

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES

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Centro de Estudos Sociais
Universidade de Coimbra



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SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY

Ana Cristina Santos

Discrimination is intersectional, cumulative and aggravated by vulnerability, which has historically placed lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people at increased risk. Many crosscutting issues emerge from the relationship between pandemic, natural disasters or other critical events, and sexual and gender diversity. One example is domestic, sexual and gender-based violence among LGBTI youth, enhanced by late emancipation and confinement with the family of origin and/or lack of economic autonomy, or absence of social networks and informal support from schoolmates, educational agents or a group of friends. Another common issue is a decrease in objective conditions of existence for those who – through homophobia, transphobia and other forms of structural discrimination – traditionally have a high incidence of unemployment or of invisible, precarious and insecure employment. This is particularly relevant in the case of trans and non-binary people. An equally important issue is the isolation of LGBTI people over 65, in cases where ageing, together with digital illiteracy and the absence of an adequate support and care network, leads to increased risk for this heavily neglected population, particularly in situations related to economic and emotional fragility, chronic illness and mental health.

The intersectional impact of sexual discrimination in a pandemic, natural disaster or other critical events should be tackled with short,

medium and long-term measures to counter the economic and emotional vulnerability, as well as the structural discrimination with regard to gender and sexuality. We know that the tendency to create priority hierarchies pushes LGBTI people to the end of the waiting list and that post-crisis periods are, as a rule, fertile ground for populist incursions. Therefore, in establishing priority areas of intervention and defining the most urgent measures, the rights of LGBTI people must not be reverted, and sexual and gender diversity must remain a bastion of democracy and human dignity. When ensuring respect and monitoring the rights already established, it is important to accelerate, monitor and consolidate the work in progress to tackle discrimination, especially in the areas of education, health and employment. To achieve this aim, links with actors in the field, including non-governmental organisations, social movements and academia, should be strengthened. Evidence-based knowledge production by gender studies and sociology will be essential to inform political decision-making and defuse populist discourses. We will need an attentive and participatory university that ensures more and better citizenship, as well as sexual and gender justice, one that blatantly refuses sexist and homophobic practices based on tradition, in full compliance with the principle of equality established in Article 13 of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic.