

STILL IN BETWEEN PAID AND UNPAID WORK? WOMEN'S DISCUSSION ABOUT THEIR SITUATION IN BELGIUM, LITHUANIA, THE NETHERLANDS, AND PORTUGAL¹

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Abstract²

Women's situation in Portugal, Lithuania, Belgium, and the Netherlands is examined. We focus on women's possibilities to *enter* and *succeed* in the labour market together with their established locations in the private space, when phenomena such as job scarcity, among others, put at risk significant parts of the world population, mostly women. We build on discussion with a group of women of these nationalities about female situation in different fields of social life in their countries. Countries' similarities and differences are emphasised, which interrelate to their locations in the European Union.

Keywords: women voice and citizenship, labour market, care and housework.

Introduction

Nowadays, the inequalities between women and men in the labour market and in the private sphere of care and housework are still a problem. They are shaped differently within diverse European contexts and frequently informed by the myth of individual conciliation between the two spheres. These phenomena of inequality seem to put at risk not only women citizenship, but also the construction and experiencing of democracy by women and men as a whole (Amaral 2004). Therefore, many European and national political decisions have been taken in the last 25 to 30 years which aim at dealing with and overcoming this problem. Nonetheless, juridical definition does not seem to be enough. There is still great discrepancy between women protection by the law and the effective economic and social conditions they experience (*ibid.*). The prevalence of deep gender inequalities in the labour market and in the private sphere, where new constructions of

femininity and masculinity are emerging, is at stake here. The attempt to understand women status and positions in between the borders of the private and public spheres lead to questioning women about these matters.

Together with other phenomena of subordination and domination that have shaped women lives (Young 1997), women oppression is attributed to the silencing of their voices, a phenomena which occurs both in their professional and private lives. This means the marginalization of their history/ies, experience(s), the world views, ways of gaining knowledge, values and identities (Arnot 2006). Therefore, the silencing of women is seen as another way to imprint patriarchal control, while imposing male hegemonic ways of knowledge and of the world (*ibid.*). Within this view, we stand on a methodological-epistemological feminist tradition that focuses the centrality of voice to legitimate citizenship to unveil and challenge these power relations, and that asserts women potential to produce knowledge and to interpret the social arrangement. Concurrently, while embodying a movement of individual and collective reconstruction, it uses the opportunity to help reinforce women status and practice as "female-subjects" (Koning 2005) bursting of diversity and heterogeneity.

We assume an interpretivist approach which stands on a more flexible and dialectic concept of rationality. Interpretation is seen as a human way of knowledge that stands on the crisscrossing of subjectivities (Henriques 2003). We dare to translate and theorize around women expressed voices hoping to be as faithful and fair translators as possible.

¹ This paper builds on an Erasmus Intensive Programme "WASPOLSS – Tracking New European Ways in Social Policy, Legal and Social Services" at Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, in April 2008. It involved students and teachers from Belgium, Lithuania, The Netherlands, and Portugal. This article updates and develops our discussion of the same problem in a Portuguese gender studies journal: Macedo, Eunice & Santos, Sofia (2009), "Apenas Mulheres? Situação das mulheres no mercado de trabalho em quatro países europeus", *ex aequo* 19, 129–155.

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Inequalities: key aspects

As it has been pointed out above, this article focuses on the tensions experienced by women in between the public sphere of productive paid work and the private sphere of unpaid care work and housework, in their path to constructing their femininities in the countries in focus. In fact, in the context of late modernity when gender roles are refigured one can still find the existence of sexual division of work in the public and private spheres. Structural inequality of women is now contrasted with the evidence of significant change in personal relations and gender expectations (Arnot, Araújo, Delyianni & Iverson 2000). Traditional gender roles undergo a process of dilution and fragmentation, which is embodied in gender reconfiguration in relations, in the family, and in the workplace. These bring into evidence subtle changes in the balance of power between genders (*ibid.*).

As the diverse dimensions of human life, including work and care, are intrinsically connected it is impossible to enhance democracy and (re)figure citizenship without questioning and changing its structural locations and nature. This includes the need to identify the macro limits imposed by dichotomised views about male and female, public and private. Such views are still rooted in universalizing the male and in particularizing the female that put women to a so-called *natural* position of subordination to men (Lister 1997). Therefore, there is a need to overcome these misleading dualisms that sustain hegemonic views (Lister 1999; Henriques 2003).

For that reason, there is need to take into account that, on the one hand, changes in the labour market had significant impact on the gender regime and identities at the work place, on the other, they had influenced the family structures, the sexual division of work and domestic responsibilities in the families, and the personal relations as well. This is to say that changes have occurred which affect – and are affected by – the cultural perspectives, as well as work and family structures, socialization practices and gendered identities are experienced within the private (Grant 2000) and public spheres. As a result, it would be impossible to discuss women inclusion in the labour market in European countries without discussing the weight of the social values and beliefs which inform the conceptions of masculinity and femininity. The latter frame the way the European Union and some of its member states define their politics and their political and social priorities. As we mentioned, these still seem to be rooted in an artificial and rigid division between the public and private spheres as well as in gendered views

on citizenship. Feminist political scientists, such as Pateman (1988) Lister (1999), among many others, have long criticised the androcentric bias in the paradigms and concepts underlying citizenship. As noted by Arnot, Araújo, Delyianni and Iverson (2000), such views on citizenship seem still to be rooted on a material and ideological legacy, which was developed by modernity in order to explain in a rational way the attribution of greater power to men. In this sense, gender has been used as a symbolic structure. The distinction between femininity and masculinity has legitimated the sexual division of work.

Femininities and masculinities in the labour market

This leads to questioning the social construction of femininities and masculinities as well as the nature of women presence in the public sphere in different member states of the European Union, namely in the field of work and employment.

We argue that the symbolic conceptions of femininities and masculinities that inform social practices help constructing women as dependent or in attainment of a moderate autonomy. Thus, they promote the attribution to women of a mode of partial citizenship. This social allocation of women articulates the sexual division of labour which, in its turn, puts people's relations to the public sphere and structures their relation to time as a crucial resource to citizenship as a status and a practice (Lister 1999). In that manner, the social production of the gender arrangement cannot be seen as fitting within the limit of the family and the social division of work; a view which is inculcated into a symbolic production of social categories and identities, funded on gender asymmetries. The latter are used to define men as a universal category and women as a situational one (Nogueira 2001; Inglez 2007). Therefore, there is a need, first, to deconstruct men's abstract universality in its tension with women's equally artificial limited positioning; and second, to bring to light the relations of the state and the labour market with male and female citizens.

Moving beyond a "politics of presence" (Philips 2001), we question the nature of women employment in the public sphere of work in four European countries. A field that is considered to be highly bureaucratic, mainly conceived *by* and *for* men, and within which women are still positioned in a very contradictory way as *excluded from within*. This concept, which was firstly used by Bourdieu and Champagne (1998) in an interesting piece where they analysed the exclusion of young people in secondary schools by reason of a clash between pupil

culture and school culture, reveals useful to our analysis. It helps theorize women situation in a mainly male labour culture where they are, frequently, seen as different and inadequate, as a threat, or as someone to be ignored or subdued to the ill-called 'women matters'. Women seem to give origin to a feeling of oddness, as someone who might disturb the *natural* order of the events. Women occupation of the public area seems to be even more difficult when it takes place in mainly male work sectors and, in particular, when women occupy positions of authority and decision making. Even when women have institutional power, they remain exogenous to the male-dominant culture in the work place where certain behaviours and technocratic models of management, as part of the male prevalence, are legitimized. Hence, increasing women participation in the labour market assumes quite an ambiguous character. On the one hand it corresponds to women attainment of positions in the sphere of labour and can be seen as a step towards greater gender equality, on the other it concurrently may signal a phenomena of differentiation and sexual segregation (Casaca 2005).

This phenomenon of differentiation and segregation not only results in the *exclusion from within* experienced at the work place, but it is also shaped in the exclusion of female labour in the culture of employment. This means that the lack of representation of women in the culture of work in highly recognized professional sectors results in a form of control over women. Another form of control, which is still quite frequent, is the positioning of women in processes of subordination and domination within precarious, less visible and less privileged professional areas, where women participation seems to be dependent on the male attribution of a mode of mitigated citizenship.

As a matter of fact, some work sectors, such as health, education and social action are frequently described as feminized, and used to illustrate society's open mind towards equality and recognition of women. Though, these jobs are still socially represented as an extension of the female private care work within the family, in accordance with their *natural* female attributes (Casaca 2005). Thus, when it comes to be rewarded and recognized in these so-called feminized sectors, men are frequently given the best jobs. Besides that, traditional 'feminine' areas such as fashion, the *media*, cooking and decoration have been occupied and affected by men. This type of competitiveness within more 'feminized' professions ends up generating other forms of intra-gender exclusion, which are shaped by the crisscross-

sing of different forms of inequality, social class, ethnicity, qualifications and age, in particular.

It is within the neoliberal framework that still seems to inform the constructions of femininities and masculinities (Brenner 2000) and while recognizing the intertwining between the private and public spheres, that the impact of women's jobs on their personal relations and vice-versa is brought into evidence. These are considered to be significant aspects in the current context of reconfiguration of the gendered citizenships. In spite of the visible process of reallocation of new femininities and masculinities within the gender arrangement, and in spite of the production of European and national policies aimed at promoting gender equality, the investment in changing the large structures of inequality, within social practices, in particular, seems to fall short. Institutions still have a deeply genderized nature that is present in the way they work and in the unequal opportunities given to men and women, which are still funded on male domination. Hence, women are expected to adjust to the dominant male models. The lack of debate about women situation of economic dependence is a good example of this. Such a situation that frequently shapes the lives of women derives both from their role in the reproductive unpaid care work and housework and in a precarious, uncertain labour market, and from a system of social protection that still reflects a view of men as providers, even though social realities emit very distinct messages.

In a political, economic and cultural framework where the distribution of resources (such as work, time, money and recognition) in the family still stands on unequal relations of power, the use of time seems to constitute one of the greatest obstacles to women participation in democracy (Oliveira 2006) as it puts the possibilities of autonomic choice at risk. This division of time is socially constructed and needs to be adapted to changes in family life and work in the 21st century (Jacobs & Gerson 2004) and to emergent femininities and masculinities.

Women allocations in Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Portugal

The fragmentation and (re)construction of the gender roles and categories within social relations of work and power is a reality. Therefore, there is a need to take into account the limits imposed in each society by the gender arrangement in each historical-social moment (Rocha & Ferreira 2006). With this in mind, we tried to discuss – *with* women from the four countries – the national similarities and dif-

ferences in terms of women positions in the labour market and in their families.

Lithuania and Portugal are seen as (semi)peripheral countries, whereas Belgium and the Netherlands are described as central countries. We use the expression *(semi)peripheral* to describe the first two countries due to their position in terms of power by reference to other countries in the “world capitalist system” (Wallerstein 1990). The concept of *(semi)periphery* helps emphasise the Portuguese and Lithuanian character of intermediate development as well as underlying the endogenous and exogenous tensions they go through (Braidotti 1998) as they are particularly susceptible to the phenomena of globalization (Sousa Santos 2001). These countries’ (semi)peripheral³ situation occurs in a context of great economic, political, cultural and social heterogeneity that contains significant differences in terms of the development of civilization, the accumulation of capital and of political power, which determine an unequal division of work among regions. In their turn, as central countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, are typified by great technological development and the capacity to produce complex products. This brings into evidence their preponderance and hegemonic position in what concerns both the exchange of capital and their political and cultural power. Necessarily, this situation of inequality does affect women experience of the labour market, within diverse contexts as we will explore in the next section. For that reason, there is a need to question and clarify the tension between work and the construction of femininities in these countries, while keeping in mind their distinctive positions within the European Union and in the current time of crisis of globalization.

Belgium and the Netherlands were signatory countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, Portugal joined the community almost 30 years later (1985) and Lithuania joined the European Union (EU) only in 2004. This means that Belgium and the Netherlands had an active participation in the definition and construction of the EEC principles and actions as well as a long period of solidification of their positions among the member states, as early as in a period of capitalist growth. Portugal joined the EU in a fragile position, did not have much space for intervention in the decision making process and found it difficult to satisfy the requirements of the union due to certain infrastructural inferiority. In its turn, Lithuania, the last

to join in, made a significant effort to comply with the EU in a time of capitalist crisis which increased difficulty for the country to be involved at different levels. Together with countries’ phenomena of cultural and social change, their different phases of European integration have had impact on the countries’ gender awareness, which, in turn, affects countries’ gender social policies and practices.

Women and the sphere of care

Women roles in society and in the labour market cannot be dissociated from housework in the family. There is a need to refigure women allocation to the private sphere and the “institutionalization of the home” (Rocha & Ferreira 2006: 11) as a place where women provide invisible work – care and housework. Nowadays, a conception of work rooted in the public sphere, in employment and remuneration still prevails. It underlies the separation of private and public spheres. Within such perspectives housework is described as reproductive and unproductive, a nomination which does promote the segregation of the private sphere as a place of non-work. Women segregation is worth attention even when they are employed within the house walls. This may include professions such as housekeepers, dressers and so forth, as it keeps these women within the private sphere and, therefore, it diminishes the possibilities of public recognition of this work as a paid/productive job.

A milestone for change in women citizenship was the drive of their struggle for their rights, in particular, since industrialization, when women were called to participate in the productive competitive system. However, too frequently, housework is still seen as women responsibility. Within the field of gender studies many scholars have called this association between paid work (employment) in the public sphere and unpaid (care) work in the private sphere a *double burden*. Other scholars, such as Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira (2003; 2009), for instance, do not agree with this denomination. They allege that this cumulative burden overcomes the double task. As they see it, and we subscribe, managing the family and family emotions, with all the related work and engagement it implies, together with housework, and all the physical and managerial work it implies, largely overcome the weight of the professional more distanced work in the public sphere. This means that the management of the family, including housework and care work, together with employment goes beyond the problem of conciliation – that would deal with this problem on an individual basis – to become one of the greatest

³ Statistical indicators for Portugal and Lithuania to support the assertion of their (semi)peripheral status were not found even though they exist for other countries.

challenges faced by women and democracy in our time. It was with these concerns in mind that discussions with women about female work in the private sphere were developed. Therefore, we focused on several activities which comprise the housework, such as the work of caring for the ill and the elderly, supporting dependents with learning difficulties, and children.

Women have a say about care

As mentioned earlier, data was produced within discussion among women from the four countries involved: Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Portugal. It has got an interpretive character. Women narratives are intertwined here with statistical official data that was collected by participants. Table 1 presented below shows women views on the gender division of care work in their countries.

Table 1

Women evaluation of gender division of care work in Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Portugal

Tasks \ Countries	Belgium	Lithuania	The Netherlands	Portugal
Housework	Women and Men	Women	Women and Men	Women and Men
Ill people	Women and Men	Women	Women	Women
Elderly	Women and the State	Women	State and Private Sector	Women, State and Private Sector
People with disabilities	Women	Women	Women	Women
Children	Women and Men	Women and Men	Women and Men	Women and Men

Table built in group discussion, 17.04.2008

The immediate interpretation of this table brings into evidence some similarities and differences in between the countries. It is important to emphasize women's extremely strong presence in the various spheres of care in all countries. Only in the Netherlands the work of care in what concerns the elderly has been moved from women responsibility towards that of state and private institutions. This has been a common social practice in the Netherlands in the recent decades, which releases women from a task traditionally attributed to them. It is also important to mention, according to group discussion, that whereas women are seen as personally responsible for the tasks they are attributed, men participation – when it occurs – is subsidiary to that of women or to substitute them in their absence.

A horizontal view of the table allows emphasizing the existence of shared domestic tasks in all countries but Lithuania. It also shows that care work in what concerns the ill is exclusively performed by women, except in Belgium where it is shared with men. We already referred to the Netherlands as an exception in what concerns the work of care for the elderly. Both in Belgium and in Portugal, when the elderly stay at home they are cared for by women but there also are state institutions to shelter them, as well as private/paid institutions in Portugal. The

care for people with disabilities, within the family, is also predominantly female. In a promising note, and showing men's greater openness to the emotional world (which shapes the new forms of masculinity), the care work concerning children is the only family task described as increasingly shared between men and women in the four countries.

Next we will align women discursive data with some statistical data. Even though in the new generation couples increasingly tend to share housework and care tasks, in which they collaborate and take initiative, the management of family life, seen as unproductive, in articulation with the productive work still remains on women shoulders. In general, women spend more time in housework than men do. In Lithuania, for instance, some years ago, 75% of the housework was attributed to women (Purvanekienė, 1998).

According to information provided by CITE (2008), in Portugal, for example, in 1999 women spent 5 hours per day in housework, whereas men only spent 1.5 hours. This means women spent an average of three hours more than men, per day. In the Netherlands, even though these differences are smaller, women still work a total of 23 hours, in contrast to 11 hours for men. This means that women still spend more than twice longer time than men

doing housework, in this country (De Telegraaf, n/d). Like in the Netherlands, in Belgium this situation is confronted with a “work culture” that sees part time work as the best opportunity for women to manage the so-called double burden of public and private work. As a matter of fact, in Belgium many female workers work part time so that they have more time to deal with family life. They spend around 28 hours per week dealing with housework and 5.5 hours dealing with children. In their turn, full time female workers only manage to spend around 19 hours with housework and 3.5 hours with their children (Eurofound 2007). Interestingly, in Belgium the time spent by men in the private sphere is in direct connection to women’s condition in the labour market. When women work full time, men spend 10 hours in housework and 2 hours with children care whereas when they work part time, men spend 9 and 1 hour in the same functions, respectively. This difference in time spent by women and men in parenting and housework is useful to illustrate that ‘time’ is a genderized social construction which is conditioned by gender stereotypes. Besides the fact that this inequality still prevails, studies have proven that men’s use of time in the family corresponds to a “parenting time of sociability”, whereas women’s use corresponds to a “domestic parenting time” (Casaca 2005). This means that women are engaged in handling of tasks such as homework and so forth and their opportunity to develop human bonds within a view of fulfilment may be mitigated.

Women have a say about *access* and *progression* in the labour market

Work is an extremely complex field and needs a very deep analysis which transcends the scope of this article. We opted to analyze a set of crucial questions: access to employment, career progression, and qualifications required in this process.

Interestingly, in the 50s in the Netherlands and Belgium, in Portugal up until mid 70s, and in Lithuania until the 80s, only single women were in the

labour market, as secretaries, and in health and education, usually as nurses and teachers. These jobs, somehow, extended their role of *mothering* in the family and women were far from positions of management and authority. In Portugal women were also involved in the industrial and agricultural sectors that, since the 80s, have slowly been substituted by the third sector of services. This shows the Portugal’s relative underdevelopment when compared to the central countries (Belgium and the Netherlands) that in the same period had a well developed third sector with a strong female presence. This also helps to emphasize the Portuguese (semi)peripheral status, as some of the promises of modernity have not been attained yet. Shaping the Portuguese experience of late modernity, the claims for meeting the basic needs are present and in conflict with post-modern principles of individuation and the claim for cultural rights. In Lithuania, another (semi)peripheral country, women were also subjected to different social requests. As a matter of fact, while during Soviet times they were assured greater liberation and increased opportunities of education, employment, as well as political representation, the so-called socialist regime failed to eliminate patriarchy. Nowadays, when Lithuania is going through a transition period, there are still great discrepancies between women and men with regard to pay rates. Increasing unemployment and decreasing real wages affect women in particular. Besides that, women still often occupy the lower-paid positions in public service, such as education, health, and social service. Like in Portugal, women are more educated but this does not bring them better positions or greater level of employment.

Let us now concentrate on the way the international group involved in this research envisaged women access to the labour market, which allows for an understanding of women positioning as *different* and *unequal*, even though some positive changes must be recognized, as expressed below in Table 2.

Table 2

Women evaluation of women access to the labour market in Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, and Portugal

Professional Levels	Belgium	Lithuania	The Netherlands	Portugal
Women Possibilities of Access				
Top Profile Jobs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Medium Profile Jobs	High-Average	Low-Average	Average	Low-Average
Low Profile Jobs	High	Average	High	Average

Table built in group discussion, 24.04.2008

At first glance Table 2 illustrates that women access to top profile jobs is seen as very limited in the four countries. It is also interesting to underline that as the professional level decreases (in terms of status, responsibilities and wages, ...) women possibility of access gradually increases, though with greater amplitude in the central countries. Next, we will try to clarify these ideas through the use of statistical data.

The dimension *access* reflects – and is reflected by – the high level of female unemployment that affects the four countries, within a context of overall economic crisis. According to Eurostat (2009a), Lithuania has a high level of unemployment (13.7%) – 10.4% of women and 17.1% of men are jobless. Interestingly, male unemployment exceeds female unemployment and it is the one with the greatest gender inequality. Portugal also has a high rate of unemployment (9.6 %), but it shows a smaller gender gap (10.3% of women and 9% of men are jobless). In its turn, Belgium has an incidence of 7.9%, in this country 7.8% of men and 8.1% of women are jobless.

The Netherlands is the country that has the lowest differentiation of unemployment: 3.5% for women and 3.4% for men. The question of employability⁴ also depends on the type of employment that is provided. As a matter of fact, even though the Netherlands have the highest rate of female employment (71.5%) (Eurostat 2009b), 75.7% of it is comprised by part time work. In Belgium part time work is also seen as positive for women as they may be more available to their families, therefore 42.4% of women work part time. In Lithuania and Portugal, most women work full time, the main reason being that families need both salaries to provide for family needs. Only 8.9% of Lithuanian women and 12.8% of Portuguese women work part time. This represents quite a small percentage in comparison to the EU (27 countries) average, which corresponds to 77.6% of women part time workers against 22.3% men (Eurostat 2009c).

Hence, as we referred above, the question of

⁴ The concept of employability, which has been introduced in the “late modernity and disorganized capitalism” (Sousa Santos, 2001), shifts to the workers – women and men – the responsibility to make themselves employable. If on the one hand, people are expected to invest in their own training and qualifications, within the view of lifelong learning that leads the EU guidelines for education and training (The EQF), on the other, it demits of responsibility the macro structures which define and constraint the labour market. For the reasons we’ve pointed out, employability does not deal with women and men in the same manner.

part time work needs to be discussed. Some scholars argue that part time work is still socially figured as a female form of work. As they observe, even though it may be seen as a benefit provided for women, in fact, it represents a form of sub-employment reserved to them, which may result in an invisible process of impoverishment, or it emphasizes the logic of gender segregation (Casaca 2005). Within this view, that we share, women possibility to stay at home and care for their children, while simultaneously having a part time job in the public sphere, may constitute another form to control and limit women’s professional development. Interestingly, and reflecting the wide social construction about this feature, within our empirical research, the question of female part time work was perceived in the group as a very positive option for women that would help them deal with the *double burden*. Though, group discussion led to the deconstruction of this idea and to an understanding of this apparent benefit as a form of gender discrimination. Part time work was then understood as a limit to the construction of women career. Group open debate brought to light that the limits imposed on women’s careers also mitigate their emancipation and free choice, their economic independency and their sense of professional fulfilment. Therefore, part time work ended up being seen as a constraint to women citizenship, which helps legitimate gender relations of domination-subordination⁵.

Besides women’s loss of track of their professions due to part time employment, the fact that the wages of many female part time workers are not enough to assure their economic independency clearly illustrates the role of this so-called benefit in maintaining women in subordinate positions. Within the nuclear family, when men work full time and women work part time, the male is still seen as the bread winner who, better or worse, assumes his role as provider. It is this tension between domination-subordination that leads to our second motive of concern – women career progression. Though, before we move to analyzing that question there is need to leave a small note about today’s employment situation. Clearly the all over the world increasing problem of male and female unemployment must have worsened this situation seeing that both men and women, too frequently, are unemployed or/and living on the state subsistence funds. Even

⁵ In methodological terms, this also shows how group discussion that builds on people voices, their history, experiences and life perspectives, may constitute a form of social awareness as it helps each individual to move beyond her own view of reality to construct an enlarged perspective.

though this is a matter of serious concern it shifts away from the focus of the current analysis, therefore it will not be explored.

Let us have a look at women's views about women career progression, which were explored within our empirical research and are summarized in Table 3 presented below.

Table 3

Women evaluation of women career progression in Belgium, the Netherlands, Lithuania, and Portugal

Professional Levels	Belgium	The Netherlands	Lithuania	Portugal
	Women Possibilities of Progression			
Top Profile Jobs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Medium Profile Jobs	Average	High	Low-Average	Average
Low Profile Jobs	High	Low	Average	Low

Table built in group discussion, 24.04.2008

As one can see, women possibility to attain positions of leadership, power and decision making, inherent to top profile jobs, is perceived as very limited in all the four countries. Career opportunities are diverse in the four countries. Whereas in Belgium and in Lithuania the tendency for better opportunities as the job level decreases, as observed in the dimension 'access', remains; in the Netherlands and in Portugal the possibilities to progress in careers are weak on the top and low levels. They are significantly greater in the Netherlands, when focusing on the medium profile jobs.

Therefore, it seems that the constraints to access to the top of professional hierarchies in the labour market constitute another disconcerting reality. It pushes women to the margins of the system and it leads them to the, so-called, female sectors, which frequently mean lower status and wages, as we have referred. Quite frequently, women workers are judged by their employers, clients and colleagues more by their subordinate position in the gender arrangement than by their often higher qualifications, competence and professional character. In Lithuania, women are more frequently employed in the public sector whereas men occupy the private sector. Similar situation occurs in Portugal, where women go through similar forms of horizontal and vertical segregation. That means the discrimination of women who develop the same functions as men and the discrimination of women in various positions in the hierarchies of power, respectively. As a result, women tend to keep the lowest positions in job rankings and very rarely are given access to the highest positions in job hierarchies.

Women views are reinforced by statistical data. For instance, in Portugal, the share of women in the Portuguese Parliament is only 30%, even though the law on Parity in Portugal establishes a female quo-

ta of 33% in the Assembly of the Republic (Silva 2010). In the European Parliament women constitute 31% (Parlamento Europeu 2009). This is despite that Law 2/2003, 22 August, defines that "political parties must assure women and men direct, active and balanced participation in the political activity as well as guarantee the non discrimination according to sex" (CIG 2007:117).

Besides this, wage differences also emerge as another indicator of gender discrimination, affecting women, as it comes together with the difficulty to reach high positions, and to obtain professional benefits and job progression. Although equal pay for equal work has been legislated in the EU, Eurostat studies (2008a) show that in the Netherlands women's wages are 19.6% lower than men's for the same work, and in Belgium they are lower by less than 9%. This has been mainly justified through women presence in part time jobs, but it is another form of women discrimination through the maintenance and reproduction of gender stereotypes. In Portugal, even when women work full time, their wages are 9.2% lower than men's. These inequalities are frequently maintained through subterfuges such as the use of a different name for the same professional job when done by women or men and through a different designation of the same work functions. Currently, in spite of the change in the Lithuanian public sector, where there is an attempt to equalize women and men wages, in the private sector men still receive more. The wage gap still rests at 21.6% (Eurostat 2008a).

Finally, we will explore another matter of concern – female and male qualification and its impact on their allocations in the labour market. As many scholars have underlined (e.g. Araújo 2006, 2009; Macedo & Costa 2006) currently we face greater women's educational access and success at all edu-

cational levels, higher education in particular. However, this goes in the contra flow to the dominance of female unemployment and of the vertical segregation in the labour market, as discussed earlier.

This question was widely discussed in the women group as a problem of social (in)justice. As a matter of fact, in the four countries, most degree diplomas are conferred on women: 55% in Belgium, 60% in Lithuania, 51.6% in the Netherlands, and 53% in Portugal (Eurostat 2008b). However, these percentages are not reflected in the labour market where high rates of female unemployment and the allocation of women to the labour positions with less prestige still prevails. In fact, even when women have greater school qualifications “the social arrangement makes them more vulnerable to the risks of unemployment and labour precariousness” (Casaca 2005:83). Despite that 10.3% of women are unemployed (Eurostat 2009a), Portugal is among the countries with the highest rates of employment of women with higher education degrees, which corresponds to 92% (Eiras & Pedro, s/d). Hence, in the Netherlands, where qualification and education are crucial, and even part time work for women prevails, Dutch statistics show that 25 to 34 year old women have higher qualifications than men. For instance, in 2005-2006, 56% of women received their baccalaureate diplomas and 53% completed their masters (CBS 2007).

Statistical and dialogical data seem to show that gender stereotypes still prevail in the four countries that were studied. These stereotypes, together with social and institutional generalized resistance to change, lead women to develop more traditional pathways and constitute an obstacle to citizenship. Therefore, there is a need to encourage women and men to explore other educational and related ways as well as less conventional forms of professionalism. In its turn, this implies the need to (re)think and (re)signify the male/female dimensions as well as the nature of the public/private divide.

To conclude: (Re)thinking the private and public spheres

Even though change occurred in the different countries at different paces and rhythms, our data shows that hierarchies in the labour market and in the family still prevail and are seen as natural. Access to work and work progression are still guided by principles of individualism and individual success that have long shaped the hegemonic male world. Competition, decision making and capacity to take risks, productivity and innovation constitute the lexicon of a world still led by economy that still

treats women (and men) as human resources that are to be productive. These views shift away from the possibilities of politics of human rights, on the basis of democracy, recognition and social justice. Therefore, we seem to face a cultural and structural backlash, which resists changes in the gender arrangement and stands on the appeal to male bias (Lister 2003). This occurs in the work place, where an ideological genderized view of the divide between the private and public spheres comes to legitimate the divide between female and male citizens. Women and men are represented as distinct and separate worlds, where rigid gender divisions are used to the prevalence of phenomenon of domination and subordination. Within these views, the male public world is still issued a status of universality and rational capacity, freedom and equality in terms of social rights. In the other side – inside – women are still allocated to the private world; a world of nature, particularity and differentiation, lead by and to emotion. Two artificially constructed opposite sides of a coin that, as a matter of fact, do dilute and melt.

In order to understand women and men enactment of citizenship in the public sphere of the political, economic, social and cultural rights, there is a need to be aware of the ways women and men live within the private sphere of family and care, taking into account the gendered division of labour, in particular. This arises as a crucial condition to deconstruct and re-signify social gender relations. Therefore, there is a need to reformulate and reshape the relation between the public and private spheres, and there also is a need to re-signify the nature of these spaces, together with a reconfiguration of the formulations of femininity and masculinity within them.

Hence, the re-articulation between the private and public spheres necessitates a different women-friendly conceptualization of the work place and the family. On the one hand, women are to be granted autonomy, recognition, economic independence, and so forth, that allow them informed and free decision making about the way they want to occupy the public sphere, on the other hand, social constraints and demands that still impose hierarchical ways of participation must be challenged and transformed.

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VIS DAR TARP APMOKAMO IR NEAPMOKAMO DARBO? MOTERŲ NUOMONĖ APIE JŲ PADĖTĮ BELGIJOJE, LIETUVOJE, NYDERLANDŲ KARALYSTĖJE IR PORTUGALIJOJE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėta moterų padėtis Belgijoje, Lietuvoje, Nyderlandų Karalystėje ir Portugalijoje, sutelkiant dėmesį į moterų galimybes patekti į darbo rinką ir sėkmingai veikti joje bei privačioje erdvėje. Pabrėžiami minėtų šalių panašumai ir skirtumai darbo rinkoje, kurie siejami su Europos Sąjungos kontekstu. Siekiama atsakyti į klausimą: kokia Belgijos, Lietuvos, Nyderlandų Karalystės ir Portugalijos moterų padėtis darbo rinkoje ir socialinės priežiūros bei namų ruošos srityse? Straipsnio tikslas – apibendrinti moterų nuomonę apie jų padėtį, panašumus ir skirtumus darbo rinkoje keturiose šalyse. Nelygybė, su kuria susiduria moterys darbo rinkoje, bei šeimos struktūra kinta. Kartu kinta vyriškas ir moteriškas vaidmuo darbo rinkoje, skiriasi moterų atlyginimai socialinės priežiūros, namų ruošos srityse Belgijoje, Lietuvoje, Nyderlandų Karalystėje ir Portugalijoje, įsidarbinimo ir karjeros bei kvalifikacijos kėlimo galimybės.

Identifikuoti skirtumai ir panašumai, kurie atsirado kintant lyčių santvarkai keturiose šalyse, nors nelygybė darbo rinkoje bei šeimoje vis dar egzistuoja ir suvokiama kaip savaime suprantama. Moterims būtina draugiška darbo vietos ir šeimos koncepcija. Moterys pageidauja autonomijos, pripažinimo, ekonominės nepriklausomybės ir pan., nes visa tai suteikia joms galimybę pačioms priimti sprendimus, o socialiniai suvaržymai ir reikalavimai, kurie vis dar primeta hierarchinius bendradarbiavimo būdus, turi būti užginčyti.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: moterų balsas ir pilietybė, darbo rinką, priežiūra ir namų ruošą.

