



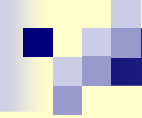
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*Workshop "Immigrant activism in national and transnational contexts"*

***Immigrant associations as socio-political mediators:  
The Angolan, Brazilian and Eastern European Communities in Portugal***

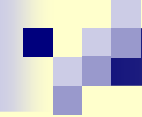
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## Immigrant associations as socio-political lobby groups

- Dependent on the host societies' 'political opportunity structures' and forms of 'institutional channelling' (Ireland, 1994; Geddes, 2000).
  
- Immigrant organisations:  
*"...define their goals, strategies, functions and level of operation in relation to the existing policies and resources of the host state. They advance demands and set agendas vis-à-vis state policy and discourses in order to seize institutional opportunities and further their claims. In this sense, the expression and organisation of migrant collective identity are formed by the institutionalised forms of the state's incorporation regime"* (Soysal, 1994: 86).
  
- 'Making themselves heard': **lobbying options and actions** of the associations:
  - negotiating with governments (local, regional and national, etc.)
  - collaborating with administrative organisms and social assistance institutions (i.e. local councils, schools and other public institutions);
  - articulating with homeland organisations (i.e. labour unions, political parties, religious institutions or other civil society organisms);
  - participating in consultative bodies designed to represent collective interests;
  - utilising confrontational means (i.e. demonstrations, strikes, etc.)



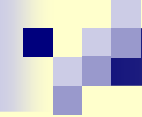
## Immigrant associations as social and political actors – the national level

### ■ The first half of the 1990's

- the first steps as political lobby groups demanding the regularisation of undocumented foreigners → creation of the *Coordinating Secretariat for Legalisation Action* (SCAL) in 1992 → for the first time the State constituted immigrant associations as partners.
- first representative of immigrant communities in Parliament in 1991 (Fernando Ká, president of the Guinean Social Solidarity Association).
- start of immigrant association boom – from ten in 1990 to 78 in 1996 (Correia, 1997) – due to the positive impact of associative intervention.


### ■ The second half of the 1990's

- growing institutional relationship with the creation of the *High Commission for Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities* (ACIME) in 1995 and two formal channels of communication between the associations and the government:
  - the *Consultative Council for Immigrant Issues* (COCAI)
  - the *Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination* (CICDR).
- passing of the legal regime regulating immigrant associations (Law n. 115/99) which legitimised immigrant associations as political partners and representatives of the interests of immigrant groups in the public arena.



## ■ Since the turn of the century

- continuation of immigrant association boom – from 78 in 1996 to 184 in 2002 (Albuquerque, 2002) – due to the increased availability of project funds, increased recognition of immigrant associations on the part of the powers-that-be and with recently arrived immigrants forming organisations.
- consolidation of ties between association movements and other civil society organisations leading to the creation of umbrella movements with the intent of coordinating common agendas and lobbying for political change, keeping in mind the best interests of the immigrants. For example:
  - the *Coordinating Secretariat of Immigrant Associations* (SCAI) (2002),
  - the *Platform of Immigrant Organisations for Regularisation and Integration* (2005),
  - the *Platform of Representative Structures of Immigrant Communities in Portugal* (PERCIP) (2006).
- community interests – the strengthening of association federations. For ex.:
  - the *Federation of Capeverdean Associations in Portugal*,
  - the *Federation of Angolan Associations and Friends of Angola*.



## Immigrant associations as social and political actors – the local level

- Associations serve as mediators on issues dealing, above all, with housing, social service provision and education.
- A second group of priorities is aimed at supporting cultural activities.
- Local-level relations – since the first one in 1993, Portugal has seen the establishment of two types of municipal organisms to deal with immigrant issues:
  - *support offices or departments* – provide information and support to the local immigrant populations and work with the associations that represent them (numerous offices of this nature can be found throughout Portugal);
  - *municipal councils* – aim to provide a forum where immigrant associations can voice their opinions on issues that concern their community (three municipal councils have been accounted for in Portugal – Lisbon, Amadora and Porto – however, only the Porto council currently functions).




## **The Study**

Based on semi-structured interviews with immigrant associations carried out from September, 2004 to September, 2005.


## **The associations**

- 28 Angolan associations - 14 (50%) recognised by ACIME.
- 18 Brazilian associations - 4 (22%) recognised by ACIME.
- 21 Eastern European associations - 9 (43%) recognised by ACIME.



## Mediating roles of the associations – examples from the Angolan community


- The lobby for regularisation and integration – the role of the associations as members of **SCAL** during the 1990's.
- Local level mediating roles:
  - **the housing issue**
    - the example of the association ***Angolan Youth Union in Portugal (UJAP)*** and the neighbourhood of Quinta do Mocho, Loures.
  - **the youth integration issue**
    - the example of the ***Association Support Without Limits (ASLI)*** located in the neighbourhood of Quinta Grande, Lisbon and the ***Angolan Residence Association of the Municipality of Odivelas (ARACODI)***
      - mediating with local city and parish halls, schools and police forces.
- Lobbying for nationality and citizenship rights – the struggle to have the Nationality Law altered from *jus sanguine* to *jus soli*.



## Mediating roles of the associations – examples from the Brazilian community

- The 1990's – the first battle of the Brazilian community – the struggle for labour practice rights.
  - the example of the association **Brazilian Dental Association – Portuguese Division** and the *Luso-Brazilian Oral Health Association*.
- 'the voice' of the Brazilian community - lobbying for regularisation, integration and citizenship right.
  - the example of the *House of Brazil of Lisbon*.
- a local level example:
  - **the social solidarity issue**
  - the example of the *Social Assistance Association - Peniel* in the parish of Quarteira, municipality of Loulé (Algarve).



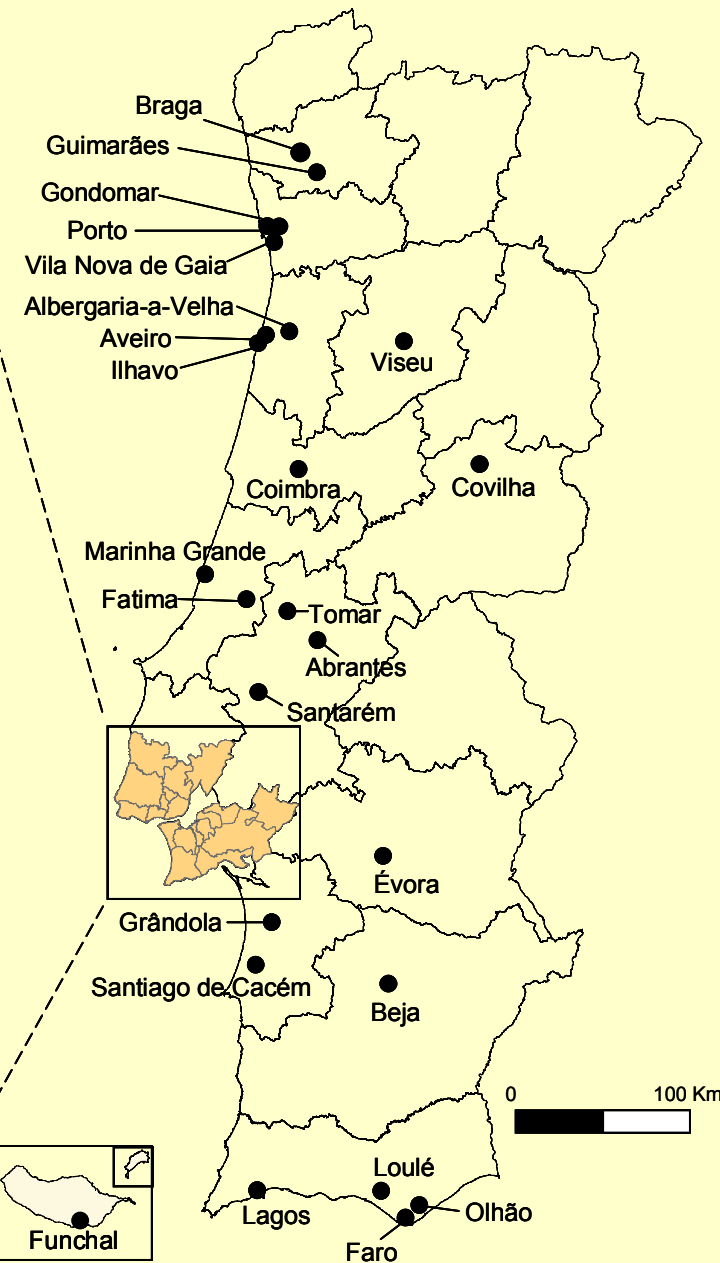
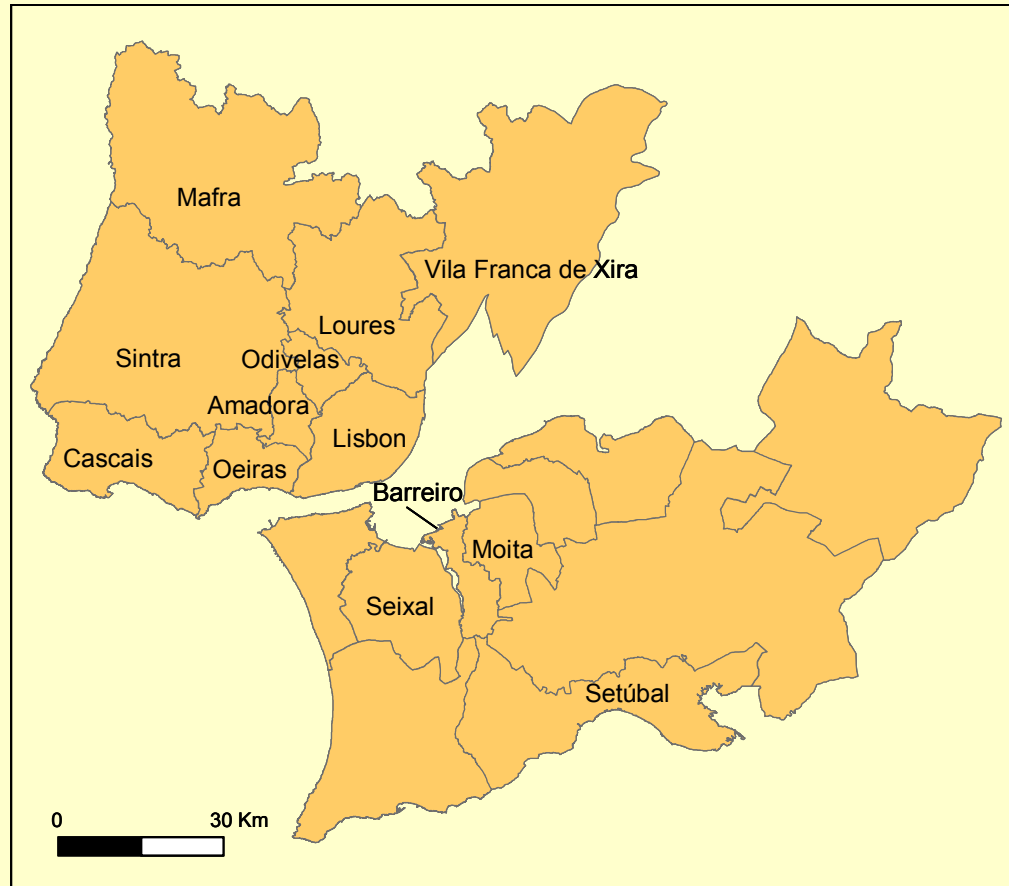


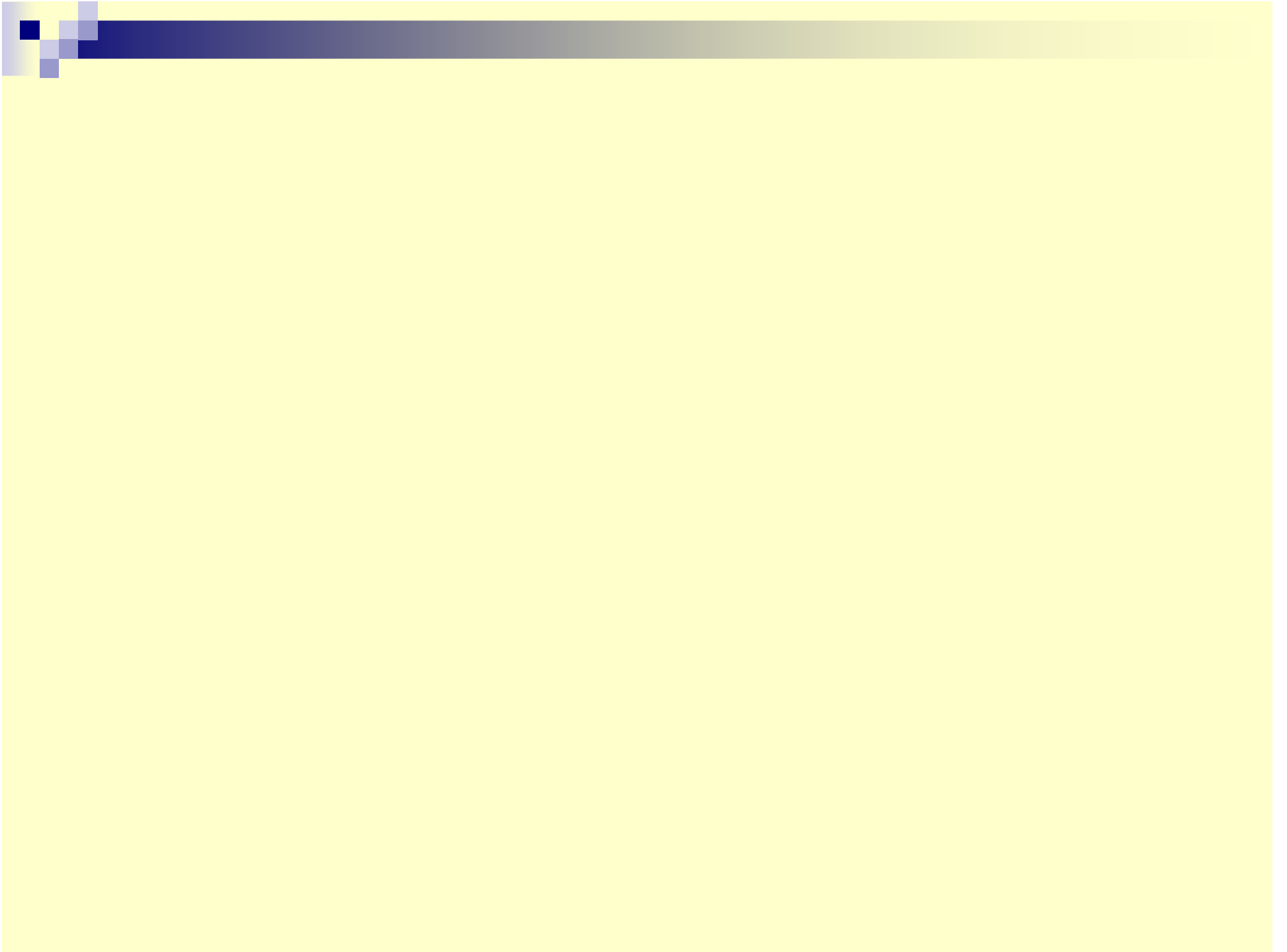
## Mediating roles of the associations – examples from the Eastern European community


The first associative steps – 2000 and on ward...

- First associations found to assist and inform immigrants on regularisation, citizenship rights and the laws of the host country; help crack down on labour exploitation and mafias rings and help with language issues.
  
- from the national to local level representation – dealing on all fronts: 2 associations, 2 cities, 2 examples:
  - ***Edinstvo – Eastern European Immigrants' Association*** in Setúbal,
  - ***Immigrant Support Association – São Bernardo*** in Aveiro.
  
- Local level mediating roles:
  - **a housing issue**
    - the example of the ***Romanian and Friendly People's Association*** and the neighbourhood of ***Poço do Bispo Homeless Shelter***.

# Municipalities where the associations (headquarters and delegations) are found







## What are the functions of voluntary immigrant associations?

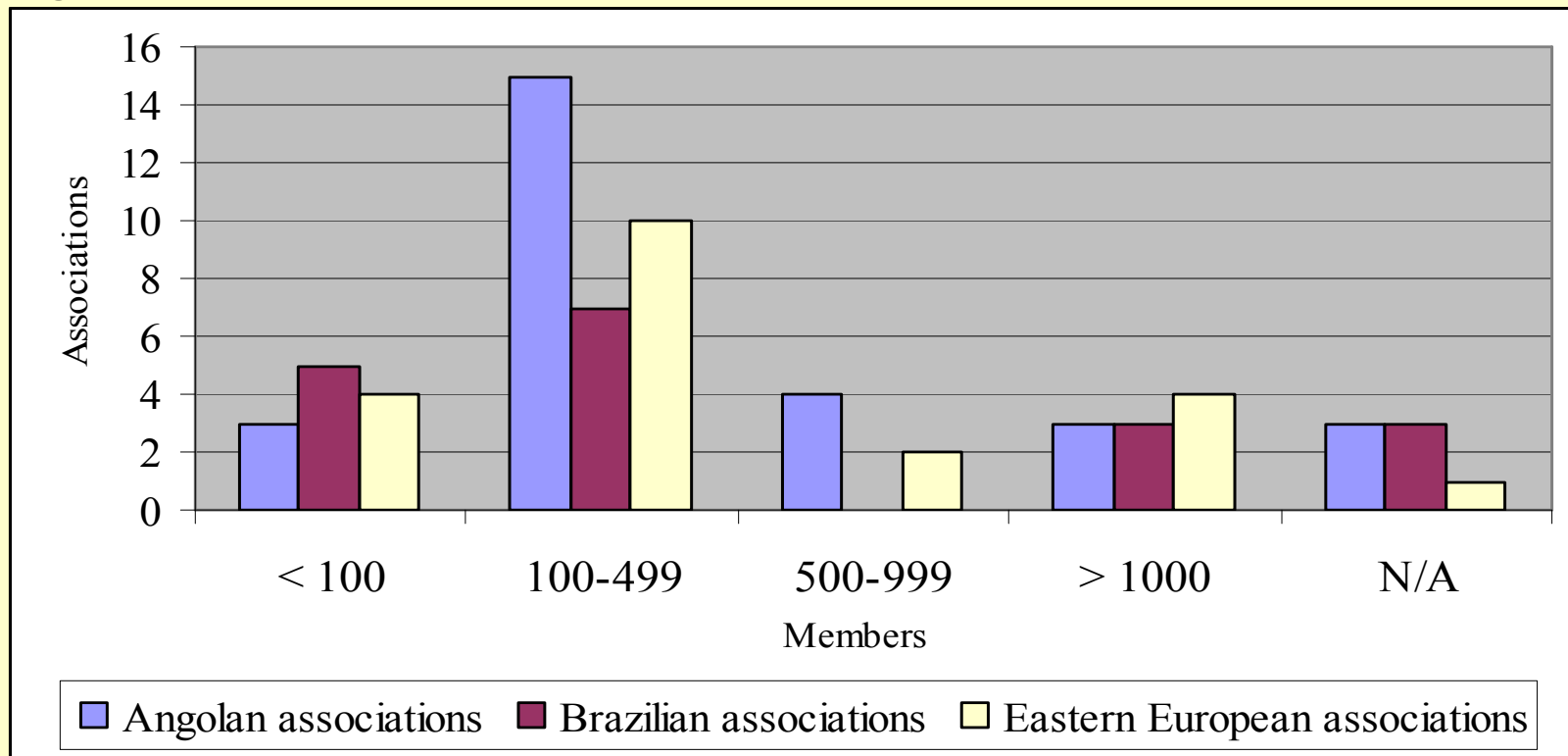
- The two broad aims of immigrant associations (Albuquerque, Ferreira and Viegas: 2000) :
  - conservation, cultural affirmation and the consolidation of the feeling of belonging based on an identity affiliation;
  - objectives of a material order, the majority of which involve aspects of the desire to integrate into the host-society's social order, primarily dealing with immigrants' civic participation and rights.
  
- Context of '*survival*' and '*resistance*' (Morén-Alegret, 2002) with 'survival' coming in the form of ethno-cultural preservation, and 'resistance' becoming a rallying point for collective action in the struggle for resources and power, or indeed to challenge directly the hegemonic policies of the host country.

**Table 1: The founding of the associations**

Time periods	Angolan		Brazilian		Eastern European		TOTAL	
	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%
<b>before 1979</b>	1	3.6	0	0	0	0	1	1.5
<b>1980-1989</b>	3	10.7	1	5.6	0	0	4	6.0
<b>1990-1994</b>	9	32.1	5	27.8	0	0	14	20.9
<b>1995-1999</b>	5	17.9	2	11.1	0	0	7	10.4
<b>2000-2005</b>	10	35.7	10	55.6	21	100	41	61.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	28	100	18	100	21	100	67	100

- Are the associations really representative of the communities they represent?


Figure 1: Membership composition of the associations



**Table 2: Membership compositions of the associations**

	<b>Angolans</b>	<b>Brazilians</b>	<b>Eastern European</b>
<b>Lowest membership composition</b>	35	9	30
<b>Highest membership composition</b>	3,000	7,800 (2,000)	5,000 (2,000)
<b>Membership composition, mean score</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>795</b> <b>(383)</b>	<b>720</b> <b>(407)</b>

- Membership composition is, however, misleading as many of the associations that provide social services will provide them on the condition that the client takes up membership. Thus the high membership number frequently reflects one-time users of the association who became members in order to receive a service.
- Immigrant associations seldom represent more than 10 per cent of the immigrant population (Ireland, 1994). On average, each Angolan and Brazilian association represents 1.1% of their respective community members, while the Eastern Europeans organisations represent 0.7%.



- **Low index of association, political and civic participation**

**Why?**

- Immigrants' primary concern is that of work and financial gain.
- Feelings of belonging to the collective community is often low.
- The thought of return keeps immigrants unattached and disinterested.
- Living conditions, situation of poverty and feelings of neglect discourage or make participation secondary.
- Cultural patterns as determinants – i.e. lack of participation rights in the country of origin (for e.g. Eastern Europeans coming from autocratic regimes).
- Immigrants possess a utilitarian outlook towards the work of the association, only seeking them out when they have issues that need resolving.



**Table 1: Most referred to integration problems/areas in need of intervention, according to the associations**

Integration problem / areas in need of intervention	Angolan (N=28 interviewees)		Brazilian (N=25 interviewees)		Eastern European (N=30 interviewees)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Housing issues	19	70.4	7	28	9	30
Education and labour market qualifications	19	70.4	2	8	-	-
Discrimination/racism/ stereotyping	18	66.7	9	36	3	10
Legality/documents/nationality/rights	12	44.4	20	80	25	83.3
Work issues (i.e. labour contracts, exploitation, etc.)	10	37	18	72	25	83.3
Limited access to services (i.e. health, education, etc.)	9	33.3	12	48	19	63.3
Lack of acceptance/ closed society	3	11.1	10	40	2	6.7
Self-isolation	3	11.1	9	36	5	16.7
Language	2	7.4	5	20	14	50
Family reunification	-	-	-	-	15	50
Academic/qualification equivalency	1	4	3	12	15	50

Source: Fieldwork interviews, 2004/05