ARTIGOS/ARTICLES

In between light empowerment and corporate moderate feminism: gender equality and women's emancipation in organizations

Entre el empoderamiento light y el feminismo corporativo moderado: igualdad de género y emancipación de las mujeres en las organizaciones

Entre o empoderamento light e o feminismo corporativo moderado: igualdade de gênero e emancipação das mulheres nas organizações

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Abstract: The relation between the institutional frameworks and the promotion of gender equality, considering the corporate social responsibility (CSR) movement, has been scarcely analyzed from the experiences of developing economies. We aimed to contribute to fill that gap, bringing to the debate the concepts of emancipation in organizations and support groups. We asked: in which ways, gender equality fostered by initiatives implemented in developing economies by transnational corporations in the form of support groups allow for organizational transformations that strengthen the process of women's emancipation in the corporate world? So, an ethnography was undertaken within a transnational company of the financial sector that operates in Brazil. The results show that these initiatives can only lead to organizational transformations that strengthen women's empowerment if they are inscribed in an institutional framework that guarantees the participation of multiple actors.

Keywords: Gender equality. Support groups. Diversity management. Emancipation. Ethnography.

Resumen: La relación entre los arreglos institucionales y la promoción de la equidad de género, considerando el movimiento de Responsabilidad Social Empresarial (RSE), apenas fue analizada en el contexto de las economías en desarrollo. Pretendemos contribuir a esta brecha, a partir del lente conceptual de emancipación y grupos de soporte. Preguntamos cómo la equidad de género impulsada en las economías en desarrollo por iniciativas de empresas transnacionales, a través de grupos de soporte, permite transformaciones organizacionales que fortalecen la emancipación de las mujeres en las organizaciones. Respondiendo a esta pregunta, presentamos los resultados de una etnografía realizada en una empresa transnacional en Brasil. Los hallazgos evidencian que esta iniciativa puede conducir a un proceso de emancipación siempre cuando exista un marco institucional que garantiza la participación de múltiples actores.

Palabras-clave: Igualdad de género. Grupos de soporte. Gestión de la diversidad. Emancipación. Etnografía.

Resumo: A relação dos arranjos institucionais e do movimento da Responsabilidade Social Empresarial (RSE) com a igualdade de gênero tem sido escassamente analisada no contexto de economias em desenvolvimento. Pretendemos contribuir com o preenchimento desta lacuna, trazendo para o debate os conceitos de emancipação nas organizações e grupos de suporte. Indagamos de que maneira a igualdade de gênero fomentada em economias em desenvolvimento por iniciativas de corporações transnacionais, por meio de grupos de suporte,

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permite transformações organizacionais que fortalecem a emancipação das mulheres nas organizações? Para responder a essa pergunta, apresentamos os resultados de uma etnografia feita em uma empresa transnacional que atua no Brasil. Os achados evidenciam que esta iniciativa pode levar a transformações organizacionais que fortaleçam o empoderamento das mulheres se elas se inscreverem em um quadro institucional que garanta a participação de múltiplos atores.

Palavras-chave: Igualdade de gênero. Grupos de suporte. Gestão da diversidade. Emancipação. Etnografia.

Introduction

In the last 20 years, gender equality has come to occupy a prominent place in both public debates and academic research from different subjects and perspectives of analysis (Kaley and Deutsch 2018). By adopting the concept of gender mainstreaming (Walby 2005a; 2005b), the UN has encouraged the creation of governance mechanisms (Oh, Chang and Tae-Yeol 2018; Kreuzberg and Vicente 2019) that involve not only national governments and NGOs, but also transnational corporations in gender equality guidelines. The involvement of companies in this process was facilitated by the CSR movement, which includes diversity management programs structured through support groups (Creek, Kuhn and Sahaym 2019). It remains to be seen, however, if these initiatives mean concrete advances in terms of the emancipation of women in organizations (Box 2015; Olsen, Parsons and Ivanaj 2016), whether it's macro or micro emancipation, the first is the process by which individuals and groups become free from structural domination exercised by corporations; the last refers to partial changes in situations of domination encountered in organizations, composed of a set of actions developed by individuals and groups that work within their margins of freedom.

Particularly, studies on gender equality have already shown that its advancement is dependent on favourable institutional frameworks (Bexell 2012; Grosser and Moon 2005; Grosser 2009). This framework has the United Nations (UN) as its main inducer, but studies revealed that the gender governance also should involve multiple actors, with an emphasis on the participation of national governments, NGOs, and companies (Grosser 2009).

Women's participation in the workplace and their career development have gained prominence among the guidelines implemented by these social partners to promote gender equality (Grosser and Moon 2005; Grosser 2009; Grosser, Moon and Nelson 2017). This is due to the fact of that the barriers that impede women from rising to positions of greater power, prestige, and remuneration in the corporate world have been denounced since the 1980s (Auster 1994; Oakley 2000) and have been studied from different perspectives (Auster 1994; Connell and Messerschmidt 2013; Cook and Glass 2018; Lewis 2017). In Brazil, Cappellin (2008) and Guimarães and Georges (2009) have already clearly demonstrated the set of barriers that make it difficult for women to access positions of authority and power.

The relationship between CSR and the development of gender equality has already been well analyzed from the experiences of developed economies (Grosser and Moon 2005; Grosser 2009; Olsen, Parsons and Ivanaj 2016). However, there is still scarce research on how it occurs in the case of developing economies (Karam and Jamali 2017). One of the examples in the Brazilian case is Cappellin's (2008) study. Comparing from quantitative data the positions occupied by men and women in high-hierarchy positions in companies of different economic segments, she argues that gender inequality is structural and that the ever more rhetorical statements of CSR of companies that convey the message of promoting equal opportunities, but with rare cases of concrete action, fail to modify this asymmetry.

This article intended to fill this gap, bringing to the debate an analytical lens built from the concepts of emancipation in organizations (Alvesson and Willmott 1995; Zanoni and Janssens 2007; Huault, Perret and Spicer 2014), and support groups (Kahnweiler and Riordan 1998; Douglas 2008; Brunstein and Jaime 2009). Our research question is the following: in what ways, gender equality fostered by initiatives implemented in developing economies by transnational corporations allow for organizational transformations

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that strengthen the process of women's emancipation in the corporate world? In order to answer this question, the results of an ethnographic investigation are presented, undertaken within a Women's Committee, that took place in the context of a diversity management programme within a transnational corporation of the financial sector that operates in Brazil.

This article is organized as follows: first, the theoretical discussion retraces some debates about gender equality and institutional mechanisms, and the boundaries of emancipation in organizations; following, we present the research design, giving a brief description about ethnography and highlighting how it was conducted. We then introduce the ethnographic data, providing some information about the diversity program of the company that is the empirical *locus* of the research, and describing the dynamics of the women committee that is part of this program. Finally, we make the concluding remarks, highlighting the contributions of the article and also its limitations.

Gender equality and institutional mechanisms

The gender mainstreaming was originally conceived by the UN due to its guideline for gender policies developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (Walby 2005a; 2005b). Even if the process of advancing gender equality has the ambition of submitting all policies to the gender equality imperative, there are still structural disadvantages of women in relation to men, as in the case of the career development, especially in regard to the staffing of positions of greater power, prestige, and remuneration (Grosser and Moon 2005).

This is certainly a key issue for gender mainstreaming initiatives since, at least from the 1980s onwards, the barriers preventing women from rising to middle and top management positions in large companies, known as "the glass ceiling", have been denounced (Oakley 2000). The glass ceiling refers to the barriers created by business practices, which relate to the recruitment, reten-

tion, and promotion of personnel, which often favour men over women (Oakley 2000; Cappellin 2008). Also, it concerns to the obstacles related to cultural and behavioural causes, expressed in ways that are as often explicit as they are veiled (Connell and Messerschmidt 2013), strongly associated with gender stereotypes about the leadership styles, and the power relations between men and women in the workplace and elsewhere (Cappellin 2008, Ezzedeen, Budworth and Baker 2015; Cook and Glass 2018). For example, Oakley (2000) refers to the dominant view among business leaders that women should present rational and authoritative attributes (such as men) to be taken seriously, but they will be perceived as unbalanced if they act aggressively.

Moreover, according to Cappellin (2008), gender conceptions that define occupations and positions in organizational hierarchy as feminine (care sector and HR posts), or masculine (industrial or financial segments and positions related to operations or strategy) cause barriers to entry and career development by women in more prestigious positions.

In this way, the achievement of gender equality in the workplace goes beyond the performance of individual companies (Grosser and Moon 2005) and there is a need for a new system and governance structure that allow changes the dominant gender regime in the business world. One of these mechanisms is the so-called support groups, an organizational initiative whose origins were in the creation of employee forums, to give emotional support for critical situations. The support groups are formed by individuals belonging to specific identity groups, such as gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality etc. They aim to promote a space for discussion around the challenges of working in a diverse environment characterised by barriers and difficulties (Riordan and Kahnweiler 1996; Brunstein and Jaime 2009).

Organizational support groups can take on a variety of forms with distinct purposes (Kahnweiler and Riordan 1998), but generally they seek to develop the competencies of their members, expand their strategic skills and network con-

tacts, and to develop their leadership capacity for the advancement of their careers (Riordan and Kahnweiler 1996; Brunstein and Jaime 2009). In some cases, these groups are created by women from different companies, who develop networks to promote mutual help in the development of their careers (Jaime et al. 2022).

Over time, practices incorporated top managers into the groups, to reach a better communication between the group and the top managers of the organization. The initiative broadened the voice and visibility of these committees and allowed their concerns regarding products, customers, and careers to reach unfiltered to the highest echelons (Douglas 2008; Brunstein and Jaime 2009). The ultimate purpose of these groups is to promote behavioural change - by means of human agency and dialogical participation as mechanisms to face the institutionalised prejudices and practices that perpetuate the inequalities in organizations, thus seeking emancipation (Brunstein and Jaime 2009; Jaime et al. 2022).

Emancipation in organizations

Researchers in critical management studies have addressed emancipation, which were strongly influenced by Marxism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Within this frame of reference, emancipation in organizations has been uniquely understood as the process by which individuals and groups become free from the repressive social and ideological conditions that restrict the development and expression of human consciousness. It does refer to a movement capable of overcoming structural domination exercised by the state or by corporations, and ultimately by the elimination of class society (Alvesson and Willmott 1992).

More recently there has been a reformulation of the critical management studies agenda (Crane, Knights and Starkey 2008; Alvesson and Deetz 2013; Raffnsøe, Mennicken and Miller 2019) that view managers as a heterogeneous social group, whether in respect to the positions they occupy in the hierarchy of companies, the functions they perform in them, or their identity

locations (gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality etc.). They also emphasised that some managers may themselves feel the victims of, rather than the tormentors of organizational oppression (Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Johnson and Duberley 2015). In addition, there was also a review of the understanding of emancipation processes in organizations, bringing into focus what was termed as micro-emancipation (O'Mahoney, Vincent and Harley 2018). The emancipation would result in partial changes in situations of domination encountered in organizations, composed of a set of actions developed by individuals and groups that work within their margins of freedom (Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Zanoni and Janssens 2007; O'Mahoney, Vincent and Harley 2018).

This new approach was criticized and the division between micro-emancipation and macro-emancipation often ignores the many imbrications that exist between them (Huault, Perret and Spicer 2014). One way to work with this relationship is to pay attention to the struggles organised by way collective action, such as the formation of support groups. They consider that emancipation is not a gift granted to employees, but a result of the resistance of those who are engaged in an effort of mutual support, given the contextual conditions in which they find themselves.

It is possible to relate this duality between micro and macro emancipation with the gender equality issues explored in this article. In this sense, Cornwall (2018), for example, denounces what can be considered gender micro-emancipations and advocates more radical changes in the structure of gender inequalities. The core of her critique is the concept of women empowerment, which, according to her, has lost its political potency in the semantic slippage that it has suffered from the shift from feminist discourse to that supported by international agencies such as Women UN, NGOs, investment banks, development banks, and transnational corporations, within the scope of neoliberal capitalism.

In her work, she focuses mainly on female entrepreneurship as a buzzword mobilized in the context of neoliberal development and which

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is configured as a light empowerment of wo-men, since it burdens them with obligations that should be seen as rights guaranteed by the State. However, her criticism does not fail to refer to the way in which companies have also assumed this discourse of women empowerment in an uncriti-cal bias. In this case, her argument points to the fact that, instead of promoting structural social and power transformations, these companies are more concerned with incorporating women into labor markets supported by unequal norms and practices.

She points out that feminist awareness groups, which brought together women to critically analy-ze and reflect on their lives which marked the second wave of feminism [in the 1970s] were appropriated by light empowerment in a very empty way. The questioning of patriarchy, for example, is not posed. Thus, empowerment light promotes docile conformity rather than changes in power relations. Furthermore, it is often asso-ciated with the pursuit of competitive advantage through the rhetoric of the quality of the female workforce. In this regard, she indicates the global consulting firm McKinsey's 2016 report, which points to gender diversity as a driver of corporate performance. Such discursive strategies foster corporate profit with gains for the image of com-panies' brands as socially conscious, in a kind of transnational corporate feminism.

This perspective, although extremely impor-tant, can be contrasted with others. According to Lewis (2014) and Billing (2011) instead of exploring the reality of women in organizations only in terms of exclusion related to a male norm, researchers should interpret women's experiences in organi-zations as variable, complex and contradictory. This view of things is corroborated by Mavin and Grandy (2019) through their use of the concept of moderate corporate feminism. For them, women in leadership positions in companies are often limited to talking to others in management about their obstacles to career development, such as sexual harassment and unequal incentives. Howe-ver, the rare and persistent character of women who have reached senior positions in companies

attests how important their experience is for the future of feminism.

They argue that these executives operate in a contradictory space. On the one hand, they are privileged to occupy positions of power and receive high salaries. On the other hand, they are still a minority, and their privilege is fragile and unstable. Also, according to them, women leaders in the corporate world recognize and seek to challenge the dynamics of power in va-rious organizational structures. In this sense, the moderate corporate feminism that they represent can be seen as a form of resistance in the quest for emancipation. However, it can also be seen as a conservative effort associated with individu-alism and merit. Furthermore, this movement is led by white middle-class women who can leave many other women (black, lesbian, transgender) voiceless in these spaces.

This means that the analysis of this pheno-menon cannot be done without concepts such as intersectionality and consubstantiality. Re-garding the first, African American researchers and anti-racist activists such as Crenshaw (1991), Collins (2000) and Davis (2016) have already fully demonstrated how gender inequalities and pa-triarchy articulate with other axes of discrimination based on race, class and sexuality giving a specific character to the oppression experienced by Black women. Consequently, these women end up achieving less social mobility, occupying subor-dinate positions in the labor market, rarely taking on managerial positions. As for the second, Hirata (2014) argues that studies carried out by Nadya Guimarães have already revealed that, compared to white and black men, white and black women have professional trajectories in less prestigious occupations and in which working conditions are more precarious. She cites the case of domestic work, in which black women are the majority.

In any case, Mavin and Grandy (2019) argue that all this does not mean that such women should be turned into villains by the feminist movement. Instead, their experiences need to be understood in their complexities and ambiguities. All these remarks guided our analysis of a new form of

collective action related to gender issues that have emerged in the Brazilian corporate world (Brunstein and Jaime 2009; Jaime et al. 2022).

Research design

The data discussed in this article is the result of an organizational ethnography (Garsten and Nyqvist 2014). In this methodological approach, the data is assembled in a dialogical interaction in which the researcher engages with his interlocutors, with whom he shares a sufficiently long-lasting involvement.

The ethnographic fieldwork is shaped by the researcher from the network of his real relationships, what allows him to know some spaces and to have access to get certain types of information (Garsten and Nyqvist 2014). For two years we conducted an ethnographic study within the Women's Committee, which is part of the Diversity Program of the company. During this period, we followed regular monthly meetings and some special meetings and / or events held by this committee.

The ethnographic observations were guided by the following headings: the history of the committee; the structuring and the action strategies of it; the profiles of its constituents; the identities and ideals of it; its inclusion in the context of the company's diversity management programme; the autonomy / regulation of it; the obstacles for taking actions; the impact of these actions on the change of gender relations and the confrontation of inequalities in the company.
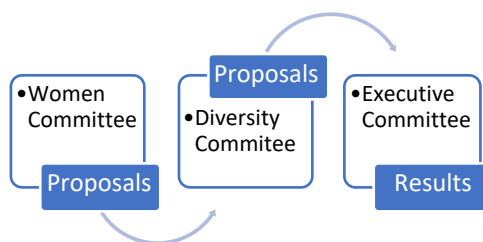
Observations were logged separately by the researchers via field notes. At the end of the observation period, about 20 deep-in-interviews were held with representatives of the Women's Committee and the Human Resources Department (HRD) of the company. In ethnographic research, an interview is understood as a dialogic interaction (Davies 2008). Each interview lasted about two hours and the dialogues were based on the same headings that guided the ethnographic observation. We also collected documents regar-

ding the diversity management initiatives of the company: reports and / or research produced by the HRD, as well as news regarding the company conveyed in business newspapers. By the end of the fieldwork, we transcribed fully our field notes and the documents. The next phase was a reading exercise, where we sought evidence to see if and how the actions of these committees contributed to the emancipation of women in the organization and whose results are presented in the following topic.

The women's committee

The company's interest in diversity began in 2000 with the initiative of its CEO. According to one HR director interviewed, he advocated the idea that diversity was important to add value to the business and in 2001 a programme began to be drawn up. A Diversity Committee was then formed, consisting primarily of people from the CSR and HR departments. At the end of 2005, when the same HR director (interviewed) took over the area of diversity, there was a reformation of the committee, which started to include representatives from the marketing, business, and legal departments. More specific committees were then set up. The first of these was the Women's Committee, followed by the Black Committee, the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and the LGBT. The leaders of each of these groups also took a seat on the Diversity Committee, which reported to an Executive Committee, composed by the CEO and the corporate board. As a strategy to legitimise the committees and give them greater capacity to influence the upper levels of power, it was determined that each one of them could have a sponsor, an executive of one of the business areas of the company who had proximity to the corporate board, and that was sensitive the "cause" put forward by the group. The figure 1 shows how these Committees are interrelated and works.

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Figure 1 – Articulations among Company's Committees.

Source: the authors

The Women's Committee was initially compo-sed of a team of about 20 professionals, mostly in middle management or top management positions. They began a formation process along with a university professor who was researching gender issues. At that time, they emphasised that their work was done in a very informal way and that they did not have their own budget to carry out actions, being dependent on the redirection of funds allocated to departments in which they found allies.

Over time legitimacy was gained and changes were made in the formation of the committee, with executives occupying positions of greater power in the organizational structure leaving to give their place to women who were younger and / or placed in lower positions. This trend was attributed by the members of the group to a "natural turnover" within the business world, in which certain people lead the creation of new projects, and then pass on the responsibility of their management to other professionals. Howe-ver, the ethnography and the literature review (Cornwall 2018; Mavin and Grandy 2019) has led us to suggest the pertinence of another inter-pretation. Top levels of companies are far from constitute areas of activism and struggle for rights. As one moves up the organizational hierarchy, certain issues are not freely spoken of, except in guarded spaces, restrained by explicit or subtle control mechanisms. So, they learn how to deal with this in different manners:

> So, if we get there and say: "Look, we need US$6,000 because we're going to empower the women of this organization and improve their desire to grow up professionally", we wouldn't

get anything. But if we ask: "We want to pay a tribute to women, in women's week… Can we count on your cooperation?" "They accept." The greatest admirer of our committee is one of those who, before, mocked our actions.

Therefore, we believe that these women, al-though selected to help the committee get up and running, realised that they were taking a risk in terms of their career development if they suffered the friction that is entailed in acting in the front line of this subject matter. They then put others in their places and moved to the rear, continuing to help behind the scenes, in meetings outside the company or out of office hours. This evidence that the micro emancipation is depen-dent of the macro emancipation. The structural domination (Alvesson and Willmott 1992) supports this dynamic. This also reveals that their action was restricted to a moderate corporate feminism (Mavin and Grandy 2019) or represents a light empowerment (Cornwall 2018).

We support this interpretation as we often heard reports during the fieldwork of the fear of women that their superiors or peers would discover they were participating in the collective. Speaking of the first leader of the committee, one of the members of the group with a prominent participation in its dynamics told us: "To everyone who asked, she would say, 'No, I do not belong to it anymore', yet behind closed doors she always supporting us, at all times." This interpretation is further reinforced by the fact that the repre-sentatives of the committee told us that they always had to formulate their demands by using language revolved around instrumental rationa-lity, by which is, emphasising the results that the

collective could bring to the performance of the company, as denounced (Cornwall 2018). Wording by means of communicative rationality, which emphasised the need to reduce inequalities for its own value, would be seen as very "feminine". This can be observed in the following speech:

> I think the best strategy, because the CEO is male, is the use of rational one. I think this is the best strategy ever, actually. In the executive world, huh? For God's sake! In the executive world there is this need of control: "Where were we, what did we do and where are we today?" So, actually, the best strategy is use the facts and evidences; you can't follow your intuition.

There was thus a contradiction between the fact that the company's diversity management initiatives came at the behest of its CEO, and the "clandestine feeling" expressed in these accounts. Furthermore, despite the CEO's endorsement of the committees, not all executives in middle management or top management positions were entirely convinced of their importance. According to the representatives of the Women's Committee, many displayed resistances. This could be interpreted as light empowerment (Cornwall 2018), and it also could be a result of this macro discourses and hegemonies of heteronormative environment.

In the period encompassed by the fieldwork, this collective had about 20 members that held monthly meetings. Five women, all located in mid-level positions in the organizational structure, assumed the position of protagonists. A characteristic of the discourse of these members was their deliberate departure from the feminist movement. However, they set themselves the objective of reducing gender inequalities in the company. One of the first actions undertaken with this intention was to conduct a survey that mapped the status of women within the organization. This survey led to the creation of a specific space within the headquarters building where working mothers could breastfeed their baby, and a mentoring programme to support the development of women's professional trajectories. Such initiatives demonstrated the groups aim to

reduce barriers that women commonly encounter in the development of executive careers, and points to the performance of this collective as a support group.

Nonetheless, we realised that the committee's representatives were more concerned with the development of their managerial paths, especially of those professionals with proximity to the head office. They revealed that they were aware of the limitations of their guidelines. In addition, they often claimed that the committee was not a place where women could "run for shelter." By this they meant that they would not raise the banner of the struggle against bullying or sexual harassment.

Such a position can be understood by observing the profile of the committee's participants. They were basically white, middle-aged, upper-middle-class women occupying mid-level positions in the organizational hierarchy and working in the head office or very close to its orbit. Almost all aspired to the development of top management positions. Thus, they ended up reproducing a certain way of being a woman and distanced themselves from the demands of other women of the company. This contradiction can be understood if we see this picture under the intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; Davis 2016) and consubstantiality lenses (Hirata 2014) and highlight the sociocultural barriers that exist and contribute to the reproduction of this dynamics.

Besides this contradiction, we perceived another paradox in the work of this collective. On the one hand, its members developed actions aimed at reducing gender inequalities within the organization, such as the mentoring programme already mentioned and the monitoring of the participation of young men and women in the trainee programme. On the other hand, they organised and promoted commemorative events for the celebration of Mother's Day, Father's Day, and children's day in the company, which included games activities and the giving of gifts. They thus reproduced within the organization the traditional place attributed to women by the discourse of hegemonic gender in society: the one responsi-

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ble for family sociability. We are not suggesting that such events should not be celebrated in companies; however, its management should be the responsibility of the HR department or the marketing department, rather than a collective focused on the gender inequalities agenda. Moreover, they could, during such events, discuss dominant gender relations both in the private and in public life and, of course, contribute to the macro emancipation.

Other factors also hampered a more effective action by the Women's Committee in the promotion of gender equality within the organization. The voluntary nature of the participation in the collective was certainly one of them. Our interviewees reported that they were unable to get their actions from the committee incorporated into the work plan they negotiated annually with their superiors. This generated fluctuating participation in the meetings and an insufficient dedication to the collective, which compromised the referral of actions.

Conclusions

Having as background the discussion on the institutional frameworks to promote gender equality, this article sought to identify and describe the ways that gender equality fostered by initiatives implemented in developing economies by transnational corporations in the form of support groups set up within their diversity management programs allow for organizational transformations that strengthen the process of women's emancipation in the corporate world.

We believe that the results of the empirical research presented here allow us to respond to this research question in the following way: a) These initiatives can only lead to organizational transformations that strengthen women's empowerment processes if they are mediated by an institutional framework that guarantees a space in which multiple actors (companies, governments, NGOs, trade unions and international organizations) can deal with their struggles and formulate possible compromises. In these disputes and compromises, it is important that discourses and practices

around light empowerment and moderate corporate feminism are challenged; b) These actors, and their conflicts and compromises, also should reflect the intersections of gender identity with other social markers of difference, such as race and ethnicity, religion, class, age, and sexuality.

We hope that this research may have contributed to the advancement of the theoretical discussion on gender equality by emphasising that the institutional weaknesses of gender governance arrangements in developing economies need to be considered in order to understand the translations of the gender policies proposed by the United Nations, especially given the risks of these gender policies being impoverished around empowerment light practices. It is also important recognize that the institutional field has a political game, where the actors are playing according their interests and, of course, their paradigms of reality. So that, it is also necessary to highlight those significant advances in this area, especially in the context of deep socioeconomic inequalities and institutional weaknesses such as those existing in Latin American countries, will not come without the presence of conflict. It should not be forgotten that, as Chantal Mouffe (2013) points out, democracy is a process always under construction from agonistic pluralism.

We would like to conclude by pointing out a limitation of this work: the fact that this article has focused on the experiences of gender equality and the advancement of diversity existing in the operation of a single transnational corporation operating in Brazil. Moreover, having been based on the use of ethnography, the study, even considering the macro-social context in which the ethnographic experience is embedded, favoured the micro-social dimension. Thus, we consider that it points to the need for new qualitative or quantitative research that investigates in greater detail the institutional frameworks related to gender equality in different countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. We believe that in this way we will have the critical mass required to advance the understanding of gender equality and women emancipation in the corporate world in developing economies.

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