

Social innovation dynamics: a territorial approach to 3rd sector initiatives in the north of Portugal

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This ongoing project addresses the recent transformations within social policy and practice that gave form to the concept of social innovation. Social innovation is understood as a significant change in the way a given society deals with a social problem. Its significance is measured by scale - number of people, geographical area involved, by scope - its capacity to affect multiple social dimensions, and by resonance - that is, the degree of intensity to which it attracts people's imagination (Nilsson, 2003).

The question is to know in which ways the spatial development and spatial justice (Soja, 2010) is affected by the social innovation initiatives carried on within the third sector. The literature on social innovation refers to two main methodologies: working with and not for the people – the conviction that social actors' involvement on the projects that are designed for their benefit is a functional requirement; network cooperation – the understanding that organizations must come out of their walls in order to fully engage with society, for that is the only way to provide an integrated answer to social needs in a network society.

The research will approach 3 case studies: a national project on gender equality run by a Local Development Association's network – *Animar*; a Private Social Institution focused on Health and Wellness – *Espaço T*; and, a Non Profit Association focused on Housing – *Associação Humanitária Habitat*. This third case is a methodology of housing support based on volunteer work and territorial network activation, therefore of particular interest for this conference.

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The guideline of the project that gives ground to this paper is *the relation between 3rd sector social innovation initiatives and spatial development*. The research question we pose is *In which ways can 3rd*

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sector social innovation initiatives affect spatial development? This question can be divided into two: *Can 3rd sector social innovation initiatives affect spatial development? If so, in which ways?*

The debate aroused by these questions comes from a wider reasoning about the role of 3rd sector's organizations, and the role of the civil society, in general, in the construction of the future of communities, regions and nations, which is in fact, the practice of development. Such reasoning is based on recognized literature and research on the identity and structure of the 3rd sector, on the ascending field of social innovation and on spatial development. These references give us reasons to believe there is a relation between the 3rd sector and spatial development, and that the first can affect the second. Far from assuming this relation as linear and unidirectional, our position towards research is focused on the role of the 3rd sector, particularly of the new generation initiatives that follow the principles of social innovation, in shaping the face of place.

The 3rd sector is defined as a wide group of organizations whose purpose is not to maximize profit but to obtain a social outcome, to provide a collective or public service that answers the needs and aspirations of a local community or a particular group of people. Their private nature is what distinguishes these organizations from the public institutions. Although they provide collective or public services motivated by a social goal, they are ruled by private law and have autonomous management nondependent from the governmental or public administrative structures. At the same time, the 3rd sector organizations are different from the private market organizations in what comes to profit, there is no profit maximization in the 3rd sector organizations, once their focus is on the social value of their activities. Therefore there is no struggle between the use value and the exchange value of the services provided, once it is the value in use, the intrinsic value of the service provided that gives purpose to the economic activity. This can in fact be seen as the competitive advantage of the third sector over the market, once it is not subject to the market laws that exclude consumers according to the price of goods. And in comparison with the state, the 3rd sector organizations are not subject to the variability of political cycles, which represents a possibility of advantage in terms of inner coherence and continuity of services and programs provided by the 3rd sector (Evers, 1990). According to the John Hopkins University, CNPP – Comparative Non Profit Project, applied in a wide range of countries, including our country, in 2005, a 3rd sector organization is defined by five common traits: to have a formal legalized structure; to assume private nature; the absence of maximization or distribution of profits; the existence of an autonomous management supporting an ongoing activity run by a formally defined group of members; to admit only voluntary forms of membership (Franco, 2005).

An analytical approach to the 3rd sector initiatives distinguishes the activities of these organizations by the principles that are implied in such structures, such as the universal value of human life, and its superiority above the value of capital, the importance of freedom, justice and human rights, the necessity of promoting forms of cooperation to achieve a better commitment to the fulfilment of human capacities. According to Salvatore, the type of rationality that underlies these principles is the value oriented rationality, as defined by Max Weber, for its principal goal is the provision of services that will answer to social needs, problems or aspirations, differing from the instrumental rationality, the value oriented rationality is not focused on the means or costs that an activity might imply, neither on its probability of success. For the leitmotiv of such activities are the values and ideas that inspire it, hence these values give ground to the structural objectives of the organization. Weber's theory was designed to explain social interaction among individuals but it can also be useful to understand the organizational behaviour, moreover, there is an important

relation between individual social interaction and the forming of organizations, once the origin of social organizations, as a general rule, is the reunion and collective action of groups of individuals with common values and common goals (Salvatore, 2004; Weber, 1922).

The 3rd sector arose from the need of cooperation and the understanding that in our world we live better when we work together, an individual cannot obtain by him or herself necessary resources and services to provide for his/her own life goals and needs. Throughout history mankind has learnt the power of cooperation and institutionalized organization for the fulfilment of each person's individual freedom. Institutionalization means obtaining a formal legal structure, defining formal goals and rules and a body of members with distinct functions connected by the hierarchy line that grants the share of responsibility. Institutionalization is what distinguishes the 3rd sector organizations from the ground based groups or collectivities with no formal identity. So, the 3rd sector can be seen as the organized and institutionalized part of civil society, existing therefore a connection between the 3rd sector and social movements, as well as with the social facts that arise in a society in each time period. Like it occurred when the Portuguese revolution of 1974 gave momentum to the explosion of the popular protests, already under course, for the right to proper housing and the *Right to the City*, spread in the biggest cities where the housing need was more severe, and lack of urban planning more crucial. This movement resulted in the gradual institutionalization of the Portuguese Housing Cooperatives, a strong group within the cooperative sector, until nowadays (Rodrigues, 1999; Faria, 2009) Cooperativism is itself an important piece of the history of the 3rd sector, developed particularly in the XIX century, in activities of major importance such as agriculture, education and primary goods consumption, and its legal framework was formed in the early XX century, as well as its distinction from the other forms of social organizations, associations and mutual organizations or societies (Quintão, 2004).

The concept of social innovation is related to the current transformation in the field of social work, largely carried on by the 3rd sector. This transformation proposes an integrated and effective approach to social problems, since an integrated perspective of human existence in the context of social exclusion is the only way to invert the process and open a path towards social inclusion. This transformation requires new ideas that can provide solutions to increasing social problems, particularly new ways of posing such problems, new reasoning standards, focusing not only on people's needs but on people's capacities. As Einstein once said *today's problems can not be solved with the same reasoning standards that created them* (in Meneses, 2009). This is the basis of the idea of social innovation as Nilsson defines it, in his words, *a significant, creative and sustainable shift in the way a given society dealt with a profound and previously intractable social problem such as poverty, disease, violence or environmental deterioration* (Nilsson, 2003). Such a transformation process in the patterns of response to accurate social problems will imply a rupture with the established norms and the previous order of distribution of power, capital and resources. According to Mulgan, the process of social innovation depends upon three basic links of the socioeconomic system that sustains it: effective demand – the broad recognition of social problems; effective supply – the generation of new ideas that can solve those problems; effective strategies – the answer to the question *how to make the ideas work?* – involving the options taken, the methodologies, the forms of access to funds, and the relationships created with several actors (Mulgan, 2007b).

This step forward needs to be taken firstly inside the organizations that undertake the process of social innovation, for it means the adoption of a new methodology of social work, which is composed by two main

pillars: the necessity of *working with and not for the people* and the awareness of the multiple benefits of *network cooperation* – these two pillars, operating at the procedural level, constitute the first set of conditions for social innovation to occur.

Working with the people and not for the people, means that the essential basis of social innovation work is relational and therefore must be focused not only on people's immediate needs but furthermore on people's capacities, goals and responsibilities. Therefore the excluded populations must be treated as capable, free and responsible individuals, who have a word to say and a central role to play in their own process of inclusion and life standards improvement. This idea follows the theorization on the concept of *empowerment* that we will not explore in depth on this article, but whose basic assumption is that excluded groups and individuals must be the locomotives of social change. And in fact, as Mulgan states, *social innovation does not only serve vulnerable populations, it is served by them*, not so rarely, the excluded groups themselves create forms of organization to stand for their own rights (Mulgan, 2007a). Besides, creativity and the capacity of adaptation are common traits to human beings, in these capacities lies the complex of agency which gives social structures their balance throughout the evolution line. Agency and structure are, indeed, the two basic forces that form social systems; structure is maintained by the necessary continuity that a society relies on to keep its identity, and agency is the moving force that allows these structures to keep its resilience. Resilience theory is based on the assumption that change is the inner order of reality, from systemic change to systemic change, the ecosystems have a natural capacity of adjustment and reactivity that allow them to avoid disintegration or collapse. Coming from the natural sciences this model has been applied to social sciences in a wide range of disciplines, including sociology and geography. In this context the resilience capacity of social systems depend upon the connectivity and balance between agency and structure, for agency to be effective, the social capital must be reinforced, so that human capital can be strengthen and reinvested in the economy (Westley, 2008). Mulgan provides a general but clear distinction between the economic perspective of human capital, the sociological approach of social capital that recognizes the value of social bounds, and the insightful caption of relational capital which analyses the depth, quality, dynamic and stability of the configuration of social networks (Mulgan, 2009). For Isabel André it is the strength of relation capital, in other words, the communication and sharing of knowledge, ideas and information, through the architecture of power structures that can make social innovation happen (André, 2006).

Therefore, the second main pillar – *network cooperation*- is a crucial method for the process of social innovation. It implies an effective share of power in the process of innovation and a real distribution of credits for its results, thus it is only when organizations come out of their walls that social change at systemic level can occur. The *network cooperation* method is not only applied amongst social organizations, but as well between 3rd sector and governments, public institutions and market economy organizations. The relational network includes relationships between 3rd sector organizations and private companies, individual private donors, local, national and supranational governmental authorities, as well as, to put it briefly, the set of relationships among all the stakeholders, like, for example, the relationships between volunteers and staff members, or board members and fundraising event sponsors. The mixed nature of the network – in terms of economic sectors involved, is fundamental, once the ultimate goal of social innovation is much wider than what can be achieved within the boundaries of the 3rd sector. Social innovation aims social change, as a condition to put in practice an integrated and accurate process of

development. Currently, the model of sustainable development is accepted almost worldwide, particularly in the developed countries, and it proposes an integrated view, implying that all economic actors are obliged to the harmony between social, environmental and economical development.

The perspective of spatial development can be very useful for structuring an integrated perspective, given the spatial allocation of people, services and resources. So, it is in place, that the three vectors of sustainable development can be achieved, and they can only be achieved at full extent by implying the active participation of all social and economic actors that shape the face of place, and will build the future spatial forms and social structures. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that space is place, that is, space is socially constructed, as well as society is constructed on space in such a way that, like a mirror reflection, space gains social identity, multiplying the social traits that gave it shape. From this reasoning comes the idea of spatial justice, defined as an integrated view of political, economical and social justice that people benefit from in a certain place. The level of spatial justice is measured in terms of access to public decision making processes, and access to goods and services that allow the realization of human needs, such as housing, education, proper jobs and proper working conditions, clean water, heating systems and other important resources. Within the cities and urban areas it is clear that there are areas with quite different levels of spatial justice, in fact, this topic has been particularly developed in the field of City studies (Soja, 2009).

The main goal of all development theory is the Well-Being of the population which, briefly, can be understood as the improvement of people's life standards – the base of the main commitment of the State towards society. In an utilitarian approach, Well-Being is defined as the completion of human needs, such as access to basic goods, and other consumption goods, shelter, education, proper jobs, and others. Another fundamental approach is focused on the notion of *capacity*, defined by Amartya Sen as the effect of people's freedom of choice, that is, their range of possibilities in their own live choices. According to Sen, the maximization of individual freedom is a condition for development, because development can only succeed when people are able to participate in its process, and they can only do so, by accomplishing their own life goals and aspirations. This notion of Well-Being is connected to the previous explanation about spatial justice, for the fulfilment of individual freedom cannot be accomplished without justice criteria, as the principle of individual freedom implies a social commitment (Marques, 2004). In Rawls theory of *justice as fairness*, the basic principle of justice is the maximization of the minimum standards of Well-Being – the *maximin* principle – meaning that, the existence of social inequalities must result in the amplification of the opportunities of those who are in worst position in the unequal structures of resources distribution. Well, this principle is based on two important criteria, one of which is the recognition of difference, and the other is the right to individual freedom. Accepting the universal value of human life, every individual has equal right to freedom; therefore, the extent of freedom of an individual is connected to the extent of freedom of other individuals, not only meaning that others' freedom limits our freedom, but also that the completion of our own freedom depends upon our relationship with others, and their freedom too (Rawls, 2001). This view of justice and freedom are necessary ingredients of the process of systemic change that social innovation is about.

In order to understand systemic change, we must comprehend society as an ecosystem where the environmental situations – the form of structure in a given space-time social reality - such as *administrative structures and policies, geography and infrastructures, economy and market structure, culture and social*

patterns impose conditions to the actors' freedom, and here, we must perspective all the actors and *interactors* present in the relational network as explained above (*partners, competitors, funders, sponsors, volunteers, supporters, opponents and spectators*). Again, we encounter the complex of agency, which can be understood as the capacity of actors to work upon environmental conditions. According to Dees, it is the relationship between actors and environmental conditions that can generate systemic change, and there are two basic ways of promoting it: to impose a change in the environmental situations themselves or to create a stable and wide process of innovation that can create new standards of behaviour among actors towards the environment (Dees, 2008).

Here we arrive to the level of the second set of conditions for social innovation to work, that is the results level, which according to Nilsson ought to be measured according to 3 criteria: a) *scale* – the importance of dimension, in terms of number of people involved, dimension of the geographical area that is served; b) *scope* – the importance of integrated and multidisciplinary approaches in order to reach the several interdependent dimensions of exclusion, such as Housing and Education, for instance; c) *resonance* – the projects capacity for entering people's lives and imagination – not only the imagination of people in need, but the imagination and lives of all stakeholders, such as volunteers, staff, investors and the public in general, in order to promote the necessary re-interpretation of ideas to make them grow and spread. For the process of social innovation to be effective and design a clear and significant shift in the patterns of response to social problems, scale, scope and resonance must be visible in its outcomes.

From this conceptual framework we developed a hypothetical structure that will guide us on the analysis of the study cases. Crossing the two social innovation methodological pillars with the criteria of signification of the outcomes of social innovation projects, we obtained the framework pictured below on table 1:

Table 1. Hypothetical framework

1 st set of conditions	2nd set of conditions	hypothesis
Working with and not for the people	scale criterion	1. Interaction between groups in different socioeconomic conditions, different sociocultural origins and with different social problems, can increase social inclusion of target populations
Working with and not for the people	resonance criterion	2. Volunteering experiences can affect the imagination of volunteers, target populations and general public 3. Promoting social change within the structures of 3 rd sector organizations is a condition to improve the extension of that

		struggle outside its walls
Network cooperation	scope criterion	4. Different socioeconomic agents interaction can consolidate spatial development by implying a wider range of social actors in the process, promoting more cohesive communities
Network cooperation	scale criterion	5. The use of global cooperation tools might increase social inclusion

This combination of hypothesis is grounded on the exploratory research undertaken during the selection procedure, which was based on the two sets of conditions explained above 1) the necessary inner change within the 3rd sector, based in the two main pillars – *working with the people and not for the people* and *network cooperation*; 2) the alignment of the projects outlines with the fulfillment of the criteria of results significance – *scale, scope and resonance*(Nilsson, 2003). Therefore, this research will be focused on the evaluation of the effective fulfillment of the results significance criteria and the effective practice of the two main methodological pillars.

The study cases were selected through interviews with privileged informers whose experience in the 3rd sector and in social innovation projects in particular, provided the guidance we needed. A prior condition was to analyze projects that take place in the northern region of the country, given the time limits and limited resources available for this project, and the impossibility to compare diverse single initiatives in completely different spatial contexts.

After file analysis of several projects and organizations, following privileged informers' guidelines, with the precious help of the *EQUAL initiative* database and through participation in conferences of the subject, first contact interviews were taken by 5 organizations, from which 3 study cases were selected.

The first case study is a national project on gender equality run by a Local Development Association that is constituted as network – *Animar, Associação Portuguesa Para o Desenvolvimento Local* – created in 1993 for the purpose of promoting territorial cooperation work between organizations, groups and individuals in order to support and improve local development. *Animar* is an important network, not only for the Local Development Associations but also for several other kinds of social institutions that became their partners. *Animar* has run several national projects articulated by regions involving a wide range of institutions and concerning different social dimensions. Most of these projects have been financed by European funding and some of them were included in the above stated *EQUAL initiative*. The project under research has the purpose to promote gender equality within the 3rd sector organizations. For that purpose a diagnosis on the matter is being done, organized in workshops and web participative methodologies and together with the

diagnosis, a list of improvements will be defined by each institution and follow up work on those commitments will be undertaken.

The second case study is a Private Social Institution focused on Health and Wellness– *Espaço T* – created in 1992 for the purpose of providing a positive and integrated approach to Health and Wellness issues in general, the methodology applied is the formula of *integration through art* – based on the therapeutic benefits of creative activities. This institution operates in Porto city, the town of Trofa and it is also starting to develop an affiliate in Lisboa, although that growing project won't be analyzed, once it is outside the geographical limits of this research. The target population of *Espaço t* is quite wide, from blind to drug addict individuals, passing through all sorts of health and wellness disturbances. These participants are referred to as *students* and the participation in different workshops and therapies is not based on their particular problem but on their psychosocial needs as individuals. The name *Espaço t* is based on the idea that there is space for everyone, *Espaço t* is therefore a place for everyone – *espaço para todos* – no matter what specific needs, no matter at which levels they follow the standards of normality.

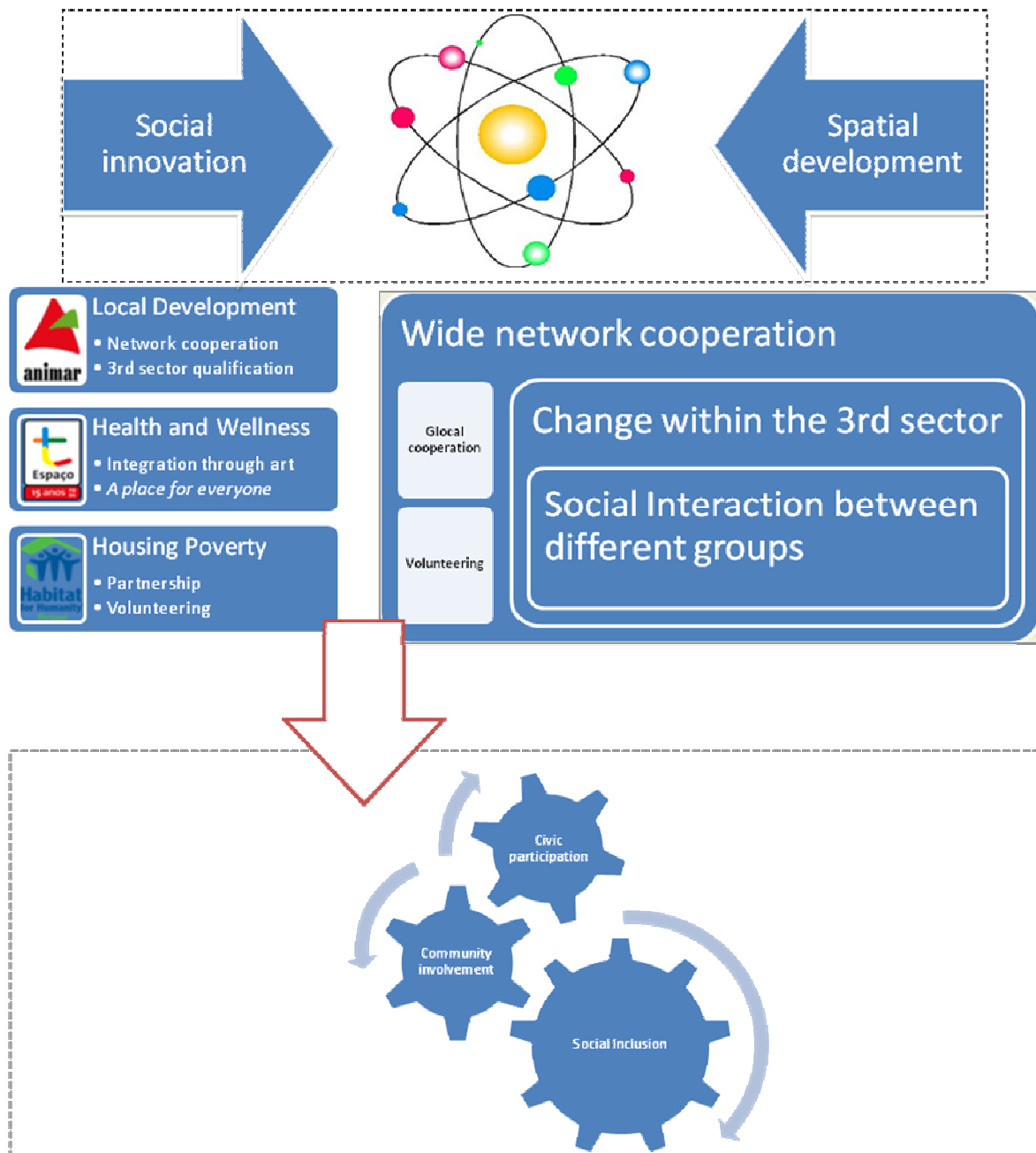
The third case study is a Non Profit Association focused on Housing – *Associação Humanitária Habitat* – the Portuguese affiliate of *Habitat For Humanity International*, whose mission is to eradicate poverty housing from the face of the earth. *Associação Humanitária Habitat* was founded in 1996, in the city of Braga, by a group of friends who believed poverty housing is a crucial problem in our country and that it is in our hands to stop it. Given the coincidence between this conference's subject and the nature of the social problem focused by this organization, this case will be explained in more detail further on.

The methodology for this research is of qualitative type based on the application of interviews (average of 6 by case study) to multiple actors, amongst target population, organizational leaders, staff and volunteers, key-partners in the networks of cooperation, and community members. Participant observation will also be carried on during a few of the projects' workdays, attending workshops and participating in general activities. The approach to the case studies is, as stated above, based 1) firstly, on the focus of the research – the influence of 3rd sector social innovation initiatives on spatial development, 2) secondly, on the hypothetical structure developed from the conceptual framework and 3) at last, on the specific goals of this research which are based on the hypothesis and will be stated bellow.

1. To understand how people in need live the experience of interacting with the working staff of these projects, the volunteers and general public. What effect does this interaction cause in their social representations and in their participation in the community?
2. To analyze the representations of volunteering experiences by volunteers, staff members and target population, in order to understand their importance in shaping people's view of the individual's role in society.
3. To understand the interactions that give form to the current process of change within the 3rd sector, to analyze the representations of staff members and board members about it and to comprehend the implications of this experience in these members' own value standards and attitudes towards their work and their organization.
4. To know the effects of network cooperation between agents with different socioeconomic roles in development, evaluating benefits and disadvantages for different network members, and their spatial results on communities.

5. To understand how the global scale interacts with the local scale directly in such projects, and to analyze the effect of the contact with the wider scale for people in need, in terms of social representations. The interconnection between this 5 research objectives, the hypothetical structure, the research focus and the conceptual framework that gave ground to it, can be visually analyzed on figure 1.

Figure 1. Analysis framework



As we can see, social interaction occupies an important role, for it is relational work that gives fuel to the social innovation process, as the idea of *working with and not for the people* implies. In this topic, volunteering assumes great relevance, given its capacity for mixing groups from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, which has effects, on the volunteers, on the target population, on staff members and on general public that comes to hear about these experiences. For the volunteers, these experiences have potential for changing their view about the social problems they encounter and the people that face such problems, and for changing their attitude towards social exclusion and inequalities, in general, triggering a more participative engagement in society. Our aim is to know how effective is the relational work in process on these projects, how effective are its results in the empowerment of target populations. In what comes to volunteering experiences, we will analyze the social representations in order to know the effective changes that these experiences have produced.

Inter-institutional and further cooperation between different economic agents assume a central place in the process of spatial development for it consists in creating integrated synergies between 3rd sector organizations, public institutions and business companies. Working at the local scale, these networks support the improvement of the human capital that will return more benefits to the economy, and moreover, they will improve the share of knowledge triggering the generation of new ideas that can answer to environmental, social and economic needs. On this topic we will analyze the dynamics and try to assess the effective share of knowledge and resources implied in such networks.

The cross scale interactions that these networks also carry out are crucial for the fulfillment of the goal of social change in a globalized network society. Nowadays, the intersection of global and local is an everyday reality, globalized consumption standards enter our homes every day through TV, as well as information from all sources of social movement in virtually any part of the world can be obtained through the internet. The influence of global markets and global financial structure is more than a given fact in our societies, so much affected by the crisis that this system cyclically produces. The importance of regional supranational structures, such as the EU, is another trait of how the Nation-state has become a weaker link in defining paths for spatial development. Therefore this research will focus on the glocal cooperation synergies and try to assess their importance for the local spatial development of the communities under analysis.

Community involvement is seen as an expected outcome of these projects, through the process of empowerment that underlies the relational work, which includes the effective answer to the more urgent needs of the individuals, but particularly implies a process of change in the individuals' perceptions of their own capacities and responsibilities towards society as a whole, that may lead to an increased participation their communities. Civic participation can be an additional gain in this process; once it is connected to community involvement, only more commonly related to the political system. The individual that becomes more active in his or her community will have more reasons to vote, to defend ideas and perspectives or protest for a cause. Furthermore, civic participation can be spread in wider scales through the possibilities of long distant networks and global action chains. We will focus on analyzing the occurrence or absence of change in the representations of community involvement and civic participation of the target population participants in these projects.

In the end, once social innovations main goal is to promote social change towards a more cohesive and just society, we will try to understand if a shift towards social inclusion can indeed be seen as a general outcome of this complex process, in the limited scale of the three study cases.

The Case of Habitat Portugal

Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) was founded in Americus, Georgia, in 1976, by Millard and Linda Fuller, a couple that gave up a life of wealth for a life of service to people in need. Habitat has Christian ecumenical inspiration, and was raised in the United States with much support from churches and religious congregations. However, Habitat is an international NGO not related to any church in particular, and nondiscrimination by religion, race or gender is included in its principles. In fact Habitat has even started affiliates in non Christian countries such as Lebanon and Egypt, for example (Fuller, 1980).

Before HFHI had formed the structure that it assumes today, the experiences of Linda and Millard, struggling to gather funds for building shelter for poor and marginalized people, started in 1968 around the area of Koinonia Farm, in Georgia. In 1973, encouraged by the achievements at home, the couple made an attempt to take Habitat's model outside the United States of America, and the experience succeeded beautifully in Zaire (currently the republic of Congo). Today, HFHI is spread throughout 92 countries and has built around 300.000 houses sheltering about 1, 5 million people all over the world.

It was the inspirational example of the founders of HFHI, exposed in a magazine that drove José Cruz Pinto, a businessman and former pilot, to join a group of friends and create the Portuguese affiliate – *Associação Humanitária Habitat*, in 1996. When the first project took place, in a very difficult location, on the top of a mount with limited area and poor road access, in Rechã – Vieira do Minho, it seemed hard to believe that volunteer work under a contractor's supervision could be enough to get the job done, but it was! Volunteers came from all over the world with Habitat's international volunteer program – Global Village, working side by side with future homeowners, and local volunteers.

Today, Habitat Portugal has built 25 new houses and repaired 11 houses that gave shelter to 36 families in the district of Braga. This year, *Associação Humanitária Habitat* has expanded its action to the town of Amarante in the district of Porto, with a house repair project. Habitat's houses are built, as much as possible, in the future homeowners' previous location, for the importance of social networks is taken under consideration. Land is in many cases owned by the homeowners, or donated by relatives, friends, the municipalities or other institutions.

Housing Poverty is indeed a global problem but with very important local specificities and social cultural dimensions, that can only be solved by the involvement of all community actors. In Portugal, *Associação Humanitária Habitat* struggles with the hidden poverty housing in cities surroundings and in semi-rural areas, whereas in the States it struggles more with effects of the urban marginalized communities. In Portugal, particularly in Braga, although there are housing needs in the city center, most of the houses are rented and inhabited by tenants, therefore it is harder to start projects in that location. On the contrary, in the less urbanized perimeters, families tend to own one piece of land, or a house or there are more probabilities of finding free and cheaper land.

Given the stated above, it is clear that the target population of *Associação Humanitária Habitat* is not the poorest of the poor, as it happens in other affiliates, such as Mozambique. However, Habitat Portugal

gives support and guidance to people who knock on its door and are not eligible to own a Habitat House. Sometimes, finding a job for one of the couple members, or achieving a form of social security support is enough to increase the income of the family in order to afford the house. In any case, Habitat will never choose a family for whom the house mortgage would represent a problem more than a solution.

Habitat works in partnership with families, in the sense that there is a contract of commitment between the affiliate and the family. Families must give an amount of hours – sweat equity hours – to the construction project, Habitat must inform the families of the estimated budget and together, according to the families' income, they agree on the amount of the mortgage. In Habitat Portugal, the amount applied is, on average, around 150€ per month, which is less than the regular price to rent a room in the same region of the country. The methodology of partnership extends from the homeowners to the private partners, such as donors, of construction materials and other goods, investors, that fund and support Habitat, for instance cooperating in fundraising events. Habitat works by side with the local governments, as well, partnering for land, architectural projects, partial funding of the construction projects, sometimes the municipalities also make donations directly to the families.

Habitat's second main pillar, after partnership, is volunteering. All board members and all committees that structure Habitat – the Construction Committee, the Families Committee and the Fundraising and Volunteering Committee – are by definition formed by volunteers. 90% of the construction work is assured by volunteers, local and international volunteers under the Global Village Program. This international volunteering program implies that, besides all travel expenses, each volunteer pays a fee to the affiliate, that ranges from 250 to 400€, in contribution for the cost of materials and as a way to help Habitat build more homes. The Global Village volunteers, generally, perspective this experience as their contribution to social equality and as a way to get to know the real world out there and make important connections with communities worldwide.

The Global Village program is an important connection link between local and global, volunteers entering this program commonly repeat the experience, and engage in fighting poverty housing all over the world.

Habitat Portugal is a famous destination for Global Village Programs, only last year it received more than 20 teams from March to December. Every Global Village team has one or two team leaders that manage the teams' budget, motivate the team and work together with the local affiliate since the travel is scheduled, in order to organize free time activities and team logistics at the construction site. Generally the teams have around 10 to 15 members and work for a period of 1 to 2 weeks, with 1 or 2 free days for leisure activities. These activities may vary as much as visiting Porto city and the Port Wine Cellars from taking ceramic workshops at the Barcelos museum. International Volunteering Experiences are also available for International Schools, generally during one week and following, more or less, the same patterns of organization that Global Village teams do.

Local volunteering is organized in two main projects – School Volunteering and the Teambuilding Program for companies, these two programs have developed stable relationships between Habitat and important partners either in business, such as *Boehringer Ingelheim* and *Lilly*, as well as in education institutions, such as CLIB – *Colégio Internacional de Braga* and *Escola Profissional de Esposende*. For individual local volunteers the door is always opened, and they can be enrolled in workdays of Global Village teams or other teams. On special occasions, such as the Faith Building Week, workdays for local volunteers only are organized, or, whenever a small repair requires only the work of a few people. Local volunteering of

private individuals is not as stable as it would be desirable; however, there is an important group of more regular members.

The Teambuilding program for companies is of particular interest; like the Global Village program, the Teambuilding implies a donation to the affiliate, of minimum 500€ each team per day, but the companies tend to exceed the expected amount, and additionally provide donations in kind to the families or to Habitat for distribution amongst the most needed homeowners. This connection to the business market is an important way to promote awareness of the housing matter and help companies to improve their external organizational responsibility practices. At the same time, these experiences provide important moments for social interaction among workers, promoting their teamwork abilities, and improving their motivation.

The project of *Associação Humanitária Habitat*, based on the principles of HFHI, gives evidence that Housing and Urban Planning are issues that transcend the local municipalities or the state's responsibilities. In our country, all associative forms have been expelled from this matter in the late 70's, when the municipalities gained control of Social Housing. Since then, only cooperatives stayed in the market of low cost housing. Habitat's model is essentially different from the cooperative structure; its simplicity might come from what Millard Fuller called the *economics of Jesus*, but the fact that makes it essentially different is the process of construction. In no other construction program in our country, families are builders of their own houses and are able to decide, depending on the budget, about the structure and shape of the house (Fuller, 1980). Here I would like to establish a connection with the history of assisted self-construction, for in practical terms, although the amount of work done by the families is limited compared to that of volunteers, Habitat does help families to build their own houses.

Self-construction projects were accomplished by Geddes in India, in the first decades of the XX century, based on the model of participative planning that became more mainstream among us, only in the 60's. The basic principles of this planning model state that residents have the right to participate in the decisions that affect the infrastructures and resources that will provide their own needs; therefore every public matter is subject of public decision. The State should focus on forming a coherent legal framework for the civil society's initiatives, providing access to land, preferably near the job centers, preparing the organization of infrastructures and promoting and coordinating the provision of materials and highly skilled workers for specific tasks. During the decades of 20 and 30, self-construction was carried away illegally in England, as well as in other countries, until the hygiene policies became more severe. In the 60's, Geddes example was followed by Turner in Peru, achieving great success with the participative planning model and creating the so called *Barriadas de Lima*, where $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 6 million inhabitants of Lima were living in 1990. Despite the stigma attached to these constructions, the living conditions were far better than those experienced in the overpopulated city centers. Moreover, in the *Barriadas* the inhabitants had an active role in shaping their own residence and neighborhood, which concurred to their own personal and social development as human beings. The impact of these experiences arrived to the North Hemisphere, in the United States of America with Jane Jacobs and Richard Sennet both implied in the battle against top down planning, from which results the Harlem of New York (Hall, 1987).

During the 60's and 70's, throughout Europe there are examples of citizen interest and concern about the shape and use of the cities, as it occurred in Paris, with the Les Halles Market, in London, with the Convent Garden Market and in Stockholm, over the Intercontinental Hotel. In England, in Macclesfield, Manchester, in 1971, it was built the greatest example of communitarian architecture, which started with a

protest against a demolition order, during which the architect Rod Hackney supported the community in the contact with the authorities and in the building process. Rod Hackney became President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, in 1987. Following that example, the self-construction model was also largely applied in Liverpool (Hall, 1987).

In Portugal, during the 50's, 60's and 70's self construction was the illegal side of the dual housing market, promoted by low income families, with less conditions to obtain houses in the legal market, which favored stronger contractors. The owners of small commerce facilities, textile industry, social construction and lower services' workers were the more regular adepts of self-construction. After the revolution of 1974, the numbers grow up until, between 1971 and 1981, self-construction represents 39,6% of the total housing construction, the highest numbers are in the south of the country, especially in Lisboa (52,4%) and Setúbal (52,5%), while in the district of Porto, the percentage was of 35,8% (Matos, 2001).

Besides the stigma attached to illegal construction, these initiatives did solve the material housing needs of a great amount of people and at the same time, allowed families to achieve the dream of owning their own house. And, in fact, once the illegal construction was under fewer restrictions in what comes to the structure of the houses, these people could use their creativity in shaping the house according to their life style and preferences. The quality of the housing, however, was not necessarily poorer, despite their appearance of somehow being unfinished, and the lack of water and sewage systems was common (Matos, 2001).

Bottom line, the lesson to learn from self-construction is that urban planning management authorities should never underestimate the origin of power in democracy – the people. People's rights must never be ignored or minimized. And the effective right to proper housing includes the ability to choose the kind of housing building process and architectural model that is more suitable to their life style. Another important right is to take part in the decisions that shape their own environment, not only those which concern housing, neighborhoods and proximity services, but also those who respect to public transportation and road and motorway planning.

The perspective of posing the city inhabitant in the centre of urban planning politics is nowadays defended by several documents of City Policy. And it was also present in the methodology applied in – *Anima-te* – a network of cooperation between several institutional actors and communities involved in environmental and social projects, a program of the EQUAL initiative. However the effective participation of communities in territorial decisions is still an exception. The success of social innovation programs would be to make this philosophy a common practice. The effect of resonance may take time to allow social innovators to be inspired by these pilot experiences and develop their own projects (EQUAL, 2008).

However, the literature on the matter defends that the best test for a social innovation idea is to face reality, that is, to be put into practice, in order to expose its full potential. Just like Habitat For Humanity, that started by a local experiment that simply worked, and whose leaders had the courage to believe it could grow bigger (Mulgan, 2007b)

Final words

Once this is an ongoing research, there are no conclusions, only the perspective that social innovation is, as the EQUAL initiative foreclosure document, synthesizing and evaluating 8 years of work, proposes – a *national opportunity* (EQUAL, 2009). This means Portugal has proven to detain the necessary capacities in human, social and relational capital to promote social change at the scale of several projects spread over its territory. The challenge now is how to increase this innovation outside of the restricted area of such projects, how to improve scale, scope and resonance, how to empower more people and promote the development of wider geographical areas, how to trigger the inclusion process moving all important exclusion dimensions, how to share these new ideas with society to grow stronger plants?

Such questions are still to be answered. And the answers can only be found if the ideas flourish and are tested in diverse and wide realities. Therefore, best moment for social innovation is, in fact, now! Because now is the time to build tomorrow.

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