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ALLA GUERRA**

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**AU 20<sup>ÈME</sup> SIÈCLE EN FRANCE**

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**(1915-1923)**

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Mutilazione e decolonizzazione del corpo  
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#02

CULTURAL DISABILITY STUDIES  
**Minority Reports**

# Minority Reports

CULTURAL DISABILITY STUDIES

#02  
GENNAIO  
GIUGNO  
2016

## LA GUERRA IN CARNE E OSSA THE WAR IN THE FLESH

Mimesis Edizioni  
[www.mimesisedizioni.it](http://www.mimesisedizioni.it)

20,00 euro



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## Minority Reports. Cultural Disability Studies

2 / gennaio - giugno 2016

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### *Direzione e redazione*

Università di Napoli "Suor Orsola Benincasa" - Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione,  
via Suor Orsola, 10 - 80135 Napoli  
Sito web: [mimesisedizioni.it/riviste/minority-reports.html](http://mimesisedizioni.it/riviste/minority-reports.html)  
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MINORITY REPORTS  
CULTURAL DISABILITY STUDIES

LA GUERRA  
IN CARNE E OSSA /  
THE WAR IN THE FLESH

*2/2016*

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MIMESIS / SUOR ORSOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

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L'editore resta disponibile ad assolvere le proprie obbligazioni riguardo le immagini presenti nel testo, avendo effettuato, senza successo, tutte le ricerche necessarie al fine di identificare gli aventi titolo.

MIMESIS EDIZIONI (Milano – Udine)  
www.mimesisedizioni.it  
mimesis@mimesisedizioni.it

ISSN: 2465-0315  
ISBN: 9788857538082

© 2016 – MIM EDIZIONI SRL  
Via Monfalcone, 17/19 – 20099  
Sesto San Giovanni (MI)  
Phone +39 02 24861657 / 24416383

© 2016 – Suor Orsola University Press  
via Suor Orsola, 10 - 80135 Napoli

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Napoli n. 24 del 21.04.2015  
Direttore responsabile: Arturo Lando (Università di Napoli “Suor Orsola Benincasa”)

La rivista è promossa dal CeRC - Centre for Governmentality and Disability Studies “Robert Castel” dell’Università di Napoli “Suor Orsola Benincasa”.

Stampa: Digital Team - Fano (PU)



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LA GUERRA IN CARNE E OSSA /  
THE WAR IN THE FLESH



DISABILITY POLITICS IN PORTUGAL  
AND THE COLONIAL WAR

*Fernando Fontes\**, *Bruno Sena Martins\*\**

0. *Introduction*

Western modern cultures have been permeated with conflicting images of disability and the attitude of modern states towards disabled people has been ambivalent. On one hand, modern states fostered the charitable status of disabled people, on the other, they came to acknowledge disabled people's citizenship rights and the state's responsibility for the construction of a more inclusive society. These ambiguities have permeated the politics of disability across time and become more evident in moments of austerity, as the one Europe currently faces, where disabled people see their citizenship status denied and their human rights violated.

States' attitude have also been ambivalent towards different impairments. Historically, those with congenital impairments have been treated differently from those with acquired impairments. This is the case of disabled war veterans. If the first had to rely mainly on charity, the disabled war veterans have always been at the forefront of the state's concern. Disabled people's rights are, in most cases, the result of the extension of the rights initially attributed to those with acquired impairments and, in countries such as Portugal, there is still a split in the eligibility criteria for different types of compensation benefits and rehabilitation services, between those with im-

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pairments acquired at work, war, sport, etc. and those whose impairments are congenital or result from old age or long-term illness (Fontes 2009, 2014).

This article aims to explore this ambivalence in modern Portugal and the impact of wartime in Portuguese disability policies and politics. Therefore it will focus in the major armed conflict Portugal got involved in the twentieth century: the Colonial War which took place between 1961 and 1974. The first section contains a brief theoretical anchorage used to conceptualise disability, highlighting competing definitions and models on issues of disability and impairment. The second section will contextualize the Portuguese colonial war and its role in the end of dictatorship and the establishment of a democratic regime in Portugal. The third and final section reflects on the role of the disabled war veterans in the development of the Portuguese disabled people's movement and of disability policies in Portugal.

### 1. *Disability. Competing models and approaches*

The development of modern medicine in the western world over the last two or three centuries produced a significant shift in the social understanding of health and illness and in the way society deals with it (Giddens 1993). As a result, science-based medical diagnosis came to the fore, with "curing" as its main objective (*ibidem*); and medical professionals achieved the power to «determine the boundaries between "normal" and "abnormal" individuals, the sane and insane, healthy and sick people» (Barnes - Mercer 2010: 18); disability became individualised and medicalised (Stone 1984; Oliver 1990); disabled people became institutionalised and segregated into medical spaces (Finkelstein 1980; Goffman 1987; Hughes 2001); and the medical/individual model became dominant in relation to disability.

Disability has, therefore, been constructed by modern western biomedicine as a particular form of pathology (Stiker 1999; Martins 2006) and has been reduced to the “malfunctions” of the individual body (Oliver 1990). Thus the restrictions and obstacles that disabled people face in their everyday lives tend to be naturalised as the result of their presumed functional limitations.

This model was reinforced after World War I and the return home of a huge number of soldiers impaired at war and the need to provide a solution for their situation, which came from medical rehabilitation and its promise of cure or, at least, of normalising body functions.

The medical or individual model of disability, remained unchallenged until the emergence of disabled people’s movements in the late 1970s early 1980s (Campbell - Oliver 1996). The fact that disability was defined as a medical issue related to the individual body proved decisive in favouring responses that focussed resolutely on the individual within a “rehabilitational approach” (Stiker 1999). Responses informed by this approach were always based on the idea that decisions concerning the lives of disabled people should be made by professionals, at the forefront of knowledge. This authoritarian relationship laid the foundations for disqualifying the perspectives of disabled people, in which the limits and inequalities imposed by the social order tend to play a central role.

Growing challenges to the medical model of disability led the World Health Organisation (WHO) to publish the International Classification of Functioning, Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps in 1980 (ICIDH) (WHO 1980). However, the perspective adopted by the Classification, which touched on “social and cultural factors” in its key definitions (impairments, disabilities and handicaps), proved unable to abandon the largely individualised view of disability (Barnes - Mercer 2003) based on the “hegemony of normalcy” (Davis 1995).

In opposition to this, a new proposal acknowledging the socio-political context of disability developed in Britain by

the late 1960s, early 1970s (Campbell - Oliver 1996), which became known as the social model of disability. The social model of disability proposes a reconceptualization of disability as a form of social oppression (UPIAS 1976). The assumption that the problems associated with disability are linked to social structures rather than the functioning of the body has also had important implications in terms of identity empowerment, to the extent that it has enabled disabled people to reinterpret their social position in opposition to the values that had previously disqualified them, as lesser people, irredeemably isolated from key social activities (Gibbs 2004).

Continued criticism of the ICIDH and the internal dissent within disability studies highlighted the need for a reconciliation of the medical and social models. Such criticism led to a new model of disability, referred to as the relational model (Thomas 1999) or the bio-psycho-social model (WHO 2001). This model was consolidated in the new International Classification of Functioning, Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH-2 or ICF) published by the WHO (2001), in which the WHO recognised disability as the result of the interaction between body functions, body structures, activities and participation, and environmental factors. Despite these changes, the ICF is still heavily criticised by those who defend the social model. The various different criticisms include the charge that the ICF continues to focus on the consequences of medical conditions, viewing the social aspects of disability only in terms of references to environmental factors (Pfeiffer 2000).

Far from being irrelevant, the way in which we view disability is essential to the way in which we define the problems and draw up solutions. This is crucial to social policy (Oliver - Sapey 1999; Hespanha 2008; Fontes 2009), and also to scientific research, in which different concepts signify different positions in terms of acknowledging and valuing the voices of disabled people. Within this article we adopt the social model as our theoretical tool, value the voices of disabled people and

favour a critical perspective to understand the circumstances of disabled people within Portuguese society.

## *2. The colonial war and the rise of Democracy in Portugal*

The Colonial War (1961-1974) opposed the Portuguese Armed Forces to the independency movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Counteracting the independence movement of most African colonies in the late 1950s, early 1960s, Portugal initiated in 1961 a war for the maintenance of Portuguese colonies which drained the metropolis of funds and men, thus being too hard an effort for Portugal to make at the time. Portuguese Colonial War was fought in three different battlefields (Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique), over thirteen years, led to the deployment of more than a million soldiers and caused 8290 deaths and 30.000 disabled soldiers (just on the Portuguese side).

On the 25th of April of 1974 a military coup brought to an end the dictatorial regime that ruled the country for nearly fifty years and inaugurated a new democratic regime, in which the country still lives.

Albeit its historical relevance, the Colonial War has never been given a space of commemoration in the process of the democratic and post-imperial reconstruction of Portuguese society (Meneses - Martins 2013). From various points of view, the disabled soldiers represented the vivid expression of a collective trauma which the democratic social order has wished to forget. In fact, for decades the Colonial War has been a taboo that only now, fifty years from its inception, starts to be broken. The dictatorial regime never recognized the existence of a war in the colonies and tried to hide its negative consequences (ADFA 1999). A telling example of this attitude is the way in which the bodies of the soldiers were removed from the boats throughout the night or the way in which the wounded and impaired soldiers had to remain out

of sight during recovery and rehabilitation (Maurício 1994; Antunes 1996). The period following the Carnation Revolution created a socio-political moment in which the War was seen as an unjust and useless conflict, an appalling stubbornness – against the winds of history and the self-determination of African populations – which everybody wished to forget. Moreover, the silencing of the Colonial War was also the product of the conviction that raising the issue would lead to the confrontation of a whole range of acts of extreme violence (including the massacre of entire populations) which ought to involve complex processes of attribution and assumption of guilt. Therefore, a new political and ideological order was founded, which was anchored to an identity narrative of Portugal which actively led to the silencing of the Colonial War.

The Colonial War had, however, a significant impact, not only in the African Portuguese speaking countries, but also in Portugal. In the Portuguese colonies it was crucial for creating the space for the independency of these countries, but also had significant repercussions in the long conflicts that followed it in the new independent countries, namely in the conflicts taking place in Angola and Mozambique. In Portugal, it was decisive to push for the change of the political regime and framing the socio-political reality of contemporary Portugal. From a sociological point of view, the end of dictatorship and beginning of democracy in Portugal brought with it new opportunities for the development and maturation of Portuguese civil society. The corporatist state created by dictatorship repressed most forms of collective action and subordinated individual claims to a so called common or natural good (Hamann - Manuel 1999) which the state obviously represented. This thwarted the focus and activity of most disability organisations that emerged in Portugal in the first three quarters of the twentieth century. The revolutionary period after the military coup created the opportunities for a participatory civil society. In fact the «period (1974-75) witnessed a range of experiences of active citizenship [...] a

plethora of social movements and citizen initiatives gave rise to the invention of new forms of participatory democracy» (Santos - Nunes 2004: 11). One of the new social movements during this revolutionary period was precisely the Disabled People's Movement, triggered by the emergence of the Association of Disabled war veterans (ADFA) in May 1974. The movement created by the disabled war veterans framed Portuguese disability policies as it is going to be analysed in the following section.

### *3. Disabled war veterans and disability policies and politics in Portugal*

The ambivalence of State's attitude towards people with different impairments dates back in time and disabled war veterans have been at the fore front of state's concerns. Most disabled people's rights in general are an extension of the rights initially ascribed to disabled war veterans. This is the case of Portugal and of the disabled war veterans resulting from the Portuguese colonial wars in Africa from 1961 to 1974.

Unlike most European countries, the Portuguese Welfare State developed only after 1974, following the Revolution. Until 1974 a system of compulsory social insurance excluded a considerable number of citizens, including disabled people<sup>1</sup>. In a period more concerned with the control of minds (Pimentel 1999) and with the punishment of those considered different and thinking differently, the support given to disabled people was almost non-existent. Since its beginning, the dictatorial state held a supplementary role in the social assistance sector, those left outside relied mainly on kinship

1. For an analysis of the groups protected by the system of social insurance in Portugal in the 1960s and 1970s please see: Mozzicafreddo (1992), Carreira (1996) and Guibentif (1996).

and friendship networks and on the scarce existing charities. The control exercised over civil society by the dictatorial regime prevented, however, those left outside the protection schemes, namely disabled people, from being politically active until 1974 (APD 1997).

As it happened in the United States of America (USA), where the impaired Vietnam war veterans stirred the disability protest (Barnes - Mercer - Shakespeare 2000), in Portugal the mass of disabled war veterans returning to the country paved the way to a new understanding of disability. This is evident in the publication in 1971 of the first law for the rehabilitation of disabled people (Law 6/71 of 8/11/1971). The discussion of this new law would also allowed the emergence of a group of activists, led by disabled war veterans, to create the first non-single-impairment and non-single-issue organisation of disabled people in Portugal – the Portuguese Association of Disabled People (APD) (APD 1997). The main idea was to establish a different perspective towards disability and disabled people, an image dissociated from the charity perspectives followed by its predecessor organisations. Its first statutes elected the fostering of rehabilitation, the provision of technical support, the representation of disabled people and their interests and the creation of a publication concerning disability politics as the main goals of APD. The difficulties associated to the political regime prevented APD, however, from being immediately active in Portuguese society, which happened only after 1974 (APD 1997).

Immediately after the Revolution the impaired veterans of the Colonial War also founded the Association of the Impaired of the Armed Forces (ADFA), formed in May 1974. The guiding principles and aims which led to the founding of this association were already apparent before the Carnation Revolution, but it was not until democracy was instated that the association had the freedom and opportunity to assert itself and become an institution. As the opening note of the first number of the ADFA's newspaper in 1974 stated: «We fight



for a dignifying place in a just society with rights and without charity» (ELO 1974). Among these rights, the right to rehabilitation, integration at work and economic compensation for impairments acquired during war assumed special relevance. ADFA embodied the structure that would address the serious repercussions which soldiers were suffering from after having been scarred by the experience of the Colonial War was declared urgent, as this was the inevitable consequence of thirteen years during which more than one million youths were sent to war. In this sense, ADFA appears as a reaction, both to the insufficient responses provided by the *Liga dos Combatentes* (War Veterans League), to the obstacles of Portuguese society and built environment to disabled people's social participation and inclusion and, more generally, to the incipient indemnification policies which were in place until the end of the war.

The new democratic regime developed an array of measures that allowed the emergence of an embryonic or "quasi welfare-state" (Gough 1996; Santos 1999). The Portuguese "welfare-state" has developed unevenly between different social sectors protected by different welfare regimes with contrasting levels of generosity (Ferrera 1996; Santos 1999; Hespanha 2001). Due to factors such as the non-involvement in World War II, the lengthy dictatorship and the absence of social concerns within the dictatorial governing bodies until late 1960s, the Portuguese welfare-state only emerged after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. By then, most European welfare-states were already decaying due to neo-liberal economics (Trifiletti 1999). Additionally, the Portuguese development occurred during the profound international economic crises of the 1970s. The result was what Santos (1999) calls a quasi-welfare-state, i.e., a welfare-state that was never a real welfare-state. This idea of lack of efficiency of the Portuguese welfare regime suggested by Santos (*ibidem*) stems from the low levels of social protection, the comparatively low redistributive scheme based on low benefits, of a non-universal

character and based on diverse welfare-regimes (Santos 1999; Andreotti *et al.* 2001; Hespanha 2001). Compared to other European countries the level of protection achieved by the Portuguese welfare-state is well below the average (Gough 1996), placing those groups already economically deprived, namely old, disabled and unemployed people, below the poverty line (Hespanha 2001).

The incipient indemnification and social policies in place for disabled war veterans returning from the colonial war, the lack of efficiency of the welfare regime created after the Revolution, the absence of opportunities for disabled people in Portuguese society, the array of social, psychological and physical barriers to disabled people's integration and the concentration of disabled war veterans in military hospitals created the environment for the emergency of a political consciousness amongst disabled war veterans concerning disability issues and their situation within Portuguese society.

This led to the creation of APD in 1972, the first non-single-impairment and non-single-issue Portuguese organization of disabled people and the Association of the Disabled of the Armed Forces (ADFA) in 1974 and to the inauguration of a long period of contestation from the disabled war veterans. In fact this political consciousness prompted the mobilization of disabled war veterans to demand for better conditions. The publication of the first legislation conferring disability specific rights to disabled war veterans in January 1976 (Law-Decree 43/76, 20/1/1976) resulted of a long period of contestation from the disabled war veterans, which included: public demonstrations, sit-ins close to the House of Parliament, street, train rails and bridge blockings, and the occupation of the National Radio Station (ADFA 1994). Due to the instability created by the disabled war veterans, in an extremely sensitive post-revolutionary time (Reis 1996), the government was pushed to legislate against wider consequences.

As a result of the political campaign of the disabled war veterans, in January 1976 it was published the first disabil-

ity specific social policy legislation – Law-Decree 43/76 (20/1/1976). This new legal document, which is still the main tool of the disabled war veterans' rights, assigns a collection of social, economic, medical, rehabilitation and education rights to impaired war veterans, namely social benefits, tax exemptions and benefits, priority in the access to employment in the public sector, concession in public transports, medical rehabilitation and treatment, provision of prostheses, etc.

This legal document set the scene for the development of other disabled people's rights. In fact, since 1974, disabled people had access to a social pension (Law-Decree 217/74, 27/05/1974), but this legislation was not disability specific, it targeted people over 65 years old and "invalid" [*sic*] people. The extension of some of the rights conferred by this law to other civilian disabled people occurred only later and gradually, first with tax exemption for the acquisition of wheelchairs and other personal transport vehicles (Law 11/78, 20/3/1978), then with exemption of car taxes (Law-Decree 143/78, 12/6/1978), income tax reductions (Law-Decree 138/78, 12/6/1978) and, four years later, with privileged house mortgage (Law-Decree 230/80, 10/07/1980) and disability specific social benefits. This package of social benefits for disabled people included: social pension complement for those "severely disabled" (Law-Decree 139/80, 20/5/1980) and Disability Additional Benefit of the Children and Youth Family Allowance, Special Education Attendance Benefit, Third Person Assistance Benefit and Lifelong Monthly Disability Benefit (Law-Decree 160/80, 27/5/1980). The extension of disabled war veterans was the result of the increasing pressure from the Disabled People's Movement, following the political activity of disabled war veterans, which started to organize itself in late 1970s (Fontes 2011, 2014).

#### 4. Concluding remarks

To conclude, the Portuguese Disabled People's Movement established its sociopolitical arena in the post-revolutionary period of Portuguese history. As with other areas of Portuguese society, the 1974 democratic revolution signaled a turnover in disability collective action. The formation of new organizations politically active and the takeover of some of the existing organizations by disabled people laid the foundations of the Portuguese Disabled People's Movement and the demand for disabled people's rights and disability specific benefits (*ibidem*).

In such a sociopolitical context, ADFA has been an important agent in the struggle of Portuguese Disabled People's Movement. It is one of the most important organizations of disabled people, and some of the rights conquered for the disabled war veterans have been extended to disabled people at large. Notwithstanding, the rights conquered have more to do with reparations of war (social benefits, medical care, etc.) than with an effective social transformation towards inclusion and participation in mainstream society.

The leading role of disabled war veterans in establishing disabled people's rights and on defining the Disabled People's Movement demands did, however, die out in the following decades. This was the result of several factors, namely the fact that most of their demands were satisfied by the government, by the lack of a politicized understanding of disability, by the institutionalization of their movement and by the fact that disabled war veterans from the colonial war represented the vivid expression of a collective trauma which the democratic social order wishes to forget.

In fact, most of their demands, as analyzed elsewhere (*ibidem*), focused on basic daily-living rights or rights needed for the achievement of a minimum citizenship standard by disabled war veterans, "second level demands", i.e. demands that transcend the attribution of rights to

disabled people and emphasize social and political issues, were less common.

Furthermore, contrary to the UK and USA where the politicization of disability through the social model of disability has had an important impact (Barnes 2003; Hahn 2002), in Portugal the Disabled People's Movement was unable to politicized disability and detach it from the individual's impairment. Due to the objective living conditions of the majority of Portuguese disabled people, the organizations of disabled people, since its beginning, have focused on improving living standards. The result was setting an agenda centered on the elimination of physical barriers and on the access and maintenance of social benefits to cover the costs of living with impairment. Consequently, the organizations of disabled people ended up investing most of their efforts in the provision of services, functioning as an extension of the Portuguese welfare state. Hence, the human and material resources available in the organizations tend to be diverted from a political stance based transforming of the disabling structures in society and organizations of disability, like ADFA, became captives of the government and of its funding to subsist.

Finally, for decades the Colonial War has been a taboo that only now, fifty years from its inception, starts to be broken. The period after the Carnation Revolution created a socio-political moment in which the colonial war was seen as an unjust and useless conflict, an appalling stubbornness that everybody wished to forget. The new political and ideological order was founded in an identity narrative of Portugal which actively led to the silencing of the Colonial War and, therefore, to the silencing of disabled war veterans' voices and experiences. In this sense, the lives interrupted by the Colonial War and scarred by impairment contain significant elements of marginalization and distancing in relation to Portuguese society, as a result of the dramatic encounter of these factors of disruption (Martins 2015). Although ADFA and the political movement created by the disabled war veterans has been successful in

achieving some compensation for their members, the exclusion and silencing of the ex-soldiers of the colonial war is still very much a reality today.

As analyzed along this article, the attitude of the Portuguese state towards disabled war veterans and towards disabled people in general resonates the ambivalence, initially described, of the state's attitude towards different impairments, but also of the Portuguese state's reluctance to recognize disabled people's citizenship status.

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which will lead many fighters to seek refuge elsewhere in a universe covered by a mystical and apotropaic rituality.

*Keywords:* Great War, Asylum, Internment, Shell Shock, Modernity

### **World War I and disability. A bibliographical path**

*Giampiero Griffò, Mariamaddalena Frevola*

This bibliography related to the First World War in the National Library Service (SBN) is updated to July 2014 (exactly one century after the first declaration of war). The research was carried out on certain subjects that had a bearing on the chosen theme (war, war invalids, invalids' associations) and then follow the publications related to similar subjects. Among all surveyed volumes then sorting was done to select publications that seemed most appropriate for the purpose of a historical reconstruction linked to the condition of persons with disabilities and to the policies and actions in their favor.

*Keywords:* First World War, War Invalids, Invalids' Associations, History of Associations

### **Disability politics in Portugal and the colonial war**

*Fernando Fontes, Bruno Sena Martins*

The Portuguese Colonial war was fought between Portugal's military and the nationalist movements in Portugal's African colonies between 1961 and 1974. The conflict opposing the Portuguese Armed Forces to the independency movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau is crucial to understand the transition to democracy brought on by the Carnation Revolution. Notwithstanding, a manifest silence of Portuguese society as regards to the Colonial War has subsist-

ed during decades. Through the perspective of disabled war veterans this article attempts to recover crucial testimonies valorization of the Colonial War as a historical moment which has left long-lasting marks on Portuguese society. Moreover, this article aims to explore the impact of Colonial War's disabled soldiers in Portuguese disability policies and politics.

*Keywords:* Disabled war veterans, Colonial War, Portugal, Disability, Disability Policies, Human Rights

**Of rights and wrongs. Assessing disability rights in Portugal in the era of austerity**

*Paula Campos Pinto*

Long fought for by the global disability movement, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) held the promise of rights and a life with dignity for all people with disabilities worldwide. Portugal was amongst the first States to sign and ratify the CRPD, thus committing to advance policy reforms and shift from a charity to a rights-based approach to disability. Almost a decade has passed by now - Portugal has plunged into a deep economic recession and fiscal crisis and endured a strict austerity plan from 2011 to 2014. What has this done to disability rights? This paper examines this question and offers an overview of disability rights progression in Portugal. Assessing the impact of austerity and a neoliberal agenda on the fulfilment at domestic level of international human rights commitments, we discuss the complex interplay of law, policy and politics in contemporary societies and the role of disability studies in advancing rights.

*Keywords:* Disability, Human Rights, Austerity, CRPD, Disability Policy