

Multidimensionality in Poverty: Spatial and Gender analyses for Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul.

Osmar Tomaz de Souza^{*}
Izete Pengo Bagolin^{**}
Flávio V. Comin^{***}
Sabino da Silva Porto Júnior^{****}

Resumo

Este trabalho buscou reconhecer e dar visibilidade às múltiplas dimensões da pobreza, incluindo aí seus aspectos espaciais e as particularidades das desigualdades de gênero da mesma em Porto Alegre. Para isso, foram apresentados os resultados desagregados de uma pesquisa conduzida conjuntamente por duas Universidades e a Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre no ano de 2007. Na pesquisa, foram entrevistadas 16386 pessoas vivendo em situação de pobreza nas diferentes regiões da cidade. Buscou-se uma mudança de enfoque na análise sobre pobreza ao enfatizar o peso das dimensões que as pessoas consideram relevante para uma vida “digna de ser vivida”. Os resultados evidenciaram as diferenças regionais das carências, as dimensões mais importantes para as pessoas e, em especial, as formas como homens e mulheres vivenciam e manifestam suas percepções acerca da pobreza e das privações.

Palavras Chaves: Pobreza, Gênero, Desigualdade, Capacitações.

Abstract.

This paper aims to emphasize the importance of different dimensions in poverty studies in Porto Alegre and, to identify spatial and gender disparities among its regions. The paper was based in a dataset from a survey conducted during 2007 by a partnership among two Universities and the Municipal Administration of Porto Alegre and sponsored by REDE URB-AL. In a two stages methodology, 16386 people living in poverty condition were interviewed. The results allow the researchers to highlight the importance of dimensions such as habitation, health, education to allow people have a “dignifying live”. It is also possible to conclude that the deprivations between women and man and those differences are heterogeneous also among Porto Alegre Regions. Such results show more clearly the actual conditions of the population living in poverty.

Key Words: Poverty, gender inequality, Capability

JEL: I3, I32, O15

^{*} Professor do programa de pós Graduação em Economia da PUC-RS

^{**} Professora do programa de pós Graduação em Economia da PUC-RS

^{***} Professor do PPGE/UFRGS.

^{****} Professor do PPGE/UFRGS.

1. Introduction

Poverty, unequal opportunities, low development and social exclusion in Brazil and Latin America are long time subjects of research and reflections in the field of Economics and the Social Sciences. Nevertheless, since the beginning of this century debates about their complexity have intensified, particularly their articulation with different aspects of the contemporary economic and social reality. This happens because the study and understanding of these phenomena without articulating them with their regional, place, sectorial, social groups, genre particularities and other aspects, greatly limit their possibilities to inspire actions to fight poverty and promote development.

The acceptance of the subject's complexity is renewing the agenda of poverty research and allows the development and the inclusion of new approaches to its study and measurement. Example of this are the poverty studies guided by the capability approach whose theoretical and concept basis were initially established by Amartya Sen (1982, 2000), by Nussbaum (1999, 2000) and are being improved by authors such as Comin (2001,2002), Chiapero Martinetti (2000), Qizilbash (2002), among others. This represents a change of perspective in the poverty vision, its study, the creation of information data bases and obviously, in the way poverty-fighting interventions are thought.

To this effect, it is important to highlight that the true "essence" of an approach depends not only on what it evaluates but also on what it ignores. The main theoretical contribution of the Capabilities Approach (CA) as a broad normative *framework* is precisely to expand the information environment at the functionings and capabilities level, that is to say, the substantive freedom (capability) a person has to chose the kind of life they value through their states and actions (accomplished functionings).

Thus, the CA establishes a contrast with the philosophical approaches which concentrate on mental states such as happiness or the fulfillment of desires and on primary goods, and with the theories based on earnings, expenditure, consumption or basic needs. When it emphasizes that – "in a way", the capabilities or substantial freedoms and the quality of life approach "detaches itself from the traditions established in economy" – Sen (2000: 39) states that those "broader approaches are in tune with analysis criteria that have been part of professional economy since the beginning."

As Sen explains (1992; 1993; 2000), the philosophical base of the CA can be identified in the "human blooming" and "capabilities" approach related to quality of life and substantive freedoms which derive from elements present in Aristotle ideas. The connections with Adam Smith, according to Sen (1984; 1984b; 1985; 1987; 1992; 1993; 2000), pivot around the "needs" and "life conditions" analysis. Smith considered the need to satisfy some of the freedoms, for instance, "the ability to appear before people without feeling ashamed" or to take part in community life. Sen (1984b; 1987; 1992; 1993; 2000) highlights the fact that in Marx's political philosophy the defense of the basic value of freedom can be found, emphatically including "under the control of individuals the conditions for their activities and free development." He (1984; 1985; 1987) also points out another important contribution related to what Marx called "merchandise fetiche" – to consider goods valuable in themselves and not by how helpful they are to people. According to Sen, Mill's utilitarian approach, on the other hand, was substituted when it judged interests in the terms of extension of freedom.

Some of the CA's theoretical sources having been indicated, it is important to emphasize that its perspective is based mainly on Amartya Sen (1980; 1984; 1984b; 1985; 1987; 1992; 1993; 2000) and, in a complementary way, on Martha Nussbaum (2000).

CA can be distinguished at three different levels, according to Pressman and Summerfield (2000: 90) and Robeyns (2003; 2005):

1. As a thinking *framework* to evaluate individual advantages or social arrangements;
2. As criticism to other approaches for the evaluation of welfare and justice; and
3. As a contribution to operate welfare comparisons among people and to measure poverty and inequality.

Under the Capabilities Approach, according to Sen (1983b; 1984; 1992; 1993; 2000), poverty must be understood as the deprivation of basic capabilities and not only as lack of income or low level of resources, primary goods or basic needs.

He explains that (1992: 109-110; 1993: 41) the use of the term “basic capabilities” (Sen, 1980; 1983b), aimed at separating the capacity to satisfy certain crucially important functionings from certain minimum adequate levels. As explained before, this minimum condition can be represented by the most basic functionings such as being adequately fed, having good health, being free of avoidable illnesses and premature death, and more complex things such as being happy, having self respect and taking part in community life.

Based on this, according to Sen (1992; 1993), the identification of certain basic capabilities at minimally acceptable levels can provide a possible approach to poverty. According to him (1993: 41), “identifying a minimal combination of basic capabilities can be a good way to determine the problem of diagnosing and measuring poverty”.

Nevertheless, Sen (2000) cautions that the goal of the CA is not to deny that low levels of income is one of the main causes of poverty. He (1992: 111) explains that “having an inadequate income is not a question of having an income below a poverty line established externally, but of having an income below what is adequate to generate the levels specified by the capabilities for the person in question”. Thus, according to Sen (1992: 111) and Foster and Sen (1997: 213), in the income realm “the relevant concept of poverty needs to be the *inadequacy* (to generate the minimally acceptable capabilities), instead of a *low level* (independent from personal characteristics)”.

Sen (2000: 110) and Foster and Sen (1997: 211) suggest some points in favor of approaching poverty as the deprivation of capabilities:

1. Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of deprivation of capabilities intrinsically important when compared to income, which is important only instrumentally;
2. There are influences on the deprivation of capabilities more than on the insufficiency of income; and
3. The impact of low income on the capabilities is contingent and conditional, that is to say, the instrumental relation between income insufficiency and low level of capabilities varies among communities and even among families and individuals.

Of these arguments, Sen points out that the third one is particularly important in relation with public action analysis whose objective is to reduce poverty of inequity. Sen (2000: 110 e 111) and Foster and Sen (1997: 211-213) list some reasons about “conditional variations” which are discussed by the literature in the context of public policies devise:

- (a) The connection between income and capabilities is greatly influenced by human diversity, regarding not only personal characteristics but also outside circumstances. Apart from this, people may not have control or may have it in a limited way over some variables related to that diversity;

(b) A certain “coupling” of disadvantages might exist between (1) deprivation of income and (2) adversity to transform income into functionings. For instance, disadvantages such as age, incapacity or illness not only lower an individual’s potential to generate income but also make it more difficult to transform income into capabilities;

(c) To consider only the family income is to ignore the inequity among the family and the level of deprivations of the neglected members;

(d) Relative deprivation of income can result in absolute deprivation of capabilities.

Based on that, Sen (1992: 116) emphasizes that to consider just the insufficiency of income, apart from “being very far from the main motivation behind our interest on poverty (the limitations of the lives some people are forced to live)”, might “not provide empirical guidance related to the origin and prevalence of deprivation”. As a result, according to him (2000: 112), to analyze poverty as the deprivation of capabilities is “to improve the understanding of its nature and of its causes, diverting the main attention from the means to the ends that people justifiably look for and, accordingly, to the freedoms of being able to achieve those ends”.

It is in the context of the above reflections that the field research which originated this paper fits, that is to say, the goal of studying poverty from a theoretical-methodological frame which allowed broadening the understanding of its complexity and multidimensionality. In this context, the research’s main objectives were to identify the vision people have of their own poverty and, from that, to build a multidimensional poverty index for Porto Alegre (RS).

To this effect, interviews with 16386 people in situation of poverty were carried out in the Porto Alegre county, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The county has a population of about 1.4 million people and polarizes the Porto Alegre metropolitan area (RMPA), which totalizes 31 counties and more than 4 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2007). According to income criteria, 11% of the inhabitants of Porto Alegre are considered to live below the poverty line. That translates into a universe of more than 150 thousand people. Nevertheless, this is an income criterion, and the research carried out aimed at identifying multidimensional poverty, measuring deprivations in the area of capabilities. It is due to this approach that it is possible to suppose that the number of multidimensional poor people is bigger.

Some of the results of this research are shown in this article in which we highlight the spatial distribution of poverty in Porto Alegre and above all, the differences in the way men and women see and express their visions on it. More than a theoretical debate on genre issues, the text emphasizes the *perspectives* of men and women, fact which, in our understanding, *illustrates* the way in which this condition is perceived and experienced by both sexes. This paper aims at achieving two objectives: On the one hand, to recognize and make known the multiple dimensions of poverty including their spatial aspects and the peculiarities of the genre-related inequity of it in Porto Alegre. On the other hand, to contribute to reveal the reality of the inequity and provide fundamental information which aims at legitimizing important issues on the subject, make society aware of them and, especially, to help in the design of public policies.

2. Poverty, Deprivations and Genre

Generally speaking, the view on poverty is based mainly on the lack of income. Institutions and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program

(UNDP) use the “income” criteria to define “poor individual” and people in “extreme poverty” situations. Nevertheless, despite the easiness of application of this criterion, it is a consensus that it is incapable of grasping the sense and the depth of what being “poor” means. The creation and vast use of the Human Development Index (HDI) has been a progress towards spreading the use of the Per Capita Income as a development index.

Sen (2000), one of the mentors of the HDI, highlights the importance of the change in the way poverty is looked at, since income deprivations and capabilities deprivations in general show “considerable depending relations, it is important to avoid the trap of thinking that considering the first ones in a way will tell us something about the others” (p.34). That is to say, relations are not always that strong and sometimes, departures from them are more important. Sen points out that poverty seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities can be thought about from different aspects, such as premature death, illiteracy, sub nutrition and even the phenomenon of gender inequity.

The question of inequity based on sex and the debate about the historical and theoretical construction of the “genre” category is becoming more important in the academic and political Brazilian arena. It is an attempt at giving voice and visibility to the role of women in the historical processes and particularly, at women’s importance to them. Either studying the constitutive and historical aspects of the subject (GONÇALVES, 2006; STREY et al., 2004)) or those linked to the world of work, family and public policies (CARREIRA, 2004; OLINTO and OLIVEIRA, 2004; ARAÚJO and SCALON, 2005; SCOTT and CORDEIRO, 2006), the broadening of research and publications that try to break the apparent “neutrality” of quantitative data and historical records can be verified.

As we stated before, the deepening of theoretical reflections related to this category is not our objective in this paper, as it was not in the field research. Even so, as we believe that this optic can contribute to understanding poverty and to public policies which look to overcome poverty, we made the effort to analyze data in the shade of the inequity of visions and prospects among the sexes.

About those two issues, Social Watch points out that “poverty affects men, women, boys and girls. Nevertheless, it is experienced differently by people of different ages, ethnic origin, family roles and sexes” (2005, p.27). As much as the phenomenon of poverty in its broader sense, genre-based inequity also goes beyond the methodological approaches being employed, as the same document points out when it refers to “...methodological problems in the measurement of poverty that hide genre-based issues” (p.27). Social Watch in its 2007 issue recognizes that: “Gender-based inequity is a phenomenon that transcends borders, cultures, religions, nations and income levels. The achievement of gender equity is a challenge for the entire modern world because although its manifestations are diverse, the gap between women and men persists in all countries” (2007, p.85).

Social Watch 2005 issue goes further when it emphasizes that poverty and genre are “inextricably related” and that despite this reality genre “... in practice, does not get enough attention from action plans and specific development projects” (p.27).

The Capability Approach can be considered as one of the most encompassing alternatives in the current debate about development. This Approach has been used with different aims in multidisciplinary studies in the most diverse areas of knowledge. Nevertheless, practical and/or empirical applications are still limited and subjected to criticism and discussions. Consensus has not been reached on how to operate the approach or how to evaluate public policies implemented from the principles of the approach. In this way, the operation and application of the approach can still be considered as restricted aspects that call for additional research efforts.

Departing from these distinctions, to say that the poverty in Porto Alegre, considered as insufficiency of income, has practically not changed in the 90's, going from 11% of the population in 1991 to 11.3% in 2000, is a rather limited conclusion. That information hides other aspects of poverty in the capital city. Basic aspects such as being properly nurtured, having good health, being free of avoidable illnesses and premature death, and more complex aspects such as being happy, having self respect and participating of community life are overlooked by this poverty indicator.

3. Methodological aspects of the survey

As said before, at the time of carrying out surveys and questionnaires it is common to see questions being asked by researchers and institutes without any participation of or *input* from the people interviewed. They should benefit from the surveys but instead of that, end up acting as mere instruments most of the time, as means to legitimize the researchers thesis which are already incorporated in office-prepared questions. On the other hand, researchers who are aware of that problem and who try to avoid it, end up caught in the trap of conducting focus groups, many times with open agendas, and limiting themselves to produce a description of the conversations, without a link coherently related to the object of the survey. It is frequent to use public surveys as a way to justify or legitimate results when they are carried out without letting poor people influence the definition of the dimensions to be considered by the studies.

With the aim of overcoming these difficulties, this survey about *Multidimensional Poverty in Porto Alegre* proposed a *Public Enquiry* as a preliminary stage to the design of the questions which would be used in the questionnaire to be created and applied. The main objectives of that enquiry were:

- The identification of dimensions relevant to poverty, in the views of the participants
- Ordering the different dimensions to be used to create a system of indexes quantification

The *public enquiry* was organized through implementing one-page individual questionnaires. A questionnaire was elaborated to collect data and create a multidimensional poverty index based on the results of the enquiry.

When elaborating the *questionnaire*, the first elements chosen to be part of it are not part of the index. They are called 'controls' because they are used to differentiate results. We worked with four main controls in this survey, being them: genre, age, educational level and income level. The presence of the 'income level' control in particular makes the comparison and correlation among the dimensions of the index and income possible.

The rest of the variables for each of the dimensions were included based on the suggestions and normative judgments which came up during the enquiry. They were systematized considering the characteristics of the informative spaces of the capabilities and as such try to avoid basing themselves on i) resources and ii) subjective judgments. It is important to emphasize at this point that despite the fact that the dimensions being used are dimensions traditionally used in poverty and welfare surveys, they are basically different from conventional surveys. The data collected refers to deprivation of capabilities and functionings and not to the ownership or access to goods and resources.

In its broadest sense, the survey had two main objectives. The first one was to collect information about the views poor people have of their own poverty. The methodology used has a similar scope and purpose of study to the one used in the “Voices of the Poor” type of studies, as coordinated by Deepa Narayan (2000) on behalf of the World Bank. Questions of a broad nature were made, which were interactively refined based on the data that emerged from the survey itself. The objective was to obtain rich and dense qualitative information about the nature of the poverty lived by the people of Porto Alegre. As discussed by Narayan et al (2000: 17-18), sampling techniques used in surveys of this kind vary greatly.

Sampling techniques ranged from nationally representative samples to purposive sampling based primarily on poverty, agro-ecological diversity, and rural and urban diversity. Sample sizes varied from less than one hundred to 5,000 people. Some studies focused only on the poor while others included the non-poor.

In the case of this study the focus is just on people already recognized as poor.

The second objective of this survey, according to what we highlighted before, was that of creating a multidimensional poverty index for Porto Alegre. Because of this, the important point to define the Sampling Plan is that, since the beginning, there was not the possibility of choosing what was ‘representative’ before doing the survey. The most relevant aspect is that the survey, especially in its initial stage, has a consultive character. That is to say, it served as an instrument for the poorer to voice their problems. Considering a monetary poverty rate of 11% for Porto Alegre, we are talking about more than 150.000 poor people living in the city. Based on a Pilot performed by this group, it is estimated that the number of multidimensional poor people is bigger than that. To justify the election of the size of the sample we looked for the best practices in similar studies and some theoretical considerations.

The international reference in the construction of household surveys, Angus Deaton, comments in his book *The Analysis of Household Surveys* (1998: 10) that samples sizes of 10.000 are the most frequently found in studies of this kind. The author highlights that, for obvious reasons, the Sampling Plan depends on the purpose of the survey, the size of the population and the degree of subdivisions of the groups.

It is important to point out that the survey carried out does not fit in a conventional Sampling Plan as the one employed for polling surveys. In our case, we do not know the population we want to study and we conducted a process which is at the same time investigative and consulting. In other words, we structured a process of *construction of social reason* in which simply, the bigger the number of participations the better. Restrictions were more on the budget and logistics side. Any justification of the sampling size cannot result, in our case, from the simple application of a formula since there are several parameters still unknown. This does not mean that the process we propose is not valid. When we adopted the highest sampling reference for studies of this kind we guaranteed the minimum sampling precision levels demanded for the reliability of the results.

The field survey was divided into two stages which were complementary. The first stage was the people enquiry and the second stage was the collection of data. In the first stage 7383 people living in the 16 regions of the participative budget were interviewed. The aim of these interviews was to collect information through a simple and open questionnaire. This information would justify the elaboration of questionnaire 2, clarify the definition of extreme poverty, identify the dimensions of poverty and identify the weights to be attributed to each of the identified dimensions.

The second stage was the collection of data itself through the application of questionnaire 2. 10.220 people were interviewed in this stage. The elimination of incomplete,

suspicious or defective questionnaires resulted in 9003 valid questionnaires. Adding the two stages, 16.386 valid questionnaires were obtained.

Questionnaires were applied by people belonging to the communities themselves. Initially, a group of 51 representatives took part in the first training. There were three of them for each region. The Porto Alegre Town Hall chose the participants based on the objectives of the survey and on a list of regional leaders related to the Participative Budget of the county. Those people were organized in groups and divided among the 16 regions of the Participative Budget. Each region was represented by 3 people.

Two training sessions were organized for the creation and application of the questionnaires: a 3-day session at the beginning of the process and a 1-day session for the second round. The sessions did not merely train the people to apply the questionnaires, but were a constitutive part of the project whose aim was not only to collect information about the multidimensionality of poverty but also to promote the empowerment and qualification of leaders. To reach these objectives, the theoretical and practical aspects related to the survey were presented and discussed, fostering the participation of the people themselves in the process of adapting the language used and also the geographical distribution of the ‘main points’ (places considered the poorest ones in each neighborhood within each region of the PB), allowing in this way the identification and mapping of poverty.

Interviews were carried out in the 16 regions of Porto Alegre and the regional distribution of the sample appears in Table 1.

Table 1 : Distribution of sample – valid questionnaires – among the Regions of the Participative Budget of Porto Alegre Enquiry and Questionnaire II.

Regions of PB	Questionnaire I - Enquiry	Questionnaire II – Data collection
Region 01 – Humaitá/Navegantes/Islands	587	725
Region 02 – North-west	531	604
Region 03 – East	256	567
Region 04 – Lomba do Pinheiro	289	275
Region 05 – North	653	1.169
Region 06 – North-east	535	341
Region 07 – Partenon	801	1.048
Region 08 – Restinga	573	501
Region 09 – Glória	595	766
Region 10 – Cruzeiro	360	739
Region 11 – Cristal	215	116
Region 12 – Center-South	511	329
Region 13 – Extreme-Southl	537	608
Region 14 – Baltazar Axis	258	193
Region 15 – South	40	132
Region 16 – City centre	642	890
Total	7.383	9.003

Source: Elaborated by the authors; survey result

The creation of the questionnaire considered the 4 dimensions identified as the most important ones in the enquiry process, being them: Housing, Health, Work and Income and Education. The questionnaire was structured around 6 groups of questions. The first group contained questions to collect information denominated '*control variables*' (Age, genre, income, level of education). The following 5 groups included questions to collect information about people's **deprivations** in each of the dimensions being studied. The sixth and last group tried to collect information that might contribute to the debate about **extreme poverty**. It is to be pointed out that following the methodology adopted for this work, the questions included in the questionnaires did not aim at collecting information about access to goods or resources, as it generally happens in the questionnaires usually applied, but at finding out about *people's capabilities*.

4. Survey Results

The survey conducted in Porto Alegre did not aim at "counting" the number of poor people but at understanding the characteristics and the spatial distribution of deprivations in the different regions and different social groups. A multidimensional deprivation index was created to this effect (DI). This index is not helpful to discriminate who is poor and who is not since the population which is the object of this research and which was interviewed is formed exclusively by people who live in poverty. In this way, the results to be presented are helpful to understand in which of the dimensions poverty is more acute and where deprivations, in each (or more than one) of the dimensions 'selected' by the poor people of Porto Alegre themselves, are more intense.

That is to say, the DI is an index composed of four dimensions (Housing, Health, Education and Work and Income). These dimensions were defined after the first stage of the survey because, as already mentioned, they were 'elected' by the people who live in poverty. Although these dimensions have been usually used in analysis of poverty, their inclusion in this survey derives from the validation through popular enquiry. Apart from that and contrary to the vast majority of available indexes, the weight of each dimension in the composition of the DI is not arbitrary. Those weights were defined by the order of the dimensions given by the people interviewed after being asked to list the four deprivations considered the most important ones in the community where they live. With that, the DI was devised so as to show bigger and lesser deprivations, ranging from 0 to 1, according to the vision of the poor population itself. Summarizing, the nearer to 1 the index is, the greater the multidimensional deprivation; and the nearer to 0 the greater the deprivation.

The DI is a novel index due to its conception and also because it presents an alternative to the measuring process of the dimensions that form the index. The Multidimensional Deprivation Index (DI) was built by using the four dimensions indicated above since the people interviewed during the surveys considered them as the most important ones. For each one of these dimensions (Housing; Health; Education; Work and Income) 06 (six) questions were formulated. These questions tried to measure the capabilities of the people interviewed and to create sub-indexes within each dimension. The questions used for the creation of the sub-indexes of each dimension were assigned equal weights. In the process of the aggregation of the dimensions for the creation of the aggregate DI the weights defined during the enquiry process were used. Based on those values, the formula for the index is this:

$$DI = 30/100 H + 26/100 S + 22/100 TeR + 22/100 E$$

Being:

H = housing dimension contributed a weight of 30% of the index;

S = health dimension contributed a weight of 26% of the index;

TeR = work and income dimension and;

E = education dimension; each one of them contributed a weight of 22% of the index.

From the general results it is possible to have a vision of the general distribution of poverty among the city's regions where the more intense deprivations are highlighted, and that intensity is present in a greater number of dimensions¹.

The regions that suffer from more deprivations are Restinga, the Baltazar Axis and the Northeast region. The DI for all of them is above 0,46. Following, with a DI between 0,429 and 0,459 are the regions of Humaitá/Navegantes/Islands, Cruzeiro, Cristal, Centre-South and City centre. That is to say, under the vision of multidimensional poverty, in this group of 8 regions, the intensity of deprivations is greater, and from the point of view of public policies this represents a possible index of priorities.

Analyzing the survey data we can have a better idea of the regional and genre-based differences it shows. As we pointed out previously, the sampling of the survey in the second stage was composed of 903 people residing in the city of Porto Alegre. Of them, 34,7% are men and 64,1% are women (no information about genre was available for the remaining 1,2%). This data related to men and women show that there are multiple aspects in which genre peculiarities become evident. Figure 1, below, shows that, on average, poor men belong to an older age group than women in practically all regions. Considering all the regions, the age average of the men interviewed is 40,1 years of age and that of women is 37,7.

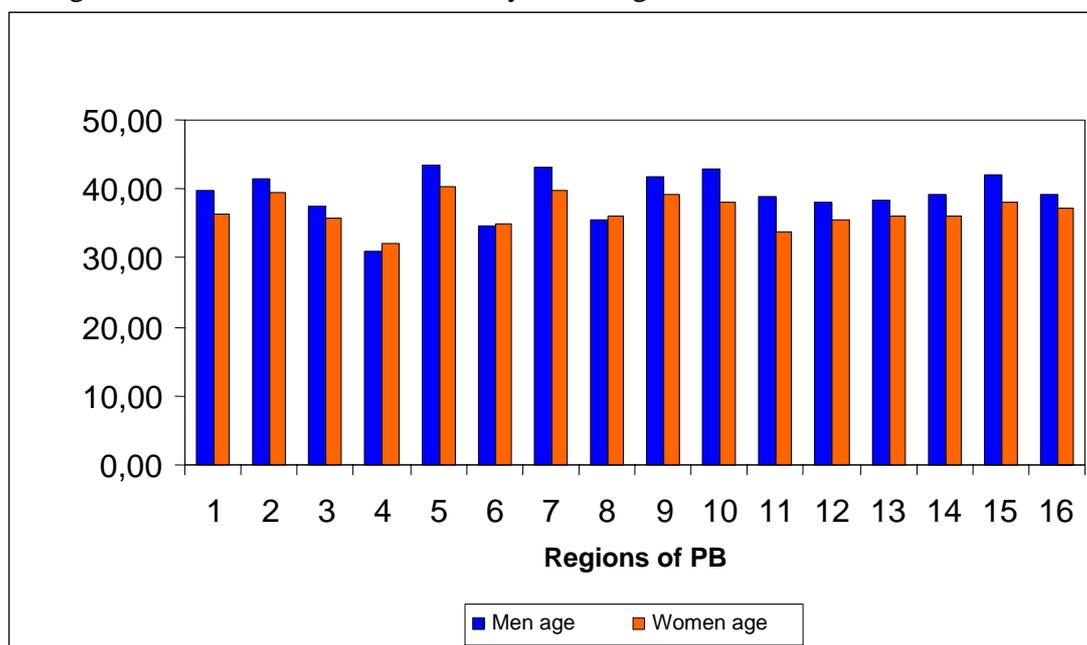


Figure 1 – Men and women by age group in the 16 Regions of the Participative Budget

In the aspect of access to formal education, Figure 2 shows that there are not significant differences related to the average number of years of study for the men and women

¹ For example, the Restinga region is poorer than all other regions in the Work and Income and Health dimensions, and is the second poorest in the Housing dimension. This region performs relatively better in the Education dimension.

interviewed. Different from the Brazilian national average which shows that women have more years of study than men (OLINTO & OLIVEIRA, 2004), in Porto Alegre the data of the survey indicates that men studied 6,12 years on average and women 6,17 years. This verifies that, on average, men as well as women study fewer years than the ones necessary to conclude primary education. This fact shows that men and women are on the same standing in terms of professional qualification and this should, in theory, provide equal opportunities related to the realization of value functionings.

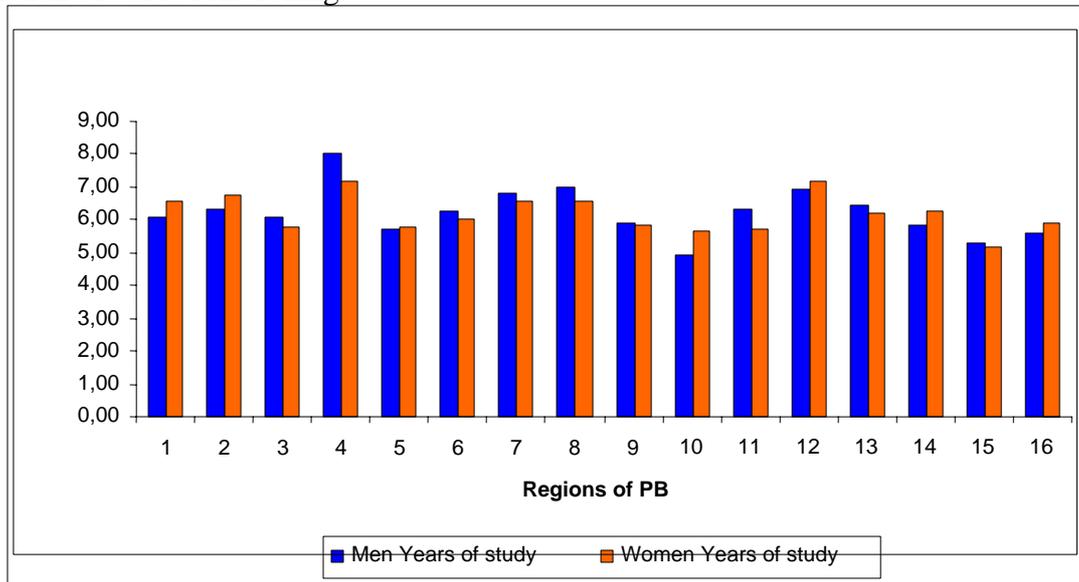


Figure 2 – Average years of study for men and women in the Regions of the Participative Budget of Porto Alegre

Despite the fact that the average number of years of study among the men and women interviewed are similar, when other aspects such as the income dimension are observed (Figure 3), differences in terms of achievement start to appear. On average, men are in higher income bands than women. The frequency observed indicates that 36,5% of the men interviewed are in income bands lower than 1 minimum salary and that 40,3% of women are in this condition. The figure shows that practically in all regions men are in income bands higher than those of women. The only exception is Region 8 (Restinga) where women’s income average is higher than that of men. This disparity takes us back to analyzing the “deprivation” variables which tried to understand the *degree of deprivation* in the work dimension and access to the formal job market, which will be presented and discussed later on.

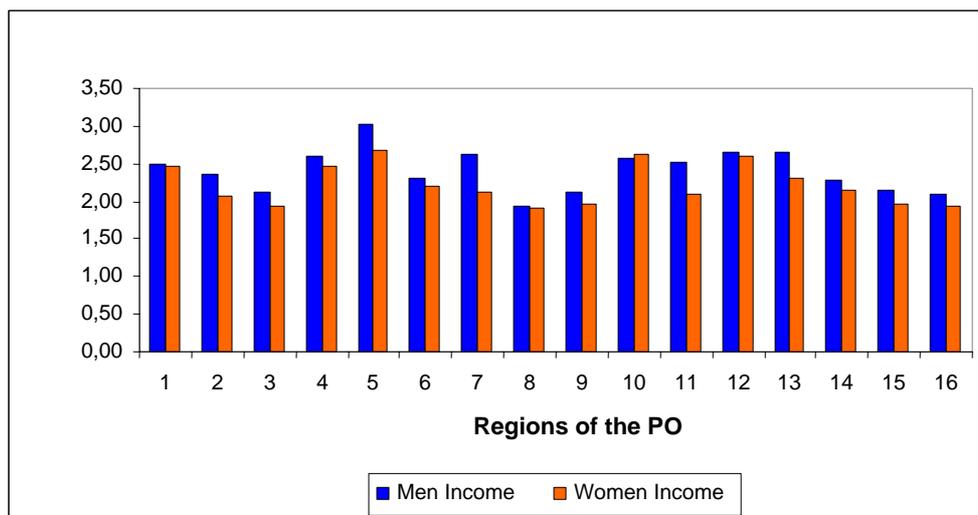


Figure 3 – Income bands for Men and Women in the 16 Regions of the Participative Budget of Porto Alegre

Before discussing the deprivations related to employment and the formal job market, it is time to have a look at the synthesis of the *Deprivation Index* in the four dimensions (Housing, Work and Income, Health, and Education) shown in Figure 4 and that summarizes the performance of men and women. It confirms that the Education dimension is, in fact, the only one in which both sexes show a similar performance: the Education Deprivation Index for men is 0,499 and 0,508 for women. In the other three indexes the performance of women is worse than that of men, that is to say, their DI is higher. The DI for Work and Income verifies a greater disparity between the sexes: DI of 0,307 for men and of 0,360 for women. If we consider the fact that work and income can be a fundamental factor of autonomy and independence for the individual, it can be inferred that this type of disparity illustrates even more clearly the precarious condition in the job market (formal or informal) of the women interviewed in Porto Alegre, in the terms presented and discussed also by Olinto and Oliveira (2004).

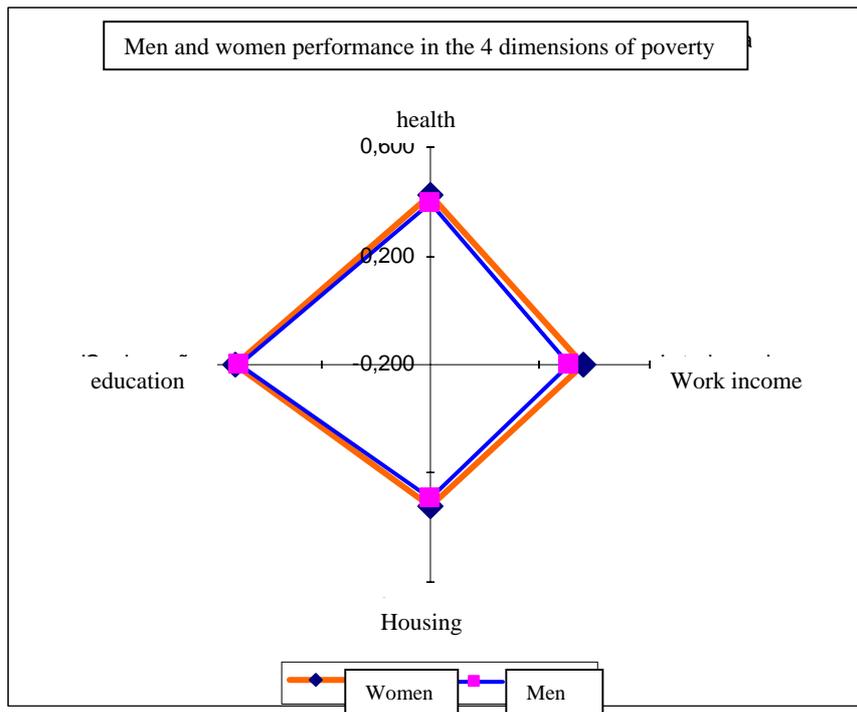


Figure 4 – Performance of Men and Women in the four dimensions of poverty.

Regarding the issue of job deprivation shown in Figure 5, the numbers only reinforce even more the perception of inequity, even in a frame in which deprivations are already quite high (for poor people of both sexes in Porto Alegre) women suffer of more deprivations. Observe that in most regions, the Deprivation Index in the Job dimension for women is higher than 0,60 while for men the index is higher than that value only in the 12th region (Center-South). The differences between the Deprivation Indexes are very clear in almost all regions, but the negative highlights go for regions 5 (North), 11 (Cristal) and 13 (Extreme South) of the city of Porto Alegre, in which the differences between the deprivations of men and women are higher.

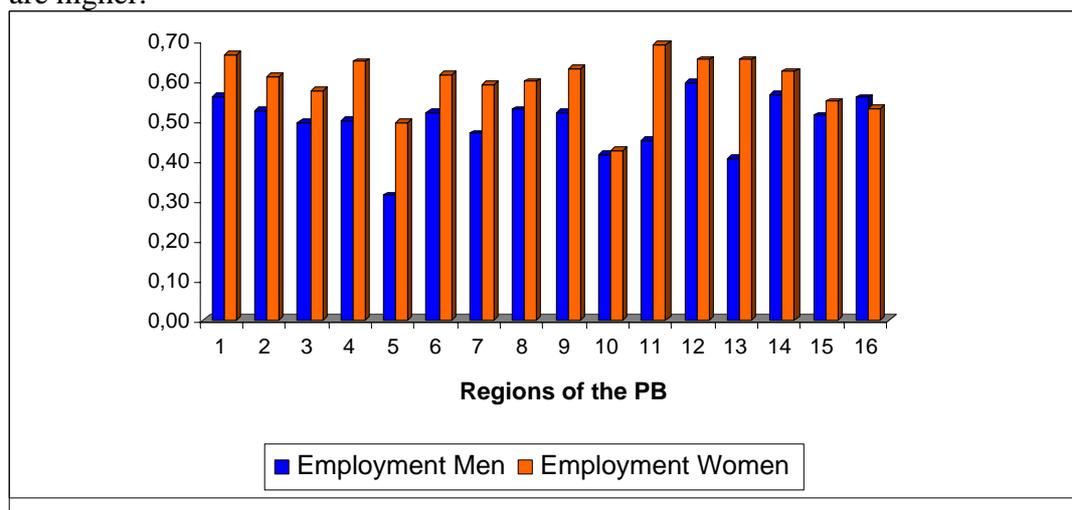


Figure 5 – Deprivation in the employment dimension for Men and Women in the Regions of Porto Alegre.

Just as illustrative of those inequities are the deprivations regarding access to the formal job market shown in Figure 6. With the exceptions of just two regions (Region 2 – Northwest and Region 6 – Northeast) the women in Porto Alegre face more difficulties to obtain a formal job, proving the version of the close relationship between ‘women and lesser jobs’ and between ‘women and informal jobs’ pointed out by Olinto and Oliveira (2004). It can be said that this situation has its roots on the historical stereotype which divided jobs according to sex, between ‘men jobs’ and ‘women jobs’, having women less ‘visibility’ thanks to the performance of household chores (related to the home and private spaces) and men more ‘visibility’ in the streets and, consequently, the vast occupation of formal job posts. (STREY, CABEDA and PREHN, 2004; GONÇALVES, 2006).

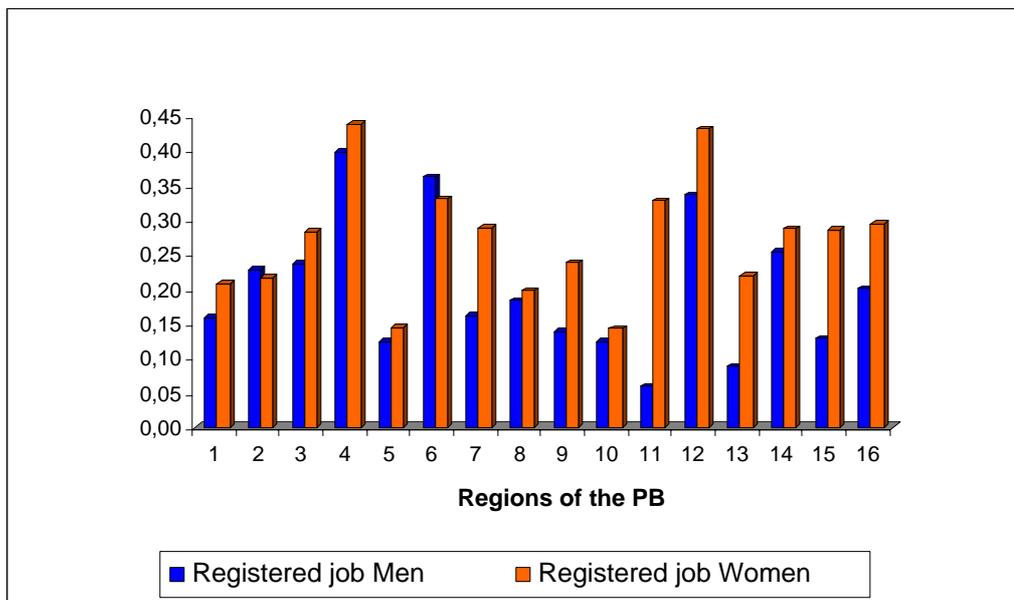


Figure 6 – No-access to the formal job market for the men and women in the regions of Porto Alegre

According to what Social Watch highlights (2005, p.27), ‘the division of work according to sexes which attributes to women household-related jobs limits their opportunities to access material and social resources and their opportunities of participating in political, economic and social decisions’. Consequently, they possess limited material goods and more restricted social goods (access to income), fact that ‘places them in a situation with a higher risk of poverty’.

It is also interesting to realize that regions 4 and 12 stand out negatively, that is to say, show a more intense deprivation situation related to the access to the formal job market. This might be related to their spatial location and to the existence of many irregular occupations in those regions. In these cases, apart from the other deprivations deriving from poverty, it is impossible to prove having a residential address when the time of getting a formal job comes.

The data shown in Figure 7 points in that same direction, that is, they reinforce women higher risk of living in extreme poverty. The data shows that, with the exceptions of Regions 1, 7, 11 and 12 (Humaitá/Navegantes/Islands, Partenon, Cristal and Centre-South respectively) women were identified as being more exposed to humiliating situations deriving from their poverty condition.

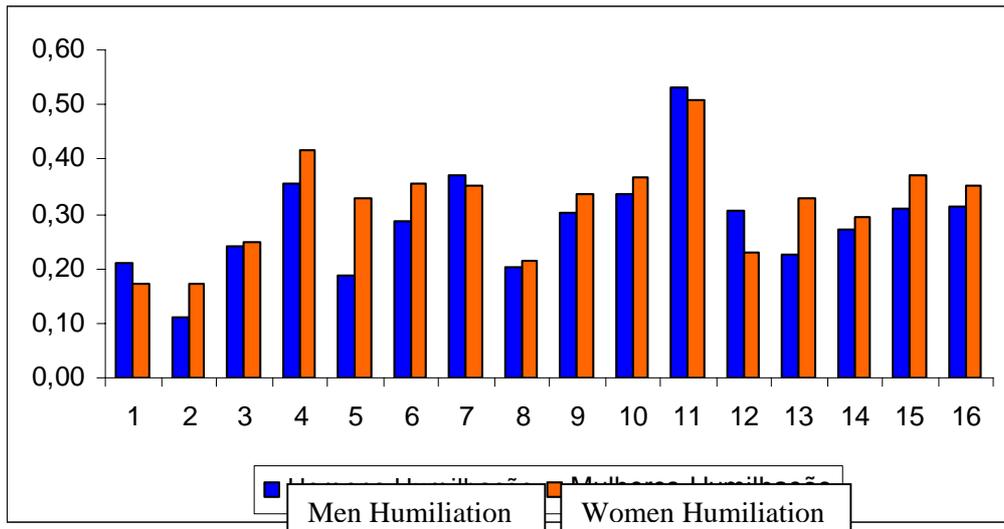


Figure 7 – Porto Alegre Men and Women exposure to Humiliation

These variables, critical from the point of view of the personal perception of poverty, can be seen in perspective through the data shown in figures 8 and 9 below. Both of them deal with people’s prospects for the future.

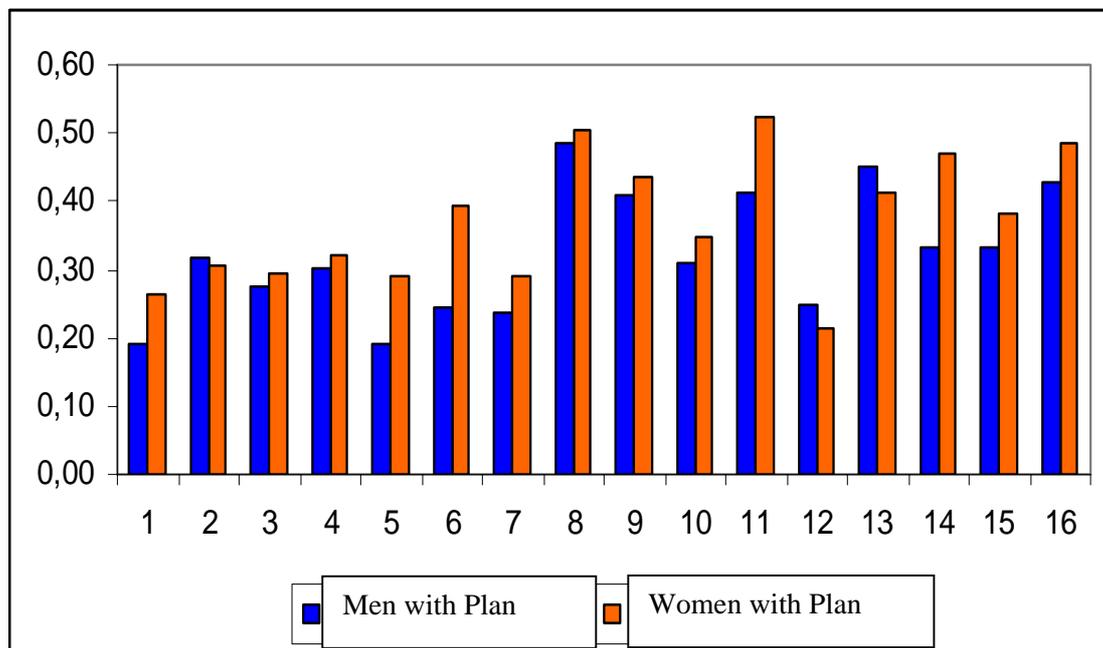


Figure 8 – Existence of a Plan to emerge from poverty for men and women in Porto Alegre

Figure 8 evidences the question of the individual’s empowerment, their capacity of being the agent if their own destiny and having an active role in the achievement of their future projects. Again, female indexes are worse than those of men. When asked if they had a plan/plans or not to emerge from poverty men answered more positively. Women show greater “resignation” before this condition.

As a last highlight, Figure 9 shows the data related to the average number of people the interviewed individuals say they trust. We can understand that this is the number of people they can count on in critical situations. Men manifested that, on average, they trust 2,4 people, and women trust 2,29 people. This shows that, summarizing the issue of women's risk of being in the poverty situation, they consider themselves more subject to humiliation, they have worse prospects and plans to emerge from poverty and even count with a lesser number of people they can trust.

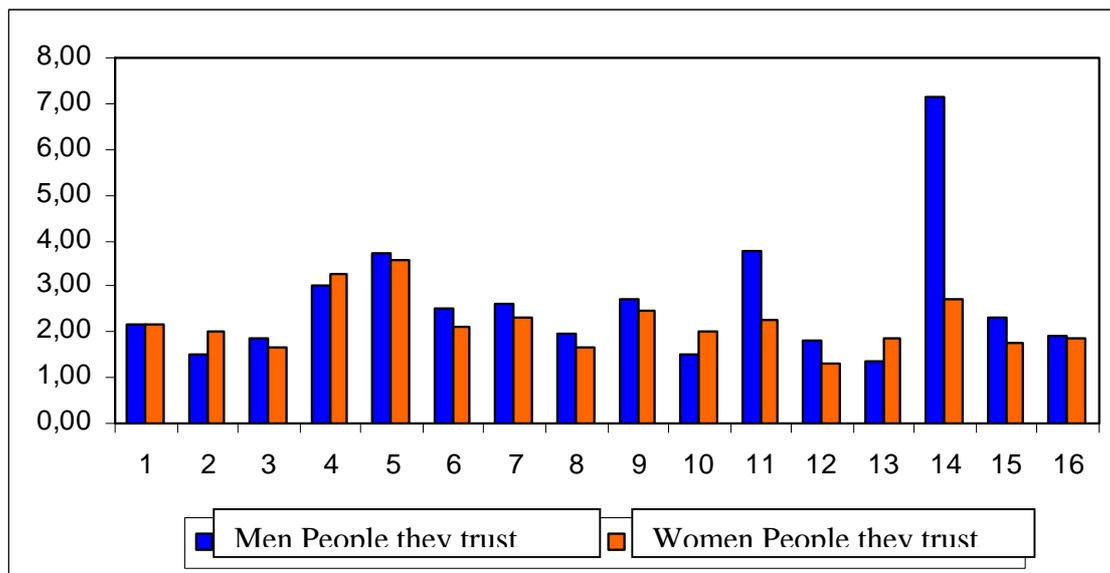


Figure 9 – Number of people men and women from the different regions of Porto Alegre trust

The data shown here allows us to say that female poverty has to be understood differently from male poverty. At least it needs to be understood that poverty-related data with an aggregate focus (in the county or regional environment for instance) or even with a family focus need to be seen with restrictions, because to understand multidimensional poverty might imply to understand also that ‘people have asymmetrical relationships’ (Social Watch, 2005, p.27).

Summarizing, we can say along the same lines of Social Watch, that the data presented works not only in the measurement of poverty but helps to make it more visible and has an important role in the development and implementation of public policies” (p.28). Along this same line, the genre perspective used broadens the concept and reinforces the need that we understand its multiple dimensions.

5. Conclusions

The reflections and data presented here had a double challenge. On the one hand, to recognize and give visibility to the multiple dimensions of poverty, including its spatial aspects and the peculiarities of its gender-based inequity in Porto Alegre. On the other hand, to contribute to reveal the reality of inequities and gather information to legitimate important questions about the subject, make society aware and, above all, help and influence public policies.

This work emphasized that the change in the approach to poverty studies and its multiple dimensions represents a departure from the classical distinctions between poor people and rich people which are based on income criteria. The data presented might have contributed to reinforce the importance of this change. When emphasizing the weights of dimensions such as Housing, Health and Education, in the manifestation of what they consider relevant for a “life worth being lived”, the people interviewed were just explaining the things that really matter to them and their difficulties in realizing value functionings. Despite being dimensions that traditionally present themselves as “critical”, it was shown that among the poor people of Porto Alegre they are dimensions and issues not resolved and that proportionally affect women more.

If the results can be inspirational of public policies when they indicate in which of the regions the more acute needs are, they also have to be inspirational in relation to the dimensions which are more important to people and the differential treatment that needs to be given to inequities between men and women.

In this sense the general public policies of poverty fight in Porto Alegre that aim at dealing with more serious deprivation situations could concentrate efforts in city regions such as Restinga, the Baltazar axis and the Northeastern. Even so, this would be a general prioritization criterion which would not consider the sub-indexes of the dimensions nor the gender issues.

In the first case, the “weights” defined through the enquiry process showed the following order: Housing, Health, Work and Income and Education. At least, this sequence could be indicative of policies priorities.

In the same way, when considering the gender aspect, those policies could consider that the women in question, the ones in poverty and deprivation situations in Porto Alegre, present more inequities when compared to men regarding the Work and Income aspect and more deprivations related to not getting a job. Thus, this could constitute a gender indication for work and income policies in the county. Along the same line, if those policies aimed at reducing the distance between men and women deprivations in the job aspect, the prioritization could take place regionally, where they are bigger, as is the case of the North, Cristal and Extreme South regions of the city.

To illustrate the Work and Income dimension, if the objective of the public policy were the impossibility to access the formal job market, and prioritizing city regions, it could concentrate efforts in the Lomba do Pinheiro, Northeast and Center-South regions where deprivations are more acute. Anyway, using gender-based differences as an additional criteria, the same policy could prioritize the Lomba do Pinheiro and Center South regions, where the situation of women is worse than that of men.

Summarizing, this is about understanding that apart from the social segregation deriving from poverty, there is a segregation even “inside” poverty; women suffer from more acute deprivations related to their capabilities to realize value functionings such as having a place to live, being free of avoidable illnesses, being properly educated and having conditions of generating their own income by means of a dignified job and counting with social welfare. Among the poor ones, women have a more restricted capabilities-universe, fact that deserves attention when creating public policies.

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