

# GENDERED IDENTITIES IN PORTUGUESE ANTI-AUSTERITY MOBILISATION

## IDENTIDADES DE GÉNERO NA MOBILIZAÇÃO ANTI-AUSTERIDADE EM PORTUGAL

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**Abstract:** The austerity policies implemented following the financial crisis of 2008 in Portugal led to high contention in the public sphere. New, mostly young, and urban social movements took central stage in organising it, often articulated with traditional actors (labour unions or left-wing political parties). These movements presented a very unified image and message to the public, the media, and the institutions whose policies they opposed, based on a shared interpretation of social justice. These coalitions included feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations, with a story of past activism which is said to have been pushed aside so they could cooperate in the priority anti-austerity arena. This paper questions whether these identities were indeed side-lined, relying on content analysis of materials made available online by those organisations to argue that feminist and LGBTQIA+ protesters framed their mobilisation through a gendered interpretation of the events and consequences of austerity, closely related to their previous values, beliefs, and incentives to participate in social activism.

**Keywords:** anti-austerity mobilisation, Portugal, feminist, LGBTQIA+.

**Resumo:** As políticas de austeridade implementadas na sequência da crise financeira de 2008 em Portugal causaram elevada contestação. Novos movimentos sociais, maioritariamente jovens e urbanos, ocuparam o palco central na sua organização, muitas vezes em articulação com atores tradicionais (sindicatos e partidos políticos de esquerda). Estes movimentos apresentaram, ao público, à *media* e às instituições a que se opunham, uma imagem e mensagem muito unificadas, baseadas numa interpretação partilhada de justiça social. Estas coligações incluíram organizações feministas e LGBTQIA+, com uma história de ativismo que, supostamente, teria sido relegada face ao carácter prioritário da luta anti-austeridade. Este artigo baseia-se numa análise de conteúdo de materiais disponibilizados *online* por essas organizações para argumentar que participantes feministas e LGBTQIA+ na contensão anti-austeritária enquadraram a sua mobilização com base numa interpretação genderizada dos acontecimentos e consequências da austeridade, intimamente relacionadas com os seus valores, crenças e incentivos anteriores para o ativismo social.

**Palavras-chave:** mobilização anti-austeridade, Portugal, feminista, LGBTQIA+.

### Introduction

Portugal was among the European countries most hit by the financial crisis of 2008 and the economic and social crisis that followed it (the Great Recession). This corresponded

to a period of intense anti-austerity protest, featuring the most participated demonstrations since the April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1974 Revolution. This protest cycle has been the subject of many interesting and pertinent scholarly analyses (for example, Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; Babo & Silva, 2015; Baumgarten, 2013, 2016; Camargo 2014; T. Fernandes, 2017), yet, so far, feminist and LGBTQIA+<sup>1</sup> participation remains under-studied, and their interpretation of the impact of austerity on Portuguese women and those identifying as LGBTQIA+, as well as their resistance to it, remains an untold story.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to filling that void, by analysing the contribution of feminist and LGBTQIA+ activism to the anti-austerity dissent in the country. It demonstrates that, despite alliances with traditional protest actors in the Portuguese public sphere – particularly with labour unions – and with new citizens initiatives created in the wake of the financial crisis (mainly Geração à Rasca [Struggling Generation] and Que Se Lixe a Troika [Screw the Troika]), feminist and LGBTQIA+ anti-austerity resistance was framed within a clear interpretation of the crisis and the austerity measures from a gendered and intersectional perspective. As such, it studies the feminist and LGBTQIA+ strategies of mobilisation against neoliberal and capitalist politics, demonstrating how these were constructed based on previous experiences of anti-patriarchy and anti-discrimination activism, with the crisis being a catalyst for more intense, continuous, and engaged mobilisation, bearing fruits in terms of future engagement.

By showing how feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations put the interest of women and those identifying as QUILTBAG+ at the centre of their anti-austerity contention, this paper argues that the responsibility of representing women's and queer people's interests fell on this type of organisations, which provided an open space for an alternative framing of the crisis and its impacts, focusing on specific identities and needs, that were absent from the narrative of the participatory social movements at the forefront of the anti-austerity mobilisation, as well as from formal politics actors' and the media's discourse during the protest cycle.

### Structure of the paper

After presenting its methodological approach, this paper will offer a contextual background of the Great Recession in Portugal and civil society's responses. From

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1 LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the + sign signals the inclusion potential of the acronym. This paper also uses the acronym QUILTBAG+, which stands for Queer/Questioning, Unidentified, Intersex, Lesbian, Transexual, Bisexual, Asexual, Gay, and has the advantage of being more easily pronounced, and the disadvantage of being less current. Both acronyms are, here, used interchangeably.

this general picture, it will funnel to a description of the gendered impact of the crisis, followed by an analysis of civil society's gendered responses, focusing on the actions of feminist and QUILTBAG+ organisations that were the most active in anti-austerity dissent in the public sphere (UMAR – União Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta [Union Women Alternative and Response] and CFAA – Campanha Feminista Anti-Austeritária [Anti-Austerity Feminist Campaign] for the case of feminist activism, and Panteras Rosa [Pink Panthers], for the case of LGBTQIA+ activism). It will conclude by offering explanations of the (mostly) one-dimensional and gender-blind narrative of civil society's responses to the crisis, as well as presenting directions for further investigation.

### **Methodology and data sources**

This article's focus is the participation of two feminist and one LGBTQIA+ organisations in the anti-austerity protest cycle in Portugal. UMAR and Panteras Rosa were selected taking into account their salience in the Portuguese feminist and QUILTBAG+ protest sphere, following a perusal of the organisers of protest events in Portugal featured in the Disobedient Democracy database<sup>2</sup>, which mapped all protest events reported in two of the main newspapers in Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Serbia from 2000 to 2017 (*Público* and *Diário de Notícias* for the case of Portugal). CFAA, in contrast, was chosen taking into account that it is the Portuguese wing of the transnational feminist anti-austerity social movement and acted as an umbrella organisation for other women, feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations present in the Portuguese public sphere during the anti-austerity protest cycle.

This paper relies on content analysis of Portuguese feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations' position papers, manifestos, promotional materials and online/social media publications, which, together, create their own narrative on their participation in the anti-austerity protest cycle, allowing for an understanding of the scope, motivations, justifications and claims of feminist and QUILTBAG+ anti-austerity activism. Materials published by the organisations in their own web presence (websites, blogs, social media) during the anti-austerity protest cycle (2009-2014) were considered. In this way, the investigation was centred on the organisations' own story of the protest cycle, as told by their own publications.

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2 <https://disdem.org/>

## Portugal hit by the crisis

Portugal, already deeply indebted due to a decade of slow growth, was severely hit by the financial crisis from 2008 onwards. In the first stage, the Socialist Party (PS) government<sup>1</sup> strategy to tame the effects of the crisis involved measures to preserve jobs and increase internal consumption, but the weight of the public debt (which had reached 96.2% of the GDP) and pressures of international financial markets would soon push the government to request a bailout from the European Union institutions (2010). This would be approved in May 2011, for the amount of 76 billion Euros, following intense negotiations between the Portuguese government and the transnational institutions that constituted the “Troika” (International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and the European Commission).

The result was to be an agreement memorandum focused on achieving fiscal consolidation through structural modifications to the labour market, the judicial system and the service sector, and guarantees to private banking institutions, which would translate into cuts to public spending (particularly on instruments of social protection and reduction of poverty and public service providing, mainly in education and health), labour market deregulation, higher taxes (including those affecting daily consumption goods), and higher interest rates on individual and commercial credit. Combined, these were to cause higher rates of unemployment and precarious work, reduction of income, and reduction of access to state benefits, leading to rising poverty rates and generating cuts to both public and private investment (V. Ferreira, 2014; V. Ferreira & Monteiro, 2015a; Freire et al., 2015; Leite et al., 2014; A. P. Lima, 2016), and ultimately creating a perfect storm of precarity, inequality and impoverishment affecting a significant part of the country's society.

Individuals adopted a number of strategies to resist the crisis and the Great Recession that would follow, including emigration – about half a million Portuguese, mainly young, left the country in search of work (Gabinete do Secretário de Estado das Comunidades Portuguesas [GSECP], 2014) –, seeking second and third part-time, precarious – and mostly irregular – employment, and family re-grouping, with young people returning to the parental home and citizens relying on family networks of intergenerational support to curb loss of income and decreased access to formerly state-provided services (Frade & Coelho, 2015; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2013). Another citizen response was mobilisation, a phenomenon this paper turns to in the next session.

## Portuguese civil society responds to the crisis

Protest has been an intrinsic part of Portuguese democracy since its inception with the Carnation Revolution of 1974, but popular mobilisation reached a renewed height in the anti-austerity protest cycle. This protest was transnational in nature, even if located within the borders of the country: the claims being made were both national and global (more employment, more social support and public services, but also reform of international institutions, opposition to globalisation and capitalism, and solidarity with the people of other countries also affected by austerity policies), the targets were national (the Portuguese government) and transnational (international institutions, but also foreign governments, particularly Germany's), and the protest repertoire took some transnational forms (as seen in the diffusion of public space occupation strategies such as "*acampadas*" or on combined protest actions in different European countries – exemplified in the transnational protest occurring on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2012 across Europe) (della Porta et al., 2017; Fominaya, 2017).

Further, this cycle of protest saw the participation of traditional actors (trade unions, leftist political parties, anti-globalisation and social justice social movement), and of new types of protesters who had not been highly visible in protest in the European public sphere, in consistently high numbers, representing multiple social groups and various age groups (public servants, private companies' employees, the unemployed, precarious and self-employed workers, young people, students and pupils, pensioners, women, migrants, minorities), defining themselves both as national and European citizens, and perceiving themselves as the losers of neoliberal development and its crisis (della Porta et al., 2017; Fominaya, 2017).

In some EU countries, this new typology of protesters organised themselves in and through new citizen initiatives emerging specifically due to and aiming at austerity policies (the Indignados and the 15-M in Spain are the most well-known example), and so was the case in Portugal, with *Geração à Rasca* and *Que Se Lixe a Troika*. *Geração à Rasca*, an informal network of activists created by four Political Science students with a personal history of involvement in activism, including one member of the LGBTQIA+ activist group, *Panteras Rosa*, was responsible for one of the first country-wide anti-austerity protest events, convened using social media instruments and gathering 300000 protesters on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (Gomes, 2011). They would, however, soon demobilise, with some of its founders joining the second anti-austerity citizen initiative, *Que Se Lixe a Troika*.

*Que Se Lixe a Troika* was a wider, more organised and clearly political movement that was responsible for two of the most participated protest events during

the cycle of contention – September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013, involving more than a million people (Dias et al., 2012; A. P. Fernandes et al., 2013) – but also for smaller protest events across the country – *i. e.* “*Grandoladas*”, with protesters greeting the Prime Minister and other members of the Government on several occasions during 2012 and 2013 by singing “*Grândola Vila Morena*”, the musical symbol of the Carnation Revolution. It was a network movement, with an ingrained culture of protest inherited by past activist and political experiences, and sustained by cooperation between a diversity of established social movements (including feminist groups – UMAR – and LGBTQIA+ groups -Panteras Rosas and Clube Safo) and between these and traditional protest actors, such as left-wing parties (Portuguese Communist Party – PCP and Left Bloc – BE) and trade unions, which were to result in instances of close cooperation on the streets (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; T. Fernandes, 2017; M. Lima & Artiles, 2014), and high numbers of participants in protest actions.

While one can say that the intensity of the protest cycle and its high participation and networking ability is a sign of the strength, cohesion and engagement of Portuguese civil society (Bernhard et al., 2017; T. Fernandes, 2012, 2018; Fishman, 2019), others argue that Portuguese civil society is traditionally weak, as a consequence of a highly centralised and closed democratic system, which tends to exclude new participants in favour of traditional protest actors (labour unions, left-wing parties), and where minority organisations – including women’s and QUILTBAG+’s – are weak and of low participation (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; V. Ferreira, 2014; Hamman & Manuel, 1999; Monteiro & Ferreira, 2016; Prata, 2017).

This paper takes the middle-ground approach, stating that the role of Portuguese civil society cannot be blindly celebrated nor diminished, agreeing with Alonso (2012, p. 596) who states that “Portugal features a long tradition of engaging voices from civil society in the making of equality policies”, with stable and well establish mechanisms of civil society participation and access to political actors in decision-making positions at various levels of government, but countering that the impact of these avenues of participation in policy-making is questionable, as studies have demonstrated that civil society organisations (CSOs) themselves perceived their impact as limited and would like to see their capacities improved (Alonso, 2012; Civil Society Europe [CSE], 2017; Ponzio, 2010).

The fact remains that anti-austerity mobilisation in the country created new avenues for cooperation between new and old actors working together towards a shared goal and against opponents perceived as common. Protest, thus, remains an important avenue for political participation in Portugal, legitimised in the

public sphere by formal political actors, by the media and by high numbers of participants, organisers, and allies. It is the dimension, length, width, and importance of protest that led scholars to argue that the crisis constituted a critical juncture (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017) for social movements across Europe, and that can also be the case for gender equality in Europe (Rubery, 2014), as austerity policies were seen as threats to hard-won advances achieved across the EU. This paper turns to this dimension of the crisis in the next session, focusing on the Portuguese case.

### **Gendered impacts of the crisis in Portugal**

This paper assumes that the crisis and Great Recession were not gender-neutral, as austerity measures disproportionately impacted women and LGBTQIA+ people in many different ways (see Alonso & Lombardo, 2018; V. Ferreira, 2014; V. Ferreira & Monteiro, 2015a; Guerra, 2017; Karamessini & Rubery, 2014). In Portugal, youth unemployment reached 35% in the first trimester of 2012 (affecting men and women equally), and other labour groups were also severely affected, including male workers in the construction and manufacturing sectors, and self-employed women, female public servants, female domestic workers, and female temporary contract employees (V. Ferreira, 2014; V. Ferreira & Monteiro, 2015b).

Rising unemployment and precarity would, in turn, lead to an increased tendency for the feminisation of labour, with men's employment becoming as precarious, unregulated, low wage and low protection as women's labour had traditionally been (V. Ferreira & Monteiro, 2015b), and previous gender inequalities were reinforced to the detriment of female workers, which, in turn, contributed to reinforce gender stereotypes (Prata, 2017), which were also strengthened by cuts to public services, particularly healthcare and education, impacting women more severely by increasing the burden of care and making the already unbalanced work-life equilibrium of Portuguese women even worse (Amâncio, 2007; Ribeiro et al., 2015).

These factors, combined with decreasing social provisions, strengthened structures of family-based informal welfare society, traditionally relying on women's unpaid reproductive work (V. Ferreira, 2014; V. Ferreira & Monteiro, 2015a, 2015b), a solution that was actually preached by the government's Deputy Prime Minister during the electoral campaign of 2015<sup>3</sup>, in a show of approval for the refamilisation tendency identified by V. Ferreira and Monteiro (2015b) as a response to the crisis, relying

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3 Paulo Portas stated, in September 2015, that “As mulheres sabem que têm de organizar a casa e pagar as contas a dias certos, pensar nos mais velhos e cuidar dos mais novos” [Women are aware that they need to organise their home and pay their bills on time, while thinking of the elderly and taking care of the younger] (Jornal de Notícias [JN], 2015, para. 4).

mostly on female networks of homely or neighbourhood support for economic assistance and caregiving (A. P. Lima, 2016). In turn, this return to the family and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles can be connected to the surge in domestic violence in Portugal during the economic crisis (União Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta [UMAR], 2012; Prata, 2017), reinforcing the cycle of gender inequality and structural violence.

Women were also particularly impacted by cuts in the national health system, with UMAR (2012) making the case that the rise in the number of abortions up to 2011 was connected to austerity-fuelled cuts to programs providing free contraceptives, as well as to the rise in unemployment and precarity, as it was mostly women who were themselves or whose partner was unemployed or a precarious worker who had most abortions, which, however, started a continuous declining tendency in 2012, despite no change in the austerity-driven health policies until the new cycle of government foundation (UMAR, 2012).

Despite the reality described above, Prata (2017) demonstrated that the political discourse at the National Parliament remained mostly gender-blind, with very few Members of Parliament bringing the issue of gender inequality in connection to the Great Recession to the forum, resulting in the absence of gender mainstreaming from policy making and implementing. Women's problems were only occasionally mentioned, mainly in relation to domestic violence, and LGBTQIA+ rights were not mentioned on any occasion. I argue that, despite the silencing of these issues in the public fora where austerity was being discussed, they were not absent from the anti-austerity mobilisation, as I will demonstrate in the next session.

### **Gendered resistance to the crisis in Portugal**

As the Great Recession settled in, protesters in Portugal became less settled, increasing the number of protest events against austerity. Women and LGBTQIA+ folk were a vigorous part of this great wave of contention, active in both demonstrating and protest organising, not only through their own organisations, but also through involvement in the recently formed Portuguese anti-austerity social movement, and they were very vocal in providing their own vision on the multiple ways austerity was impacting them. It is to this aspect that this work will now turn.

One of the most intervenient feminist organisations in the Portuguese anti-austerity protest cycle was UMAR, who adapted their anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalism and anti-neoliberal discourse to their anti-austerity mobilisation, and framed their participation from a clear feminist perspective, based on the simple declaration that austerity measures increased the difficulties of women,



historically the most vulnerable members of the Portuguese society<sup>4</sup>, and specifically highlighting their impact on long-term unemployed women, on women in precarious employment, in terms of the wage and pension gap between men and women, and in connection to increased gendered violence. In fact, one of UMAR's discursive strategies was to unabashedly connect austerity to violence – physical violence, psychological violence, and poverty as institutionalised and structural violence<sup>5</sup>, affecting women more than men, and rising due to the government's policies.

UMAR' discourse also described how cuts to public services – particularly in terms of healthcare – would impact sexual and reproductive rights, particularly in setting limitations to the right to abortion. That was the case when the organisation campaigned against the closing of Maternidade Alfredo da Costa (a maternity hospital in Lisbon which was the central institution in the Portuguese capital for voluntary pregnancy terminations)<sup>6</sup>.

Further, UMAR pointed out how other cuts in healthcare (including elderly care) and education (fewer facilities and subsidies for children under school age, less support for children in all levels of education) would increase the (already unbalanced) burden of care on Portuguese women, forcing them back into the private sphere of the family home, which would potentially increase the level of violence women were (already) subjected to. Additionally, UMAR, although centred on women's rights, adopted an intersectional approach in denouncing multiple discriminations, stating that it protested not only for gender equality, but also in defence of other vulnerable groups, including minorities, migrants and LGBTQIA+ people<sup>7</sup>.

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4 “Austeridade (...) agrava a vulnerabilidade laboral e social da maior parte da população, nomeadamente das mulheres” [Austerity (...) increases labour and social vulnerability of the major part of the population, namely of women] (UMAR, s.d.a).

5 “A pobreza e a violência são a consequência inevitável numa sociedade governada por quem só está preocupado em pagar aos bancos tirando o dinheiro a quem já quase nada tem para sobreviver.” [Poverty and violence are the inevitable consequence in a society governed by those who are only worried about paying the banks with money taken from those who already have barely anything to live on.] (UMAR, s.d.b).

6 “Encerrar a Maternidade Alfredo da Costa representa (...) um ataque aos direitos de maternidade/paternidade, assim como aos direitos sexuais e reprodutivos, na medida em que nesta maternidade a lei de interrupção da gravidez era aplicada com acompanhamento e apoio às mulheres que decidiam interromper uma gravidez não desejada.” [Closing the maternity hospital represents (...) an attack on the maternity/paternity rights, as well as on sexual and reproductive rights, inasmuch as the law on the pregnancy termination, here, was applied with support and counselling for those women who decided to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.] (UMAR, s.d.b).

7 “As múltiplas discriminações vividas pelas mulheres e por outros grupos sociais mais vulneráveis.” [The multiple discriminations experienced by women and by other vulnerable social groups] (UMAR, s.d.c).

UMAR also supported the European Day of Action and Solidarity on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012. This was one of the most important transnational protest events in the anti-austerity protest cycle, coordinated by the European Trade Union Confederation, and marked by demonstrations in several European cities, the largest and most significant in Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal. In Portugal, the main organiser was CGTP – Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses [General Confederation of Portuguese Workers] (possibly the most mobilising labour union in the country), with multiple CSOs either supporting or acting as allies, including the organisation Campanha Feminista Anti-Austeritária (CFAA) [Feminist Anti-Austerity Campaign], which, having been created a few weeks before, constituted the feminist frontline in this protest event.

The CFAA, a transnational social movement of resistance to austerity, was promoted by the Portuguese wing of the MMM – Marcha Mundial das Mulheres [World Women's March], with close support of UMAR and other organisations, including LGBTQIA+ organisations such as Clube Safo and Panteras Rosa, a feminist students' organisation – República Das Marias Do Loureiro, a precarious workers' organisation – Precários Inflexíveis, anti-racism and migrants' organisations – SOS Racismo and Solidariedade Imigrante, and social justice organisations – Associação Comunitária and SERES Portugal. Its action started on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012, when the anti-austerity movement was well under-way, under the slogan “Não pagaremos a vossa crise” [We shall not pay for your crisis] (Figure 1), and the movement was present in all anti-austerity national protest events organised past its creation. Prior to the CFAA, MMM had joined the very first national anti-austerity protest mobilised by Geração à Rasca on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and had been present – along with UMAR – in one of biggest Que Se Lixe a Troika protest event on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. Both the MMM and the CFAA (as well as UMAR) made their presence visible in the moments of dissent by wearing purple, importing the transnational protest repertoire used in Spanish anti-austerity protest with the violet tide.

CFAA's mobilisation was consistently framed in terms of gender equality, articulating growing unemployment and declining welfare with women's resistance to going back to the patriarchal family home, to forcibly taking unpaid care work, and to domestic violence. This message was clear in one of the first protest events they organised, which took place on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012 outside the Portuguese National Bank headquarters in Lisbon. Targeting both the Portuguese government and the international organisations of the Troika under the slogan “A dívida dos Governos é com as mulheres, não com os bancos” [This government's debt is towards women, not towards banks], CFAA activists handed out alternative bank



**Figure 1** Promotional material for the CFAA participation in the protest event of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013  
Source: Mulheres em Marcha (2013b).

notes to passers-by and delivered them at the bank's reception desk, featuring the following messages (Figure 2):

- “500 unemployment benefits” (replacing the 500 euros bill)
- “100 home support units” (replacing the 100 euros bill)
- “10 retirement homes” (replacing the 10 euros bill)
- “5 day-care centres” (replacing the 5 euros bill).

Through this creative repertoire, the protesters succeeded in creating an alternative narrative of the consequences of the Portuguese Government's and Troika's choice to support the banking system at the expense of public services and labour-related support, claiming that funds being injected into saving private banks should instead be used in alleviating the burden of reproductive care on women, in creating employment and awarding state benefits to those living in precarity.

Together, UMAR and MMM (and, as of 2012, CFAA) also organised the anti-austerity women's march on March 8<sup>th</sup> during the years of the Troika intervention, often in alliance with labour unions (particularly CGTP) and with other feminist CSOs (Rede 8 de Março, feminist student organisations). In 2013, the women's



**Figure 2** Alternative bank notes featured on the CFFA protest event of November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
Source: Mulheres em Marcha (2013b).

march adopted a clear anti-austerity stance, under the slogan “A igualdade de género não é compatível com políticas de austeridade” [Gender equality is not compatible with austerity policies], framed from the feminist perspective of resistance to refamilisation and right to the public sphere “Estamos organizadas em movimentos sociais, apesar de quererem que permaneçamos no espaço doméstico e das pressões com que lidamos no espaço público.” [We (women) are organised in social movements, despite their (the government's, Troika's, the patriarchy's) desire to keep us in the domestic space and the pressures we face in the public space.] (Mulheres em Marcha, 2013a, para. 2).

The Anti-Austerity Women's March also constituted an opportunity to relate feminist resistance to claims being uttered by the general anti-austerity protest, particularly in terms of labour, a demand that is central in Portuguese protest (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; Estanque et al., 2013; T. Fernandes et al., 2021), articulated through a gender perspective that highlighted labour-related gender inequalities, including overrepresentation of women in unemployment, precarious, part-time, lower security and lower rights employment, the gender pay gap, and the prevalence of domestic and care unpaid work, always connected to gendered violence against women.

CFAA remained active in anti-austerity resistance up to the October 2015 elections, which were to cause a shift in the political colour of the Portuguese government through a unique informal coalition between the Socialist Party and the parties further to the left, but their activity shifted to the organisation of informational and convivial events once the protest cycle started to die down. Prior to those elections, UMAR actively campaigned for an anti-government vote, as per their manifesto:

A atual maioria de direita PSD/CDS lesou os nossos direitos como mulheres. Impôs a austeridade nas nossas vidas: desemprego, precariedade, cortes nos serviços sociais, na saúde, na educação. Levou a que as e os nossos filhos fugissem do país. Dizem-nos que já temos muito que fazer: cuidar das crianças, das pessoas idosas, fazer contas para gerir a casa. Estas foram declarações recentes do vice-primeiro ministro Paulo Portas! (...) A atual maioria PSD/CDS fez recuar a lei de despenalização do aborto. [The majority PSD-PP government has attacked our rights as women, through the imposition of austerity measures (...). It caused the emigration of our children (...) and gave women plenty to do: taking care of children and the elderly, taking care of the household, in the very words of Deputy Prime Minister Paulo Portas. It also pushed back the legislation on the depenalisation of abortion]. (UMAR, s.d.e)

When it comes to LGBTQIA+ anti-austerity activism, one of the most active organisations in Portuguese anti-austerity protest was Panteras Rosa, which started its involvement early in the protest cycle, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010, when the organisation participated in the first national anti-austerity protest, convened by CGTP in alliance with several civil society organisations. From the very beginning, their involvement was framed in terms of LGBTQIA+ rights, through the adoption of the motto “Precariedade laboral somada à discriminação sexual resulta em opressão total” [Precarity added to sexual discrimination results in total oppression] (dezanove, 2010) and the slogan “Maricas e fufas contra a austeridade laboral!” [Faggots and dykes against labour austerity!] (dezanove, 2010) (Figure 3), reflecting the organisation's long-time strategy of twisting insults and turning them into a form of empowerment.

Panteras Rosa had already been a highly active protest organisation, adopting strategies to increase the visibility of LGBTQIA+ activism in the Portuguese public sphere that included the use of rainbow flags and the colour bright pink in protest material, plus some of their activists also wear a pink tail, which they continued to employ in the anti-austerity protest cycle. They were also one of the proponents of the Rainbow Tide, along with other LGBTQIA+ organisations present in anti-austerity mobilisation (Clube Safo, Opus Gay, Exército de Dumbledore,



**Figure 3** Panteras Rosa's call to participation in the CGTP demonstration of May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Source: dezanove (2010).

Bichas Cobardes, Grupo Transexual Portugal) in widely participated protest events.

They were an integral part of the first highly participated anti-austerity protest event convened by Geração à Rasca (a natural progression as one of the movement founders was also an activist in Panteras Rosa), and the *ethos* of the organisation can be found in the Geração à Rasca manifesto: an inclusive and diverse protest event, laic, apolitical and pacifist, focusing on participatory democracy. Panteras would go on to participate in all national events convened by the anti-austerity social movement, having been present in all the national Que Se Lixe a Troika protest events, all general strikes, and the European Day of Action and Solidarity, as well as in smaller demonstrations taking place mainly in Lisbon and Porto.

Their participation was framed in accordance with their previous activist work and identity, emphasising that, while everyone was affected by the financial crisis and Great Recession, minorities' rights were under particular threat, including the hard-won rights of sexual minorities. They stated that austerity measures

increased the discrimination of the LGBTQIA+ population, who, already facing homophobia and transphobia in access to regular employment, saw their rights curtailed and their labour-related precarity increased, as they were specifically targeted in licensing processes and downgraded to precarious employment<sup>8</sup>. Their stance was reflected in the series of slogans they adopted during this protest cycle, which included “Austerity is also a prejudice”, “Trans, Feminist and Queer Insubmission”, “Austerity is immoral, not love” and, closely related to Geração à Rasca's name, “Struggling LGBT”.

They further argued that the crisis took a particularly heavy toll on those identifying as LGBTQIA+, through decreasing funding and resources for gender equality policies and services, which would force some people back into the closet and aggravate the precarisation of sexual autonomies, particularly those of young people, women and non-heteronormative or binary people, and joined the feminist activists in their fight against women being forced back into the private sphere. Their interpretation of the crisis is, thus, clearly made from a queer point of view, close to the anti-capitalist and participatory democracy stance of the organisation. It is also, like the CFAA, constructed from a transnational stance, in solidarity with the people of other countries affected by the Great Recession, but also with the protesters in the Arab Spring.

The rainbow tide would, naturally, also be present in moments of LGBTQIA+ activism, such as Pride celebrations taking place during the Great Recession. Along with other organisations, Panteras Rosa took advantage of these moments of higher visibility of the community's activism to articulate claims and demands related to the anti-austerity protest cycle, again from their own non-binary and non-heteronormative perspective – that was the case in Pride 2013, under the slogan “Orgulho é Resistência” [Pride is Resistance], and on the 2010, 2011 and 2012 editions, when the organisation clearly framed its participation in terms of resistance to austerity measures, specifically in terms of their impact not only on the LGBTQ+ population, but also on minorities, migrants, sex workers and women.

The organisation also convened anti-austerity protest events in alliance with other organisations, as was the case with May Day 2010 (April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010), when, together with UMAR, it promoted the protest “Precarious Workers come out of the closet”, part of a wider event where migrants rights and precarious workers organisations were also present.

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8 “A população LGBT é um grupo particularmente frágil a esta austeridade, devido à homofobia e à transfobia.” [The LGBT population is a particularly fragile group in the face of austerity, as a result of homophobia and transphobia.] (Vitorino, 2011a).



**Figure 4** Panteras Rosa promotional material for the 2011 and 2012 general strikes. The first sign reads [Austerity is also a prejudice], while the second states [Trans, feminist and queer insubmission], and identifies the following protest targets: [International Monetary Fund, austerity, capital, the banking and the financial system, precarity, imperialism, patriarchy, macho culture, Fascism, racism, sexism, homophobia, lesbian-phobia, transphobia, nationalism, patriotism...]

Source: Vitorino (2011b, 2012a).

Finally, anti-austerity mobilisation was also the norm on two traditional moments of protest in the Portuguese democracy – the yearly celebrations of the Carnation Revolution of 1974 on April 25<sup>th</sup>, marking the eventful transition to democracy, and Labour Day (May 1<sup>st</sup>). These events tend to be highly visible in the media, participated by both citizens and activists, even if they are mostly organised by traditional protest actors in the country – labour unions and left-wing political parties – as well as by CSOs whose mission relates to democracy and the Revolution itself. During the anti-austerity protest cycle, these constituted another opportunity for dissent, with the potential of gathering higher numbers of participants and a wider net of organisers (both days being national holidays).

Feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations have been participating in these protest events, and that continued to be the case during this protest cycle, when their participation was framed taking into account their interpretation not only of the austerity cycle, but also of the significance, symbology, and importance of these



dates for Portuguese democracy, highlighting the need to resist in order not to recede on the rights that the democratic transition had guaranteed, particularly in terms of gender equality and minorities' recognition. As such, UMAR used this moment to criticise and mobilise against the government's discourse of identification with women with traditional gender roles, as homely caregivers who would bear the burden of the austerity cuts by providing for their family<sup>9</sup>. As for Panteras Rosa, their discourse, formulated in the same terms of resisting backing up on rights, appealed to participation in the rainbow tide during these protest events.

The fear of going back on hard-won rights was, thus, a common theme articulated by both the feminist and the LGBTQIA+ activist movements during the anti-austerity protest cycle. Together, organisations articulated the dread of being confined to the patriarchal home or the closet, as symbolic and physical spaces where the rights of women and those identifying as LGBTQIA+ could not be guaranteed, and were effectively under threat. Anti-patriarchy discourse is also clear in both women's and LGBTQIA+ organisations' interpretation of the crisis, as they identified the patriarchal structures underlying the austerity measures being imposed from above and blamed them for LGBTQIA+-phobia and the subalternisation of women and sexual minorities. Uniting them were other claims, including the effect austerity had on women's and the LGBTQIA+ population's access to dignified employment and labour rights, and reproductive and sexual rights.

During the protest cycle, thus, bridges for cooperation were built through the identification and articulation of multiple forms of discrimination made worse by austerity – including class and labour status, race, colonial past, gender, sexual orientation – as intersectionality emerged as a common identity of all organisations. Their involvement, thus, came from a specifically gendered interpretation of the financial and economic crisis, both in its origins and in its consequences, and so did their demands, articulated from the inclusion of a gender perspective.

Together, often side by side in protest events, these organisations created an open space free of discrimination where multiple solidarities emerged: between women and queer folk, between generations, between economical and professional classes, where the personal impact of the crisis on women and the LGBTQIA+ population was displayed. The place of protest, thus, can be seen as a *locus* where the daily struggles increasing the vulnerability of the people entering it

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9 “Perante o desemprego e a precariedade, querem pôr a história a andar para trás, apontando-nos o caminho de casa para desempenharmos os papéis tradicionais de cuidadoras e de ‘domésticas’ [In the face of unemployment and precarity, they want to make history turn back, showing us the way back into our houses so we can continue to perform the traditional ‘housewives’ and caregiving roles] (Mulheres em Marcha, 2013a).

became a source of empowerment, echoing Judith Butler's reflections on the anti-austerity mobilisation, when she states that “the demand to end precarity is enacted publicly by those who expose their vulnerability to failing infrastructural conditions” (Butler, 2014, p. 4).

The solidarity between movements thus became a form of collective resistance, contributing to the construction of collective identities through the clear identification of situations of injustice (Tarrow, 2011), presented through meaningful messages aimed at galvanising broader support and consistent mobilisation, while clearly marking the gendered positionality of the organisations, a discourse that functioned both as a form of self-legitimation and a form of questioning the “no alternative” narrative established by the government and the Troika.

These common claims contributed to the building of alliances between these two movements, as well as to their integration in the wide-encompassing Portuguese anti-austerity social movement (Figure 5). These alliances could fall under Woodward's (2015) concept of “velvet triangle”, featuring coalitions (temporary or not) between women's organisations, other CSOs and institutional actors (such as labour unions), and the academia, a third axis that was not visible in this analysis, pointing at the possibility of an incomplete triangle, missing one of its sides.

Instances of mobilisation of the feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations with political parties outside the scope of Que Se Lixe a Troika were also not found in the materials analysed. This seems to indicate that feminist and QUILTBAG+ participation in the anti-austerity protest movement remained somewhat separate from formal political actors — as hinted by the absence of gender from the National Parliament identified by Ana Prata (2017) —, which was not the case with the anti-austerity social movement, in which the influence of PCP, BE and even PS was felt.

Despite these alliances, though, the activists remained aware of discrimination within the movement, as uttered in the 2013 Women's March manifesto: “Nós, activistas nos nossos sindicatos e partidos políticos, desafiamos o sexismo que perdura e a misoginia revelada pelos nossos próprios irmãos de luta, continuando, sempre, a manter a pressão para a inclusão do nosso feminismo anti-capitalista, de base e anticolonialista (...) nas lutas” [We, the female activists in our labour unions and political parties, defy the sexism and misogyny revealed by our resistance brothers, and pressure for the inclusion of bottom-up, anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist feminism in (...) our struggles] (Mulheres em Marcha, 2013a, para. 7). Breaches were also present between the feminist movement itself and between them and the LGBTQIA+ movement, particularly in relation to the rights of sex workers, with Panteras Rosa actively campaigning for their labour rights and marching side by side with sex workers during Labour Day celebrations “O precariado sai hoje sem medo às ruas (...) e



**Figure 5** Organisations convening the general strike of June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, featuring UMAR, CFAA and Panteras Rosa, among others

Source: Vitorino (2013).

também xs trabalhadorxs do sexo” [The precariat marches today (...) alongside sex workxs with no fear] (Vitorino, 2012b).

Other differences relate to higher resistance to cuts to public services from the feminist movement<sup>10</sup> than from the LGBTQIA+ movement, and the question of domestic violence also acquiring higher priority in the women's movement discourse. As important as alliances were, then, they are not enough to say the organisations were speaking in one, single, unified voice.

As for alliances with the Portuguese anti-austerity social movement, the clear feminist/gender perspective present in the Indignados/15-M movement in Spain (Alonso & Lombardo, 2018; Fuentes, 2015; Palomo, 2016) is not to be found in its Portuguese equivalent, as Que Se Lixe a Troika remained mostly gender-blind in

10 “Cortam brutalmente nos serviços públicos e esperam que sejamos nós, as mulheres, a assumir, em trabalho não pago, o que entendem não ser bem público: a saúde, a educação, a protecção social, o cuidado dos/as idosos/as.” [They [the government, the Troika] brutally cut public services and expect that us, the women, take over, through unpaid labour, in healthcare, education, social protection and elderly care, as they do not believe those to be public goods.] (UMAR, s.d.d.).

its utterances and positionings. However, I argue that, just like in the Spanish case, Portuguese feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations intensified their mobilisation, nationally and transnationally, through participation in the intense protest cycle, which fortified and empowered the organisations and provided them with avenues for future collaborations. In fact, both UMAR and Panteras Rosa continue to be active in solidarity with other movements in important protest events, such as the labour union which organised dockers' strike of June 15<sup>th</sup> 2016 or the National March in Defence of Public School on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, and, more significantly, the results can be seen in the Feminist Strike of 2019, the biggest to that date in the country, mobilising the biggest number of women present in a protest event in the history of the country (30000 women demonstrators) and the support of 5 labour unions.

## Conclusion

Civil society's resistance against austerity politics and in favour of democracy shows that political contestation is at the core of this crisis and has important gender dimensions (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017, p. 3)

This paper started from a personal reaction – as a participant in the anti-austerity protest cycle, I joined the purple and the rainbow tides. I didn't see them on the news, I didn't see them in political discourse and I didn't see them in academic work on the protest cycle. As Camargo (2014) states, much of the story of anti-austerity mobilisation in Portugal remains to be told: this paper is an effort to uncover other sides of the story – that of women and LGBTQIA+ mobilisation.

By identifying the main frames used by feminist and QUILTBAG+ organisations in resisting the crisis, as well as outlining their strong commitment to taking to the streets to communicate their own narratives of how austerity was impinging on their rights and their existence to a wider audience, this work demonstrated how feminist and LGBTQIA+ anti-austerity mobilisation was constructed based on previous experiences of anti-patriarchy and anti-discrimination activism, against neoliberal and capitalist policies seen as posing common threats, leading to the creation and reinforcement of alliances between different organisations, present on the streets many times side by side and fully participating in the protest cycle. As such, the gendered identities of these activists and of their organisations was a significant contributor to their interpretation of the crisis and to their motivations to take to the streets with an alternative narrative on austerity in Portugal.

Having shown at least some of the active roles played by women and LGBTQIA+ folk in austerity contention in Portugal, I am still left with the question: why were alternative voices in the Portuguese anti-austerity protest cycle unheard in the news, in public and political discourse and in academic analyses of the protest cycle?

One of the possible explanations for the lack of visibility can be offered in the fact that feminist protest became stronger and more organised at the end of 2012 with the creation of the CFAA, when anti-austerity protest was already starting to die down, but this explanation is not satisfactory, as this paper has demonstrated that women and LGBTQIA+ activists were present in protest events from the beginning of the cycle. I believe this silencing reveals deeper abysses in the Portuguese society, which remains genuinely traditional and patriarchal, and where gender-based violence is epidemical.

Further, women's, but particularly LGBTQIA+'s rights, are still a divisive claim for some in the Portuguese public sphere, which contributed to their silencing. If gender equality has been gaining traction, Portugal still ranks high in discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ population (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2013), a cycle that organisations like Panteras Rosa are engaged in breaking. However, as Eduarda Ferreira (2014) points out, most organisations engaged in the promotion of LGBTQIA+ rights are rather informal, gather small numbers of activists and have very little financial means, which bears weight in their invisibility in the public sphere. In the case of the feminist movement, previous research (Monteiro & Ferreira, 2016) has shown that the political environment in which they operate is still particularly difficult, and this will, naturally, have repercussions when the movements hit the streets and on their visibility in the media.

The silencing of claims perceived as potentially divisive could also have been a strategy of the main citizen initiative fuelling the anti-austerity protest, *Que Se Lixe a Troika*, which passed a very unified message, potentially seen as more powerful, but leaving little room for different voices within the movement. As such, it is possible to say that, while “[t]he Eurocrisis and associated politics of austerity highlight[ed] the fragile nature of feminist gains” (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017, p. 99), this was not clear for the main conveners of the anti-austerity protest cycle in Portugal. It certainly was for both feminist and LGBTQI+ organisations, who solely seem to have borne the responsibility of passing this message to the public.

Nonetheless, the anti-austerity cycle of contention can be seen as a success given that it corresponded to the greatest moment of cooperation between activists since the Carnation Revolution. This had a positive impact on feminist and

LGBTQIA+ activists' commitment to collective action, reinforcing their willingness to cooperate in future protest actions, which is reflected, for example, in the growth of the feminist strike in Portugal. However, this paper argues that, although it was clear that the anti-austerity protest represented a clear moment of diverse social movements coming together to protest against a common target and due to common grievances, there were a variety of rights-enhancing messages in the public sphere that remained rather invisible. As a feminist, I wish they had been heard farther and wider in those years, but I remain hopeful that the message has grown stronger since then.

Other invisibilities remain, such as the participation of migrants in anti-austerity mobilisation in the country. Broader investigation into the issue of silence in protest overall is also pressing, particularly focusing on the evolution of silence and visibility in a public sphere that has been affected by the highly participated anti-austerity protest cycle — this could start from interviews with the activists whose organisations are focus of this paper, or from Critical Discourse Analysis of the newspaper articles depicting the protest events where female and LGBTQIA+ participants — as well as migrants — are barely to be found.

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