

How the Portuguese media represented the first racialized female MP head of a political party

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Abstract

This paper is part of an ongoing research that analyses the news coverage of the first six months of the parliamentary term of Joacine Katar Moreira, the first racialized woman head of the political party LIVRE (meaning ‘free’) in the general elections of 2019 in Portugal. PhD in African Studies, black woman, feminist and anti-racism activist, the first MP with a stutter, Joacine Katar Moreira arrived at the House with a renowned academic career and a history of engagement in the social area. The starting question which guides this research is: how did the national press – in both print and digital formats – represent Joacine Katar Moreira from 6 October 2019 to 6 April 2020? This period of analysis enables us to follow the two initial stages of her MP’s term - the debut as MP and the exit from LIVRE following irreconcilable disagreements. In February 2020 she became an independent MP and from this date onward, the media agenda was dominated by the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the aftermath of the 2019 parliamentary elections, three new political parties entered the Portuguese Parliament: Chega! (meaning ‘Enough!’, far-right), Iniciativa Liberal (meaning ‘Liberal Initiative’, right-wing) and LIVRE (left-wing). It was expected that after the new parliamentary composition was settled, routine would set in which would dilute the novelty conferred by the media to the presence of these three parties. This would not be the case with LIVRE, as a result of the processes of Othering performed by the media, vis-a-vis the social situatedness of Joacine Katar Moreira. Throughout nearly four months, LIVRE and Joacine Katar Moreira would take up the media agenda, going from the euphoria of victory and the focus on the MP’s differentiating features, to the disputes between her and the party she was elected for. The process would come to a head on 3 February 2020, when LIVRE withdrew its political trust in Katar Moreira, who refused to leave the Parliament and became a non-attached member.

The research aims at understanding how the Portuguese national press represented, framed and narrated the Joacine Katar Moreira case, not only the surprise of her election but to which extent her political persona defied the established patterns of

Portuguese political news coverage. This paper will share the first results of the study. The corpus includes the front pages of newspapers, covers of magazines and homepages of nine selected media, both quality and popular press with different political approaches: *Correio da Manhã*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso*, *jornal I*, *Jornal de Notícias*, *Observador*, *Público*, *Sábado* and *Visão*. The news and opinion pieces of the selected media are analysed using an intersectional approach, seeking to ascertain the dimensions used by newspapers, magazines and websites to represent Joacine Katar Moreira at their most important device as well as the implications of this social construction.

Keywords: Media; Politics; Journalism; Intersectionality

Introduction

This document presents the exploratory results of the research project “IM Lab (Intersectionality Media Lab) - The Joacine Katar Moreira Case Study” of CICANT, a research centre of Universidade Lusófona (Lisboa, Portugal), through which it received the support of FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia. The project “IM Lab (Intersectionality Media Lab) - The Joacine Katar Moreira Case Study” aims to understand how information newspapers and magazines, considered the stronghold of watchdog journalism, guarantors of the democratic system, represented, framed and narrated offline and online the Joacine Katar Moreira case.

With the parliamentary elections of October 6, 2019, three new political forces entered the Portuguese Parliament: *Chega!* (far-right), *Iniciativa Liberal* (right wing) and *LIVRE* (left wing). The former two political forces debuted in the 2019 legislative elections, while *LIVRE*, a left-wing pro-Europe party, founded in 2014, also achieves parliamentary representation for the first time, albeit only after standing for election three times unsuccessfully (two European and one legislative poll) led by Rui Tavares.

Once the initial period of setting the agenda for the new parliamentary reality, it was expected that routine would be set in which would dilute the media presence of these three parties. This was not the case with *LIVRE*, as a result of the differentiating characteristics of the only elected MP. PhD in African Studies in a Portuguese university, feminist and anti-racism activist, the first MP with a stutter, Joacine Katar Moreira arrives at the House with a renowned academic career and a history of engagement in the social area.

On 3 February 2020, less than four months after Katar Moreira’s election, disputes between the political party and its only elected MP, led *LIVRE* to withdraw political confidence, inviting her to relinquish her seat so that she could be replaced in Parliament. However, Katar Moreira refused to leave the Parliament and become a non-attached member, a right enshrined by the Portuguese parliament.

The election of Joacine Katar Moreira (JKM) brought to the Portuguese media arena a political figure where four dimensions of novelty converged: 1) the election of the first

MP for LIVRE; 2) the first woman to take a new political party to the Portuguese Parliament; 3) the first black woman heading the list of a political party to be elected; 4) the first Portuguese MP with a stutter. As Nelson Traquina remarked, “the journalistic world is very interested in the first time” (Traquina, 2002, p. 189), which makes the news-value of “novelty” one of the more crucial of this interpretative community (Zelizer, 1993). Since the election of JKM corresponded to this criterion of newsworthiness in the four dimensions mentioned above, it was only to be expected that it should draw the attention of the Portuguese mass media, following what had happened during the electoral campaign, analyzed by Basílio de Simões & Amaral (2020) who alert to the fact that “as feminist research has also shown, the coverage of exceptionality, of novelty, tends to reify the pattern” (Basílio de Simões & Amaral, 2020, p. 145).

According to the news feed aggregator MediaCloud, between October 6, 2019 and April 6, 2020, there were around 1000 newspaper pieces and op-ed pieces (both national and regional) explicitly naming Joacine Katar Moreira, thus demonstrating the relevance given to this issue by the Portuguese press. We will only focus on a subset of this coverage, but we include these data here to contextualize the relative hypervisibility she occupied within the Portuguese journalistic sphere.

Theoretical framework

Magazine covers may be understood as autonomous communication devices, which contain their own narrative, stemming from the combination of text, image and design (Cardoso, 2012). To some extent, the same logic can be applied to newspapers' front pages as well as homepages. Often forgotten in media analysis, editorial design plays a fundamental role in the hierarchization of elements, organizing and determining the perception of information complexity. The decisions that support the organization of the more impactful devices of print and digital publications (front pages, covers and homepages) are the responsibility of editors and editors-in-chief, representing a will that goes beyond that of individual journalists and that engages the medium as identity. The analysis of these devices allows an insight into the power editorial decisions inside the media. This leads us to the starting question which guides the research: in what way did the Portuguese general information press represent MP Joacine Katar Moreira in their front pages, covers and homepages throughout the first six months of her term? The goal is to understand the role of journalism in the construction of black, woman-read and disabled subjectivities on their most important devices.

As Cerqueira & Magalhães (2017, p. 10) state “the present time cannot be dissociated from multidetermined and always present experiences”, and “as a significant part of these experiences we find the media”. To this end, it is relevant to note that the media have a fundamental role in the structural reproduction of racism, as van Dijk (2012) notes. However, racism alone is insufficient as a framework for analysis, considering that race, gender and class all mutually constitute each other - and that therefore the role of Joacine Katar Moreira requires the use of an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 2008). The study of intersectionality is deemed “relevant as a way of approaching the media

construction of the society and its impacts on the deconstruction or sedimentation of power relations, in the individuals' experiences and subjectivities" (Cerqueira & Magalhães, 2017, p. 15). Given the multiple identity affiliation of its protagonist (a Black woman, with a disability and double nationality), this case raised specific questions in the media public space (Cerqueira & Magalhães, 2017). The hypothesis is raised that the Katar Moreira case eludes traditional media political coverage patterns and additionally compels them to explore new languages, and engage with audiences by "making them a part of the developing story" (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 5). To Beckett & Deuze, "as journalism and society change, emotion is becoming a much more important dynamic in how news is produced and consumed" (2016: p. 2). This relation between emotionalism and journalism is an axis which will also be analysed, especially considering how emotions play a fundamental role in boundary work (Ahmed, 2014, p. 4).

Methodologies

The complete period of analysis of this project enables us to follow the two initial stages of the MP and ends in April 2020. The six-month period begins on the first day of the MP's term, on 6 October 2019, covers the four controversial months of confrontation between Katar Moreira and LIVRE, the party for which she was elected, and includes her first two months as non-attached member of parliament, a situation which began in February 2020. The goal is to analyse the work of the selected media in light of the intersectional approach, seeking to ascertain the dimensions used by newspapers, magazines and websites to represent Joacine Katar Moreira as well as the implications of this social construction. Specifically, we will explore the representations of the MP on the front pages of newspapers, covers of magazines and homepages of the selected media, which include both the most important Portuguese reference and popular press: *Correio da Manhã* (CM), *Diário de Notícias* (DN), *Expresso*, *jornal I*, *Jornal de Notícias* (JN), *Observador*, *Público*, *Sábado* and *Visão*.

To collect the articles for analysis the site capasjornais.pt is being used for the front pages of the newspapers and for the magazine covers, and arquivo.pt for homepages. In the latter case, the greatest difficulty was defining the final limit of what a homepage is, so as to use a uniform criterion, fully aware that what each user sees will depend on the access device (computer or mobile phone, for instance) or even on the dimensions of the screen the information is visualised in. When one enters the homepage of a news website, scrolling it can lead the viewer/reader to browse several pages. Thus, put briefly, it can be stated that the analysis covered what emerges in the spaces closer to the beginning of the homepage, but the study was taken a step further. The digital architecture of each mass medium was analysed, resorting to the reduction of zoom, in search of an organic rationale (similar to that of a print front page), which would allow that inferior limit to be drawn and thus make the comparison between the two formats possible.

This working paper is the first output of the research project and it is, therefore, a precious opportunity to test the methodological approach aimed for and fine-tune it after the first results have been extracted. Thus, for this first paper, only the first two weeks of the period of analysis will be covered – 6 to 20 October 2019 –, which comprise

the early media representations of Joacine Katar Moreira as MP. In this timeframe, 22 references were identified, present only on the front pages of newspapers and on the homepages. Two selection criteria were used: presence of Katar Moreira's image or direct reference to the MP in the headline and/or text which might go with it. The analysis grid which is being developed in the context of this project is divided into four sectors: general aspects of Joacine Katar Moreira's media representation; visual elements; headline; and textual elements. This working paper uses a version reduced to the essential elements of that analysis grid¹, with 14 categories, which correspond to 57 variables. In the case of headlines, the classification and intentionality axes are explored, according to Mário Mesquita².

Results and discussion

The first evident result is the overwhelming superiority of the media representation of Joacine Katar Moreira in the digital format, with 20 instances, versus two in the print format, found only in two daily newspapers, *I* and *Jornal de Notícias*, one in each. Despite the limited period of analysis, only one of the nine media under study does not show any occurrences, i.e., *Observador*. From 6 to 20 October 2019, this newspaper, the only publication of the corpus which is exclusively digital, did not make any reference to the MP on its homepage using the name or the image of Joacine Katar Moreira. On the other end of the spectrum, we find *Diário de Notícias*, which registered 8 of the 23 references, in other words, over 36% of the corpus. In the remaining seven publications, the results are similar, with the same exact results for the two newsmagazines (*Sábado* and *Visão*), with two references each, both in the digital format. *Expresso*, the only weekly newspaper of the corpus, shows only one instance on the homepage, the same result of the popular daily *Correio da Manhã*. In *I* two instances were recorded, one in the print format and another in the digital format, while *Público* and *Jornal de Notícias* have three occurrences each, albeit of a different nature. In *Público* they can all be found on the homepage, whereas in *Jornal de Notícias*, two occur on the homepage and one on the print format.

Another prevailing pattern is that a total of 86% of the corpus refers to an informational discourse. Put differently, in 22 units under analysis, only three occurrences were identified, on the digital format, (in *DN* and in *Visão*) associated to opinion articles, but which correspond only to two autonomous references, since *Visão* repeats the same articles on 10 and 11 October³. From the information pieces, five of the 19 references are headlines on homepages, a situation that never happens in the print format. In the two instances where the topic is on the front page of the newspapers, it is there as secondary references, in a space of less relevance.

Observing the two references in print format, one is combined with an image (*I* of 11/10/2019), the other contains merely text (*JN*, 14/10/2019). But this balance is

¹ As it can be found in the Annex at the end of this article.

² Mesquita, M. (s.d). *Introdução à Análise dos Títulos da Imprensa*.

³ There is also a third repetition, on the following day (October 12, 2019), but it was not considered, since it appears at the homepage exactly the same way as the day before, while from October 10 to 11, 2019 the reference gains hierarchical prominence on the homepage, rising to a higher position.

shattered in the digital format, where the image predominates, featuring in 15 of the 20 instances, namely, in 75% of the cases. Going back to the whole of the corpus, we thus find 16 images, all photographs. In 11 of these 16 pieces, the MP is represented in the context of a group, but on the foreground, and in two other images she is depicted with two other figures, albeit with the same prominence. In only two photographs is JKM depicted alone and on the foreground. Nevertheless, almost nothing else brings together these specific media representations (see Figure 1) which belong to the digital edition of / of 7 October and to the print edition of *Jornal de Notícias* of 14 October.

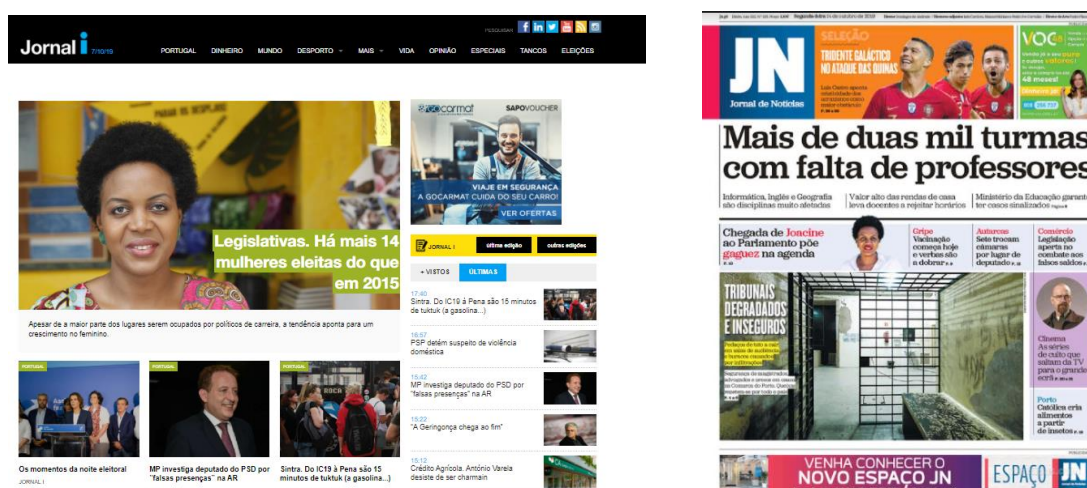


Figure 1. JKM appears represented alone and on the foreground only twice.

Analysing the space visualized as background in the 16 photographs, the MP is photographed ten times in a public space and, in two instances, the photograph evokes the exercise of the political activity, since it is taken in the Parliament or the Belém Palace (official residence of the President). Only two photographic records were identified in which JKM is depicted in the context of a private space. Also, regarding the visual representation of the mediatization of the political figure, the facial expressions present in the images selected by the media were identified. In ten of the 16 photographs, JKM is depicted with a smiling expression and in seven of these ten the MP is on the foreground, with other people and in the context of a celebration. Among the images that have these characteristics a photo of Lusa News Agency stands out, taken during the celebration of the victory, which features in four different publications (*DN*, *CM*, *Sábado* e *Visão*) on 7 October⁴. Only in two instances was the politician photographed with a serious demeanour. Moreover, in three of the five headlines, in which there is a photo of Joacine Katar Moreira, the MP is pictured smiling, contrasting with two other instances in which it is seen with a more serious demeanour.

As regards the clothes worn, from the 16 references that are accompanied by an image, JKM is dressed casually in ten of them (over 60%). In four photographic records, the clothes are more formal and in two instances the MP is depicted wearing clothes styled as *capulana*, in colourful material, typical of Mozambique and south-eastern Africa.

⁴ The photo is the one on Figure 2.

In the universe of the 22 references analysed, only one instance is recorded where the headline is incomplete (on the homepage of *DN* of 10 October). As regards the categories of analysis of the headline, only in one instance was it not possible to apply them. In terms of results, informative headlines predominate (18), whereas expressive headlines constitute merely three occurrences. Seven engaged headlines were recorded, in other words, headlines that denote support to some type of ideology or cause, five of which informative, and the two remaining ones expressive.

When the text that accompanies the media representations of JKM is analysed, one of the more interesting results is that which concerns how newspapers and magazines refer to her. In 11 of the 22 cases, the identification is made just by the image, since the name is absent. Only in two instances, both in the digital format, in *Público* (7 October) and in *DN* (10 October), are the name and surname used (Joacine Katar Moreira). In the nine remaining instances, which correspond to nearly half the corpus, LIVRE MP is referred to by her first name, “Joacine”.

The last category in the analysis grid sought to identify the attributes highlighted by the text found on the homepages and on the first pages, the latter being of a cumulative nature. In two instances only was it impossible to address this category. In the remaining 20 occurrences, JKM is associated with five distinct attributes: political activity; gender identity; racial identity; stutter; and intersectional identity. In 14 of the references, only one of these four attributes was identified, eight units refer to two, and two refer to three.

Political activity is the attribute the texts more often associate with the MP, amounting to 13 of the 20 instances in this category (65%). Next come gender identity and the stutter, with six instances each, and racial identity, with three. The sum of these three identity dimensions totals 15 registers, which exceeds the dominant attribute (political activity). In two instances, the text associates two of the three identity dimensions, and for this reason the variable intersectional identity was added to this category. These two registers add references to the same identities (gender and racial) and both happened on 7 October, the day after the elections, on the homepages *Diário de Notícias* (a newspaper) and *Sábado* (a magazine). In both cases, they constitute the headlines of the homepages and use the same exact photograph, although the emphasis of the graphic design on *DN* is much larger, as well as the emotional nature which it thus builds, giving the sensation that the beaming newly-elected MP will embrace the reader of the article with joy and enthusiasm (Figure 2). Another aspect to be pointed out is the fact that the two headlines highlight the presence of three black women in the Parliament, belonging to three different political parties, one of which the winner of the elections. However, *DN* and *Sábado* opted for the same image which depicts only Joacine Katar Moreira, which means they chose her as representative of the three.



Figure 2. One newspaper (*DN*, left) and one magazine (*Sábado*, right) use the same photo of JKM to illustrate the arrival of three black women to the Portuguese Parliament.

Conclusions

This first paper confirmed the wealth of the research object of the project “IM Lab (Intersectionality Media Lab) - The Joacine Katar Moreira Case Study”. In a mere two weeks covered (from a total period of six months) it is possible to identify two different narratives.

The first is of “victory, celebration and reactions”, which emerges on 7 October 2019, the day after the polls, in which 9 of the 22 pieces under analysis (about 40%) were published, and which continues for two more days, with four more pieces.

On 10 October a new narrative emerges around “stutter as a logistic problem”, brought about by the fact that the party for which JKM was elected, LIVRE, asked the Parliament for more time for its MP’s interventions, so as not to penalise her for her physical condition. This second narrative has six references, four of which were published on 10 October 2019, a fifth one on the following day, and the last, the only one to occur on the front page of a newspaper, on 14 October 2019.

With the election of Joacine Katar Moreira, a person unknown to the general public until 2019, the LIVRE party is represented in the Portuguese Parliament for the first time. This first dimension of novelty, as we identified, is the one which is more often depicted by the media, followed by the stutter, for the reason mentioned. This means that there is a depoliticization of the disability - the potential for criticism of the ways in which the parliamentary system is grounded on assumptions of bodily and neurotypical privilege is exchanged for hypersensitivity in issues of the micro-management of bureaucratic procedures.

Still, the novelties in the field of gender and racial identities are not made to stand out, in other words, in the corpus no references were found to the fact that Joacine Katar Moreira was the first woman to place a new party in the Portuguese Parliament, and that she was the first black woman to head the list of a political party to be elected. The lack of visibility of Joacine Katar Moreira on the homepages of *Observador* is also noteworthy. It should be added that this newspaper has a pro-right-wing slant, the only publication under analysis which does not engage with any of the four dimensions of novelty involving the new MP.

The predominance of the references to JKM as merely MP demonstrate the investment of journalism in erasing the categories of social allegiance of the depicted subjects – and therefore in the ideological laundering of the MP, within the context of an antithetical

rationale to the intersectional stance and the production of knowledge and situated political *praxis* (Haraway, 1988; Rodrigues, 2015).

The manner in which the Portuguese media identify Joacine Katar Moreira is another key element of analysis, since the power to name and identify is one of the main purposes of discourse. The data collected show the predominance of the use of the first name, a tendency which goes against the journalistic rule of naming public figures – who are referred to by the first name and surname, or surname alone. In fact, in the period under analysis, two references were identified which will earn more in-depth analysis, one because it combines in one headline the names of three Portuguese political figures from different political sectors, all women, in which only JKM is addressed by the first name; and the other, which uses only first names to identify JKM and two other Portuguese MPs, connected by the same gender and racial identity. This element is empirical evidence of the need for an intersectional approach, and how JKM's femininity is represented as inferior, not only to men's masculinity, but also to the femininity of *white* women. The two pieces were published on 7 October 2019 in the digital edition of *Diário de Notícias*, the former associated with an opinion piece and the latter in an information piece.

This result must be read in light of the processes of over-personalization of political life (Rieffel, 2003), in that the media spectacle around JKM contributed to eliminate from the public eye the other black women who also had a seat in Parliament. Thus, as a narrative emerged in which the leading character is JKM, her existence as racialised, genderized and disabled subject is subsumed to her existence as the focus of affective investment and symbolic concentration. This replicates hegemonically-white power structures, while at the same time turning JKM into a *token*, in the same way that several other black women have been objectified by the media (Cloud, 1996). This allows the mainstream media to present themselves as diverse or as impartial in their media coverage, while at the same time exempting themselves from dealing with the systemic inequality before them (van Dijk, 2012). Moreover, and as is frequently found in situations of minority representation (Mercer, 1990), JKM is forced to occupy not the role and the position of JKM, LIVRE MP, but rather the position of Black person who must represent, very specifically, the whole blackness (to the detriment of all her other social positions).

Finally, it becomes apparent that this first exploratory study enables us to understand the importance of analysing the homepages of the mass media in parallel to the front pages and covers of their print editions. In these two weeks, the arrival of Joacine Katar Moreira to the Portuguese Parliament was considered to be sufficiently relevant to earn a place on the “digital front page” of eight different publications and, in 25% of the cases, as leading story. In the print editions, there are no references on the covers of newsmagazines and on the front pages of newspapers this only happens twice, in both cases as a secondary headline. Thus, while the traditional press remains a legitimate historiographic source, the preliminary results seem to point to the urgency of conducting research on the archives that preserve the digital mass media, since this seems to be the only path to preserve a memory that is closer to the multiplicity of facts that earned media prominence and to the way the media decided to address them.

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Annex

Analysis Grid

I - General categories

1. Format

1. Front Page
2. Homepage
3. Cover

2. Nature

1. Information
2. Opinion

3. Relevance

1. Main headline
2. Secondary reference

4. Presentation

1. With image
2. Text only
3. With video
4. Other

II - General categories of image analysis

5. Type

1. Photograph
2. Other
3. N/A

III - Visual representation of Joacine Katar Moreira

6. Prominence

1. Alone, in the foreground
2. Alone, in the background
3. With company, in the foreground
4. With company, in the background
5. With company, with equal prominence
6. Absent
7. N/A

7. Space depicted as background

1. Parliament/Belém Palace
2. Public
3. Private
4. N/A

8. Clothing

1. Formal
2. Informal
3. Capulana
4. N/A

9. Facial Expression

1. Smiling
2. Tense
3. Angry
4. Serious
5. Other
6. N/A

IV - Analysis categories of headlines

10. Structure

1. Complete
2. Incomplete

11. Classification

1. Informative
2. Expressive
3. Other
4. N/A

12. Intentionality

1. Engaged
2. Not engaged
3. N/A

V - Textual representation of Joacine Katar Moreira

13. Identification

1. First name and surname
2. First name
3. Surname
4. Absent

14. Highlighted attributes

1. Personality traits
2. Dual nationality
3. Academic career
4. Political activity
5. Gender identity
6. Racial/ethnic identity
7. Stutter
8. Intersectional identity
9. Others
10. N/A