Giving a European dimension to civil society organisations.
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Abstract

Civil society organisations have not acquired a European dimension spontaneously. In order to explain the emergence and transformation of civil society at the European level it is necessary to take into account other factors, as European institutions’ structuring effects. With the aim to drawn attention on this unexplored issue, this paper examines efforts made by European institutions, in particular the European Commission, to give a European dimension to civil society organisations. Our arguments are based on empirical evidence from humanitarian, development and Human Rights NGOs, as well as social NGOs working against social exclusion.

Civil society has gained widespread currency in European academic and political discourses. Participation in the policy process has been considered as a means of improving European governance and connecting people to European policies.

At first, European studies analysts turned their attention to interest groups’ participation in European public policies. Most authors tried to analyse, from this interest groups’ perspective, the impact of certain social movements and NGOs on European public policy. Cases studies provided some interesting empirical evidence, in particular on environmental and consumer NGOs.

As a consequence of the legitimacy crisis of the European commission in 1999 and of the increasing civil society’s visibility, European policy-makers put more emphasis on including civil society in policy-making. These new developments did not go without attracting researcher’s attention. Most works at this moment concentrate on efforts made to include civil society in European policies, and in particular on the White Book on European Governance (Smismans 2002), as well as on participation of civil society organisations in specific consultation processes (see for example De Schutter 2002 and Rüb 2002). Another strand of literature concentrates on new forms of collective action at European level (Balme, Chabanet and Wright 2002 ; Hilson 2002 ; Della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht 1999). Emphasis is put on new forms of participation, analysing the role of political opportunities as well as an eventual Europeanization of these movements.

Nevertheless, until this moment, no attention has been drawn to the European political system transformatory impact on civil society organisations. Political opportunities and Europeanization literature have been more interested in explaining collective action at European level than the specific consequences of this new orientation on civil society organisations. Empirical evidence presented in this paper intends to fill this gap. We consider that European policies directed towards civil society organisations have an important transformatory impact. They can foster the development of civil society actors, their professionalisation and even the use of particular strategies to reach their objectives (Sanchez Salgado 2001). This paper will draw attention on efforts made by European institutions, in particular the European Commission, to give a European
dimension to civil society organisations. Our arguments are based on empirical evidence from humanitarian, development and Human Rights NGOs, as well as social NGOs working against social exclusion.

First, we will develop an analytical framework which will help us to account for these transformatory dynamics. As we will see, analytical tools elaborated by Europeanization theorists are very useful in dealing with impacts from the European political system. Collective action conceptual developments, particularly works on political opportunity structures, are also to be taken into account. The main part of this paper will concentrate on European institutions’ actions orientated to give a European dimension to civil society organisations, as funding programmes and consultation processes, and on their impact. As it will be evident from this analysis, the European Commission has contributed to give a European dimension to NGOs, but this European dimension did not always develop the way it was expected to.

1. Accounting for European Impact on Civil Society Organisations

This first review of the literature on Europeanization is intended to clarify our specific approach to this transformatory process. This first step is particularly important as there is no consensus neither about the meaning of Europeanization or about the analytical tools better adapted to grasp the dynamics at work in this process. Attention will be drawn on some particular concepts which will help explain Europeanization’s magnitude and direction.

1.1. Transformation of civil society as a form of Europeanization

If our objective is to analyse the impact of the European political system on NGOs, we can not avoid discussing conceptual tools developed by studies on Europeanization. Europeanization studies are becoming popular among scholars because they focus on the consequences of the EU’s integration process, in what some have called a post-ontological stage.

One of the reasons that make it difficult to reach a consensus on the definition of Europeanization is that this approach has been used by scholars of several disciplines putting emphasis in very different research questions (Knodt and Kohler-Koch 2000). Some authors use a very broad definition of Europeanization (Risse, Caporaso and Cowles 2001 and Olsen 2001), making it difficult to separate this concept from others as European integration. Radaelli (2003:30) elaborated one of the most used definitions:

Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.

This definition, which has the advantage of considering Europeanization as a process (Ladrech 1994), includes both the process of policy construction and the process of national adaptation.

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1 The following analytical framework, which is going to be used to analyse the impact on European institutions’ actions on the NGOs European dimension, can also be used to analyse impacts on other topics.
Some authors do not incorporate Europeanization as policy construction in the definition in order to make a distinction between Europeanization and European integration, even if they recognize the importance of the interrelation between these two processes (Dison and Goetz 2003). Although this definition has the virtue of being clear in identifying the dependent and independent variables, it is to be noted that the process of policy construction and the impact of these policies are tightly interlinked. This is an important reason to consider Europeanization as an interactive process and to include in the same analysis the national and the European level (Surel and Palier 2005).

Most studies on Europeanization focuses on the impact of the European Union on national public policies or on national political systems. Studies about public interest groups or civil society concentrate on actors based in the Brussels complex, giving then little attention to Europeanization dynamics at the member’s state level. Only a few studies have considered the impact of the European political system on national social movements (Tarrow 1995 and 1999; Rootes 2003 and Favell 1998). These scholars have concentrated their efforts on the existence (or absence) of collective action at the European level, drawing little attention on the transformations occurring within the movements themselves.

Our paper, concentrating on the impact of European political system on civil society organisations, will contribute to the understanding of an empirical field which has been underexplored until this moment. The diversity of civil society organisations will be an excellent means to test different hypothesis about the direction and magnitude of the Europeanization process.

1.2. Measuring Europeanization: magnitude and direction.

If we consider that it exist an impact from European political system on civil society organisations, we assume that European institutions have a constitutive role, which is consistent with a neo-institutionalist approach. Even if our emphasis is put in this institutional dimension, our analytical framework will also take into account other factors, as the existing organisational culture and values of civil society organisations.

In order to analyse pressures coming down from European institutions, we are going to borrow from the social movements literature the concept of political opportunities (see Tarrow 1994; Meyer 1996 and Kitschelt 1986). According to social movement’s literature, political opportunities have an important impact on the creation and evolution of social movements. We will distinguish between economical (European funding programmes), institutional (consultation processes) and political (European public policy) opportunities, affecting directly civil society organisations.

Our main argument points to the fact that European institutions have a substantial impact on civil society organisations which have seized these opportunities. In particular, European institutions have developed specific programmes and actions oriented to give a European dimension to civil society, which is going to be the focus of our analysis.

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2 Tarrow (1994 : 18), referring to collective action, proposes the following definition “By political opportunity structure, I refer to consistent- but not necessarily formal, permanent of national- dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action. The concept of political opportunity emphasizes resources external to the group- unlike money and power- that can be taken advantage of even by weak or disorganized challengers.”
Scholars have developed several analytical models to explain the Europeanization process. The most popular, proposed by Risse, Caporaso and Cowles (2001), considers that Europeanization depends on adaptational pressures from the European level and on the degree of “misfit” between these adaptational pressures and domestic factors. As Surel and Palier (2005) point out, this analytical tool only accounts for one form of Europeanization, assuming that it exist an automatic impact from the European level. They propose, considering this model in a more flexible way, admitting that the Europeanization process can also start at member states’ level.

On the basis of this model, we have identified European opportunities and adaptation pressures coming down the European level. Considering that it is more difficult to do this in a systematic way, we also pay some attention to Europeanization dynamics starting at member states’ level.

We will then turn our attention to civil society organisations. They orientate themselves to the European level and transform their organisational culture and actions, on the basis of rational choice or as a result of a socialisation process. In some cases, the choice to use European opportunities is done with the aim of maximizing the utility of individual organisations. In other cases, intersubjective exchanges lead to a consensus among actors at different levels on the best way of doing things. Individual organisation’s motivations have also some impact on the results of this transformatory process.

As we will see, Europeanization results are not always convergence. Radaelli (2003) presents four possible outcomes of this transformatory process: accommodation, absorption, inertia and retrenchment. Inertia points out the absence of transformation and retrenchment to reverse effects. The most difficult task is to distinguish between true transformations (accommodation) and adaptational processes (absorption). Andersen (2004) argues that convergence and divergence are not mutually exclusive. Europeanization’s results depend on the degree of accuracy of European norms, which may leave more or less room for creative implementation, and on national actors, which may be unwilling to apply rules as they are stated.

To sum up, we will consider that Civil society’s Europeanization depends on the existing European opportunity structures, which may imply more or less adaptational pressures. The results of the Europeanization process also depend on the accuracy of European norms and on actors’ readiness for implementation. Our institutionalist approach is to be complemented with other logics of action as rational choice and a sociological perspective.

2. Different ways of giving a European dimension to civil society organisations.

European institutions try to foster civil society’s development by several means. First, our attention will be turn to programmes funded by the European Union, as a very specific instrument to give a European dimension to NGOs. Opening access to civil society organisations by European institutions, as allowing informal lobbying or structuring dialogue and consultation constitutes other way to encourage this European dimension, which will be analyzed next.

2.1. European Funding opportunities
Funding civil society activities has become a frequent activity of the European Commission’s Directorates Generals (DG). Starting in the 70s, European funding opportunities have increased steadily during the 80s and 90s. Nowadays, around one billion euros is channelled through NGOs, mainly to carry out external activities (development, humanitarian aid, human rights), but also to foster popular education and environmental protection. A great amount of money from the European Social Fund (EFS), in particular those from Community Initiatives, is also channelled through NGOs by the DG Employment and Social Affairs. Our attention will specifically be drawn on those fundings whose aim is not only to promote a particular activity (human rights, development, etc) but also to give a European dimension to NGOs.

First, we will present funding programmes whose aim is to promote directly European topics through NGOs, which are the most evident way to encourage a European dimension. Second, the emphasis will be put in other means to give a European dimension to NGOs, as promoting European consortia and transnational networks.

2.1.1. Fostering European issues.

In 1992, under Jacques Delors’ political impulsion, the first budget line specifically addressed to NGOs, promoting the European Interest, is created. Managed by the European Commission’s general secretariat, one of its first aims was to encourage dialogue between religions in order to foster the acknowledgement of the ethical and spiritual dimension of the European construction project (Evalua 2004). In 1998 this budget line was divided in budget line A-3024, which provided funding for promoting EU’s values and objectives and budget line A-3021, aimed at funding organisations whose main objective is the promotion of European values. In this first moment, the amount of funds available to civil society organisations was quite limited. Budget line A-3024 represented around 1.3 millions euros from 1999 to 2003. These budget lines can be used by any European civil society organisation which shows an interest for European Union issues.

As it has been the case for other funding opportunities, these budget lines have been transformed into a programme called Community Action programme to promote active European Citizenship. Its main purpose is to promote and spread European Union values and objectives and to bring citizens closer to the European institutions though conferences, seminars, workshops, networking, exchanges of experience and education and training events (European Commission 2004). The creation of this programme has implied a considerable increase in the amounts available for NGOs. For the period from 2004 to 2006 the total amount available was of 72 millions euros. The new programme for the period 2007 to 2013, called “Citizens for Europe” will have an amount of about 232 millions euros for carrying out similar objectives (European Commission 2005).

Apart from the Active Citizens programme, which applies for every civil society organisation, it exist other funding opportunities, which only concern NGOs from a specific sector. That is the case of a part of budget line B7-6000 for development NGOs and some of the funds managed by ECHO. The main purpose of these funds is to promote European public opinion’s awareness on development and humanitarian issues. In addition to that, NGOs using these funds may integrate a

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4 This programme can be used by NGOs, but also by trade unions ans even by towns.
European dimension, which often consist of dealing with European issues: presenting, for example, European policies or particular European objectives.

2.1.2. Transnational networks

Other way of giving a European dimension is to focus on the process, instead of on the action’s content. The purpose is not any more to ensure that civil society organisations tackle European topics, but to guarantee that they are acting according to a “European way of doing things”. In most domains, it is difficult to identify such a European way of doing things as European institutions share much of their objectives, cognitive frames and instruments with many other international and governmental agencies. Assuming the existence of European ways of doing things implies that the European Union has an important role in the construction of global or sectorial paradigms (Muller and Surel 2000).

On the basis of the subsidiarity principle, European Commission’s actions need to be justified by a European added value. The European Commission considered that carrying out transnational European projects\(^5\) could be one of the best ways of giving a European added value to its actions in several fields, as social exclusion, fight against unemployment and fight against all forms of violence\(^6\) (Sanchez Salgado 2005). At the international level, in particular in the context of globalization, transnational projects are very frequent and include in particular international development, human rights and humanitarian aid. However, the European Union is the only actor proposing funding for transnational projects carried out by organisations working on national topics.

Most European programmes managed by the Directorates-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and for Justice, Freedom and Security, include a transnational dimension. As an example, in order to get funds from the Community Initiative EQUAL created to fight against unemployment (European Commission 2003 and 2000) and the Community Action programme on Social exclusion (European Parliament and Council of Ministers 2001), it is required to take part in a transnational Cooperation Partnership (European Commission 2000 and 2003). Although in a first moment it was not very clear what the European Commission did mean by transnational partnership (Rouault 1995), seminars and guides are nowadays proliferating, providing very specific advice on the format and other particular characteristics of the partnerships. In the social field, partnership is not only promoted among civil society organisations, but also among public agencies and private for profit companies, which makes some authors speak about multi-nodal partnerships (Benington and Harvey 1999)

2.2. European Institutional and political opportunities.

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\(^5\) By European transnational projects we mean projects which are carried out by several organisations (at least two) based on two or more European countries.

\(^6\) In some cases where the Community action is shared between the Commission and the member States, as in international development cooperation and Human Rights promotion, the European Commission does not need to justify its actions on the basis of the subsidiarity principle. Nonetheless, the Commission still promotes European consortia and networks as it is easier to manage a limited number of big projects implemented by consortia than a lot of little projects implemented by individual NGOs.
Apart from funding opportunities, European institutions have also developed several formal and informal ways to integrate civil society organisations in the decision-making process. At the same time, in particular since the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, civil society organisations are becoming aware of the increasing role of European institutions in decisions which affect them. These developments have culminated in the proliferation of civil society actors in the Brussels’s complex.

2.2.1. Dialogues, consultations and partnerships.

In the 80s and 90s, most civil society actors active at the European level tried to influence the European decision-making process in the same way as business interest groups did. Their participation consisted basically in providing expertise to the European Commission, by presenting their positions on several topics and organising seminars and experts visits.

In the middle 90s, the idea of initiating a privileged dialogue with civil society organisations flourished, mainly in the most NGO friendly DG’s, as Development and Employment. DG Employment and the Social Platform developed the concept of civil dialogue, which was supposed to give civil society organisations a privileged position in the European decision making process. DG development and the Liaison Committee of development NGOs (CLONG) agreed to initiate the Elewijth process, which culminated in a dialogue at the meso level. This specific dialogue, although giving a more important place to civil society organisations, did not change the essential dimensions of the participation. Expertise, interest aggregation, consensus seeking and focusing on technical issues continued to be privileged by the European Commission.

The European Commission’s legitimacy crisis in 1999 and the increasing importance of civil society organisations lead to a dramatic change in European civil society discourses. Not only other DGs, as DG Trade, interested themselves in civil dialogue, but also the Commission secretariat general developed a global approach to civil society organisations, which was intended to be implemented by every DG (Smismans 2002). This new approach is particularly present in the European Commission White paper on European Governance (2001) and in the European Commission communication on general principles and minimum standards for consultation (2002). In these documents, the European Commission fosters the development of civil society consultation processes in every DG.

While the Commission’s approach is very different at the discourse level, in practice, the participation dimensions which are encouraged are not very different from those which were predominating before. Indeed, demands for NGOs’ expertise (Weisbein 2001) as well as the encouragement of conventional participation forms (Marks and McAdam 1999) have always been characteristic of the European Commission’s approach.

Interest for Civil Society organisations participation is no any more the Commission’s exclusivity. Since the end of the 90s, the Economic and Social Committee (ESC), and even the European

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7 By conventional Strategies Marks and McAdam refer to institutionalised, elite lobbying taking place continuously within established political channels in contrast to unconventional activities as uninstitutionalised mass protests. Establishing such a difference between conventional and unconventional strategies has been contested by several scholars (Balme and Chabanet 2002).
Council of Ministers, have been proposing channels for civil society’s participation. This participation has been required not only in European “constitutional” processes, as the Convention on the Charter of Human Rights (De Schutter 2002), or the Convention on the Future of Europe, but also on horizontal policy-making processes as the Open Method of Coordination in the domain of social exclusion.

2.2.2. Increasing impact of European public policies.

As Muller states, in the middle 90s, the European Union has become a real locus of public policy production (1995). The Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, as symbols for the single market and the common currency, constituted an important stage in the European integration process. More issues, particularly in the fields of interest for NGOs, have since this moment been considered at the European Level.

Since Maastricht’s Treaty, human rights promotion in third countries has become one of the Common Foreign and Security Policy’s (CFSP) objectives. The Maastricht treaty also introduced a new chapter on international development cooperation, stressing the importance of fighting against poverty. These new treaty provisions and their consequences have attired the attention of international NGOs. New European competences to deal with immigration issues and to fight against terrorism may also have had some impact on Human Rights and Migrants NGOs activities. The Social Charter and more recently the Open Method of Coordination on Social Exclusion and the directive on services of social interest increasingly attract the attention of social NGOs.

More punctual events oriented to arouse citizens’ attention, as the European Social Charter or the European Human Rights Charter may also have attracted NGOs and other civil society organisations. In addition, European summits and intergovernmental conferences deal more frequently with topics which concern directly civil society. In this context, European public policy is increasingly an object of concern for NGOs. Most of the issues on which NGOs are working are frequently considered at the European level.

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Civil society organisations have not acquired an European dimension spontaneously, neither have they acted, at least in a first moment, as political entrepreneurs or purposeful actors, oriented to reach their aims by pressing for establishing their priorities at the European level. European opportunities, as presented in this section, have played (and are playing) a decisive role in this process. Funding opportunities are not only oriented to guarantee the implementation of specific public policies, they can also be used to give a concrete European dimension to civil society organisations. Dialogue and consultation opportunities, and in particular open access to civil society organisations at the European level are also susceptible to have an impact on civil society’s European dimension. Finally, some actors may also have acquired a European dimension as a reaction to the increasing public policy production at the European level.

8 It is important to note that the European Economic Community had already important competences in this fields, in particular in International Development Cooperation. This has already implied the reaction of some well informed international NGOs. Nonetheless, this process becomes more general after the signature of the Maastricht Treaty.
3. The transformation of civil society organisations.

Considering existing political opportunities at the European level is just the first step in order to grasp European political system’s impact on civil society organisations. Indeed, it is necessary to turn our attention on civil society organisations themselves to appreciate up to what extent these European opportunities are being used. In particular, it is necessary to take into account civil society organisations’ specificities, as their own organisational culture, values and identity. These factors may help explain divergence on the degree and direction of Europeanization.

3.1. Funding opportunities

One of the alternatives to achieve an objective is to put money in it. This seems to be a European Commission and Parliament’s privileged solution. Both institutions have dedicated a lot of efforts to create budget lines providing funding to foster a European dimension among NGOs. However, European funds do not normally have a direct and automatic impact on NGOs. A lot of attention has then to be drawn on NGOs specific characteristics and on their way of using these European funding opportunities.

3.1.1. Working on European Issues

Unfortunately, systematic evaluation of European funding programmes which intends to promote European issues’ impact among NGOs is almost non existent, which makes the analysis very difficult. Nevertheless, empirical evidence presented in this section will provide some interesting examples of the way in which the European Commission funds contribute to give a European dimension to NGOs.

Although only a few number of associations are concerned by this funding (considering the number of civil society organisations in Europe), the number of beneficiaries is far from being negligible. In 2000, budget line A-3024 funded 60 civil society projects\(^9\), mainly in Austria, Germany, France and Italy. It is important to note that around 400 organisations applied for these funds, which shows clearly that interest in this kind of funding is quite generalised (Evalua 2004). Organisations funded under this budget line have diversified objectives. That includes popular education NGOs, women’s and immigrants groups, as well as religious organisations. Apart from this budget line, directly oriented to promote European values, there exists other financial opportunities to consider European issues managed by Development, Employment and Social Affairs DGs as well as ECHO. As an example, 41 development NGOs were funded in 2003 to carry out awareness projects with a European dimension\(^10\). These specific opportunities increase considerably the number of NGOs concerned by funding programmes. European civil servants are confident that funding opportunities will lead to some positive effects, as the “snow ball” effect, encouraging more national actors to deal with European topics (Evalua 2004).

\(^9\) 70 projects were selected, but the funding of 10 projects was cancelled because of irregularities as an evident gap between the real project and the financed activities or absence of reporting.
\(^10\) This informations are availble in :
Most actions consist on seminars, workshops and production of information (documents and videos). Some projects include training sessions, cultural events or awareness raising campaigns through mass media. Projects are carried out by European networks as well as by national organisations.

Although the European Commission gives sometimes some general orientations, topics which may be considered by NGOs are not specific enough, which leaves a great room for manoeuvre to NGOs. In addition, the content of the projects is not monitored by the Commission. These factors explain divergence in the results of this Europeanization process.

Some civil society organisations, interested in promoting and diffusing European values, ask for a more direct involvement of the Commission, as a source of expertise and inspiration on European matters. Other NGOs contact directly Commission official services asking for more specific European input in order to elaborate their projects (Evalua 2004).

In other cases, European issues are not very present or are not very clearly stated in the projects. Funding from the European Commission does not automatically guarantee that conferences and debates are going to foster a positive image of the EU. Some associations are indeed very critical of EU policies. As an example, the project ‘Think Global, Act local’ (in the original Global Denken-Lokal handeln) managed by the German NGO Weltfriendsdiens\(^\text{11}\), as a way to introduce a European dimension, considered the negative effects of the Common Agriculture Policy on developing countries. The most striking example is the French anti-globalisation association ATTAC, funded under budget line A-3024, which has carried out a very active campaign for the no in the French referendum on the Treaty establishing a European Constitution\(^\text{12}\).

European funds have contributed to make some civil society organisations consider issues from a European perspective. They have to some extent also increased public’s concerns on European issues. Nonetheless, as is clear from our examples, each civil society organisation has been able to tackle European issues in a way which was consistent with their own specific objectives and values. In some cases, learning about European issues, may have contributed to diffuse a positive image of European institutions among NGOs and public opinion, transforming their values in a deeper way (accommodation), but the opposite is also possible. Some civil society organisations may have become more sceptical about the European integration process (retrenchment). Such a divergence can be explained by the European Commission dispositions’ lack of specificity, which allow what Andersen (2004) presented as interactive convergence and autonomous convergence\(^\text{13}\).

3.1.2. Becoming transnational.

The European dimension does not only consist in including European issues in civil society organisations’ agendas. Diffusing European practices and European ways of doing things is other important means to integrate a European dimension.

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\(^{11}\) The project is funded by the European Commission under budget line B7-6000 to 50%.

\(^{12}\) European funds may not have been used specifically for the referendum campaign. It is also to note that there exist important divergences among the members of this association concerning European issues.

\(^{13}\) Interactive Convergence implies that the actors are going to comply with rules that they have contributed to elaborate by an interactive process. In the case of autonomous convergence, formal structures and norms are not going to be implemented, despite of the fact that the European Commission left an important room for manoeuvre.
European transnational cooperation, as promoted by European funding, is not an isolated phenomena. More present (as compulsory) in the social field as well as in programmes to be carried out within the EU borders, it is also becoming more important for external EU funding programmes. As an example, in the second round of EQUAL, 735 partnerships were managed by not for profit organisations out of a total of 2087 partnerships\(^{14}\). Nonetheless, NGOs are participating in almost every partnership, even though they do not assume the responsibility.

At first, the European Commission did not provide a very specific definition of what was meant by transnational partnership. As a consequence, actors at the national level could contribute to give content to this concept. This situation leads to a great deal of diversity. A transnational action can consist of considering the same issue in different countries and establishing European trends, on carrying out a joint action by organisations of different countries, on training sessions and exchange of best practises, etc. Recently, the European Commission has put more emphasis on establishing more specific criteria and guidelines, which foster mainly mainstreaming processes, including the transfer and diffusion of best practices\(^{15}\). After a more experimental and exploratory period, where a lot of room for manoeuvre was left to national actors, the Commission has made criteria more specific.

Transnational networks are not exempted from territorial tensions (Benington and Harvey 1999). Sometimes, mainly in the social field, member states can impose specific criteria in addition to those of the European Commission, which has important consequences for the content of the partnerships. As an example, partnerships funded through German authorities must include at least one partner from a new member state\(^{16}\). Territoriality is also present in the choice of partners by civil society organisations. NGOs from one specific country prefer working with NGOs from other specific country.

As transnationality is compulsory, some transnational partnerships may only exist in order to get funding from the EC. More instrumental civil society organisations may take profit from European funds with the only aim to carry on their own activities, implementing the transnational dimension only in a superficial manner. Nonetheless, other organisations consider that transnational cooperation and networking have considerable benefits and are transferring this way of doings things to other activities. As a consequence, the transformation extent depends on the organisational culture of the organisation and particularly on its openness to cultural diversity and external input.

\(^{14}\)This information come from a data base available on the European Commission web site. It is to note that the criteria used to elaborate this data base were not very clear and that they were not applied in a very strict manner. The impression from the author is that the participation of civil society organisations as a partner or manager of these projects has been minimized. The data base can be consulted on : http://equal.cee.eu.int/equal/jsp/index.jsp ?long=fr, consulted on the 23\(^{rd}\) June 2005.

\(^{15}\)These criteria are particularly present in the EQUAL guide on the 2004-2008 transnational cooperation, available on the EC’s web site : http://euorpa.eu.int/employment_social/equal/about/key-doc_en.cfm, consulted on march 25\(^{th}\) 2005.

\(^{16}\)This information is available in the transnationality guides elaborated by each member state, which can be consulted on the European Commission web site : http://fourm.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/empl/equal_etg/library ?1=/etgo/transnationality/transnational_cooperation &um=detailed&sib=, date de consultation: consulted on the 24\(^{th}\) June 2005.
3.2. Participating at the European level.

European funding opportunities are not the only factor fostering civil society organisations’ European dimension. Some civil society organisations have acquired a European dimension as a consequence of their participation in European policy-making processes or as a reaction (or an answer) to European public policies. In the first of these cases, the European institutions’ role and in particular the role of the European Commission has been considerably more important.

3.2.1. Participation in European policy-making processes.

European institutions have been frequently characterised by providing an open access to interest groups and civil society organisations. We argue that participation opportunities, as they are organised at the European level, have an important impact on civil society organisations. First, the European Commission has played an important role by encouraging the creation and development of European networks. Existing formal and informal participation opportunities have also important consequences for these actors.

European Networks’ EC encouragement.

The European Commission has played a very important role in promoting the emergence of civil society networks (or peak associations) at the European level. Fostering the creation of European Network was a way to promote an institutionalised dialogue between the European Commission and a privileged interlocutor, to spread information across national actors and to aggregate the divergent positions of a myriad of actors interested in the participation process.

This role has particularly been evident in the social field, where the European Commission has contributed directly to the creation of the Social Platform in 1995, of the European Antipoverty Network (EAPN) in 1991 and of other specific Networks (Cram 1997 and Harvey 1993). The European Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD, formerly CLONG), an international development NGO network, has also been encouraged and funded by the European Commission since 1976, as has been the network Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE), created in 1992, which focuses on humanitarian issues.

European Commission’s support for public interest groups is quite important, in comparison with support for private interest groups. As Aspinwall and Greenwood (1998) note, 59% of public interest groups receive some kind of economic support from the European Commission as only 4% of private or professional groups receipt such help. Without the economic and political support from European institutions, cooperation at the European level becomes much more difficult. As an example, international Human Rights NGOs are much less organised at the European Level than other sectors. Attempts to create a network on this topic have failed despite some encouragement from the European Commission, because of the lack of interest of big international human rights organisations in this project as it was conceived by the Commission (Sanchez Salgado 2001).

17 There is no strong European international human rights network including all human rights organisations. There is only, the Human Rights and Democracy Network, which seems to have been created in a ad hoc manner (for the process of the European Convention on the Fucture of Europe) and which has no official status, no international secretariat and not much activity.
European networks supported by the Commission are normally very inclusive. As participation costs are very low, which is also a consequence of the economic support; they include a great amount of members. In this context, coordination becomes quite complicated. Consultation processes are difficult and inconclusive (Ruzza 2004:103). Active participation in European networks is an exception, which can be explained in rational choice terms, considering that civil society organisations act as free riders (Olson 1966), but also in more sociological terms, pointing to the existence of a representation deficit at the European level. In networks characterised by cohesion, as VOICE, the rational choice explanation seems more convincing. In contrast, in very big networks, where contacts among the international secretariat and members are even not direct, the deficit of representation thesis has more explanatory power.

*The impact of Access opportunities.*

According to Marks and McAdams’ (1999) argument, civil society organisations working at the European level tend to use conventional forms of participation, which is the most encouraged strategy at this level. There is a lot of empirical evidence supporting this hypothesis: studies on migrant’s organisations (Favell 2000), on organisations working to promote European values (Weisbein 2001), and on environmental organisations (Marks and McAdams 1999).

Indeed, civil society organisations participate in the policy process mainly by providing expertise. Their main activities consist on organising conferences, presenting position papers and reports, and proposing meetings with experts of their choice. Civil society organisations adopt a pragmatic and technocratic position, seeking consensus and avoiding conflicts. They seek strategic alliances and adapt the content of their demands to what is feasible, which is quite consistent with a logic of rational choice.

There is very little evidence showing that civil society organisations have adopted alternative strategies at the European level. Not only contentious politics (quite difficult to develop in Brussels) is absent, but also of grass-root lobbying strategies, which have been frequently used at the international level. Neither juridical opportunities (mainly the Court of Justice of the European Communities) have frequently been considered, with the exception of women’s groups (Pollack 1997).

The choice of a more conventional strategy could be explained by Hilson’s arguments (2002). He considers that confrontational strategies, as litigation or protest, are more frequently used in the absence of political opportunities as for example open access to lobbyists. Nonetheless, in some cases, in the absence of more conventional participation opportunities, civil society organisations do not adopt alternative strategies, because they lack the necessary resources to carry them out.

18 To have an idea of civil society organisations position see for example: Civil Society Contact Group et ActEurope Campaign, (2003), *The ICG Toolkit. Future of Europe Debate*, Bruxelles: Act4Europe, September.

19 Contentious politics include routine protests (petitions, public meetings, demonstrations), strikes and boycotts, confrontational protests and violence (Igmig and Tarrow 1999).

20 The grass-roots lobbying implies the participation of stakeholders and other members. It includes activities as stakeholders petitions and mails addressed to public authorities. Gardner’s (1991) considerations about the absence of grass-roots lobbying at the European level can be maintained in the current situation.
Organisations that are able to change their strategy according to the level of governance they address, may be considered as instrumental organisations (Hilson 2002). Other organisations, whose strategy constitutes an important element of their identity, will not modify it so easily. In this sense, organisations which define themselves by their participation in protest activities will find it difficult to participate at the European level.

3.2.2. Reacting to European public policy.

Some civil society organisations started to work on European issues as a reaction to the increasing importance of the European Union as a locus for public policy production. They have become aware of the fact that they can not any more carry out their work without taking into account the European level.

The European orientation of these civil society organisations has not necessarily received support from the European Commission. Some NGOs have been able to organise their activities at the European level without any European financial support. Most networks working at this level were created in the wake of the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty, which implies that they have been created as a reaction to the increasing importance of the European political system (Aspinwall and Greenwood 1998). Some examples are the network European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People (EUROSTEP) and the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV), both created in 1990. These networks, as well as individual associations working at the European level have also adopted conventional forms of participation and have also put their emphasis on European issues. Nevertheless, some international organisations tend to link European and globalisation issues. Networks are more exclusive and, as a consequence of their more limited number of members, coordination and ascendant trends are more frequent.

Organisations which integrated such an European dimension by their own means are generally big associations with enough resources to do it, or international NGOs, having already an important experience in working before main international organisations (UN, World Bank, etc). Organisations belonging to several sectors with fewer resources, as human rights NGOs working within EU borders\(^{21}\), have not been able to act effectively at the European level, as a consequence of lack of resources and support from the EU.

Some associations and networks have oriented themselves to the European level as a reaction to particular European events. That is the case of the movement The Other Europe or the European Marches against unemployment, Job insecurity and Exclusion. The first of these movements has been organised in parallel to inter-governemental Conferences; the second in parallel to the Amsterdam summit. These transnational movements do not participate in the regular channels opened by the European institutions. They direct their actions to the European level but they have not integrated European practices or European ways of doing things. They use their own strategies, which can be inspired from national or international level.

\(^{21}\) Several Human rights organisations, which were member of FIDH have tried to created several times a transnational organisation on European issues. They have no much success in a first attempt: the euro-groups. Nowadays, they have created the European Association of Human Rights (FIDH-AE). Nonetheless, this new organisation has not carried out a lot of activities because of lack of resources (Sanchez Salgado 2001).
Other organisations have integrated European issues in their regular work at the national level. As an example, the British NGO Liberty works on the European directive facilitating the extradition among European countries, as it has important effects for UK citizens’ rights. This strategy has been called internalisation (Balme and Chabanet 2002). Other NGOs as the French Human rights association *Ligue française des droits de l’Homme* (French League for Human Rights), as a result of the increasing importance of the European level, consider that they should act as European citizens, and integrate a European dimension to their activities.

Organisations and networks which oriented themselves at the European level only as a result of the increasing importance of the European institutions are not so closed to European institutions, or are not at all in contact with them. As a consequence, while they consider European issues, they have not transformed their way of doing things. In addition, European issues are considered from a more personal approach (considering also international or national dynamics), instead of following directly the European institutions agenda.

**Conclusion**

As it was clear from this paper, civil society organisations have not acquired a European dimension spontaneously, neither as a declinatation of the process of globalisation. The European political system, an in particular the European Commission, has played a very important role in diffusing this European dimension.

We argued that civil society Europeanization has taken place as a reaction to existing opportunities at the European level, which are funding programmes, channels of participation and increasing public policy formulation at this level. While considering funding and access opportunities, the importance of European institutions in the definition and the encouragement of this European dimension has been noted. Civil society organisations do not only direct their attention to the European level, they also adopt practices and ways of doing things encouraged by European institutions. Nonetheless, in a great amount of cases, civil society organisations have a great room for manoeuvre while implementing European rules, which implies very different results for this Europeanization process.

When civil society organisations direct their attention to the European level as a reaction of increasing public policy production at this level, or as a consequence of particular events, as one intergovermentemal Conference, the role of European institutions is less relevant. In such cases, civil society organisations tackle European issues but they do not integrate European practices. Some civil society organisations have not been able to integrate effectively a European dimension as a consequence of lack of economical resources.

In spite of increasing participation of national and European civil society organisations at the European level, there is no systematic research on the consequences of this participation for civil society organisations. Further research on the role of European institutions in structuration of civil society is needed to grasp fully the dynamics affecting the process of configuration.

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22 It is to note that in some exceptional cases, some networks or organisations had acquired a European dimension as a consequence of the globalisation process, at is the case of the European Social Forum.
Bibliography


