Is the Press Presenting (Neoliberal) Foreign Residency Laws in a Depoliticised Way? The Case of Investment Visas and the Reconfiguring of Citizenship

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Abstract

Neoliberalism calls upon the social sciences to explore how legal innovations – new laws and policies – incorporating neoliberal values are presented to the citizenry. An example are investment visas, a new legal instrument regulating foreign residency. Investment visas reconfigure citizenship by prioritising neoliberal values, by privileging economic capital over labour and over place-and-community involvement in the host country. They also create sub-groups within a same migrant community. The press can present these changes by highlighting how they involve choices among competing values, stimulating debate, or it can hide such choices, offering a depoliticised coverage of the issue. This paper explores how investment visas were presented to the Portuguese public by the press, in connection with the Chinese, its main beneficiary community. The analysis is two-fold: first, a thematic analysis focuses on the representation of the Chinese in two newspapers (n = 525 articles), exploring whether it differentiates the investment visa sub-group within the Chinese community; second, a content analysis examines whether the law’s transformations to citizenship are presented in a depoliticised way (n = 164 articles). Findings indicate that the press shows Chinese investment visa beneficiaries as disconnected from other representations of the Chinese. Additionally, the investment visa laws are presented in a depoliticised way: one (uncontested) perspective is privileged, emphasizing their benefits. Conflicting values are almost absent, and the deterritorialised aspect of citizenship is left unproblematised. We conclude by discussing the implications of this type of coverage in shaping social debate and for the socio-psychological study of legal innovations and of citizenship.

Keywords: social psychology of citizenship, legal innovation, depoliticisation, neoliberalism, investment visas, Chinese migrants
systems—e.g., social representations (Moscovici, 1972) or values (Schwartz, 2012)—making them suited to advance neoliberal goals at a collective and individual level (Bay-Cheng, Fitz, Alizaga, & Zucker, 2015). Particularly, it calls for a social and political psychology of mediated communication, capable of exploring how such legal innovations are constructed and presented to the citizenry in the media (Castro, 2012). This is a project to which the theory of social representations can contribute by helping explore the role of the media in creating new shared representations and in furthering their acceptance or rejection by the public (Amer & Howarth, 2017; Castro, 2012; Castro, Seixas, Neca, & Bettencourt, 2018; Jaspal, Nerlich, & Koteyko, 2013).

This article thus focuses on the press presentation of one such law: that of investment visas, a citizenship-by-investment law regulating foreign entry and residency, and thus migration (Ampudia de Haro & Gaspar, 2019; Gaspar & Ampudia de Haro, 2020; Ley, 2003; Mavelli, 2018; Parker, 2017; Tanasoca, 2016). The law offers immediate residency rights to those investing a certain (sizeable) sum in the country, for example in private property, most notably real estate. It thus prioritizes capital over labour, and property over place- and community-bound involvement in the host country, as criteria for residency. It stimulates a reconfiguring of the meanings of citizenship (Tanasoca, 2016), offering a detractorialised and commodified version of citizenship rights. Moreover, through these priorities, the law also creates different sub-groups within each foreign community: citizens/residents by labour and citizens/residents by property. This has the potential to create further intra-minority conflicts, an issue requiring the attention of social psychology (Verkuyten, 2018).

Policies and laws such as this can be presented to the public sphere in different ways. They can be presented as a matter of political choice among competing values and goals, or, instead, normalised as an inevitability requiring no choice, involving only technical decisions (Moury & Standring, 2017; Wood, 2016), or as a straightforward response to the way “the world is” (Castro & Mouro, 2016). This normalisation—a presentation of policies that depoliticises them—is an option that can today be often detected in parliamentary debates and press coverages (Hay, 2014; Maeseele & Raejmaekers, 2017; Wood, 2016; Wood & Flinders, 2014). Such depoliticised discourses legitimize neoliberal laws and policies in ways that render the dimension of political choice invisible (Wood, 2016), offering the public a somehow helpless role (Carvalho, 2008), contributing to closing down the space for possible (political) contestation, collective action or participation. However, few social psychological studies have explored how this is done. In particular, few studies on the social psychology of citizenship (Andreouli, 2019; Condor, 2011; Stevenson, Hopkins, Luyt, & Dixon, 2015; Xenitidou & Sapountzis, 2018) have simultaneously attended to the social psychology of mediated communication about citizenship-relevant laws: for instance, by focusing on how new (neoliberal) laws for migration and residency are presented to a polity by the press, namely examining whether this presentation is depoliticised, or whether and how it makes visible sub-groups of a foreign community and constructs their representations.

In the current research, we address this lacuna by exploring how the Portuguese press has presented to the public the recently implemented investment visa law, focusing on a specific foreign community: the Chinese. In Portugal, the Chinese are the main beneficiaries of investment visas as well as a rapidly growing group: currently the fifth largest foreign group (Gaspar & Ampudia de Haro, 2020; Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras [SEF], 2017). Specifically, this research has two goals. First, it aims at exploring the representation of the Chinese in two types of newspapers (quality and tabloid) to uncover whether they are presented as a unified community, or if investment visa beneficiaries come out as a different sub-group. Second, it examines whether the press presentation of the investment visa law is a depoliticized one, highlighting only values and benefits supporting the neoliberal model (e.g. economic values), and minimizing other values and options on which to anchor citizenship.
We now provide some details on the new investment visa law, then summarize the social psychological view of citizenship and of legal innovations and consider the relevance of the press in advancing new ideas and representations.

**Context: The New Investment Visa Law**

Since 2010, several European Union member-states (Malta, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Portugal, Latvia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Greece and Spain) have implemented investment visas. In Portugal this law entered into force in 2012, presented as part of the government’s effort to capture foreign investment (Gaspar & Ampudia de Haro, 2020). It was a measure put in place by a center-right government when the country was under the Troika (EU and IMF) intervention (2011-2014) and its austerity measures, in the sequence of the crisis that hit Portugal in the wake of the 2008 financial crash. Investment visa’s residency rights are granted through the purchase of real estate property of 500,000€ or more, transferring 1,000,000€ in capital, or creating 10 jobs, among other investment possibilities. In practice, in Portugal, the vast majority of investment visa beneficiaries purchase real estate (SEF, 2017). These investors obtain full residency rights, and their only duty is that of staying in the country for 7 days during the first year, and 14 days throughout every two subsequent years (Ampudia de Haro & Gaspar, 2019).

The Chinese have been the major beneficiaries of investment visas in the world (Liu-Farrer, 2016) and also in Portugal, where, so far, 58.2% of investment visas have been attributed to the Chinese. Furthermore, during the crisis, the Chinese were the only group of foreign residents that grew (SEF, 2017). They made use of both “traditional” residency applications and of investment visas – popularly called *golden visas*. Research is still scarce on how this group of foreign residents – today governed by two different legal ways of settlement in the country – is represented and discussed in the Portuguese public sphere.

**Reconfiguring Citizenship Through New Laws**

Citizenship is often defined as “a status of a legal and political membership of a state” (Verkuyten, 2018, p. 226) and is usually equated to nationality. The notion of citizenship is, however, far more complex and extensive than a simple equation with nationality (Andreouli, 2019; Bosniak, 2006; Castro & Santos, 2020; Gibson, 2011; Langhout & Fernández, 2018; Stevenson et al., 2015). Citizenship regimes are laws and legal frameworks that regulate several dimensions of people’s relation with a nation, with some determining the conditions for foreigners/migrants’ entrance, residency in and exit from a country (Vink, 2017). This means that while entering and when inside a polity – and before any process of naturalisation – foreigners have citizenship rights and duties. The laws and legal procedures defining such rights and duties incorporate definitions of who belongs and can stay and under what conditions (Bosniak, 2006), reifying or objectifying different ‘types’ of migrants (Castro & Santos, 2020; Mahendran, Magnusson, Howarth, & Scuzarello, 2019). Changes in these legal frameworks reconfigure the meanings and limits of citizenship for migrants.

Investment visa law is an example of such change, one through which the state prioritises certain characteristics of its migrants/citizens over others. In this case, economic capacity is the characteristic prioritised, expressing a commodification of citizenship offering a “smoother route” for residency and naturalization (Tanasoca, 2016, p. 182). It is a path for privileged entrance and permanence, where traditional citizenship/residency requirements - such as long-term permanence and language-learning, signs of place-bound involvement with the host community (Parker, 2017) - are waived. Also, to be remarked upon from a social-psychological perspective of citizenship is how this law may open sub-groups within each foreign community: allowing some people to apply for this type
of deterritorialised residency, while others, following “traditional” citizenship laws, are expected to develop place and labour-type involvement and belonging (Bhatia, 2008). In sum, the investment visa law reconfigures entry and residency rights and duties by differentiating among foreign newcomers according to economic capital (Ley, 2003; Mavelli, 2018), following the trend of neoliberal shifting of priorities: from labour and production towards property and consumption (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001).

The consequences of this commodification of citizenship and the new sub-groups it creates are still under-studied. Previous research on the social psychology of citizenship has looked at how citizenship representations affect the endorsement of more or less inclusive migration and naturalisation policies (Kadianaki & Andreouli, 2017; Reijerse, van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet, & Duriez, 2013), or at how inclusive versus exclusive representations of citizenship by the public impact intergroup relations (Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009; Wakefield et al., 2011; Yogeeswaran, Dasgupta, & Gomez, 2012). Few studies have focused on the ways in which the legal constructions of the citizen are presented to the public sphere and how they are debated (see Andreouli & Howarth, 2013; Andreouli, Kadianaki, & Xenitidou, 2017; Gray & Griffin, 2014). However, no studies exist, as yet, about how a new definition for foreign residency – a type of neoliberal citizenship with no labour or place-base involvement duties (Ley, 2003; Mavelli, 2018; Parker, 2017; Tanasoca, 2016) – is presented to a polity and transforms the relations among groups.

For understanding these changes, it is thus important to take a closer look at how the press presents these laws, since the press is a main mediator between the policy/legal sphere and the public – a main actor in helping the public make sense of new ideas (Carvalho, 2008; Castro et al., 2018). For instance, regarding the values and social representations of citizenship that the new investment visa law carries, the specific ways in which they are constructed and presented in the press are consequential for how the public ends up viewing the nation’s common good (Andreouli et al., 2017; Gray & Griffin, 2014; Moghaddam, 2008). It also contributes to legitimizing the inclusion/exclusion of certain people from citizenship (Condor, 2011), and helps delimit the residency and “immigration debate” (Wills, 2010).

However, few studies have specifically analysed the actual practices of the media in presenting to the public legal innovations that reconfigure citizenship and migration. Furthermore, no studies have specifically explored the extent to which this coverage might be depoliticised, i.e., might take the options of the laws and the reconfigurations to citizenship that they bring as natural, inevitable and a technical solution to societal challenges. Depoliticised coverages, presenting complex and contentious issues as simple ones (Maeseele & Raiejmaekers, 2017; Wood, 2016) conceal (neoliberal) transformations and limit the debate. The next section better addresses the role of the press in legitimising and maintaining certain representations, subjectivities and social relations over others.

Neoliberalism in the (Depoliticised) Press

The social psychology of mediated communication includes the study of how the press contributes to the construction, stabilisation and transformation of shared meaning systems, or social representations (Batel & Castro, 2018; Castro et al., 2018; Moscovici, 1972, 1988). Following the plea for a more situated social research about how changes in political and economic systems affect social life (Elcheroth, Doise, & Reicher, 2011; Howarth et al., 2013; Marsella, 2012), it is important to understand how neoliberalism, as a political framework, is affecting social representations and subjectivities (Bay-Cheng et al., 2015). One way of doing this is by examining how the press presents neoliberal legal innovations and helps shape the debate about its meanings and consequences.
On the issues of citizenship and migration, previous studies focusing on the press highlight its importance for a better understanding of how certain representations regarding race and ethnicity are thereinormalised and made (to seem) unproblematic (Tukachinsky, 2015). Others have shown how the press can help create, perpetuate and/or challenge the hegemonic social representations of certain conflicting identities in majority and minority presses (Amer & Howarth, 2017). The press is, then, one place where social conflicts are enacted, and sometimes created (Carvalho, 2008; Castro et al., 2018; Jaspal, Nerlich, & Koteyko, 2013), and therefore constitutes the acting field *par excellence* for “battles of ideas” (Moscovici & Marková, 2000, p. 275).

However, the press does not always make clear the contribution of the neoliberal values embedded in new laws to these “battles of ideas” (Mavelli, 2018; Ong, 2006; Wacquant, 2012). In the context of neoliberalism, the term depoliticisation has been applied to refer to discursive and rhetorical strategies that hide (i.e. depoliticise) choices in policy making, helping close the debate about them (Hay, 2014; Wood, 2016; Wood & Flinders, 2014). For example, not asserting neoliberal values as sustaining a particular economic and political configuration naturalises or normalises them as technological choices. This affects citizens’ involvement in the debate, narrowing down the conceptualisation of possible alternatives and helping to consolidate the hegemony of the neoliberal project (Hay, 2014).

The analysis of depoliticisation in the press provides an analytical framework for a better understanding if “the debate about and beyond established [neoliberal] social structures and ways of life” (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017, p. 2) takes place. Particularly, depoliticisation focuses on the ways in which the press privileges certain voices/perspectives (carrying neoliberal values) – not showing the contestation of and arguments against current socio-political and economic options. It tends to present issues as technical, in need of technical solutions, thus hindering their (chosen) political/ideological (neoliberal) values (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017; Ong, 2006; Wood & Flinders, 2014).

**Research Questions**

Specifically focusing on the Chinese in Portugal, this study examines how the Portuguese press presents a neoliberal policy (that of investment visas) affecting citizenship and foreign residents.

In a first stage, we will explore (1) if Chinese foreign residents are represented in the Portuguese press as a unified community (made of both labour and place-based immigrants and investment visa residents), or as a community with two different disconnected sub-groups. In a second stage, we will analyse (2) how this legal innovation is presented when the Chinese are discussed in the press, and specifically examine whether it is presented in a depoliticised way – i.e., whether the neoliberal values sustaining investment visas are made invisible and presented as unproblematic – and inside or outside of the “immigration debate”. We will further examine whether the patterns of these presentations are similar across two widely read but different newspapers, a quality (*Público*) and a tabloid (*Correio da Manhã*) one – since research shows that the pattern of depoliticisation cuts across different types of widely read newspapers (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017). In the first stage we will use a text mining software (IraMuTeQ) and in the second, focusing exclusively on the articles mentioning investment visas, we resort to content analysis.
Method and Results

Newspaper Selection

To explore whether the characteristics of depoliticisation are consistently present across the Portuguese press coverage of the Chinese community and Chinese investment visas, it was necessary to choose widely read papers with different audiences. Thus, the two papers Público and Correio da Manhã were chosen, as is usual for Portuguese press studies (see Castro et al., 2018). Of the two main daily reference/quality newspapers, Público is the one with the largest online readership. From the tabloid/popular press, Correio da Manhã is the only daily tabloid available, as well as being the most read Portuguese newspaper (Associação Portuguesa para Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação [APCT], 2018).

First Stage

Procedure

The websites of the two newspapers were searched for the keywords “Chinese” and “Portugal” for collecting articles from January 2000 until September 2017 (the month of data collection); the articles that were explicitly about Chinese residents in Portugal made up the corpus of analysis. This yielded a total of 525 articles (Público n = 287 and Correio da Manhã n = 238) – our unit of analysis – which were then prepared to be submitted to the Reinert Method using the IRaMuTeQ software. The method aims at detecting word clusters (Reinert, 1986) based on the co-occurrence of similar lexical forms (words or multi-words), calculated through consecutive chi-square tests, using a hierarchical descending classification (Rizzoli et al., 2019). The word clusters are then computer-generated on the basis of similar lexical contents. The software also conducts a factorial correspondence analysis that can be graphically depicted, a spatial presentation allowing the analysis of relationships between themes. The overall meaning of each theme results from the words composing it, as interpreted by the researcher. The articles from each newspaper were separately analysed to allow for comparisons between them.

Results

The themes from each newspaper are presented in Table 1 along with their five most representative words. A representation of the factorial correspondence analysis of both newspapers – indicating the spatial distribution of the themes according to two axes, defined by their lexical proximity – is presented in Figure 1. To explore whether different Chinese themes are connected or disconnected from each other, the proximity of the themes is an indicator (Tuzzi, 2018). The size of the circles demonstrates the dispersion of the theme (see original output in supplementary material) and not its predominance.

Público’s articles on the Chinese in Portugal are organised in six themes, whereas those of Correio da Manhã yielded five themes. Regarding the first research question as to whether the Chinese presence would be represented as a unified community or having two disconnected sub-groups, in both newspapers the pattern of disconnected themes is strikingly similar. The similarities are that the theme “Chinese investment visas” emerged as separated from all the other Chinese themes, and that there is no proximity to other themes that are linked to the Chinese participation in public life and public places in the country.
However, there are some differences between the two newspapers in the content of the themes. Público has more themes on the visible presence of Chinese in public places, mentioning Martim Moniz, a square in Lisbon (P3, 19.2%) where Chinese commerce is very visible, and the educational aspects associated with (Chinese) cultural diversity (P6, 11%). Typical text segments for these two themes, as extracted by the software, are accounts of Chinese activities and celebrations in public places, and, regarding theme P6, on the difficulties felt by Chinese children learning the Portuguese language at school. Correio da Manhã, instead, highlights the relationship between institutions of control, such as the police or the health control department and the Chinese, either being perpetrators (CM2, 12.3%) or victims (CM3, 21.9%), also in mostly commerce related issues. Typical text segments of the Chinese as perpetrators report them being caught by the police involved in money laundering or not following food safety regulations in their restaurants. In theme CM3 they are seen as victims of petty crimes, their shops and restaurants being targeted for robbery. This difference between newspapers is in line with their different publishing styles and expected audiences, where one presents more culture-relevant content (Público) and the other focuses on criminal/sensational events (Correio da Manhã) (Sparks, 2000). Nevertheless, the pattern of disconnection of investment visa articles from all other Chinese themes is similar in both of these widely read newspapers: both construct the issues surrounding investment visas as distant from other Chinese issues. This
suggests that in reading them, the public is being presented with the existence of two, unrelated, sub-groups of Chinese in Portugal.

A further consistent pattern is that the “Chinese investment visas” and the “Investment visas’ corruption” themes have similar percentages in the two newspapers, meaning that the level of exposure and discussion of the issue was almost the same in both. Representative text segments for “Investment visas’ corruption” themes in both newspapers report on a trial in which government officials liaised with real state companies and fostered businesses in exchange for accelerated visa procedures. Yet, corruption problems regarding investment visas are even more clearly disconnected from the Chinese migration debate in the press. This seems to confirm our second research question, in which we focus on how investment visas may be portrayed as depoliticised and disconnected from the “immigration debate”. This pattern is also clear in both newspapers, suggesting that across the widely read press the strategies used are similar.

However, this analysis does not explicitly present the forms in which the depoliticisation might be present. A more fine-grained analysis is necessary to explore how investment visas are discussed: particularly, to explore the characteristics of discourse that may have contributed to a depoliticised representation of the issue; also, to uncover how this depoliticisation may affect representations of citizenship, and of the Chinese residents along with it.

Second Stage
Content Analysis
As mentioned, in the second stage, the goal is to uncover whether Chinese investment visas are discussed in the press in a depoliticised way using content analysis. We now describe the analytic procedure.

The first step was to select articles from the previous corpus that directly mentioned investment visas. These were 83 articles in Público and 81 in Correio da Manhã, making for a total of 164 articles from January 2013 until September 2017.

Then a content analysis was conducted to explore depoliticisation. Drawing from the framework for the analysis of depoliticisation in the press (see Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017), it was defined that depoliticisation could be detected in both structure and content categories. Regarding structure, depoliticisation would be present if articles were short, few were of opinion, and there would be a predominance of articles highlighting the benefits of the law. Depoliticisation would systematically show only one (homogeneous) perspective about investment visas and their underlying neoliberal values. Articles would also exclude several relevant social actors. Regarding content, articles would be predominately composed by arguments in favour of investment visas using economic values rather than citizenship ones. Economic values should draw on (neoliberal) economic and property values for capital accumulation and/or production (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001), whereas citizenship values would put forward a discussion on the deterritorialised proposal of investment visas and how it may contrast with (traditional) labour and place-based citizenship and participation values (Langhout & Fernández, 2018). A very high predominance of economic values was considered as an indicator of depoliticisation. The steps for the content analysis (Lacy, Watson, Riffe, & Lovejoy, 2015) were the following.

First, the structural categories were created following the methodological procedure of Castro and colleagues (2018). Categories were discussed between the first two authors until their definitions were stabilised and only
then would analysis proceed to the whole corpus. The structure categories created were: length of article (short to medium vs. long); depth of article (opinion vs. news/reportage); orientation related to investment visas (balanced, predominance of benefits, predominance of problems, and descriptive); range of perspectives (homogeneous or heterogeneous); voice (not mentioned vs. mentioned/directly quoted by: (a) the government institutions/actors; (b) real estate; (c) investment visa holders; (d) Chinese institutions; (e) other non-investment migrants; (f) other citizens, e.g., local citizens).

Second, the content categories were created by the two first authors by screening the articles for arguments that used different types of values to justify the societal relevance of investment visas. Arguments were defined as extracts of articles that either implicitly or explicitly give reasons for or against investment visas. The content categories created were the following: (1) arguments using economic values in favour of investment visas; (2) arguments using economic values against investment visas (3) arguments using citizenship values in favour of investment visas and (4) arguments using citizenship values against investment visas.

Third, each of the four types of arguments were further divided in specific data-driven sub-categories (see supplementary materials for frequencies). These were categorized for a more detailed analysis of the composition of these arguments and whether these contributed to a plural – politicised – debate within the tensions in economics and in citizenship/migration.

Fourth, as recommended by best practices in content analysis (Lacy et al., 2015), an external evaluator performed a random codification of 20% of articles to evaluate inter-rater reliability of the coding. The mean of Cohen's Kappa was .954 (see Table 3).

Results

Regarding whether investment visas are presented in a depoliticised way, structure categories seem to support this claim. In both newspapers, the majority of the articles were of short to medium length (130 articles, 79.1%) and there was a high prevalence of descriptive news (154 articles, 93.9%), with very few opinion articles (10 articles, 6.1%).

Most articles highlighted the benefits of investment visas (81 articles, 49.4%) and only a small percentage of articles discussed their problems (20 articles, 12.2%). Also, most articles showed a homogeneous perspective on the matter (138 articles, 84.1%), i.e., in each article, only one perspective was presented. These structural characteristics of the corpus signal an unbalanced way of discussing investment visa-related issues in the press. It presents only one perspective – that of the benefits it brings – with little depth or complexity.

Regarding whose voices the press might be favouring, governmental institutions and actors were the most mentioned/quoted actors in these articles (135 articles, 82.3%), followed by investment visa holders (59 articles, 36.0%) and real estate representatives (55 articles, 33.5%). Other social actors who could have contributed to a more pluralistic debate on the consequences of investment visas were practically absent. These are: local Chinese institutions (not mentioned, 89.0%), other non-investment migrants (not mentioned, 98.2%) and other local citizens (not mentioned, 98.2%). To clarify whether the two newspapers present differences between them in the structural categories, chi-square tests were performed (see Table 2). Results show differences in length, \( \chi^2(1) = 4,981, p = .02 \), in the orientation of investment visas, \( \chi^2(3) = 10,896, p = .01 \), in the range of perspectives, \( \chi^2(1) = 6,240, p = .01 \), and in the presence of real estate as a social actor, \( \chi^2(1) = 13,642, p < .001 \). However, despite these few
differences, the overall pattern remains similar – and points to depoliticisation of the issue. This corroborates the literature indicating that this coverage strategy may be applied in all types of widely read press.

Table 2
Frequencies and Chi-Square Test of Structure Categories by Type of Press

| Structure Category                  | Público | Correio da Manhã | Total (%) |
|------------------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------|
| **Length***                        |         |                  |           |
| Short/Medium                       | 60 (-)  | 70 (+)           | 130 (79.1)|
| Long                               | 23 (+)  | 11 (-)           | 34 (20.7) |
| **Depth**                          |         |                  |           |
| Opinion                            | 3       | 7                | 10 (6.1)  |
| News/Reportage                     | 80      | 74               | 154 (93.9)|
| **Investment-visa orientation***   |         |                  |           |
| Balanced                           | 20      | 29               | 49 (29.9) |
| Benefits                           | 46      | 35               | 81 (49.4) |
| Problems                           | 6 (-)   | 14 (+)           | 20 (12.2) |
| Descriptive                        | 11 (+)  | 3 (-)            | 14 (8.5)  |
| **Range of perspectives***         |         |                  |           |
| Homogeneous                        | 64 (-)  | 74 (+)           | 138 (84.1)|
| Heterogeneous                      | 19 (+)  | 7 (-)            | 26 (15.9) |
| **Voice**                          |         |                  |           |
| Government                         |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 19      | 10               | 29 (17.7) |
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 64      | 71               | 135 (82.3)|
| Investment visa                    |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 59      | 46               | 105 (64.0)|
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 24      | 35               | 59 (36.0) |
| Real estate*                       |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 44 (-)  | 65 (+)           | 109 (66.5)|
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 39 (+)  | 16 (-)           | 55 (33.5) |
| Chinese institutions               |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 74      | 72               | 146 (89.0)|
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 9       | 9                | 18 (11.0) |
| Other migrants                     |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 81      | 80               | 161 (98.2)|
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 2       | 1                | 3 (1.8)   |
| Other citizens                     |         |                  |           |
| Not mentioned                      | 80      | 81               | 161 (98.2)|
| Mentioned/Quoted                   | 3       | 3                | 3 (1.8)   |
| **Total**                          | 83      | 81               | 164       |

*Note. Valence of adjusted standardized residuals in parenthesis beside frequencies.

*p < .05.

Regarding the content categories (see Table 3), the number of articles including arguments using economic values in favour of investment visas is striking (85 articles, 51.8%) compared to other types of arguments, and, particu-
larly, contrasting with the number of articles having arguments using economic values against investment visas (2 articles, 1.2%). The low number of articles that argue about investment visas through citizenship values (4 articles in favour, 2.4%, 13 articles against, 7.9%) seems to suggest this legal innovation is seldom discussed via the “immigration debate” (Wills, 2010), i.e., through the articulation of residency rights. Comparisons between newspapers revealed significant differences only regarding arguments with economic values in favour of investment visas, $\chi^2(1) = 7,882, p = .005$. According to the previous step of analysis, part of our corpus describes corruption events (see Table 1), still, contestation against investment visas as a legal mechanism is scarce. Not showing different views on these (neoliberal) innovations to citizenship, nor on valid contestation beyond neoliberal/economic values, creates the conditions to close down the debate on the matter (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017).

Table 3

| Type of Argument | Público (%) | Correio da Manhã (%) | Kappa | Total (%) |
|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------|
| Economic         |             |                       |       |           |
| In Favour*       | 52 (62.7) (+) | 33 (40.7) (-) | .864  | 85 (51.8) |
| Against          | -           | 2 (2.5)               | -     | 2 (1.2)   |
| Citizenship      |             |                       |       |           |
| In Favour        | 2 (2.4)     | 2 (2.5)               | 1.00  | 4 (2.4)   |
| Against          | 9 (10.8)    | 4 (4.9)               | 1.00  | 13 (7.9)  |
| Total            | 63 (75.9) / 83 | 41 (50.6) / 81 | 33 (20.0) / 164 | 104 (63.4) / 164 |

Note. Valence of adjusted standardized residuals in parenthesis beside frequencies. *p < .05.

Arguments using economic values in favour of investment visas (222 arguments, 87.1%) are overwhelmingly more numerous (see supplementary material for frequency details on these sub-categories and full frequencies on number of arguments). This evidence, in combination with other structural categories in which a homogeneous and positive perspective are the major tendency, suggests that the press is showing the citizenship-by-investment law very positively and as bringing only benefits to the economy. Depoliticisation is done by the emphasis on how investment visas bring “large sums of money to Portugal”, i.e., stating, very generally, that the benefits are for all (i.e., the whole country). In one example in particular (see Table 4), it is mentioned how this money coming from the investment visa law is directly entering the Portuguese “vaults”. Who has these “vaults”, and who benefits from them, however, remains undiscussed – particularly striking considering that this investment is mostly channelled into real estate, even though other possibilities of investment are available – in urban rehabilitation, job creation, or in cultural and research activities (Ampudia de Haro & Gaspar, 2019).

This law was implemented during the financial crisis in Portugal and the consequent bailout and austerity program, during which technical/economic solutions were systematically presented as highly desirable, and, in fact, as the only possibility for leaving the crisis (e.g. Figueiras & Ribeiro, 2013; Moury & Standring, 2017). So, in this coverage again, overall, foreign investment is presented to the public sphere as an inevitable technical solution to the difficult times the country and the economy were going through, by mentioning the potential for economic growth, job creation and other economic advantages – although it is left rather vague who the exact beneficiaries are (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017). In this vein, government social actors for instance claim in the articles that it would be “an insanity to refuse foreign investment” (see Table 4).
| Arguments using economic values | Against investment visas | Arguments using citizenship values | Against investment visas |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| In favour of investment visas    |                          | In favour of investment visas       |                          |
| The Golden Visa program has already conferred 817 million euros to the state vaults. The initiative was created in October 2012 in order to attract foreign investors. Since then, 1360 golden visas have been issued to foreign entrepreneurs who have created job opportunities in Portugal or invested more than half a million euros in the country. | And suddenly Portugal started issuing visas to promote solely two sectors: Real estate and banking and a group of rascals in ties strategically placed in the state apparatus. | The entrepreneur admits that Chinese clients have but one goal, which is to "obtain a visa so as to be granted freedom of movement in Europe." - some of his clients had never heard of Portugal before. Despite not being interested in staying permanently in Portugal, this does not mean that investors do not want the required investment to be profitable. |
| Portugal issued 471 Golden Visas in 2013 and earned 306.7 million in investments. The expected growth is, for the vice Prime-Minister, the confirmation that 'Golden Visas are a tool for economic recovery as well as that of the Real Estate market', as explained to Lusa (news agency). | The millions that entered the country were almost exclusively invested in real estate, which has largely contributed to the economic crisis. That is why property owners are given advantage, particularly by banks cramped with repossessed buildings which would lose even more of its value, were it not for the extra help. Investors did not show any interest in areas which would help us change the economic "paradigm", such as the export sector. | Portugal's requirement that the investor remains in the country, for 14 days every two subsequent years "does not affect the investor's life in his home country (China)." |
| We are willing to improve the system, we want Portugal to have a system "that contributes to economic growth", highlighted the vice Prime-Minister. In his first intervention, Portas said that "it would be an insanity to refuse foreign investment" | Golden investors are not the least bit interested in the Portuguese economy. Their two concerns are: money laundering and the European economy, since a visa issued in Portugal opens doors to the EU, thanks to the freedom of movement allowed within its borders | And these, clearly, are "touristic destinations known worldwide with plenty of beautiful landscapes and a paradisiacal coast where rich citizens can enjoy a high quality of life. |
| And these, clearly, are "touristic destinations known worldwide with plenty of beautiful landscapes and a paradisiacal coast where rich citizens can enjoy a high quality of life. | The socialist member of the European parliament Ana Gomes does not seem surprised (…). "I got sick and tired of warning people that this was bound to happen. It is a scheme that lends itself to all manners of corruption, starting at the bottom and going all the way to the top of the administrative hierarchy, as well as facilitating money laundry." | Portuguese language tests are no longer required, issues of security and prestige are no longer taken into consideration - open doors, letting swindlers in. Is that "golden"? | Surely, there will always be rascals taking advantage of this citizenship auction as a means of laundering their money, corrupting civil servants, deceiving the state and so on and so forth. |
Also, arguments using economic values to contest the investment visa regime are low (3 arguments; 1.2%). This shows how economic contestation, i.e., contestation to the neoliberal logic of the market, is absent. Apart from one extract – from one opinion article – that argues for the change of the “economic paradigm” (see Table 4) – no contestation is given to the neoliberal proposals of investment visas.

Arguments using citizenship values to either sustain (9 arguments; 3.5%) or contest (21 arguments; 9.4%) investment visas are not frequent. In those arguments, real estate representatives highlight the deterritorialised proposal of the law as something positive: e.g., because it allows free movement in Europe/World; because investors show no desire for an attachment in the host country. In some arguments, this defence of the deterritorialised vision of citizenship supported by the law co-exists, however, with the expectation that new residents are looking for a “high quality of life” (see Table 4). Scarce as it is, this type of positive argument puts forward new representations of citizenship, migration and residency without making evident the tension with previous “traditional” citizenship representations. They present the new investment visa residents as people who do not work (in Portugal) and do not need to attach to community or place as other forms of residency require.

This is in contrast with arguments against investment visas using citizenship values. These arguments show some contestation, by negatively referring to waivers in the investment visa application process (e.g., no Portuguese language requirement). They also mention how it may allow the entrance of dishonest people into the territory and highlight the potential for corruption inside the state institutions.

Again, although there is almost no contestation, the available contestation does not discuss in depth (1) how new legal proposals affect different groups of foreign residents, (2) how place-based citizenship is being challenged by the commodification of citizenship and (3) (other) citizenship possibilities/values beyond neoliberal values.

Discussion

This study draws on a view of neoliberalism as “an articulation of state, market and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third” (Wacquant, 2012, p. 71). It seeks to understand how the Portuguese press communicates to the public sphere a particular market-conforming policy through which the state redraws the meanings of citizenship. For this, it focused on a group of foreign residents in Portugal, the Chinese, a rapidly growing group and the major beneficiaries of investment visas (a neoliberal policy for migration and foreign residency) in the country. It sought to uncover whether the press presented the Chinese residents as a unified community, or if the investment visa beneficiaries come out as a different sub-group; and whether or not this presentation was a depoliticised one.

Results show that the two widely read tabloid and quality newspapers studied yielded very similar patterns. Both present and discuss residents that are in the country through traditional means of labour and place-bound integration separately from those who are residents through investment visas. This means that, to the readers, two separate sub-groups of foreign residents come out. Following a more fine-grained analysis of the articles only mentioning investment visas, it was possible to unveil in them the characteristics of a depoliticised discourse. Specifically, the systematic prevalence of short, descriptive – rather than analytic/opinion – articles, the predominance of homogeneous articles highlighting only investment visas’ benefits, with no contrary views, and the overall presence of arguments with economic reasons for the investment visas to be inevitably good rendered both the existence
of choice among competing values and contestation not visible. Also, the voices – and thus the perspectives – of the governmental institutions were much privileged and highlighted. This is aligned with previous claims that the widely read press often contributes to serve as “agents of establishment ideas and elite voices” (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017, p. 1).

The contributions of this study are three-fold: theoretical, methodological and applied. Theoretically, it contributes to social psychological studies of citizenship and of legal innovation. This is done by focusing on neoliberal legal innovations directly affecting citizenship, which incorporate and legitimise certain values and representations of the common good (Castro, 2012), and by analysing how these are reflected or suppressed in the press. Extending existing research, we thus explored the link between the macro-level of legal representations of citizenship and the micro-level of everyday meaning-making (Andreouli et al., 2017; Batel & Castro, 2018; Castro, 2012; Castro & Santos, 2020; Howarth et al., 2013; Mahendran et al., 2019) for a better understanding of citizenship under neoliberal rules. Specifically, we explored how a legal innovation regarding citizenship and migration, informed by economic values, was discursively presented in the press – and helped shape everyday debates and representations of citizenship and migration. The tensions and contrasting views that could arise from the economic priority offered to capital over labour (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001), and the dismissal of a place-based involvement in the country (Tanasoca, 2016) were, however, absent. The depoliticisation of investment visas also presents them to the public as economic/development policies, rather than migration and citizenship ones – leaving them outside the much more complex and contested “immigration debate” (Wills, 2010). This emphasizes how the press is contributing to how socially shared meaning – in interaction with neoliberal proposals – is actively constructing who constitutes an immigrant and in what conditions. The findings pose interesting questions to migration studies, challenging it to examine how globalization and transnational movements (regulated by new laws) affect who is perceived as an immigrant and the relations between inter-minority and intra-minority groups in host societies (Verkuyten, 2018). Also, we show how the press plays an important role in creating limits for the meaning-making processes related to new (neoliberal) laws.

Methodologically, this research puts forward an innovative combination of methods for the study of the press. Relying on a two-step approach, we first used a standardized, software-based procedure to systematically and parsimoniously identify the main themes of a sizeable corpus of articles, and to detect whether the investment visas and their recipients were there treated as a topic separate from others. Since this was the case, in a second step we used a classic content analysis procedure to uncover the structural and content characteristics of this specific topic. This innovative combination also defines in this second step clear categories of analysis for the study of depoliticisation in the press that can now be applied to the alternative, non-mainstream press to explore the dynamics and forms of depoliticised discourse in this and other domains. A limitation of this study, however, is that we are unable to confirm the accuracy of the search engines in the two newspapers. Moreover, the fact that it is a qualitative study focusing on the Portuguese press and the Chinese means that the results are not to be directly generalized to other presses and groups. However, its framework of analysis and findings offer insights for a socio-psychological reflection on the role of the state, its neoliberal transformations and the mediating role of the press on the construction and re-construction of the meanings of citizenship and migration. A more comprehensive analysis of how the press discusses investment visas, exclusively, may also further inform the process involved in depoliticisation.

Our findings also have important applied implications for rethinking the role of the press. Indeed, this study shows how the widely read press is not assuring the space for plural debates about citizenship and migration, by portraying
the neoliberal perspective as unique and undebatable (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2017). If the press does not present the range and complexity of political contestation to economic and political options, and its alternatives, citizens have limited access to other (political) configurations and options. This invisibility of other political options may help feed the lack of citizenship engagement – and the "learned helplessness" assumption from the polity that policy is, in fact, only a matter of "expertise" (Hay, 2014). The press may play an important role in rendering certain issues as inside the plural, political debate, or rather, presenting it outside the realm of citizenship, and, consequently, belonging to the realm of technocratic considerations. Future research can examine the effect of depoliticised debates in citizenship engagement for social change (Carvalho, 2008) – specifically as a pre-condition for politicised identities necessary for collective action (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The ways in which the press maintains the hegemonic representation of certain political (neoliberal) configurations should be explored further – how it happens in the newsroom where press material is produced, thus exploring what factors may lead towards a politicised press or a depoliticised one.

Finally, this paper contributes to the literature by putting forward a framework to analyse how (neoliberal) legal changes regulating migration may not be presented to the public as proposals following from options among competing values, but as technocratic decisions, thus limiting possible debate beyond neoliberal values.

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Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Supplementary Materials

The supplementary materials contain the original output yielded by IRaMuTeQ software in the first stage of analysis and a detailed table with the sub-categories used in defining arguments in the second stage of analysis:

- S1. Original IRaMuTeQ Output of the Factorial Correspondence Analysis
- S2. Detailed Table with Number of Arguments in Favour of or Against Investment Visas According to Sub-Category Type

For access see Index of Supplementary Materials below.

Index of Supplementary Materials

Santos, T. R., Castro, P., & Guerra, R. (2020). Supplementary materials to "Is the press presenting (neoliberal) foreign residency laws in a depoliticised way? The case of investment visas and the reconfiguring of citizenship" [Additional information]. PsychOpen. https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.4229
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