WORKING PAPER
Does Nomination Influence Women's Access to Institutional Decision-Making Bodies?

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Abstract: Based in the CHANGE[1] (H2020 funded) project, this paper puts in perspective the reality of a Portuguese university in terms of gender representation in its governance and management bodies. Portuguese higher education institutions (HEI) are excellent case-studies of women representation in academia, considering their significant presence and rapid growth in HEI. As the system expanded, and democratised it also became more feminised. Nevertheless, and despite efforts to minimise gender gaps, women are still underrepresented in top management and leading positions, contributing to increment the phenomenon of vertical segregation.

Recently, within the New Public Management (NPM) and managerialism context, HEI have been subjected to external pressures to create a new institutional and organisational environment aimed at substituting the collegial model of governance with a managerial one. In this context, there is also a trend to replace the election by the nomination as the dominant process to occupy decision-making positions. In this paper, the authors discuss if and how the way decision-making bodies are constituted, influence the gender balance of their members. Both quantitative and qualitative data are analysed. Quantitative data result from the analysis of the gender constitution of the decision-making bodies of the university. Qualitative data focus on the content analysis of legal documents describing the mission of the decision-making bodies and in 12 interviews with institutional key-actors.

The authors conclude that the gender balance decreases with the increasing importance of the decision-making body. However, it is not possible to say that there is a direct relation between the way actors are chosen to these bodies and its gender balance. By other words, the way actors are chosen can not be seen as the only factor influencing the gender constitution of decision-making bodies. Furthermore, interviewees do not perceive the way actors are chosen as a relevant mechanism to improve gender equality and neither actions in this domain were identified to be included in Gender Equality Plans. This study provides a relevant contribution to the literature on mechanisms and strategies to improve gender equality in institutional decision-making processes and bodies.

Keywords: Glass ceiling; universities; gender balance; decision-making bodies

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[1] Challenging Gender (in)equality in Science and Research. The project involves six countries: Israel, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia and Portugal.

I. Introduction

The lack of women in leadership across higher education as a result of the well-known phenomenon of vertical segregation has been problematized in the literature (Bagilhole and White, 2011, White et al., 2011, Burkinshaw and White, 2017, Carvalho and Diogo, 2018b). In fact, despite the feminization of universities in terms of the number of female students, formal positions in top management and/or leading positions, academic leadership in higher education remains concentrated in male hands (O'Connor, 2018, Carvalho and Diogo, 2018b, Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Additionally, and although the representation of women in leadership roles has increased, this happens mostly in administrative areas (Burkinshaw and White, 2017) – at the technostructure level. In fact, it is this increase in women students and in women faculty and administrators a little bit all over the world that has been touted as that gender equity has achieved the University (Alemán, 2014). Leadership is still mostly associated with a men's activity and, according to Dunn et al. (2014), male-centric leadership models and norms have served to limit women's aspirations as well as their access to leadership roles. Patriarchal sex/gender arrangements have been underlying many political conflicts by establishing identities, maintaining group cohesion and transmitting identities and values across generations (Vickers, 1994). This led the author to conceptualise sex/gender arrangements (as well as patriarchies) as technologies of social organisation and control (Vickers, 1994), following the analytical construct of "sex/gender" developed by Rubin (1984).

Gender gaps persist in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life opportunities and outcomes (OECD, 2017b, Costa et al., 2011, Costa et al., 2012). In this sense, the underrepresentation of women in academic administration suggests that masculine practices and leadership norms function to exclude women, which is particularly problematic, considering that the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in academia (as well as in public life) also represents a waste of talent.

In turn, since the mid 1970s, NPM and managerialism call for new ways of viewing the core mission of HEI, i.e. how institutions are and will be funded, how training will be delivered, how findings from research will be disseminated and applied and what matters for successful performance assessment exercises. According to Alemán (2014), managerialism, advance managers' interests over workers' interests and preserve relations of power and control in the hierarchy of the institution. It is in this context of change that HEI have been subjected to external pressures to create a new institutional and organisational environment aimed at substituting the collegial model with a managerial one. Along these shifts, there has also been a trend to replace the election by the nomination as the dominant process to occupy decision-making positions as well as changes in human resources management and assessment exercises. Portugal is no exception of these trends and in 2007 implemented legislation to define a new legal status to HEI – the RJIES (Law 62/2007). This new legal framework has deeply encapsulated managerialist principles (Diogo and Brückmann, 2015, Bruckmann and Carvalho, 2014, Bruckmann and Carvalho, 2018). Being leadership historically and normally assumed by men, discourses aiming at *helping* women breaking through the "glass ceiling" generally focused or passed the idea that there is a need of "fixing the women", contributing to perpetuate the inexistence of a gender neutral career development, and even to maintain (or deepen) the

precariousness of (leadership) careers of female academics (Alemán, 2014, Burkinshaw and White, 2017).

In this paper, the authors discuss if and how the way decision-making bodies are constituted in Portuguese HEI influence the gender balance of their members and how managerialism has been a facilitator mechanism towards precariousness, insecurity, affecting gender power relations within academia, reinforcing gender inequalities.

II. Theoretical Framework: Mechanisms and strategies to improve gender equality in institutional decision-making processes and bodies

At the beginning of the millennium, and similarly to other institutions and organisations, HEI have been facing increasingly pressures to institutionalise strong managerial modes of operation and leadership. NPM and managerialism provide fertile soil for HEI become subjected to external pressures in order to create a new institutional and organisational environment aimed at substituting the collegial model of governance with a managerial one (Carvalho and Santiago, 2015, Shepherd, 2017, White et al., 2011, Amaral and Meek, 2003, Veltri and Puntillo, 2019), increasing the pressure on international control mechanisms (Veltri and Puntillo, 2019). Within the NPM framework, while leadership and management assume greater importance, the opposite phenomenon regarding academics' situation develops, i.e. their power and status in university governance has declined (Deem et al., 2007, Carvalho and Diogo, 2018b). Managerialism implements decision-making almost coercively, top down, with academics having reduced influence, focusing on accountability, evaluation and economic efficiency (Amaral et al., 2003, Santiago and Carvalho, 2004, Ball, 2016).

Amidst this context, the literature refers that managerial universities value research above all other academic activities and, consequently, increasingly more HEI value and reward academics who bring external funding, projects, profitable collaborations, etc. to the organisation (Dunn et al., 2014, Acker and Dillabough, 2007, Acker, 1990, Diogo, 2016, Diogo, 2015, Alemán, 2014). Thus, research-intensive universities, quite often managerially governed, work as important contextual variables that likely impact leadership styles and experiences. In turn, by assuming that top management positions in these institutions are care-free, individuals – managers – *should* be available to participate almost without interruption in a long-hours work environment (Lynch et al., 2012, Akpinar-Sposito, 2013, Morley, 2013, Morley and Walsh, 1996). Not surprisingly, thus, academic females often build their careers later than their male colleagues as personal lives (e.g. motherhood; family) present challenges to administrative success (Dunn et al., 2014), which, in turn, make women less likely to have a *traditional* trajectory starting as a lecturer and then progressing through the ranks' top positions, such as senior lecturer, associate professor and full professor (Bagilhole and White, 2011). According to Akpinar-Sposito (2013) working mothers are stereotyped as not being serious or reliable enough to take positions as managers because their priorities lean more towards (raising a) family, reinforcing the idea that successful executives are unable to manage multiple priorities. Additionally, or consequently, even those women that achieve leadership positions in the academia technostructure are more prone to their male colleagues to have interrupted careers and/or to work part-time. In fact, women in universities (as well as other minority groups who work part-time and on a temporary

basis) face increasingly precarious career paths due to job insecurity, managerialist practices, heavy workloads and they even are paid less (Bagilhole and White, 2011, White et al., 2011, El-Alayli et al., 2018, Fogg, 2003, Gentry and Stokes, 2015, Carvalho and Diogo, 2018a, Barrett and Barrett, 2011, Aarrevaara et al., 2007). Previous research confirmed that hose with a non-permanent position tend to assume teaching duties almost exclusively, with a heavy workload (Gale, 2011, O'Connor, 2015); teaching duties tend to be mainly performed by women (Carvalho and Diogo, 2018a, Acker and Dillabough, 2007, Angervall et al., 2015), transforming these individuals into what Angervall and Beach (2018) labelled of "profitable workers". As Burkinshaw and White (2017) refer, being a minority creates precariousness in itself. When analysing the differential effects of academic capitalism on academic women, Metcalfe and Slaughter (2008) acknowledged that female academics end up in a disadvantageous position in academia as managerialism reorganizes professional power and privilege in a way that academic advancement is secured through market-based criteria, compromising academic capitalism. Also regarding the reality in United States, Alemán (2014) refers that the adoption of managerialism in the US universities, overvaluing and intensifying managerial principles, led to the strengthening of discursive masculinity and worsened women's faculty likelihood of professional advancement endangering gender equity in the academic profession.

Towards this reality, and in order to understand gender and its (com)implications for those who do science and work in knowledge producing organisations, namely in decision-making bodies, we also frame this study on the contribution of Jeff Hearn and Liisa Husu (2011) in seeing gender relations and gendered power relations as important characteristics of higher education and science and technology systems (Hearn and Husu, 2011). As such, and similar to Vickers (1994) conceptualisation of gendered technologies of social organisation and control, science and technology are not just structured by gender but pervaded and constituted by and through gender, gender relations and gendered power relations (Hearn and Husu, 2011), i.e. gender and gender issues related with power and hierarchical relations in HEI can be understood as operating and as relevant to science and technology at several levels: who does science and technology, how science and technology are organised, and the construction of knowledge in science and technology (Hearn and Husu, 2011).

In this sense, the literature is also consistent with the fact that although managerialism in higher education can provide opportunities for women to develop their careers – especially for those that can be successful gaining funding – it also perpetuates and intensifies the gendered organisational culture (Acker, 1990, Acker and Dillabough, 2007, Acker et al., 2012, Vickers, 2011, Thomas and Davies, 2002, Blättel-Mink et al., 2012, Davies and Thomas, 2002) as socioeconomic and ideological forces shape gender/power relation (Hearn and Husu, 2011, Vickers, 2011, Archer, 2008, Peterson, 2016).

The combination of heavy workloads with precariousness and insecurity of contracts, as well as feelings and anxiety to perform a flawless job, tends to strengthen and reproduce the idea of the need of women to be 'hyperprofessional' (Gornall and Salisbury, 2012), i.e. meaning that academics need to make strong efforts to maximise the levels of productivity, working harder and longer even when they are not explicitly asked to. The neoliberal academic work environment – based on competition, performativity, auditing and monitoring – is incorporated by academics who "become more demanding and rigorous with themselves than any other

employer could be" (Gornall and Salisbury, 2012, Ball, 2016, Peterson, 2016). Such hyper professionalism does not allow delimiting space and time outside of the academic environment, constraining academics to become non-stop workers (Ball, 2016). Thus, quite often, women tend to suffer more than man with this hyper professionalism syndrome, placing them (or labelling, almost blaming them) as outsiders – marginalizing them – if they wish, or strive to compete in careers' progression ladder. These processes and contexts contribute to legitimize discourses (and actions) promoting the need to 'fixing the women' rather than, or therefore, to fix organisations' culture, processes and practices. It is also true that not every women (or man) in academia seek leadership roles, but it is also true that the 'fixing the women' perspective – instead of the institutional culture – helps women to rationalise their withdraw of such advancement in their careers, blaming them for not being able to reach leadership (Burkinshaw and White, 2017, Morley, 2014, Carvalho and Diogo, 2018b, Fitzgerald and Wilkinson, 2010, Schiebinger, 2000).

These trends do not explicitly demonstrate that people, academics in this context, are not prepared to see (or to live with) the presence of women in executive positions, but rather that there is a lack of gender awareness in organisations (Hearn and Husu, 2011). For example, the Portuguese case exemplifies that despite the changes in national laws promoting gender equality in society, and the high participation of women in higher education, it was only in 2001 that the first woman rector was elected, and since then, only six more in the whole country have achieved this position (Carvalho and Diogo, 2018b). This resonates with that of Espírito-Santo (2016) on the Portuguese citizens' attitudes towards women in parliament. According to her study, the Portuguese population is willing to see an increase in the number of women in political power but only up to a certain point. This is so because even though most people support an increase in the number of female Prime Ministers, only a minority wish a substantial increase. Although with interesting specificities (Amâncio and Ávila, 1995), the Portuguese scenario does not differ much from the general trends presented above, being therefore relevant to understand whether NPM and managerialism eased up or hindered careers' progression of academic women.

By cross comparing decision-making processes of the Portuguese university governance bodies that has redefined its institutional organisation and legal status as well as their constitution, this paper gives a valuable contribution to the operationalisation of a managerial university in terms of gender representation in its governance and management bodies.

III. Methodology

The literature on higher education governance is consistent with the fact that NPM and managerialism have produced pressures to create a new institutional and organisational environment, aiming at substituting the collegial model with a managerial one. In this context, there have been changes in HEI juridical status, human resources management, as well as trends to replace the election by the nomination as the dominant process to occupy decision-making positions as well as. For example, before Law 62/2007 (RJES), rectors used to be elected by the university assembly. Now they are elected by secret ballot by the General Council. This modification does not change the rector's basic functions as the law stipulates that s/he be the

General Council's senior official.

In this paper, the authors triangulate quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand if and how the way decision-making bodies are constituted, influence the gender balance of their members. As Campbell (1974) puts it, triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. In this paper, we use the four basic types of triangulation identified by (Denzin, 1978) *in* Patton 2002: 247): i) *data triangulation* (the use of a variety of data sources) in the study; ii) *investigator triangulation* (having several researchers elaborating the study. In this case, we are three researchers with different backgrounds and different professional paths); iii) *theory triangulation* (the use of multiple perspectives to interpret our data) and iv) *methodological triangulation* (the use of multiple methods to study a problem).

Quantitative data result from the analysis of the gender constitution of the decision-making bodies of the university. This is combined with qualitative data focusing on the content analysis of legal documents describing the mission of the decision-making bodies and in 12 interviews with institutional key-actors. The interview guideline follows the previously established protocol to every country of the project in order to enhance comparison and assure anonymity of interviewees. Interviewees' identification according to their sex and role/position they hold in the university is presented in table 1. In the following section, we present tables with a description of the gender composition of the governance bodies of the Portuguese university analyzed, including a brief explanation on the way that access to the position happens (tables 2 and 3).

The framework used to analyse data from this case study lays on the combination of the above literature review, which introduced the theoretical framework, with the analysis of the legal documents on the decision-making bodies and the interviews' analysis process. Interviews themes were coded through the help of the data analysis software Nvivo, thus thematic analysis was undertaken in the light of the themes emerging from the combination of all these sources. It is expected that this research design will enable the generalisation of findings to different groups and geographical settings. The discourses analysed - with few exceptions – strongly resonate the 'fixing the women' perspective, as evidenced in the following section.

Table 1: Summary of Interviewees' Profile

Interviewees' Sex	Interviewees' Institutional Role			
	Top Management	Middle Management	Academics	Technostructure
1. Female		HRM Professional		
2. Female				Administrator's Assistant
3. Male	Vice-Rector			
4. Female		Dean		
5. Female			Associate Professor and *coordinator of a pole of a research unit.*	
6. Male		Dean		
7. Male	*Member of the Ethics and Deontology Council*			
8. Female			Assistant Professor (prior Pro-Rector)	
9. Female				*Senior technician*
10. Male		Dean		
11. Female			Assistant Professor	
12. Male				Representative of PhD students in the institution and of the national scientific research fellows association

IV. Discussion

RJIES, which came officially into force in 2008, reduced the representation of students and staff in management and governance bodies, fostering inequalities between institutions which choose to become public foundations and those which remain under the traditional public institute regime. As the legislation stipulated fewer governance bodies with fewer people – instead of having four organs (the rector, the rector's team, the university assembly and the administrative council), sometimes universities were left with only three, in which case the university assembly was replaced by a smaller general council – there is an excessive concentration of power in universities' General Councils and in sole proprietorship positions, i.e. university rectors and directors of polytechnics, meaning that researchers, students and staff feel a significant reduction in academic endeavour as well as lower participation in democratic governance (Diogo, 2016, Diogo and Brückmann, 2015).

Towards these changes in governance modes and decision-making process, we analyse how gender composition of governance bodies is affected by the managerial university ethos. Tables 2 and 3 present the gender compositions of the institution governance bodies as well as a

summary description on the access to the position.

Table 2: Gender Composition of the UAVR Bodies (by percentage and number).

Governance bodies		Scientific & pedagogic bodies		Management bodies		Advisory bodies	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
69%	31%	55%	45%	70%	30%	75%	25%

Governance bodies	Men	Women	Total
Rector	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
Rectoral Team	8 (66.7%)	4 (33.3%)	12
Board of Trustees	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5
General Council	12 (63.2)	7 (36.8%)	19
Management Council/ Board	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5
Scientific & pedagogic bodies	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Scientific Council	12 (50%)	12 (50%)	24
Pedagogical Council	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	25
Management bodies	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Deans	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	20
Executive Commission	50 (64.1%)	28 (35.9%)	78
Coordinators of Research Units	13 (68.4%)	6 (31.6%)	19
Advisory bodies	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**
Council of Ethics	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	12
Disciplinary Commission	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	7
Student Ombudsman	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1

A first glance immediately confirms what the literature and statistical data refer on the reduced number of women achieving senior or top leadership positions in the academia. Even if the document analysis and quantitative data refer an increase in the representation of women in leadership roles, this happens mostly in administrative areas. The analysis of the scientific and pedagogic bodies, meaning the bodies responsible for the scientific and pedagogical decisions at the strategic and/or operational level reveals a gender imbalance regarding its composition. The members of the scientific council take decisions concerning the University's plan of scientific activities and its scientific policy, and only within this body we find parity of gender. With respect

to the pedagogical council, responsible for the university educational affairs, more men than women constitute it.

Table 3 – Gender Composition of the Governance Bodies and Process of Accessing the Position

Governance structures	Access to the Position	Gender Composition		
		Total Nr.	Male	Female
1. Rector	The Rector is **elected** by the General Council (a much smaller and less represented structure when compared to the university assembly, which was in place before the RJIES) instead of being elected by all members. He may not be a member of the institution and may not be Portuguese – as the legislation (Law 62/2007) opens the position to people coming from both outside the institution and the country. The UAVR elected a Rector who belongs to the institution, reinforcing the image of the Rector as *primus inter pares* and not so much as a chief executive office as the Legislation suggests. This is important for rectors' legitimacy to have internal support from other academics, being in line with the more traditional collegial model of governance.	1	1	–
2. Rector Team	Freely **appointed** by the Rector and may come from outside the institution. May be dismissed at any time by the Rector and the end of their mandates coincide with the mandates of the Rector. Other offices may be created to assist the Rector (Law 62/2007).	**12** 5 Vice-Rectors + 7 Pro-Rectors	**8** 4 Vice-Rector + 4 Pro-Rectors	**4** 1 Vice-Rector + 3 Pro-Rectors
3. Board of Trustees	5 personalities (external members) **appointed** by the government based on the previous suggestion of the UAVR. These curators are personalities recognised for their particular merit and highly relevant professional experience. Their 5-year mandate, incompatible with any contractual activity with the UA, can be renewed once. The president of this Board is elected by its members by absolute majority and is also granted a 5-year mandate.	**5**	**4**	**1**
4. General Council (GC)	The representatives of teachers and researchers are **elected** by all the teachers and researchers in the university, using a system of proportional representation; they must constitute more than half of the total number of members of the GC. The students' representatives are elected by all the students in the university using a system of proportional representation under the terms of the statutes. They must constitute at least 15% of the total number of members of the GC. The individuals of recognised merit who have relevant knowledge and experience but who do not belong to the institution are co-opted by the representatives of teachers and researchers and representatives of students, point by absolute majority, based on justified proposals subscribed to by at least one third of the members; these must constitute at least 30% of the total number of members of the GC.	**19**	**12**	**7**
5.Management Council	The Management Board is **elected** and discharged by the Board of Trustees, on the proposal of the Rector, and composed of the Rector, who presides, one Vice-Rector and the Administrator of the University. The Management Board is **appointed** and presided over by the Rector.	**5**	**4**	**1**
Scientific and Pedagogic bodies				
1. Scientific Council	- The Rector, who presides, plus - 9 representatives **elected** from among the UA's career professors and researchers (7 from the university and 2 from the polytechnic schools); - Representatives **elected** from among the UA's remaining professors and researchers, following the rules established for this effect.	**24**	**12**	**12**
2. Pedagogical Council	The Pedagogical Council is constituted by 25 members and chaired by one Vice-Rector of the UA (man), for delegation of powers conferred by the Rector; + 12 professors (9 belonging to university teaching and 3 to polytechnic teaching) and 12 students (10 belonging to university teaching and 2 to polytechnic).	**25**	**15**	**10**
Management bodies				

1. Deans	**Designated** by a selection committee composed by the Rector and 4 other elements. **Nomination** is confirmed by the Rector by formal appointment	**20** 16 Deans + 4 Polytechnic Schools	**16** **3**	**0** **1**
2. Executive Commission	Members are **appointed** by the Director.	**60** 18 polytechnic schools	**40** 10 polytechnic	**20** 8 polytechnic schools
3. Coordinators of Research Units and laboratories	Usually **elected** by the members of the research unit but it depends on the internal regulations of each centre.	**19**	**3**	**6**
Advisory bodies				
1. Council of Ethics Board	The Council of Ethics and Deontology is composed of a maximum of 12 members, including internal and external personalities, freely **appointed** and exempted by the General Council, which defines the term and regime of mandates and other framing rules.	**12**	**9**	**3**
2. Disciplinary Commission	The Disciplinary Committee is composed of 7 members, **appointed** and dismissed by the Rector and for the term of the respective mandate.	**7**	**5**	**2**
3. Student Ombudsman	The President of the General Council nominates one of the people he knows and trusts to be the Student Ombudsman.	**1**	**1**	**_**

As the previous tables show, only the scientific council (one of the scientific and pedagogic bodies) is constituted by equal number of men and women. Following these trends, only one of the polytechnic schools is chaired by a woman, who herself explained, did not apply for the specific position of Dean, therefore not being representative of a *normal* career path and of an election/nomination procedure.

> *Actually, it was quite unexpected. I was chosen (appointed) rather than elected because the former Director quit the job. The Rector appointed me until the term of office of the previous Director, also because I was already a member of the Executive Commission/Committee (Executive Board). I never thought of applying for this job* (P4).

Although she refers that it was completely unexpected and that she never thought about it before, she did not refused the job and feels that she was, in fact, the best decision the Rector could make. She sees herself as a good leader, regardless her sex, assuming this leadership experience as gender-neutral.

> *Now I am enjoying it and I think I am a good leader, regardless being a women. At least I like to believe that. Among the choices the Rector had, I think I was the best one* (P4).

The fact that only few women reach top-positions – and usually at a much latter stage than men – seems to be a non-issue for most of our interviewees. Indeed, from the reduced sample we have, it is possible to say that interviewees' discourses go against with what Morley (2014) found on the fact of women themselves asserting that they have been marginalised in the gendered

research economy. As the following citation evidence, most of our females' discourses show an alignment with the perspective 'the problem are the women':

> *I acknowledge that mentalities need to change, but women should also empower themselves, asserting themselves, emerging as leaders! If women stand for what they want, they will (eventually) obtain it* (P2).

Consequently, these messages contribute to perpetuate the situation of women under-representation at the highest executive governance bodies, as the feeling portrayed is that women who really want to become institutional leaders or managers, will do it. Being a relatively small institution, it is thus natural that these visions become known and incorporated by those who appoint the institution representatives and the members of the governance bodies. As men do not need to worry about *such* issues, it is thus *natural* that they are mostly positioned or seen as *natural candidates* for such job. Additionally, this type of behaviour is perpetuated by higher education gender power relations that involve structures, practices and processes that are exacerbated by precarious careers, usually affecting more women than men, as they "fit" (and need to accomplish) more roles in society than men.

The problem of work overload, of feeling more pressure to be always available and accomplish as more as possible was mostly referred by women. Such discourses corroborate the NPM credo of on the strengthening the importance of performativity elements in academics' career development and progression. Although this is a phenomenon common to both genders, especially in a managerial university and research-intensive organisations, it is more penalising for women than men who do not want to abdicate from motherhood. As reported by both female and male interviewees:

> *It is something that is important when we talk about positions that are by nomination, and then we enter in the "world of men". Women have a different dedication to family life (although younger generation couples tend to share responsibilities at home) and people in leadership roles believe that women have less availability to be appointed for certain positions. It is more frequent for women than men to refuse certain positions because they do not want to abdicate from their family life. Competency and availability should be articulated and should not exclude each other* (P3; P5).

Following the theoretical framework of Hearn and Husu (2011), it is possible to observe that gender operates in science and technology in terms of *who* does science and technology, *defining* the leaders, inventors, researchers, workers. Even if Portugal stands out among the OECD countries in terms of the percentage of female researchers, they are still a minority in a global perspective (OECD, 2017a, OECD, 2018). There is gendered division of labour and authority, both formal and informal, with both sexes specializing in particular types of labour, creating vertical and horizontal divisions within organizations (Hearn and Husu 2011). This data also shoes that women and men may be valued differentially in terms of formal authority, position, and informal status and standing in organizations as referred by Hearn and Husu (2011).

In the case of the Portuguese university of this study, the performance of the leader (Rector) is supervised by a Board of Trustees, of which the great majority are constituted by men. As a matter of fact, at this university, different bodies have a highly relevant role in adopting and change general acts as the Statute, namely the General Council. In these bodies, one finds representants of different groups of stakeholders (both internal and external to the academia).

Conclusions

The cross analysis of quantitative and qualitative data shows that the gender balance within academia decreases with the increasing importance of the decision-making body. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that there is a direct relation between the way actors are chosen to these bodies and its gender balance. By other words, the way actors are chosen can not be seen as the only or most important factor influencing the gender constitution of decision-making bodies. Furthermore, interviewees do not perceive the way actors are chosen as a relevant mechanism to improve gender equality and neither actions in this domain were identified to be included in Gender Equality Plans or even to be bear in mind in future practices in the academia to increase gender awareness in the institution. Towards this scenario, it is in this sense that this study also provides a relevant contribution to the literature on mechanisms and strategies to improve gender equality in institutional decision-making processes and bodies, as well as to raise gender awareness within HEI. The results of this research go in line with previous studies of the authors Carvalho and Diogo (2018), concluding that women holding leadership positions in universities (e.g. rectors) tend to develop narratives about their professional route to the top as based on merit and hard work, and tend to classify their leadership experience as gender-neutral as well as grounded on the establishment of good relationships with their peers along their professional path. This corroborates the typical patterns of gendering processes in organizations related to *interactions, and individuals' internal mental work*, that maintain, or disrupt, other gendered patterns, and concern how people make sense of gendering (Hearn and Husu 2011).

When comparing the gender composition of the decision-making bodies of the countries' different institutions belonging to the CHANGE project consortium, the Portuguese and Israeli institutions are those evidencing a greater gender balance (55% of men). Nevertheless, more research needs to be developed to assess how managerialist practices and NPM ideology have increased job insecurity and precarious working conditions, while fostering continuous organisational restructuring and consequently affects gender power relations at work. In interviewees' discourses, it is not possible to establish clear links between, for example, the rise and consolidation of managerialism, pressures for the hyper professionalism syndrome and precariousness of working conditions in academia. In fact, this research also shows that there is still a long way to demystify the belief or the idea that gender equality, in the 21st century, is taken for granted. In Europe and USA, and towards the mid of 2019, one still finds discourses promoting the idea that the only thing that needs to be fixed is society, removing the responsibility of institutions to promote equal opportunities, and therefore impacting on the way and which people are chosen to leadership positions.

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