

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis
A collective work by CES



Centro de Estudos Sociais
Universidade de Coimbra



UNIVERSIDADE DE
COIMBRA



Organização
das Nações Unidas
para a Educação,
a Ciência e a Cultura



Universidade de
Coimbra - Alta e Sã
inscrita na Lista do Património
Mundial em 2013



PROGRAMA OPERACIONAL COMPLEXIDADE E INOVAÇÃO



UNIÃO EUROPEIA

Fundo Europeu
de Desenvolvimento Regional



Fundação
para a Ciência
e a Tecnologia

WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Editor

José Reis

Publisher

Centre for Social Studies
University of Coimbra

Scientific Review

Ana Cordeiro Santos, António Sousa Ribeiro, Carlos Fortuna, João Rodrigues,
José Castro Caldas, José Reis, Pedro Hespanha, Vítor Neves

Linguistic Revision

João Paulo Moreira

Editorial Assistant

Rita Kacia Oliveira

Design and Pagination

André Queda

December, 2020

This work is funded by ERDF Funds through the Competitiveness Factors Operational Programme - COMPETE and by National Funds through the FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology within the UIDB/50012/2020 project.

The data and opinions included in this publication are the exclusive responsibility of its authors.

ISBN

978-989-8847-28-7

VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Madalena Duarte

The exacerbation of risk caused by the COVID-19 pandemic brought the need for social confinement and spread a “Stay at home” message throughout the world, thereby equating intimate space with an ideal of personal safety. However, for many people, mostly women, the fear of public space as a health risk coexists with (and even takes a back seat to) the fear of private space, where the ideal of intimacy and protection is corrupted by violence. The increase in reports of domestic violence in some countries during the lockdown period has caused social alarm and forced urgent measures to be taken, especially in terms of reinforcing victim support services. However, the indispensability of these measures should not prevent us from questioning the broader paradigm and from tackling, or at least seeking to be more responsive to, situations of violence in intimate relationships. The present pandemic moment shows that if we really wish to face up to this reality, it is not enough to adapt already existing responses and services to a virtual emergency context; a critical and feminist reflection is needed on the policies aimed at this type of violence. We must not forget that: (i) many of these women were already in a situation of social isolation; (ii) the pandemic only exacerbates a pre-existing context marked by violence-promoting precariousness and gender inequality in various spheres of our social life; (iii) women who are victims of violence tend to experience, at the same time, different forms of oppression and social control, since they are immersed in social contexts where patriarchy intersects with other power systems that weaken them, such as colonialism and capitalism.

What we have here, therefore, is the combination of a structural scenario that is actively produced by patriarchy and a conjunctural

but emergency context that was caused by the pandemic and is likely to aggravate situations of abuse.

Contrary to what is being promised to the rest of us, the victims of violence do not look forward to the end of the pandemic as a return to normality, for which reason the measures to be taken in this area must also be directed at the conditions and processes that contribute to their daily vulnerability: (i) primary prevention must remain a priority; (ii) the measures must be empowering and allow the home to become a truly safe space, while efforts should be made to actively combat the notion – widely spread in society at large and the legal arena in particular – that women must leave home to escape violence; (iii) the measures must take into account the economic situation of women before and after the pandemic and strengthen their position in the labour market, valuing their multiple roles; (iv) an intersectional look at the causes and impacts of violence on women’s lives is also needed, as is currently being done with regard to the pandemic.

The current pandemic has been particularly severe for older women and women from lower social classes. But women who are immigrants, refugees, from ethnic and cultural minorities, of non-normative sexual orientation, among many others, are also on the margins of society. If this is worrying enough in contexts of social, political and economic peace, it is even more so at a critical time like the one we are currently experiencing.