

Three Decades of State Feminism and Gender Equality Policies in Multi-governed Spain

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Abstract Spain's evolution from an authoritarian regime to a well-established multi-governed democracy in a short period of time, has been accompanied by incredibly rapid social change and a varied (depending on the governmental period), but overall steady, consideration of gender equality as a political priority. This has also led to the rapid development and consolidation of women's and equality machineries—state feminism—and well-established policies devoted to promoting gender equality over the last three decades, both at national and regional governmental levels. This article aims to present a consolidated policy area which has enough elements to survive and to keep on developing, although in an increasingly fragmented manner, among regions, despite the ongoing economic crisis and the conservative political turn. Based on theories of state feminism and discursive politics, this article analyzes four important elements for understanding this claim and the evolution of national and regional Spanish gender policies and institutions during the last three decades: women's machinery, the relations between that machinery and women's and feminist movements, the policy discourses present in gender equality policies, and the policy instruments used by those machineries and policies.

Keywords Equality policies · Gender equality · Gender policies · State feminism

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Introduction

Spain has transitioned from an authoritarian regime to a well-established democracy in a short time span, and this has occurred alongside an incredibly rapid change in social and gender roles (EIGE 2013; Iglesias de Ussel 2009; Juárez and Casado 1994; Cáritas Española 1983), and to a varied (depending on the governmental period), but overall steady, consideration of gender equality as a political priority. This led to the rapid development and consolidation of women's and equality machineries—state feminism—and policies devoted to promoting gender equality over the last three decades at national and regional governmental levels, which were described as being “at the vanguard in European Gender Equality Policies” (Valiente 2008, p. 101). This quick development has resulted in the interest in gender research, including Spain in important comparative research projects since the 90s, both in Europe (European research projects funded by the European Commission, among others, the Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe 2003–2005- –MAGEEQ- project (Verloo 2007), or the Quality in Gender 2006–2011 –QUING- project –www.quing.eu) and internationally (Research Network on Gender Politics and the State - <http://libarts.wsu.edu/pppa/rngs/>).

This article aims to picture a policy area which has evolved and consolidated over the last 30 years. Although there are some developments that are nowadays at stake due to the economic crisis and the political conservative turn, which have made gender equality a non-priority since 2010 (Bettio et al. 2012; Bosco and Verney 2012; Gálvez 2013; Gálvez and Torres 2010; González 2011; Lahey and de Villota 2013), the overall architecture of Spanish gender policies, both at national and regional levels, was able to develop and is strong enough to survive, and allow some opportunities for development in some regions and areas. No strong leadership on

gender policies at national level may lead to sharper fragmentation and differences among regions.

In this paper I use projections based on an in-depth analysis of how Spanish state feminism and gender policies have behaved and developed over the last three decades. I examine the evolution of four key elements for state feminism at national and regional levels: women's machinery, the relations between that machinery and women's and feminist movements, the policy discourses present in gender equality policies, and the policy instruments used by those machineries and policies. This analysis allows me to conclude that the institutional consolidation of women's machinery and the use of more efficient policy instruments, on the one side, and the dynamics of varied and fragmented different frames and discourses, regions and feminist and women's movements, on the other, create different opportunities for development and a picture of a consolidated, although more fragmented, policy area.

Apart from four main sections on equality machinery, relations with women's movements, policy discourses and policy instruments, the first part of this article also presents a section on the theoretical basis which supports the analysis, and a brief section presenting some important features of the Spanish historical context for understanding the evolution of the three decades of Spanish state feminism and gender policies.

Theoretical Background

This article benefits from theoretical insights from theories in discursive politics and state feminism. The literature on state feminism has shown that the analysis of gender equality bodies and their functioning is a key starting point for understanding which factors might favor more gender-equal outcomes. Most of the authors agree on the factors identified, although they emphasize different ones in their conclusions: the structural conditions of the equality machinery (Rai 2003), the broader context (Htun and Weldon 2010; Mazur 2002), or the type of alliances between the women's policy agency and the feminist movement (Hausman and Sauer 2007; Lovenduski 2005; Mazur 2002; McBride and Mazur 2010; Outshoorn 2004).

The theoretical foundations for the State Feminism framework stem from four strands of theory: institutionalism and the state; social movement theory; democracy and representation; and policy and framing (McBride and Mazur 2013). State feminism cannot be equated to the simple presence or existence of women's machinery, but refers to the "degree to which women's policy machineries effectively promote women's interests within the state, through advancing women's movements actors' ideas and claims in policy debates" (McBride and Mazur 2013, p. 656). For this reason, it is

important to study not only the structure of the women's machinery, but also its activities and what they do and the instruments they employ, as well as the policy discourses that they promote and the alliances they create with the feminist and women's movements. The strength of Spanish state feminism in the 90s is critical for understanding the gender policies that were developed, not only at national, but also at regional levels, presenting quite a fragmented landscape (Bustelo and Ortals 2007). In this article, I add an analysis of the role that the fragmentation of Spanish gender equality policies has played in the last part of the pro-equality Zapatero governments (2004–2011), including the budgetary cuts which started in 2010, and its effects in the very different context of economic crisis and conservative turn.

Banaszak et al. (2003), in their study on how women's movements face the reconfigured state, highlight the importance of structural changes within the state which imply a relocation of state authority and responsibilities from one governmental level to another. They distinguish between *downloading* of power and responsibility to lower state levels (in the Spanish case, from central to regional), and *uploading* to higher state levels (in this case, to the EU). Zippel (2004) also describes the 'ping-pong effect', which she uses to expand Keck and Sikkink's (1998) concept of the "boomerang pattern" –by which, national organizations blocked at the national level advocate for their interests at the supranational level, which exerts pressure back onto their national governments. Due to the EU's multilevel system of governance, the structure of policy making within the EU not only offers activists new opportunities at the supranational level, but also changes the nature of policy making within member states. Thus, policy action often flows back and forth between the EU and national levels, with each influencing the other (Zippel 2004, p. 59).

Following this double movement, one should look at the role the EU has played in Spanish gender policies, with its important initial influence at the beginning and a relatively moderate impact thereafter (Lombardo 2004). It is also interesting, however, to consider things *viceversa*, that is, to consider the influence that the Spanish gender policies might have had in Europe. In this sense, I also refer to the literature on Europeanization from a discursive-sociological approach, which refers to Europeanization not merely as a top-down process (integration from above), but as a set of processes, such as policy transfers, practices and mutual learning, norms adaptation and diffusion, as well as the different EU 'uses' from domestic actors (Lombardo and Forest 2012; Woll and Jacquot 2010). In the Spanish case, it is argued that, apart from processes of norm diffusion that fostered, for example, mainstreaming instruments and a more recent shift from implementation-oriented measures towards 'hard' discrimination provisions, "Europeanization has also

affected the making of regional equality policies to a relevant extent” (Alonso and Forest 2012, p. 193).

On the other hand, theories of discursive politics explore processes of *contestation* and attribution of *meanings* to political concepts, such as that of gender equality. Several scholars have already discussed the open and contested nature of this concept (Bacchi 1999; Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, and Rucht 2002; Kantola 2006; Verloo 2007). Gender equality is contested, since it is not a fixed concept, but rather a concept whose meaning is discursively constructed in political disputes among different state and non-state actors. The meaning of gender equality can be “stretched” or “bent” in different directions leading to a concept with different interpretations: equal opportunities in some contexts and empowerment in others (Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo 2009). For this reason, the examination of policy discourses embedded in gender policies can serve as an interesting dimension for understanding those policies.

Historical Context

Spain was reorganized from an authoritarian regime to a well-established democracy in a short space of time: The dictator Franco died in 1975, the first general elections were in 1977, the Spanish Constitution was approved in 1978 (considered to be the end of the political transition; *La transición*), and Spain entered the European Economic Community in 1986. In 1982, after 5 years of governments ruled by the *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD), a right-center party that disappeared with the democratic transition, the socialist party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*; PSOE), was in office for 14 years (under Felipe González’s presidency) until 1996, when the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP) took office, governed by José María Aznar for 8 years. Then, in 2004, the PSOE, under the leadership of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, governed again for almost another 8 years. In November 2011, Mariano Rajoy (PP) won the general election with an absolute majority in the National Parliament.

This rapid democratization process taking place in less than 10 years (1975–1982) led to profound and enormous social changes, including changes to women’s roles in Spanish society (Cáritas Española 1983). To understand the nature of these changes, it should be pointed out that women’s status in the pre-democratic right-wing authoritarian regime led by Franco (1939–1975) was strongly influenced by the Catholic Church and firmly based on a protectionist male-breadwinner model, with women considered exclusively as housewives and caretakers, and motherhood being their main and only role (Cáritas Española 1983).

This historical perspective elucidates the importance of social and political change and the impact of gender policies in Spain over the last three decades. A good recent indicator of

Spanish gender performance is the Gender Equality Index, released in 2013 by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The Gender Equality Index is formed by combining gender indicators across six core domains (*work* –participation in the labour market and segregation and quality of work-, *money*– financial resources and the economic situation-, *knowledge* –educational attainment and segregation and life-long learning-, *time* –care and social activities-, *power* –political and economical- and *health* –status and access-) and this index measures how far (or how close) the EU-27 and its Member States were from achieving gender equality in 2010. It provides results at both the level of the Member States and the EU-27, assigning scores between 1, total inequality, and 100, full equality (EIGE 2013). In this index, Spain has a symbolic exact figure as the EU-27 mean, 54, which is higher than six countries of the old EU-15 (higher than Austria, Italy, Germany, Greece, Luxemburg and Portugal). Although the gender index will need to be updated soon to check on probable effects of the economic crisis on gender performance, I think it is still a useful indicator for Spain.

The social and political changes during these last three decades must be analyzed alongside others taking place across the institutional organization in the Spanish territory. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 set the original model for territorial organization in Spain (neither unitary nor centralized nor federal), which established political and administrative autonomy for the different regions and nationalities in the country. Thus, Spain also transformed from a strong centralized state into a quasi-federal state within 20 years. This context is important for understanding the development and the role of gender public policies, as well as their fragmentation. Certainly, Spanish public policies at regional level represent the most important governmental level over the national and local levels: In 2003, the *Comunidades Autónomas* (Autonomous Communities; hereafter, referred to as *regions*) managed 34.8 % (49 % excluding social security) of the total expenses of all public administrations (Domínguez Martínez et al. 2006).

State feminism began developing in Spain primarily at the end of 1983, when a national woman’s institute (*Instituto de la Mujer*; IM) was created by the Socialist Party (PSOE), in part as a consequence of the pressure for the country to enter as a candidate in the European Economic Union (1986). The regions followed that model and adapted IM policies during the late 80s and the 90s using gender equality plans that contained initiatives to be implemented by different governmental units. Since then, the regions have developed different and specific policy frameworks, discourses, methods of intervention, and ways of dealing with women’s movements. These differences are tied to territory, to different developments of the regions’ political and institutional systems, and to specific political parties in these regions. Although some similarities can be found relating mainly to the influence of the European Union,

Spain has a wide variety of gender policies overall (Alonso and Forest 2012; Bustelo and Ortals 2007).

A Strong Equality Machinery at National and Regional Levels

The creation of the national agency, the IM, in 1983 is considered to be the starting point for state feminism and gender equality public policies in Spain. From the moment of its creation, gender equality public policies—and the institutional framework created around them—developed very quickly in Spain. The inception of state feminism arrived approximately 10 years later in Spain compared to other Western countries. Nevertheless, the IM was comparable to similar institutions in other advanced industrial democracies, in terms of goals, budget, and human resources in 1994, 10 years after its creation (Valiente 1995).

All Spanish regional governments followed the national model and also developed ample regional women's machinery, consisting of varied types of agencies. This institutional development towards equality agencies or *women's agencies* at regional level started in the late 80s, approximately 5 years after the IM was created at the end of 1983 (Bustelo and Ortals 2007). At that time, the national agency (IM) was a model for the regional institutionalization of governmental women's agencies (Valiente 1995), but their development has been characterized by the Autonomous State model and has resulted in steady and increasing differentiation, fragmentation, and autonomy of the regions over the last 30 years. The 17 regions, which are regions with administrative and political autonomy, were created from 1979 (*Pais Vasco* and *Cataluña*) to 1983 (the last four were *Extremadura*, *Baleares*, *Madrid*, and *Castilla-León*), to which the cities of *Ceuta* and *Melilla* were added in 1995. All of them should be considered Spanish "femocracies" that have been the main actors in regional gender equality public policies in Spain (Bustelo and Ortals 2007) (see Table 1).

The political context is an important factor which should be taken into account in this institutional analysis. At national level, according to Valiente (1995), the creation of the IM in 1983 was primarily due to the PSOE being in government at that time and some feminist socialist women who fought for it, using the pressure of the candidacy in order to enter the European Economic Union, in a typical 'boomerang pattern' as described by Keck and Sikkink's (1998). Thus, up to the mid-90s, national gender policies in Spain were associated with the PSOE (Threlfall 1998). However, the conservative party (*Partido Popular*; PP) took office in 1996 and contrary to what was claimed in the conservative electoral program, women's agencies and gender policies were also supported by the new cabinet.

Key factors used to explain the PP's stance included the World Conference IV in Beijing, and European support and resources for gender policies (Bustelo and Ortals 2007). That relative support from Aznar's conservative cabinet in 1996–2004 is not so clear in the case of the conservative Rajoy's, which took office at the end of 2011, due to the general budgetary cuts which are especially hitting social policies (Alonso and Paleo 2013; Valiente 2013). After 8 years of conservative government (1996–2004), the two government terms led by Zapatero (PSOE, 2004–2011) had an important impact on gender policies, with clear, positive signs, such as a parity government, the creation of higher rank equality structures, and the approval of gender-related acts (Valiente 2008). Some of these advancements have been vanishing since the PP won the general elections in November. Parity in government disappeared with the proportion of women in the PP cabinet dropping to 31 % (although the real and symbolic change was that Zapatero's paritary governments also had an effect on Rajoy's conservative government when compared to the single female minister—a proportion of 3.7 %—in the Aznar's conservative 2002 cabinet), the IM was hierarchically downgraded, and many of the measures passed in the previous term, including the 2010 abortion law, (which will probably be replaced in 2014 by an extremely restrictive and conservative new law approved by the PP's cabinet on December 2013) are now being questioned. Despite this non-gender-friendly environment, the equality machinery at national level still maintains structural strength, and the regional machineries are, in general, also well consolidated and have steadily maintained the institutional strength acquired increasingly during the last two decades.

The regional political landscape also varied during these three decades. In 1998, for example, 11 of the 17 regions were in conservative hands (PP), whereas in 2008, this was the case in only seven regions, with the PSOE governing in nine of them. The landscape turned mainly conservative again in 2012 (12 regions have PP governments). It is important to note that the political subsystems in the regions have varied dynamics and are different from the national system in many cases. As an example, regional or nationalist political parties sometimes form coalitions with a major party—or another regional party—which consequently impacts regional governance (see Table 1).

However, with regards to the Spanish equality machinery development, the most important and significant institutional developments occurred at the national level during the PSOE terms from 2004 to 2011. The Equality Policies General Secretariat was created with a higher rank than the IM in 2004 and a Ministry of Equality was also set up 4 years later in 2008. Apart from the IM, the Special Government

Table 1 Spanish national and regional women's machinery in 2012

Level/Region	Type of organization and date of creation	Party in government	Governmental area
National	<i>Instituto de la Mujer</i> (Woman's Institute) (1983) <i>Secretaría General de Políticas de Igualdad</i> (General Secretariat of Equality Policies) (2004) <i>Ministerio de Igualdad</i> (Ministry of Equality) (2008; abolished in 2010) <i>Secretaría de Estado de Igualdad</i> (General Secretariat of Equality) (2010) <i>Secretaría de Estado de Servicios Sociales e Igualdad</i> (General Secretariat of Social Services and Equality) (2012)	PP (2011)	Health, Social Services, and Equality
Andalucía	<i>Instituto Andaluz de la Mujer</i> (Andalusian Woman's Institute) (1988)	PSOE	Equality and Social Welfare; Until 2004 in Presidency
Aragón	<i>Instituto Aragonés de la Mujer</i> (Aragon Woman's Institute) (1993)	PP & PAR (regional party)	Health, Social Welfare and Family; Until 2003 in Presidency
Asturias	<i>Secretaría Regional de la Mujer</i> (Regional Secretariat of Woman) (1989) <i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1993) <i>Instituto Asturiano de la Mujer</i> (Asturias Woman's Institute) (1999)	PSOE	Presidency (since 1999)
Baleares	<i>Comisión Interdepartamental</i> (Interdepartmental Commission) (1990) <i>Instituto Balear de la Mujer</i> (Balears Woman's Institute) (2000)	PP	Health, Family and Social Welfare Until 2009 in Presidency
Canarias	<i>Instituto Canario de la Mujer</i> (Canary Woman's Institute) (1994), <i>de Igualdad</i> (Canary Equality's Institute) (2010)	PP & CC (regional party)	Presidency, Justice and Equality
Cantabria	<i>Agencia de Promoción de la Mujer</i> (Agency for Woman's Promotion) (1986) <i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1997)	PP	Presidency and Justice
Castilla-La Mancha	<i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1990) <i>Instituto de la Mujer de Castilla-La Mancha</i> (Woman's Institute of Castilla-La Mancha) (2002)	PP	Presidency
Castilla-León	<i>Secretaría Regional de la Mujer</i> (Regional Secretariat of Woman) (1994) <i>Dirección General de la Mujer e Igualdad de Oportunidades</i> (Directorate General of Woman and Equal Opportunities) (1999)	PP	Family and Equal Opportunities
Cataluña	<i>Comisión Interdepartamental de Promoción de la Mujer</i> (1987) (Interdepartmental Commission of Woman's Promotion) <i>Institut Català de la Dona</i> (Catalonian Woman's Institute) (1989)	CiU	Social Welfare and Family Until 2006 in Presidency
Comunidad Valenciana	<i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1997) <i>Dirección General de Familia y Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Family and Woman)	PP	Justice and Social Welfare
Extremadura	<i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1991) <i>Instituto de la Mujer de Extremadura</i> (Woman's Institute of Extremadura) (2001)	PP	Health and Social Policy
Galicia	<i>Servicio Gallego de Promoción de Igualdad del Hombre y la Mujer</i> (Galician Service of Equality Promotion for Man and Woman) (1991, abolished in 2010) <i>Secretaría General de Igualdad</i> (Secretariat General of Equality) (2005)	PP	Presidency

Table 1 (continued)

Level/Region	Type of organization and date of creation	Party in government	Governmental area
<i>La Rioja</i>	<i>Dirección General de Bienestar Social</i> (Directorate General of Social Welfare) (1988) <i>Dirección General de Política Social</i> (Directorate General of Social Policy) (2003)	PP	Health and Social Services
<i>Madrid</i>	<i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1989)	PP	Social Affairs
<i>Murcia</i>	<i>Dirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate General of Woman) (1991) <i>Instituto Murciano de la Mujer</i> (Murcia Woman's Institute) 2002, abolished in 2010) <i>Dirección General de Asuntos Sociales, Igualdad e Inmigración</i> (Directorate General of Social Affairs, Equality and Immigration) (2011)	PP	Health and Social Policy
<i>Navarra</i>	<i>Subdirección General de la Mujer</i> (Directorate Subgeneral of Woman) (1991) <i>Instituto Navarro de la Mujer</i> (Navarra Woman's Institute) (1995) <i>Instituto Navarro para la Familia e Igualdad</i> (Navarra Institute for Family and Equality)	UPN/PSN (regional parties)	Social Policies
<i>País Vasco</i>	<i>Instituto Vasco de la Mujer–Emakunde</i> (Basque Woman's Institute) (1988)	PNV (2012)	Presidency

PP partido popular; PSOE Partido Socialista Obrero Español; PAR Partido Aragonés; CC Coalición Canaria; CiU Convergència i Unió; UPN Unión del Pueblo Navarro; CDN Convergencia de Demócratas de Navarra; PSN Partido Socialista Navarro; PNV Partido Nacionalista Vasco

Delegation Opposing Violence Against Women (*Delegación Especial del Gobierno contra la Violencia de la Mujer*) was created and was also dependent on this secretariat. The establishment of this special delegation was set by the national law 1/2004 on gender violence and its main objective was the formulation of governmental public policies related to gender violence. A new Ministry of Equality was created in 2008, which the general secretariat, the IM, and special delegation for gender violence fell under alongside other structures dealing with inequalities apart from gender, such as the Youth Institute and the Council of the Advancement of Equality of Treatment and Non-Discrimination of People on Grounds of Racial and Ethnic Origin, set up in 2009. The Ministry of Equality was abolished in 2010 as part of Zapatero's budgetary cut measures, to deal with the financial crisis, and converted into the State Secretariat for Equality within the Ministry of Health, Social Policy, and Equality. At the end of 2011, the conservatives maintained the same ministry (significantly substituting the term *social policy* with *social services*), but downgraded the IM to be dependent solely on the Directorate General (lower in hierarchy than the former Secretary of State), who was named the Directorate General of Equal Opportunities (not referring to gender) under a Secretary of State who lost specificity on Equality, becoming the Secretary of State of Social Services and Equality. Taking into account the fabulous development of the equality machinery during the 2004–2010 period, it is easy to conclude that the

retrenchment, already started by Zapatero in 2010 and followed by Rajoy, could be seriously jeopardizing the Spanish gender architecture, and further research will be needed to evaluate the impact of this retrenchment. However, the IM still has the same dimensions, functions and personnel that it had before and the Directorate General of Equal Opportunities maintains the core functions of the former Ministry and State Secretariat. Furthermore, and despite the general budget cuts and elimination of equality agencies in two regions –Galicia and Murcia– (Alonso and Paleo 2013), if an overall assessment of the Spanish Equality machinery is carried out, which also includes the regional level, we find a consolidated landscape of equality institutions, which is still strong.

Traditionally Weak Relations Between Feminist Movements and the State

One of the most important weaknesses of women's and equality machineries in Spain is related to a relative lack of participation of feminist and women's movements in gender policies (Valiente 1995; Bustelo and Ortals 2007). Undoubtedly, Spanish gender policies have been traditionally more oriented toward public powers rather than women's movements. Although the IM was initially established thanks to the efforts of feminists within the PSOE, who were or had been members of feminist groups (Valiente 2003), and the theoretical model

was partly based on shared participation, the practical model was not. An explanation may be that since it was so important for the persuasion strategy to establish alliances among public powers, Spanish femocrats may have been more compelled to obtain participation and collaboration from their governmental colleagues rather than from other women's groups.

Another explanation is that the participation of social movements in Spanish public policies has generally never been a strong point or characteristic of the Spanish policy style. Along with the Spanish political culture, this may also be due to our own recent democratic history. Not only were social movements necessarily weak during the democratic transition period, but in the first years of democratic governments, there was also a sort of *cooptation phenomenon* (attracting the best social leaders as policymakers), especially in municipalities at a local level, which unexpectedly weakened the already small social groups surviving Franco's dictatorship (Alberich 2007).

Although the transition period produced a lively women's movement, fighting for abortion rights, divorce, sexuality, education, and equality in the workplace (Escario et al. 1996; Threlfall 1996), the current movement is highly fragmented with movement organizations that have different feminist discourses and even recreational associationalism. Here, it is important to distinguish between "women's movements" and "feminist movements" (Ferree and Mueller 2007; McBride and Mazur 2010; Ewig and Ferree 2013). For Ewig and Ferree, by *feminist organizing*, they mean efforts led by women which explicitly challenge women's subordination to men, and this is different to *women's movements*, which are movements composed of women seeking social change but not necessarily addressing women's subordination and *feminism*, which is concerned with women's empowerment, but is not necessarily collectively organized (Ewig and Ferree 2013, p. 411). Indeed, there are several Spanish women's movements that are not necessarily feminist; they may be composed of widows, housewives, or "cultural" associations, for example. This fragmentation is also territorial, with each region expressing different dynamics of women's and feminist movements (Bustelo and Orbals 2007, p. 215; Orbals 2007, 2008).

There is also some fragmentation with regard to the roles of the women's movements in relation to the issues they tackle. Regarding gender violence, the role the Spanish feminist movement has played is a very important one. During the conservative period at the national level (1996–2004), feminists formed an alliance with the leftist parties. When the political context turned favorable in 2004, the government and parliament were ready to approve one of the most advanced laws on gender violence. However, issues regarding family policies, reconciliation, and care have only recently caught the attention of (part of) the feminist movement. It was

not until the 2000s that some groups of young feminists began to consider care and co-responsibility as priority goals. Thus, policy discourses on these issues have had a slower process of formation. Consequently, they have been much more fragmented than gender violence, particularly when the participation of feminist movements is less obvious. However, late mobilizations by the feminist movements regarding the new ultra conservative abortion law proposal should be mentioned (El País 2013). Feminist movements, alongside progressive political parties, managed to mobilise massive demonstrations in the streets, echoed by support from European governments –such as France- and what seems to be a majority of Spaniards –including PP's voters- against this law (El País 2014).

Traditionally, the studies done on Spanish state feminism conclude that the relationships between Spanish women's agencies and feminist organizations have typically been tenuous (Valiente 1995; Threlfall et al. 2005; Bustelo and Orbals 2007), with collaboration limited mainly to subsidies, which might have perverse effects on organizations dependent on the state, and advising on equality plans through women's councils. These *Consejos de Participación* (Women's Councils) are a good indicator of the weak relations between women's movements and the state. They were developed much later in time and were not developed as a stronger element than the gender plans, programs, and laws developed at regional and national levels. Generally speaking, and with the exception of the regions of Madrid (abolished in 2011), Cantabria, and the Basque Country, these councils are just "consulting and advising bodies," clearly dependent on the ministry or department in which the women's agency stands (see Table 2). In the cases of Madrid, Cantabria, and the Basque Country, these councils are independent public entities created by law. The women's council in Madrid was abolished as part of the 2011 budgetary cuts and the only council currently considered to be independent and approved by law is the one in the Basque Country. The Women's Participation National Council (*Consejo Nacional de Participación de las Mujeres*), mentioned in the national equality law, is not an independent body and was not fully implemented until 2010, an indicator of the low priority that civil society participation has had in national gender policies. Moreover, the amount of energy invested in organizational matters to coordinate gender policies among public powers does not correspond with the only article that simply concerns the creation of the Women's Participation National Council, its nature, and its general functions.

The study of who is represented in the women's councils, both in the national council, which is relatively new (2010), and in the autonomous communities' councils, which have their own dynamics, remains to be investigated in future research.

Table 2 Women's participation councils

Independent bodies, created by law	
Madrid	<i>Consejo de la Mujer de la Comunidad de Madrid</i> (Law 3/1993; abolished in 2011)
Cantabria	<i>Consejo de la Mujer de Cantabria</i> (Law 3/1997)
Basque Country	<i>Consejo Vasco de Mujeres para la Igualdad</i> (Law 4/2005). Still to be fully implemented
Consulting bodies, dependent on the women's agency or ministry	
Navarra	<i>Consejo Navarro de la Mujer</i> (Norm 351/1996)
Valencia	<i>Consejo Valenciano de la Mujer</i> (Norm July 1997)
Asturias	<i>Consejo Asturiano de la Mujer</i> (Resolution July 2000), considered also in Law 2/2011 as a participating and consulting body for women's organizations and unions)
Catalonia	<i>Consell Nacional del Dones de Catalunya</i> (Decree 460/2004)
Murcia	<i>Consejo Asesor regional de la Mujer</i> (Norm February 2005)
Balears Islands	<i>Consell de Participació de la Dona</i> (its creation is considered in Law 12/2006 as a consulting body)
National	<i>Consejo de Participación de la Mujer</i> (its creation is considered in Law 3/2007 as a consulting body)
Andalusia	<i>Consejo Andaluz de Participación de las Mujeres</i> (its creation is considered in Law 12/2007 as a participating body for women's organizations)
Canary Islands	<i>Consejo Canario de Igualdad de Género</i> (its creation is considered in Law 1/2010 as a participating body for women's organizations)
Extremadura	<i>Consejo Extremeño de Participación de las Mujeres</i> (its creation is considered in Law 8/2011 as a participating and consulting body for women's organizations)

Policy Discourses: Fragmentation and Competition

Although policy priorities of the PP diverged from those of the PSOE, the IM maintained many policy programs between 1996 and 2004, such as those for fighting violence against women, assisting rural women, offering job training, and helping women balance work and family responsibilities (Bustelo and Ortals 2007). The PP also opposed quotas and rejected any initiative to reform electoral systems (Lombardo 2008). The socialist government led by Zapatero in 2004 had a substantial impact on gender policies (Valiente 2008). From the beginning of his government, clear signs of change were evident: a parity government, the creation of the Equality Policies General Secretariat, approval of the gender violence law (December 2004), a set of measures to promote equality between women and men that involve all the ministries (March 2005), reformation of the Civil Code to allow

homosexual marriage (July 2005), reconciliation of personal and work life of civil servants within national public administration through the *Plan Concilia* (December 2005), approval of the so-called *dependency law* and the re-inclusion of gender equality aims in a reformed education law (2006), and approval of the Effective Equality Law (2007). Abortion reform (2010) and the social security regime reform for domestic workers (2011) had to wait until Zapatero's second term, which was, by far, less active for gender equality policies than the first one, including the suppression of the Ministry of Equality in 2010, just 2 years after its creation (Valiente 2013). The proposal of an equal treatment law, reflecting the principles of an antidiscrimination policy on multiple inequalities and not only gender (Bustelo 2009), was approved by Zapatero's cabinet in January 2011, but never entered the parliamentary process because it was not considered to be a political priority in economically difficult times. Full implementation of these gender policy advancements during the 2004–2011 socialist governments are now being jeopardized by the economic crisis and a conservative government with other priorities and values (Alonso and Paleo 2013). Although some issues, such as abortion, are in serious danger, most of these advances have already been explicitly framed in such a way that it would be difficult to forget or make these elaborated discourses and values completely disappear. They might disappear as dominant discourses and frames held by 'official' voices, but they will remain in the voices of important actors, who will continue to play an important role in gender policies; these voices not only include the voices of the feminist movement and gender experts, but also the voices of professionals in charge of gender policies (such as civil servants in the equality institutions or equality agents in charge of implementing gender policies).

To illustrate this, I would like to build on the frame analysis performed by the European Research Projects MAGEEQ (Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe 2003–2005), and QUING (Quality in Gender 2006–2011) on the Spanish case in the concrete topic of gendered base violence—GBV—(Bustelo et al. 2007). In that frame analysis of Spanish GBV (1996–2004), a dominant frame in the official documents, called 'Domestic Violence', revealed that even if the issue was somehow related to gender inequality, no attention was paid to the structural and systemic component of inequality, or it was simply diluted. However, there was also an alternative frame called 'Structural Gender Equality', held by civil society and other progressive voices, in which inequality was defined as the cause and effect of violence. This alternative frame, in a more comprehensive way, was the frame which appeared as dominant in later official documents from 2004 onwards. This means that as soon as a political opportunity was opened by Zapatero's government, those frames which were alternative had the chance to become dominant and appear in a stronger and more comprehensive form. But if

they had not been considered as alternative frames, they would hardly have appeared so quickly and with such strength and articulation. Here, I would like to emphasize that the co-existence of different and competing frames could be an indicator of further consolidation of gender policies.

By the same token, an increased fragmentation and differentiation of policy discourses and priorities among the Spanish regions represents an opportunity for further development on gender policies. Although more empirical research would be needed to get conclusive results, this regional fragmentation of policy discourses was greater during the conservative period of 1996–2004, and somehow smaller, starting to show some convergent elements, during the socialist period at the national level, due to the strength and comprehensiveness of official frames in important documents, such as the Law on Violence (2004) and the Equality Law (2007). We can therefore expect a new tendency for general regional fragmentation, but especially so from those regions which are more developed and which have governments of a different colour than that of the conservatives at national level (such as the Basque Country or Catalonia).

Gender mainstreaming was officially endorsed as a strategy to integrate a gender perspective in all public policies by the European Commission on behalf of the European Union in the IV World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995 (Commission of the European Communities 1996). This gender mainstreaming principle strongly influenced Spanish policy discourses, especially during the 90s. However, generally speaking, EU influence was uneven during these 30 years, playing a key role in the emergence of Spanish gender policies, whilst at the same time, gradually losing its influence as those discourses got stronger, but recovering this influence again for certain themes (anti-discrimination and multiple inequalities' policies) or at certain times (appealing to the EU in times of budgetary cuts). Indeed, this influence has been maintained not only for certain issues and procedures, but also for norms diffusion, policy transfers, and different uses of 'Europe', even during the absence of adaptation pressure, as the new sociological discursive approach to Europeanization has pointed out (Lombardo and Forest 2012). This Europeanization occurs not only at the national but also at the regional level. Moreover, in the absence of a nationally strong leadership on gender policies and in the presence of the economic crisis and conservative governments, this 'back to Europe' approach will certainly take place during the coming years, at all governmental levels.

New Policy Instruments: The Importance of Equality Acts

The IM launched its first plan (Plan of Equal Opportunities for Women I; *I Plan de Igualdad e Oportunidades para las Mujeres*) in 1988 and since then, six different plans have been

approved at national level, including two Strategic Plans for Equal Opportunities (2008–2011; and the last one, 2014–2016), which entails the development of the Organic Law for Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007). At a slightly different pace, during the first decade of Spanish gender equality policies, regional governments also established equality plans of their own. These plans were developed by regional women's machinery, although they typically involve other departments or ministries in regional public administrations. Most of these regional agencies are also up to their own fourth or fifth round of plans. For many years and until the 2000s, these plans represented the main and exclusive policy instrument in the articulation of equality public policies in Spain. These gender equality plans consist of aims, objectives, and actions to be taken in a set period of time by the different governmental departments involved in each action. Although approved by the cabinet (either at national or regional level), these plans can be considered "soft" legislation and depend a great deal upon the femocrats' power of persuasion (Bustelo 2004; Valiente 1995).

The content of equality plans has apparently been quite homogeneous in regard to issues or "areas" tackled, which organize the different actions. The first regional plans were influenced by the original national plans, international policies (UN Beijing Platform), and especially European policies (Strategic Framework and Action Plan IV) later on (Bustelo 2004). The plans vary regarding the number of actions, the nature of fulfilling those actions, the relative importance of each set of actions, and their corresponding budget allocations. The plans are also dissimilar regarding policy discourses.

As an instrument of national and regional gender equality policies, some plans have had several advantages, such as promoting public consciousness, comprehensiveness, strategic vision, public commitment, coordination, participation, evaluation, and a reference framework to be emulated by other governments (especially local governments). Nevertheless, gender equality plans also have some disadvantages when they are the only policy instrument used (with no hard legislation on equality), which was the case in Spain until the 2000s. The most significant drawback is that equality plans rest on persuasion. Plan promoters (i.e., women's agencies) provide the impulse for, rather than execute, equality policies. Thus, plan promoters do not have any power to sanction or punish if these objectives or actions are not fulfilled.

However, other policy instruments have recently been introduced into the Spanish gender policies arena. These new instruments are most notably *equality laws*, both at national and regional levels, and also *gender units*, which intend to provide public administrations, and thus public administrators, with a support structure to implement and consolidate gender mainstreaming policies. The first gender unit was first created in *Andalucía* (2000; exclusively targeting public administrators) with the support of European Social Funds. Soon

after, Basque (2005), Andalusian (2007), and national (2007) equality laws established compulsory gender units within their respective regional and national ministries. These units are in charge of promoting and keeping a gender perspective within public policies in different governmental areas.

This introduction of 'hard' policy instruments in the gender policy area goes beyond 'equality laws'. As already discussed in previous sections, prior to the national equality act of 2007, and as a hallmark of Zapatero's governments, an Act on Violence (Organic Law 1/2004, of 28 December, on Integral Protection Measures against Gender Violence) was approved. Other laws, such as the so-called 'Same-sex marriage law' (Law 13/2005, by which the Civil Code is modified in relation to marriage rights), and the 'Dependency law' (Law 39/2006 for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Attention to Persons in Situation of Dependency), passed in 2005 and 2006 respectively, although not directly in the gender arena, were claimed to be important landmarks of Zapatero's gender policies. The Violence Law, however, has been at the core of the gender policy arena, and has produced a parallel and similar development as the general equality area, leading to specific institutions and resources, as well as specific regional laws and plans (8 regional laws passed in 2001 –*Castilla-La Mancha*-, 2003 –*Canarias and Navarra*-, 2004 –*Cantabria*-, 2005 –*Madrid*- and 2007 –*Andalucía, Aragón and Galicia*-). In other three regions (*Murcia* –2007-, *Asturias* and *Extremadura* –2011-), the laws approved include both general equality and gender violence issues (see Table 3).

It can be claimed that this tendency towards 'hard legislation' has a European Union influence (Alonso and Forest 2012), especially with regard to anti-discrimination policies, an area very much influenced by legal expert actors and by the pressure to adapt to EU legislation (Bustelo 2009). An 'Equal Treatment Act' was prepared by the Ministry of Equality during 2008 and 2009, and was finally approved by Zapatero's cabinet in January 2011, although it has not entered the parliamentary process to be approved yet and it does not seem to be a priority for Rajoy's government.

Coming back to the general equality laws, six regional equality laws (in *Navarra, Castilla y León, Valencia, Galicia, País Vasco*, and *Baleares*) were already approved between 2002 and 2007 when the national equality law was passed. Six other regional equality laws in *Andalucía* (2007), *Canarias and Castilla-La Mancha* (both in 2010), and in *Murcia* (2007), *Asturias* and *Extremadura* (2011), these last three which are joint general equality and gender violence laws, were approved after the national equality law (Table 3).

The Spanish national parliament passed their equality law, the Law for Effective Equality Between Women and Men, on 22nd March 2007 (Constitutional Act 3/2007; López et al. 2007; Pérez Orozco 2008). The issues addressed here are: the equality principle and protection against discrimination; public policies for equality; equality and mass media; the right to

work, with equal opportunities (including reconciliation measures and equality plans for private enterprises); the equality principle in public administrations (including the military and the security corps); equal treatment in access to goods and services; equality in private enterprises' social responsibility; and organizational regulations. The most polemic measures were an individual based paternal leave of 15 days for fathers and compulsory equality plans for private enterprises with more than 250 employees.

The law's general objectives, such as combating all existing forms of direct or indirect discrimination, furthering real equality between men and women, and considering gender mainstreaming as a guiding principle, give rise to policy actions in several realms of social and political life. Thus, this law can be considered a comprehensive legislative text. Some objectives are general guiding principles aimed at public authorities and there are general measures linked to legal changes, the development of affirmative actions, and criteria for action to be taken by public authorities. Finally, new institutions were created, such as the Interministerial Committee for Equality Between Women and Men, in charge of coordinating the policies and measures adopted by ministries, and the Equality Units, to be set up in each ministry. These Equality Units are responsible for securing statistical information compiled by ministry bodies, advising ministry bodies in relation to the elaboration of statistics, conducting research to promote equality between women and men, consulting with regard to formulating gender impact reports, putting forward training proposals, and overseeing compliance of this act and the effective implementation of the principle of equality.

From the six regional laws approved before the national equality act was passed, a very different use of the same policy instrument could be found, being the Basque one (2005) the most complete and comprehensive. Curiously enough, among these first cases –*Navarra, Valencia, Castilla y León, Galicia, and Baleares*-, the laws were approved by conservative parliaments under the PP. In the Basque Country, although the party in government when the law was passed (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*; PNV) is considered to be a nationalistic conservative party in the Spanish political spectrum, it is safe to say that the party's "degree of conservatism" was much lower than other conservative parties, especially regarding social public policies. Apart from the Basque law, the first regional equality laws have more general content and overuse terms such as *to promote* or *to stimulate*, stating measures in a very general and exclusively symbolic way. In actual fact, the Basque regional gender policies in Spain have been already considered the most advanced and developed in the Spanish scenario (Bustelo and Peterson 2005). This has to do in part with general characteristics in this region, such as a strong commitment to "social policies" on the part of the PNV and the availability of public resources, due to a special regimen for financing the region (*Regimen Foral de Financiación*

Table 3 Equality laws at national and regional level in 2012

Level/Region	Date of approval	Name/Reference	General structure
National	Mar. 2007	<i>Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo para la igualdad efectiva entre mujeres y hombres</i>	9 Titles, 83 articles, and a complex set of 31 additional, 11 transitory, and 8 final regulations (35 pages)
Navarra	Nov. 2002	<i>Ley Foral 33/2002, de 28 de noviembre, de fomento de la igualdad de oportunidades entre mujeres y hombres, del Parlamento de Navarra</i>	2 Very general articles—one on raising awareness and the other on social and political participation
Castilla y León	Mar. 2003	<i>Ley 1/2003, de 3 de marzo, de Igualdad de oportunidades entre mujeres y hombres en Castilla y León</i>	5 Titles (one on sanctions), 46 articles, 3 additional regulations, and 3 final regulations
Valencia	Apr. 2003	<i>Ley 9/2003, de 2 de abril, para la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres, de la Comunidad Autónoma Valenciana</i>	4 Titles, 51 articles, 1 additional regulation, 2 transitory regulations, and 1 final regulation
Galicia	Jul. 2004	<i>Ley 7/2004, de 16 de julio, gallega para la igualdad de mujeres y hombres</i>	2 Titles, 54 articles, 7 additional regulations, and 2 final regulations
País Vasco	Feb. 2005	<i>Ley 4/2005, de 18 de febrero, para la Igualdad de Mujeres y Hombres</i>	5 Titles (one on sanctions), 83 articles, and a set of 3 additional, 1 transitory, and 13 final regulations
Baleares	Sept. 2006	<i>Ley 12/2006, de 20 de septiembre, para la mujer</i>	5 Titles, 66 articles, 1 transitory regulation, and 3 final regulations
Murcia	Apr. 2007	<i>Ley 7/2007, de 4 de abril, para la igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres, y de Protección contra la Violencia de Género</i>	5 Titles, 64 articles, 1 additional regulation, and 5 final regulations (14 pages)
Andalucía	Nov. 2007	<i>Ley 12/2007, de 26 de noviembre, para la promoción de la igualdad de género en Andalucía</i>	4 Titles, 66 articles, 1 additional regulation, and 2 final regulations
Canarias	Feb. 2010	<i>Ley 1/2010, de 26 de febrero, canaria de igualdad entre mujeres y hombres</i>	5 Titles, 74 articles, 4 additional regulation, and 2 final regulations (37 pages)
Castilla-La Mancha	Nov. 2010	<i>Ley 12/2010, de 18 de noviembre, de igualdad entre mujeres y hombres de Castilla-La Mancha</i>	6 Titles, 65 articles, 1 additional regulation, and 6 final regulations (24 pages)
Asturias	Mar. 2011	<i>Ley del Principado de Asturias 2/2011, de 11 de marzo, para la igualdad de mujeres y hombres y la erradicación de la violencia de género</i>	6 Titles, 49 articles, 1 additional regulation, and 2 final regulations (19 pages)
Extremadura	Mar. 2011	<i>Ley 8/2011, de 23 de marzo, de Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres y contra la Violencia de Género en Extremadura</i>	7 Titles, 106 articles, 4 additional regulation, and 2 final regulations (54 pages)

Autonómica; see Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas 2013; Mitxelena Camiruaga 2006), but, overall, it has to do with the leadership role that *Emakunde* (Basque Woman's Institute) and its first director played in Spanish gender policies (Bustelo and Peterson 2005) for more than 17 years.

From this analysis, it can be argued that in Spain, using laws as an added policy instrument to the traditional equality plans makes gender policies more efficient, as it allows far more comprehensive public action regarding gender issues. One of the limitations of equality plans being used as the exclusive policy instrument was that gender policies tend to remain almost exclusively in executive power. Laws permit gender-related public action to fully enter legislative and judicial power (the latter through sanctions imposed if the law is broken). We believe this is a monumental step forward in the case of Spanish gender policies. Furthermore, although both laws and plans can be left without implementation, plans

are limited in terms of time—they normally span from 3 to 5 years—, whereas laws have no time-span limitation, so they can survive more easily in a 'low profile' form until an appropriate political opportunity allows for their recuperation. In this sense, the introduction of new 'hard' policy instruments is a good resource and an indicator of further consolidation of Spanish gender policies over the last decade.

Conclusion

In this article, I have presented an overview of Spanish gender policies and state feminism, examining their evolution and development across four dimensions: women's and equality machinery, relations with feminist and women's movements, policy discourses, and policy instruments. Despite the ongoing gender-unfriendly environment, Spain has a consolidated

state feminism which is not in danger of disappearing. The more recent and promising developments occurred at national level during the two terms of the socialist government led by Zapatero (2004–2011), and they could have led to further developments. However, the economic crisis and the 2011 transition to a national conservative government, with an absolute majority in the national parliament, that has not marked gender equality as a priority, are reducing the number of structures and resources, which is limiting the implementation of these recent advancements.

Despite the fact that the relations between feminist and women's movements and the state have been presented as the weakest element of Spanish State feminism, there are some illustrative examples, such as the mobilization for the violence law in the early 2000s and very recently the mobilization against the new conservative and restrictive abortion legislation, which point to a certain awakening of a more active participation, and in addition, the different regional dynamics contribute to more vivid and varied women's and feminists movements in Spain. As could be seen with these latest mobilizations around the abortion issue, the more conservative the governmental actions are, the more articulated and socially supported feminist reactions there could be.

The introduction of new policy instruments, such as laws and gender units, at all governmental levels, has also reinforced and consolidated Spanish gender policies. Both the national gender violence law of 2004 and equality law of 2007 are very important references that continue to influence regional policies in a 'downloading' movement. With regard to policy discourses, official frames both in the violence (2004) and in the equality (2007) laws are strong and comprehensive enough to produce a regional tendency to return to the national discourse as a reference, representing a step forward with gender policies. However, as was the case in the conservative period from 1996 to 2004, no strong leadership on gender policies at national level may lead to sharper fragmentation and differences among regions (Bustelo and Ortals 2007), which seek innovation and fresh ideas internationally and supranationally, especially in terms of looking for incentives for 'uploading' powers at the European level, rather than nationally (Alonso and Forest 2012). Even when the primarily conservative landscape in the regions is taken into account, the low priority given to gender equality by the new national government could produce further fragmentation among regions.

I have also shown in this article that which at the beginning was a crucial influence of the former European Economic Community, later the European Union, in gender policies (the creation of the IM could not be understood otherwise, as the EEC was used as an ally by the feminist women in the PSOE), gradually vanished across the 30 years of state feminism and gender policies in Spain. However, this influence has clearly been maintained for certain issues (anti-discrimination policies) and for a certain international and

European 'usage', and a 'back to Europe' movement might take place during these coming years at civil society (as with late abortion mobilisations) and all governmental levels.

Although some works have already started to appear (Alonso y Paleo, 2013; Bettio et al. 2012; Bosco and Verney 2012; Gálvez 2013; Gálvez and Torres 2010; González 2011; Lahey and de Villota 2013), more research is expected to come in the coming years, to analyze the impact of the crisis and the political change in Spanish gender policies. However, despite the economic crisis that particularly affects women and the political conservative turn in Spain, Spanish gender policies have developed well enough to continue to be indicator and generator of social change at the same time; social change that, to a certain extent, is already irreversible.

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