

THE GENDER OF RECESSION: WHEN NEOLIBERAL MANAGEMENT MODELS AND ECONOMIC POLICIES DEFINE WOMEN'S SUBJECT-POSITION

Juliana Souza

ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed to discuss how the non-inclusion of public policies addressing gender relations in Portugal, during the current financial crisis, can determine the severity of the impacts not only of economic contraction, but also of an entire social dynamics for women – and for those other said minority groups. In this sense, it also seeks to understand how this neoliberal economic structure, gendered and patriarchal in its essence, has affected women in a considerable way. Thus, in defining its decisive agents within the economic fabric, Portugal's interventionist economy does not place women as subjects in the centre of social decisions and economic priorities.

KEYWORDS

Economic crisis; gender relations; women studies

INTRODUCTION

After just over four years of austere experiment in the country, with the intervention of the International Monetary Fund along with what would end in the implementation of a structural adjustment program, the reality of facts seems to indicate – at least in a short term – a paradigmatic change in this new economic model of Portugal. Contrarily to the evidence sustained by the institutional discourse, the “expansionary austerity” panorama is complex and presents no predictable outcome, since the economic contraction in the country, aggravated by fiscal adjustment policies, changed an entire social reality, especially in economic sectors where women are inserted.

In these times, the development models of gender regimes eventually reflect the processes of exclusion and integration of women, not only in the productive economy and in institutional models of labour market management, but also in the evolution within the family core, in pension and social protection systems, and in the social gender relations in particular. Considering a time of economic cleavage, as it is for this one witnessed in Portugal, such models, when associated with a liberal logic of management of the economy in which the Welfare State and austerity weaken social rights – particularly in countries of little tradition of social dialogue on the organization of labour – interfere greatly in gender relations, contributing to the definition of subject-positions in society.

Several factors can explain this gender asymmetry in the economic organization of capitalist societies. One relates to the historical dichotomy, in which social relations

of production and reproduction grant the role of production to masculinity whereas the reproduction roles are left to the femininity. This patriarchal logic of domination/subjugation, in which political and economic inequalities experienced by women reaffirm patterns for the construction of both femininity and masculinity (Reinharz, 1992, p. 147), settle the social construction of difference, in which women come out in clear disadvantage. Another factor is due to the exclusion of management models based on services and public policies that address gender relations. Failing to incorporate such models can determine the severity of impacts not only of an economic contraction, but also of an entire social dynamics, as in labour relationships for example.

As a consequence of these asymmetric relations, economic and social inequities and current labour dynamics, aggravated by the financial crisis, are being felt in several fronts: in the labour force, endangering female workers' labour-bond relations; in the sexual segregation of various sectors in the Portuguese labour structure – also due to the historical gender inequality in job *status*; in unemployment, lasting last for longer periods of time; in the increased incidence of poverty; in the significant growth of unpaid work, partly due to the cuts in the State's social transfers, etc. Such inequalities also put the women's economic and symbolic independence into question (Casaca, 2012; Fraser, 2009), as well as their democratic representation in public life and their representation as a productive force.

Under such terms, the neoliberal capitalism regime, increased with the eruption of the global financial system collapse in 2008, has intensified pre-existing and polarized gender rules and roles (Negra & Tasker, 2014), contributing to a setback in both policies and the path for the modernization of gender-equality relations, including in the construction of social institutions.

In rethinking genre as a socially-constructed practice, the macroeconomic framework of a country, which is part of this same process of social constitution, contributes to the determination of subject-positions in several economies by defining its decisive agents within the economic fabric. They are power structures that underlie gender representations in contemporary society, like the configuration and division of labour and social transfers itself, where one still verifies asymmetries – women's segregation and social vulnerability are instances to be marked.

In convergence with the most recent analysis based on the triad gender, recession and austerity, one draws the hypothesis that the impact of the financial recession varies depending on the interactions among gender relations, the institutions and the chosen adjustment mechanisms, with special focus on an economy in recession, such as Portugal's. This means to say that the exclusion or inclusion of management models, based on public policies that address gender relations, can determine the severity of impacts not only of an economic contraction but also of a whole social dynamics (Rubery, 2014). Therefore, the contribution of this paper is to identify how gender differences in the Portuguese economic architecture are accentuated in times of deep economic recession like this current one. In order to do so, it attempted to observe and analyse the impact of the neoliberal tripod "privatization, flexibilization and austerity" (Abreu et al., 2013) on women's everyday life.

In particular, this analysis also enables to perceive how the “language of crisis”, appropriated by means of social communication, can be observed and interpreted as a social phenomenon that involves, in its *modus operandi*, both the control/power structures and the identity logics of a patriarchal consumer society. This exercise in turn contributes to identify and analyse the possible impact that gender divisions and stereotypes cause in the way women are seen in Portuguese society, currently driven by the financial market.

The starting point was the intuition that the understanding of gender relations in the current scenario of crisis would consequently imply in an intense everyday experience: the neoliberal economic structure is gendered and patriarchal in its roots (Muñoz & Madroño, 2011).

1. FROM THE DILUTION OF THE WELFARE STATE TO THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF LABOUR RELATIONS

According to what is seen in the Portuguese context, the long-term crisis occurring along the last four decades consolidated countless economic and social boundaries, especially in the labour fabric. Particularly in this sector, a gender occupational segregation with clear disadvantages to women was established. Such reality resulted partly from a historical naturalization of the subordination process of women's position in society. This secondary position is related both to the “division between men and women in the labour market” (Muñoz & Madroño, 2011, p. 116) and the responsibilities undertaken by both genders regarding housework and the unpaid care.

The Portuguese labour market, both in its structure and dynamics, represents an important indicator of how these gender-relations are configured in today's economy. With the economic downturn, aggravated by the obligation to comply with the criteria established in the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with *Troika*, one is able to point some of the main impacts on women's everyday life in Portugal: the expansion of women's informal economy and more precarious forms of employment (Ferreira, 2014); greater weakening of contractual relations, job insecurity, involuntary part-time work, unemployment and long-term unemployment (Casaca, 2012, p. 2); professional stagnation, deterioration of women's labour market (Ferreira, 2014); loss or reduction in social transfers and risk of poverty. In this scenario, women's unemployment and risk of poverty make one of the greatest social scourges to women, mainly because they are inserted in a profoundly gendered macroeconomic architecture. Such gender asymmetries, inherent to a patriarchal model, make it impossible for women to occupy symmetric spaces and perform symmetric duties regarding the opposite sex, not only in a moment of economic downturn, but also in a moment of economical expansion/recovering.

In discussing the economic crisis and the impact that strikes women's workforce, it is necessary to consider that the economy, particularly in these moments of political and economic cleavage, is anchored in a particular fluidity of bonds while hiring workforce. So, in addition to cuts in social expenses, market liberalization and the subsequent flexibilization in labour relations (Casaca, 2012; Muñoz & Madroño, 2011) allowed

companies to work in conformity with market demand, employing according to the available resources and flexibility (Rubery, 2014).

Based upon the analysis that Marxist feminist theories make on class struggle, Lina Muñoz and Paula Madroño (2011, p. 117) seek to demonstrate that, due mainly to the market fluidity and labour bonds that unfold thereof, women constitute a potential workforce reserve, available anytime and mobilized according to labour market demands. In other words: hired in times of economic boom and dismissed during recessions – largely due to the *harmful flexibility*¹ stated by Sara Falcão Casaca (2012, p. 41). In this context, women were always attributed the role of “reserve army” in the functioning of the market economy².

In Portugal, as highlighted by Casaca, such “strategy takes special relevance in the Portuguese business community, where competition strategies, fundamentally oriented to cost-reduction, are predominant” (2012, p. 40), resulting in turn in an increase in flexible forms of employment. With the State’s more evident retraction, especially by means of reduced levels of protection and social transfers, more flexible labour modalities have become a market rule.

On the issue of social transfers, it is important to consider that well-being and social protection levels still represent an effective way of women’s social integration, both in the labour market and in the public sphere. With the retraction of the State and subsequent cuts in social support, social and labour marginalization of women is established, compromising systematically in this cycle their economic, financial and political autonomy (Karamessini & Rubery, 2014; Muñoz & Madroño, 2011). As it is documented in the *Feminist Campaign’s Anti-Austerity Report* (RCFAA), of 2013³:

cuts in the State’s social expenses presuppose the increase in housework and non-paid care, generally left to women [...] this lack of resources means a lack of power that makes vulnerable, subordinates, oppresses and prevents access to active and full citizenship. (RCFAA, 2013, pp. 5-6)

Therefore, the absence of public policies that converge to gender equality becomes crucial for the aggravation of the social crisis, mainly in years of austerity. Such policies, as illustrated by Rubery (2014, p. 32), “are designed to encourage women to either abandon the labour market or dedicate themselves to positions with more flexible labour bonds and lower wages”.

¹ The neoliberal perspective on flexibilization of economies as a solution for difficulties in business competitiveness, as well as in the State itself, alongside the proposition to boost the economy as a whole, follows what Sara Falcão Casaca defines as *harmful flexibility*, a practice founded on low wage costs, precarious, instable and insecure employment at the core of labour relations. In Portugal’s case, the tendency to apply this modality of flexibility – the *harmful one* – has increased, once the country, in a process of “expansionist austerity” (Abreu et al., 2013) has adopted policies of strong fiscal restraint, especially in the reduction of State’s expenses and with the aforesaid sequent cuts in social support.

² Muñoz & Madroño complement this issue on flexible workforce: “women are the ones who supply a greater degree of flexibility in the informal economy when interacting with the formal one” (2011, p. 117).

³ A document organized by UMAR (‘Alternative and Response’ Women’s Union), presented at the 1st National Meeting of the Initiative for a Citizen Audit “Crisis do not pay debts”, in 2013.

And that is not all. Gender inequality at labour *status* turns out to be another worrying aspect in women's financial and economic autonomy, especially in times of austerity. This stems fundamentally from the fact that both the dominant political speech and company practices still support and perpetuate the ontologically constructed idea that women are more likely to undertake certain types of work and positions, such as those of care, teaching and obviously homemaking. This social construction of difference creates asymmetries and profound impacts on women's everyday labour. Lack of acknowledgement in the labour market itself and asymmetrical distribution of salaries, as well as women's low levels of professional qualification, are some of the impacts to be highlighted. These factors eventually contribute even more for the consolidation of an obtuse understanding around the bipolarity of gender roles.

Beyond such asymmetry, it verifies another trend increased by the crisis, mainly through a necessity to diversify income sources in the family core: the feminization of professions or gender occupational segregation. In other words, there are more and more women performing jobs of a feminine trait that contribute to the consolidation of gender roles, such as service sectors, education and care taking. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE) 2011's data, women are overrepresented by 71% in personal and social services.

Work feminization rate might also be another important indicative when analysing labour dynamics and gender relations. If it starts from the presupposition that the macroeconomic architecture is gendered in its foundational basis, interfering profoundly in gender relations as a consequence, employment flexibility falls "fundamentally onto the female workforce" (Casaca, 2012, p. 25). This phenomenon amplifies even more the gap and asymmetry in labour and gender relations, consolidating both the "traditional social representations and the very asymmetry in the division of non-paid work" (Casaca, 2012, p. 33). Therefore, the greater gender asymmetry in labour flexibility is, the greater the rate of work feminization (as well as part-time work). Still in accordance to INE, it is important to highlight that 61.4% of Portuguese male and female workforce is in the service sector. Thus, if the work-flexibilization trend is more present in this sector, majorly comprised of women, the probability women are more subject to more precarious and vulnerable work relations is greater when compared to men's.

Consequently, the labour vulnerability⁴ in an economy is also related to the implementation or not of public policies contemplating gender relations in society as a whole. It is so, because "active policies of employment provide higher levels of protection to the involved individuals" (Casaca, 2012, p. 28) entitling workers to be awarded with social and fiscal protectionist benefits, thus preventing precariousness. The neoliberal policies to make labour relations flexible, where part-time work regime is a conditional, stand in an opposing direction thereto. They are numerically flexible, yet intensive jobs, which ease their adjustment according to the demand (Rubery, 2014)⁵. That means: ease of dismissal.

⁴ Such vulnerability is resulting mainly from a process of economy liberalization, in which the flexibilization of labour relations aims at lowering costs on work staff; yet, mainly where workers are regulated both on cost management and according to market demand.

⁵ The nomenclature commonly used in the United States to this type of work is *buffer jobs* (Rubery, 2014).

Precariousness and loss of jobs also present an accentuated gender-asymmetry during times of economic contraction. As pointed by Jill Rubery (2014), Maria Karamessini (2014) and Virgínia Ferreira (2014), the degree of vulnerability/impact in a context of strong economic rupture is perceived more distinctly by social groups, due to gender differences in the economic architecture. So, there are sectors which are more affected than others during the stages of an economic recession. The authors register that the initial impact of a crisis is usually felt by the masculine workforce, the dominant one. Only afterwards the effects are diluted (mostly in a more severe way) amongst the other groups. Then, sectors such as manufacture, and particularly the automobile and construction industries, two of the predominantly male sectors, suffered the main impacts in the first stage of the crisis in the Portuguese context. As to the female workforce, it felt the direct repercussions as from 2010, the period called “second stage of the crisis”, due to both the crisis itself and the governing policies. This is when sectors such as the textile, footwear and ceramist industries succumbed to the economic recession.

Such evidence strengthens many of feminist criticisms⁶ on the macroeconomic architecture and the way in which it is organized today. In displacing women – and other minorities – from the centre of economic priorities, favouring the free-market economy, the neoliberal model, patriarchal in its essence, it reinforces pre-existing gender rules (Floro & Dymski, 2000). One example is the fact that job loss is not uniform, as revealed by Ferreira (2014, p. 213), men keep losing wage work positions⁷, and women lose poorly-paid and low-skilled jobs: “Considering that men lost more jobs such as wage ones; women in turn lost more jobs as independent workers, such as unpaid family workers and employers (twice more than men)”. Also within the context of labour relations, Sara Falcão Casaca (2012, p. 16) complements this issue on the reinforcement of the pre-existing gender roles by numbering some of the reasons that lead to this process, which happens due to:

[...] differentiation between a group which benefits from job security and opportunities for professional development on one side, and on the other side, a peripheral segment that includes those who find themselves working part-time or who have a contract for services, which perform their activities through subcontracting agencies (including temporary work agencies, which have a contract for a limited term). (Casaca, 2012, p. 16)

Some social components such as flexibility of labour bonds and relations, which result from the neoliberal paradigm of market liberalization in the sector of implementation of fiscal adjustment policies, bring even more severe implications for the female population. One highlights the precarization of working conditions and social rights, because they amplify the weakening of citizenship and the neutralization of subjects’

⁶ Many of the feminist economy propositions, mainly on the focus given to the gender dimension in the crisis of the last two decades, turn out to be useful in the attempt to attribute more visibility regarding the “economic development and social inequality” in women’s everyday life, a paradigm that rather impairs women instead of protecting them.

⁷ As it is to be confirmed in the analysis of Muñoz and Madroño (2011), men resume their activities in a stage of economic recovery much easier than women. While women suffer from the most serious repercussions, such as the loss of jobs with more precarious labour relations, as it is for the cases of self-employed individuals and housemaids.

resistance. In these terms, it is important to reflect on how this conjuncture of financial recession puts into question the emancipation and representation of women in the public sphere as well, together with their representation in the democratic process.

2. THE IDEOLOGICAL OFFENSIVE OF NEOLIBERALISM AND THE MEDIA IN REINFORCING THE GENDERED DIVISION OF BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES

Part of this process is due to the fact that the liberal currents of the market economy work to implement social and labour policies in which women are not covered as active subjects (Fraser, 2009) – thus, the emancipation/contesting voices are silenced. Therefore, as elucidated by Virgínia Ferreira, all this process has direct repercussions in women's economic and financial autonomy, mainly in what she defines as “triple dimensions” of autonomy: the individual, social and the political ones (2014, p. 224).

Although neoliberal economies have implemented public policies targeting to cover both men and women in a more symmetric way when accessing the labour market and social rights benefits, such as paternity-leave for example, there are ideas and procedures of a patriarchal nature that are implicit in the *modus operandi* which still block women's emancipation in all areas. Such procedures, as the asymmetries in the professional *status* and inequality of wages, act in an ambiguous way and must be sensitized and disclosed. As Ferreira explains, on one side is the State, which treats “men and women equally as producers and caretakers, but does not create the essential means that enable them to perform both activities in an adequate way” (2014, p. 211). On the other side, there is the market, which still (re)produces the ideology of the “man-provider, discriminating women in general, particularly those with family responsibilities, as well as those men who try to share family responsibilities” (Ferreira, 2014, p. 211). Looking just at the feminine universe, one's attention is called to the fact that there is always a cross idea in these two ambiguous spheres, as pointed by Ferreira: the cultural adhesion of women to the reproductive sphere (and the idea that they are more likely able to perform housework and care activities) still prevails.

The post-feminist rhetoric of consumption and meritocracy also comes into the discussion. The Portuguese institutional speech has focused on the consecration of free-market and the validation of austerity measures, presenting them both as a natural and inevitably advantageous process of economic recovery. This assertive narrative, a part of the gears that move the consumption industry, appeals to those notions of individual achievement by means of meritocracy, then unattached to actions of the State – notions that in turn are widely valued by the neoliberal market. This meritocracy rhetoric eventually hides the obligations inherent to the State.

In this ideological offensive, it is strengthened what Muñoz and Madroño call “safety net for the poor” (2011, p. 121), or what Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines as “providence-society” (2011, p. 74). In addition to the informal economy, this has become a “specific way to constitute income, in particular families' non-wage incomes” (Santos, 2011, p. 74) in face of the socioeconomic aggravation of post-*Troika*. In Portugal, this particularity

of the neoliberal economic model has been more and more concrete and recurrent, once the providence-state, inefficient and unable to subsidize social expenses, namely in times of crisis, obliges individuals to appeal to family-oriented and assistencialist policies. One is then allowed to highlight that the more precarious and in-deficit the providence-society appears, the more present it is. Once again, women's autonomy is brought into question, since the reinforcement of their subsidiary role in the family at times of providence-state impairs their releasing from the domestic environment, its non-wage working and key areas of citizenship.

In Portugal's case, one thing that explains this scenario beyond the crisis⁸ itself is the very dilution of the welfare state in function of public cuts and adjustment measures adopted during *Troika's* period of country administration. Falling to intervene in the economic regulation, the State overburdens the providence-society, thus fragilizing one of the driving forces to the market economy, society and family income basis: women. Santos (2011, pp. 76-77) confirms this argument: "all cuts in the State's social expenses represent an overburdening to the providence-society, mainly to women, who are considerably the great craftspeople in the providence-society".

In these socio-political and economic transformations, which have contributed to the delimitation of women's subject-positions, there is another level of discussion that must be considered: the new institutional discourse, particularly the one of the media. In her article of 2014 entitled "Employment and austerity: Changing welfare and gender regimes in Portugal", Virginia Ferreira defends the idea that the journalistic narrative seeks, by means of broadcasting "crisis-fighting" strategies, to incentivise women to return to the domestic environment, in a clear setback to the issues on gender⁹. The arguments of Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker are in accordance with what Ferreira refers to as the *media's* taking sides in interpreting and broadcasting the crisis, and how this work contributes to the construction of such public self-blaming opinion without a voice of resistance. In research done in the United States, the authors strongly defend that the media culture is biased in working the game of representations to maintain *status quo* – regarding gender rules as well.

Therefore, what is verified is that gender normativity is still constructed and framed in patriarchal terms, namely in the economic field. The analysis made by Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker (2004) on media texts that naturalize gender inequalities, especially in times of economic cleavage, provides the idea of how the process of gender-orientation in the journalistic discourses, in convergence with post-feminist notions of consumption, mass culture and the masculinity/femininity binomial, contributes to an even more obtuse and polarized social representation. One example are the publications targeting said "feminine" public, which interpret the financial recession according to neoliberal and post-feminist values, with a strong appeal to consumerism; an ideal that places

⁸ In Portugal, the crisis in the labour market and the consequential debt of families has caused a direct impact on families' subsistence model, reconfiguring in turn a whole social and labour scenario in the country (Santos, 2011).

⁹ Alexandre Abreu et al. (2013, p. 9) points to the institutional discourse of the Portuguese self-blaming, in which one attributes the Portuguese with an irresponsible behaviour for living over their possibilities, a bias that omits the real reasons which led the Portuguese economy to a level of crisis.

women rather as consumers instead of subjects at the centre of social decisions and economic priorities. This assertive discourse of leadership and financial autonomy — and also of sexual freedom —, (re)produced by the *media*, is paradoxical to a reality of low wages, precariousness, poverty and unemployment. Therefore, it is noted that economic changes still follow the conventional gender rules, as confirmed by Negra and Tasker:

The group of women to increase the legal, educational and economic assertiveness on one side and the availability of cheap women's workforce on another grant that economic changes are repetitively framed in terms of gender rules. (Negra & Tasker, 2014, p. 15)

The aforementioned gender inequality in work *status*, which reinforces women's wage gap and their low qualifications in the labour market, alongside the very asymmetry in the social gender relations, also come to determine, by means of the *media*, women's subject-position in an economy in crisis: in the private sphere, namely those who have low professional qualification. This is partly due to the naturalization of gender inequalities also (re)produced by the *media*. Sensitive to this matter, Ferreira argues that

[...] the media frequently chooses sources that have a certain preference by women who return to their homes. Such procedure induces part of the public opinion to conclude that salaries don't even pay for these women's children care, transport and taxes; therefore, they stay home in order to save money. (Ferreira, 2014, p. 224)

The argument proposed in the aftermath of media discourse on the crisis comes to suggest that the relation between labour dynamics which are drawn today in the Portuguese context, as well as the weakening of citizen's social rights, are inseparable from the process of building meanings in which one determines the subject-positions that categorize power relations. In this process, the press, namely the one targeting the so-called "feminine" public, comes to consolidate such social constructions of difference, with significant disadvantage to women, in a moment in which the reality of facts confirm a profound increase of social inequalities among women (Negra & Tasker, 2014).

Therefore, the negative constructions that the *media* and the market operationalize in relation to women not only reflect an increase in the country's labour vulnerability, but also a *modus operandi* that is oblivious to gender-inclusive policies. Such mechanisms, with strong neoliberal characteristics of institutional protectionism and socio-labour exclusion (Muñoz & Madroño, 2011), generate in turn a significant setback in policies of social concentration, and particularly in the process of struggling for equality in gender relations, including in the core of the construction of social institutions. In this sense, the vulnerability and the non-participation of women in the public sphere are increased, considering the profound and historical asymmetry of gender that is present in economic, family and productive relations.

In thinking of women's presence in today's liberal model, by this perspective of promoting them — representing them in a secondary role — inside and outside the

labour market in response to the economic changes, it becomes more and more evident how the segregation process, in which women are historically inserted, may be the scope for understanding gender differences at the impact of macroeconomic changes. It is ultimately important to observe such segregation more as a reinforcement of traditional and tight gender rules to (de)limit women's subject-position. Most importantly, to observe how this new *modus operandi* has implied in a profound transformation in social relations of sex/gender, mainly in contexts of crisis. Therefore, it is common knowledge that austerity marginalizes women's subject-position in society, subordinating and oppressing them, possibly causing "an ideological setback reaction, favouring a return to the traditional gender roles" (Karamessini, 2014, p. 14).

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In this context, the effective broadcasting this gender-transversality principle, both in the organization and in the definition of policies, may be useful for the new labour dynamics which arise in a context of profound economic and financial recession. As Muñoz and Madroño highlight (2011, p. 128) "the implementation and enforcement of laws presuppose that one addresses and fights the multidimensionality of gender discrimination effectively". It would also be useful to open for a process of strong criticism on the evolution of gender relations in the core of social institutions (Rubery, 2014), mainly through the *media*.

Both austerity and current public policies reinforce the same failed mechanisms that propel the economic crisis in a first moment (Karamessini & Rubery, 2014) and they represent a true challenge to policies of gender equality. That is so, because the crisis that many economies confront today have been an ideological bias, especially by sectors of the right and nationalist fronts, for silencing of the political debate around these issues, particularly in regards to women's rights and the rights of other groups called "minority" ones, such as immigrants. As Negra and Tasker confirm, this recession represents an opportunity for the "right-wing 'feminists' to obscure and delegitimize the worries and organizations in defence of women's rights on gender inequality" (2014, p. 22).

In this sense, when problematizing precariousness in terms of the current austerity, one should take into consideration that there are negative factors resulting fundamentally from the very neoliberal ideal, which generates a profound process of social and economic inequality — thus aggravating a whole social construction, historically based on the difference. Once again, Muñoz and Madroño confirm this argument: "however designed they may be, inequality policies do not fit a macroeconomic model of deflationary policies, such as those that are being developed nowadays, generators of inequality" (2011, p. 128). Policies of inequality are the ones which provide austerity, in constant expansion, with the prioritization of measures that void the interests around the evolution of gender equality relations.

Along the three years of compliance with Portugal's economic and financial adjustment programme, government and *Troika* failed for not considering the implications that

an economic and financial crisis of this magnitude would bring to the subject-position of men and women, in an orthodox and essentially patriarchal economy that is subject to neoliberal and Eurocentric excesses. Therefore, in the end of three years of a government that was not voted by the population (Abreu et al., 2013), it must take into account public policies that effectively address gender perspectives; mainly in a way so Portuguese economy can finally grow with social justice against the dichotomous logic of domination/subjugation, which keeps defining social relations.

REFERENCES

- Abreu, A. (2013). *A crise, a troika e as alternativas urgentes*. Lisboa: Tinta da China.
- Bento, A. (2013). *Relatório da Campanha Feminista Anti-Austeritária*. Documento organizado pela UMAR (União Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta) e apresentado no I Encontro Nacional da Iniciativa por uma Auditoria Cidadã “As crises não pagam dívidas”. Texto policopiado.
- Casaca, S. (2012). *Mudanças laborais e relações de género: Novos vetores de (des)igualdade*. Lisboa: Almedina.
- Ferreira, V. (2014). Employment and austerity: Changing welfare and gender regimes in Portugal. In M. Karamessini & J. Rubery (Eds.), *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality* (pp. 207-227), Nova Yorque: Routledge.
- Floro, M. & Dymski, G. (2000). Financial crisis, gender and power: An analytical framework. *World Development*, 28 (7), 1269 – 1283.
- Fraser, N. (2009). O feminismo, o capitalismo e a astúcia da história. *Mediações*, 14, (2), 11-33.
- Karamessini, M. (2014). Women's vulnerability to recession and austerity: a different crisis, a different context. In M. Karamessini & J. Rubery (Eds.), *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality* (pp. 03-16), Nova Yorque: Routledge.
- Muñoz, L. & Madroño, P. (2011). La desigualdade de género en las crisis económicas. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 2, 113-132.
- Negra, D. & Tasker, Y. (2014). *Gendering the recession: Media and culture in a Age of Austerity*. Londres: Duke University Press.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). Feminist content analysis. In S. Reinharz *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (pp. 145-163), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rubery, J. (2014). From ‘women and recession’ to ‘women and austerity’: a framework for analysis. In M. Karamessini & J. Rubery (Eds.), *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality* (pp. 17-36), Nova Yorque: Routledge.
- Santos, B. (2011). *Portugal: ensaio sobre a autoflagelação*. Coimbra: Almedina.

Juliana Mello Souza has a degree in Communication Sciences and is Master in Journalism and Media Studies/*Universidade Nova* of Lisbon. PhD student from the Post-Graduation programme in *Languages and Heterodoxies: History, Poetic and Social Practices* (CES) and scholarship-student from FCT within Doctor's Degree Scholarship of reference number SFRH/BD/72415/2010.

E-mail: jmellosouza@gmail.com
Universidade de Coimbra, CES Colégio de S. Jerónimo, Largo D. Dinis, Apartado
3087, 3000-995 Coimbra, Portugal

* **Submitted: 16-02-2015**

* **Accepted: 20-04-2015**