

Does regionalism prove to be an advantage for woman's equality? The presence of women in business associations in Spain

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Summary

This paper will look at how and if devolution enhances gender consciousness and, as a consequence, promotes women for leadership choices within business associations in Spain. Our paper will analyse comparatively the presence of women in the executive committees in the chambers of commerce and of six Spanish regions (Catalonia, the Basque country, Galicia, Andalusia, Madrid and Comunitat Valenciana) (2008-2012). We compare three regions with a strong nationalist basis (Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia) and three regions with weaker regionalist claims (Madrid, Andalusia and Valencia). The paper has four main aims: first, observing if there are inequalities between the presence of women and men and its evolution; second, observing if the feminine profile is present amongst the positions of leadership; third, observing if this correlation depends on the region under scrutiny; and, fourth, contrasting these results with the theories of power and interest groups. The methodology used will be based on Quantitative exploration of the Plenary and Executive committees of organizations.

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Introduction

Collective Action Theory assures individuals set up organised groups in order to encourage the government to favour a certain sort of interest, as well as to confront other rival groups' power (Bentley 1908, Truman 1951). Such groups bring together similar people in terms of values, needs, profession, precedence, and so forth. What differentiates a group from a (social and/or political) movement is the existence of various rules permitting internal governance such as the hierarchical imposition of decisions, the stability of the directors, and the usage of resources and benefits. Apart from discussing various requirements for a group to succeed (Olson 1971), there has been little literature aiming at describing the configuration of internal leadership on the grounds of gender attributes. We can even admit that gender has been neither a striking issue nor a fundamental determinant for the mainstream of scholars analysing interest groups. Probably, the reason is that there has never been a women's association jeopardising the status of traditional economic groups such as employers' associations and Trade Unions. Nor they have acquired more public visibility than, for instance, bankers, pharmacists, environmentalists or fishers. Although men are still leading governments and running big corporations, we are nevertheless witnessing an increase of women's presence in public life and in most of the private spheres, especially at the regional level. According to Chappell and Meier (ECPR Joint Sessions 2011), regional authorities boost equal employment opportunities, which is the basis for a better representation of women and for a better interaction between society and politics (Hudson and R'oonblom 2007). This paper deals with a very concrete topic of women in the private sphere: feminine leadership in Chambers of Commerce in Spain as means of testing the impact of 'gender equality' reforms on private organisations convening business people. In so doing, we feel that the greater presence of women in Chambers of Commerce, the greater private consciousness about gender inequalities. Conversely, a scant figure of women within Chambers of Commerce would determine we are still away from a real 'social change' if we believe that change should affect both public institutions (political parties, parliaments, governments) and private actors (interest groups, the media, firms).

Nowadays, it is perhaps inadequate to strictly focus such a study on the membership of business associations and respond an inquiry such as 'How many women belong to a Chamber of Commerce and what is the percentage of women in relation to men?' In terms of power it is not conclusive the figure of women who joined a political party, but how many of them have become Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers all around the world. Therefore, in similar terms it is more salient for us now to appraise whether

women have assumed leadership roles within business associations and have been able to expand their public visibility. 'Leadership' and 'Public visibility' become therefore two relevant factors in this research, but there are other elements to take into account regarding the market structure (which defines the number and type of firms in a given territory), the political capacity (which defines the degree of political capital of a government to tackle gender issues in relation to the opposition and the Courts), the cultural support (which characterises the demands for gender reforms), the educational system (which gives information about the number of women with university studies), and so on. In this research we deal however with a significant independent variable: the territorial structure of the state. Hence, this paper fits within Political Science as looks at the relation of power in business interest groups (Chambers of Commerce), as well as within the Regionalist debate as we utilise independent variables of phenomena occurring at the territorial level between the state and the municipality. Our paper analyses the presence of women in Chambers of Commerce's Boards and Councils in six Spanish regions (Catalonia, the Basque country, Galicia, Andalusia, Madrid and Comunitat Valenciana) for the period 2008-2010. This regional selection will allow the assessment of intertwined regional attributes (identity, market structure, social capital, institutionalisation, etc.) in order to clarify which of them has greater explanatory salience. This paper will look at how and if devolution enhances gender consciousness and, as a consequence, promotes women for leadership choices within business associations in Spain. Four aims are stressed: first, observing if there are inequalities between the presence of women and men and its evolution; second, observing if the feminine profile is present amongst the positions of leadership; third, observing if this correlation depends on the region under scrutiny; and, fourth, contrasting these results with the theories of power and interest groups.

The Research

Research inquiries and hypotheses

We pose three research questions:

Arguably, the debate on gender and women leadership has been a fashionable topic during the last decade in Spain and abroad. It is no longer morally and politically accepted the downgrading of women in jobs, politics, home, leisure, and so on. Institutions and political parties are both now compromised to guaranty parity in picking up candidates, but...

Q₁. Is 'gender consciousness' present at Chambers of Commerce' manage-

rial bodies in Spain?

In this regard, there is an obvious qualitative factor arguing in favour of feminine presence within organisations. Seemingly, there is a huge distinction between either being a rank-and-file member or a chair person. Therefore, we wonder whether...

Q₂. Are women leading Chambers of Commerce?

Literature on associations in Spain usually seeks territorial variances between the richer regions and the poor ones, between nationalities and regions, between the most industrialised and those with higher rates of agricultural production, etc. In order to enrich our analysis, we also introduce such a "regional question" by wondering if...

Q₃. Is there a 'territorial gap' between nationalities and regions affecting the qualitative promotion of women in business associations?

This paper is part of our research project "Business associations and regional interests". However, while keeping the regional focus, this paper will be dealing with the literature on gender and devolution, multi-level governance and devolution. The research aims at analysing the new context of Spain under New Regionalism, the main policies adopted both at the European and Spanish level concerning gender equality issues and its real impact on the business association's arena. We will explore whether the developments in the business arena are slower, faster or similar to those in the political sphere.

Our main hypotheses are three:

H₁-Even if both the European and Spanish context have adopted more policies towards gender equality in all areas including the business arena, the percentage of representation of women in the Council, Board and Presidential positions among Spanish chambers of Commerce is still very scarce.

H₂- The number of women present in the Council of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce analysed is small but the number of women present in the Board or holding Presidential positions (positions with the real executive power) is even smaller.

H₃-The autonomous state of Spain which corresponds to different economic, structural and historical regions could be related to the promotion of women within Chambers of Commerce.

Case study: Chambers of Commerce in Spain

Spain is characterised by a strong sense of corporatism as are the rest of Southern countries in Europe (Portugal, Italy and Greece) (Visser 2004). Corporatism has been a key factor in order to share efforts among political and economic actors throughout the democratic period started back in 1975. During the Transition to democracy, there was a necessity to consolidate democratic reforms in view of the seriousness of the economic crisis of late 1970s, whereas in the 1990s it was important to reach the European Union's requirements to join the EMU by avoiding social conflict. It was also important to help create a democratic political system in accordance with the European standards, so the Spanish Constitution (1978) recognised a distinguished role for both business associations and Trade Unions to participate in the provision of economic, labour and social policies. In so doing, Spain commenced, on the one hand, to develop the institutionalisation of social partners by granting them with *public status* and, on the other hand, to establish advisory corporatist mechanisms to shape the economic policy-making and the industrial relation system (Offe 1981; Schmitter 1979).

In result, the state recognises the CEOE (Spanish Confederation of Employers' Associations) as the voice of employers at the Spain-wide level, whereas the UGT (socialist trade union) and the CCOO (communist trade union) share the representation of workers. However, the Spanish map of business associations is a bit more complex than this. The following table summarises how business association are involved in the four main functions reserved to them: a) social concertation which is the formal dialogue with trade unions and the government on various policy issues; b) industrial relations corresponds to collective agreements on labour conditions; c) advisory tasks mainly focused on concrete consultations on legal issues and sectoral policies; and d) 'business services to members' specifies the delivering and provision of services such as training, legal assistance, business certification, etc. At first glance, three statements can be highlight: first, the scope of business associations' functions is distributed throughout the territory. Second, even though CEOE is the main peak employers' associations, it is not directly involved in various tasks such as in industrial relations (or collective bargaining), which is chiefly carried out at the provincial level. And third, there are other business associations competing with CEOE in advising the government and in delivering services to companies.

According to Molins (2008), any research on business associations in Spain needs to go beyond a simplistic approach centred on the Spain-wide level in order to capture the actual complexity of business associations' functions on the grounds of sector, territory and

type of organisation. Moreover, Nonell and Molins (2007) pointed out that the regional level was increasingly reinforcing the attachment and involvement of business associations as regional institutions were endorsed with greater areas of policies. Spanish map of business associations is a bit more complex than this. It is clear that Chambers of Commerce don't take part of the employers' function in both the social concertation and the collective bargaining. However, Chambers have a long history in advising the government and in helping the business community with specific services. According to Windmuller and Gladstone's (1984) business associations' typology, Chambers of Commerce are trade associations and not employers' associations because they don't participate in the collective bargaining, but they are aimed at promoting trade and guarantying a good economic environment.

Overall, there are three factors determining the relevance of Chambers of Commerce in Spain: on the one hand, Spanish Chambers of Commerce belong to the so-called 'Public Model' of Chambers of Commerce, so to speak, they are not merely voluntary business associations, but they are public corporations in charge of advising the government on several topics in relation to trade and economy, as well as managing public services affecting business such as, for instance, exportation's certificates. On the other hand, voluntary business associability in Spain has not been a frequent aspect of the political system due to long periods of dictatorship (Linz 1988). This has long generated a business associations' map comprised of very weak and sporadic employers' associations and dispersed Chambers of Commerce throughout the country in which the political elite attempted to control the business community. And on the third hand, the advent of democracy started with an ambiguous position between the 'new' CEOE and the 'old' Chambers: they were directly competing for the same type of members as well as overlapping functions. This situation led to a permanent struggle between them in order to differentiate formal responsibilities and to exert control on each other (Molins 1989).

In fairness, we must state that CEOE has gathered more powers than the Chambers because CEOE has tried, on the one hand, to 'colonise' Chambers by situating its candidates in the directive positions, and, on the other hand, to impoverish the 'economic functions' of Chambers by shaping them as mere services suppliers (Jerez 1995). The 1993 Law of Chambers of Commerce aimed to diminish the confrontation between employers' associations and Chambers of Commerce by assuring a certain percentage of employers' associations' representatives under direct designation.

Briefly, the key features of the Public Model are: public law status, mandatory membership, protection of Chambers' names, regulation of the activity in a given territory, del-

Figure 1: Spanish Business associations' functions by territorial domain

	Social Concer- tation	Industrial Relations	Government and Ministerial advisory	Business ser- vices to mem- bers
National	CEOE (bipartite or tripartite agreements)	(CEOE only releases guide-lines for its local/provincial associations)	CEOE Sectoral employers' associations Business Think tanks Chambers of Commerce	CEOE Cham-bers of Com-merce
Regional	CEOE's territo-rial associations	(CEOE's ter-ritorial asso-ciations only co-ordinate local/provincial associations)	Sectoral em-ployers' as-sociations CEOE's terri-torial associa-tions Business Think tanks Chambers of Commerce	CEOE's terri-torial associa-tions Sectoral employers' associations Chambers of Commerce
Local	---	Local/provincial employers' as-sociations	Sectoral em-ployers' asso-ciations Lo-cal/provincial employers' association-s Chambers of Commerce	Local/provincial employers' as-sociations Chambers of Commerce

Source: Own Research

egated public functions, advisory status with the government; guaranteed financing, hierarchy of Chambers, and government supervision (Fedotov 2007). Guaranteed financing is achieved through government regulation of membership fees or through an additional tax levied on entrepreneurs to the benefit of Chambers.ⁱ Mandatory membership in the Public Model grants a voter status and the right to be elected as Chamber member.ⁱⁱ Elections to the Chambers' governing bodies, namely the Council, the Board and the Presidency are held every four years. Members are classified by groups and categories (according to their sector of activity and whether they belong to business or to industry) because elections are held within each group. Afterwards, the Council elects the President and the members of the Board by individual, secret ballot. No significant majority is required. The hierarchical organisation within Chambers supposes that the President and the members of the Board are the ones holding more power (Molins 1989).

Despite the definition given above, a major change is now under way within the Chambers of Commerce in Spain since the approval of the recent Decree-Law (3rd December, 2010) that erased the mandatory membership and the obligatory payment of the Chambers' fee. We do not have still a clear evidence of the modifications it might have provoked. Nevertheless, one might speculate that Chambers will progressively lose their independence both in relation to the government and in relation to CEOE. Now Chambers will have to go through a process of restructuring in order to adjust their expenditures to their new budget and being more efficient in providing their services.

Political and Economic context in Spain

The turning point in the process of establishment of regional governments in Spain was the approval of the 1978 Constitution, which specified three levels of autonomous community which determined how autonomy was to be achieved and what competencies would be transferred to which regions. The nations were given privileged status and would automatically be granted autonomy and would immediately enjoy full autonomous powers with a level of governing authority. Our paper analyses these three nations (Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia) which had enjoyed autonomous statutes already during the period of the Second Republic in Spain (1931-39) due to their historical and

ⁱThe funding sources of continental model chambers are the following: membership fees (30-80%); taxes (funding of delegated public functions, or subsidies, 20-30%) especial programs: 10-20 %; participation in commercial activities: 5-10%.

ⁱⁱThe voter status obligates all enterprises to vote in elections and gives them the right to be chosen as chamber members.

linguistic claims of autonomy. (Catalonia in 1932; the Basque Country in 1936 and Galicia in 1938). Other regions were to follow the slow track route to autonomy, which would involve a formal application and a transitional period of five years with just low levels of autonomy. A third path was created for the case of Andalucía which could not be qualified as a nation but nonetheless claimed widespread support for regional autonomy. Once Andalucía would draft a statute of autonomy which would be approved through a referendum, it could apply for the same level of autonomy that the nations (Bukowski 2002). Other than Andalucía, our paper also analyses Valencia and Madrid. Valencia approved its first statute of autonomy in 1982 and it was revised in 2006. Thus, nowadays the only region that does not have maximum level of competencies from the ones chosen is Madrid.

In what concerns the institutional arrangements of regional governments, by 1983, statutes had been approved in the 17 autonomous communities. Regional governments were granted competencies for a wide range of activities such as economic development policies, infrastructure development and education and health services. However, regional incomes remain largely tied to state transfers and the claims for increased regional fiscal autonomy have not succeeded. It is only in the Basque Country where the autonomous system is based on the Basque historical *fueros* which recognises a especial financing based in the Economic Agreements established after the abolition of the *fueros* in 1876. This is not the case for instance in Catalonia and this is one of the main reasons for the renewed claims for a new statute in 2006 which had as ultimate justification the desire for fiscal autonomy. Today the autonomous state is questioned as many claims it no longer fits the desires of the Spanish citizens.

About the economic inequalities among chosen regions, historically Catalonia and the Basque country were the two first regions where the industrial revolution took place. However, nowadays these differences have slimmed down a lot and have been overrun by an increasing economic crisis that is affecting all the regions in Spain. One would need to analyse the impact of this crisis on market opportunities and ultimately on business organisations such as Chambers of Commerce.

About the study of women's presence in Spanish politics throughout the years, the first thing that needs to be mentioned is that the Spanish women have access to voting since 1931. Their real participation as activists and even as potential leaders is very recent. There has not been a Spanish feminine prime Minister. Under the present government of Rodríguez Zapatero, there was for the first time a woman vice-president of the government. A further aspect to be analysed is women increasing presence in society (education, culture, jobs). The massive access of women to university in Spain only happened

after the transition to democracy and its massive access to the labour world as well. These processes had started in the mid twentieth century in the rest of Europe but they were delayed in Spain due to Francoism (Chinchilla and León 2004). During the last thirty years, more than two million women joined the labour market in Spain. However, the equality in the labour market is still very relative. Women get paid on average 27% less than men for the same job and very few Spanish businesses count with women in their board.

In the last decade, the gender issue has entered the political agenda both at the European and Spanish levels. Policy-wise, both the European and Spanish context aim at gender equality. For example, the EU roadmap outlines priority areas for EU action on gender equality for the period 2006-10 amongst which is equal representation in decision-making, equal share of women in national economic institutions and equal distribution of managers by sex (European Commission 2010). Even more so, an EU report concluded that there is a positive correlation between women leadership and business behavior (EU Directorate-General for Employment, Social affairs and Equal opportunities, unit G1 2010). However, the business community is still widely dominated by men who do not have sufficient confidence in women. This is the case in 76% of the cases (European Commission 2009) However, even if the political ambition of equality exists, the results of the implementation of these policies are still very scarce.

In Spain, one turning point concerning gender policies was the approval of the law of equality (L003) in 2007 by the Spanish Parliament, which claimed the necessity of promoting the presence of women in all economic spheres and, particularly, within business organizations, within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (Verge 2009). Its objective was to make a big step towards gender equality. This law proposed some participatory mechanisms and obliged local administrations to have an internal plan of equality. However, the problem was that there was no obligation of enforcement of this plan and therefore the binding was weak. As the first results show, the real revision of politics and a real compromise of all actors from a gender perspective is still far away (Alonso, Diz, and Lois 2010).ⁱⁱⁱ Even if the gender policies aim at gender equality both at the European and

ⁱⁱⁱEven at regional level, gender equality has been a focus. For example, the revised Catalan statute of 2006 made a especial mentioning to the right of women to its participation in all the areas of society. For instance, Article 41 maintains that:

Public powers have to guarantee the accomplishment of the principle of equality of opportunities among men and women in their access to occupation, formation and professional formation, in their conditions of work, including the salary and in all other situations and it also includes that women should not be discriminated due to pregnancy or maternity (...) Public powers have to guarantee the transversality in the incorporation of the gender perspective and of women in all the public policies in order to obtain a real and effective equality between men

Spanish context, the studies show that we are still far away from equality. As for the context of this paper, one thing that would need further analysis is the profile of the women recruited and how it is developing over time, across institutions and across sectors. Furthermore, we would need to research the context of gender issue developments in other sectors of society. For example, many studies show that the percentage of women sitting in business boards in Spain is very low. We would also need to research in the Spanish context if the unions and the political parties are doing better. Finally, we would need to research if other countries are doing better.

Theoretical framework

This paper relies on three theoretical approaches: on the one hand, the New Regionalism as the theory stressing the revitalisation of regions as ‘spaces for politics’ since the state commenced to “hollow-out” up-wards, down-wards, and side-wards (Keating 1998; Carter and Pasquier 2010; Rhodes, 1994). Many processes helped foster regional authorities throughout the territory since globalisation eroded the Keynesian Welfare state. Arguably, globalisation opened the economy as national governments deemed necessary to reinforce the supply-side of the economy through policies such as innovation, infrastructures, and training. The territorial side of the economy, so to speak, the need to enhance firms’ competitiveness by creating better economic environments (transports, human capital, energy, etc.) and not through monetary policies, geared the establishment of regional development agencies in places which have never had a regional consciousness, whereas regions with previous experiences in self-government claimed for a deeper decentralisation (Güell 2011; Molins, Nonell, Güell, and Medina 2010). In one way or another, the establishment of regional authorities permitted the emergence of new elites and new channels of communication between the government and society (Molins, Medina, Plaza, and Nonell 2010). Power is now shared among as many as five different tiers of decision-making (Hausman and Vickers 2010), thus there exist new opportunities to exert pressure on various governments to achieve social transformations. Furthermore, the existence of more than a state-wide level of decision-making facilitates the formation of regional interest groups as they find it easy to lobby a nearby institution. Secondly, some authors have focused on the extent to which federalism forms a political opportunity for women to rally around political demands. For instance, women have done exceedingly well in terms of achieving representation in the new devolved assem-

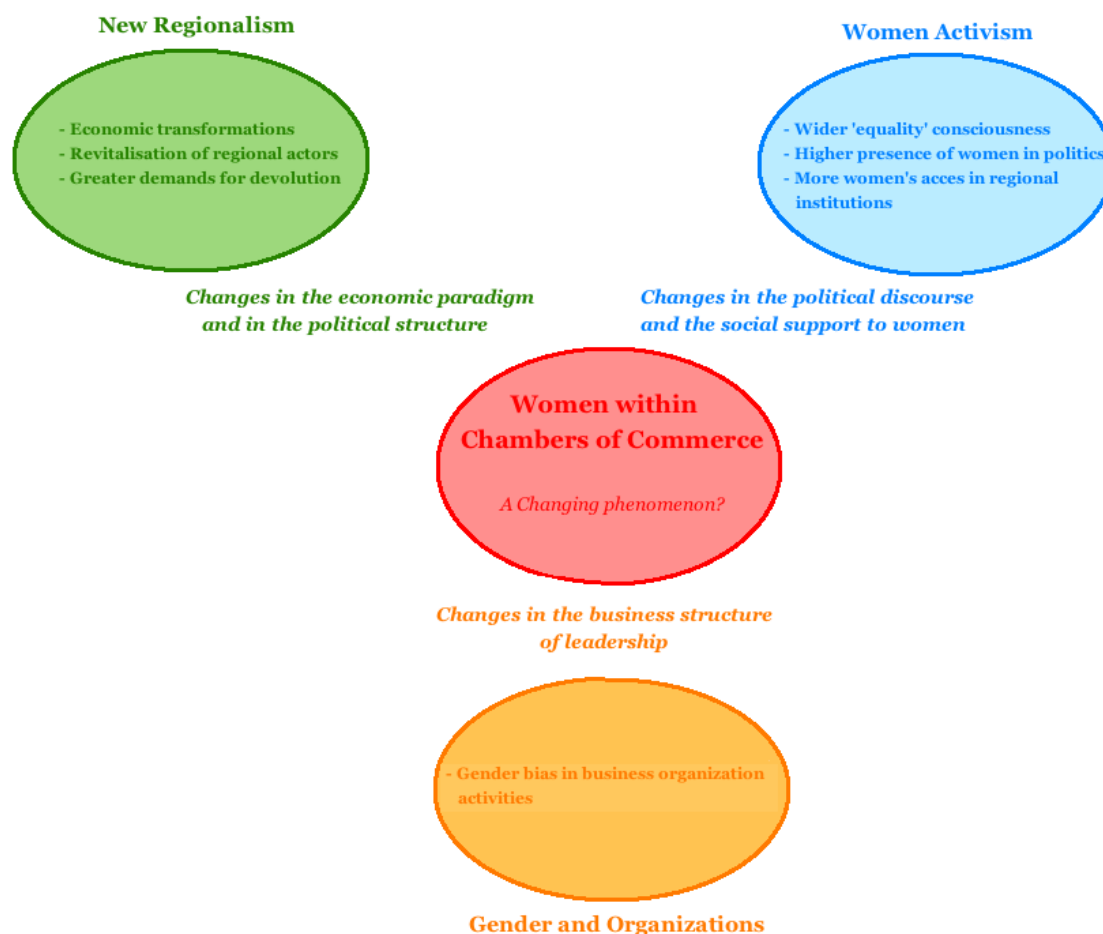
and women.

blies in the United Kingdom (Chappell 2002). Other research have assessed the feminine presence within political parties (Chappell 2000), institutions, and political and social organisations at the European level ((Hausman and Sauer 2007); Hafner-Burtin and Pollock 2009). According to (Chappell and Teghtsoonian 2008), similar institutions in different countries provide varying opportunities for women. As for Spain, there are various studies appraising the political scope of women (Verge 2010) elaborated a detailed study of Catalan political parties with a special dedication to the first elections ‘post Equality law’: the 2007 local elections. Some authors have studied the presence of women in the Spain-wide institutions such as the Congreso de los Diputados –Parliament- (Valiente, Ramiro, and Morales 2003; Roig 2010), whereas there are studies focused on the participation of women in local institutions (Fuente, Maria de la and Freixanet 2009) and on social institutions such as the Instituto de la Mujer –Women’s Institute- (Valiente 1998). More sceptical views argue that the restructuring of state is not automatically accompanied by organisational change (Kenny and Mackcay 2010). One might consider that there are other factors still blocking further transformations such as, for instance, related with the political culture (acceptance of a woman as a political leader). Notwithstanding the ‘political strength’ of women, governments have also devoted some attention to promoting women in education, institutions, culture and firms, as well as to fight against all sources of discrimination in labour affairs, gender violence, body integrity, social promotion and cultural barriers.

A third theoretical pillar that needs to back up our article is the reference to the literature on gender and organization. We need to take into account the possibility of gender bias in the business organizations boards and councils’ activities and way of functioning. Acker (1990) argued that organizational structure is not gender neutral and this is why we need a systematic theory of gender and organizations. Feminists wanting to theorize about organizations face a difficult task because of the deeply embedded gendering of both organizational processes and theory (Acker 1990). Gender is constructed within institutional and cultural contexts that produce multiple forms of masculinity. For example, schools are active players in the formation of masculinities. Maculinizing practices are concentrated are certain sites: curriculum divisions, discipline systems and sports. We need to take into account if there is any gender deviation in the way business organisations’ boards and councils are organised, ie., if the inequalities in the number of women and men in the boards and councils of chambers of Commerce may have something to do with the way the councils and boards work, the activities they do, the timetables, the requirements to be one of them.etc. We cannot draw any conclusions from the way the Chambers of Commerce public model works, including the electoral procedure so we

would need to further research on the way they organise their activities.

Figure 2: Theoretical background applied to women within Chambers of Commerce'



Source: Own Research

There is however little literature on the presence of women in business associations so far. Spanish researchers have focused mostly on the territorial differences, the outcome of business associations' lobby, the degree of density (affiliation) of Spanish business associations in comparative perspective, and other 'traditional inquiries' (Solé 1999; Jerez 1995). This fact does not hide the impressive list of women's associations covering manifold interests. 'Gender' has definitely become a motivation to set up an association, and it has even been a striking factor to establish women's regional and local business associations in Spain. For instance, there is such an association in Madrid (*Asociación Española de Mujeres Empresarias de Madrid*, ASEME, <http://www.aseme.es/>), in Cantabria (*Asociación de Mujeres Empresarias de Cantabria*, AMEC, <http://www.empresariascantabria.com/>)

and in Navarra (*Asociación de Mujeres Empresarias y Directivas de Navarra*, AMEDNA, <http://www.amedna.com/>). Nevertheless, they are associations with a very limited number of members whose main goal is to promote women within society and business, but they don't want to replace CEOE's functions in social concertation and industrial relations. They are rather associated to CEOE.

This situation evidences businesswomen can follow various paths while joining a business association. As shown in table 2, businesswomen can belong to a 'classic business association' taking advantage of the established system of interest intermediation and opting for the creation of either a 'Women Affairs Commission' within the association or/and for the promotion of female candidates to the higher positions. Otherwise, women can only choose belonging to a classic business association and not participating actively in its daily activities. (They only seek for business services)

On the other hand, women are more likely to form specific associations highlighting the salience of gender traits. The determinant logic behind such an association is the fact of being women, although it diminishes its comparative power as reduces its access to employers' representation in collective bargaining and other afore-mentioned functions. Again, individuals can decide not to undertake an active role, but contributing to the association by paying fees and sporadically help forge opinions. In this research we are mainly addressing the '1' option: women in classic business associations with a certain degree of organisational leadership.

Figure 3: Potential members' involvement in Business associations and Women's associations

	Business Association	Women's Association
Leader	1. Active involvement High competition, high organisational profile, broad discourse on several employers' issues	3. Active involvement - but according to association's needs-, low competition, low resources, discourse centred on specific topics
Members	2. Passive involvement, business-related needs and incentives, access to services	4. Passive involvement, ideological incentives, access to services

Source: Own Research

Results

Hypothesis 1:

According to the collected data, only 90 out of the 1206 members of the 23 considered Chambers of Commerce, within the six different regions considered, are women. It represents a 7,5% of the total membership. Tables 1 show the gender distribution among those Chambers (aggregated per regions and nations). Percentages vary from 0% in Álava (País Vasco) to 20% in Almería (Andalucía). Nevertheless, there is a trend of low women representation, with no significant difference among regions. Table 4 presents the aggregated data per regions. In this aggregated data it stands out the case of the Comunidad de Madrid, where only a 2,6% of the members of the analysed chamber are women.

Hypothesis 2

Tables from 5 to 10 do confirm the extreme lack of women within the boards in the Chambers considered. In addition to the aggregated low percentages presented, it is also interesting to mention that only one woman holds the Presidency of a Chamber of Commerce (Córdoba), and that no other women holds neither the first Vice-Presidency nor the Second Vice-Presidency. We may also find three women holding the Treasury (Málaga in Andalucía, Ourense in Galicia, Valencia in Comunidad Valenciana), and also nine additional women being a member of the board of their respective Chamber (Barcelona (2), Lleida and Tarragona in Catalunya, Gipuzkoa and Bilbao in País Vasco, Huelva in Andalucía, Lugo and Ourense in Galicia).

Hypothesis 3

Table 11 confirms that no significant difference appear between the nations and the regions. Maybe the non-board members of those Chambers belonging to the nations are slightly bigger (8,2% versus 6,4%) but this is a minor difference.

Debate and Conclusions: To what extent women in business interest groups?

A first analysis seems to confirm our H_1 that the percentage of women holding positions in the Council and Board of the Chambers of Commerce of the chosen regions is very low. Concerning H_2 , the number of women in leadership positions within the board is also very low. About H_3 , the number of women in the Council or Board in the nations is slightly higher than in the regions of Spain but it is difficult to infer any political consequences from this result.

Two main conclusions arise: First, even if women have joined the labour market massively, the number of women holding leadership positions in the business associations sphere is still very low (both at the Executive and Board level). If we frame this result within the larger debate on gender equality, we can confirm that even if the policies aim at gender equality, percentages of women holding leadership positions within the business associations are still very low, which is no longer so much the case in the political sphere.

Second, in order to determine whether there is a relation between the number of women represented in business associations and the Spanish political architecture we would need to widen our data under analysis to the remaining Chambers of Commerce and to other business associations. It is thus premature with these results to establish a relation between gender and state architecture but it might be the case that in Spain nations allow for further opportunities for developing gender interests than other regions.

In our further research, we would need to analyse what is the profile of women that make it to the top levels. Furthermore, from this quantitative research we cannot conclude whether Chambers of Commerce boards and councils are gendered embedded or not. We would need to further research their activities.

We would need to further research their activities, because there is undoubtedly a long path to cover. Nevertheless this paper presents a significant attempt to shed more light on the under-researched of descriptive representation of women in Spanish business organizations, and particularly in the Chambers of Commerce. Apart from permitting to contrast our hypotheses on a scarce and low women's presence in this organizations, this paper also will potentially permit a wider comparison between feminine presence in both public and private spheres in Spain.

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Figure 4: Distribution of the types by rank

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Regions	Andalucía	28 8,20%	313 91,80%	341 100,00%
	Catalunya	20 8,70%	210 91,30%	230 100,00%
	Comunitat Valenciana	14 6,20%	211 93,80%	225 100,00%
	Galicia	16 8,70%	167 91,30%	183 100,00%
	Comunidad de Madrid	2 2,60%	76 97,40%	78 100,00%
	País Vasco	10 6,70%	139 93,30%	149 100,00%
	Total	90 7,50%	1116 92,50%	1206 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 5: Chambers of Commerce in Andalucía. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Andalucía	Board Members	4 6,00%	63 94,00%	67 100,00%
	Non-board Members	24 8,80%	250 91,20%	264 100,00%
	Total	28 8,20%	313 91,80%	341 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 6: Chambers of Commerce in Catalunya. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Catalunya	Board Members	4 8,90%	41 91,10%	45 100,00%
	Non-board Members	16 8,60%	169 91,40%	185 100,00%
	Total	20 8,70%	210 91,30%	230 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 7: Chambers of Commerce in Comunidad Valenciana. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Comunidad Valenciana	Board Members	6 15,40%	33 84,60%	39 100,00%
	Non-board Members	8 4,30%	178 95,7%	186 100,00%
	Total	14 6,20%	211 93,80%	225 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 8: Chambers of Commerce in Galicia. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Galicia	Board Members	3 7,90%	35 92,10%	38 100,00%
	Non-board Members	13 9,00%	132 91,00%	145 100,00%
	Total	16 8,70%	167 91,30%	183 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 9: Chambers of Commerce in Comunidad de Madrid. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Comunidad de Madrid	Board Members	0 0,00%	9 100,00%	9 100,00%
	Non-board Members	2 9,00%	76 91,00%	78 100,00%
	Total	2 2,60%	76 97,40%	78 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 10: Chambers of Commerce in País Vasco. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
País Vasco	Board Members	4 8,60%	41 91,40%	45 100,00%
	Non-board Members	16 8,90%	169 91,10%	185 100,00%
	Total	20 8,70%	210 91,30%	341 100,00%

Source: Own Research

Figure 11: Chambers of Commerce in País Vasco. Gender Distribution among Board- and Non-Board Positions (2008–2010)

		Gender		Total
		Men	Women	
Nations	Board Members	10 8,70%	105 91,30%	115 100,00%
	Non-board Members	34 6,40%	495 93,60%	529 100,00%
	Total	44 6,80%	600 93,20%	644 100,00%
Regions	Board Members	9 8,10%	102 91,90%	111 100,00%
	Non-board Members	37 8,10%	414 91,90%	451 100,00%
	Total	46 8,20%	516 91,80%	562 100,00%

Source: Own Research