

Welfare State in Portugal: delegated powers or disclaims responsibility?

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Abstract

The Social Local Intervention Network (RLIS) came to light in Portugal in 2013, as a policy to reduce poverty and social exclusion. In this context, it has been possible to observe a transfer of responsibilities within the scope of the social action of the State for Social Economy Organizations under the pretext of "social responsibility of the different social agents" (network governance logic) and the guarantee of "new and better responses of proximity to citizens". In this article, we intend to critically discuss the assumptions of the new logic of public policy network governance, exemplified here by RLIS, and discuss the respective impacts, namely in terms of effectiveness and innovation in local development

Keywords

Welfare State, Social Policies, Network Governance, Social Innovation, Impact Assessment

Resumo

A Rede de Intervenção Social Local (RLIS) surgiu em Portugal em 2013, como uma política para reduzir a pobreza e a exclusão social. Nesse contexto, foi possível observar uma transferência de responsabilidades no âmbito da ação social do Estado das Organizações de Economia Social sob o pretexto de "responsabilidade social dos diferentes agentes sociais" (lógica de governança de redes) e garantia de "novas e melhores respostas de proximidade com os cidadãos". Neste artigo, pretendemos discutir criticamente as premissas da nova lógica de governança de redes de políticas públicas, exemplificada aqui pelo RLIS, e discutir os respectivos impactos, nomeadamente em termos de efetividade e inovação no desenvolvimento local.

Palavras chave

Estado Social, Políticas Sociais, Governança de Redes, Inovação Social, Avaliação de Impacto.

Resumen

La Red de Intervención Social Local (RLIS) salió a la luz en Portugal en 2013, como una política para reducir la pobreza y la exclusión social. En este contexto, ha sido posible observar una transferencia de responsabilidades dentro del alcance de la acción social del Estado para las Organizaciones de Economía Social con el pretexto de "responsabilidad social de los diferentes agentes sociales" (lógica de gobernanza de red) y la garantía de "Nuevas y mejores respuestas de proximidad a los ciudadanos". En este artículo, tenemos la intención de discutir críticamente los supuestos de la nueva lógica de la gobernanza de la red de políticas públicas, ejemplificada aquí por RLIS, y discutir los respectivos impactos, es decir, en términos de efectividad e innovación en el desarrollo local.

Palabras clave

Estado de bienestar, políticas sociales, gobernanza de redes, innovación social, evaluación de impacto

Introduction

In Portugal, there has been a gradual change in the logic of social protection, appearing to be less homogeneous and guaranteed. State intervention has adapted to the situations, with a greater specification and customization of the means and intervention models. Thus, public policies are based on options centered on "contingency and adaptability" (Albuquerque and Amaro da Luz, 2016). These changes and adaptations lead to the emergence of new forms of social welfare, with direct implications on citizenship and social justice. In parallel, there has been a gradual transition from a logic of government (the state provides and controls social responses) to a logic of network governance (the state is a partner of other actors, be they public, private or even voluntary, in the creation and monitoring of social responses). The intentional use of the (apparently pleonastic) expression of network governance intends to put the emphasis on the complementarity of partner's roles, objectives and resources to respond to current complex and wicked problems and, at the same time, to underline the role of networks of (emerging) actors and the challenges associated with this new analytical and actional paradigm. An approach anchored in renewed participatory strategies and production of social innovation in local contexts. This implies, notably, processes of global and local cooperation, regional development, particularly in deprived geographical areas, sustainable development and cultural engagement. The concept of network governance puts thus, in a clearer way, the need of greater commitment and assessment in the conception of responses and adapted policies, the exigency of a better and more sustainable management of complexity, the cooperation between stakeholders, a transparent and innovative management direction as well as experimentation and shared apprenticeship processes.

Network governance appears, in fact, as a current and pressing societal challenge that has been discussed both in the academic arena (Braun and Schultz, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2013; Gundelach et al., 2017; Kim and

Lee, 2012; Lopes, 2010; Magone, 2017; Pereira and Carranca, 2011; Vossole, 2013), as in the context of social policies (Burgess, 2014; Ekundayo, 2017; Farazmand, 2017; Ferrão, 2015; Ruggie, 2014; Veiga et al., 2013). It is a cross-cutting theme, adopted globally and in multiple sectors. What is new and what is linked to traditional ways of acting and conceptualizing social problems under the new paradigm of governance?

The change in the presuppositions of public action that this transmutation of logic presupposes opens the possibility and encourages new processes of intervention anchored in cooperation and socio-political and territorial innovation. In this context, the Local Social Intervention Network (RLIS) is an organization model that emphasizes integrated action (involvement and accountability of different local actors: public and private entities, civil society). In the logic of network governance, the perspective of shared responsibility of the community in risks and opportunities. Thus, Social Economy Organizations appear here as privileged actors in social intervention, in social regulation and even in the sustainability of public policies in general, and social policies in particular. Organizations of the Social Economy have been gaining more and more protagonism in the capacity of dynamization of social intervention programs/projects. It may, however, be questioned, and this is the motto of ongoing research, to what extent does the new form of territorial organization (RLIS) effectively correspond to a new format of social intervention, producing renewed ways of understanding/acting on complex local social problems and generates social impacts. In this article we intend to reflect critically on these issues, highlighting the emergency context of a new intervention logic objectified in the RLIS, as well as the critical factors that it can have, both in terms of basic philosophy and in terms of implementation.

The article is structured in 4 articulated parts. It begins with the analytical (de)construction of social protection, followed by the discussion of the advances and retreats of social protection in Portugal, as well as social intervention methodologies and ends with the presentation of RLIS, analysis of the breaks and continuities of the classic social protection regime, questioning the effectiveness and efficiency of the adoption of the network governance model and the innovative nature of the initiative.

Social Protection: analytical (de)construction¹

The discussion around social protection models is not new. Much has been written and debated regarding the need satisfaction mechanisms of people in different historical or geographic contexts.

State models have undergone various transformations throughout history. According to political, social and economic time and circumstances, different social protection models were adopted: from charity associated models to its configuration as a right (social welfare structured systems), and to the paradigm shift: from the notion of protection as a right to the notion of protection as shared responsibility (Welfare Mix) between state, civil society, third sector and companies. "In any case, history shows us that there are no monolithic models that follow one another, but rather always composite, transitory and indefinite duration solutions" (Estanque, 2012: 16).

In the first half of the XX century, Social protection systems widespread nearly to every European country. Social rights appearance, called third generation rights through Marshall's perspective (1950), along with the state's authority reinforcement, brought new social demands and the State was increasingly given the role of provider of these rights. What Bismark had initiated in Germany in 1880 with the national social security na-

¹ In this article the concepts of welfare state, social state and social protection systems will be adopted in an undifferentiated way, as if they were synonyms.

tional service was now spreading to many other countries. The state was becoming the new social rights fundamental provider.

However, over the last decades, significant changes led to Social State model sustainability questioning. Several authors (Abramovitz, 2018; Brandt et al., 2018; Estanque, 2012; Gosta, 1993; Hespanha and Carapineiro, 2002; Otto, 2018; Pereirinha and Carolo, 2009; Pereirinha, 2006; Santos, 2001, 1993, 1991, 1990, 1987; Silva, 2013; Sposati and Rodrigues, 1995) studied, for example, technological, demographic and labour market changes consequences and sought to understand the "new social issues" impact in welfare states.

In this context, the traditional welfare state became increasingly contested in recent decades. Recently, political developments took a step further at the traditional welfare state erosion through the emergence of the so-called "workfare" (Brandt et al., 2018). Passive or compensatory social policies (Rosanvallon, 1981) were gradually replaced for active social policies, which entailed the individualized integration contracts drafting and personal action plans. Brandt, Roose, and Verschelden (2018:8) compared these new intervention forms to "trampolines", that intend the beneficiaries market labour integration as soon as possible. On the other hand, Fabian Kessl supports the "Welfare State(s) shadow" appearance (2018: 44). Thus, the author argues that before the welfare states inefficiency, spontaneous ways to overcome social needs arose (through basic needs surpluses distribution among those in need), which not being contemplated by the regulated forms of Welfare State or Providence Society, work in the "shadow" of the previous ones.

This "new charity economy" is providing support through food aid, soup, charity clothing stores (*idem*). But it is possible to find new other (international) care regimes or deinstitutionalized organizations supporting refugees or migrants as part of this welfare state shadow development.

The author (Kessl, 2018: 44) alerts overall for the consequences of the "social welfare shadow services" emergence, namely that they are weakening formal social rights, even though those rights officially exist; being fundamentally changing the social services providing process; and, not being an alternative, but being directly related to institutional and professionalized social assistance services.

According to this perspective, the "welfare shadow" is an important part of the welfare state's continuous transformation process (Kessl, 2018: 44).

From charity to law: Portuguese Social Protection breakthroughs and step-backs

Until 1974, in Portugal, social intervention was limited to "charitable-based corporatist assistance" (Joaquim, 2015: 8). The turning point was the Portuguese Republic Constitution's publication in 1976, reinforcing the State intervention, in a social solidarity perspective through the "social solidarity private institutions" consecration, associating these institutions to the social security system. After the Social Security Reform (1962), the Social Security General System was being developed, until the Basic Social Security Law of 1984 approval (Pereirinha and Carolo in Joaquim, 2015: 9).

With the intent to establish a Welfare State in Portugal, poverty and social inequalities combat economic and social policies were implemented (minimum national wage fixation, unemployment and sickness subsidies, family allowances, social pension, among others). All these measures were of a universalist character and under direct state tutelage. "Over the years the welfare state has behaved as a «reimburse machine» (...) and that clearly revealed inadequate to the social risk type of situations nowadays" (Hespanha, 2008: 1).

Like it was said before, in recent years, social protection logics gradually changed, in Portugal, appearing to be less homogeneous and guaranteed. The economic crisis context and consequent austerity policies application led to changes in European welfare states in general and in the Portuguese welfare state particularly. In Portugal, with the referred social state changes, it is important to analyse created and implements public policies in order to verify the state's social intervention role. In this line of thought, the authors argue that "the current state, although less protective and securitizing (...), does not cease to be increasingly controlling, in more explicit or more subtle ways, in a kind of «omniscience» without «omnipotence» guarantee" (*idem*: XII).

This trend gains emphasis when it is possible to witness a gradual transition from a government logic to a governance network logic. Even so, some of the current changes in welfare models, classified as innovative, only translate sometimes merely a strategy to fulfill the relative inefficacy of the State, and not an effective qualitative change (Albuquerque and Amaro da Luz, 2016).

Network governance influences the local public policy implementation and articulation, by the way the problem is diagnosed, the objectives are designed, and the policies conceived, not to mention these models' impact in the implementation and evaluation of those policies.

It should not be forgotten that social rights envisaged by the Portuguese social state suffered various influences that contributed to its construction and readjustment. First, the New State's corporative guidelines, followed by the democracy equalitarian influences (after the 1974 revolution) and the Europeanization (with EU membership in 1986). All of this social state maturation process allowed the development of two primary areas of social policies intervention, namely: "corrective", which provides for social transfers and services ("redistributive in nature"); and "preventive" in order to anticipate new social situations and/or problems (Albuquerque and Amaro da Luz, 2016: 189). In addition, since the social protection universalization phase, in the Portuguese context, the Social State contemplates many social rights alongside a weak economy that does not ensure its economic and social sustainability.

With the purpose of carrying out a more extensive analysis of the Social State breakthroughs and step backs, it will be necessary to describe the economic, political and social conditions that characterize the last decades of development in Portugal.

Portugal faced a political, financial and social crisis that began in 2008 and severally fragile the Portuguese society.

Table 1 – Notes of the Portuguese crisis between 2008 and 2013

Political crisis	Financial Crisis	Social Crisis
<p>XVIII Constitutional Government (26/10/2009 to 21/06/2011) - Prime Minister: José Sócrates (PS). PS wins the election with a relative majority. This government negotiated with "Troika" the international financial aid request. The memorandum with the troika had 11 revisions.</p> <p>José Sócrates resigned on 03/23/2011, due to the Stability and Growth Programs (PEC) rejection. He held the position of Management Government until 06/21/2011.</p>	<p>Portugal asked for foreign financial help to avoid bankruptcy.</p> <p>On 3 May 2011, the Understanding Memorandum with the "Troika" (International Monetary Fund, European Union, European Central Bank) is signed.</p> <p>Adoption of financial austerity measures to reduce the budget deficit, public debt, and expenditure (through the reduction or freezing of wages, the increase in taxes and charges, and the restructuring of public services and support).</p>	<p>Between 2011 and 2014 emigration significantly increased (from 100978 thousand people to 134624 thousand people).</p> <p>Youth unemployment reached 40% in 2012; long-term unemployment reached 9.5% in 2012.</p> <p>The unemployment rate reached 16.9% in 2013.</p> <p>Precarious work increased (part-time employment rate increased from 11.5 in 2006 to 13.1 in 2014, the number of employees with a limited duration contract increased from 20.4 in 2006 to 21.4 in 2014)</p>
<p>XIX Constitutional Government (06/21/2011 to 10/30/2015) - Prime Minister: Pedro Passos Coelho (PSD-CDS). PSD is the most voted party and forms a government with a majority of parliamentary support. Establishes a government agreement with CDS-PP (led by Paulo Portas).</p>	<p>Cut in social expenses with a restriction on social benefits (eg Social Income from Insertion, Supplementary Supplement for the Elderly, Unemployment Allowance and Family Allowance) access.</p> <p>Restriction of access and unemployment benefits reduction.</p>	<p>In 2013, 19.5% of the Portuguese were at risk of poverty.</p> <p>The number of people who cannot afford unexpected expenses increased from 16.4% in 2006 to 43.2% in 2014. This is even more significant when analysing people aged 65 or over (from 34.2% in 2006 to 52.5% in 2014).</p>

Source: Own production, based on INEs information, Pordata and Portugal.gov.pt site

As can be seen in the table, the investment against poverty decreased, between 2010 and 2015, because of the change in the access to social benefits requirements and benefits value reduction. In this way, despite the economic and social situation worsening, the number of social benefits beneficiaries decreased, and since the value of the benefits was also reduced, there was a clear social spending reduction in this area.

Table 2 - Social Security expenditure against poverty variation between 2010-2015 PSD / CDS Government and "Troika"

Rubric	Execution Millions	CGE Millions	Variation millions
	2010	2015	2010-15
Family and child allowance	964,9	628,8	-336,1
Solidarity supplement for the elderly	266,0	190,5	-75,4
Social integration income	520,0	287,4	-232,6
Other benefits	815,6	720,5	-95,1
Social action	1.671,1	1653,5	-17,6
Unemployment benefits	2.247,9	1.760,6	-487,3
Cuts in poverty reduction benefits	6.485,5	5.241,4	-1.244,1
Basic Social Security Laws Funding	7.498,7	6.464,1	-1.034,6

Source: State Budget Report - 2011 and 2017

With the economic crisis as an "argument", social support and social benefits access conditions were reduced. At the same time, there was an increase in social problems, and the field of social intervention against poverty and exclusion assumes increasingly restrictive lines of action. As an example, and considering unemployment,

during the financial assistance period, the social protection system was changed, leaving an increasing number of unemployed unprotected, with the access restriction introduction to the measure, a period of assistance reduction and increased beneficiary inclusion in the labour market responsibilities (Marques and Matos, 2016). Social Integration Income is another example of successive legislative changes and procedures, which, with the introduction of more restrictive rules, makes it difficult to access the measure, resulting in a beneficiary's number reduction during a period of worsening poverty situations and social exclusion in the country. Thus, there is an assistentialist and emergency social action logic, resulting in a classic (universal) social rights reduction, in which greater autonomy (of social protection, citizenship, and social security) is granted to the beneficiaries and social support measures in kind², precarious, discretionary and with stigmatizing exposure of the beneficiaries' vulnerability are developed. It should also be noted that the adoption of these austerity measures (reflected in the decrease of family incomes) and the introduction of policies against poverty and social exclusion changes (reduction of social support and numbers of people supported) adding to the existing problems of poverty and social exclusion, the emergence of new poverty pockets, which affect differentiating characteristics of the society (precarious, low-wage workers, among others) was not prevented.

As can be seen, the last decade historical, political, economic and social events (in a movement that began in the 1990s) indicate a social expenditure growing disinvestment by the State (welfare states weakening) and, consequently, a greater accountability of civil society in social issues (strengthening of the Providence Society³).

The State thus ceases to constitute itself as a single agent of protection, joining with other agents in the responsible production of the socio-economic well-being and social cohesion based on justice presuppositions and participation rights, recognition, insertion and of utility (Albuquerque, 2013: 65).

Crossroads of social intervention: between passivity and activation

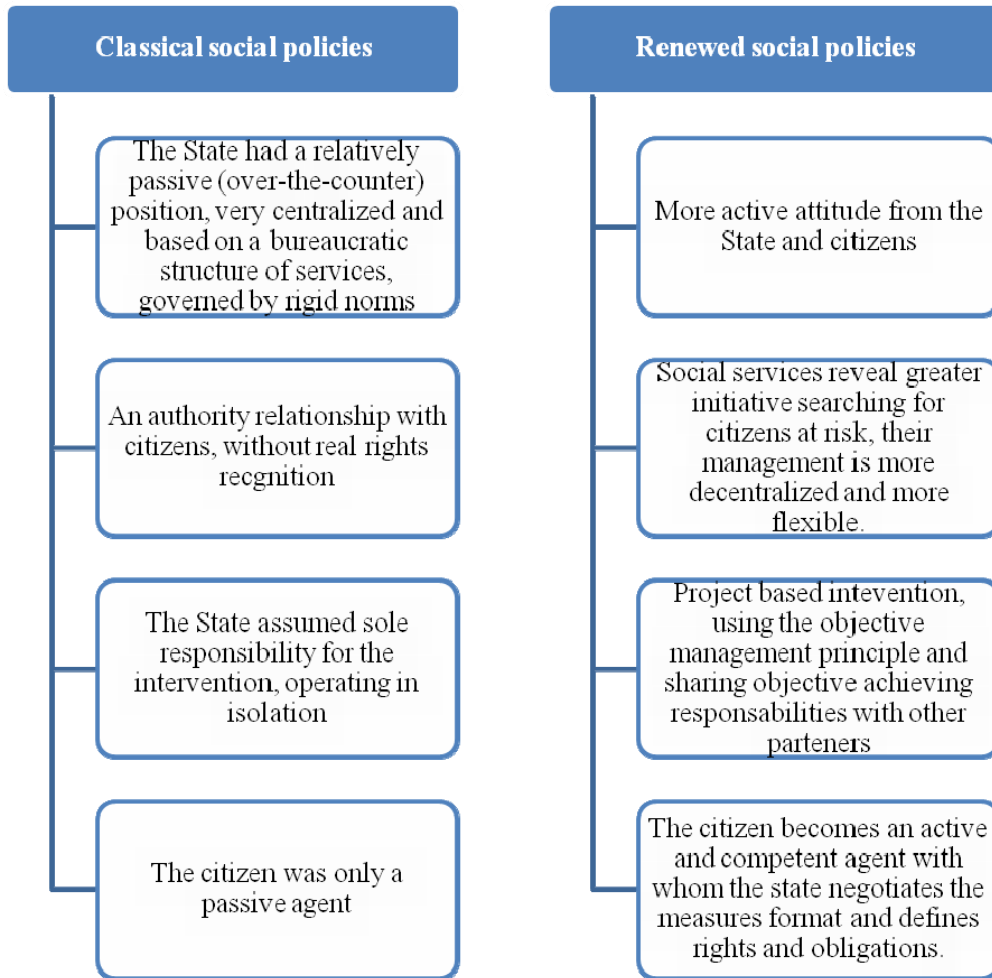
Considering individuals as active citizens and not only assisted, a citizenship philosophy, removed in the classic paternalistic relation between State and assisted, that generates dependence and by which the latter tends to become a subordinate subject is introduced (Hespanha, 2008: 2).

To highlight the main differences between classical and renewed social policies, the following scheme is presented:

² The number of Social Canteens in the Social Emergency Program increased from 62 in 2011 to 843 in 2015 (totalling 48,000 meals a day) (Marques and Matos, 2016).

³ See also (Branco, 2017; Ferreira, 2008; Gosta, 1993; Portugal, 2008; Santos, 1991; Sposati and Rodrigues, 1995; Varela and Guedes, 2013)

Scheme 1 - Main differences between classical and renewed social polities



Source: adapted from Pedro Hespanha (2008: 3).

In this conceptual framework, Pedro Hespanha presents the "new social intervention methodologies" resulting from the "active welfare state", namely "project approach, decentralized and shared action, responses personalization and contractualisation" (2008:4).

Recently, social intervention models proliferated, with a project approach (objective-driven management, flexible, innovative/experimental and temporary), very different from the previous model (which emphasized the procedures stability/routine, rigidity/bureaucracy, and permanence). Project logic is widespread both in the public sector and in the private sector (social economy enterprises and organizations). Now, it is important to highlight this approach main advantages and disadvantages.

Table 3 - Strengths and limitations of the project approach

Strengths	Limitations
Proximity: local reality knowledge improved, greater participation of stakeholders and greater legitimacy of intervention.	Proximity can amplify negative relationships between local partners.
Integrated action: adequate to the multidimensional nature of the problems and fomenting inter-institutional cooperation.	Strong institutional logic can potentiate conflict or lead to the most powerful institution's domination (the problem worsens when a tradition of institutional cooperation is lacking).
The flexibility of the action: better adaptation to the local reality and its changes, better adjustment in the local actor's cooperation and non-bureaucratic management.	Flexibility can divert the action from national interests and priority objectives.
The autonomy of the action: greater decision and mobilization of local resources capacity.	The autonomy of the action may lead to a lack of control over the use of the resources.
Identity sharing: greater cohesion to get consensus about local objectives; strong and positive relationship identification between the partners.	Risk of local or particularistic logics.
Ability to circulate information, mobilize social capital, produce aid, link economic agents, control public policies; Objective achievement limited duration: allows the situation reassessment adjusting the action to changes.	Integrated and partnered intervention requires a stable organizational structure driven by precise objectives, making it difficult to solve problems and risking action discontinuity within a temporally limited project.

Source: adapted from Pedro Hespanha (2008: 5).

In addition to the table mentioned aspects, it is necessary to reflect on the need for permanent activities and organizations. Are not many time-bound projects used to finance permanent activities? Can organizations continue to fund permanent responses/services using temporary funding?

It is also necessary to mention the public policies Europeanisation influence, and particularly social policies, not only in guidelines terms but also in economic support for their implementation (before the economic crisis of 2008/2009). It can be concluded that national and Community public funds are important sources of both institutions and social responses funding.

Another model of social intervention identified by Pedro Hespanha (2008:6) is the decentralized intervention and responsibility-sharing with civil society. Like any other model, decentralized intervention may also present limitations. The author argues that these manifest themselves ineffectiveness (local initiatives alone cannot solve complex social problems, needing to be accompanied by national measures); equity ("unequal distribution of social protection by different territories may be generated"); evaluation/accountability ("greater difficulty controlling the public resources application"); localism ("possibility of significant «deviations» between national objectives and local policy implementation"); proximity effect/familiarity (the lack of distance from the familiar can make it difficult to understand local needs and opportunities); scale (there are situations where the place is not the best option) (Hespanha, 2008: 6).

The personalization or individualization measures are perhaps the most relevant innovation at the social intervention models level. "Instead of abstract universal devices application, new social programs privilege concrete measures tailored to the actual beneficiaries profile, both families and individuals" (Hespanha, 2008: 10).

The social intervention subjectivation is visible through the approach given to the person using the system, insofar it is called to intervene actively in the whole process, either through its course "reconstitution" (when it reports its life history), identifying their capacities and fragilities, either by endogenous resources mobilization and solutions searching for the identified problem(s). However, while promoting autonomy, in a kind of emancipatory social policy, the structure opportunities access "gap" growth increases. It is possible, in fact, to identify parallel paths in social protection, between a management orientation, based in a rationalization and quantification logic, and a subjective orientation associated with new forms of monitoring vulnerability situations and life narratives (Albuquerque, 2013).

In the social intervention subjectivation, the social intervener's role assumes special importance. Thus, its action can be guided by the "interactions domain singularization or customization"; "accountability in the contractual approach field"; by "motivational construction and skills mobilization" (*idem*: 78).

Focusing on the person's individuality, autonomy, and accountability to solve his/her problem(s) will be a positive response when provided with "account, weight, and measure". Contextualization of the collective sphere situation of the individual is mandatory, to promote the person autonomy using existing synergies, to value the person, in a citizenship and dignity context. The social intervener plays a decisive role in the personal and social factors negotiation and combination.

In this scenario of new approaches regarding social intervention, the active involvement of the people for whom it is intended is a fundamental part. It is assumed that beneficiaries participate in their own social inclusion process, through contractualisation. Based on emancipatory principles, these measures may cause some displeasures, inasmuch as they are punishable to social benefits access in case of non-compliance, with a high level of the beneficiary accountability for the exclusion situation and with the increasing secondary and precarious labour market possibility (beneficiaries with years of work in precarious situations, without the guaranteed labour rights) (Hespanha, 2008: 12 and 13).

Hans-Uwe Otto (2018:68) asserts that both "European Welfare States" and the "political-social space" are currently undergoing a fundamental reorganization": for one, there is a retreat in the models that emphasize the social security provision to transfer payments, and, on the other hand, the growth of models that emphasize individual responsibility and promote better living conditions through active market participation. Thus, social services are transformed into personalized services, not only in their nature but also in their importance, even in "the new welfare principles implementation", which are now totally focused on the individual subject and "oriented towards emancipatory development of its clientele" (Otto, 2018: 68).

The author argues that "the new logic underlying the social services" combines institutional and managerial premises, with normative objectives of "productivist orientation, that goes hand in hand with the self-commitment and individual responsibility of their addressees" (Otto, 2018: 68).

In this regard, Hans-Uwe Otto (2018: 68) argues that "Social work as a profession is under attack", inasmuch as the professional action is understood as a mediator "between subject and social structure". This does not mean that there is a new "form" of social services or the professional action central focus abandonment.

From the point of view of the theory of the profession, it is not just a question of a form of corrective action, but always also of the case-based reconstruction of (non)existing chances at realisation as well as the demand for equal participation in the material, cultural and political bases of life (Idem).

Local Social Intervention Network: competences delegation or responsibility disclaims?

The RLIS created in Portugal in September 2013 aiming the social sector entities action reinforcement by their proximity to the population, creating a "public or private entities organization model, of articulated and integrated intervention, with social action development responsibility", governed by contracting principles, rights culture and obligations, and proximity intervention⁴.

The RLIS initiative is triggered within a framework of external financial intervention in Portugal, during a period of strong austerity and reflux of social policies, in which the incumbent government has made significant cuts and restrictions on social rights, channeling part of the social expenditure for a Social Emergency Program.

Through the background analysis, the political options that underlie the RLIS public policy design, namely the social action competencies delegation in civil society institutions and the search for programs funding that, being necessary, were not responding to the Portuguese population growing needs (either by reducing the resources allocated⁵ or by increasing the benefits and social support access criteria restriction). It is also possible to understand that the extent of the initiative to reform the social action governance model among vulnerable populations could not be influenced by a strategy to mobilize resources from the European Social Fund whose access would only be possible with the organizations in actions to combat poverty and social exclusion direct involvement.

From the Government's program analysis, it can be said that the formulation highlights the purpose of creating a "Social Emergency Program" (PES) to achieve the objectives, namely to fight poverty, to focus on inclusion and social cohesion, family importance recognition, guaranteeing social models and their⁶ sustainability.

On the other hand, by the time of publication and entry into force of the Basic Law of the Social Economy (Law no. 30/2013, of May 8), policymakers stated that its main objective was to reinforce the shared logic, decentralized intervention and close to the citizens and based on shared responsibility. However, from the analysis of the mentioned diploma, it is verified that it regulates the relationship between the State and the social economy entities, only from the States obligations regarding the relationship with those entities perspective, and in this law, no obligations of these entities are established before the State, or even for society in general, or for the members, users, and beneficiaries of these particular entities.

⁴ Law (Despacho in Portuguese) no. 12154/2013 from 24th September

⁵ At the same time, there was a significant restructuring of public services, including social security and other ministerial departments, with non-renewal and termination of contracts with many social security officials, including social workers and other social professions.

⁶ The Government created the PAEF-Financial Assistance Program for Portugal, the PES, beginning in 2011. Combating Poverty and Strengthening Social Inclusion and Cohesion; the Social Economy; Family and Birth; and Promoting the Sustainability of Social Security are the central lines of this measure.

During the period under review, it was also approved the basic law of the social security system⁷ amendment. It should be noted that there are only changes in the articles 63 – a pensions Legal framework and 64 - Sustainability factor. This fact, in itself, reveals the limited weight that social action had in the Social Security System reform in Portugal. From the analysis, there is a Social Security responsibility transfer to municipalities concerning social action. In point 3 of Article 32 (Social Solidarity Private Institutions - IPSS) is pointed out that the State exercises supervisory and inspection powers over the IPSS in order to guarantee the effective fulfillment of legal and contractual obligations (resulting from cooperation agreements or protocols concluded with the State).

The Government associates the RLIS creation with the social sector entities action reinforcement by its proximity to the population, creating an "organization model, public or private entities articulated and integrated intervention with development of social action responsibility", governed by contracting, culture of rights and obligations and proximity intervention principles (Order no. 12154/2013 of September 24). It is clear the social action competences decentralizing intention, not only for the municipalities but also for the Non-profit Organizations, in a networking logic (governance), with the State as a partner and simultaneously with supervisory and inspector powers.

The diploma (Order no. 12154/2013, of September 24) refers to the Social Emergency Program and the Social Security System Basic Law, as well as the economic and social crisis analysed previously, to justify the RLIS creation.

As the previous arguments have pointed out, the strategic partnership in the social intervention field is paramount, aiming the effectiveness and efficiency increase of both resources and responses to the population needs.

RLIS is based on the principle of contractualisation (all stakeholders, citizens, families, public and private institutions are committed to the intervention which they are part of), the culture of rights and obligations (citizenship and compliance promotion); transversality (the policies integration, various sectors programs and measures and the articulation with the different intervention areas entities) and the proximity intervention logic (bringing services closer to citizens in response to their needs) (point 3, Order no. 12154/2013, of September 24).

It also presupposes "Social Innovation", that is, the new action mechanisms and different action strategies implementation adapted to the current social needs, as well as the territorial specificities.

Although created on 09/24/2013, RLIS was regulated only in 09/18/2014, where it is defined that, Non-profit Organizations and similar entities or public entities with which complementary services are contracted, can be adherent entities.

The RLIS is based on articulated and integrated intervention logic of entities responsible for the development of social action that seeks to foster a concerted action of the various organizations and entities involved in the pursuit of the public interest and promote the implementation of new mechanisms of action and different strategies of action in response to social needs. (Article 2, Order No. 11675/2014, of September 18).

⁷ Law no. 4/2007, of January 16 amended by Law no. 83-A / 2013, of December 30.

RLIS objectives are also presented in this diploma, however, after a year, some changes that care for analysis can be observed.

It should be noted that in the course of the legislative changes there is a RLIS objectives amplification, which is not without its revealing. While the first decree provided for vulnerable populations financial support, at the alterations time, the objective is amplified for "vulnerability situations social monitoring, in particular, through the programs local management set up for this purpose" and through the "necessary resources to face crisis and/or social emergency situations, as well as proven economic shortage" existence (Article 4 of Dispatch no. 11675/2014, of September 18). The field of collaborative work objectives increase, as well as an objective that reinforces the promotion of social innovation introduction should also be referred.

Alongside the RLIS objectives, the Social Assistance and Monitoring Service (SAAS) objectives were also defined.

a) Inform, advise and guide for social answers, services or social benefits appropriate to each situation; b) Support in social vulnerability situations; c) Prevent social poverty and social exclusion situations; d) Contribute to the individuals and families competences acquisition and/or strengthening, promoting their autonomy and strengthening family and social support networks; e) Ensure the social insertion path social follow-up; f) Mobilize community resources adequate for progressive personal, social and professional autonomy (Article 3).

In this regard, it should be noted that, despite the social action powers delegation in Social Economy Organizations, the State continues to provide the instruments and means for the SAAS organization and operation.

The RLIS management model is based on decentralization and contractualisation of services logic, in a proximity logic (supra-county, county, circumscribed to a parish or locality, depending on the territory characteristics), ensuring the subsidiarity of its implementation, attendance and monitoring (Article 6 of the RLIS Regulation).

The RLIS management model provides for three levels of intervention and responsibility, with the state being responsible for attendance and monitoring all levels of intervention (central, district and local). In fact, in the policies operationalization, the Local Social Security Service approval for the attribution of eventual benefits with the purpose of filling social emergency situations and of proven economic shortage, and also for the contractualisation within the intervention scope (Inclusion Social Agreement-AIS) is mandatory, although these aspects are not explicit in the legal regulation.

This regulation by public entities, in one hand, is an essential factor guaranteeing equity in compliance with cross-cutting rules and expenditures and results monitoring, on the other, can produce or amplify tensions already identified by Godinho and Henriques (2013) within the Social Network Program framework, between adherence to a top-down social policy planning structure, anchored in standardized instruments, and a bottom-up participatory logic; between flexibility and variable geometry in operating conditions and the organic and standardized organs status, instruments and resources.

The "Technical Manual for SAAS" was conceived by the ISS and distributed by all RLIS teams during compulsory training attendance on social intervention technical procedures and methodologies (provided by the ISS

District Centers) and defines a standard of care and follow-up service (SAAS) provided under the RLIS program.

Final Considerations


The RLIS, based on the Welfare Mix model, is based on shared responsibility between State, civil society, international agents, third sector and companies.

The analysis carried out highlight some questions about the RLIS policy, namely:

1. Will the option of transferring the state's social action responsibilities to the Social Economy Organizations in the crisis context be caused by the neoliberal intervention policies growth or by the need to obtain community funding for essential tasks that the State was unable to bear?
2. Is there a power transfer or is it still the State that protects social action? In spite of being understood as a partner, the State has the competence to monitor and supervise, in addition to the social intervention operationalization, there are RLIS teams technical procedures that depend on the approval of the ISS (District Center or Local Service).
3. Is the RLIS an innovative intervention response? To what extent is it possible to innovate, when the work procedures and methodologies are transmitted and linked by the ISS?
4. Is it not important for the State to carry out a continuous process of public interest evaluation, the provided services quality and the citizen-users rights observance? How can equity and universality of access to social action services be guaranteed?

It would be relevant to publicly present the results of the evaluation (actions of the Social Economy Organizations that provide public services inspection, under the cooperation and partnership agreements entered) carried out by the State, as a transparency and information access guarantor.

In a period such as we have experienced in recently in the atrophy of the welfare state European context, we have seen how the Keynesian model has left room for a concept of «regulating state» re-emergence, inspired by the Schumpeterian principle that markets are endowed with a «natural» capacity for self-regulation, and the State is primarily responsible for ensuring good competition conditions. This passage, in spite of its peculiarities in different countries, was translated into three fundamental traits: the state action decentralization to the local or transnational scales; greater focus on the labour market, in particular vocational training policies and lean production; the focus on «network governance», usually accompanied by privatization and subcontracting processes in various sectors and public services (Silva in Estanque, 2012: 16).

There was greater accountability of the Social Economy Organizations in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, with the social action functions attribution (previously States competence), with the monitoring and supervision of the ISS. While civil society is called upon to intervene in the fight against complex social problems with innovative, effective and efficient social responses, it is necessary to maintain intervention and procedures forms. There are, therefore, several aspects that may appear paradoxical and which need to be further reflected to determine the structuring axis of local development and network governance policies that are truly effective and innovative rather than palliative measures for the State structural difficulties. 

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