Navigating on Different Spaces: The Movements of NGO Activists and Government Professionals in the Brazilian HIV/AIDS Policy.

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Brazilian HIV/AIDS Public Policy is a result of wide efforts of a diverse spectrum of social actors from public, private and non-profit sectors. It arose in São Paulo state in the beginning of the 80s, headed by some physicians working in public hospitals and the gay movement. Gradually other societal actors joined it, especially those from civil society involved in reestablishing democracy and the human rights of marginalized minorities.

The mobilization of the gay movement, human rights NGOs, movements to the restoration of democracy, progressive health professionals, among other groups, managed to put the HIV/AIDS issue in the federal government agenda, resulting on the creation of the National STD/Aids Program in 1985. It is recognized by many international organizations, like WHO, UNESCO and The World Bank as a reference to developed and developing countries.

Literature emphasizes the importance of civil society organizations, knew generically as “AIDS-NGOs”, and that it would be impossible to analyze the Brazilian HIV/AIDS policy without considering their participation in delivering several public services and acting as watch-dog control (Parker, 2003). The relationship between NGOs and State in this policy is usually seen only from these two dimensions and there are much research exploring and analyzing them.

Even though, there are other “institutional dimensions” that were not explored in the studies of the HIV/AIDS policy. As stated by Lewis (2008a), personal relationships and informal transactions are also important aspects, as much as the official and formal connections established. He recognizes sector boundaries as blurring and perceives a fluid transit of individuals among the sectors, showing a different pattern of linkage. For him, these cross-over movements represent new approaches to understand Third Sector-State partnerships in structuring public policies and emphasize the aspect of individual agency, in contrast to a more generalized policy framing.

Given this context, the paper aims at exploring the movement of NGO activists across the boundaries between Aids movement organizations and State into the Brazilian HIV/AIDS Policy. We mapped some individuals who made this movement and explored the reasons for cross-over, how they experienced public policy construction in both sides and what happened next in their trajectories.

The paper utilized the ‘three sector idea’ as a theoretical model, emphasizing sector different roles in structuring policies (Lewis, 2008b; Gidron ET AL, 1992) and the neo-institutionalism contributions on the so-called institutional entrepreneurs (Dimaggio, 1988) and their actions inside the organizational fields (Mendonça, Alves and Campos, 2007; 2008).

To Lewis (2008b:564) the so-called ‘boundary-crossing studies’ aim at learning from career trajectories and experiences of individuals who travel between the third sector and the public
sector, exploring the broader meanings and implications of these movements. The different narratives of cross-over can also reflect shifts in resource incentives and political opportunities, helping to adequate the three sector idea theoretical model to more complex realities.

They also bring insights that might further inform and strengthen the complex practices of partnership that are ‘normatively’ in vogue, but also show critical issues of accountability and performance in general, and specifically in Brazil (CAMPOS and ALCOFORADO, 2008).

We mapped and interviewed 20 activists, selected from a pre-defined list and from the use of snowballing techniques, in order to get the widest representation of these movements among the Brazilian NGOs working with HIV/Aids. The interview script aim at exploring some categories, or, ‘set of experiences’ (LEWIS, 2008a:126): taking ideas from one sector into another, managing transitions between one set of work-place rules and norms and another, and engaging with power relationships in either the maintenance of the status quo or the pursuit of change. It also explored issues related to motivation and identity of these activists.

The extent of cross-over did not allow us to call the majority of them sector brokers. The cross-over, although brings us important insights of the micro-level of HIV/Aids policy in Brazil, is marginal and reflects, in some way, organizational fragilities faced by Aids-NGOs. The main reasons put by the activist to make this movement include lack of professional and financial perspective working in NGOs, more stability offered by State and wider possibilities to implement public policy. Although marginal, these movements can be seen as an alternative strategy to bring different approaches into the governmental agenda and a way to balance the tensions between the sectors.

**MAIN REFERENCES**


