Janus in Governance: Interpellations Around an Educational Policy of Community Intervention in Portugal

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Abstract: This article intends to empirically document the ambiguity, even ambivalence, of governance practices[1], through the study of a public policy in Portugal, the Programme InovAction,

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[1] The title of the paper evokes Janus, the Roman god represented with two faces, here associated with the governance practices discussed.

that stimulates intervention projects in 'local state of emergency' territories. In this way, we search to contribute to the debate around the reform of the State and public policies, apprehended through metamorphoses in the coordination of collective action in education. Education, State and governance are viewed as social relationships and sites of social practices; governance is understood as a field in which policies, discourses and practices manifest themselves in neo-liberal hegemonic versions or according to contradictory achievements. The data we mobilize were built on documental analysis and on information obtained through semi-structured interviews (to national, regional and local projects Coordinators, technicians and young people). The unfolding discussion illuminates tensions and contradictions in governance practices of Programme InovAction: the strengthening of collective action may occur simultaneously with the construction of routes and alternative spaces of social exclusion; the reduction of the social responsibility of the school with regards to certain audiences challenges approaches to the construction of a public space of education; the privilege given to known interests has gone side by side with practices to broaden the local governance circle.
Key words: Portugal; educational governance; State; partnership; public policies; non-formal education

Janus en la gobernanza: Interpelaciones alrededor de una política educativa de la intervención comunitaria en Portugal

Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo documentar empíricamente la ambigüedad, hasta la ambivalencia, de las prácticas de gobernanza, a través del estudio de una política pública en Portugal, el Programa InnovAción, que promueve proyectos de intervención en territorios en "estado local de emergencia". De esta forma, procuramos contribuir al debate en torno a la reforma del Estado y de las políticas públicas, aprehendidas a través de metamorfosis en la coordinación de la acción colectiva en educación. La educación, el estado y la gobernanza son perspetivado como relaciones y terrenos de prácticas sociales; la gobernanza es entendida como un campo en que políticas, discursos y prácticas se manifiestan en versiones hegemónicas neoliberales o según concreciones contradictorias. Los datos que movilizamos fueron construidos a partir del análisis documental y de la información obtenida a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas (a Coordinadores nacionales, regionales y locales de proyectos, técnicos y jóvenes). La discusión visibiliza tensiones y contradicciones de prácticas de gobernanza en el ámbito del Programa InnovAción: el fortalecimiento de la acción colectiva organizada puede ocurrir paralelamente a la construcción de guiones y espacios alternativos de exclusión social; la reducción de la responsabilidad social de la institución escolar frente a ciertos públicos aparece concomitante con aproximaciones a la construcción de un espacio público de educación; el privilegio a los intereses reconocidos figura al lado de las prácticas de ampliación del círculo de la gobernanza local.
Palabras clave: Portugal; gobernanza educativa; Estado; parceria; políticas públicas; educación no formal

Janus na governação: Interpelações em torno de uma política educacional de intervenção comunitária em Portugal

Resumo: Este artigo pretende documentar empiricamente a ambiguidade, até a ambivalência, das práticas de governação, através do estudo de uma política pública em Portugal, o Programa InovAção, que estimula projetos de intervenção em territórios em "estado local de emergência". Desta forma, procuramos contribuir para o debate em torno da reforma do Estado e das políticas públicas, apreendidas através de metamorfoses na coordenação da ação coletiva em educação. A educação, o estado e a governação são perspetivados como relações e terrenos de práticas sociais; a governação é entendida como um campo em que políticas, discursos e práticas se manifestam em

versões hegemônicas neoliberais ou segundo concretizações contraditórias. Os dados que mobilizamos foram construídos a partir da análise documental e da informação obtida através de entrevistas semi-estruturadas (a Coordenadores nacionais, regionais e locais de projetos, técnicos e jovens). A discussão visibiliza tensões e contradições de práticas de governação no âmbito do Programa InovAção: o fortalecimento da ação coletiva organizada pode ocorrer paralelamente à construção de roteiros e espaços alternativos de exclusão social; a redução da responsabilidade social da instituição escolar face a certos públicos aparece concomitante com aproximações à construção de um espaço público de educação; o privilégio a interesses reconhecidos figura ao lado de práticas de alargamento do círculo da governação local.
Palavras-chave: Portugal; governação educacional; Estado; parceria; políticas públicas; educação não formal

Introduction

When one chooses to focus the analysis and reflection on the senses of community micro-intervention[2] operated through projects that involve European funding, as is the case of "Programme InovAction"[3] (PIA), one is inevitably placing the *locus* of discussion in the new logic of global governance and on the multiple senses of its reach for the field of public policies of education. This is due to the fact that that Programme, with the exclusion of its first generation (2001-2003), has been supported since 2004 by the European Social Fund through the "Human Potential Operational Programme (HPOP)" ["Programa Operacional Potencial Humano"[4] (POPH)] and, as was mentioned by the national coordinator of PIA [Programa InovAção], 'nowadays, we have two thirds of EU funds and one third of State budget.' (E13[5]).

Thus, among other aspects, we should bear in mind the tensions resulting from the ongoing political and economic changes and the *continuum* with which the global governance of the social question is designed. We have adopted the expression *global governance* to refer to a double meaning: on the one hand, it is about 'multi-scale governance', in the sense proposed by Dale (2005), (of 'functional and scale division' of the coordination of the processes of decision and action); on the other hand, it is about considering the logic or agenda (in a sense, close to that of 'hegemonic governance', global logic of governance of the social question).

This article discusses some of the dimensions inherent to the current change in educational governance through empirical, collected and constructed data based on the observations of concrete socio-educational intervention contexts. One research question we want to explore is: what aspects of the coordination of collective action and decision in community micro-intervention assigned by PIA appear to foster the resources and capacity of intervention towards the learning and school participation of children? And what aspects seem to reproduce inequalities involving institutional

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[2] This research was supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology under Grant PTDC/MHC/CED/3775/2014.

[3] This is a fictitious designation. Throughout the text, either the Programme InovAction (PIA), or the political and technical staff responsible for it, be it at national or local level, as well as the Projects or the subjects, are referred to with fictitious names and designations, in line with the option that was taken in the scope of the research, in order to safeguard people, institutions and contexts. The PIA will be briefly characterized further ahead.

[4] One of the priorities of the POPH is to 'overcome the structural deficit of qualifications of the Portuguese population, anchoring the secondary level as the minimal referential of qualification, for everyone' (see http://www.poph.qren.pt/).

[5] E13: this is the designation used to indicate Interview 13. Each time we refer to the lines/words of the interviewed subjects, the source of information will be indicated in this way.

processes? Our goal is to contribute to the debate around the state reform and the reform of the public policies, apprehended through metamorphoses in the coordination of the public and collective action in education (Casto, McGrath, Sipple & Todd, 2016); more specifically, we aim to empirically document the instability, ambiguity, and even ambivalence of the governance practices on the field. (cf. Seddon, Billet & Clemans, 2005; Sousa Santos, 2005).

The PIA develops institutional arrangements for the local governance (the coordination of collective action and decision) that allow questioning some limits and challenges about the dynamics of construction of the *public space of education* (Nóvoa, 2002) in the context of *implementation* of the local projects. Thus, the increase of the "social commitment" to education "towards the integration of all children", as well as the creation of contexts and practices of participation in decision making, can be observed side to side with a framework of public action that disconnects social problems from the structural and institutional relationships that originate and frame them. In this way the research seek to understand how a public policy seem to be a potential tool for organized collective action and participation with a priority focus on school failure and dropout in impoverished and disadvantaged communities and appears with a tone of particularistic and compensatory intervention, in those contexts of strong social and school exclusion.

The paper is divided into four main sections. To start with, we will provide an account of the methodological design used in the research, in order to obtain the data, as well as the way in which they were dealt with and worked out. Afterwards, we will briefly present the theoretical referential that shapes the view from which this paper problematizes, discussing and providing a critical argumentation of the extensive subject matter. We will then proceed to the presentation, analysis and discussion of empirical data dealt with so far. Lastly, we draw some conclusions on the emergence and the current realization of the governance logic, which is predominantly based on a matrix of a neoliberal nature (Barros, 2012), even though the field is still disputed by contradictory practices and projects, considering the impacts that this political phenomenon has on education.

Methodological Options of the Research

The educational research which frames the data presented and discussed here is of the qualitative type (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), adopting a posture of "knowledge mobilization" as alternative for the more usual *educationalese* (Fischman & Tefera, 2014), and employs the sociological method of field research (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998), thus favouring the use of inquiry by semi-structured interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In this paper, we have considered as a starting point information collected and analysed mainly during the most intensive stage of data gathering (between January and July, 2015), and focused on the case study, through: two individual interviews, conducted with people responsible for the national and regional coordination of the PIA; five individual interviews with two coordinators and three technicians of two local projects of the fifth edition (2013-2015) of the PIA, one located in the north and the other one in the south of Portugal; two collective interviews with young people involved in the activities of those same projects. We have chosen to interview different categories of participants involved in the PIA's main scales of governance and implementation. As the PIA had a national agenda and was centrally designed, it was important to hear the main responsible for the national coordination. This national coordinator assured that the regional coordinators disseminate the main inclusive dynamics intended by this central public policy; he stablished priorities in order to accommodate and negotiate changes depending of central government decisions. As he had a longtime past experience in working with socio-educational integration projects, it was particularly important to hear him about the PIA as a public policy concerned with the right to education of socio economically vulnerable communities.

We have selected a regional coordinator in order to understand governance perspectives and practices. The regional coordinator performed the mesoscale governance, so he transmitted to the national coordinator the regional successes and difficulties of the policy implementation. At the same time, he represented the national authority when interacting with the local actors and day to day realities of the community micro-projects. The regional coordinator is the responsible who directly gives support to the local teams questions and urgent needs.

The national agenda of the PIA was implemented by each of the community micro-projects approved, and this required that we searched for the testimonies of the professional teams who worked in the field. These teams, by means of their own local pluri-annual projects, intervened in the concrete dynamics of socio educational inclusion-exclusion, which is the main focus of the PIA. At this local level of governance, the coordinators of community projects managed to work the priorities, the ways of doing, and the local particularities to be taken into account. They also assured the cohesion of the team of technicians, who work directly with the programme beneficiaries. The majority of those technicians were women and had a degree on social or educational sciences. Their relevance for catching and keeping the permanence at school of the young people involved in the local projects was definitive.

As the young people involved was the *raison d'être* of the PIA, their testimonies were very important to understand if and in what degree they saw the changes and opportunities promoted by the PIA's local activities. Those beneficiaries frequently experienced school unsuccessful trajectories and cumulative unfavourable life conditions related to very low income and qualification levels of their families, unemployment or precarious and seasonal work of parents, ethnic minorities or migrant background, particularly from Lusophone countries of Africa.

The *nine interviews* were subjected to a structural content analysis, in which frequencies corresponding to specific topics were obtained, and in which the association between the identified topics was favoured. On the other hand, we used the discourse analysis suggested by Bacchi (2000) in the breakdown of the *External Evaluation Report PIA 2010-2012 [Relatório de Avaliação Externa do PIA 2010-2012]*, of the *2nd Interim Report of External Evaluation of the PIA*, in the study of the *legislation* drawn up in the creation and successive renovation of this Programme, while examining thirty three proposals of practices, and also in the scrutiny of the texts of the *Revista InovAção [InovAction Journal]*

The analysis took into account two work hypotheses: i) this socio-political innovation generates readings (and interrogations) that make visible its consistency with integral trends of the matrix of social neoliberal regulation (compensatory policies; a problem solving approach to social questions; the *localisation* of social problems); ii) this public policy contains signs and co-responds to aspirations and approaches to 'increase the social commitment with education, hosting and supporting initiatives by families, associations, local authorities or teachers, which develop in a framework of openness and integration of all the children' [and youths], opening up possibilities around a 'public space of education' (Nóvoa, 2002).

Theoretical Fundamentals for the Analysis of a Public Policy

In this study, education, State and *governance* are viewed as social relationships and processes, that is, as fields of social, conflicting and contradictory practices, in which political action and confrontations may take place. In that sense, we consider that the forms of *governance* that are currently observable: (i) ascertain the reconstitution and reorientation, and not the reduction, of the centrality of the action, role and power of the State; (ii) reorder the distribution of power between the supra and subnational scales and (iii) still relate to social movements and aspirations and to *bottom-up* reactions, with regards to widening democratic participation and transparency in the administration and government (Dale, 2005).

In this framework, the State creates additional room to intervene in a strategic and selective way, to inhibit or stimulate social innovation, either progressive or regressive, in the margins of the systems and cross-border with institutions. Thereby, the field of governance is presented as a conflicting and unbalanced construction that involves severe tensions, as far as the social redistribution and the recognition of difference are concerned (Sousa Santos, 2005), with policies, discourses and practices being manifested under hegemonic neo-liberal versions or having contradictory, fragmentary or ambivalent realizations.

The matrix of (hegemonic) neo-liberal governance is thus characterized by Hursh and Henderson as being 'promoted by the most powerful, and that can, therefore, control the public debate and present neo-liberalism, either as an inevitable evolution of capitalism, or as an apolitical response to economic and social matters' (2011, p. 171), in a process that silences typical concepts of critical social theory, such as the 'social changes, popular participation, social contract, social justice, power relations and social conflict' (Sousa Santos, 2005, p. 14). Sousa Santos (2005) identifies a counter-hegemonic (insurgent) governance, of a diverse nature, and that 'implies the articulation and coordination between a wide variety of social movements and of civil society organizations, with the purpose of combining strategies and tactics, of defining agendas, and still, of planning and carrying out collective actions' (2005, p. 22). And although it is about two poles of a *continuum*, in which values and principles to organize life in society are manipulated differently, the fact is that, in the first case, global governance takes place at the service of a social exclusion and socio-economic polarization project; in the second case, global governance occurs at the service of a social inclusion project, and of social redistribution of wealth.

The data discussion that follows explores the PIA case study: we discuss which interventions have been developed, why, with whom and with which results; we problematize guidelines and practices; we question the fabrication of the contours of the educational space (Seddon, 2014) through these interventions, stimulated by entities based in the community, in which the school assumes the role of a partner institution.

Analysis and Data Discussion: Centralities and Peripheries in Educational Intervention

A Competitive, Emergency, Particularistic Policy and a Case Study of Socio-educational Experimentation and Innovation?

From the outset, PIA was constituted as a temporary public policy intervention seeking to address certain situations/problem clusters, the so-called 'local states of emergency' (Robertson & Dale, 2001); to that extent, it can be viewed as a *compensatory* policy to address social situations that structures, institutions or universal public policies (the labour market, school, the economy…) have not dealt with satisfactorily. To this particularistic fundamental (that is, a policy with recipients and target-audiences which are marked by a set of specific socio-economic conditions) was added, from the Programme's second edition (2004-2006; cf. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2004), a dimension which would definitely mark its nature: the 'mobilization of civil society' criterion was added to the emergency parameter. In other words, the resources and the self-organizational capacity of the local contexts were established as conditions for public intervention in the scope of this Programme. In addition to the emergency dimension, which called for PIA's intervention in a given context, and the local resources, ability and mobilization condition[6], the filter 'competitive

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[6] We are referring to the filter-criterium, since the intervention is only carried out in contexts with the capacity and resources (institutions, actors, knowledge) to make a successful application.

application' for financing (involving European funds) was included for previously defined contingents of projects in each region. Therefore, we realize that PIA's design gears it to award 'excellence' (the *best* projects) in emergency intervention in the face of social exclusion, supporting those proposals that, from the point of view of the Programme's parameters, present a better performance. Hence, a favourable circumstance for the success of interventions has been created. In this regard, this can be the case when the State creates a tool to support the initiative and intervention capacity of communities and contexts in socio-economic and educational disadvantaged conditions, trying to reinforce local intervention resources. The fact that the approval rate corresponds to little more than one-third (35.6%) of the applicant projects[7] raises several questions, among which we register two. To what extent in this policy are there features which are likely to promote social 'experimentation' and 'innovation' practices on behalf of impoverished and disfavoured communities and subjects? Can this public policy be considered as a banner seeking to contribute to the legitimation of the economy, the market, the State and even the community, and to contain disruptive effects of social fractures resulting from the operation and the failures of those spheres and institutions? We will not provide an answer to these questions, but we will attempt to contribute to their discussion.

Between Meta-regulation and Micro-intervention – Alternative Routes in the Treatment of the Social Question

The ongoing study that supports our data aims at analysing practices that, in the domain of the public policies of education: (i) make visible the reconstitution of the forms and meaning of the centrality of the State and public authorities (like the EU); and (ii) accomplish the formation of diverse supra and subnational spaces, scales and actors that together build and define the sector's activities. With these dimensions under observation, and bearing in mind the complexity of reality, we discuss the centralities and the peripheries caused by the current educational governance, and its role in relocating school problems and redirecting dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion (Alexiadou, 2002; Buckingham et al., 2014; Souto-Otero, 2013; Tomlinson, 2015). We are interested in exploring the institutional arrangements coordinating PIA[8], between the public and private domains and the formal and non-formal spaces of education, for what it has brought to the reconstitution of educational action spaces, being able to relocate school problems and to innovate logics of community intervention. We explore this ideas also keeping in mind that "schools are institutions with a degree of agency and capacity at the local level (…) schools are both outward-looking and concerned with the future regarding the family and community support systems in which their work is embedded" (Casto et al., 2016, p. 7).

When examining the interviews, as well as data from observation and documental analysis, special attention was given to the declared and perceived meanings assigned to the mission, the objectives, general principles, and priorities, as well as the management of the tensions that derived from the alteration of the dynamics that this *evidence-based programme* brings to the matter of social redistribution. In the words of its previous national coordinator, PIA's mission is 'the responsibility of serving the common good, namely through the promotion of the social inclusion of children and

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[7] This fact is calculated from the minutes of the selection jury of the ongoing Projects (2016): 247 applications were submitted to the 88 financed projects.

[8] Bearing in mind what Sousa Santos had to say about this matter: "The real test to governance is, therefore, to know to what extent we can tackle, either the question of social redistribution, or the question of recognising difference (…) I do not consider that the matrix of governance generates any potential for a significant social redistribution. Governance is in better conditions to respond to the matter of recognizing difference than to answer the question of social redistribution." (Sousa Santos, 2005, p. 20).

youths from more vulnerable social contexts with a view to a fairer society, and with equal opportunities' (Silva, 2007, p. 3). This idea is sustained by the Secretary of State, who states:

> In the current social and economic context, PIA's mission in Portugal involves continuing and intensifying the work of integration, qualification and combating discrimination of the descendants of immigrants, young immigrants and ethnic groups, and of their families, with a view to achieving a better mobilization of their potential and competences, the reinforcement of social mobility, a better articulation with employment policy and the access to a common citizenship (Diogo, 2014, p. 8).

We are dealing with a reaffirmed mission, within the framework of PIA's successive renewals, and which was always based on two main goals: 'the equality of opportunities and the strengthening of social cohesion' (Legislative Order 2015). Since then, this aspect of continuity is highlighted in the framework of the current educational governance, as it reveals a mandate for a Programme with a temporal consistency that seems to go beyond the circumstantial rationale, and the interests of political cycles with which other sectors – such as, for example, adult education (Antunes & Guimarães, 2014; Barros, 2016) – have been governed in Portugal.

The concrete political framework of this agenda links the conception and execution of the educational micro-intervention projects (locally planned and submitted to PIA) to the seven general principles stated successively throughout several editions of the Programme, namely: i) strategic planning; ii) partnerships; iii) participation; iv) intercultural dialogue; v) mediation; vi) social innovation; vii) entrepreneurship. On the other hand, it links it to the current five areas of intervention, namely: i) school inclusion and non-formal education; ii) professional training and employability; iii) community involvement and citizenship; iv) digital inclusion; and v) entrepreneurship and empowerment. It is clear that the State takes on its decision-making role regarding the guidelines, areas of intervention and purposes of the action, explicitly legislating that

> The design and execution of the projects which the present Regulation refers to, must obey the following general principles: (…) c) Participation — perceiving the human potential as an end and a resource, the projects must guarantee the participation of young people, communities, and organizations in all stages of the project, promoting qualification and joint responsibility.[9]

Having said that, and taking into account the logics of community intervention raised by PIA between 2001 and 2016, we notice a progressive realignment that transitioned from a logic of intervention – above all, preventive of juvenile delinquency – to a logic of intervention which is particularly directed towards the promotion of social and school inclusion; in this framework, the valuation of non-formal education has been manifest as a key-context to implement activities, inside and outside school, which counteract school dropout and failure, thus intentionally reconstituting spaces of educational action.

Thereby, the interfaces of the institutional arrangements for coordination in PIA are structured within a model of governance (AAVV, 2014) which is considered mixed, insofar as,

> There is a strongly centralized component, at the same time that there is a dynamic of local consortia grounded in permanence and in a capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation logic. The 'quality assurance' determines the existence of these two poles of the same line of strategic direction (AAVV, 2014, p. 21).

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[9] *Programa InovAção*, Regulation, articles 2 and 5 (Legislative Order 2012).

Indeed, according to Dale (2005), a substantial aspect of the new matrix of today's educational governance is the way the coordination by the State has become widespread. In the case of PIA [10], jurisdiction and coordination are assigned to an Agency which is the equivalent to a General-Directorate, and, according to the latest external evaluation report available, a model of State social and socio-communitarian action has prevailed in IP, which possesses

> a dynamic of 'set regulation ' in the point of view of the theories of social regulation, which therefore always combines two facets: the high standardization with the heterogeneity of the projects and of the actors/consortia; the strong vertical integration of activity with the encouragement of local transversality and of local cooperative work; a clear command and control with development of collaborative local participation; prior and impersonal regulations with a close human relationship, valued and expressed through visits and meetings between project stakeholders; a possible opacity of the administrative machine with the constant search for transparency (AAVV, 2014, p. 21).

Therefore, the current logic of governance in PIA has reconstituted the forms and the meaning of the centrality of the State and public authorities, becoming apparent that the central power operates mainly according to coordination systems which are mostly based on the information collected from the IT platform, and that the local power operates above all according to the duties assumed with other community partners within the framework of local consortia. Certain expressions of the *managerial State* are still present, as was theorized and observed by several authors and studies, such as the control of the strategic decisions by the system's core, coupled with the appeal to the mobilization and participation of civil society in the execution of the objectives defined by the State. This development tends to be accompanied by the *retraction* of direct State intervention in areas such as social well-being, and by the movement of *dispersion* of competences that it had previously undertaken, by a myriad of entities, very often locally rooted; this enables the state's *expansion* within civil society, through regular monitoring, control, evaluation and auditing processes (cf. Antunes & Guimarães, 2014; Barros, 2013; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Newman & Clarke, 2012).

In fact, the formal establishment of a *Consortium Agreement* is mandatory as the basis of the institutional arrangement with which the projects of educational micro-intervention are operationalized. This *Consortium Agreement* should include at least four institutions, with the various regulations that have renewed the PIA making provision for bonuses for broader consortia. There are two main local coordination entities[11]: a *promoting institution*, which will coordinate the set of the financed activities within the scope of the project; the remaining institutions are known as the *partner institutions* and will cooperate in the execution of the project. Based on the interviews, we have realized that this institutional arrangement is recognized as legitimate and desirable to fulfil the purposes of the PIA through the projects, since it is believed that it allows for a better use of resources amidst the diversity of the regional and local contexts where they operate. However, despite the decentralization thus promoted, there remains a logic of centralized control, in that

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[10] The fifth edition of the PIA had three sources of funding: the Ministry of Education and Science (through the General Directorate of Education), the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Employment and Social Security (through the Social Security Institute), and EU funding (through the Human Potential Operational Programme). The 2015 Legislative Order, which governs the sixth edition of the PIA (2016-2018), states that "acknowledging its crucial importance, the EU funding programme, within the scope of *Portugal 2020*, has already provided the necessary framework for the PIA in accordance with its various funding instruments".
[11] It is also stipulated that one of the institutions of the consortium will have to manage the set of funded activities, organizing and updating the financial and accounting dossier of the project.

provisions are made beforehand to favour a specific, albeit broad, set of partners for funding. These include schools and school networks, public institutions (such as Town Halls and municipalities, among others) and private entities (profitable or non-profitable, like companies, associations and Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, among others). To use Sousa Santos's words (2005), this rationale is based on a pre-selection principle that confers participation legitimacy in the educational governance to only a fraction of civil society, that it designates as *liberal civil society*, and which nowadays has a prominent place in the relations constituted between the several agents of social power operating at the local level, through the State itself. On the other hand, it is no less significant that this institutional consortium arrangement often comprises partners that are 'entities which have been created within the 'InovAction' community as an outcome of projects, such as cultural and sports associations currently headed by young former participants" (AAVV, 2014, p. 86).

This deals with an aspect that, according to Dale's interpretation (2010), characterizes the present post- neoliberal globalization context, in which the education policies promote the fusion of regulation and emancipation, the shift from government to governance, and the reconstruction of the very idea of what is national.

With no explicit justification, the approved institutional arrangement creates a clear division of work between the public and private domains by expressly excluding "the institutions of public nature or the institutions in which central, regional or local public administration have some participation" from "managing the activities financed within the scope of the project"[12].

From another viewpoint, it is interesting to note, in this regard, that according to the two most recent External Evaluation Reports, 'cohesion, cooperation, and availability beyond what is required are pointed out by the majority of the projects as qualities that describe the consortia' (AAVV, 2013, p. 161), and 'actors are unanimous in recognizing that the Programme and the projects have a great impact on the community, largely due to the consortia' (AAVV, 2014, p. 86). That is to say, the consortia's role tends to be perceived as an indication of the politically promoted increase of a 'collectively participated and territorially rooted development', with a predominant ''networking' philosophy', which is truly anchored in a collaborative culture' (AAVV, 2014, p. 29). These institutional arrangements are designed to maximize community micro-intervention and to reconstruct spaces of educational action, involving "boundary crossing" effort between non-school and school partners (Vesterinen et al., 2017). In this way, the positive aspects pointed out are the effective organization of the partners whose collaboration involves provision of resources (transportation, facilities, technicians, materials, etc.), and of those who are more geared towards interaction and exchange of interests through joint work, be it to carry out activities, actions, workshops, among others, or to flag cases to be followed within the scope of the project. In other words, there has been a notorious valuation of the consortium's role, mostly for its commitment to solving, as a partnership, the concrete problems that may be counteracting, at any given moment, the implementation of the approved and funded projects, given that, according to the institutional heads interviewed, it is an asset that helps improving the life contexts of the participants, either as direct recipients or indirect beneficiaries.

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[12] Before the drafting of this paper, it wasn't possible to clarify if this impossibility derives from the legal and normative framework of the EU for the structural funds, or if it is an option of the Portuguese government. This lack of information shows by itself the multi-scalar governance condition of the Programme, previously mentioned. Not allowing public entities to have a management role entails, among other things, that they are unable to receive and execute the funding of the project or recruit human resources and services. (cf. *Regulation of the Program InovAction*, article 7 (Legislative Order 2012).

However, we question the long-term political and pedagogical reach of this *problem solving* approach, due to the difficulties of maintaining and sustaining the rationale underlying the autonomous individual and community management required by educational intervention of an emancipatory nature. Besides entailing a technically capable educational intervention, it also requires an educational intervention, which is socio-politically significant.

 In other words, PIA's strategy, in terms of governance, can be perceived as successful as it has maintained the regulatory rationale of the *programme-contracts*, which has avowedly been the rationale enabling its validation by the successive central governments, facilitating a continued intervention within the framework of the 'urban housing districts of segregated and selective concentration of poverty, ethnic minorities, low schooling and social exclusion' (AAVV, 2014, p. 108).

Hence, when conjoining the logic of emancipation with the logic of regulation in educational micro-intervention, we can observe the growing emergence of institutions and target audiences, in the intervened contexts, that are not so much engaged in questioning the causes that generate their social condition of excluded people, but that are very much able to operationalize and positively respond to 'pre-defined lines of action, with models, deadlines and pre-determined monitoring modes and evaluation' (AAVV, 2014, p. 20).

In this regard, the path pursued so far in the analysis allows us to understand that, in the institutional constellation created by the consortia agreements involving entities that 'are inside', the answers constructed by these privileged agents are successful in circumventing the reinforcement of State-conducted social and educational policies, in which, for example, to intervene in school inclusion and non-formal education is seen as strategic, because 'premature school dropout costs are tremendous (…) these are lifelong costs which imply a loss of productivity for the economy' (Bento, 2013, p. 6[13]).

We wonder whether one of the political meanings produced from the outside, in these new relationships developed at the local level, will be the reduction of the school's social responsibility. If that is to be the case, one of the social consequences deriving from it, and as a result of promoting the fusion of regulation and emancipation, may, over time, be a new socially legitimized form of construction of alternative routes for social exclusion spaces, arising from this alternative form of educational action. Bearing this in mind, and taking into account that these partners and promoters have approached their involvement in education from a *problem solving* viewpoint, we should reflect on the *appeasing* role of educational micro-intervention in contexts where there is strong social and school[14] exclusion, at a moment when,

> there are nowadays 936 civil society partners that have come together in local projects supported by the PIA, among which it is worth mentioning the 164 Schools and School Networks mobilized. It is in that first protection barrier that the communities have

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[13] National Head of the PIA.

[14] The global indicators of the Activity Report of the PIA, from 2014 display a 74% school success rate of the participants in all the projects and the last external report corroborates this scenario of success, emphasising that we can still verify 'high impacts at the level of education and training, mainly as regards the improvements of academic success, decrease of school absenteeism, reduction or inexistence of school dropout and growing appreciation and awareness of the importance of school' (AAVV, 2014, p. 31). On the other hand, in the same Report, a total of 1955 school re-integrations is displayed, for 2013-14, given as a positive fact, 'although there are still a few difficulties in the redirection toward alternative solutions, like PIEF [Programa Integrado de Educação e Formação – Integrated Program of Education and Training] and double certification courses', admitting that the new CQEP [Centers for Qualification and Professional Learning] have created new expectation in this field' (PIA, 2014, p. 37). The recent Decree nr. 232/2016, has transformed these centers into 'Centros Qualifica'.

organized themselves, drastically reducing the number of those who, by dropping out prematurely, would later increase levels of exclusion and delinquency (Bento, 2013, p. 6).

Taking into account that in the scope of 2020 Strategy[15], 'the established goal for Portugal is the reduction of the school premature dropout rate, set at 10%' (Cabral, 2014, p. 10-11), the dynamics created by PIA in order to constitute relations and intersections between the public domain (over-represented and prevented from holding project management responsibilities), and the private domain (less significant and able to assume a wider range of responsibilities), as well as between formal and non-formal spaces of education, acquire a new meaning in terms of governance, with a goal and deadline defined at a pluri-scalar level. It is also revealing that PIA is

> recognized internationally as one of the most effective and efficient policies in the promotion of the social inclusion of children and young people at risk (…) this result and cost assessment represents a good practice in terms of public policy, and should be promoted for greater dissemination, even within the framework of the programmes and initiatives supported by the structural funds, where the evaluation practices have been more common (Dias, 2013, p. 11).

This is, *per se,* a successful aspect inherent to the meta-regulation of educational governance in a context of strong Europeanization but which, nonetheless, raises several questions with regards to the new tensions it creates, for example, in the response to the issue of social distribution, or in the field of the old rationales of construction of legitimacy in the democratic political decision.

Localisation and Public Space of Education: Power and Decision Making

As was mentioned before, since PIA constitutes a policy based on a competitive and selective application, supporting the 'elite' of the projects that propose to act in contexts of exclusion, it is understandable that certain conditions maximize, from the outset, the success of the interventions. Among those conditions appears, as previously mentioned, the local governance of the project (the coordination of action and decision), in particular two of the components that constitute the object of our study: the constitution of a consortium associated with a formal agreement and the involvement of the beneficiaries, children and young people, in all the stages of the project, namely through the Youth Assembly. These two components of local governance raise some questions that allow for the exploration of the political meaning of governance: what is the role of the State? What is the role of the excluded: source of power or object of intervention?

The relevance of the local dimension of governance in public policies has been discussed as the expression of the distribution of power, namely when it involves the organizational figure of social partnerships, taking into account that these constitute disputed fields, processes and practices with ambivalent meanings, susceptible to typification, either as 'community movements that operate through the shaping of local horizontal networks', or as 'political tools designed to intervene in, and affirm, vertical central and local relations' (Seddon, Billet & Clemans, 2005, p. 567). In that sense, the institutional arrangements of coordination of the local collective action may be problematized as platforms of 'community mobilization or instruments of neoliberal governance that intensify inclusion-exclusion' (Seddon et al, 2005, p. 568). Insularity, localisation (Correia & Caramelo, 2003) and individualisation of social problems, disconnected from the structural and institutional relationships that originate and frame them, identify *local states of emergency* attributed to communities and subjects (Robertson & Dale, 2001). That constitutes a political rationality that is frequently

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[15] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_pt.htm.

institutionalized through public policies that actualize governance practices inscribed in the socio-political matrix of neoliberal regulation. On the other hand, the local institutional arrangements of governance may, in certain cases, have the material conditions to create scenarios of decision and other forms of action coordination liable to challenge practices, to construct learnings and to explore new answers; frequently, these dynamics and processes are precarious, idiosyncratic and contradictory (Sousa Santos, 2005).

By analysing what represents and characterizes PIA's operational model as a public policy geared towards socio-educational inclusion, at least two spheres and interfaces of its coordination institutional arrangement stand out, when the model is viewed from the focus point that inquires about the dynamics of construction of the *public space of education* (Nóvoa, 2002).Thus, in the first place, one can observe that its concrete governance matrix, while still falling within the contemporary scope of pluri-scalar or multi-level governance (Dale, 2005) that characterizes current global governance of the social question in general has, nonetheless, features which are not in tune with this area's discursive mainstream. This last one has tended to express the apriorisms of a *globally structured agenda* (Dale, 2001), where problem solving, the exclusive participation of stakeholders, the imposed self-regulation, the win-win games and the option for compensatory policies set and dictate the pace of the action (Sousa Santos, 2005).

Although, as we saw in the previous section, these guidelines and practices are not absent from the configuration of PIA as a public policy, it is also possible to see options of coordination of the local collective action susceptible of generating frameworks of action and empowering practices to influence everyday's life and contexts. To quote the national coordination of the Programme:

> within the framework of the PIA we work in the most vulnerable communities with entities which are often themselves very small, like small local immigrant associations and this often requires them to make   a great management effort. But I would say that this had led us to progress slowly towards this idea of consortia, therefore, towards the idea of not leaving those entities on their own, but so that they would also have very active background support, a great set of community partners that, deep down, also help them to empower themselves. (National Coordinator of the PIA, E13).

In this regard, it is interesting to ascertain that in PIA's operational model there are rationales of democratic management that seem to indicate a continued effort to promote, also amongst the designated direct public, the apprehension of democracy through the introduction of practices of democratic decision, though limited to the context of *implementation* of the local projects. Thus, what stands out, within the scope of socio-educational micro-intervention, is the importance that PIA assigns to the assumption that 'the competence to make conscious choices in complex and adverse contexts, or the competence to plan, implement and assess (…), can only be developed in the intersection between cognitive, technical and behavioural development' (Bento, 2014, p. 84). This means that, among other objectives, what prevails, both in the centrally produced discourses, and in the perceptions which are peripherally manifested, is the valuation of the learning of civic participation facilitated through the construction of institutional arrangements favourable to its continued practice. This mission is, in fact, present, namely: (a) in the type of logic inherent to the *Consortium Agreement* that sets out the features of the project from the outset and (b) in the *Youth Assembly*.

There is also, on the other hand, the highlighting of collaborative work logics instigated by the type of partnerships gradually constituted through the Consortium Agreement, starting at PIA's application stage, which despite embodying the typical operation of a matrix of hegemonic governance created to regulate the social sphere, nevertheless seems to also be perceived as a mechanism involving power relations and their possible realignment:

> There is what we call a Consortium Agreement (…) which is a document that has legal value. Therefore, it is a contract (…) the entities are held co-responsible for its execution. We like this model in which there isn't a single entity that leads, and others that just follow, they are all at the same level, even if they have different responsibilities. In that Consortium Agreement the responsibilities of each entity are set out , (…) that is power, and it is very often the distribution of power among the entities, and it has worked out well (National Coordinator of the PIA, E13).
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> The goal of the PIA is to make the partners work for the project as well, that is, to have this social responsibility, because at the end of this project the partners are supposed to take the project and continue working with it (…) obviously, this federated futsal team has already been suggested to the partners Council, since it was one of the solutions proposed by the kids at the Youth Assembly. Thus, I think it is exactly this, I think that…this is what is good about the PIA, that's what I believe in, it's the proximity with regards to everything, to the teams, the partners, the young people, the families (Coordinator, Sarande project, E15).

As prescribed by PIA's national coordination, it is about translating principles and values into practices, given that

> for example, the reports that the staff send us every six months have to be validated by what we call a Youth Assembly (National Coordinator of the PIA, E13).
>
> Every six months I have to get together with the Youth Assembly and with the Consortium, check what activities went well and what went wrong in order to see if any of them needs to be replaced, assess if the periodicity was sufficient or if it must be altered, check if it is working well on Mondays, or if Tuesdays is better, therefore every six months it has to be renewed, even formally (Coordinator, Sarande project, E15)

Effectively, the testimonies of the young people interviewed in this study point towards a rationale of democratic deliberation through collegial bodies as is suggested by the following statement:

> It is where we have a debate with young people, the name says it all: Youth Assembly! *There you go*… the activities you can do, the ones you can't do because, you see, there are lots of activities that we would like to do … but you need to have funds, you need a lot of things, it's not only just chitchat, like 'let's do this…let's do that' … you need a majority, because we're not going to do something for only two people and another one for another two people. No!! There has to be a group, or it has to be discussed, hence the Assembly! And that girl is the president (Youth of the Cirandarte projet, E22).

If we accept the argument which states that 'Practices of organising mediate the character of contexts at a local level, shaping the way agency is structured, the way opportunity and constraint are experienced' (Seddon et al., 2005, p. 574), we can wonder about the political meaning of the governance arrangements evoked, questioning, in line with Sousa Santos (2005), what is the role of the State and as well as that of the excluded (subjects and communities involved in the projects). If we consider the possibility of the latter coming together, in certain circumstances, as sources of power by, for example, participating in the decisions that influence their life contexts, the described coordination arrangement can foster practices of counter-hegemonic governance.

The fact that, in PIA's case, alternative interfaces to the hegemonic logic of intervention in the social question (Sousa Santos, 2005) can be observed, may have to do with the valuation of the experience acquired in contexts of educational and socio-communitarian intervention of the people involved, who gradually constitute the human network of the national and subnational coordination of this Programme. Herein operates not only the internationally fostered public discourse of partnerships and intervention justified by the need for compensation and rehabilitation, but also the discourse of power relations and social justice. Nowadays, what appears to be hegemonic is the fluent and influential lexicon that emerges from international political instances and their respective *think thanks* and spreads through the mechanisms and devices of global governance (Dale & Robertson, 2009). We can consider, for example, the HPOP (Human Potential Operational Programme) via NSRF[16] (that funds the PIA), as a vehicle of that discourse that persuades, as never before, the social actors to participate in the public sphere. However, this is encouraged according to pre-established frameworks and functional with the capitalist mode of production that opts for social dualization (Montaño, 2012). So, it is interesting to find a complex reorganization of centralities and peripheries, as well as principles and values, in PIA's operational model. Effectively, there is the emphasis of the rationales of inclusion and participation in PIA's coordination by actors with a vast experience in the field (constituted locally), as is certified by this statement,

> Even because we are people who have done fieldwork … we know that the field is not reflected in the diagnosis that we offered in the application, right?... reality is much more complex, it is changeable (…) from our part there is even sensitivity, frequently, to review the project, to go after new problems, new opportunities, and that is achieved, mainly with a close monitoring of the projects. That is a distinctive mark of the Programme (National Coordinator of the PIA, E13).

Likewise, the involvement of a wide range of actors in the governance of the project, through the Consortium Agreement, suggests the possibility that certain dynamics help 'increase social commitment' to education with a view to the 'integration of all children', opening up possibilities around a 'public space of education' (Nóvoa, 2002).

> We have a good relationship with all of them, otherwise they wouldn't be our partners, would they? But they intervene more in their own functions, each one intervenes the way it can, right? That is why we can also attend the Consortium meetings, (…) because from what I know, whenever we need a certain entity or feel that they will better suit a certain need, we know they will be there (Member of staff , Sarande Project, E16).

The statements we obtained empirically describe some of these dynamics and features, which may lead one to think that this socio-political innovation renders visible the tensions and contradictions towards the integrating trends of the socio-political matrix of neoliberal social regulation (compensatory policies; problem solving; localisation).

Accordingly, PIA's particularistic logic, emergency and selectivity character, its temporary nature, among other characteristics, situate it as a public policy in line with the hegemonic orientation of the neoliberal governance. On the other hand, certain dimensions of the coordination of local collective action that give rise to 'extended social commitments', as well as to contexts and practices of participation in decision making, challenge an obvious conclusion to that extent. This 'new form of responsibilisation' of the individual and collective local actors, which is not necessarily matched by the means to face up to the added responsibilities, frequently yields very limited

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[16] National Strategic Reference Framework.

effective results in the overcoming of the problems addressed by local action (Souto-Otero, 2013, pp. 23-24). The questions rose about such institutional practices being a contradictory and precarious approximation to a public space of education in tension with neoliberal governance are accompanied by interrogations about other dimensions of intervention. For instance, it is relevant to ask to what extent are constructed socio-educational practices likely to challenge social relationships and processes that, within the scope of powerful institutions like school and the labour market, tend to exclude the populations involved.

Final Remarks: The Janus Face of Governance?

Seeking to understand the area of educational governance, we examine a public Programme that, in Portugal, stimulates projects of community micro-intervention in territories which are in a 'local state of emergency'. We bear in mind the hegemony of the neoliberal social regulation matrix, as well as the understanding of governance as a complex network of social projects and relationships, and a troubled field of contradictory practices. On a first approach, we suggest that, being an emergency Programme, particularistic and compensatory, selective and competitive, PIA still appears to be a potential tool for strengthening and boosting the endogenous resources of organized collective action and participation in impoverished and disadvantaged communities.

On the other hand, in PIA's governance arrangement, there are other significant elements of the reform of the *managerial State* that lie in the reconstruction of the centrality of the national state, in Portugal as in other states: (i) taking strategic decisions about the guiding principles of local intervention (e.g. the participation of the target subjects since the diagnosis and the construction of the proposal, the partnership with local entities), the ends and priorities, the scopes and the instruments of action, the financing parameters; (ii) the continuous monitoring through IT platforms, for example, the frequent measurement and evaluation of the intervention.

We may still observe, in consortia responsible for local intervention, the inclusion of entities generated in the field of action (e.g. youth associations), as well as the Youth Assembly, in the decision-making and local governance of the project; either practice can configure the *widening of the circle of local governance* and the constitution of subjects excluded as a source of power (Sousa Santos, 2005). At the same time, the option of excluding public entities from the management of local projects enables governance to be confined to favoured interests and actors ('civil society intimate with the State', according to Sousa Santos, 1990), as component of the matrix of neoliberal social regulation.

We suggest that, as we tried to document, the confluence of the logic of emancipation with the logic of regulation fosters the emergence of situations and *target-audiences*, in the intervened contexts, that are not significantly engaged in questioning the causes that generate their exclusion. We also question whether one of the implications of the adopted governance entails, not only the reduction of the social responsibility of the school towards certain audiences, but also the construction of alternative routes and spaces of social exclusion arising from this form of alternative educational action. The increase of the "social commitment" to education "towards the integration of all children", opening up possibilities of construction of a *public space of education* (Nóvoa, 2002), may constitute a "useful resource" for the development of the policy if it alters the "policy outcomes", as well as the "policy process" (Souto-Otero, 2013, p. 31). In this respect, it is important to reflect upon the *appeasing* role of educational micro-intervention from a *problem solving* standpoint, in contexts of strong social and school exclusion.

From a different complementary viewpoint, PIA provides intervention arising from the community, which is strongly based on non-formal education and seeks to boost the construction of broader social commitments with a priority focus on school failure and dropout; in that sense, PIA

is expressly geared to play a role in the fabrication of the contours of the educational space (Seddon, 2014), shifting centralities and peripheries: the (local) school obtains the status of partner in the local micro-intervention and maintains institutional prerogatives of distribution of life opportunities.

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