Civil society organisations and gender equality: mainstreaming and empowerment in the public policies towards civil society[1]

Mónica Lopes, Centre for Social Studies, Coimbra University (CES-UC), Portugal (presenter)
Virginia Ferreira, Faculty of Economics of the University of Coimbra (FEUC); CES-UC
Silvia Ferreira, FEUC; CES-UC; Lancaster University
Lina Coelho, FEUC; CES-UC
Email: monica@ces.uc.pt

Introduction

The study on the relationships between civil society organisations and gender equality has been object of little attention when compared with other studies on gender equality such as employment, democracy and welfare. The existing research relating gender and civil society tend to focus on issues of leadership and militancy (Garain and Garain, 2004; O'Neill, 1994), advocacy (Rétif, 2006) and gender equality in the labour force (Odendahl, 1994; Guérin, 2003). However, as it has been recognised that, as gender equality emerges as a priority policy area in state policies and at the level of the European Union, a more multifaceted approach is necessary to account for the relationships that are established between the state and civil (Lange and Trukeschitz, 2005).

In this presentation we propose a framework for the analysis of the role of civil society and third sector organisations in gender equality that articulates two analytical and empirical axes. On one hand, mainstreaming, related to the practices regarding equality between women and men both inside and outside organisations, including governance structures, the labour force and the volunteers, as well as activities and projects towards promoting gender equality in the wider community (Conselho da Europa, 1999; Ferreira, 2000). On the other hand, empowerment, related to the study of organisational capacity in terms of mission, participation, management, accountability, strategic capacity as well as embededness in the community and inter-organisational networks (Edwards and Fowler, 2002). The articulations of these two axes brings issues around effectiveness and sustainability both in civil society organisations and in gender equality and provide a richer framework, both for research and policy.

The framework presented here was the basis of a research project carried out by the authors in Portugal focusing a governmental grant aiming at enhancing the role of civil society and third sector organisations in promoting gender equality. Interestingly, this grant was accessible to both women's organisations and other types of third sector organisations such as, for instance, those involved in services delivery. We present the findings regarding the existing situation in terms of gender equality in civil society and third sector organisations in Portugal and regarding the impact of the policy in shaping civil society activities and promoting sustainable gender equality.

1. Equality governance and the role of NGOs in European policy

The European Union's powers, that started as essentially economic, were broadened with the Treaty of Amsterdam. Currently the regulation on equal opportunities is mainly under the EU scope. Given that the EU has become more integrated and its governance capacity increased, the importance of the European policies on gender equality has also increased.

The Treaty of Amsterdam (1977) is a milestone in the policies towards gender equality. It was in this treaty that the European Employment Strategy (EES) was shaped. This strategy is mainly about promoting the coordination of the national employment policies (art. 126 of the Treaty) around four pillars of priority actions with specific goals.

The Treaty defines the framework for an annual process of multilateral supervision that is shaped in 3 documents: the Employment Guidelines (from an EU proposal); the annual reports on the guidelines' implementation; and the Joint Employment Report, presented annually to the European Council (art. 128). Therefore, each country has to produce, monitor and present a National Action Plan for Employment.

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Amongst the main policy principles expressed is the promotion of a European Employment Pact, which involves not only the national governments, but also social and local partners, NGOs and all those that might have something at stake in this area.

The Lisbon Strategy (2000) brought new inputs to the EES, namely by the adoption of the combination of full-employment, jobs and economic and social improvement goals.

Another goal adopted by the Lisbon Strategy was the elimination of poverty and social exclusion by 2010, and as a result a common Social Inclusion Strategy was implemented, with the same open method of coordination as the Employment Strategy, but with the difference that the Member States (MS) participation is voluntary and not compulsory. All the MS were involved in this process and the first Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion were presented in 2001. The Portuguese action plan included explicitly the promotion of equality between women and men in its strategically measures, namely stating its role to enhancing democracy, citizenship and individual freedom and through mainstreaming of gender equality in the activities promoting social inclusion.

The ongoing public policies towards equal opportunities between women and men are also happening in the context of the work being done by other bodies such as the United Nations (UN). The four UN World Conferences on Women, especially the fourth, in Beijing (1995), and the NGOs parallel forums are important milestones with influence in the design of policies and inniatives towards equality both in the EU and at national level. The Beijing Platform for Action in its number 26 says that:

> The growing strength of the non-governmental sector, particularly women's organizations and feminist groups, has become a driving force for change. Non-governmental organizations have played an important advocacy role in advancing legislation or mechanisms to ensure the promotion of women. They have also become catalysts for new approaches to development. Many Governments have increasingly recognized the important role that non-governmental organisations play and the importance of working with them for progress. Yet, in some countries, Governments continue to restrict the ability of non-governmental organisations to operate freely. Women, through non-governmental organisations, have participated in and strongly influenced community, national, regional and global forums and international debates[2].

In this Platform can be found references to supporting women's NGOs, especially in the strategic objective G.1. – "Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making" –, in the action mentioned in 190 f):

> Support non-governmental organisations and research institutes that conduct studies on women's participation in and impact on decision- making and the decision-making environment.

or in 192 d):

> Encourage efforts by non-governmental organisations, trade unions and the private sector to achieve equality between women and men in their ranks, including equal participation in their decision-making bodies and in negotiations in all areas and at all levels.

Mainly due to the neoliberal strategy of privatising the public services and reducing the state intervention to a minimum, and to the greater interference of the supranational bodies, we are witnessing the destatization of the social policies and equality (Santos *in* Ferreira, 2000:36). As a consequence of the changes in the nature of the state, through rescaling and the shift from government to governance (Jessop, 2002), the third sector has been seen as a major protagonist in the state reestructuring, and particularly of the nationally bounded bureaucratically organised welfare or development state. Women's NGOs achieved the status of actors, often transnational. The action of the women's transnational networks has had a great thrust in economic, political and transnational relations matters (Ferreira, 2000:27).

The absence of women from decision-making centres transformed the NGOs in instruments of denounce, in representatives of the stakeholders and in advocates for a fairer society with parity. The civil society movements and organisations (be it at the local, national or international level) have a fundamental role advancing women's rights: influencing the decision-making at the national level, guaranteeing the development and implementation of equality policies and the states' compliance with the international agreements and identifying new priorities for the political agenda.

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[2] Beijing Plataform for Action in http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm.

The European Commission launched the *Roadmap for Equality 2006-2010*, where it proposes to keep these lines of intervention in equality policies, namely the establishment of partnerships with the organisations that advocate for women's rights and "gender equality". The Roadmap acknowledges the contribution of the social dialogue – i.e, the dialogue between the social partners - and the dialogue with the civil society in the progress made during the recent years towards equality between women and man. However, the European Commission also acknowledges that there is still a lot to be done and the need to increase the support to social dialogue through cooperating with the civil society organisations and the social partners in furthering gender equality. It is within this political project that a programme like the System of Technical and Financial Support to NGOs (SATF-ONG) makes sense. It was this public programme that constituted the basis for our research and of the exploration of an analytical framework which takes to the core the concepts of mainstreaming and empowerment aiming at accounting for the causal chains associated with the state policies towards gender equality via civil society and vice-versa.

Mainstreaming and empowerment as new governance

Since the last two decades that a real paradigm shift in the approach to the equality policies has been happening. The launch of positive actions on behalf of the fight against all forms of discrimination, even the indirect discrimination, is now common place. Those are temporary measures aimed at a specific group and intended to eliminate and prevent the discrimination or to compensate for the disadvantages. This shift means that the liberal principles in which the equality policies were first inspired have been questioned, and the acknowledgment that the formal equality, recognised to each person, might imply inequalities to certain groups. It is a pro-active intervention that incorporates the principles of power inequality between social groups and is intended to prevent discrimination, promoting the equality of outcomes and a non-discriminatory environment (Ferreira, 2000:16). Thus, it is acknowledged that discrimination happens independently of the individual behaviours and actions. The indirect discrimination is structural, systemic and makes way to the questioning of all the social practices and even to the questioning of the structure and institutions of the state. Therefore, the mainstreaming strategy is considered as the only one able to guarantee a high degree of effectiveness to the designed positive actions (*idem*: 17).

The adoption of the mainstreaming strategy corresponds to a new stage in the conception of the feminism by the western culture. It is a way of institutionalise feminism that might permeate all the instances of the organisation of the public life and to influence all the public strategies and policies (Silva, 2000:46). It is the systematic integration, in all the policies, of the situations, priorities and needs of men and women aiming at promoting the equality between them and to explicitly mobilise the set of policies and global actions for equality.

The strategy of women empowerment – considering empowerment as a process by which populations and women in particular, individually or collectively, become aware of how the power relations operate in their lives and gain self-confidence and capacity to challenge them – is clearly articulated with the mainstreaming strategy. The current popularity of the concept of empowerment reflects the transformation from a top-down paradigm of change to another more participatory, bottom-up, in which the populations have a voice in the development processes. This change has been translated in the increasing tendency for the development agencies to establish partnerships with civil society organisations, instead of with the state. As a result of this new framework, the governments from all over the world are under pressure to institutionalise the perspective of the gender equality in their policies and the international bodies are using the NGOs to reinforce that pressure (Ferreira, 2000:23-25).

2. Description of the study

The study that is the base for this presentation was simultaneously a diagnosis of the current situation and a prospective analysis regarding the NGOs role in promoting equality. Therefore, it included proposals regarding the relationship between the state and the NGOs in order to encourage the role of these organisations in promoting gender equality.

We focused a governmental programme, supported by the European funding, the SATF-ONG[3] which aimed at supporting the technical intervention of the NGOs and other non-profit organisations that were active in the field of gender equality. The programme aimed at an increased capability of intervention directly or indirectly leading to reinforcing the role of women in economic activity and encouraging the exercise of the respective citizenship's conditions. In this area, technical and financial support was granted to the NGOs whose goals, already defined or to be incorporated in their mission, included the promotion of Gender Equality, providing them with the means to act complementarily and consistently with the public interventions. Hence, this grant was aimed not only at women's organisations but also at initiatives of other types of third sector organisations such as, for instance, those involved in social services delivery, in local development or other issue-based organisations. By intending to influence the mission of organisations towards gender equality, the grant itself contributed to the increasing hybridisation of civil society organisations (Evers, 2004; Minkhoff, 2002).

The analysis made possible to verify how the state, through its policies, can encourage the deepening of equality in civil society organisations. It is a formulation that tends to reverse the terms on the discussion that often deals with the ways through which civil society organisations have the ability to render their political projects adopted in the state. This means adopting a less unidirectional perspective of the relationship between state and civil society, which makes sense in a framework in which, besides the traditional ways of relationship, new ways are emerging, often expressed in the semantics of governance. We are in face of a less stable equilibrium and more ambiguous relationship in the constantly shifting borders between state and civil society, rendering difficult to observe the co-constitutive dynamics taking place. However, this area is one which best expresses these dynamics.

On one hand, this study intended to understand in which way the projects developed by the NGOs are making innovative experiences possible, resulting from collaboration with the public sector, improving their capacity, deepening their embededness in the community and contributing to increase the equal opportunities between women and men. On the other hand, it proposes to assess the capacity that the equality policies have, through mainstreaming and empowerment, to make that the principles of equal opportunities penetrate the practices and goals of the NGOs.

Hypotheses and analytical model

The study of the effectiveness of the NGOs practices, in the EU, have used mainly qualitative instruments that allow for a comprehensive understanding of the effects of those practices. In the USA, for instance, the approaches tend to be more quantitative, since they are based in cost-benefice analysis, namely regarding public policies. Since both approaches have advantages and disadvantages, we decided to combine both of them, quantifying the most that we could and, simultaneously, using the qualitative instruments in all their potential.

It was, thus, developed an analysis based on criteria of "social return", trying to establish in which way the investments made are translated in the sustainability of the civil society organisations and networks and in empowerment regarding the building of a society which is fairer and more equal for women and men. Still in this ambit, we have also focused in the analysis of the NGOs activity regarding transparency requirements and the capacity to be accountable not only to their users and members but also to society overall.

We propose a framework for the analysis of the role of civil society and third sector organisations in gender equality that articulates two analytical and empirical axes. On the one hand, gender

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[3] One of the objectives of the QCA III (2000-2006) - Third Community Support Framework - was to accomplish what was established in the European Community Treaty regarding the promotion of equality between man and women, namely in employment and work. Thus, in the context of the POEFDS (Operational Programme for Employment, Training and Social Development) it was created a positive measure to "promote equal opportunities between man and women through the reinforcement of positive actions and a mainstreaming approach in all areas of activity, thus developing global integrated strategies which promote the balanced participation of man and women in the profession, family life and the decision process and create conditions for a paradigm shift about the culturally prevailing social roles" (Despacho Conjunto nº 186/2002, of March 12). In the context of this measure it was created the SATF-ONG (Sistema de Apoio Técnico e Financeiro às Organizações Não Governamentais) through a contract between CIDM (Commission for Equality and Rights of Women) – one of the governmental equality mechanisms – as intermediary, and the manager of POEFDS, to the implementation of the SATF-ONG from 2003 to 2006.

mainstreaming, related to the study of practices regarding equality between women and men both inside and outside organisations, including governance structures, the labour force and the volunteers as well as activities and projects towards promoting gender equality in the wider community (Conselho da Europa, 1999; Ferreira, 2000). On the other hand, empowerment, related to the study of organisational capacity in terms of mission, participation, management, accountability, strategic capacity as well as embeddedness in the community and inter-organisational networks (Edwards and Fowler, 2002).

Since our focus is in organisations we started from the assumption that the more the political role and/or the immersion of the organisations in the community, the more is the possibility of their practices of internal and external gender equality to create changes in their communities, their partners and the broader society. In this sense, we consider that, besides the activities developed in their projects of equality promotion and the internal practices of gender equality, the questions regarding embeddedness, accountability, advocacy and marketing, type of political role, nature and scale of the demands and type of networks have more impact, since they expand not only the organisations' legitimacy, but also their impact (Riddell et. al, 1997; Smith, 2000).

In line with this, since the effects of the initiatives of promoting gender equality within specific projects are determinant, their multiplying effect within the organisation and to society demand a wider framework regarding the understanding of the issue of gender equality. At this level it is of utmost importance the capacity that the organisations have to learn from the projects in which they are involved and to consider them in articulation with the other organisational practices, being the communication channels among the staff and between the staff and the governance body an essential dimension.

In the internal/external gender equality axis lays the measure of the equality practices within the organisation and outside it. Thus, internally, we have the equality practices regarding the governance in the organisation and the gender equality policies and measures in the human resources management and in other aspects of the organisation. Externally, we have the organisation's impact in the local, national or global community, either through the internal gender equality practices (for instance, working as a model of best practices) or through its projects of intervention in society.

In the organisational empowerment/community intervention axis lays, on the one hand, the capabilities regarding governance, technical management, mission coherence, decision processes, accountability, strategic capabilities, planning and evaluation and, on the other hand, the embeddedness in the community, the nature of the political role and the involvement in networks and partnerships. Because these dimensions are articulated through complex mechanisms, it is not possible to design a simple correspondence between the organisation's nature and the type of community intervention.

Analytical dimensions of mainstreaming and empowerment

	Mainstreaming	Empowerment
Internal	- Equality in mission and organisational culture - Equality in governance bodies - Gender equality policies and measures in staff management - Organisational expertise in gender equality - Discourses and theorisations on gender equality	- Consistency between mission, activities, projects and strategy - Participation mechanisms for users, members and staff - Internal accountability mechanisms - Balance between professionals and volunteers - Diversified sources of funding and resources
External	- Equality in programmes and projects of intervention in the community or in society - Weight of activities of gender promotion/advocacy - Model of best practices in equality - Positive discrimination discourses and campaigns	- Community embeddedness and leadership capacity - Participation mechanisms for the community and partners - External accountability mechanisms and their balance regarding the different stakeholders - Strength of networks and alliances and variety of partners - Political activities and capacity promoting the mission and the organisation

Used in its full potential, this framework is an analytical strategy that is not aiming at generalizations on linear causal relationships. For instance, it assumes empirically a clear separation between the organisation and its environment when in the concrete these borders are constantly being made and remade. However, it provided us with the tools to describe the multidimensionality of the mainstreaming and empowerment concepts and their possible interrelationship, being adequate to observe specific contexts and organisations.

Thus, one of the goals of our study was to understand the features of those organisations that showed more effectiveness, both internally and externally, in the mainstreaming and empowerment strategies for gender equality, given the enormous diversity of organisations implementing projects under the SATF-ONG programme that we studied.

By proposing in our study an analytic framework that articulates two axis of action of the policies that configure the couple mainstreaming/empowerment, we reflect the multidimensionality of the approach to gender equality that underlies the philosophy of the measure. These two axis interact and strengthen or weaken mutually. The multidimensionality of the approach that we suggest presupposes that the policies always have multiple effects, either from the state or from the organisations, through the internal and external impact of their actions.

Methodology

The methodology that was used involved:

- Sixteen case studies from various types of organisations funded by the programme - this included surveys and interviews to the heads, staff, partners and users of the projects and analysis of organisations documents;

- A questionnaire to a sample of the universe of civil society organisations in Portugal;

- Thirty semi-structured interviews to leaders of the main federative bodies in civil society, to leaders of women's organisations and to policy-makers, and the analysis of policy documents.

Besides the interviews with the protagonists of the projects that were developed under the governmental programme, the case studies also included the gathering of information regarding the effects already visible and the expected effects, either among the population to which the projects were aimed and among the organisations involved in the projects, as well as the projected actions for the dissemination of the outcomes. With this in mind, the protagonists of the equality policies as well as of the employment and social inclusion policies were also interviewed.

We also sought to understand into what extent the detected best practices were (or not) incorporated in the policies. This analysis was based in a set of interviews with the representatives of the institutions that participated in the design of those policies, so that its effectiveness regarding the objective of mainstreaming and empowerment could be assessed. The case studies and the survey also provided relevant informative inputs regarding the adequacy of the mainstreaming and empowerment strategies developed until now.

Universe and Sample of the Study

The organisations that were supported by the programme are very diverse set in terms of legal framework, main mission, size, scope, activities, etc. The analytical strategy that was used was based in a classification of the organisations in five groups which derived from an exploratory study of the database of organisations which were funded by the programme:

- WNGO – it only includes the organisations that belong to the Consultative Council of the Commission for the Equality and the Rights of Women and, therefore, covering almost all organisations which are primarily oriented towards the promotion of the equality between women and men or women's rights;

- NGOs – it includes the organisations aimed at diversified missions, with a strong emphasis in specific group's rights or needs, but which the main focus is not the gender equality. This is the current designation in Portugal, particularly used to distinguish these organisations from the more traditional service providers.

- SSO – it represents the organisations that have the statute of private institutions of social solidarity which cover basically all non-profit welfare services providers and are mainly oriented to the provision of services;

- LDO – it includes the local development organisations;

- Other – residual category, it includes a great variety of organisations aimed at different missions that singularly didn't constitute a relevant single group in the programme (for instance, training, culture and recreation, employers associations).

The survey – designed having in mind the information provided by the case studies and the interviews – to the universe of the civil society organisations, including all third sector organisations, was sent by mail to a sample of 1162 organisations, and the number of replies was 214: 117 SSO, 30 LDO, 15 WNGO, 22 NGOs and 31 organisations classified as "Other".

3. Capacity of civil society and third sector organizations

3.1. State and civil society in Portugal

Given the breath of the study it is impossible to bring here all the dimensions which where analysed. Instead, we opt to sketch a portrait of the Portuguese civil society and to focus the organisational capacity in this sphere, looking at the internal dimensions of mainstreaming and empowerment.

Analysing the countries in Southern Europe, Andreotti *et al.* (2001: 45-46) mention the coincidence of weakness and centrality of the state and strength and marginality of social forces. While the weakness of the state is expressed by the low level of social expenses and the prevalence of the principle of subsidiarity, its centrality is the result of the dominant role it plays in the regulation of social life given the heterogeneity and fragmentation of social interests. This characterisation is adequate to describe civil society in Portugal which was characterised by Santos (1991) as weak, with low levels of organisation and institutionalization and high dependency in relation to the state.

The transformation of the initiatives of the social movements that emerged after the 1974 Revolution through legislation on their constitution, organisational forms and relationships with the state curtailed the plurality of interests and organisational forms of the previous period (Hespanha *et al.*, 2000; Vilaça, 1994). In the social welfare area, for instance, as organisations were placed in the core of welfare provision[4] they developed a strong isomorphism with the state – and vice-versa regarding the difficult incorporation of universality principles in the state - while the state became dependent on these organisations to sustain the type of welfare regime and the economic and employment structure.

It is in this nexus, however, that emerges one of the peculiarities of the Portuguese society when compared with other southern European countries and even with some continental European countries. Third sector organisations in the area of welfare services are a support to a labour market which is characterised by the model of the dual breadwinner, high participation of women and very low level of wages. Though their specific arrangements with the State they provide subsidized services at costs which allow women to participate in the labour market at very low wages. Historically, several dynamics seem to be at stake to produce this outcome: from policies in the second half of the 1970s intending to promote equality between women and men in terms of access to the labour market through socializing the care costs and using third sector as partner of the state in provision, regulation and funding to a deliberate withdraw of the state from provision, regulation and funding of social care during the 1980s, in the context of the discourse of devolution of these responsibilities to society. This trend only began changing since the mid 1990s with a stronger role of the state in regulation and funding through the new technologies of governance (Ferreira, 2008).

In Portugal, and in spite of the transformations that happened in the last decades, women continue not having political visibility and to assume double or treble tasks. Even though there is a high rate of feminisation in the labour force and high rates of educational qualification, there are some difficulties already identified that have prevented women from completely enjoying their rights of citizenship and social equality: workplace discriminations, obstacles in the access to more qualified positions, higher

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[4] This is a place which they inherited from the dictatorship as well as the dominant catholic principle of subsidiarity so, actually, a place from which they never left.

rate of unemployment, work overload in the family, insufficient social support, specially in maternity and in children and older people care (among others, Tavares, 2000; Ferreira, 1998; 2001).

As concerning women's organisations, we can briefly state that they never benefited from an environment which would allow their flourishing. During the dictatorial regime there wasn't liberty neither of expression nor of organisation, and afterwards the public sphere has been occupied by women organisations of several political parties (for instance, the communist party controlled the largest women's organizations – the MDM – Women's Democratic Movement).

By the end of the eighties, the state started to actively support the organized civil society, what was much due to the European integration process. Given that there were few women organisations and since the European programmes demanded (and demand) the participation of women organisations as partners and representatives of civil society, after the accession to the European Community, in 1986, the state became a promoter of these organisations.

The Johns Hopkins project on Portugal portrays a non-profit sector relatively weak in terms of workforce when compared with other countries, with only 4% of ETI in total employment. It is strongly oriented towards the provision of services, namely the typical tasks of the welfare state, such as social services, health, education, local development and housing, less oriented to culture and leisure but with some significance in terms of advocacy and civic participation organisations. Globally it has a strong reliance in its own capacity to generate resources, which includes the weight that user fees have in the social services providers, but also the capacity to draw resources both from the market and from members' payments by advocacy and civic organisations, housing and development and culture and leisure. The only areas where it relies heavily on the government are in health and education services. In terms of volunteers the Portuguese third sector is, among those western European countries where the weight of volunteers is less important (Franco *et al.*, 2005).

Given that the amounts and sources of organisation's resources is one of the best well kept secrets in Portuguese third sector organisations we can only confirm the data from the Johns Hopkins project from our analysis of the income structure of organisations which were funded by the SATF-ONG programme, thus with the filtering effects of the measure. This structure shows a heavy reliance on subsidies, from the national government and from European funds (particularly in the case of local development organisations), as well as in women's organisations and other NGOs. It also shows that there is a strong reliance on member's payments in the case of women and other NGOs and a reliance on other sources from OSS and LDO, which are frequently user's payments. In the context of a low wage based economy, the high reliance on member's payments is not synonym of capacity but, instead, of great weakness and limited size and capacity as we will see below.

Graphic 1. Income structure, by type of organization
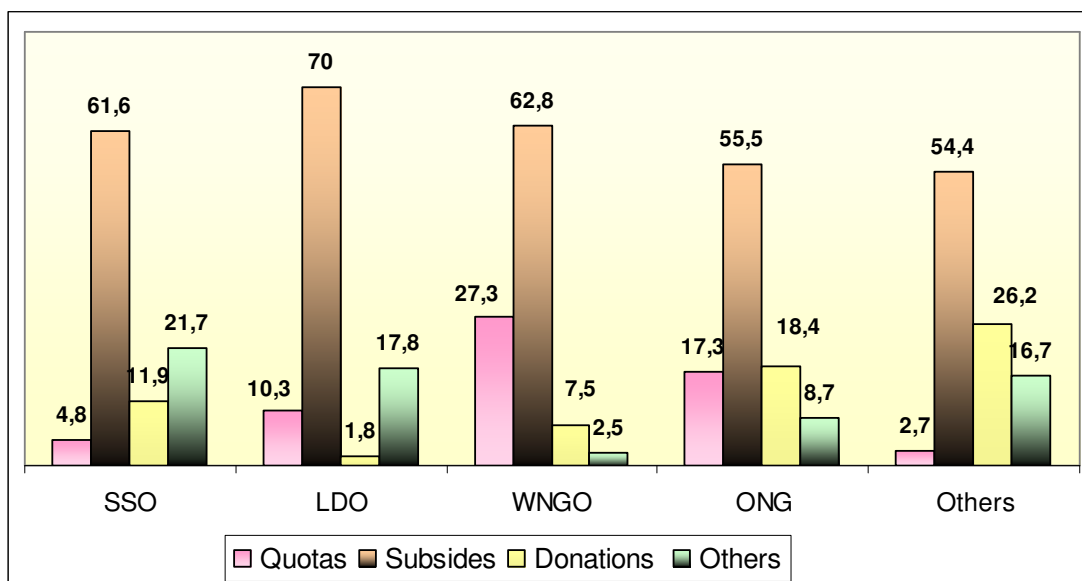
Source: Database of the SATF-ONG projects

Although we used the distinction service providers/advocacy and expression during our study, namely in asking to the surveyed organisations where they place themselves primarily, we also wanted to overcome this division by researching about the hybridization of civil society organisations. Besides being a trend in many organisations, as much international research had showed (Evers, 2004; Minkhoff, 2002), it is both one of the outcomes of policies such as the SATF-ONG and a factor which may contribute to the effectiveness of mainstreaming policies in the several dimensions we pointed out. Thus, what we concluded was that even if organisations tend to self-identify with one of the main logics, in terms of activities, many organisations tend to mix them, with some social services providers being involved in the defence of causes or expressive activities and some advocacy organisations being involved in the provision of services for the groups they represent. The graphic shows the high level of hybridisation happening in Portuguese civil society, with particular emphasis to women organisations.

Graphic 2. Activity type, by organisation type
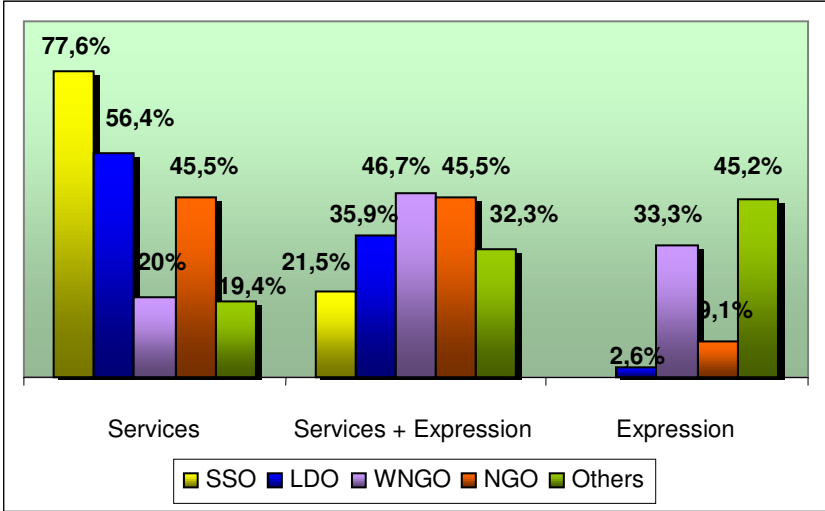
Source: NGOs survey

It was a condition of the SATF-ONG programme that NGOs should include stated in their constitution the promotion of equality between men and women. Thus, many had to rewrite their constitutional statement to incorporate this objective. However we must also look at the concrete impact. The case studies provided us with sensitive data on the degree to which this amendment has been mainstreamed by these organizations. Interviews with community members showed that organizations not formerly identified as advocates of gender equality did not gain that identity. In our sixteen case studies there were only two organisations where this new identity has been entirely acquired and assumed.

We think that this can be partly justified by organizations' governance and management model, in fact, a strategy to reassure their guiding mission in their activities has to include both the medium and long term planning. The majority of the organizations studied don't plan at all, or they do it in a very incipient way through a non-participatory process, without the mobilization of community members or experts that could help to improve the quality of diagnoses and intervention design. This turned out in an obstacle to the internalization of equality issues. We will see, however, that this process is not facilitated either by other characteristics of the dominant governance model, to whose more detailed characterization we turn on our attention straight away.


3.2. Organisations and empowerment

Size

From the survey we undertook and having in mind the filtering effects of this technique we can conclude that there is an enormous heterogeneity in terms of sizes of organisations considered in terms of paid staff. Most organisations have between six to fifteen workers (23.8%) and sixteen to fifty (28%),

which is already an important size, but there are differences according to the type of organisation. While there is a big number of WNGOs and NGOs with not staff at all or the bigger organisations have around six to fifteen staff, OSS tend to have sixteen to fifty staff or even more. Indeed in many localities these organisations can be the biggest employer. LDO tend to have between five and fifteen workers. The "other" organisations are even more heterogeneous as they include from the small cultural and leisure associations to Professional and employer's associations.

Graphic 3. Employees, by type of organization
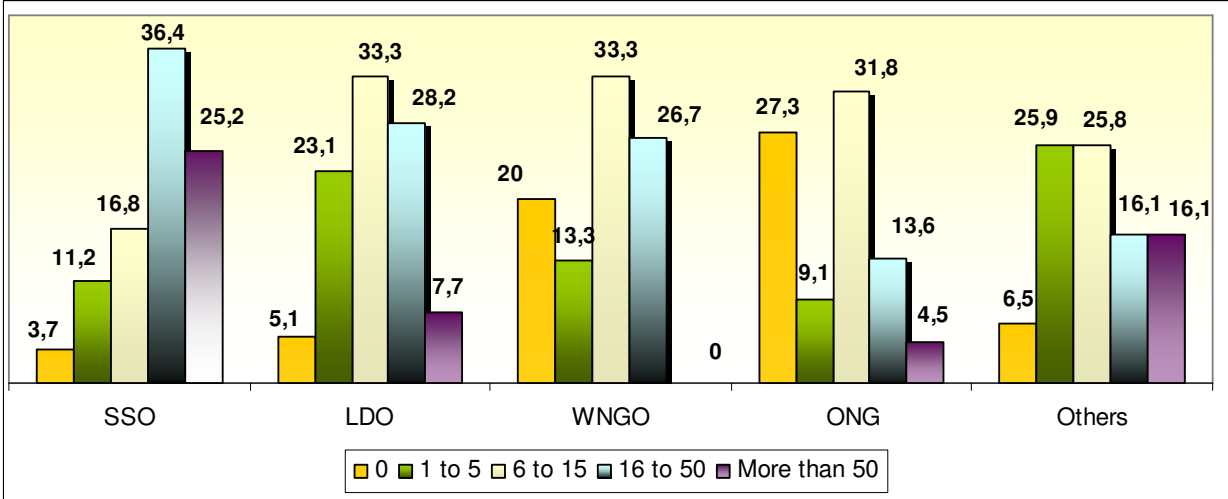
Source: NGOs survey

The data on the organisations which had access to the SATF-NGO programme shows a not very dissimilar structure with the majority of organisations falling in the group of six to fifteen or sixteen to fifty workers. However, when analysed the type of organisations there are some differences. A bigger number of small WNGOs had access to this programme, nine of them with up to one worker, and the OSSs and LDOs which went for this programme were generally the larger sized ones. In this regard it is visible that the measure targeted women organisations as a way to empower these and stronger OSS and LDO as a strategy to mainstream gender equality.

**Graphic 4. Employees, by type of organization**
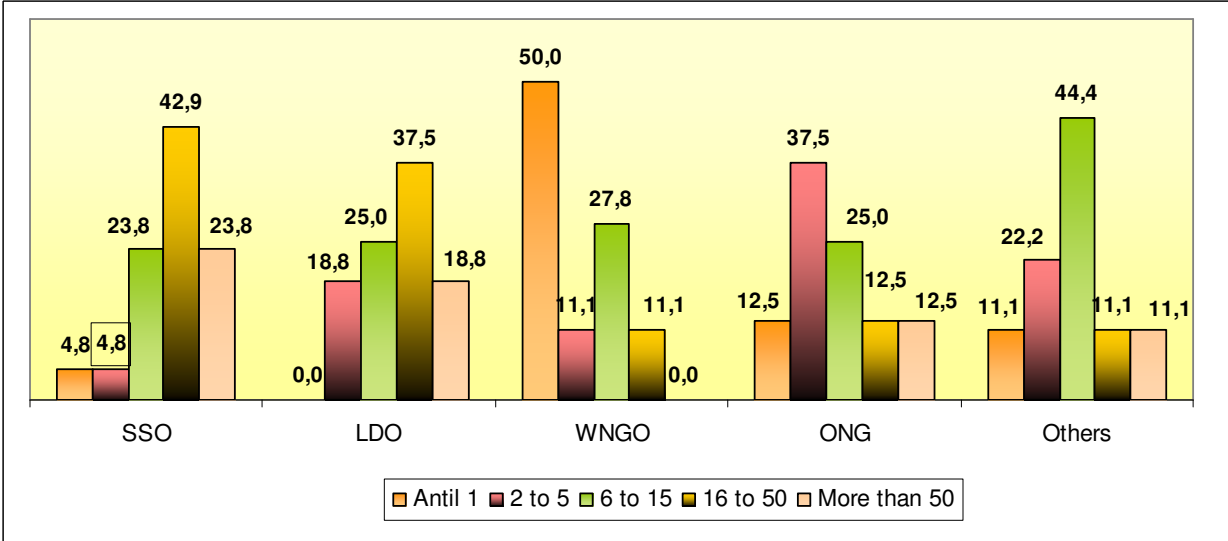
Source: Database of the SATF-ONG projects

Resources

We delve into the structure of income of organisations and the portrait we draw from the analysis of the data confirms and reinforces some of the conclusions about Portuguese civil society. The data shows, for instance, that 72% of organisations depend in more than 50% on a single funder, which is more substantial in local development organisations which have been deriving their funding from European projects.

**Graphic 5. Weight of the main funder, by type of organization**
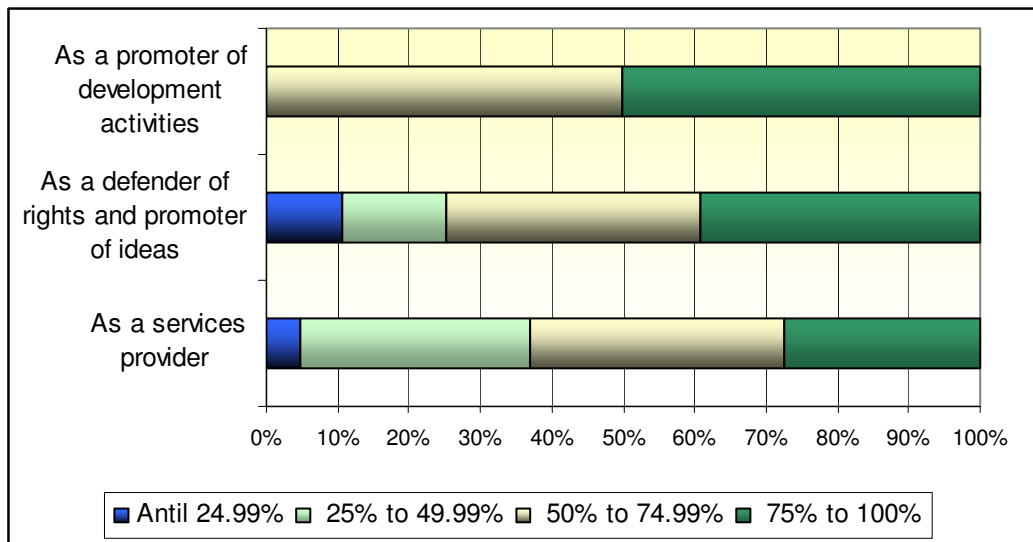
Source: NGOs survey

The concentration of sources of funding is also strong in advocacy organisations and less marked in service providers. What this shows is that service providers not only can draw from market income from the users' fees but also from more varied sources of funding such as, for instance, local government or other governmental programmes. As for advocacy organisations, besides the member's payments, they rely substantially on resources of a single state agency as there are no alternative sources of funding. This is a tricky situation as sometimes they depend on the same bodies which they are supposed to monitor and criticize.

The data we draw from our study shows a low level of volunteering. Normally volunteering only happens at the level of the board members. Not surprisingly, the analysis according the typology of organisations show that it is in the women organisations and NGOs that volunteering is higher. Volunteers represent 36.7% in women organisations and 31.7% in NGOs. Social solidarity organisations and local development organisations also stated explicitly a low interest in involving volunteers.

Graphic 6. Medium weight of volunteering, by type of organization
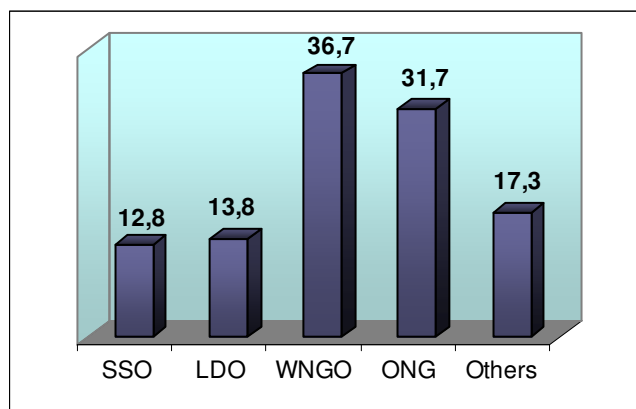
Source: NGOs survey

Participation and accountability mechanisms

If in terms of size we seem to be partially in presence of relatively strong organisations, even if side by side with extremely small organisations, in terms of organisations' governance our study concluded for some weaknesses. The general assemblies don't work even according to the legal requirements or function only in the strict and limited respect for these, expressing a low level of participation of members in organisational life; there is a low level of turn out of the board members, another indicator of a low level of internal democracy; and in some cases there is a high dependency on the founder, which is often the chair of the board of directors.

On the other hand, in terms of the time that the members of the board, which are volunteers, spend with the organisation, there is generally a high dedication with management tasks. In the service provision and local development organisations there is normally an executive director, which points to the trend to the professionalization of management. There is a marked pressure for the professionalization of management as an outcome both of the pressure from the environment and the changes in the relationships between organisations and public agencies and enterprises and from internal needs of organisations given the plurality of activities, the demands of their funding sources and of the co-governance mechanisms and the growing popularity of the discourses about management.

Governance is generally shared among the members of the board, the executive director (when it exists) and the technical supervisors and less participated by the workers, the users or the public. Of course there are exceptions in some organisations we fond, but unfortunately they are not the rule.

Ambit of networks and alliances

We observed that organisations tend to establish partnerships preferably with the state (54.7%), followed by civil society organisations (34.6%) and with almost insignificant relevance, with enterprises (4.7%) which has consequences in terms of access to resources and also the capacity to have impact beyond organisational boundaries. There is a high variation, however, if we regard the main activity of these organisations. Partnerships with public organisations tend to prevail in social service, education and research, health, advocacy, culture and leisure organisations. Partnerships with other civil society organisations prevail in women and environmental organisations. Other advocacy organisations and philanthropic organisations and those promoting volunteering are the ones establishing more partnerships with enterprises, which is not surprising as they derive part of their resources here. The most isolated in relation to partnerships with other civil society organisations are advocacy, social services and culture and leisure organisations. This is probably the outcome and the source of the high fragmentation at the level of the federations and umbrellas strengthen by the features of corporatism in the relationship between state and civil society.

Given the corporatisation of Portuguese civil society we also wanted to know if there are differences between organisations in terms of membership to federations. We consider these federations important because they are mechanisms of self-regulation of the sector. These organisations play an important role in terms of supporting organisations, helping to build a sense of identity and intermediating between organisations and the state.

In Portugal there is no such overarching body which can promote the idea of a particular third sector - even less of a civil society - but, instead, a number of federations which aggregate organisations according to the activities, type of organisation or tradition. OSS have three umbrella bodies, one for social solidarity organisations, one for *Misericordias* and one for mutuals. All of them are representatives of their organisations in the negotiations with the state. LDOs are organised in a network which supported the strong identity of these organisations although their representation in the state is made by other federation. In some areas the state created bodies for supporting organisations as it happens, for instance, in the areas of cooperatives, ethnic minorities, environment, disability and women's organisations. For instance, it is as members of this body and part of a consultative committee of this body, that women organisations find their identity as a sector.

ONGs and other organisations are the ones which declared in major number not being members of any federation while social solidarity organisations and local development organisations are quite well structured in terms of membership to peaks. On the other hand, these organisations are much less internationalised in terms of supra-national networks. Membership in international organisations seem to be more important in organisations where activities are more markedly advocacy, expression and defence of professional, cultural, political and social interests.

## 4. Internal effectiveness in the promotion of gender equality

Equality in labour relations

Management of staff is crossed by tensions and ambivalence due to the double moral standards these organisations put in place. On one hand publicly they are often advocates of citizenship rights, including labour rights but, on the other hand, given the insecurity of their resources base and the logic of operation through projects they often incur in illegalities concerning the labour rights of their own workers, to whom they demand militant devotion in terms of working hours and rhythms and even the sacrifice of the legal rights regarding absence leaves. A recent study carried on by some of the authors of this paper showed that the third sector (the third system) is one of the employment sectors where women enjoy less the absence leaves they are entitle to, such as, for instance, the reduction of two hours per day during the first year of the child for baby feeding (Ferreira e Lopes, 2004).

As far as the employment structure is concerned, we observe that these organisations:

- have a much feminized employment structure (75%), as it is expected from the type of activities pursued, since they are typified as female dominated (Lange and Trukeschitz, 2005);
- with the exception of women organisations, have male dominated boards of directors;
- in general, the employment structure is more polarised, with the more qualified occupations having an higher weight that in the private sector of employment.

Graphic 7. Rate of feminization, by type of organisation
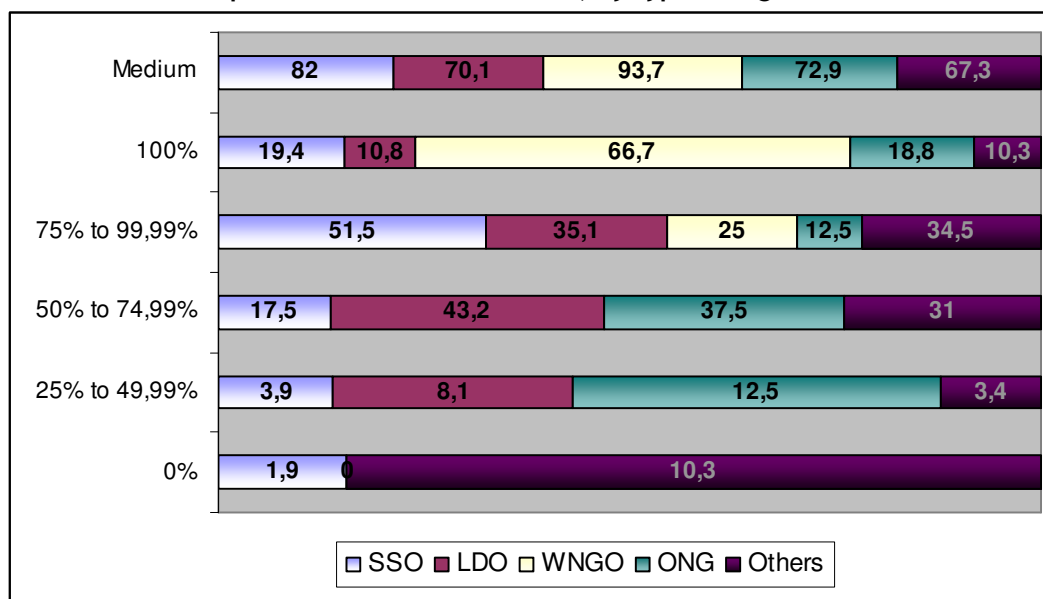
Source: NGOs survey

We conclude that women that work in third sector organisations, excluding women's organisations, have to face a glass ceiling which prevents them to reach position in the boards but are not stuck in a viscous floor in the most disqualified position, as it happens in the private sector. A possible explanation for this fact could be that wages in the third sector are lower but this is not confirmed by the data we have for the year 2004 (See Virginia, 2007). Indeed when comparing monthly medium earnings we conclude that while men wages in the third sector are similar to the wages in the overall private employment sector, for women they are higher, particularly in the professional category of intellectual and scientific professionals. Summing up, more qualified women are better remunerated in the third sector than in the overall private employment sector.

Table 1. Medium wages of dependent workers in the category of experts of intellectual and scientific professions in total and third sector employment (in €)

Type of wage		DW, in general	Gap %	DW, 3° SECTOR	Gap %
Base Medium Mensal Wage	Women	983,09	67,2	1203,96	86,3
	Men	1462,97		1491,49	
Medium Mensal Wage - Earnings	Women	1107,35	68,2	1327,08	83,5
	Men	1623,98		1677,4	

Source: Own calculations from DGEEP, 2004.

Our analysis also looked at working conditions in the third sector. Once again we observed that people who work in the third sector are in a better situation. From the data of our questionnaire we concluded that the rate of employees with permanent jobs is higher than for the overall private employment according to the existing statistical employment data. It is 64.6% in the third sector for 60% in the economy.

However, regarding the nature of the labour relation in the third sector this data must be relativised. We observe that in a number of organisations there is a low percentage of permanent jobs, particularly in WNGOs, other NGOs and in LDOs. Social solidarity organisations are those which offer a better situation in terms of percentage of permanent jobs and feminization of those jobs. Women organisations and other NGOs, because they are closer to the profile of civil society organisations,

more based on volunteering and dependent of more contingent resources have a more flexible labour relation. This emphasizes again the weakness of this kind of organisations in Portugal.

**Table 2. Medium weight and feminization rate of employees with permanent jobs, by type of organisation**

Employees with permanent jobs	Type of organization					
	SSO	LDO	MNGO	NGO	Others	Total
	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Weight/dependent workers	71,5	49,5	35,9	40,2	84,4	64,6
Feminization rate	82,8	74,8	81,5	73,5	68,6	78,6

Source: NGOs survey

Despite this we observed that formally there is no incorporation of explicitly practices of equality, such as a document which states an equality police, policies against sexual harassment, selection of the underrepresented sex for training and access to the more unequal areas. Basically organisations tend to claim that by the fact of employing a majority of women they have practices of gender equality.

We researched into work/family balance in organisational practices. This includes positive discrimination practices beyond those established by legislation, such as existence of child care in organisations, flexibility of working time, longer maternity and paternity leaves and longer periods of reduction of working time for baby feeding than those established by the law. As we can see in the graphic, there is a strong emphasis on working time flexibility and much less emphasis in other policies.

Graphic 8. Work/family balance practices, by type of organisation
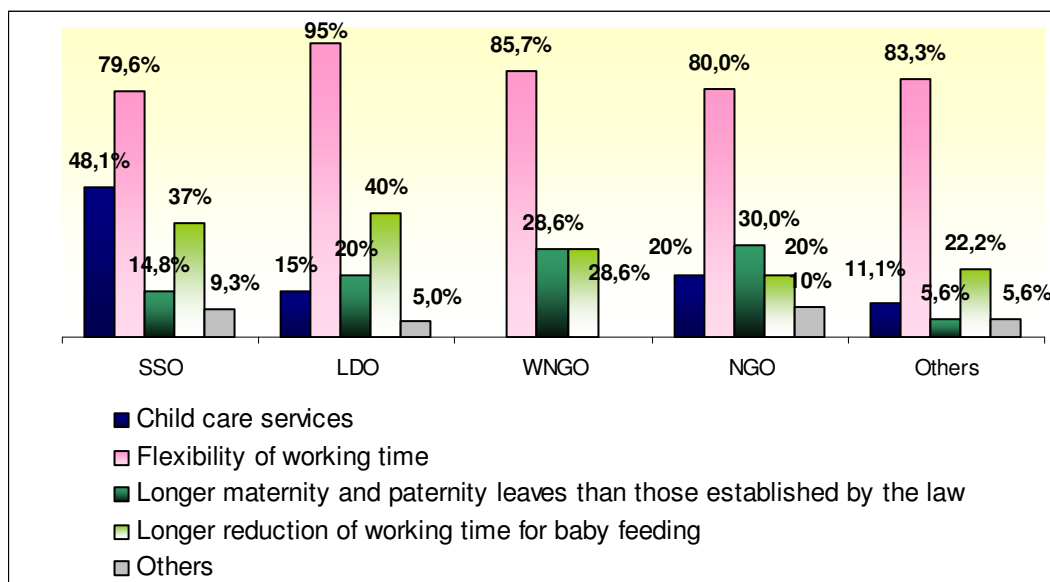
Source: NGOs survey

We conclude that there is flexibility but this answers more to the needs related to the nature of work or to adhoc and individual needs of the workers than to organisational formal, universal, explicit and known by all policies of work/family balance, even if it is frequent that organisations formulate "flexibility of working time" as an equality policy.

Working time flexibility is ambivalent in its effects in terms of work/ family balance. In many organisations work is associated with non-standard schedules depending on the demands of the projects, the public or the objectives. During the interviews many workers expressed the difficulty in the conciliation between work and personal life.

Representations about gender equality

Representations about gender equality are stereotypical among organisations (excluding women's organisations). Claims like "equality is not to discriminate" or "equality is equal pay for work of equal value", confirm the lack of acknowledgement of structural gender inequalities, witch, as we said before, is in the background of mainstream policies. The general perception, which is also dominant in Portuguese society, is that women and men have the same opportunities if they are treated in the same way. In some organisations we found an explicit refusal to deal with inequality actively, with statements like "it's a matter of time and change of mentality" and even "there isn't discrimination anymore in the labour market". Generally there is no perception of the general evidence of discrimination, for instance in the lower access of women to less remunerated jobs and to leadership.

In the questionnaire we found evidence of the same representations among third sector organisations, which pointed out that the main constraints for improvements in the situation of women in the labour market and access to leadership roles is general prejudice and the excessive weight of their family responsibilities.

Table 3. The main constraints for improvements in the situation of women in the labour market and access to leadership roles

	N	%
The depreciation of their professional competences	21	9,8
Excessive weight of their family responsibilities	70	32,7
The prejudices still existing as regards their role in the society	83	38,8
Others	9	4,2
No answer	31	14,5
Total	214	100,0

Source: NGOs survey

Researching into the measures which are deemed necessary by organisations to promote gender equality we observe that there is a strong emphasis in mentality change and child education. Curiously the differences between women organisations and the other third sector organisations are not as striking as we imagined. Women organisations are the ones putting more emphasis on children education although they rely less on mentality change. They also emphasise scientific research more than any other organisation and they emphasize legislation to regulate to access to leadership by women, which is related to the debates on quota in political parties which were taking place in Portugal at the time of the research and towards which women organisations were campaigning. Curiously, however, in comparison with other third sector organisations women organisations in Portugal give little importance to regulations on equality plans in organisations. We expected indeed a visible difference regarding a more proactive attitude in relation to gender equality in women organisations and less reliance on change of mentalities.

Graphic 9. Measures necessary to promote gender equality, by type of organisation
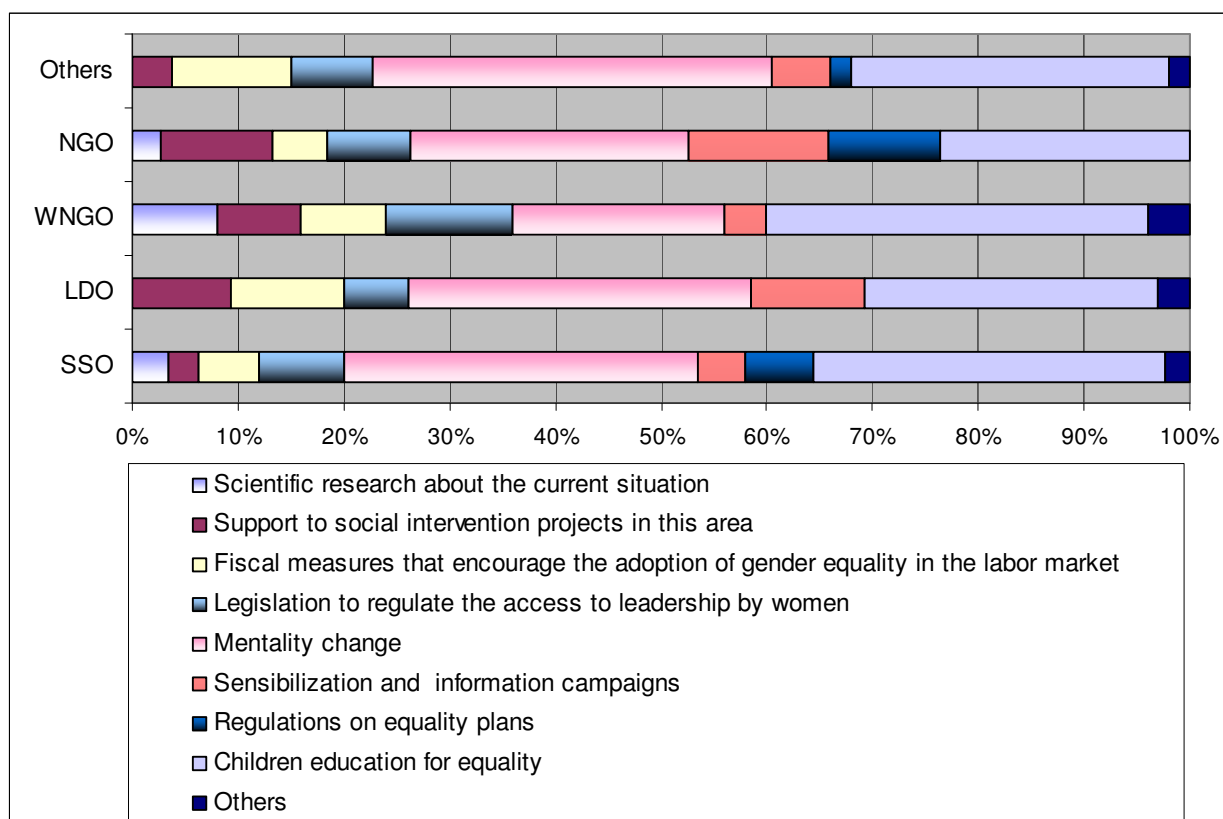
Source: NGOs survey

Another aspect that characterises organisations that are closer to the advocacy model is their self-referentiality, which we also found in other types of organisations, especially in the category that we called NGOs. The focus on the fight against a certain kind of discrimination, which provides the *rationale* for their own mission, ends up shaping an orientation often exclusivist of organisational resources to maximise their capacity to answer to the needs of their target group and their membership base. Thus, we found out that in some organisations, even when they already developed activities aimed at women, the gender equality discourse was not internalised, even though sometimes it was acknowledged that women are victim of a double discrimination. The discourse that always ends up coming to the surface is the inequality identified in the foundational mission – disability, rurality, poverty, etc.

5. Policy outcomes

5.1. The impact of projects in NGOs empowerment and in the sustainable promotion of gender equality

In our research we also sought to know the impact that the projects had in the organisations that received funding under the SATF-ONG. A clearly positive outcome was the allocation of competences on gender equality to tens of organisations. In the immaterial dimension of resources – the competencies – there was clearly an empowerment of the organisations. However, in the remaining dimensions the outcomes do not allow for good expectations regarding the sustainability of the activities started with the projects.

The internal impacts in the organisations seem to be very scarce, especially regarding the internal management, since most of the organisations only do what the law requires them to do (in terms of wages, training, recruitment).

To most organisations, the effects that seem to have been produced were: rendering visible the equality promotion as a distinctive mark of their image; the use of an inclusive language/discourse; and the inclusion of the equality theme in events (seminars, workshops, conferences, etc.). In our

evaluation, each of these procedures is easy to be adopted by the organisations, having virtually no costs.

To estimate the future of the activities associated to the gender equality after the end of the projects, we also sought to understand the impact of the SATF-ONG in the sustainable creation of jobs, both for experts in gender equality and in other professional areas. The sustainability of the jobs created under the SATF-ONG seems to be weak: from the twenty organisations that answered the survey, eight didn't keep any of them. The poor performance achieved in this domain is strongly linked to the financial incapacity of the organisations to keep the jobs that were created. In the majority, we are in face of organisations dealing mostly with project funding, thus maintaining the job posts is dependent on getting projects funded.

This poor performance allows us to anticipate that it will be difficult for most of the organisations to keep the activities initiated with the project. In some cases it seems to be possible to keep at least some of those activities, be it because even before this project those organisations were already active in this area or because they will get funding through new sources. In other cases there are no conditions to keep the activities that were previously developed. The lack of financial resources is one of the main causes for this situation, just like it happens regarding the maintenance of the job posts created.

The need to continue the interventions, which created expectations among the population, was mentioned by many of the interviewees. To help evaluate this issue, we mention some of the features of the organisations that will help them overcome the difficulties resulting from the reduction of the funding and to guarantee the sustainability of their activities in the field of gender equality. According to a study from Hawkins, Steger and Trimble, (1986, in Smith, 2000: 211), the organisations that better adapt to cuts in their budget are those that have a staff highly qualified and diversified; the ones that manage to have a significant part of self-funding; and those that use more volunteers. We would add the existence of know-how in the specific field of the thematic in question. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about the weaker women organisations.

Less than half of the organisations seem to have gained capacity. The organisations with more institutional support and that are more professionalised were those that also had their capacity reinforced.

These difficulties induce the need to adopt a more effective and efficient management of the public funding. Here are included dimensions as the adequacy of the funding system to the objective of strengthening the NGOs; a solid training/experience of intervention on the domain of gender equality by the teams that manage the Programs; the reinforcement of the capacity of following-up and controlling, given the little experience of the organisations in this type of actions; ensuring a qualified coordination of the projects, using experts/trainers in equality instead of giving priority to the creation of jobs without specific qualifications; or the importance of the support to the continuity and sustainability of the actions so that when the projects end the expectations created in the communities are not frustrated. Given the deficit of competences of most organisations that operate in the field of gender equality promotion, it is crucial to guarantee a good follow-up to the projects and to the people that coordinate them.

5.2. Effectiveness of the diverse types of organisations

In all the five types of organisations analysed it was possible to find examples of effective capacity to develop activities to promote gender equality. However, this capacity is more likely in organisations whose main mission is directly or indirectly associated to the goal of promoting the status of women in society in its multiple dimensions. We found that NGOs specifically dedicated to the promotion of equality, and also LDOs which operate in a holistic framework of sustainable local development have more capacity to incorporate in their activity this type of intervention. Regarding the other 3 types of organisations (NGOs, OSS and Other), we found examples of capacity to proceed in this domain, but it seems to be strongly conditioned and secondarised in presence of a mission concerned with other dimensions of disadvantage and inequality – disability, rurality, poverty, etc.

The analysis of the changes caused by the programme lead us to the conclusion that the critical success factors that we identified in the performance of each organisation have less to do with the formal features and more with the centrality that the gender equality principle has in the internal management of people and activities, in the specific skills on gender equality issues, in the strategic vision and in the capacity to plan ahead.

Conclusion

Portuguese civil society is confronted with the challenge to take advantage of the potentialities and to escape from the dangers opened by the new forms of relationship between the state and civil society during the 1990s and the transformations in the organisations which populate this sphere. The new instruments of multi-level governance, from the national policies with a territorial dimension – namely local partnerships – to the way the national state incorporates the European Union soft law and the new relationships being established between different actors at different scales, there is the acknowledgement of the importance of the civil society organisations in governance in terms of strategic societal goals such as sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and gender equality.

The concepts of mainstreaming and empowerment that we used as the core of our empirical and analytical strategy are two typical instruments of the shift to new modes of governance. We designed an analytical framework which has consideration of the multidimensionality and multicausality of these two concepts and keep the reservations concerning the concrete difficulties of these governance instruments. The politics of mainstreaming creates an enormous challenge regarding the possibility of changing well established rationalities and institutions in the state, the private sector and civil society and in the relationships between these spheres, grounded as they are in structures which incorporate and reproduce the inequality between women and man. Thus, forms of governance which are typical of the hierarchical command of the Weberian state are combined with other modes of governance more persuasive, horizontal, networked, dialogical and bottom up (Jessop, 2002). The strategy of empowerment means to assume that NGOs are able to express the voice of these same populations and social groups, i.e., that they do represent these groups and that they have capacity to have their voice heard in the new governance stages, that there are no internal differences, conflict and competition in this third sector or in civil society or that these differences can be easily dealt with through negotiation or dialogue.

In face of these difficulties there are challenges even in the ideas of third sector or civil society which is simultaneously called to constitute a specific sector and to become increasingly hybrid, for instance, as a result of programmes such as the SATF-ONG.

We explored mainly the dimensions of mainstreaming and empowerment through focusing internal effectiveness in the promotion of equality. This was based in the assumption that there cannot be external effectiveness without a certain degree of effectiveness at the internal level. This means that an organisation without practices and reflexivity inspired in the gender equality principles can hardly export/disseminate best practices in this field. That is the reason why we started to try to inquire about organisational and social intervention practices that we considered being a way to promote the equality found in the organisations. In the external dimension, which we didn't bring to this presentation, we found major weaknesses in civil society. While many third sector organisations can hardly be considered as being part of civil society given their strong isomorphism both with the state and the market, in civil society organisations we also observed too often a big distance from the political; a distance from the public sphere and broader societal concerns and the lack of inscription of their activities in the long term and in the broader scales of the fights against discrimination, inequality and injustice. This send us back to descriptions of Portuguese society as bearing marks of strong particularism (Hespanha *et al*, 2000) and overall the concern that the civil society which is envisaged in the new governance mechanisms is almost absent in Portugal.

The structural dimensions of the Portuguese society must be brought to the front in terms of the understanding and the governing of gender equality. We observed the specific context and the path dependent trajectories which operate at several levels, from the organisational to the socio-political and economic. We mentioned the complexity of the dynamics in place and also made reference to the multifaceted way through which civil society or/and the third sector relates to gender equality: in its role in service provision facilitating the socialization of care costs – even if only a half accomplished socialization given the reliance on user fees; in the structure of work in the third sector which in many aspects is more favourable to women than the structure of the overall employment – even if at the price of sacrifice of personal life and legal rights; in its capacity to articulate an agenda and advocate towards a more equal society – even if in the context of structural weakness of women organisations.

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