

SCARCE WAYS: PROCESSES OF SOCIAL PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION IN THE MINIMUM INCOME

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Abstract

Portugal established in 1996 the Guaranteed Minimum Income (Law N° 19-A/96), defined as an instrument of social policy with two components: 1) the financial provision to the poor and 2) a socio-professional insertion program for beneficiaries and their households. It is, therefore, fundamental to study and evaluate the impacts and structural constraints that this politics has caused, in the context of a weak Portuguese welfare state, seeking to understand the relationships between the objectives detailed in the law and actual practices in its application. We focus the analysis on beneficiaries, their characteristics and their ways of live, as well as in institutional practices and in their organizational models.

But this analysis also requires the study of the factors and processes of vulnerability that tend to perpetuate themselves and remain in the beneficiary populations and the analysis of the forms and models of institutional intervention. It is pertinent to consider whether the policies of integration have or not a unifying role. This will mean that the logic of integration can act as a leveling factor, standardizing practices and social representations as the effect of institutional functioning. Or, rather, the analysis of social practices, ideas and value systems of the beneficiaries and professional actors will distinguish conflicts and oppositions, giving rise to groups that manage the paradoxes of integration policies from different resources. Still, the weakening of the structures, the multiplicity of partners and specific initiatives can be important obstacles, as important as most people hardly know the bureaucratic and administrative channels.

This study is held in the empirical area of Vila Nova de Gaia, Porto, Portugal.

Key Words: *inclusion; social policy*

JEL Classification: I30

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This is the sub-heading

This paper is intended to be a contribution and a tool for critical discussion, analysis, planning and organization of public responses in combating the multiple dimensions of poverty and social exclusion.

This is more relevant as the current speeches from various sources, appear to be colonized by the explanations merely circumstantial and individualistic. No use relies on those arguments based on crises as explanatory factors; History shows that economic growth, unemployment and poverty are consistent realities at the same time and space. So discuss social policies and welfare state is to discuss the quality of democracy and citizenship.

This study is intended to be an instrument of understanding and a measure of multiple aspects of social life which can be returned to the discussion and public criticism. The study aims, in this line, to participate in the process which may include Sociology as a public service in a form of critical thinking. When it avoids Sociology, avoids the knowledge and the liberating potential that this knowledge can produce.

2. SOCIAL IMPACTS

2.1. Minimum income in Portugal

In 1996 Portugal was established in the Minimum Guaranteed Income (first on an experimental basis, and a year later generalized to the entire country), defined as an instrument of social policy with a cash benefit component and a component derived from the existence of socio-professional integration of an inclusion program. In 2003, this measure was reconfigured into RSI (Social Insertion Income), without there a major change to the legal and regulatory content.

Thus, our object of research is the study and evaluation of cyclical and structural impacts that this has caused, seeking to understand the relationships between objectives explicit in the formulation of effective measures and practices which are directed in their application, whether focusing on analysis on beneficiaries and their characteristics, either in institutional practices or in their organizational models.

In selecting the beneficiaries of RSI as the target population, we assume the operationalization of theoretical and heuristic potentialities of the concept of "assisted" by Georg Simmel. Here, the poor becomes a subject of sociological study, not just for what he does, but rather by what others make it from social action. Poverty becomes thus a sociological phenomenon unique: a group of individuals occupying a particular position within society. But this position is not determined by his fate and condition, but mainly because of other intervening in this situation.

The study aims to proceed to the comprehension of the factors and processes to increasing vulnerability that tend to perpetuate themselves in the recipient population, as well as the study of shapes and models of institutional intervention. It is very relevant to understand whether the policies of integration have a unifying role. That would mean that the logic of the insert can act as a leveling factor, by unifying the disparate spheres priori, first by the effect of institutional functioning. Or, the analysis of social practices, representations and value systems of the beneficiaries and institutional players will distinguish conflict and opposition, giving rise to subgroups that deals the paradoxes of integration policies from different resources and different effects as well.

The implementation of the minimum income meant a moment of potential reform of the social contract. Hence it becomes relevant, evidence of the relationship between the objectives pursued by the policies of minimum income and actual practices on the ground.

We assume, therefore, the multidimensionality of the explanatory framework, addressing the Social Practices of the actors, the ways of life, the solidarity networks, logic and Reproductive Procedure, the Territory (operationalizing the concept of territories of exclusion) and the institutional practices.

The immobilization procedures are defined here are specific dynamics that most holders of the RSI shows, features interdependent on each other and cumulative processes of social increasing vulnerability, strengthening weaknesses of individuals who increasingly scarce individuality.

This notion of immobilization is inspired in biology, referring to the immobilization process of the cells, which is the main reason for the atrophy of growth of a plant. Looking like it was born weak or less able, the plant is ultimately the product of a process of parasite removal of nutrients and incorporation of weakness (or inequalities) multiplied (François Dubet explains that in the scholar context).

2.2. The ways of the inclusion process

The analytical approaches are deployed on one hand, the order macro-sociological, which consists of the analysis of the institutional forms of social interventions at the population, and, secondly, the order of micro-sociological, which consists in analyzing the sense that people give to their life experiences, attitudes they adopt towards those who designates them as such and ways to adapt to different situations with which they face.

Thus, we assume three explanatory dimensions of exclusion processes. Firstly, the global social mechanisms (universal characteristics that favor processes of exclusion and the forms and structures to respond to these issues), secondly, the social mechanisms of local or regional characteristics that result from more specific and contextualized (more specific characteristics and context for inducing individual or group of mechanisms of exclusion, as well as the mechanisms for how local partners interact and activate effective policies for social inclusion) and, finally, the mechanisms resulting from individual characteristics or group (these mechanisms are apparently more tax aspects related to individual or group). Nevertheless, these mechanisms gain importance, as they are mobilized by the company and becoming key constraints for the psychosocial structure of individuals and groups.

In fact, in recent years we have been witnessing a series of neoliberal offensive to many areas of social policies. We saw recently a context of crisis of the welfare state together with a set of ideological positions, from neoliberal inspiration, which advocates of a smaller state intervention and an insert through the mechanisms of the market organization.

Thus, we can identify the assumptions guiding the investigation from the utterances that follow. Firstly, the beneficiaries of RSI (minimum income) build specific models guiding life. These models are characterized by trajectories of economic and social dependence, in that strand insertion is undervalued according to the aspect of mere pecuniary.

Secondly, the persistence of a misfit and a set of social immobility increase the likelihood of entry, maintenance and perpetuation of poverty and social exclusion.

Thirdly, with regard to collective action, forms of sociability of RSI recipients phenomena are characterized by progressive social isolation and relationship, the result of accumulation of social immobility, and stigma associated with them. Understanding these mechanisms, which are not countered by the generality of social policies, is critical to the design of social policies in general and RSI in particular do not just down the road and palliative care.

Fourth, the representations of RSI recipients embody biases that have come from what has been produced by political and scientific discourses. Themselves predispose tax devalued representations of subjects and mechanisms conducive to reproduction, since they promote the action against these same speeches, sometimes more, sometimes less stigmatizing, sometimes more, sometimes less inclusive.

Fifthly, the territorial contexts of the beneficiaries of RSI are marked by insecurity, by downplaying the relegation and because of the absence of intervention strategies (or the existence of intervention strategies wrong) by the institutional actors. The institutions and their patterns of action take a guiding role in understanding the mechanisms and social dynamics.

Sixth, access to "citizenship" and forms of political participation and association is difficult to RSI beneficiaries, due to a social structure and an institutional intervention that perpetuates the stigmatization and exclusion processes.

Finally, the objective and subjective perceptions of poverty are producing a low self-esteem in general RSI beneficiaries, by stigmatizing nature that incorporates this measure. This affects self-esteem, shame and stigmatize. Shame because the subject does not sit well with the social image they assume to have, and censures, because the individual does not feel comfortable with the image that "perceives" that society has of itself or, as E. Goffman states, it still be affected by the creation of identity by others.

They live where they were born, and work where they live. Thus, the horizons of opportunity are difficult, first because they were born in disqualified territories. Housing is in trouble and renting public is low. We found huge regional heterogeneity, based on poverty, the disqualification in the absence of equipment and the negative assessment about the living spaces.

Fraud in RSI is taken up and becomes functional: it is easier to risk of fraud than to break with the benefit of the RSI when there's a seasonal or occasional work, because of the delays and the processing of a new process are sufficiently discouraging.

Social representations of respondents are based on the value of education for their children as a tool to take off. Similarly, they assess very well the RSI, but do not exclude its size stigmatizing, especially when they are receiving recently (also see here is a structural effect of internalizing the benefits of the measure).

Respondents expressed vulnerable identities and a set of disincentives on their future, their prospects of leaving the situation they are in, a situation which assume as a condition more structural and permanent.

With regard to the territorial dynamics in rural areas, the beneficiaries receive less money and during less time than in urban areas. The factors of urban competitiveness and the ghetto are not negligible factors for the explanation.

Regarding the typology constructed, there are three types of RSI beneficiaries identified. On the one hand, the "accommodated beneficiaries", in which we discern two different situations: first, by an "accommodation by option", the result of a number of characteristics of discouragement, of laxity, the absence of a life project, but we also find "accommodated by default", a whole set of beneficiaries receiving passively the provision that no project of entering a program or a modification of the mechanisms of weakening his own life story, according to a set of situations, circumstances, life stories, which not only allow them to leave the provision. We refer, in the latter case, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, among others.

We find, secondly, a typology of beneficiaries that are called "blocked beneficiaries". In this group are individuals who, while looking ahead and trying conditions for effective social integration, are unable to mobilize them, because they are dependent on a working situation that results from their own household or the weakening of any household member. Here are grouped all individuals

(mostly women) who are unable to mobilize integration strategies because they are taking his time with the care of dependent family members (children, elderly, sick people, etc..) that prevents them improve their own living conditions. It is a type of beneficiaries that receive passively the provision and that can not raise an insertion strategy. They can not do it, not because they don't want it, not because I they feel they are not able, but because it temporarily can not get rid of a burden that prevents family strategies for employability.

Thirdly, we find a type of beneficiaries that are called "bothered beneficiaries"; they receive a transitional provision (or at least they think that such receipt is transient, short-lasting and punctually). This is a collection of individuals which are situated a short time ago in RSI. They are highly motivated individuals to a strategy of integration and that are available to respond to opportunities for socio-professional integration.

The results establish that the beneficiaries of the RSI experiencing a process of reconfiguration of their identities and specific models guiding of life, based on the characteristics of social structures and relational processes. These models are characterized by trajectories of economic dependency and social dependency, from a position in a state of "assisted" which carry with them, fundamentally an indelible mark, a label or a stigma, which results in a process of constructing the identities of beneficiaries with low social valuation and, simultaneously, with low individual self-esteem.

We identified the following factors:

<i>Somatic immobility</i>	Handicaps and disabilities resulting from acquired or innate socio-professional integration.
<i>Territorial immobility</i>	Resulting from characteristics of the residence and the territory.
<i>Qualifications immobility</i>	Resulting from diminished skills, unskilled professions, precarious contracts and low levels of training and wages.
<i>Relational immobility</i>	Resulting from mechanisms of social reproduction of the conditions of family life rising, marking the logic of intergenerational social reproduction.
<i>Power immobility</i>	Resulting from a removal of the networks of participation and power, with a low level of participation in networks of power and influence.
<i>Representations immobility</i>	Resulting from devalued identities, low self-esteem and negative representations of life and society.
<i>Institutional immobility</i>	Resulting from mechanisms from the creation and deepening of institutional dependencies, as well as the very dynamics self-reproducing institutions.
<i>Material immobility</i>	Resulting of weak financial conditions.

Again, rather than solving the problem, these security policies tend only to create the illusion of safety. The way to overcome this importance of security policies within the framework of social policies is to shift the social and economic structures, to strengthen the presence and importance of structural policies, preventive and integrative likely therefore to establish a break with the mechanisms of social reproduction processes inherent vulnerability.

The structural nature of social policies should be conducive to intervene in social factors increasing vulnerability, ie the set of factors which cumulatively, rhythmically, but irreversibly, tend to weaken the vulnerable conditions and become dependent on the subjects concerned. Speaking the amount of problems in a logic pro-active intervention can prevent a downstream logic in palliative or reactive.

Although it is an autonomous county, it seems that a contingent of people, problems and heterogeneity that would prevent this situation, before benefiting potential institutional articulation.

3. CONCLUSION

The building of a new social contract and a new generation of social policies based on a compromise between state, market and economy is taken as an instrument of service management and production of goods and services excluded from the normal functioning of the market and unattractive for the highly competitive market and with a high profit.

Furthermore, the Open Coordination promotes an open community of social policy with a common vocabulary and a legitimate project: to make Europe the most competitive knowledge society in the world. However, policy coordination does not mean treating all countries equally, administering the same "recipe" of measures. It means, instead, the application of social and economic circumstances and contextualized in order to balance the (conflicting and heterogeneous) European countries. The future of the European social model involves two levels of change: the reexperiencing (based on policy learning, transfer and testing alternatives and methods of intervention) and recalibration (refocusing the system of social protection in "new risks" cutting across life stages of individuals) that allow harmonizing the principles of the European social model with the needs of greater economic competitiveness.

And ending as ending the argument, and research is fundamental change in practices is urgent because it is difficult requiring the beneficiaries to understand and adopt policies as instruments of social (re) integration, where the institutional practices and the organizational logics still, in most cases, located at the level of charity and philanthropy, leaving beneficiaries and institutions some limited ways.

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