

Foreign women in Portuguese prisons: Narratives of migration processes.*

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Framework

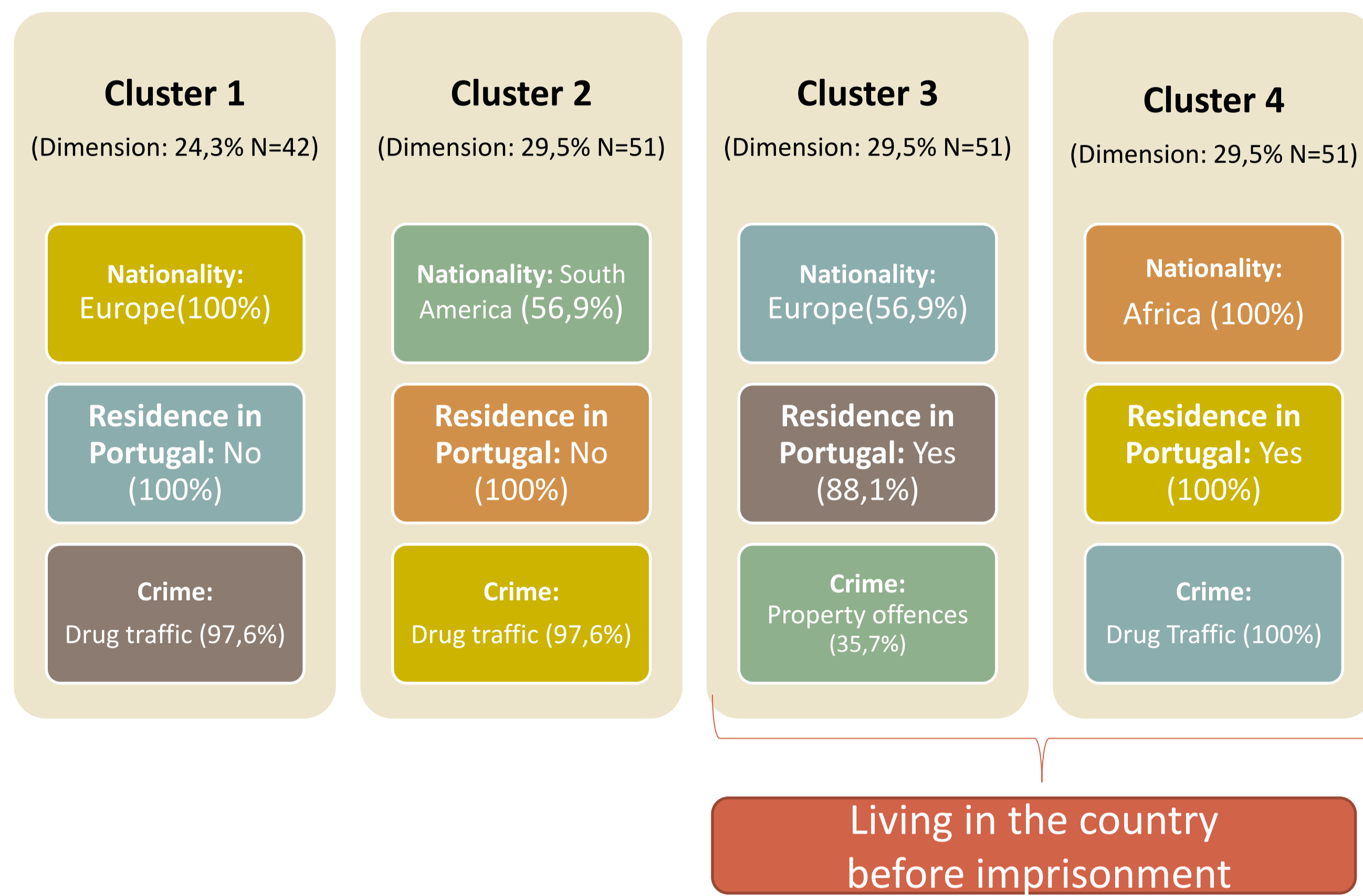
- The lack of research regarding women, crime and imprisonment and about foreign citizens in prison;
- The increasing proportion of foreign citizens in European prisons (Coyle, 2009);
- The increasing proportion of female foreign inmates among the Portuguese prison population (Santos & Seabra, 2006; Hostettler & Achermann, 2008);
- The need to deconstruct the stereotypes concerning immigration and crime.

Method

First study - 186 foreign women in prison were characterized in social demographic, criminal and legal aspects

Objectives

To analyze life trajectories of foreign women detained in Portuguese prisons, particularly migrations.



2nd study

42 of the 186 women were interviewed about their life trajectories. In this paper we present data from the analysis of 16 interviews (4 women whose characteristics matched each of the previous clusters).

16 Participants

- 8 from Europe; 4 from South America; 4 from African countries
- 8 living in Portugal before imprisonment
- 8 detained for international drug trafficking; 4 for domestic drug trafficking and 4 for other crimes

Results

Almost all the women (14/16) described migrations in their life trajectories

In both childhood and adulthood (3/16)

In childhood (7/16)

- A. Family financial difficulties – immigration / looking for better conditions in a new country;
- B. Family instability (employment; social conditions; deviant behaviors) – constant changes

In adulthood (9/16)

- A. Immigration within a relationship / with the husband / partner; Immigration to get married;
- B. Immigration without support (difficult integration / prostitution);
- C. Immigration due to a conflict relation with the family / deviant behaviors (drugs' use).

MIGRATION NARRATIVES

	CHILDHOOD	ADULTHOOD
Foreign women living in Portugal before imprisonment	A. <i>I came to Lisbon when I was 12 with my parents' friends. That's what my mother always wanted for me.</i> (Ana*, Guinea Bissau, 30 years-old) <i>We went to Spain because there my father had a job.</i> (Elisa*, Croatia, 19 years-old)	A. <i>I came to work; My husband came first [...] my father and brothers were already here.</i> (Amelia*, Cape Verde, 26 years-old); B. <i>When I came I had no place to stay [...] so I went to prostitution.</i> (Paula*, Romania, 29 years-old)
Foreign women not living in Portugal before imprisonment	B. <i>I grew older, I grew older, I moved a lot of school because we changed a lot from home.</i> (Maria*, Spain, 30 years-old); <i>I moved with my mother, who was recovering from drugs.</i> (Louise*, Holland, 27 years-old);	A. <i>I got married in Nigeria.</i> (Louise*, Holland, 27 years-old); C. <i>I lived in Madrid, Rome and New York [...]; I went back to [...] when I hadn't a place to stay anymore.</i> (Amanda*, Brazil, 27 years-old);

* Fictional names

Final considerations

- Migration emerges as a relevant topic in the narratives of foreign women in Portuguese prisons. Nevertheless, only a small part of such narratives concern immigration to Portugal, the country where these women are detained.
- Within the foreign women's trajectories, migrations seem to be usual, either in childhood or adulthood; but there is diversity in its' types (e.g., city change, country change) and contexts (e.g., family instability, financial difficulties, deviant behaviors).
- This preliminary analysis highlights the diversity of trajectories of foreign women in prison, even when the crime is similar. Further analysis, considering all the 42 participants in the study, will be important to the deconstruction of the arguments that foreigners in prison are mostly immigrants, and that immigration is inevitably related to crime.

References

Coyle, A. (2009). *La administración penitenciaria en el contexto de los derechos humanos*. Londres: Centro Internacional de Estudios Penitenciarios.; Hostettler, U., & Achermann, C. (2008). *Cidadãos estrangeiros em duas prisões na Suíça. Vida prisional, reabilitação e destino pós-reclusão*. In: M.I. Cunha (Org.), *Aquém e além da prisão. Cruzamentos e perspectivas*. Lisboa: 90ª Editora; Matos, R. (2008). *Vidas raras de mulheres comuns*. Coimbra: Edições Almedina; Seabra H. M. & Santos, T. (2006). *Reclusos estrangeiros em Portugal - esteios de uma problematização*. Porto: ACIME - Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas.