

## **BRAZILIAN LABOR MARKET REGIONAL PATTERNS: AN APPROACH TO GENDER DIVERGENCES**

Anita Kon\*

Brazil has many labor market gender disparities, which compromise the reduction in poverty and future sustainable development. These gender differences are much more pronounced in a regional approach because of the many local specific social and economic considerations requiring different regional public policies. This paper intends to analyze the regional characteristics of labor market gender differences for the purpose of gaining subsidies for Brazilian public policies. First, theoretical aspects are examined explaining the causes of labor market regional divergences. Following, regional differential indexes are analyzed, calculated by special data tabulations, for the mid-1990's to 2006, and examining labor variables such as occupation and unemployment, school level, average earnings and working hours, in order to subsidize regional public planning.

Key words: Regions; Labor; Earnings; Gender Segmentation; Brazil.

## **PADRÕES REGIONAIS DO MERCADO DE TRABALHO BRASILEIRO: UMA ABORDAGEM DAS DIVERGÊNCIAS ENTRE GÊNEROS**

O Brasil apresenta consideráveis disparidades nas situações entre gêneros no mercado de trabalho, que comprometem o decréscimo da pobreza e o desenvolvimento sustentável no futuro. Em uma abordagem regional, estas diferenças entre gêneros são ainda mais proeminentes, devido a especificidades sociais e econômicas locais, que requerem diferentes políticas públicas. A fim de subsidiar políticas públicas brasileiras, este artigo analisa as características regionais do mercado de trabalho, segundo as diferenças entre gêneros. São primeiramente examinados aspectos teóricos que explicam as causas das divergências regionais no mercado de trabalho. Em sequência, foram analisados indicadores de diferenças regionais, calculados por meio de tabulações especiais, para o período de meados da década de 1990 a 2007, examinando as variáveis ocupação, desemprego, anos de estudo e rendimentos médios, a fim de subsidiar o planejamento público regional.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho; Regiões; Rendimentos; Gênero; Segmentação Ocupacional; Brasil.

## **LOS PATRONES REGIONALES DEL MERCADO DE TRABAJO DE BRASIL: UNA APROXIMACIÓN DE LAS DIFERENCIAS ENTRE GÉNEROS**

Brasil presenta considerables disparidades en las situaciones entre hombres y mujeres el mercado de trabajo, que compromete la disminución de la pobreza y el desarrollo sostenible en el futuro. En un abordaje regional, estas diferencias entre géneros aún más prominentes, se deben a especificidades sociales y económicos lugares, que exigen distintas políticas públicas. Con el fin de subvencionar políticas públicas brasileñas, este artículo analiza las características regionales del mercado de trabajo según diferencias entre géneros. En primer lugar se examinan algunos aspectos teóricos que explican las causas de las divergencias regionales en el mercado de trabajo. En secuencia, fueran analizados indicadores de diferencias regionales, calculados a través de

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tabulaciones especiales, para el período de medios de la década de 1990 a 2007, examinando las variables empleo, desempleo, años de estudio, rentas medias, con el fin de subvencionar la planificación pública regional.

Palabras-clave: Trabajo; Regiones; Rentas; Género; Segmentación Profesional; Brasil.

## **LES VARIATIONS RÉGIONALES DU MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL BRÉSILIEN: UNE APPROCHE DES DIFFÉRENCES ENTRE LES SEXES**

Le Brésil présente de considérables disparités dans les situations entre des hommes-femmes dans le marché de travail, qui compromet la diminution de la pauvreté et le développement soutenable à l'avenir. Dans un abordage régional, ces différences entre des genres sont encore davantage prédominants, dû à des spécificités sociales et économiques de chaque localisation, qui exigent de différentes politiques publiques. Afin de subventionner des politiques publiques brésiliennes, cet article analyse les caractéristiques régionales du marché de travaux selon les différences entre des genres. Premièrement sont examinés des aspects théoriques qui expliquent les causes des divergences régionales dans le marché de travail. Dans séquence, sont analysés des indicateurs de différences régionales, calculés à travers des tabulations spéciales, pour la période de milieu de la décennie de 1990 à 2007, en examinant les variables occupation, le chômage, années d'étude, revenus moyens, afin de subventionner la planification publique régionale.

Mots-clés: Travail; Régions; Revenus; Genre; Segmentation Professionnelle; Brésil.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The stabilization and reform policies undertaken in Brazil since the eighties, to cope with high inflation and other macroeconomic unbalances, have affected (positively or negatively) the performance of the regional economies and mainly labor market opportunities. The impacts on segmentation in gender labor division have been somewhat similar among the regions, but there have also been many disparities that have led to an unfavorable situation, mainly among women. In this sense, the specific cultural, demographic, political and economic structures of each Brazilian region have caused worker distribution, calling for distinct regional policies. It has been observed that Brazilian regional occupational segmentation according to gender, regarding inequalities in labor protection conditions, qualification and earnings reinforce the already existing exclusion and poverty.

This paper strives to analyze the regional characteristics of this country's labor market, regarding gender differences, which impact personal and regional income inequality, and reflect on global and regional poverty levels. Some theoretical aspects that could explain the causes of the regional labor market gender divergences and the impacts on economic development of the countries will be examined first.

Next, an empirical analysis of Brazilian inequalities among positions for women and men according to the regional labor market division is presented. Among the selected indicators that quantify and qualify the diversities, Regional

Differential Quotients and other regional indexes are calculated, using special data tabulations, for the most recent period from the mid-1990's to 2006, in order to examine labor market variables such as occupation and unemployment, school level and average earnings, for the purpose of subsidizing regional public planning.

## **2 ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND REGIONAL LABOR MARKET IMPACTS: GENDER INEQUALITIES**

Developing countries face the challenge of solving the conflicts between macroeconomic stabilization and developing policies, aiming at competing in world markets. The occupational structure of these economies, in each situation, results from the possibilities of dealing with these conflicts. The characteristics of occupational distribution in formal and informal activities of developing countries result from the specific possibilities of the manpower offer, in those economies, to respond to firm's labor demands. The nature of these labor market offers can either block or allow firms and workers facing international competition to adjust dynamically to the new requisites brought about by the boost in world productivity.

The world globalization process has caused significant changes in advanced as well as in less developed economies in recent years, which include: a) increasing internationalization of economic activities; b) reorganization of dominant firms; c) increasing integration of manufacturing and service production; d) growing use of microelectronics technology; e) growing industrial demand for a high skilled workforce, in contrast to many routine jobs being displaced by technical change; f) the increasing complexity and volatility of consumption; and g) the changing role of state intervention. (Rima, 1996; Beneria, 2003; Castells, 2005; Boserup, (2007).

Although these changes occur more rapidly in more advanced countries, a similar dynamics of restructuring in other low and middle income countries is also observed, although at a lower speed. Similar patterns of occupational structure and restructuring are found for each level of economic development during a period of time, due to industrialization and technological modernization. Business organizations have to cope with international competition and deal with many changes regarding technology and plant, nature of labor qualification, new organization of labor process, new features of production (non-continuous production and limited economies of scale), among others. On the other hand, technical innovations affect the nature of products (intensification of non-material services, the features of a product, etc.), consumption (through product delivery forms, role of consumers, organization of consumption, etc.) and also markets (organization of markets, regulation and marketing tools, etc.) (Kon, 2007).

The impacts of the recent economic globalization on the Brazilian economy have revealed a diversified trend when observing regional production and labor market structures. This is due to the specific features of each region, as regards their sector

structure, the availability of human resources, the agglomeration economies and the degree of technological innovation undertaken by local companies. In contrast with the regional inequalities observed in the socioeconomic levels of development at the beginning of the eighties, the dynamics of Brazilian regional evolution has shown different speeds and intensities in several spaces. This is because international competitiveness and economic stabilization must be coped with simultaneously.

On one hand, there is the influence of structural aspects related to material and human resources, and also to specific spatial, politic and cultural conditions. As regards human resources, mainly in developing countries, severe gaps are noticed caused by differences in school enrollment and adult illiteracy, access to health, safe water and sanitation services, which reflect intensely on the cultural environment and on the ability to seek modernization. These gaps result in diversified possibilities of labor to adapt to the technological progress and an organizational modernization that is brought about in enterprises, in order to compete in the world market. In this sense, the most advanced regions reveal a more intense and faster growth in the more industrialized and modern sectors, strongly impacting regional worker productivity.

As a result of human and social difficulties, in many countries labor market has been showing negative characteristics in regard to the conditions for work and earnings, like the increase in open long-lasting unemployment and the spread of small informal enterprises driven by outsourcing and subcontracts, and the increase in low productivity sectors with low salaries. Moreover, self-employment in low-income occupations is also growing fast. This diminishes productivity gains at the average regional level. The differences in infrastructure utilities or in physical capital stocks, resulting in agglomeration economies and positive externalities to company location, also depict the relevant historical, cultural and economic picture of the differences in dynamism among regions, due to cultural and human resources causes (Kon, 1995).

On the other hand, there is the influence of conjuncture situations that also have repercussions on various socioeconomic spaces, with different results and intensities. The macro- and microeconomic policies aiming at economic stabilization or at stimulating specific sectors have different effects on each region, according to the structural and conjuncture possibilities of responding to these stimuli. Therefore, each space reacts differently to the impacts of the recent economic globalization, in regard to the possibilities of improving labor productivity and other labor conditions. In several economies, the impact of technological and organizational transformations and globalization also changed the attraction of regional business location conditions. This led to a different model of economic influence based on distinct central places or distinct growth clusters in the same region, instead of the former central place.

In regard to labor gender conditions, a historical trend toward increased participation by women in occupational structure is observed in developing countries. On one hand, this increase reflects positive aspects of the evolution of social values, as well as of the modernization of production processes, which refined and increased the division of tasks, and, in some cases, created occupations favoring female labor conditions, like accuracy and manual skills. However, greater female participation in the labor market, mainly during times of economically hardship, is also connected to the issue of family survival, or to the sustaining of a standard of living, and to the creation of the woman's own work opportunities.

The composition of occupational distribution according to gender reflects the net movements of these long-term and conjuncture trends. These are diversified regionally, according to the spatial impacts of global economic policies and to specific cultural factors reflected in particular patterns of segmentation. The specific features of each region are also due to their sector structure, availability of human resources, agglomeration economies and degree of technological innovation undertaken by local firms. But it is seen in a great part of countries that women disadvantages in labor market conditions prevail (Lustig and Edwards, 1997).

In contrast with the regional inequalities observed in the socioeconomic levels of development at the beginning of the eighties, the dynamics of regional evolution has shown different speeds and intensities in several spaces, similar to the impacts on labor market gender distribution, which, in contrast, maintained a high level of disparities.

Some analysts, entrepreneurs and even government agents, who are in charge of labor policies, have argued that excessive protection through labor market regulation causes some limitations to markets responses to adjusting to the high unemployment rates, and is leading an increasingly greater number of workers to precarious situations in the informal market thus worsening inequalities and exclusion. They refer to some East Asian economies, in order to base ideas of reforms in the labor markets and to suggest policies to increase labor qualification and gender equality.

Others assert that any measure that leads to the elimination of labor protections will worsen the social conditions of the workers and will increase poverty and the inequity in income distribution of the country. They also argue that regulations in Brazil have commonly been largely ignored by the employers and that the labor markets already are considerably flexible. On the other hand, some regulatory policies have not solved unemployment problems and gender inequalities in the labor market. (Lustig and Edwards, 1997; Moe, 2003; Beneria, 2003; Kon, 2007, Jacobsen, 2007). In any case, economic reforms leading to stabilization and economic modernization have not particularly solved some problems resulting from the changes in the previous labor market conditions.

In the context of capitalist development, there is a historical trend toward increased participation by women in the occupational structure. On one hand, this increase reflects positive aspects of the evolution of social values, which began to allow a higher rate of women to participate in the labor market, and in the modernization of production processes. This has refined and increased the division of tasks and, in some cases, has created occupations favoring female labor conditions, like accuracy and manual skills.

Nevertheless, firms had to cope with their need to modernize their production and organizational processes in order to increase their competitiveness at a global level, although in some regions, labor forces were not prepared to respond to an increasing demand for more qualified workers. The increasing number of self-employed workers was a way in which the economy could adjust to the new world reality of transnationalization and technological innovation, which are job economizers. The allocation of workers in informal activities, which allow easier articulation in order to cope with the economic adjustment of the firms, have an unstable character and result in smaller remuneration for those excluded from labor market.

### **3 PREMISES OF BRAZILIAN REGIONAL GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LABOR CONDITIONS**

Offer and demand factors of the Brazilian labor market, in more recent years, were deeply associated with the accelerated pace of technological progress and economic globalization, which led to technological and organizational restructuring in companies in most countries, as already seen. These changes had considerable repercussions on the nature of the productive processes, on the composition of production structures and on the evolution and nature of the product. This dynamic had also transforming impacts on the conditions and nature of work in all economic sectors, since economic modernization, with the introduction of new techniques, eliminates a series of job occupations and positions, while it creates new functions and occupations.

When analyzing the subjects related to labor earnings distribution specifically, the basic hypotheses of this evaluation are related to theoretical premises that associate this structuring with some primordial determinants which mould the standards of this composition. These determinants refer to the already mentioned labor “spatiality,” that is, the specific qualities of the occupational structure in each region, originated by cultural, social and economic characteristics peculiar to each space.

They result from diverse regional reflexes on the occupational structures, which derive from specific resources and socioeconomic bases, and are represented: a) by the quality of the job offer, in other words, of the “human capital”

incorporated in workers (Smith, 1983:248; Becker, 1993; Jacobsen, 1998:249; Boserup, 2007); b) by the differences in labor market segmentation internally to the companies (Gordon, Reich & Edwards, 1973; Doeringer and Worsen, 1971; Vietorisz & Harrison, 1973; Jacobsen 2007, Kon, 2007); c) by the structural differences in earnings (Rima, 1996:260; Jacobsen 2007, Kon, 2007); and d) by the participation of workers according to gender (Kon, 1995 e 2007; Mutari, Boushey and Fraher, 1997; Jacobsen, 2007).

One of the main determinants of labor spatiality is the Human Capital endowing of the regional labor force. The concept of Human Capital (HC) is an old discussion in economic theory (Gary Becker, 1993; Jacobsen, 2007, Rima, 1996), not relevant to classical and neoclassical theories, which considered labor homogeneity as a hypothesis, or, in other words, that all workers have the same qualifications and are identical in all important aspects. Nevertheless, revisions in these concepts are part of new theories, and are reviving the concern about the economic relevance of differences in labor capacities, as well as differences in the interpretation of gender HC endowments by the firms (Rima, 1996; Jacobsen 1998; Boserup, 2007).

The first discussions concerning the importance of Human Capital on worker remuneration pointed out that manpower, in fact, is heterogeneous, and that differences among individuals and in the labor market interfere directly in the workers' earnings. According to this approach, this capital is composed in part of a worker's physical and mental abilities that are innate and that are the result of acquired education, on-the-job training and other professional and specialization courses, as well as work experience. The common characteristic of these capacities is that they maintain or increase the market value of manpower. In other words, the salary structure or earnings differences among groups in an economy are frequently associated with age, gender, race and type of occupation; however, they also reflect the former diverse kinds of HC. The worker "rents" the use of his HC to the employer and the resulting salary is not only the compensation for the hours spent at work, but also for the available worker's HC (Rima, 1996:109)

Another explanation about earnings differences among individuals comes from the theories that internally analyze the labor market segmentation of the firms. The distinct branches of these theories try to explain the existing differences in the kinds of jobs inside companies, based on diverse recruitment criteria selection and training on one hand, and on the other, on several forms of work and career promotions linked to specific salary levels (Gordon, Reich & Edwards, 1973; Doeringer and Worsen, 1971; Vietorisz & Harrison, 1973).

In short, the ideas of these authors point out the different labor market segments inside the firms, classified as Primary and Secondary groups. The Primary market is composed of jobs with stability and with relatively high productivities and

salaries. The promotions and the salaries are established through rules specific to the firm, and are frequently adopted in large oligopolistic companies, with high capital/labor relation. The Secondary segment is composed of workers with minimum qualifications and training, who are not incorporated in promotions processes. The salaries and productivity are relatively low, and the working habits are not stable, with few formal contracts. These segments are more easily found in small competitive firms with unstable demand and little access to capital and technology; however, it is also frequent in industrial big size companies. In this segment, internal labor market promotions do not exist, because the labor is homogeneous and there are no turnover costs to the firms.

In what refers to earnings, differences in the structure of the remunerations have also been analyzed, based on two basic focuses: differences among occupations and among workers. The traditional focus on the differences among occupations considers the economy as a network of labor markets for each of the many occupations, which are differentiated according to qualification requisites, job position stability, working conditions and other factors. More recently, the focus of the HC theory does not consider differences among jobs positions, but among people, and it relates a worker earnings directly to his personal characteristics, what includes gender.

Today, an examination of the nature and sources of change in different occupational remunerations shows the strong influence of a payroll polarization process among occupational categories, related to the erosion of average remuneration job opportunities, across the earnings scale. This is connected, on one hand, to greater cost reductions undertaken by companies, as part of their administrative strategies, aiming to reduce the payroll expenses. These cuts had greater impacts on modern sectors, such as the computer science industry, commerce and financial sectors. They have also been affecting a great number of bureaucratic and administrative occupations, creating a labor demand for qualified and more flexible workers, hired at lower salaries. Their former companies sometimes rehire many previously dismissed workers, without any legal labor protections or additional benefits and with lower remuneration. A great number of these administrative workers turn into temporary workers, through subcontracting processes. These recent company practices affect professionals as well as technical and other qualified worker occupations particularly, reflecting company efforts to reduce unit production costs (Kon, 2007).

However, literature shows many cases where it is seen that all these theoretical determinants may have different impacts in workers conditions, according to their gender characteristic. In the next section the paper will analyze Brazilian regional labor force distribution according to gender, aiming to understand the disparities comparing the country's profile to the former theoretical premises.



## 4 BRAZILIAN REGIONAL LABOR SEGMENTATION ACCORDING TO GENDER

### 4.1 Initial considerations

The analysis of Brazilian regional occupational segmentation according to gender presented in this paper is part of a larger research project studying the country's labor market structure, and examining the occupational profile of the working population and the labor changes that have occurred in this distribution since the nineties (Kon, 2007). The data sources are the National Domicile Sampling Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios-PNAD*) and the Monthly Employment Research (*Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego*) conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística-IBGE*). Some indicators were constructed for the purpose of determining regional diversities in labor force distribution according to gender, by selecting some educational and earnings variables that allow a better understanding of the implications of these differences in regions with diverging levels of development. The determination of these differences allows regional public policies to select proper measures specifically directed at the most needed group of workers and regions.

First, it is pointed out that the regional labor segmentation, which can be seen through the country's statistical information, results from the structural changes that occurred in different economic activities and sectors in the period analyzed, which had a new and innovative character. These changes played the role of unbalancing the old patterns, regarding the creation of a volume of necessary job positions to be adjusted to economic growth on one hand, and to the qualification profile of Brazilian manpower, on the other. The pace of economic modernization, as well as that of the introduction of new functions and occupations in companies or in autonomous work, is often upset by the specific conditions of the Brazilian labor force profile, which is not always prepared to take over more flexible terms of production processes or more sophisticated tasks. Therefore, the Brazilian labor market conditions of the nineties did not show as many structural changes as would be expected in the new world situation. In this context, women are still at a disadvantage in labor market conditions; nevertheless, they present a qualification level equivalent to men, as it will be seen.

Brazilian labor market gender diversities are considerable for the entire economy; however, these differences in regional terms take on much more pronounced contours according to the space, particularly due to the cultural, economic and social disparities that affect the regionalized occupational structure, confirming the theoretical premises for all countries, in a more intense level than advanced ones.

With regard to the impacts on different region economies, the specific qualities of the occupational structure in each Brazilian space, are molded as much by inner structural components as by other forces, exogenous to regional and national ones, which affect these qualities in a given period. The transformations in this “spatiality” result from each space adjustment capacity to cope with new economic requisites from world economies, as impact of economic paradigms changes (Kon, 2007).

It is greatly known that some Brazilian states, such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Amazonas, Distrito Federal and Santa Catarina, present a higher *per capita income* in relation to the national average, whereas the other state show income rates which are lower than half the Brazilian average index. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this situation represents an advance in relation to the previous period, starting in the fifties, when income disparities between the most advanced and the most backward states were even higher.

In the 1950-1985 period, some important changes occurred in the production and occupational structures of the various spaces, in such a way that some regions approached the country average GDP, either in the positive sense (that is, through a higher relative growth rate) or in the negative sense (due to an inferior relative growth). Regional dynamics is driven by a sequence of factors, which act to accelerate, retard or diminish the specific growth rates (Kon, 2005).

In what concerns to human resources, it is noticed severe gaps among the North-Northeast regions and the South-Southeast regions, caused by differences in school enrolment and adult illiteracy, access to health, safe water and sanitation services which have intense reflections in the cultural environment and in the capacity to assimilate modernization.

In order to determinate these differences, the regional analysis undertaken here adopts two approaches, in accordance with the availability of statistical information on gender distribution by type: (a) according to selected metropolitan regions and (b) according to the so-called 5 Great Regions. It is initially observed that regional activity rates, that is, the regional levels of occupation, show considerable differences between the genders for all the regions.

The following selected variables aim to determinate the labor market regional profile of workers, in order to quantify and qualify the main gender differences: activity rates, unemployment situation, education level and average earnings.

#### **4.2 Activity rates**

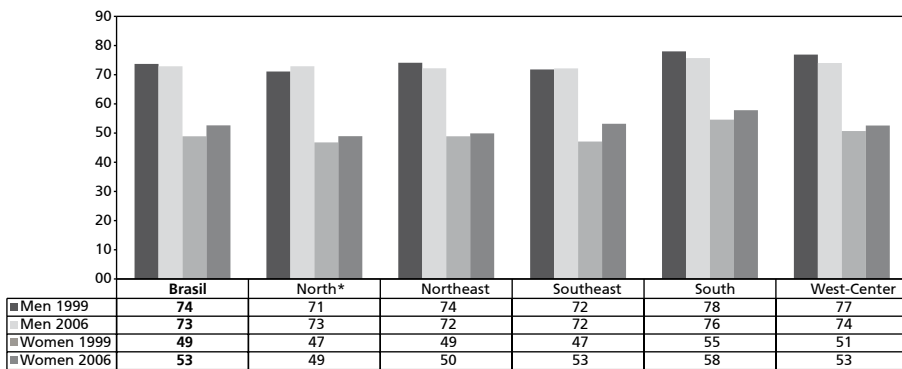
It is initially observed that the regional activity rates, that is, the regional levels of occupation present considerable differences between the genders for all the regions. The gender regional activity rates (AR) were determined by the following expression:

$$AR = (OP_{ij} / EAP_{ij}) \times 100, \text{ where}$$

$OP$  = Occupied Population,  $EAP$  = Economically Active Population,  $i$  = gender,  $j$  = region.

The Brazilian average AR shows that about 73% of men were economically active in 1999 and only 49% of women, whereas in 2006, the average rate of female activity rose almost 8%, to nearly 53%, and male activity declined not very significantly, i.e., about 1% (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1  
Gender regional activity rate (AR)



Source: IBGE-PNADs 1999 and 2006.

Elaborated by the author.

\* Urban North, in 1999.

All regions show similar situations; however, the South shows the highest rates for the two genders in the period, in that men participate with about 78% in the gender differentiation and women, 55%, in first year, and respectively 76% and 58% in the last year, closely followed by the West-Center. The lower rates among men are found in the Southeast; however, the highest participation growth between the two periods (6,1%) was observed among women.

Regional differences are better observed through the gender regional activity rate differences ( $ARD$ ), which is calculated as:

$$ARD = [(AR_{ij} / AR_{iB}) - 1], \text{ where}$$

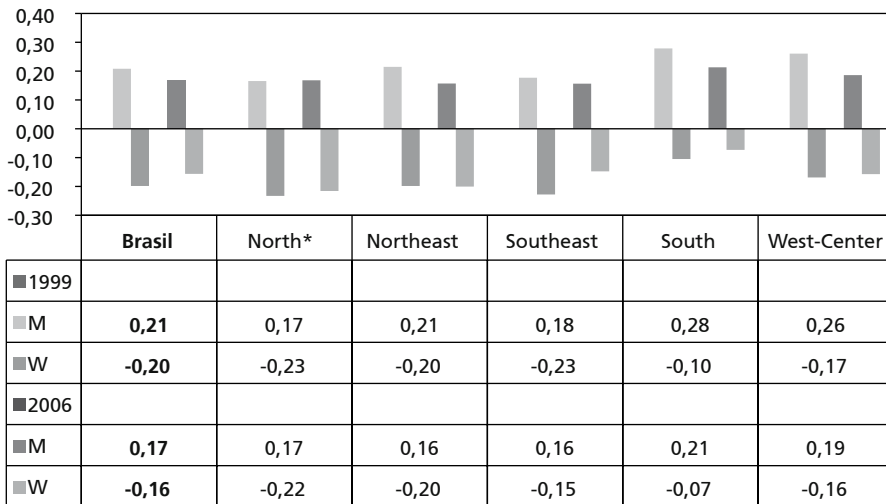
$AR_{ij} = (OP_{ij} / EAP_{ij}) \times 100$  and  $AR_{iB} = (OP_{iB} / EAP_{iB})$ ;  $OP$  = Occupied Population,  $EAP$  = Economically Active Population,  $i$  = gender,  $j$  = region and  $B$  = Brazil.

Regional differences are best observed in Figure 2, where, in regard to the total average activity rate of Brazilian workers, men show positive differentials of 21% and 17%, respectively in 1999 and 2006, and the largest positive differences are found in the South and West-Center regions (28% and 26% in the first year),

declining at the end of the period. In turn, the differentials for the women are negative in all regions, as to Brazilian global average, but there is a trend of greater convergence in the period. The region that shows the largest positive divergence among men is the same one that presents the lowest negative divergence among women (South). In short, a very slow trend toward convergence of the activity rates was clear in the period, that is, a reduction of the differentials.

However, the more intense increase in women's activity rates, in a different way than it was found in the above mentioned theoretical literature, resulted not so much from the country's modernization – as an effect of growing economic globalization – but mainly from the fact that during economically Brazilian hardship times in the period, the raise in female participation, was mainly linked to family survival; this has happened in inequality conditions, and in order to create their own work opportunities, in labor exclusion situations.

FIGURE 2  
Gender regional activity rate differences (ARD)



Source: IBGE-PNADs 1999 and 2006.

Elaborated by the author. Global Brazil (M+W) = 0

\*Urban North, in 1999.

In any case, the diverse conditions between the genders, in regard to family and professional responsibilities, rigid work schedules, and stricter demands of skills for men, among others, show that women's work doesn't depend only on market demand, but also on a series of other interconnected factors. These factors frequently lead to the allocation of workers in informal activities that allow easier articulation, but that are unstable in character and have lower remuneration. In sum though Brazilian female participation in labor market continued its historical tendency towards increasing rates, these indicators reflect something more than positive aspects of the evolution of economic performance and social values, as in more advanced countries.

Domestic work is frequently a solution found by Brazilian women and also by the enterprises that outsourcing some services, looking to reduce costs. However, unlike the domestic work resulting from outsourcing of a series of more sophisticated modern services previously allocated in the companies, in Brazil, domestic female work, in most cases, has the character of a craft, and has low qualification and lower remuneration. More effective public policies aiming to the larger engagement of the feminine population in labor force are not present, or a lot of times are badly enunciated and cause contrary effects, discouraging the enterprises companies to hire women, because they cart in a larger relation cost/benefit (Kon, 2007).

### 4.3 Unemployment behavior

The impact of the recent economic globalization on the Brazilian economy has revealed a diversified trend, when regional unemployment rates are observed. This is due to the specificities of each region, as regards their sector structure, the availability of human resources, the agglomeration economies and the degree of technological innovation undertaken by local enterprises, confirming the theoretical premises. In contrast with the regional inequalities observed in the socioeconomic levels of development at the beginning of the eighties, the dynamics of Brazilian regional evolution has shown different speeds and intensities in several spaces.

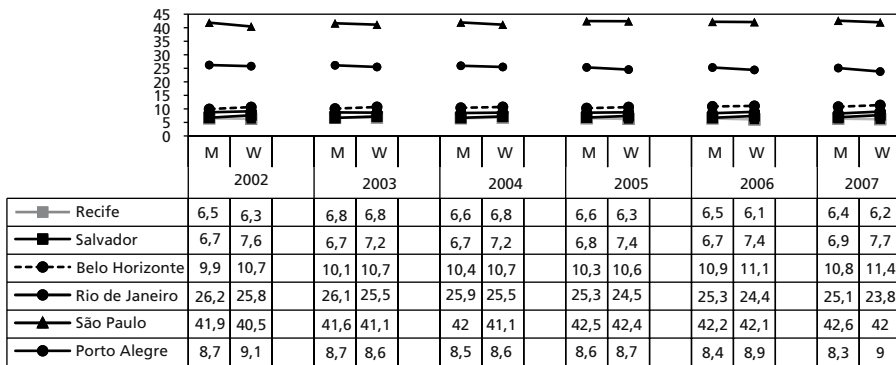
This is due, on one hand, to the need to cope simultaneously with international competitiveness and the economic stabilization process, which had an impact on the productive firms located mainly at the economic clusters, which attracted workers from other regions and affected the regional gender distribution and the unemployment rates. The high unemployment rates and the growth of the informal sector have intensified, along with the debates about the institutions that prevail in the labor markets, which can be one of the causes of the increase in negative trends (Kon, 2007).

The attraction forces of Brazilian metropolitan spaces are also diverse, according to the specific production structure of each cluster, as seen in Figure 3, which presents the gender regional distribution of workers among each selected metropolitan region, for the most recent period from 2002 to 2007.

It can be seen that, the annual participation rate differences between genders in each region, in the entire period, were very small, but in each year and in each specific region, there is a specific predominance of men or higher concentration of women. The highest worker concentration is seen in the Metropolitan Region of Sao Paulo, where the male and female concentrations in 2002 were, respectively, nearly 42% and 41%, remaining almost the same until 2007, when there was a rise of about 1%. The Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region had a great worker concentration that, in 2002, represented about 26% of the two genders, lowering to 25% of men and less than 24% of women, by the end of the period.

FIGURE 3

## Brazilian metropolitan regions (MR\*) workers distribution by gender



Source: IBGE/PME.

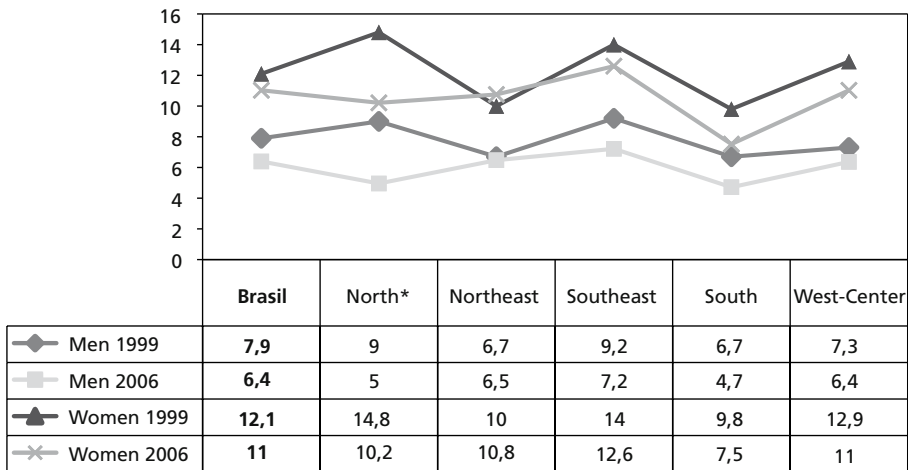
Elaborated by the author.

M = men; W = Women.  $\sum_r MR_i = 100\%$ ,  $i = \text{gender}$ ;  $r = \text{region}$ .

The third metropolitan region in terms of concentration level of workers was Belo Horizonte, where the women's representation was slightly higher in the entire period, about 11% and 10% respectively in 2002, and over 11.4% and less than 11% in this order. The concentration in Porto Alegre was alternated between male or female predominance, showing participation from 8.3% to 8.7% of men and 8.6% to 9.1% of women. The participation of Recife and Salvador regions are similar; however, whereas in the first space, both genders concentrate no more than 6% to 6.8% in the period, in the second space, women are more representative, participating with 7.2% to 7.7% and men from 6.5% to 6.9%.

In regard to regional unemployment rates, gender distribution is lower in 1999 and 2006 among men in relation to women, for all the regions (Figures 4, 5 and 6). However, the two genders show a decreasing unemployment level between the two periods, (except for the Northeast regions). This was due to the impacts of world commerce globalization upon Brazilian exports increase. The greatest levels of unemployment are observed in the country's main economic cluster region, represented by the Southeast and also in the industrial cluster of the North. The smallest levels were show in the Northeast, where the informal market is more extensive and the male and female rates are almost the same in the two periods. It has to be stressed that in the North region, the very high difference in the unemployment rates between the two periods results from the methodological change in the research (2002), because it did not include the region's rural zone in 1999.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Regional unemployment rate by gender**



Source: IBGE-PNADs 1999 and 2006.  
Elaborated by the author.  
\* Urban North in 1999.

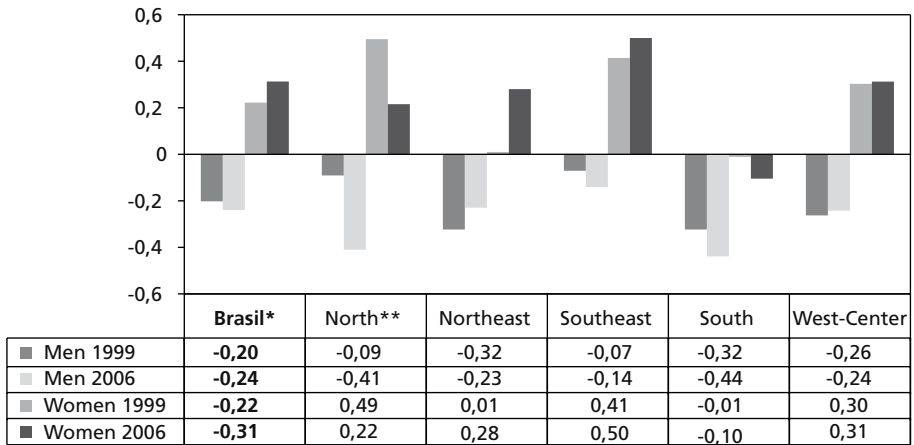
The regional unemployment rate differences (*RUD*) by gender were estimated as

$$RUD = [(UR_{ij} / UR_{iB}) - 1], \text{ where}$$

*UR* = unemployment rate,  $UR_{ij} = (UI_{ij} / UI_{iB}) \times 100$ ; *UI* = Unemployment Index; *i* = gender, *j* = region and *B* = Brazil. \*\* Total Brazil average (M+W) = 0.

Figure 5 show the regional worker unemployment differentials in relation to the Brazilian overall average rate, where gender differences are clearer. The male workers have always shown negative differences in relation to the country's average in all the regions, whereas the female workers showed positive differences, except for the South. These female differentials are the highest in the most dynamic regions of Southeast and Urban North (in this region only in 1999), but in the South region, the female unemployment rates, which were negative, show no significant divergence to the national average in the two periods.

FIGURE 5  
Regional unemployment rate differences (RUD) according to gender



Source: IBGE-PNADs 1999 and 2006.

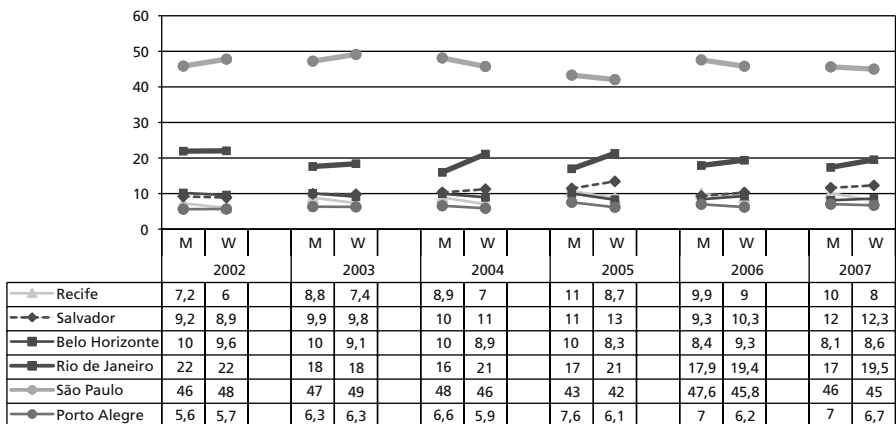
Elaborated by the author.

\* Total Brazil average (M+W) = 0.

\*\* Urban North in 1999.

Figure 6 presents the regional unemployed workers distribution according to gender in each selected metropolitan region for the most recent period since 2002 to 2007. It can be observed that, among the unemployed, the hierarchic distribution among the regions, as well as the small differences between genders, are similar to those shown in Figure 3 for total workers, maintaining the same regional profile as that of the country's Great Regions.

FIGURE 6  
Brazilian metropolitan (MR\*) unemployment distribution by gender



Source: IBGE/PME.

Elaborated by the author.

M = men; W = Women.  $\sum_r MRI = 100\%$ , i = gender; r = region.

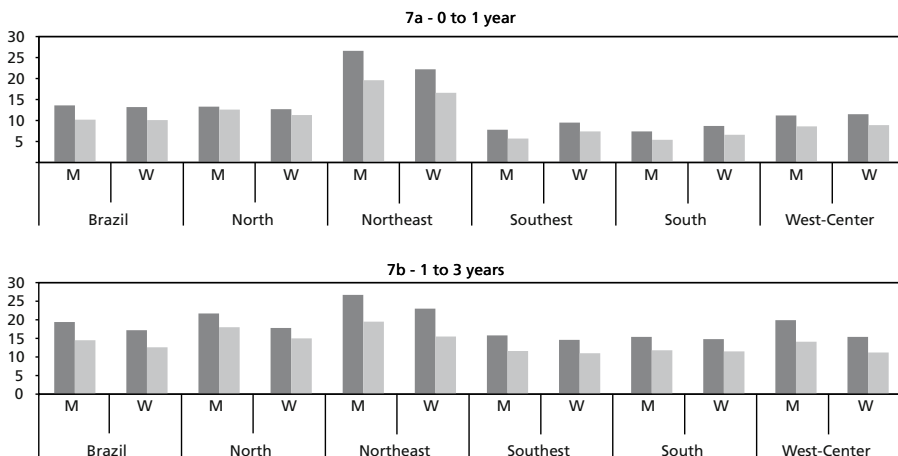


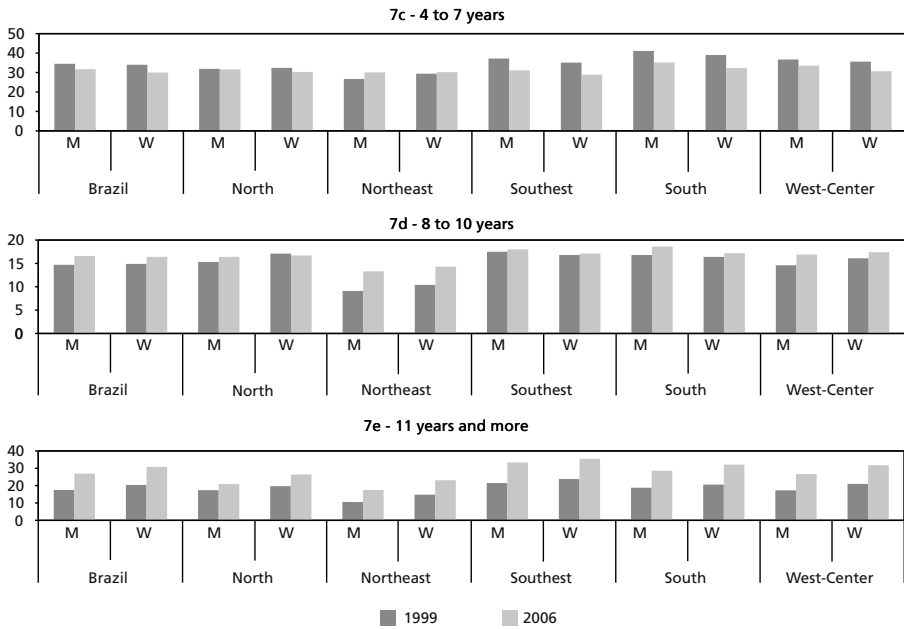
In São Paulo, the participation of the unemployed had been higher, and between 2002 and 2003, women showed higher percentages, the opposite occurring in the other years of the period. In Rio de Janeiro only, the concentrations in 2002 reached about 22% for the unemployed of both genders, but did not show any significant decrease in the rest of the period. The highest differences among the participations for the employed and the unemployed (Figure 3 and 6) was seen in Porto Alegre in both genders, where the unemployed totaled about 5.6% in the first year, whereas men's participation increased from 6.3% to 7% and women's from 5.7% to 6.7% in the following years. In the Salvador and Belo Horizonte metropolitan spaces, the unemployed presented the same representation as the employed, but with concentrations about 1% higher in the entire period. On the other hand, in Recife, the concentration of the unemployed from 2003 to 2007 rose from 2% to 3% in both genders.

#### 4.4 Qualification level: years in school

As regards the qualification conditions between genders, severe gaps are noticed between the North-Northeast and the South-Southeast regions caused by differences in school enrollment and adult illiteracy, but also in access to health, safe water and sanitation services, which reflect intensely on the cultural environment and on the ability to seek modernization. These gaps result in diversified possibilities of labor to

FIGURE 7  
**Brazilian labor force regional gender distribution according to years in school (%)**





Source: IBGE/PNADS, 1999 and 2006.  
 Elaborated by the author.  
 M = Men; W = Women

**FIGURE 8**  
**Brazilian regional labor force distribution by gender\* according to years in school (%)**

Years in school	Period	Brazil		North		Northeast		Southeast		South		West-Center	
		M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
0 to 1 year	1999	13.6	13.2	13.3	12.7	26.6	22.2	7.8	9.5	7.4	8.7	11.2	11.5
	2006	10.2	10.1	12.6	11.3	19.6	16.6	5.7	7.4	5.4	6.6	8.6	8.9
1to 3 years	1999	19.4	17.2	21.7	17.8	26.7	23	15.8	14.6	15.4	14.8	19.9	15.4
	2006	14.5	12.6	18.0	15.0	19.5	15.5	11.6	11.0	11.8	11.5	14.1	11.2
4 to 7 years	1999	34.5	34	31.9	32.4	26.7	29.4	37.2	35.1	41.1	39	36.7	35.6
	2006	31.7	30.0	31.6	30.3	30.1	30.2	31.1	28.9	35.2	32.3	33.5	30.7
8 to 10 years	1999	14.7	14.9	15.3	17.1	9.1	10.4	17.5	16.8	16.8	16.4	14.6	16.1
	2006	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	13.3	14.3	18.0	17.1	18.6	17.2	16.9	17.4
11years	1999	17.5	20.4	17.4	19.7	10.6	14.8	21.5	23.8	18.8	20.6	17.3	21.0
	2006	26.9	30.8	20.9	26.4	17.5	23.1	33.4	35.5	28.6	32.1	26.7	31.8
Or more	1999	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.7	13.3	14.3	18.0	17.1	18.6	17.2	16.9	17.4
	2006	26.9	30.8	20.9	26.4	17.5	23.1	33.4	35.5	28.6	32.1	26.7	31.8

Source: IBGE/PNADS, 1999 and 2006.  
 Elaborated by the author.  
 \* M = Men; W = Women

adapt to the technological progress and an organizational modernization that is brought about in enterprises, in order to compete in the world market. In this sense, the most advanced regions reveal a more intense and faster growth in the more industrialized and modern sectors, strongly impacting regional worker productivity.

The impact of Brazilian human capital investment (which is represented by the “years in school” indicator) on these differences, in regard to activity and unemployment rates, can be evaluated through the information in Figures 7 and 8 that show the regional distribution of the economically active population according to gender.

The greatest concentrations of workers from the two genders, in all regions, are found at the 4 to 7 years of school level (7c), which was about 34% in 1999 and 30% in 2006, with some higher rates for men. At this level, the highest concentrations were in the Southeast and the South regions; however, in all the regions, participation was practically the same between the genders.

It can be seen that at the level of up to 3 years of studies (7a and 7b), the concentration of male workers, for both periods, is slightly higher in the North and Northeast regions, and is more intense in the second region. In the south and Southeast regions, women are more representative among the workers who have up to 1 year of study (7a). This class of earnings concentrates a higher domestic female work situations, which in most of the cases, has a craftsmanship character, low qualification and it lower remuneration. At these levels, it is observed that the concentration diminished from 1999 to 2006, in all regions and in both genders, in contrast to an increase in the concentration in the levels for 8 years of study and over (7d and 7e).

This shows that, overall, the average level of years in school has been increasing, albeit at a very slowly speed, with a higher intensity in the Southeast and the South, where the level for women has increased at a slightly higher rate. The smallest concentrations of workers at higher school levels and the smallest increases in concentration rates between the two periods are seen in the Northeast. Among the workers with the highest level (7e), the concentration of women is higher in all regions, which shows once again that the schooling level is not the cause for female disadvantages in the work market, at a regional level either.

So, the Brazilian human capital endowment confirm only in part the theoretical premises which stress that higher qualifications are responsible for better (higher) women activity rates and unemployment rates (lower). In some regions and in some school levels, women’s qualification are higher and grow faster, however not always it is found the similar correspondence in activity or unemployment rates.

#### **4.5 Average real earnings**

The earnings distribution of the Brazilian working population has recently undergone some changes that are the result, on one hand, of the new requirements demanded for labor hiring, through the present production and

organizational processes. On the other hand, the economic conjuncture policies aiming at stabilization limit the opportunities for new jobs in the formal labor market. The impact of these changes was shown in the composition of average earnings, inside and outside the firms. It is evident that these changes were accompanied by differentiated worker remunerations standards, which reconcile several determinants. Among these, there is the need for specific qualifications to take on new occupations or labor functions, the restriction in the offer of working positions by firms, and the increase in the labor force offer at several different levels of qualification.

Nevertheless in Brazil, the distribution of worker earnings has also undergone considerable influences in the informal or self-employed labor market sector, which has increased steadily as of the nineties. On the other hand, it is also due to the conjuncture public policies directed at economic stabilization, which have limited the opportunities for opening new positions of formalized jobs.

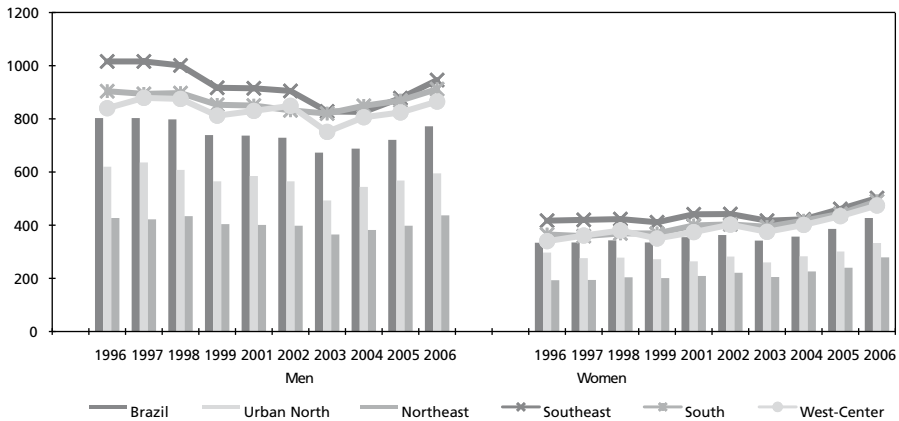
It is clear that these changes were accompanied by different patterns of worker remunerations, which try to reconcile several determinants, such as the need for specific qualifications for some new occupations, the conjuncture restrictions in offers for work positions and the increase in labor offers with different degrees of qualification, as already mentioned. On the other hand, the pace of economic modernization, as well as that of the introduction of new functions and occupations in companies or in autonomous work, is often upset by the specific conditions of labor force qualification, not always prepared to take over more flexible terms of operationalization or more sophisticated tasks, as already pointed out.

Based on these observations, the question that arose is if the processes of production modernization and economic stabilization that occurred in Brazil, at a quicker pace in the nineties, had the redistribution of labor remunerations as a liquid effect. This proved favorable to larger concentration or dispersion indexes. Then, it questioned the shape of this redistribution, manifested inside firms and also for all workers, in several Brazilian regions, which show considerably different socioeconomic situations.

Figures 9 to 14 show the regional differences of real average earnings between the genders, which show that higher female disadvantages were found in all regions, just as in the country as a whole. These remuneration differences surpass those found in the activity rates, level of unemployment and school level. First, Figure 9 portrays the average incomes gained by the two genders for a period from 1996 to 2006, regionalized from a Great Regions approach. It is observed that the regional hierarchy of earnings remained unchanged in the period for both genders. The Southeast shows the best situation, followed by the South, the West-Center, and the Urban North, whereas the Northeast shows the lowest level.

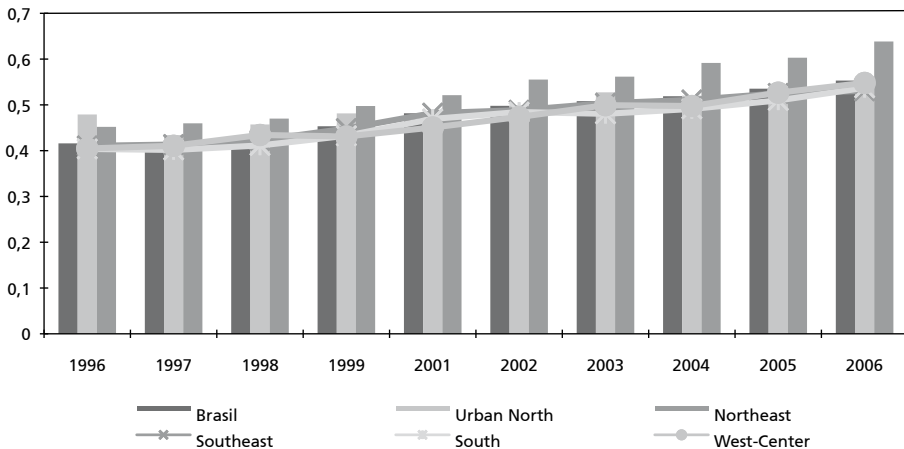
A decrease in the average regional remunerations was observed for men, from 1998 to 2003, followed by a gradual rise up until 2006. The situation among women remained practically unchanged from 1996 to 2002, with a slight decrease in 2003 and a gradual rise until 2006. This behavior was seen in almost all regions, except in the Northeast, where a gradual rise of women’s incomes was observed since the beginning of the period.

**FIGURE 9**  
**Brazilian regional average earnings according to gender**



Source: IBGE-PNADs.  
Elaborated by the author.

**FIGURE 10**  
**Brazilian regional gender earnings index (RGEI)**



Source: IBGE-PNADs.  
Elaborated by the author.

The earnings differences between the genders are better explained by the Regional Gender Earnings Index (*RGEI*) that is given by the relation between women average earnings and men average earnings. As it is seen in Figure *RGEI* were very considerable in all the regions for the whole period, but have gradually diminished. In the beginning of the period, women earned about 40% of the male gains, and this rate was about 53% to 56% in almost all the regions in the last year. This reduction was particularly more intense in the Northeast, showing a ratio of 64% of gains for women in relation to men. Nevertheless, on the other hand, the rates for this region are less unfavorable, due to the fact that average earnings are much lower in comparison to other regions.

It was observed that in regard to real average gains of all Brazilian workers,<sup>1</sup> men showed a differential of 40% and 30% above this average, respectively in 1999 and 2006, whereas the differences in women's earnings had been negative by about 37% and 28% in the two periods. However from the regional point of view, there are significant disparities, because in the Southeast, South and West-Center regions, men gained respectively about 73%, 61% and 53% above the Brazilian average in 1999, showing a trend in 2006 to convergence toward the average. The Southeast region earnings converged by about 16% and the other two regions by over 10%. On the other hand, the Northeast showed about 25% negative differentials for men (Figures 11 and 12).

The real average earnings differences (*RGD* and *RDQ*) are calculated by :

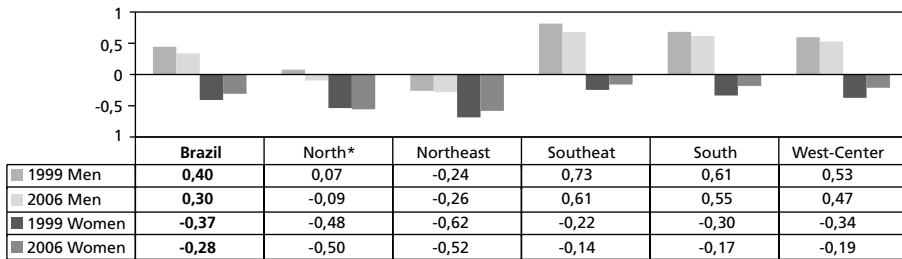
$$RGD = (RDQ - 1) \text{ and } RDQ = (E_{ij} / E_{iB}),$$

where  $RDQ = (E_{ij} / E_{iB})$ ;  $E$  = earnings;  $i$  = gender;  $j$  = region;  $B$  = Brazil.

Among women, the differences in relation to the total Brazilian average earnings had been always negative in all the regions and these differentials had diminished in 2006. As for the three previously mentioned regions, where the male disparities were higher, the female differences were smaller, about 22% to 34% in 1999 and 14% to 19% in 2006. It is also in the Northeast that women show the highest negative divergences in earnings, about 60% and 50% respectively in the two periods. Figure 12 and 13 present these differences for a more complete series of years and Figure 13 shows the Regional Differentiation Quotients (*RDQ*). The data for both figures was based on the Brazilian average real labor earnings, and they show the same previously described profile for this entire longer period.

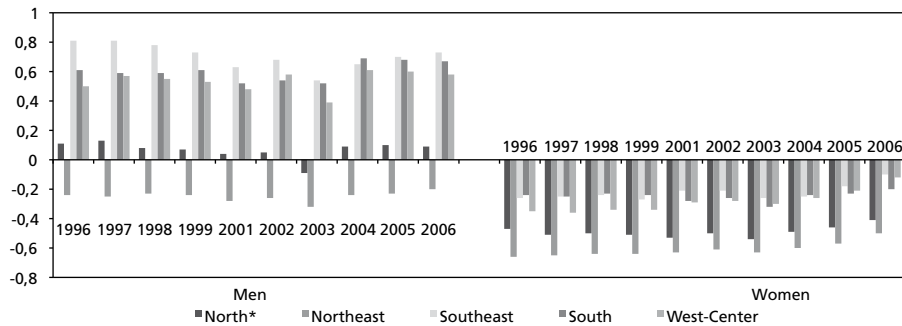
1. The real average gains of the whole Brazilian workers in 2006 "Reais" were R\$ 359 and R\$ 587 respectively in 1999 and 2006, and the gender ones were R\$502 and R\$ 764 for men and R\$ 227 and R\$ 423 for women in these two periods.

**FIGURE 11**  
**Brazilian regional gender average earnings differences (RGD)**



Source: IBGE-PNADs, 1999 and 2006.  
Elaborated by the author.  
\* Urban North in 1999.

**FIGURE 12**  
**Brazilian regional gender average earnings quotients (RDQ)**



Source: IBGE-PNADs 1996 to 2006.  
Elaborated by the author.  
\* Urban North, from 1996 to 2002.

**FIGURE 13**  
**Average earnings Regional Differential Quotient (RDQ), according to Brazilian average, by gender - 1999-2006**

	Brazil*		Urban North**		Northeast		Southeast		South		West-Center	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
1996	1.43	0.60	1.11	0.53	0.76	0.34	1.81	0.74	1.61	0.65	1.50	0.61
1997	1.43	0.60	1.13	0.49	0.75	0.35	1.81	0.75	1.59	0.64	1.57	0.64
1998	1.42	0.61	1.08	0.50	0.77	0.36	1.78	0.76	1.59	0.66	1.55	0.68
1999	1.39	0.60	1.07	0.49	0.76	0.36	1.73	0.73	1.61	0.66	1.53	0.63
2001	1.32	0.63	1.04	0.47	0.72	0.37	1.63	0.79	1.52	0.71	1.48	0.67
2002	1.35	0.65	1.05	0.50	0.74	0.39	1.68	0.79	1.54	0.72	1.58	0.72
2003	1.25	0.61	0.91	0.46	0.68	0.37	1.54	0.74	1.52	0.70	1.39	0.67
2004	1.37	0.64	1.09	0.51	0.76	0.40	1.65	0.75	1.69	0.74	1.61	0.72
2005	1.40	0.69	1.10	0.54	0.77	0.43	1.70	0.82	1.68	0.79	1.60	0.78
2006	1.41	0.76	1.09	0.59	0.80	0.50	1.73	0.90	1.67	0.88	1.58	0.85

Source: IBGE-PNADs.  
Elaborated by the author.  
\*Brazilian global earnings average (M+W) = 1.  
\*\*Urban North in 1999.

FIGURE 14

**Average earnings Regional Differential Quotient (RDQ) according to gender average 1999-2006**

	Brazil*		Urban North**		Northeast		Southeast		South		West-Center	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
1996	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.77	0.89	0.53	0.58	1.27	1.25	1.13	1.09	1.05	1.02
1997	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.79	0.82	0.53	0.58	1.27	1.25	1.11	1.07	1.09	1.08
1998	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.76	0.81	0.54	0.59	1.25	1.23	1.12	1.08	1.10	1.11
1999	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.76	0.81	0.55	0.60	1.24	1.23	1.15	1.10	1.10	1.04
2001	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.79	0.74	0.54	0.59	1.24	1.24	1.15	1.12	1.13	1.05
2002	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.78	0.78	0.55	0.61	1.24	1.22	1.14	1.11	1.16	1.11
2003	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.73	0.76	0.54	0.60	1.23	1.22	1.22	1.15	1.12	1.10
2004	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.79	0.79	0.56	0.63	1.20	1.18	1.23	1.17	1.17	1.12
2005	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.79	0.78	0.55	0.62	1.22	1.19	1.21	1.15	1.14	1.12
2006	<b>1.00</b>	<b>1.00</b>	0.77	0.78	0.57	0.65	1.23	1.18	1.18	1.15	1.12	1.11

Source: IBGE-PNADs.

Elaborated by the author.

\* Brazilian gender average = 1.

\*\* Urban North in 1999.

Figure 14 presents the Regional Differentiation Quotients based on the Brazilian average earnings for each gender in each year. It can be seen that this approach confirms the highest advantages for the Southeastern region, where men also showed positive differences of about 20% to 27% above the total gender average in each year. As for women, positive quotients were also shown, but there was a gradual loss in the period, from 25% for 18% above the gender average. As in the previous analyses, this approach showed that the Northeast had the worst earnings and that workers had gained about 43% to 47%, women about 40% to 42% less, in relation their respective gender, less than the country's in relation to men.

The greatest disadvantages, in this period, for the workers of both genders were seen in the Urban North space. They earned from 21% to 27% less than the average for men and 11% to 26% for women. The South and West-Center regions are ranked at an intermediate earnings level and also show positive quotients, although lower than those for the Southeast, in relation to each gender average.

In short, the regional analysis of labor market condition differences between genders shows that the disadvantageous situation of women exists in all the regions and periods. However, among the regions, the disparities are even greater, with more sizable advantages in the Southeast, South and West-Center respectively, and disadvantages in the Northeast.



Another explanation about earnings and other condition differences among individuals derive from the theories that analyze the labor market segmentation internally to the firms. The distinct branches of these theories try to explain the existing differences in the kinds of jobs inside companies, starting from diverse recruitment criteria selection and training on one side, and on the other, from several forms of work and career promotion linked to specific salary levels (Gordon, Reich & Edwards, 1973; Doeringer and Worsen, 1971; Victorisz & Harrison, 1973). A former investigation on Brazilian occupational segmentation confirm these theoretical ideas, from the different gender earnings results among workers inside and outside the firms, and also among production and beaurocratic occupations, at the so called Primary and Secondary markets inside the firms (Kon, 1995).

## **5 PUBLIC POLICY REQUISITES FOR EQUALITY IN BRAZIL**

Although Brazilian women, in recent decades, have increased their participation in the labor market, as has already been occurring historically in more developed countries, the country's economic difficulties witnessed in the 1980's and the 1990's, had a particular effect on the job offer and on female occupation. The increase in the female labor market participation, in moments of economic crisis, is mostly explained by the need to supplement family income, more than it is a historical trend for social and economic modernization.

In what refers to gender disparities, the Brazilian historical information shows that female unemployment rates are higher than those for male, as we could see from the former section, and did not become so much better after the introduction of special public policies beginning in the 1990's. Segregation, discrimination and informality patterns can be observed with regard to Brazilian labor market gender relations, which can be influenced, on one hand, by a series of cultural questions, and, on the other hand, by the lack of specific public policies, designed to improve the conditions for absorbing women through training programs or anti-discriminatory policies. The public policies directed at reducing disparities and integrating women more effectively in the labor market have been more intensively discussed in the country since the 1990's, and gender institutional elements are gradually occupying government debates, albeit still in an incipient form (Kon, 2007).

This is due in part because in Brazil, the traditional surpassed vision still greatly predominates, ascribing to men the role of exclusive family supplier and to women the role of house care and labor force creation and maintenance, and also secondary labor force. However, recently women participation in labor market is increasing, as already seen, not because the traditional thought has been already overcome, but much more intensively due to necessity to complement familiar income. In fact,

some data show that women are gradually but increasingly assuming the role of family head, even when the family is composed by a couple and relation between poverty and it is directly related to the dimension of the country's poverty, and to the difficulties in increasing economic development (Kon, 2007: 95).

It was seen that in the beginning of the 1990's, that women represented around 25% of the family heads, while in 2005 they reach 37%. In what refers to the participation on labor market, around 80% of the family head men were working, while only 50% of the women had some economic occupation (Kon, 2007: p.96) So, as the family head condition of women had grow, their unemployment rates had also increase, what had unfavorably blocked further improvement in the country's poverty decrease policies, also due to the high earnings disparities, as we could see in the former section.

On the other hand, Brazilian protection mechanisms that had been legally instituted (as in the case of maternity protection in the labor market and children's care by establishing day-care centers in companies), to a large extent, however, are showing negative impacts on women's absorption in the labor market, due to the prospect of higher costs to employers. The existing institutional instruments do not take in account the macro-, meso- and microeconomic integration among government spheres, that is, the transversal relationship of gender dimensions in the labor policies of several economic areas and sectors. As pointed out by the ILO (2006), a decisive element that leads to this transversal relationship in gender dimensions is to recognize women as basic objects of these policies.

At a macroeconomic level, these instruments refer to public policies aiming to impact the more aggregated levels of product generation, employment increase and prices equilibrium, in what refers to the whole country's economic system. The so called mesoeconomic instruments deal with institutions which articulate the relations among social and economic sectors, families and the markets, in order to coordinate social and economic rules and laws that supervise their behavior and performance. Examples of this kind of institutions are the labor legislation and the labor control organizations, as well as workers and enterprises unions, among others. On the other hand the microeconomic level deals with firms and workers relations, as well as with instruments of human capital creation and firm's capacities increase.

From this point of view, the public policies instruments which are neutral in what refers to gender dimension, show a great trend to cause disadvantages to women labor force, as it is seen in former investigations, due to discrimination factors already mentioned. As stressed by ILO, a decisive element that takes to this transversal relationship on the gender dimensions is to recognize women as basic objects of these policies.

As pointed out by Bandeira (2005), poverty weakens female citizenship and hinders the possibilities of women to assume effective labor actions and to absorb institutional policies and legal interferences, in order to modify their condition. In addition, it also diminishes the possibilities of breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty. In Brazil, as in other Third World countries, the increase in women's productive capacity would be a relevant factor to break this cycle, considering the fact that, according to some researches, when women present family gains, the effect on the family's well-being is very wide-ranging, because a considerable ratio of the earnings is invested in food, education and children's health expenses. In an environment of collective bargaining discussions, which begin to be more accepted, the specific problems of female workers still remain out of focus. It has also been that, on the whole, women practically do not participate in the negotiation process. In addition, the administrative and legal mechanisms of implementation supervision, as refers to women protection instruments in the labor market, are insufficient, and when they do exist, they are inefficient.

As stressed by some specialists in the field, in order for policies and programs to be able to promote equal opportunities, the awareness of the difficulties involved must be incorporated in its formularization and execution process transversally, across all planning phases, in such a way that the programs are not strange to gender issues and that they consider the specific characteristics and conditions that women live in the labor market.

The articulation among several institutions, such as ministries, public and private departments and others, requires the creation of an organizational infrastructure to render the public policies measures effective, through constant monitoring, evaluating and improving action programs. Moreover, the difficulty in finding a common understanding and language to facilitate micro-, meso- and macroeconomic integration is one of the main hurdles that are even greater than the insufficiency endowment of financial funds.

a) policies directed at influencing wages, the most frequently adopted policies of which aim at raising wages in sectors where the female participation predominates, in order to be compared with other sectors where the male is predominant, and where work values are comparable; b) policies that try to modify the employer's behavior in regard to hiring and promotion procedures; c) policies more directed at workers than at employers which aim at educational training and other programs; d) programs providing subsidies for childcare, affecting the familial decision of the woman to enter into the labor force; e) policies that specifically aim at the integration between genders as the desired result.

In this sense, some basic lines of government action are recommended to develop a strategy in the field of gender employment, besides general economic development policies. Some lines of action are directed to promote entrepreneurship, addressed to specific sectors (mesoeconomics). These policies aiming equal opportunities, by tackling gender gaps, must allow the reconciliation of work and family life for both genders.

Others policies designed to influence the pattern of employer hiring and promotion can be laid down by legal restrictions, which determine a minimum obligatory rate of hiring a certain gender (generally female), in the same way that policies for discrimination of race other minorities are laid down. In some sectors, a vacancy can occur in some ranks, when it is not possible to find a satisfactory number of qualified people offered to fill them. The results, therefore, depend on the relative offer of workers of each gender for these specific ranks.

The educational and training policies aim at providing the target labor force (to a great extent female) with the means to assume the types of ranks offered. This fact does not necessarily mean the guarantee of labor attainment, in view of other requirements demanded by employers for hiring and promoting. Other policy measures could include the granting of subsidies or exemptions to employers who present proven efforts to integrate women and seek wage equality.

Some policies that influence the decision of women regarding the intensity of their participation in the labor force and that, therefore, affect segregation, as already seen, are related to the availability of childcare conditions, either through day-care centers in the workplace, or to the availability of this kind of cheap and good quality service outside the firms. Maternity licenses and flexible working hours are also influential policies, even though the resulting changes in the degree of segregation have not proved significant with these measures, since the trend is for women to target mainly the predominantly female ranks of work, thus increasing segregation.

Another important issue, pointed out by the former data, is related to the fact that although the educational levels between genders are equivalent and many times are higher for women, in general, this condition did not improve the female situation of job disadvantage, and, in informal work, and the segmentation is more pronounced in occupations reserved for women, where the wage levels are lower. In Brazil, there exist no public “vocational” programs aiming at allowing women to diversify their occupational options in jobs where they have traditionally been little represented. The differences in gender remuneration remain high even for “jobs of equal value,” and are even greater during moments of economic stabilization crises.

Therefore, if the gender inequalities in the country had acted as obstacles for balanced development, as pointed out by Jasmine (1999), the integration of the gender dimension into the public policies would have to occur in the sense of formulating new articulations between the formal and informal spaces of work and leisure, between the productive and reproductive economy, and also between the domestic and the public spheres.

Important challenges must be established for strategic policies that lead to economic development, through the promotion of the equality between genders. So, the institutional, social and economic measures and also global policies must assume specific gender complement devices for the creation of local instruments and measures, which are differentiated and specific to the particular conditions of the country's each region and to the local characteristics of the population and labor force, including the cultural, social and economic aspects.

In short, it should be observed that the effective participation of women in equal conditions in the country's labor market does not depend exclusively on the recognition of the need of a positive female labor force incorporation, which is expressed in official documents, but also depends on the change of social standards and on the population's mentality, in the sense of demanding the real implementation of support instruments.

Moreover, as Beneria recommends, (1995: p. 51) the micro-, meso- and macroeconomic policies, are not neutral in regard to gender and can have a bias, requiring measured compensatory. Paraphrasing the World Bank, the equal opportunities between genders in the labor market is a central subject of development, and more than this, it is exactly the objective in itself.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

The Brazilian labor market regional distribution analysis according to gender shows considerable disparities in work opportunities, which lead to disadvantages to women and which compromise the country's future economic growth, making it less sustainable. On one hand, the women's labor force is not used to the extent of its broad possibilities to create the necessary social capital to apply dynamics to economic development, which affects the ability of the countries to attain more significant results. On the other hand, a greater number of women are increasing their role as family heads and the lack of favorable labor opportunities hinders the reduction of poverty levels. In a regional approach, these disadvantages are much more pronounced, due to the many social, cultural and economic specificities of each Brazilian space requiring different regional public policies.

It is necessary to point out that the inequalities between genders in the Brazilian labor market renders difficult the development as a whole, therefore despite these inequalities have more direct negative impacts on feminine population. The implied total costs are reflected in the country's production, consumption and investments as a whole, what rises the costs for population well-being, diminishing the capacity of efficient management that would conduct to poverty reduction and consequently to sustainable growth.

In regard to gender, as already known, a constant trend to increase the rates of women's participation in the labor market has been observed. However, in a way different from what occurs in more advanced countries, regarding Brazil, this increase is due only partly to cultural, demographic and economic changes directed at social modernization and economic development, because women's participation in the labor market, even in periods of socioeconomic crises, has been increasing as a consequence of the need to supplement (or as the only source of) family remuneration.

In any case, the diverse conditions between the genders, in regard to family and professional responsibilities, rigid work schedules, and stricter demands of skills for men, among others, show that women's work doesn't depend only on market demand, but also on a series of other interconnected factors. These factors frequently lead to the allocation of workers in informal activities that allow easier articulation, but that are unstable in character and have lower remuneration. More effective public policies aiming to a larger engagement of the feminine population in labor force are not present, or many times are badly enunciated and cause contrary effects, discouraging enterprises to hire women, because they result in a larger cost/benefit relation.

Conjuncture situations also had repercussions on different results and intensities in several different socioeconomic realities. Macro-, meso- and microeconomic policies aiming at economic stabilization, or encouraging the development of specific sectors, had different effects between the genders in each region, according to the possibility for a structural and conjuncture response to these incentives. More effective public policies aiming at the greater engagement of the female population in a more protected labor force were not significantly present, or many were badly stated and caused contrary effects, discouraging the enterprises from hire women, because they entail a larger cost/benefit ratio (Kon, 2007).

For Brazil as for other developing countries, some basic lines of government action are recommended to develop a strategy in the field of gender employment, besides general economic development policies. The first line of action is directed at some policies to promote entrepreneurship, addressing specific sectors that create new jobs, and promote less substitution of labor by capital, stressing the need to increase women's participation. Second, the improvement of "employability" through training and improvement of human capital policies, as well as through measures favoring the young and self-employment, should not to be indifferent to gender inequalities. Next, the adaptation of employment opportunities according to new forms of hiring, the reorganization of working time, layoff measures directed at decreasing women's disadvantages, are all important. Finally, policies must be adopted to foster equal opportunities, by tackling gender gaps, and promoting the reconciliation of work and family life.

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