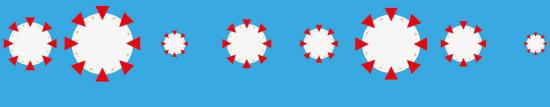
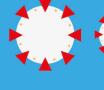
# WNRDS BFY()ND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

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# WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

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## WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

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#### Publisher

Centre for Social Studies University of Coimbra

#### Scientific Review

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#### Design and Pagination

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December, 2020

This work is funded by ERDF Funds through the Competitiveness Factors Operational Programme - COMPETE and by National Funds through the FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology within the UIDB/50012/2020 project.

The data and opinions included in this publication are the exclusive responsibility of its authors.

**ISBN** 978-989-8847-28-7

## INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, Danielle Pereira Araújo, Luana Coelho, Sebijan Fejzula

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the conditions of inequality that already exist, highlighting systematically denied racist dynamics. The (im)possibility of making these conditions visible stems from the effects of racism itself, which are manifested in the spread of ideas such as that "the virus does not see colour, it is an equaliser."

In the Portuguese and Spanish contexts, the denial of racism became clear from the lack of ethnic-racial data, from the legitimising of differentiated treatment in access to basic services, or still from the increase in surveillance of the racialised body, which is now not only dangerous, but also contagious. Anti-Gypsyism, Islamophobia and anti-Blackness create "permanent states of exception" that normalise and justify the violence of safety strategies before, during, and after the pandemic. In Portugal, the Bairro das Pedreiras a ghetto built to rehouse Romani families in Beja – has been the subject of news coverage highlighting the vulnerability of these families to infection by COVID-19, as they live in extremely poor housing conditions. One of the measures implemented to monitor compliance with lockdown measures was the presence of security forces in the access routes to the neighbourhood.

Publications in the media and social networks continued to reproduce racist imaginaries. In Spain, in March 2020, rumours circulated on social networks about the Roma population in the city of Haro, stating that "the Roma were doing as they pleased without the Police being able to control them." A number of newspapers published news focused on "non-compliance" of lockdown measures in social housing estates, dehumanising the Roma population.

The emergency policies created by the States with a focus on migrant and Roma families illustrate how governments see and treat racialised populations. The pandemic has shown that racialised people are overrepresented in precarious jobs, such as those in the domestic service sector. With the loss of these jobs and the numerous requirements needed to access public assistance, these people are left unprotected – which produces more precariousness and revictimisation.

In a context of precarious State assistance, antiracist organisations and grassroots associations in several Portuguese and Spanish cities have mobilised their solidarity networks to support black and Roma families. They have exposed the fallacy of the "democratic virus," as well as the State-sanctioned denial of basic rights in an anti-Black and anti-Roma Europe.

In Spain, anti-racist associations have seen an increase in the number of complaints of police violence since the state of alarm was decreed, and have sought to spread a counter-narrative: this increase is not merely circumstantial, but shows that the bodies of racialised people have been historically treated as a permanent threat to the democratic State.

While white people wish to "return to normality" after the pandemic, racialised people are problematising the meaning of this "normality".