of the century, these areas have seen the number of foreigners of certain ethnicities rising, especially after the last mass regularization of migrants. At the same time, police forces describe these zones as being primary intervention areas, leading to the targeting of SUZ residents. Moreover, certain new migrant groups to Portugal (and to these SUZs) are over-represented in Portuguese prisons, suggesting some bias on the part of the judicial system, who have historically described SUZs as areas of growing criminality and drug trafficking. As such, SUZ residents are thought to need greater social control, and more visible and selective policing. Within this framework, police have institutionalized a perception of SUZs as crime ghettos in need of targeting, these perceptions being reinforced by documentation concerning the “rise” of new forms of violent crime from abroad. Therefore, it is important to study these perceptions of crime as contributing to the characterization of SUZs as being areas of criminality, and how such perceptions are reinforced by the legislature’s designation of SUZs as being areas requiring “special policing strategies”. This article will focus on the balance between the selectivity of police and the justice system in Lisbon’s SUZs, with an emphasis on issues pertaining to immigration and crime. Moreover, we consider wider societal perceptions of crime, where stereotypes are constructed around a vulnerable population as needing social policies.

Keywords: selectivity; sensitive urban zones (SUZ); foreign national residents; perceptions of crime; social control

1. Introduction

Sensitive urban zones (SUZs) [1], are a recent sociological designation for the neighborhoods of the big metropolises in Portugal where houses and constructions tend to be of low quality. SUZs tend to be inhabited by people from the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum because they are cheaper than living in urban areas. SUZs are mostly concentrated in Lisbon, Setúbal, and Porto. The SUZ concept has been appropriated by the Criminal Priorities Policy, which addresses the rise and diversification of crime by choosing a certain focus of interest [2]. It has thus been used by the police

to justify special policing targeting certain neighborhoods on the outskirts of big cities as a priority intervention. The migrant population (mostly newly arrived migrants who settled in Portugal after the last mass regularization of migrants in irregularity¹ at the beginning of the century) has grown significantly in these areas of late, with most migrants concentrated on the outskirts of Lisbon, Setúbal, and to a less extent Faro [3]. We found most of these migrants to be aged 25–45 years, to be working in low-skilled jobs, and to be distributed equally across the genders. Many of these residential areas on the outskirts of Lisbon were already inhabited by at-risk and vulnerable native Portuguese populations who were often regarded with caution. Consequently, the SUZ designation for these areas predates the current demographic profile of these areas. Therefore, the SUZ designation originated not as a sociological category, but as an internal security policy designation for policing an area that was already highly stigmatized. Of late, however, the fight against criminal elements in the SUZs has taken on new meaning. Whether such criminal elements exist or not is subject to debate, but the perception of such elements has become a major driver behind public policy and the restructuring of the criminal justice system.

In this article, we describe contemporary Portuguese perceptions about immigration, crime, and SUZs; and how these perceptions interact to produce a state of tension. On the one hand, SUZs are perceived as places where vulnerable populations are concentrated, and where state social support services are essential. On the other hand, SUZs are also the focal point of police interventions aimed at fighting a war against crime involving foreign nationals (*i.e.*, immigrants). As such, there is growing tension between state social support and welfare services that aim to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable populations and the perceived need for selectivity in policing interventions.

In this paper, we take a sociological approach to understanding negative perceptions about foreign nationals and immigrants settling on the outskirts of cities, and we debate theories of irregular immigration trends, crime, and citizenship using data collected in the course of two earlier studies [3,4]. Given the goal of these earlier studies, as well as the lack of quantitative information, we adopt a mixed methods approach (*i.e.*, combining quantitative² and qualitative methods) to achieve methodological triangulation. These studies draw upon publically available information from the Internal Affairs Ministry, RASI (2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011) [2,5–7], to identify when SUZs became associated with the perception of crime, and to determine at what point these perceptions of crime came to reinforce police actions in SUZs. Moreover, we aim to identify a correlation between the perception of crime in SUZs, targeted policing, and the rising number of migrants in Portugal. We hypothesize that, from 2008 onward, the perception of rising crime in SUZs has been reinforced, leading to the SUZs being increasingly controlled by the justice system and police.

2. “Sensitive Urban Zones”—The Geography of Migration in Ghettos of Exclusion

Over the course of the last 50 years, Portugal has changed from a country of emigrants to also a country of immigrants. Having traditionally taken a *laissez-faire* approach to migration, Portugal began regulating immigration in the late 20th century in response to the increasing number of non-Portuguese-speaking migrants, many of whom had no traditional ties to Portugal, overtaking migration from Portuguese-speaking countries. The successive and extraordinary regularizations

¹ We have chosen the expression “migrants in irregularity” instead of irregular migrants since it removes the misused adjective “irregular”, following the opinion of Elie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor, Nobel Prize 1986): “No human being is illegal...”.

² To contextualize the immigration evolution in Portugal nationally and locally, we conducted a statistical analysis of data from various sources, such as the National Institute of Statistics, DGPJ (General Direction of the Justice Policy, a governmental institution for justice statistics), SEFstat [official statistics from the Immigration and Borders Service (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras)]; Eurostat, ACIDI (Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural—High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, currently Alto Comissariado para as Migrações—High Commission for Migration), and the Observatory of Immigration [3,4].

of foreigners³ undertaken in Portugal in 1992–1993, 1996, and 2001–2004, whereby all migrants in irregularity who met certain legal conditions (e.g., work contract, social security discounts, or a VAT number, *etc.*) could receive permanent or provisory residency, were marked by different historical trends. The number of people living in Portugal who were born outside the country has more than quadrupled in 30 years⁴ ([10], pp. 26–28). The number of Ukrainian migrants being regularized rose from 10 in 1996 to 64,730 in 2004, and the number of Brazilian migrants rose from 2324 in 1996 to 379,512 in 2004 ([10], p. 32). Reis distinguishes these recent waves of migration from earlier regularizations, in which the focus was on a “geography of origins” (*i.e.*, the effect on migration on the migrant’s country of origin), to a “geography of arrivals,” in which the focus is on where in Lisbon these migrants settle and their effects on Portuguese society ([11], p. 7). Cities around the world are increasingly challenged by the effects of immigration on their urban, cultural and linguistic landscapes. Moreover, the excessive individualism that marks the postmodern era involves a loss of group values, leading to the progressive stigmatization of migrants [12,13]. While migration continues to have a positive effect on the economies of origin and destination countries, destination countries are increasingly inclined to ignore these effects in favor of romanticized issues, such as immigration and crime, and envisage migrants as being concentrated in “ghetto” areas of the cities in which they settle.

The “attraction-repulsive” dichotomy between the city center and its outskirts varies depending on the perspective of analysis. In urban analysis around migration, the significance of the neighborhood is a function of the relationships between its inhabitants and the roles they assume in the process of forming a cohesive community. The city center, on the other hand, becomes an object for urban space revitalization, with spaces divided into common spaces and specific centers ([14], p. 17). Sociology and land management studies, however, are more concerned about the elements that define the neighborhood ([14], p. 17). Neighborhoods often form around a social hegemony with common sociocultural structure, not unlike a beehive ([14], p. 18; [15], p. 54). A second dichotomy emerges from the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the neighborhood. The proximity of cohesive groups occupying the same urban (or suburban) space may have either positive or negative consequences with respect to the influence and power that some groups look to impose on others, thus allowing them to include or exclude the other. Although the Chicago school pioneered the field of violence urbanization, this idea fails to take into account the “asymmetric relations of power between ethno-racial groupings” ([16], p. 158) and the way in which urban violence has been analyzed.

Ceobanu highlights the state of disorder on the outskirts of Paris and the exhaustive media coverage of riots and violent crimes, often framed in the presence of ethnic minorities [17]. Notwithstanding, the level of fear with respect to victimization usually far exceeds the actual rate of criminality ([18], p. 237). The boundary between this perception of immigrants, their supposed connection with the world of crime, and their residential concentration on the outskirts of large Portuguese cities, such as the Cape Verdean neighborhoods where recently arriving migrants integrate with earlier migrants, have become blurred ([19]; [20], p. 302). As such, it is difficult to understand how particular types of crime began to be associated with certain ethnicities, and how the justice system determines who needs policing for what crimes. The construction of feelings of insecurity appears somewhat divorced from actual crime data and involves a discourse centered on the perception of crime [21–23].

Concerning the selection of the involvement of new actors in the perception of crime, the 2002 RASI advocates for an increase in the visibility of policing in commercial and tourist areas, and other areas where there is a high concentration of people [5]. The need for this increased visibility was

³ There were around 68 regularization programs for migrants in irregularity in Europe between 1973 and 2008. Apart from Europe, the U.S.A. registered the biggest program for migrants in irregularity under the scope of the Reform and Control of Immigration Act of 1986 [8]. In 2010, 1,042,625 individuals became permanent legal residents [9].

⁴ From 1980 to 2010 (in 1992–1993, 39,000 foreigners were regularized, in 1996, 31,117 were regularized and in 2001–2004, 183,833 were regularized).

established, according to the report, with elements of the Intervention Forces, who were already acting in SUZs where rates of criminality were on the rise. ([5], p. 123) These recommendations suggest an apparent legitimacy of the selectivity of the justice system, targeting geographic areas by density, and not according to ethnicity. That the SUZs happen to be high-density housing areas whose inhabitants also tend to be more ethnically diverse than lower density residential areas is, apparently, entirely coincidental. Notwithstanding, this discourse brought the new residents of these areas into the discussion, and with increased immigration to Portugal from North Africa, worries about public security and selective policing in these areas have become increasingly visible.

2.1. Geographical Distribution of the Foreign National Population by Nationality

Several Portuguese authors have recently reflected on the spatial concentration of migrant populations, particularly ethnic minorities, in some of the outlying areas of big Portuguese cities (characterized as urban slums with degraded housing conditions), such as Lisbon, Setúbal, and Oporto [24–27]. This segregation has not always been regarded as being negative. Malheiros discusses two different approaches to segregation, active and passive; in active segregation, populations show “limitations regarding their residential choices (having lower incomes, irregularity in their presence in the labour market, some constraints in accessing social housing, prejudices on the part of housing owners)” ([28], p. 224).

The inhabitants of Lisbon’s outlying areas may have changed ethnically, but not in terms of social demographics. The inhabitants of these areas tend to have a similar demographic profile to residents of the same area 30–40 years ago, being aged 25–45 years and entering low-skilled labor groups, comprising what is typically referred to as an undemanding workforce [29]. A number of labels have been proposed in the literature to describe this changing ethnic composition, including “urban landscape” ([30], p. 163; [31]), “townscape” [30,31], “cultural landscape” and “vernacular landscape” [30,32,33], “soundscape” [34,35], “smellscape” [36,37], “ethnoscape” [38,39], and “migrantscape” ([30], pp. 44, 167), which Gésero proposes for certain urban areas of Lisbon which are characterized by a visible urban ethnic concentration [30]. According to sociologist Hondagneu-Sotelo, the recent visible changes in cities show a transposition from “immigrants in the cities” to a “city of immigrants” [40].

Among the foreign nationals in Portugal, the majority come from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), with the largest proportion originating from Cape Verde (Table 1). From 2011 onwards, the largest ethnic community to reside in Portugal has been Brazilian. Residents from the Ukraine and Romania, countries without any historical or cultural connection to Portugal, have also settled in large numbers in Portugal, with the Romanian population becoming the fourth largest community of foreign nationals in Portugal in 2011.

Table 1. The most represented resident nationalities in Portugal (2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011)⁵.

	2002	2005	2008	2011
1	Cape Verde 52,377	Cape Verde 61,515	Brazil 106,961	Brazil 119,363
2	Brazil 24,864	Brazil 49,678	Ukraine 52,494	Ukraine 49,505
3	Angola 24,638	Ukraine 35,504	Cape Verde 51,353	Cape Verde 43,979
4	Guinea Bissau 19,113	Angola 27,697	Angola 27,619	Romania 36,830
5	United Kingdom 15,899	Guinea Bissau 21,258	Romania 27,769	Angola 23,494
	Total migr. 238,746	414,659	440,547	436,822

Source: [3,10,41].

⁵ These numbers include foreign nationals holding Residence Cards, Residence Permits, and Permanent Permit extensions of Long-Stay Visas.

After analyzing the geographic distribution of foreign nationals in 2011 with Portuguese permanent residency, we found that the majority (43%, $n = 188,259$) were concentrated either in the Lisbon metropolitan area or Setúbal⁶ (10.3%, $n = 45,158$), although the number of residents decreased by 0.4% between 2009 and 2011 [4].

Most migrants chose to settle on the periphery of greater Lisbon or in the neighboring areas of Setúbal owing to the lower cost of living and the presence of a high number of support services, often informal, as provided by their fellow compatriots. These pull factors were not only found on the outskirts of these cities, but also in other areas where large numbers of migrants had already settled, such as Mouraria (a neighborhood in the center of Lisbon). This neighborhood is marked by social, ethnic, cultural and generational diversity, since there is a representative number of migrant and non-national residents and workers ([30], pp. 164, 171). These neighborhoods were already the focus of attention by law enforcement agencies before being designated SUZs because of a high number of drug-related problems and other crimes [1]. With crime already rampant, the vulnerable non-native residents of these neighborhoods welcomed new migrants into their fold to bolster their own sense of security; however, this only strengthened the community's perceptions that crime and ethnicity were somehow intrinsically linked, thus necessitating further targeting by police. According to Figueiredo Dias and Costa Andrade:

The police constitutes the most visible symbol of a formal control system, the most visible element of this formal control system, the most present in citizens' daily lives and, by rule, *the first liner enforcer* of criminal law. Its role within the selection process is, therefore, determinant ([42], p. 445).

2.2. The Institutional Public Perceptions of Crime Related to Newly Arrived Foreign Nationals

Accurately and objectively understanding the role of these areas in the supposed rising tide of crime, bearing particularly in mind the high concentration of foreign residents, is not in any sense a linear process. However, the data shown in Tables 1 and 2 reveal that, for the four years under analysis (*i.e.*, 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011), expatriates from Cape Verdean are over-represented in Portugal's prison population, making up the largest group of inmates and sentenced individuals. Expatriate Brazilian inmates comprise the second largest group in Portuguese prisons between 2008 and 2011, and the largest group of convicted individuals in 2011. In synthesizing the data from both tables, it becomes clear that these countries are not only the largest source of foreign national residents, but also of prison inmates in Portugal [3,10,43,44].

Table 2. Nationalities of non-national convicted inmates in Portugal (2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011)⁷.

	2002	2005	2008	2011
1	Cape Verde 406	Cape Verde 591	Cape Verde 543	Cape Verde 645
2	Angola 169	Angola 163	Angola 180	Brazil 258
3	Brazil 99	Brazil 119	Brazil 143	Guinea Bissau 196
4	Spain 66	Ukraine 98	Guinea Bissau 119	Angola 179
5	Guinea Bissau 65	Venezuela 86	Venezuela 61	Spain 115
Total	1209	1644	1525	1980

Source: [3,10,41] (and data from 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011 collected and analyzed by the authors).

Similarly, the number of inmates and sentenced individuals from Angola and Guinea Bissau has increased, which, along the same lines, can be explained by the growth of this population in 2008 and 2011 (despite the decrease observed in the resident population from these countries in 2011).

⁶ Also in Oporto, notwithstanding the visible rise in the two mentioned cities.

⁷ These data include non-nationals holding resident permits, permanent visas, and long-duration visas.

Despite the objectives of these studies to address biased policing, it is nonetheless important to note that the data on convicted violent offenders shows that, among other things, the point of commonality was not so much the convicted person's ethnicity, but their residential neighborhoods: the SUZs [3]. Incarcerated native Portuguese and non-nationals were equally likely to have been SUZ residents. These socio-geographic areas fail to promote social integration. Indeed, according to studies by Malheiros and Esteves [1] and Malheiros [45], the social and urban segregation of these individuals, the formation of "exclusion ghettos," and their over-representation in the criminal justice system reveals the double exclusion of these individuals. If this reveals a stronger level of control by authorities over these areas, the SUZs function as latent conflict areas where minorities, disqualified and vulnerable populations coexist. Malheiros stresses this connection between "areas of deprivation and generation of delinquency" [45], in the words of Fonseca ([43], p. 64). Fonseca further contends that the relationships established between populations residing in these areas will later be replicated within the prison space:

The approach targeting spaces where foreign national and Portuguese inmates reside reveals the greater socioeconomic vulnerability and younger age of the foreign group that is most represented in the Portuguese prison system, whose residential spaces correspond to sensitive and physically disqualified housing districts in the suburban crown of Lisbon ([43], p. 64).

In analyzing violent crime in Portugal, we conclude that robberies have contributed the most to the growing concern about the violent crime. Between 1998 and 2007, we observed an upward trend of "more than 1% per year" in the number of robberies [46]. However, between 2006 and 2007, we observed a decrease on the number of violent crimes from 24,155 incidents to 21,797, amounting to 2358 fewer incidents. Between 2011 and 2012, the number of violent crimes decreased again, from 24,154 to 22,270. The number of violent crimes increased by 10.8% in 2008, offset by a rise in the number of robberies, homicides, assaults, and rapes. Despite the subsequent drop in some of these numbers, this spike was explained by way of organized crime groups operating with impunity in the SUZs: "the existence of sensitive urban zones and the activity of several organized groups devoted to the practice of crimes" ([47], p. 33). According to the 2009 RASI, socioeconomically disenfranchised population groups (*i.e.*, migrants) are being increasingly controlled by criminal organizations operating in the SUZs [47]. It has been suggested that organized crime gangs hide among SUZ populations to conceal themselves and their movements from law enforcement, with SUZ populations being highly mobile across geographic areas, including international zones.

Based upon a further analysis of violent crime data, we conclude that the reporting of crime has increased significantly since the 1980s, thus contributing to the perception of Portugal being a nation overrun by criminals with a special interest in complex, urban, and violent crime. Indeed, there has been some differentiation in the most frequently recorded crimes over recent years, especially property crimes, including thefts (*i.e.*, home jacking). This increase in the reporting and recording of crime, especially property crimes and crimes against individuals, has been most acutely felt in the Lisbon metropolitan area and its outskirts.

3. Contextualizing Sensitive Urban Zones and Problematic Neighborhoods in the Public Discourse

We have recently contributed to a debate around territorial and urban ordainment concerning how cities are designed and built, and how populations settle in certain neighborhoods [48,49]. Urban ecologists liken the city to "an ecosystem possessing a defined structure, a series of functions and a metabolism" ([49], p. 42). Quoting Niemelä ([50], p. 121), Gomes underlines the growing importance of managing the urban ecosystem because the growth and concentration of populations in cities is now more visible and urgently requires attention [49]. A compact city means higher physical density, with more people per hectare ([49], p. 74). Several authors ([26], p. 91; [51], p. 1632; [52], p. 298) have outlined the impact of having limited contact between resident foreign nationals, migrants, and

nationals when residential neighborhoods become mechanisms for the segregation of ethnic minorities, thus preventing them from participating in the host society.

According to the United Nations ([53], p. 63), cities develop around three axes: social, economic, and environmental. The *Charter of Leipzig* [54] addresses the concept of a sustainable city and describes the main strategies of involved in urban development ([48], p. 1). *Cities of Tomorrow*, a later document, is the result of the same strategy [55], describing “challenges, visions and perspectives”. Lima ([48], pp. 1–2) identifies a number of policy documents have grown out of concern about big city neighborhoods in the 1970s, these documents intended to guide urban development: *La Politique de la Ville* in France [56], the *Soziale Stadt* in Germany [57], *New Deal for Communities* from England [58], *The Sustainable Development Strategy* for Sweden [59], and the Spanish *Urban and local Sustainability Strategy* [60].

In France⁸, *Recovery Pact of Cities* (1996) [61] defines a three-layered typology of urban areas: SUZs, “characterized by the presence of housing or poor housing blocks and a sharp imbalance between housing and employment”, reviving urban areas⁹, and outspoken urban areas¹⁰ ([49], p. 37).

Concerning the public space of cities in the Portuguese scenario, Article 34, No. 1 of Act no. 11/87, 9 April (amended by Act no. 13/2002, 19 February 2002) establishes that the government will “declare as critical all zones where the established environment listed qualities would be affected, or where the quality of the environment or human health may be affected,” thus giving the central and local administrations the power to intervene. Act 48/98, 11 August (*Law of the Ordainment of Territory and Urbanism Policy*), has since been replaced by Act no. 31/2014, 30 May 2014, which establishes similar measures for state interventions to maintain good-quality water, terrain, and housing distribution in cities, among other measures. Article 53 of Act no. 67-A/2007, 31 December 2007 (which established the national budget for 2008) refers to the amendment of Decree Law no. 394-B/84, 26 December 1984 (concerning values related to VAT). According to Article 53 of Act no. 67-A/2007, 31 December 2007:

The works of urban renewal, as defined in Article 1 of Decree Law No. 104/2004, of 7 May, held in real estate or in public spaces located in areas of urban regeneration (critical areas of recovery and conversion urban, intervention areas of urban rehabilitation companies and others) defined by law.

Beginning toward the end of the 20th century, the institutional discourse turned toward “problematic neighborhoods” or “so-called sensitive urban zones”. In Act no. 38/2009, 20 July, the *Law of Criminal Policy* for the biennium 2009–2011, which defines the objectives, priorities, and orientation of criminal policy according to Act 17/2006, 23 May 2006 (*Frame Act of the Criminal Policy*), Article 10 clearly defines a specific policy for the selective social control of so-called “urban sensitive areas”, mandating that “forces and security services develop, in urban sensitive zones in the frame of integrated strategies of prevention and intervention, regular actions of reinforced policing, using special police means and special prevention operations related to guns”. In 2010, proposed resolution no. 120/XI recommended to the Portuguese government the creation of “police mediation offices along the SUZs. The objective is to carry out joint services agreements to support young people at risk with various entities. The requirement is to present, in Parliament, an Assessment Report of public policies in the problematic neighborhoods”, specifically mentioning Lisbon, Oporto, and Setúbal.

⁸ A report quoted by Gomes and Pereira ([49], p. 39) documents 751 identified sensitive urban zones in France (of which 435 are classified as reviving urban areas, among which 100 are considered outspoken urban areas).

⁹ According to Gomes and Pereira ([49], p. 37), reviving urban areas “correspond to those Sensitive Urban Zones who are facing appreciated particular difficulties depending on their situation in the agglomeration, the economic characteristics and shopping and a synthetic indicator. This synthetic indicator is established in conditions to be set by decree, taking into account the number of inhabitants of blocks, the unemployment rate, the proportion of young people under 25 years of age, proportion of people who left the school system without a diploma and potential tax of municipalities covered.”

¹⁰ According to Gomes and Pereira ([49], p. 37), outspoken urban areas are “created in blocks of more than 10,000 inhabitants particularly disadvantaged in terms of the criteria that are taken into consideration in defining the Reviving Urban Areas”.

4. SUZs as Exclusion Ghettos: The Institutional Perceptions of Internal Security

According to Wacquant, while the concept of the ghetto might not have originated from the social sciences¹¹, the term has often been used in a descriptive way to refer to the Jewish Diaspora, to black American metropolitan areas, and to “the anthropology of ethnic outcasts in Africa and East Asia” ([16], p. 155). Although our objective here is not to discuss the conceptualization or use of the term “ghetto,” it is important to note that “SUZ” (or its expanded form) has become the preferred term by actors in the justice system to define highly concentrated neighborhoods where the perception of crime has played a major role and where crime prevention and fighting has been selectively enforced. The problem of growing crime rates in specific urban areas is explained in the 2005 RASI¹² [6] and subsequent reports, with respect to the concentration of individuals viewed by society as being less integrated:

The slight increase of certain violent crimes in Metropolitan Areas is largely attributable to two types of factors: the growth of urban pockets which concentrate insufficiently integrated people and the consolidation of different groups whose characteristics approach banditry” ([6], p. 260).

...they come from the lower social strata, usually from unstructured families, and reside in degraded zones, essentially in social housing districts, displaying low schooling levels ([6], p. 197).

Consequently, the official discourse highlights the need for government programs aimed specifically at the rehabilitation of SUZs, with a view toward crime prevention:

In the vast field of primary and secondary social prevention, due attention was given to, amongst others, the fields of domestic violence and qualification and urban reintegration of critical neighbourhoods...The Council of Ministers Resolution nr. 143/2005, from September 7, approved the initiative Operations for the Urban Qualification and Reintegration of Critical Neighbourhoods...These operations target a limited number of neighbourhoods located in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Oporto, and will cover a limited time span (2005–2007) ([6], pp. 21–22).

The SUZs are, however, a source of growing concern, which was manifested in terms of euphemisms finding their way into RASI 2008, which made specific references to “illegal immigration” in connection to other crimes (including violent and serious crimes) involving groups of local residents, including a reference to “specific social groups” ([7], p. 50) without further clarification:

In the fight against organized crime and subversion, lines of work dedicated to preventing and combating the illicit origin of money laundering crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration have been maintained. The number of expanding projects to develop and maintain in operation monitoring programs ongoing activities related to the monitoring of sensitive urban areas in terms of detection violent action against state authority. They have also been the object of monitored activities in what relates it to violent and organized groups that have been highlighted in Oporto and Lisbon, violence used in the crime management of territories with a severe impact on the security of the population ([7], p. 276).

¹¹ Wacquant lists “the four constituent elements of the ghetto: stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement” ([16], p. 155).

¹² The perception of RASIs is reproduced in society, mainly by mass media, and the perception becomes almost hegemonic (*i.e.*, more important); the other, therefore, become secondary, namely those from NGOs (as described in previous studies of the authors), but they should never be invisible. We have transferred the information from the focus group of NGOs and other actors to a future project.

Again, there are references to a “concentration of this phenomenon in metropolitan areas” ([2], p. 60), “degraded fabrics in large urban centres” ([2], p. 34), and to the need to pay attention to itinerant criminal groups in which “foreign groups of variable size...exploring a wide range of criminal malpractices” participate, and “who, owing to their great mobility within the European space and the criminal activities they developed, pose growing threats to internal security” ([2], p. 113).

The 2008 RASI establishes this connection between sensitive metropolitan areas, seen as problematic, and areas where foreign nationals comprise a significant proportion of the population, indirectly labeling these populations as being primarily “criminogenic”, and making these neighborhoods objects of permanent attention and security intervention, referring to them thusly:

...urban and peri-urban zones where citizens from other countries have a strong demographic expression ([7], p. 47).

In 2011, SUZs, mainly concentrated in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Oporto, emerge as spaces of relevance for the security apparatus, not only because they congregate criminal groups and activities, but also because these territories contribute towards an effective mobilization of individuals significantly predisposed to subversive actions against State authority. These areas pose several risk factors that, owing to their criminal nature, justify a preventive approach, as threats to internal security ([2], pp. 30–31).

The 2011 RASI is heavy with the official SUZ discourse, which is now considered responsible for the proliferation of violent crime, and discusses a number of special programs intended to fight SUZ-related crimes:

In order to increase the cooperation to streamline information sharing between the Security Forces and Services several specialized Working Groups (WG) and Mixed Teams Crime Prevention (MTCP) have been created, in the context of risk prevention and detection of threats to internal security...On the initiative of Internal Security Service, there were various constituted or continued activities, specific Working Groups and Mixed Teams Crime Prevention (many of them integrating professionals of various institutions from the Internal Security System). They were concerned with the projection situations of urban insecurity and violent and serious crime emanating from different SUZs ([2], p. 110).

In the discourse of state institutions, such as the police, issues of ethnicity, racism, social exclusion, urban decay, unemployment, poverty, and the need for selective policing are part and parcel of living in a geographically vulnerable area. Overtime, the inhabitants of these ghetto areas become merged with the space itself, favoring the perception that one is intrinsically linked to the other, thus constructing the stereotype of the foreign national being predisposed toward violent crime. As stated by Cunha [62]:

And here, in fact, as several studies have been showing ([63–65]), the neighbourhood statute is considered as a whole and it is decisive in this police selectivity, more than the individual status of the individuals, being socio—economic or ethno—“racial”. Certain neighbourhoods are constituted in this way in collective targets and routine police places, as like the so-called swoops, where people and goods may be subject to a relatively undifferentiated seizure ([62], p. 2).

The profile designed for the perpetrators of crimes encompass the whole genesis of the excluded of society. This is also valid for those who are perceived as responsible for the increase in crime. ZUS are seen as ghettos of crime, perceived as so by the inhabitants themselves as well. According to Assan, quoted in Gomes:

Well...that place has two neighbourhoods. [...] And these two neighbourhoods were always in conflict. And I lived in the middle of these neighbourhoods, you see? I knew people from one side and from the other. Sometimes there was shooting. Sometimes people were

caught by [a] shooting, as a friend of mine who was paralyzed because she was shot in the back and she had nothing to do with anyone. You see? [...] They are all young [people]—20, 21, 22 [years old]. Up to 28. [...] People in the neighbourhood are jealous. They cannot see a person with a car or a motorbike, they immediately steal it” ([66], p. 126).

In short, the discourse in the 2002 and 2005 RASI, especially the former, is presented as an adaptation to the new reality of immigration in Portugal, and refers to the criminalization of new behaviors as arising out of these changes [5,6]. Notwithstanding, the fight against drugs, terrorism, and human trafficking features prominently in these reports. In response to these issues, the message is oft repeated that crime prevention programs are a necessity and that subsequent RASI reports will be monitoring the implementation and efficacy of such programs.

With regard to organized crime, RASI prioritizes the prevention of crimes involving weapons, drugs, and terrorism. The use of surveillance cameras is highlighted in crime prevention, as well as programs targeting SUZs. In the 2008 and 2011 RASI, we note the proliferation of a number of crime fighting measures (e.g., international cooperation, criminal investigation, and proximity policing) [2,7]. There are also a number of references to various measures undertaken to monitor organized criminal groups, especially violent ones. The 2011 RASI follows the discourse emerging out of the 2008 RASI, thus indicating a strengthening of the state authority and a continuation of programs already initiated, particularly with regard to preventing and combating various forms of serious crime and violence [2].

With regards to violent crime, we found that the discourse progressively thickened from RASI 2002 until 2011, with 2008 being the year in which in all violent crimes against people and other crimes under analysis (robbery, homicide, bodily harm, and rape) supposedly increased, although in 2011, we saw crimes becoming less prevalent. Robberies were the most outstanding crimes, in both number and level of concern, in addition to an array of new criminal schemes, with the development of new *modus operandi*, and new technologies for transnational crimes that resulted in a more negative perception of foreign nationals and immigrants. According to the RASIs and to speeches given by various state actors, these crimes were being perpetrated by foreign nationals with “umbilical” bonds SUZs on the outskirts of Portuguese cities, which further reinforced in the eyes of many people the links between SUZs, migrants, and the criminal world.

5. Conclusions

We report on the increased institutional control (operationalized by the police) over populations in the so-called SUZs, specific neighborhoods on the outskirts of large metropolitan areas in Portugal. Individuals at the lower end of the socioeconomic social spectrum, many of whom are also migrants, tend to congregate in these SUZs. These groups, generally located on the periphery of Lisbon and Setúbal, are subject to economic and social precariousness. Delinquent youths and criminal activities have drawn the attention of police, especially in dealing with drugs, resulting in these neighborhoods being subject to a greater degree of scrutiny by the authorities. Consequently, foreign nationals of particular ethnicities tend to be visibly over-represented in police crime statistics as compared to nationals.

However, despite our research, we are yet to identify any clear links between foreign nationals and the rise of violent crime committed in Portugal [3]. The apparent links created by state figures (e.g., crime data, the ethnic composition of prison populations, *etc.*) are a product of a policy of selective policing of the inhabitants living on the outskirts of major Portuguese cities. As such, criminality in SUZs, where foreign nationals of certain ethnicities congregate, is more likely to be brought to the attention of police; whereas the low policing of non-SUZ native Portuguese areas means that crimes will often go unreported, creating the illusion of them having never happened in the first place.

We have also witnessed a growing tension between the state discourse of crime control and the simultaneous favoring of a welfare approach involving social interventions to integrate these populations into wider Portuguese society. We conclude that the “internal security” representations of these SUZs in RASIs for 2002, 2005, 2008, and 2011 have been hegemonic to the already existing

and reinforcing negative perception of the ghettos of exclusion, including those perpetuated by the mass media. The vulnerability of socioeconomically deprived Portuguese citizens and non-national migrants contributes to a growing sense of mistrust toward migrants, often perceived of as dangerous, as if they are responsible for the rise in violent crimes. Moreover, the RASIs are often the source of talking points for the mass media, thus further reinforcing in the eyes of the public the myth of the dangerous migrant.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ACIDI	Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural [67]
CPLP Countries	Community of Portuguese Language Countries
DGPJ	Portuguese Directorate-General for Justice Policy [68]
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Communities
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PALOP	Official Portuguese-speaking African countries
RASI	Relatório Anual de Segurança Interna [69]
SEFstat	Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras [70]
SUZ	Sensitive urban zones
UN	United Nations

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