Mid-term Report “Reclaim Europe!”

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Executive summary

This Mid-term Report aims to provide analytical knowledge from the first meeting of the project “Reclaim Europe!” led by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with grassroots groups, associations and movements (hereinafter CSO, Civil Society Organisations) in Portugal. The meeting gathered representatives from a sample of 18 CSOs who were invited to share information on local actions and initiatives, as well as international networking with other CSOs. They were also required to share information about international funding and lobbying with European and non-European institutions. Towards these aims, the meeting was structured in order to collect CSOs’ claims to Europe into an “Action Plan” to be presented in a second meeting that will take place in November 2018, in Lisbon.

This Mid-term Report first provides full description of goals and methodology of the meeting. Secondly, it collects the main ideas shared by the participants in the three sessions of working groups organised during the day. The first session of working groups focussed on ongoing local actions and initiatives led by the CSOs. The second session focussed on international networking with other grassroots practices and/or CSOs. The third session focussed on ongoing relations established with international institutions (mainly via funding and/or lobbying). While the first session was constituted by four working groups aiming to mix participants according to different fields of action, the second and third sessions were composed of three working groups each based on their similarity. Thirdly, the Report presents the notes drawn at the end of the meeting for the elaboration of an Action Plan to be shared in the second meeting of November with international decision-makers and lobbies. Last, the Report provides an overview on the feedback received by both participants and facilitators. The conclusions of this Report aim to concisely sum up the main points emerged from the first meeting in order to propose a guidance to the next steps of the project “Reclaim Europe!”. 
Goals and methodology of the meeting

The project “Reclaim Europe!” aims at fostering bottom-up participation of CSOs in Portugal. This goal is pursued in the light of the recent massive transformations in Europe, which may hinder opportunities to voicing into decision-making. More broadly, the project addresses the most contentious issues that supranational policymaking is required to effectively respond in local governance: how to ensure that the voice of the most marginalised sectors of civil society is heard by European institutions?

CSOs are broadly acknowledged as the key agents of intermediation between local populations and supranational agencies. Given their role in civil society, the meeting aimed to explore the ways through which a sample of 16 CSOs from Lisbon and 2 CSOs from Porto, which are the two major metropolitan cities of Portugal, is “reclaiming Europe” through a wide variety of actions and initiatives with citizens. Towards this end, the meeting gathered a total number of 18 CSOs representing multiple policy fields of action, as listed below:

- Academia Cidadã
- ACA-M – Associação de Cidadão Auto-Mobilizados
- APPA – Associação do Património e População de Alfama (two representatives)
- Associação Crescer
- Associação Mulheres Sem Fronteiras
- Associação Pão a Pão
- Coletivo Warehouse
- Estrada Viva
- Fórum Cidadania e Território
- Gestual – Grupo de Estudos Sócio-Territoriais, Urbanos e de Ação Local (two representatives)
- Habita Porto
- Habitar Porto
- Lisbon Sustainable Tourism / Inducar
- Moinho da Juventude
- MMEL – Movimento Morar em Lisboa
- Mulheres na Arquitetura
- Teatro do Oprimido
- Transparência e Integridade

The meeting occurred on the 14th of July in Lisbon as the first action of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung-led project “Reclaim Europe!”. The meeting’s venue was the Goethe Institute of Lisbon from 9:30 AM to 5 PM. The meeting was planned to produce a first draft of claims for a common
Action Plan to be shared, discussed and defended in November 2018 with national and international stakeholders, decision-makers, and lobbies. Accordingly, the meeting was structured as follows:

- 9.30 – 10 AM: welcoming coffee
- 10 – 11 AM: opening (instructions for the meeting and self-introduction of participants)
- 11 – 11.45 AM: first working groups
- 11.45 – 12.30 AM: plenary
- 12.30 AM – 1.30 PM: lunch
- 1.30 – 3.30 PM: second working groups
- 3.30 – 4.45 PM: plenary
- 4.45 – 5 PM: closing session

The coordination of the meeting was mandated to Roberto Falanga, first author of this Mid-term Report, with the supervision of Christine Auer, officer at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The facilitators of the working groups, and co-authors of this Mid-Term Report, were: Inês Vieira, Irina Gomes, Madalena Corte-Real, Marianna Monte.

Notes from the meeting

The meeting aimed to gather representatives from CSOs to share information on both local and international actions and initiatives. Towards this aim, the meeting was structured in order to provide adequate conditions to share knowledge and knowhow through three sessions of working groups. The first session was focussed on the local experiences conducted by the CSOs. This session provided an “identikit” of the CSOs that were invited to take part to the meeting. By ensuring diversity in each working group, CSOs introduced themselves to participants that they had not met before. The second and third sessions addressed CSOs’ experience with international networking, as well as with funding and/or lobbying with international institutions. These two sessions were run one after the other in three working groups constituted according to the similarity among fields of action.
First session of working groups: reclaiming Europe at the local level

Four working groups were constituted in order to let participants interact with representatives of CSOs that they had not met before. The four working groups were facilitated in order to address the following issues: (i) actions/initiatives developed at the local level; (ii) advantages and disadvantages of local networking.

From an overview over the ideas debated by participants, CSOs share the major need to find effective responses to public pressure from political and economic agents, as well as to create public pressure around topics of general concern. Such a major need has been further detailed through the following topics:

- Local networking is a strategy to be adopted according to the type of actions and initiatives to implement.
- Local networking can rely on either territorial (i.e. where) or thematic criteria (i.e. what) of action.
- Local networking depends on the scale of the action/initiative, i.e. whether its goals are to have an impact over local, regional, national, or international levels.
• Local networking can be effective to either distribute or apply for funding.
• Local networking is effective to start new actions and initiatives.
• Local networking can own different degrees of formalization, and include advisory committees in support of actions/initiatives.
• Local partners can be selected because of their background and experience, as well as according to the statute and mission of their organizations.
• Informal networks are often composed of networks themselves, as informal relations among movements, local associations, practitioners, and researchers are very common in Portugal (e.g. the national programme “Rede Social” should be considered as a good practice in the country since it gathers local governmental agencies and NGOs preventing from risks of political/economic co-optation and manipulation).
• Governmental agencies are not necessarily involved in local networking. More often than not, governmental agencies provide logistic and financial support.

As regards the benefit from local networking, participants shared the following insights:

• Information sharing and knowledge transfer.
• Inclusion of new agents (e.g. in public events).
• International visibility of local practices.
• Direct access to larger scale information from the local level.
• Increased capacity to have an impact over local institutions.
• Increased power of action and intervention.
• Making visible agents and issues that are marginalised from decision-making and/or governmental initiatives.
• Higher capacity of agenda setting including multiple skills for diverse solutions.
• Sharing of economic, human and time resources.
• Increased opportunity to set up new networks, platforms, and movements.
• Scaling up and capacity-building for national and international lobbying.

1 CSOs referred to the Municipality of Lisbon-led programme for urban regeneration Bip/Zip (www.bipzip.cm-lisboa.pt) and the Community Development Programme of Mouraria PDCM (http://www.aimouraria.cm-lisboa.pt/pdcm.html) as good examples.
Image 2 – Working groups 1 and 2

Photo taken by Roberto Falanga ©

Image 3 – Working group 3

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More details on the ongoing local action/initiatives led by the CSOs are presented in the following paragraphs, in order to provide a first “identikit” of the sample that took part to the meeting.

**Working group 1**

- **Gestual**: engaged research in urban and rural contexts, with ongoing projects on refugees and housing evictions (in peripheral urban areas). The team is composed of researchers of the University of Lisbon, who belong to multiple networks and collaborate with local associations and NGOs.

- **Estrada Viva**: training with local populations (mainly in Lisbon) and young students on street safety, sustainable mobility and transportation risks. While part of the initiatives is sponsored by the Municipality of Lisbon and the Ministry of Education, Estrada Viva is member of European networks and carries on both European Commission and World Health Organization-funded projects.

- **Habita Porto**: focus on the right to housing of the most marginalised sectors of civil society. Participation in the main activities promoted by Habita headquarter in Lisbon (e.g. “Caravana pelo direito à habitação”), and network with local associations in Porto. The main goal is to pressure public authorities to solve housing problems.

- **Academia Cidadã**: participation in several activities and citizen campaigns, such as “linha vermelha” (national project on natural gas extraction), “como okupar um rio” (defending public management of rivers), and MMEL (platform on the right to housing in Lisbon).
• Transparência e Integridade: participation in multiple national and international networks with focus upon public management transparency. The main project is the “Municipal Transparency Index” in Portugal, followed by projects reporting corruption in public institutions (e.g. risks concerning golden visa in the country), and diminished citizen rights in housing (e.g. via MMEL).

Working group 2
• Fórum Cidadania & Território: focus on territorial development towards national lobbying on decision-makers. Multiple initiatives developed by members of the Forum on territorial development and social participation, and actions in disadvantaged areas of the country with different sources for funding.
• Gestual (representative 2): engaged research with international partners in Mozambique, Angola, and Brazil. Focus on the right to the city and volunteer action in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the periphery of Lisbon.
• ACA-M: juridical and psychological support to victims of the street, and training of new teachers in schools. Focus on the awareness of risks related to dysfunctional behaviours in driving and/or using public transport. Partnerships with local and national public agencies, although out of public funding to keep action independent from political agendas. ACA-M is also member of the European network of the project “Serpente Papa-Léguas” and other networks that allow lobbying European institutions.
• Associação Mulheres Sem Fronteiras: prevention of women exclusion from social and labour life, in partnership with public agencies and authorities. Initiatives engendering the right to the city (e.g. project “Mulheres na diverCidade”) with focus upon the most disadvantaged groups of women in society (e.g. Roma groups and refugees), and dissemination of outputs such as the documentary “A tua voz” together with the local association “faço p-Arte” to promote social inclusion and cohesion.
• MMEL: production of an open letter on housing conditions in Lisbon gathering more than 4 thousand signatures. Support to research in this field, organisation of public debates with decision-makers, and monitoring of local evictions in the city. MMEL is member of the network SET, where Southern European cities join to combat the perverse impacts of massive tourism.

Working group 3
• APPA (representative 1): conservation of cultural, architectural, and archaeological heritage in partnership with local associations and NGOs. Recently, the application to public funding for urban regeneration in the municipality of Lisbon allowed the creation of a large network in defence of local residents in the historical neighbourhood of Alfama.
(e.g. against the evictions planned for the new “Jewish Museum” building, and massive tourism in the area)

- **Warehouse**: member of the international network “Construlab” and involved in several local projects in the country (e.g. new building for the victims of the 2017 fires in Pedrogão Grande, and rehabilitation of the primary school). Currently engaged in a European Commission-funded project on participatory urban regeneration in Lisbon. They act within a wide network of international partners.

- **Pão a pão**: support to refugees in Portugal via social entrepreneurship. The main output was the establishment of a restaurant in Lisbon funded through multiple sponsors and via crowdfunding.

- **Lisbon Sustainable Tourism**: walking tours in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the historical area in order to fund social projects in partnership with local associations and NGOs (e.g. “We hate tourism”, and “Lá Tinha”, an art-based project on the self-construction of cameras). Lisbon Sustainable Tourism representative is also member of the Inducar network, which aims to promote non-formal education on multiple issues, such as bullying, and alternative models of social innovation (e.g. project “Alternativas”).

- **Associação Crescer**: street-level work for social inclusion of the most vulnerable sectors of civil society (homeless, drug-addicted, and refugees mainly). Responsible for the projects “Housing first”, which was created through the community based development plan in the neighbourhood Mouraria, and “Drop in”. They have financial sponsors, namely the local government. Other networks, which are not financial, allow to streamline procedures.

### Working group 4

- **Habitat Porto**: local initiatives supported by parish governments, municipality of Porto and the School of Architecture, University of Porto. Among the initiatives, “Casa Preparada, Vida Melhorada” with experts from different areas in housing project for the organization of two workshops with university students.

- **Mulheres na Arquitectura**: focus on the relation between architects and citizens, with multiple partners for campaigning in favour of women labour conditions, such as “Mulheres sem fronteiras”, and ongoing projects, such as “Oficinas de Cidade” and the project “Um Género de Escola!” funded by the Municipality of Lisbon.

- **Moinho da Juventude**: socio-educational activities in the neighbourhood “Cova da Moura” supported by local, national, and international partners (from Cape Verde government mainly, due to the great presence of people from this former Portuguese colony), and participation to the programme “Participatory Citizenship” with actions aimed at supporting residents in multiple issues.
• APPA (representative 2): partnership with the municipality of Lisbon in defence of residents’ rights, and exhibition of collective memories from the historical neighbourhood Alfama.

• Grupo de Teatro do Oprimido: multiple networks with local associations and NGOs, such as the “Rede multiplica”, “Rede together”, “Criarte”, as well as public bodies to get funding and/or support to their activities focused on the implementation of the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Second session of working groups: reclaiming Europe from the local to the international scale

The second and third working groups have gathered CSOs according to the similarity of their fields of action. The three working groups were constituted as follows:

• Working group 1: public space and mobility
  o Academia Cidadã
  o ACA-M
  o APPA
  o Estrada Viva
  o Lisbon Sustainable Tourism / Inducar
  o Warehouse

• Working group 2: gender/migrations/art
  o Fórum Cidadania e Território
  o Gestual
  o Moinho
  o Mulheres na Arquitetura
  o Associação Mulheres sem Fronteiras
  o Teatro do Oprimido
  o Pão-a-pão

• Working group 3: housing
  o APPA
  o Associação Crescer
  o Gestual
  o Habita Porto
  o Habitar Porto
  o MMEL
  o Transparência e Integridade
Image 5 – Working group on public space and mobility

Photo taken by Roberto Falanga ©

Image 6 – Working group on gender/migrations/art

Photo taken by Roberto Falanga ©
Each group debated on issues concerning actions/initiatives at the international level. At the beginning, some participants were reluctant to debate on mutual learning, as each country should be considered according to specific problems and solutions. Facilitators helped clarify that, despite difficulties in replicating practices from other contexts, they were invited to share their own experience, as well as sources of inspiration.

Accordingly, participants agreed that international networking with other CSOs:

- Can be formal and informal.
- Can gather either European CSOs only or groups from non-European countries.
- Allows sharing ideas and strategies of action on a larger scale.
- Improves the capacity to critically organise local action by learning from processes and results of partners.
- Provides higher visibility and acknowledgment at the international level, and scales up capacity to claim, reclaim and act upon critical issues.
- Provides greater chances to access to international funding and related opportunities.
- Increases access to information on European policies for more effective advocacy.
- Permits enlarging the list of contacts in other countries and the organisation of international events to multiply the transfer of knowledge.
As more pointedly regards lessons learnt from international experiences of social mobilisation, participants advocated that Portugal needs to:

- Improve the mobilisation of civil society.
- Improve the self-representation of vulnerable groups.
- Be more demanding with decision-makers.
- Fight against fragmentation and isolation of movements and create conditions for greater mutual learning and sharing of resources.
- Use and provide documents in open source for broader dissemination.
- Draw inspiration from international practices by taking into critical consideration the context of implementation.
- Draw inspiration from other countries where lobbies are created to target specific policy areas.
- Draw inspiration from good housing practices such as the “municipalist” experiences and the PAH (Plataforma Afetados Hipoteca) in Spain, as they managed to make the problem public, preventing from its marginalisation.
- Draw inspiration from occupation of buildings in Italy, Spain and Germany.
- Draw inspiration from the international agenda on the rights of women.
- Draw inspiration from cooperatives for housing from Northern Europe, and public housing in the Netherlands.

Complementarily, participants pinpointed that Portugal can be an example for international partners in:

- Mixing formal and informal initiatives (e.g. “Caravana pelo direito à habitação”).
- Mixing actions concerning material and immaterial cultural heritage.
- Promoting positive human relations and social interaction in local communities.
- Promoting creativity as the instrument to overcome obstacles and limitations.
- Spreading traditions of local associativism of residents.
- Being a source of inspiration on effective reporting housing conditions (as proved by Habita with the UN, in 2017)
- Being a source of inspiration in implementing pioneer projects for homeless people, such as “Housing First”.
- Being a source of inspiration with municipal programmes that support local action (e.g. the “BipZip” in Lisbon)
Focus on working group 1: public space and mobility

CSOs own different degrees of international networking. There is wide concern on the emerging disparity through which European countries fund grassroots initiatives, with UK and France investing a lot in this field. Before this irregular scenario, it is necessary to not replicate practices from abroad without critically evaluating the context of implementation. According to some participants, formalisation helps strengthen citizen-led practices in Portugal, where mobilisation is weak and there is lack of critical mass.

For example, ACA-M carries on both formal and informal networking at the international level. It also conducts lobbying with the European Commission, and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); participation in international organisations, such as the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety; member of “Aliança Global de ONGs para a Segurança Rodoviária”; “Estrada Viva – Liga contra o Trauma”; “Federação Europeia de Vítimas Rodoviárias – FEVR”; “Federação Ibero-Americana contra a Violência nas Estradas”; “Federação Internacional de Peões – IFP”; “International Federation Against Road Trauma – ICART”. International lobbying should solve problems in the management of national issues, as well as mitigate the perverse effect of acritical replication of international practices. On the other hand, lobbying allows sharing knowhow from Portugal. At the national level, ACA-M aims to educate local populations against populist trends in Europe (like in Spain and Italy), and teaching associations in Portuguese-speaking countries (countries formerly colonized by Portugal, e.g. Angola, Mozambique, Cabo Verde) good practices from Portugal out of paternalist approaches. Similarly, Estrada Viva shares the same international contacts as ACA-M. In Portugal, it networks with a wide range of local associations and agencies (e.g. firemen, physicians, etc.) towards greater acknowledgment of street safety in Portugal.

Platforms and International/European organizations work on lobbying and advocacy and help increase capacity to networking in international projects. Inducar networks with the Anna Lindh Foundation, an inter-governmental institution bringing together civil society and citizens across the Mediterranean to build trust and improve mutual understanding; European Association for the Education of Adults; DARE – Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe, which is a Europe-wide network that aims to promote education for democratic citizenship and human rights; European Commons Assembly, an European platform gathering organizations and people on common goods. Similarly, Academia Cidadã is member of multiple networks, such as the European Civic Forum; European Alternatives; Stop TTIP; and several informal platforms concerning the right to housing. Warehouse is also partner of international projects (e.g. European Capital of Culture, European Cultural Foundation, etc.), with Universities, local associations, NGOs, movements, and entrepreneurships that collaborate to the implementation. The Spanish website “Inteligencias Colectivas” is considered a great source of inspiration for the work on
public spaces, and the access to open source documents facilitates the dissemination. Last, APPA is partner within the ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites, associated to UNESCO) and recently requested to partake to the Network of Sustainable Cities.

Focus on working group 2: gender/migrations/art
Networking helps gather new information, enlarge contacts and give more visibility to local associations’ work at the international level. Networking further allows bringing activists, militants and people from other countries in Portugal to share ideas and knowhow. There is wide necessity to make pressure on public agenda, and be consistent with the international agenda on gender equality. Towards this aim, there is necessity of more self-representativeness, resistance, persistence, and demand to public institutions. On the other hand, Portugal is a good example of how different sources of knowledge can be merged into informal and formal practices (e.g. “Caravana pelo direito à habitação”).

CSOs are networked with multiple countries in Europe (e.g. INK in Croatia, Kuringa and Jungend Academy in Germany, Utopia Barcelona and Palla Pupas in Spain, Pasapasso in France, Krilla and University of Bologna in Italy; Active Inquire in Scotland, University of Amsterdam in Netherlands, etc.) and often rely on the work of national networks (e.g. networks CLG, PAR, PPDM – Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres; European lobby of women, “Associação das Mulheres no Mediterrâneo”, European Council of Architects, European Project MOMOHO).

Focus on working group 3: housing
CSOs agree that international networking allows gaining visibility at the international level, as well as learning from international practices. Yet, they all point out that is necessary to critically approach the replication of practices in Portugal, and take into serious consideration the context. In this vein, MMEL has first aimed to consolidate the national network concerned with the right to housing and, later on, with the internationalisation. Informal connection with Southern European countries aims to combat massive tourism through the creation of the network “SET”, consisting of activist and grassroots groups agreeing upon the same manifesto. The action of APPA is strictly connected to MMEL, which ensures international visibility and access to information.

Similarly, the participation in the European Alliance on the right to housing allows Habita Porto to learn from international partners and evaluate whether and how to replicate practices in Portugal. Some of the initiatives are funded by international institutions, and it participates in international meetings on the right to housing. In the same vein, Habitar Porto holds informal relation with the “Consórcio para la Reabilitación del Centro Histórico de Santiago”, supporting the rehabilitation of buildings. Together, they applied for funding to the programme INTERREG,
and this was an occasion for learning how the Consortium works and manages different levels of administration.

Gestual holds formal relations with the Universities Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo (Mozambique) and Agostinho Neto in Luanda (Angola), as well as with grassroots movements in those cities. Informal connections are established with researchers and movements according to the issue at stake. Networking provides greater visibility and capacity to critically reflect and research on empirical knowledge. Associação Crescer also holds multiple formal relations, such as the project “Home EU” about homeless people and aiming to influence decision-making and combat social injustices. It belongs to the international network “Housing first”, which gathers universities and associations from seven countries, and organises biannual international congresses. Finally, Transparência e Integridade has a formal relation with Transparency International, a global network that covers more than 100 countries, and that lobbies European Union on effective measures against public corruption. It holds informal connections with other countries, and most of the Initiatives are funded via international partnerships.

**Third session of working groups: reclaiming Europe with international decision-makers**

Like the second session, the third session gathered CSOs according to their fields of action. The three constituted working groups maintained the same structure as the previous ones:

- **Working group 1: public space and mobility**
  - Academia Cidadã
  - ACA-M
  - APPA
  - Estrada Viva
  - Lisbon Sustainable Tourism / Inducar
  - Warehouse

- **Working group 2: gender/migrations/art**
  - Fórum Cidadania e Território
  - Gestual
  - Moinho
  - Mulheres na Arquitetura
  - Mulheres sem Fronteiras
  - Teatro do Oprimido
  - Pão-a-pão

- **Working group 3: housing**
  - APPA
  - Associação Crescer
CSOs were invited to debate on their ongoing relation with international institutions. From a general overview, some obstacles and limitations have been pinpointed in this regards:

- Little transparency in the ways international institutions collaborate with lobbies.
- Little access to wider knowledge on which institutions are responsible for the implementation of policies.
- Little effective articulation of funding from the international to the local level.
- Little evidence-based orientation in European policies.
- Little sustainability in European policies and short-term opportunities for funding.
- Little investment on long-term projects in favour of short-term mobility.
- Little monitoring and evaluation of the projects.
- Little gender equality among criteria for funding.
- Little diversification of opportunities for funding according to the wide range of agencies (e.g. EU-funded Erasmus Programme is open to Universities and CSOs, compromising the success of medium/small CSOs).
- Excessive bureaucracy requested in the application for funding that favours powerful networks.
- Funding addressed to big projects only, leaving aside medium/small CSOs with reduced capacity to network and compete at the international level.
- Disproportioned emphasis on participation against the actual availability of tools for real bottom-up citizen engagement.

Focus on working group 1: public space and mobility

While APPA does not have, at the moment, relations with international institutions, ACA-M frequently takes part to meetings in Brussels aimed at claiming changes at the local level. Even though political representatives take final decisions, meetings serve to record stakeholders’ views. One of the most recurring claims is the need to revert private investments in favour of social responsibility, out of “mysterious foundations”. Also, there is need to control governments as well as transnational agencies, such as the World Bank. Free from public funding provided by governments, ACA-M wants to act critically in its field of action. Likewise, Estrada Viva does not get public funding to keep on being independent, and acknowledges that both small and big projects are needed to have an impact over international institutions. For example, Tactical
Urbanism interventions can make a difference even with small interventions. Small projects should rely on less bureaucratic procedures and be accompanied out of short scheduling. The BipZip in Lisbon suffers similar problems: short-term public support to small interventions without gradual leaving.

Inducar representative also shared concerns about the role of the European Union, as it seems to be unresponsive on some key societal issues, and does not favour bottom-up processes of inclusion, as proved by ongoing problems of refugees’ integration in the member states. In fact, European Union often promotes tokenistic forms of dialogue with citizenship on a wide range of issues, namely among young people, and does not guarantee effective results. Although European Union may be driven by good intentions, clientelism is everywhere, and risks to prevent from any effective opportunity to get funding at the local level. Finally, the issues at stake are not always relevant, as European Union is often fascinated by key concepts, such as innovation, smart and technology that, however, do not necessarily respond to societal needs. Similarly, Warehouse agrees that bureaucracy is often excessive but that monitoring is almost absent based on self-evaluations on outputs and financial self-reporting. Furthermore, the winners of several competitions for funding are already known, and medium/small CSOs end up being marginalised from this process.

Critically, Academia Cidadã representative argues that the European Union does not provide adequate tools for effective participation, mainly for small projects led by small groups. Funding is mostly addressed to fund big networks for mobility, and applications require great efforts that are not worthy being carried out in many cases, due to spread clientelism. In this way, medium/small CSOs get far from European opportunities for funding, even when intermediary agencies should ensure greater access. The ideology of the European Union is clearly neoliberal and promotes participation just to content the left.

Focus on working group 2: gender/migrations/art

CSOs agree that European institutions are moved by great ideals and ambitious policies that rarely find their concretisation in real life. For example, as advocated by Mulheres sem Fronteiras and Mulheres na Arquitetura, despite the existence of normative frameworks on gender equality, these are barely taken into account in policymaking and/or selection for funding projects. Several problems originate from the bureaucratisation of the procedures for funding, which end up emptying good intentions. As a result, only well-structured and organised CSOs succeed in getting funds, while medium/small CSOs are increasingly marginalised. For example, the Erasmus+ programme is open to CSOs and Universities, and the latter have greater chances to get funding thanks to their structure and organisation. On the contrary, medium/small CSOs have difficulties
in accessing this and other programmes because they often lack institutional capacity to do so. A solution could be creating funds for the “professionalization” of CSOs in international funding.

When CSOs are successful in getting international funds, projects are often focussed on specific issues, with little guarantee on the sustainability of their action. Furthermore, there is lack of monitoring and evaluation on procedures and outputs of the international projects. In fact, little monitoring (and supervision) is ensured through the implementation of projects. More often than not, reporting is merely based on quantitative indicators, rather than on qualitative ones. On the contrary, the financial management is often dispersed among different agents, increasing the complexity in implementing projects and getting reimbursements. In this vein, CSOs also point out the problems of co-funding projects, and the search for additional complementary financial supports.

Lobbying mechanisms are little transparent and, therefore, it is hard to effectively influence decision-makers in EU. In addition, recommendations are barely taken into consideration, as proved with the action of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). In the relation among CSOs and international agents, the national government is more often an obstacle than a facilitator. In fact, forms of payment are frequently managed with too much bureaucracy with little attention to problems emerging from the implementation in specific contexts. As Pão a Pão argues, there is a sort of bureaucratic blockage that prevent the real engagement of the most-in-need sectors of civil society.

Accordingly, as the Teatro do Oprimido advocates, it is necessary that the most marginalised and in-need people self-represent themselves in reclaiming their rights. On the contrary, they are much more often represented by “spokesmen” in Portugal. The case of refugees and migrants is exemplar: despite Portuguese welcoming practices and policies are being acknowledged internationally as good, the reality is slightly different. And this example further confirms that it makes no sense to narrow the discussion around European institutions only, as claimed by Gestual, and rather open to the global scenario.

Focus on working group 3: housing

CSOs have different experiences of accessing to European institutions. Habita Porto, for example, provides the example of their claim to the Court for Human Rights of the Council of Europe that managed to report precarious housing conditions by the United Nations. Diversely, Transparência e Integridade accesses to European Union through international lobbying, as well as via invitation by the European Parliament at the time of the “Panamá Papers” international scandal, which involved Portugal as well. More broadly, they are consulted whenever European Union needs to check issues about corruption in public management in Portugal. The MMEL met members of the European Parliament in order to get information about normative frameworks and policies in
housing. Accordingly, they are now planning workshops with the SET network in the European Parliament.

While Gestual accesses to European funding via research projects, Associação Crescer partakes international lobbying via the project “Home EU”. However, lobbying requires knowhow, which prevents from the participation of all and, more pointedly, of the most vulnerable groups of civil society. Habitar Porto, for example, has not accessed any European funding so far, as it has rather approached local authorities in its daily work. While so, local authorities also manage international funding, such as with the European programme “Urban Innovative Actions”. However, this programme gives narrow spaces to alternative thinking, and rather ends up promoting mainstream political agendas. As a result, programmes like this barely reflect societal needs, as echoed by all the CSOs in this group. For example, housing continues to not be an issue debated in the European Parliament, and European directives prevent from providing public funding for housing against emerging needs in urban contexts. In other cases, European directives are not taken so seriously, as for transparency and open access to public data, and this eventually leads to underestimate the ways public institutions work.

Lack of information about the ways governments work is reflected by the lack of clarity on the ways European institutions coordinate international policymaking. CSOs argue that it is hard to acknowledge which institution is responsible for what. However, they also acknowledge that the European Commission has the power to influence national governments. For example, Transparência e Integridade confirms that the European Commission is conducting a study on the impacts of the Golden Visa in Portugal, which is influencing the national government to be more transparent on that. Yet, European Commission is being influenced by powerful lobbying groups, such as Airbnb, which prevent from adopting strict measures to regulate the housing market.

In this regard, Portuguese political representatives have been required to provide more adequate responses, as advocated by MMEL, and have been making public consultations for a new Law on housing, as well as a new policy strategy by the government. However, one of the main obstacles in the implementation of laws and policies in the country is the autonomy of local authorities, which often results into the lack of political commitment of local representatives, as argued by Gestual. Against this backdrop, despite the good intentions of the national government, good results could be far from being achieved. Furthermore, considering that good intentions need time to be assumed by all, electoral cycles hardly facilitate the effective implementation of new measures, and more realistically rely on the “same as usual” politics of the powerful.

In the light of all this, international funding ends up having little impact over the daily work of CSOs. The promotion of networking is functional to get funding that is not accessible to medium/small CSOs and, as a consequence, compel networks to adopt the same values and language of big mainstream groups.
Notes for an Action Plan: Reclaiming (what) Europe?
The meeting collected a wide range of information about local and international actions/initiatives led by this sample of CSOs. Considering the outputs of the working groups, which include the construction of mutual trust among participants as well as cumulative sharing of knowledge and knowhow, participants were finally required to address those claims that they would like to debate in the second meeting of November 2018.

Accordingly, CSOs voiced out the following claims, which are grouped into five macro-areas addressing a “different Europe” in what regards: (i) political agendas; (ii) policies; (iii) ways of networking; (iv) representing voices; (v) ways of funding.

Reclaiming different political agendas in Europe
- European institutions still pass through national governments, while some countries like Portugal would take more advantage from a more direct management of funding (e.g. via regional bodies).
- European institutions are now seeking to fund initiatives in Eastern European countries, more than Southern Europe. This shift compromises Portugal, which is a peripheral country that needs international acknowledgment to make things work internally.
- Considering the democratic deficit in Europe, there is need for broader debate upon what Europe we want and how it can effectively fund grassroots actions and initiatives.

Reclaiming different policies in Europe
- More often than not, European policies are guided by political agendas that define in advance the issues of interest, thus biasing genuine bottom-up processes of policymaking.
- Top-down approaches are disguised by the rhetoric of participation, which incorporates legalistic languages and bureaucratic procedures that hinder real citizen engagement.
- International debates lack intersectionality, and do not provide the needed complexity to both agenda setting and policy solutions. New approaches are needed to approach the complex matches and mismatches of claims emerging from civil society.
- Lack of transparency in European policymaking may be either a political strategy or related to the complexity of managing a huge and diverse context that, according to some, motivates easier access of big networks and lobbies.
- Lack of continuity and sustainability of policies creates great distance between European institutions and local contexts.
- Focus on metropolitan cities should not shadow smaller towns and rural contexts, as proved by the lack of accountability on funds addressed to the interior of Portugal.
Reclaiming different ways of networking in Europe

- Although European institutions declare to open the doors to all, claims are rarely made by the most in-need sectors of civil society, while powerful lobbies have more frequently voice into decision-making.
- Participation is biased because there are not adequate tools for those who have not enough resources. This generates frustration and distrust towards European institutions.
- Excessive bureaucracy further hinders the participation of medium/small CSOs that often lack knowhow to have an impact at the international level.

Reclaiming different ways of representing voices in Europe

- Self-representation is needed to be more effective in claiming rights to European institutions.
- Self-representation can be organised through formal groups as well as via movements, and whatever the form of organisation, there should be greater access to European decision-making.
- Despite the emphasis on participation, not only self-representation is limited, as the scale of action is too large for disadvantaged sectors of civil society.

Reclaiming different ways of funding in Europe

- European funding is much more concerned with international mobility than with the sustainability of actions and initiatives led by CSOs.
- European funding inherently limits the application by all CSOs because of its legalist language and bureaucratic apparatus.
- Applying to international funding has become a profession and this is not fair for democracy because it encourages the hyper-specialization of some in detriment of communities.

Feedback from CSOs and facilitators

CSOs were invited, at the end of the meeting, to fulfil an evaluation survey. Accordingly, they provided a positive feedback on the meeting, as it allowed knowing the work of other CSOs, as well as sharing ideas with both new and already known CSOs. Some of the CSOs’ representatives explicitly expressed their will to be engaged in further meetings and initiatives of the project. In one case, the organizing committee was proposed to organise a similar meeting in rural contexts.

Critiques to the meeting mainly regarded:

- Ethnic/socioeconomic biases due to greater presence of white and high-educated people
- Societal biases due to greater presence of CSOs from Lisbon
- Little clarity and/or redundancy of some of the issues for debate in the working groups
- Little time for debate in the working groups
According to the four facilitators, the sample of CSOs was adequately representative of the great diversity of fields of actions and initiatives in the country. Diversity was ensured by the provision of multiple ideas shared by participants and the mutual learning occurred among participants on the issues of debate.

However, facilitators acknowledge some limitations that should be solved in the future:

- Diversity of knowledge and experience in the European context (some CSOs own greater knowhow about international networking and funding)
- Diversity of presence and action in local contexts (the sample was reduced as to minor, peripheral, and less visible experiences of grassroots activism)
- Diversity of skills in participatory techniques (some participants found it difficult to speak on behalf of the CSOs they represented)

On a more reflective side, facilitators further point out that Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is (still) not adequately known in Portugal, and this is likely to make more difficult the engagement of CSOs in this kind of meetings. On a more logistical side, facilitators also argue the need to ensure two facilitators for each working group in order to better distribute tasks of facilitation and note-taking. Facilitators finally share that some participants showed initial resistance to the debate as it was being audio-recorded, although this never impaired meaningful debates. On the contrary, numerous participants showed great interest in knowing each other and, in some cases, anticipated future collaborations.

Conclusions

The meeting provided a complex overview on both local and international actions/initiatives led by the sample of CSOs. Europe can be approached as an opportunity, mainly as regards networking and funding, although new political agendas and policies are needed to enable CSOs to effectively benefit from them. Shared concerns on the excessive bureaucracy required to access European institutions lead CSOs to be suspicion on the real intentions of engaging medium/small CSOs in the processes of decision-making. Despite great emphasis on new tools for citizen engagement, CSOs think that evidence does not prove transparency and accountability of the initiatives promoted at the international level. Even more critically, CSOs argue that there is a redundancy of few big agencies that succeed in having a voice into decision-making, while the majority lack resources to provide their contribution.

These limitations are further supported by weak social mobilisation in Portugal, which also compromises meaningful contributions to the international debate. Portuguese political culture does not facilitate the relationship between governors and governed at all levels, while the lack of national public funding for local authorities narrows opportunities for CSOs, which more
frequently need to apply to international funding. However, national government intermediates international funding and ends up hindering greater access to medium/small CSOs. Yet, European projects often require the participation of these groups, thus creating a short-circuit that needs to be solved.

It is against this backdrop that local and international actions/initiatives should be understood as inherently connected to and dependent on opportunities provided by European institutions for the effective organisation of civil society. Accordingly, the next meeting should address these issues with international decision-makers and lobbies in order to enlarge the debate upon real chances to reduce the marginalisation of some sectors of civil society and CSOs into policymaking.

Following the notes shared for an Action Plan, the meeting should focus upon:

- Political agendas: how to solve the democratic deficit in Europe, and how to balance socioeconomic inequalities among member states?
- Policies: how to effectively engage European institution into bottom-up processes of decision-making? How to reduce legalistic languages and bureaucratic procedures that hinder citizen participation? How to promote international debates that manage to approach complex issues without lacking transparency, continuity and sustainability?
- Networking: how to include the most in-need sectors of civil society against the dominance of powerful international lobbies? How to enable the most marginalised citizens and CSOs through adequate tools, and have an impact at the international level?
- Representing voices: how to ensure that the most-in-need sectors of civil society can self-represent themselves before European institutions?
- Funding: how to shift from international mobility as the major criterion to the sustainability of actions/initiatives? How to guarantee that CSOs at all levels can access to multiple opportunities for funding out of hyper-specialisation in international applications?

These topics should be approached through a specific combination of goals and methodology to be tailored according to the typologies of agents invited to the meeting. Considering that the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung intends to invite international decision-makers and lobbies, the second meeting should not lose the opportunity to gather this sample of CSOs with medium/small CSOs as well. Accordingly, agents should be engaged through a consistent set of plenary sessions, workshops, and/or focus groups to ensure meaningful debate on real opportunities to “reclaim Europe”.

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