

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR INTERCULTURAL PARTICIPATION

ESTRATEGIAS COMUNITARIAS PARA LA PARTICIPACIÓN INTERCULTURAL

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Abstract

Faced with the demands of globalization Social Work has a key role in promoting community development. The relationship between Social Work and Human Rights focuses on values and principles essential to the integration of any person regardless of their social, economic, and cultural context. Through a study of social work praxis in an intercultural community context with immigrants, secondary statistical data were analysed, a semi-structured interview was applied to social workers and a categorical content analysis was chosen to treat the data. The results allowed us to realize that social workers appeal to an ethical and ontological matrix in relation to individuals, families, groups and communities and that community development intervention in the field of social policies implies participation strategies in favour of citizenship and Human Rights.

Resumen

Frente a las demandas de la globalización, el Trabajo Social tiene un papel clave en la promoción del desarrollo comunitario. La relación entre Trabajo Social y Derechos Humanos se centra en valores y principios esenciales para la integración de cualquier persona, independientemente de su contexto social, económico y cultural. Mediante un estudio de la praxis del trabajo social en el contexto de la comunidad intercultural con inmigrantes, se analizaron datos estadísticos secundarios, se aplicó una entrevista semiestructurada a los trabajadores sociales y se eligió un análisis de contenido categórico para tratar los datos. Los resultados nos permitieron darnos cuenta de que los trabajadores sociales apelan a una matriz ética y ontológica en relación con los individuos, las familias, los grupos y las comunidades, y que la intervención del desarrollo comunitario en el campo de las políticas sociales implica estrategias de participación a favor de la ciudadanía y la efectividad de los Derechos Humanos.

KW: Social work; community development; participation; citizenship; social intervention.

PC: Trabajo social; desarrollo comunitario; participación; ciudadanía; intervención social.

Introduction

Contemporary social problems increasingly lead us to a focus on their study and intervention, focusing on strategies of early action and a challenge to the elaboration and operationalization of an integrative intervention. "Social workers are challenged every day to consider the global and international aspects of their practice" (Mama, 2013, p.81), which means that social workers must be prepared in their practice for the global phenomena.

In Social Work intervention with communities, especially those that integrate immigrants, the forms of participation arise through an intercultural dialogue and the strategies of participation and motivation developed with the individuals who coexist in the same space (Furman, Negi & Cisneros-Howard, 2008).

The enrichment of ties and interpersonal relations favour the routes toward interculturality and the satisfaction of the population's needs. Bradshaw (as cited in Brown, 2006) suggests that the concept of social need is intertwined with the action of social services and the design of social policies through imposed, felt, expressed and comparative needs.

This study aimed to identify strategies in the community intervention process with an immigrant population needing to recognize the demands and complexity of Social Work action in community development, recognizing the constant social transformations, risks and uncertainties (Beck, 1992), problems and needs that this population is subject to. Considering the importance of community development, the actors involved in the process and how they relate to each other led us to our interest in analysing how the various elements integrate community development condition or promote the design and operationalization in practice.

The requirement of respect for the diversity of cultures and the uniqueness of the individuals composing them is a crucial problem for ethical and political reflection. The relationship between multiculturalism and difference, which determines otherness, in addition to highlighting the proposal of Ricoeur (1967) based on the principle of tolerance and its connection with other principles such as justice, responsibility and solidarity that, according to the author's interpretation, is more fruitful than friendship (Rocha, 2009, p.69).

Emphasis is placed on the importance of ethical and political action to build a more peaceful picture, develop more balanced relations between individuals from different cultures immersed in a globalized reality, precluding the use of force and coercion, seeking to expand the horizons of tolerance, justice and respect. Considering that cultural diversity is

also a human right, its realization goes beyond the premises exclusively linked to cultural rights and merges with social, economic, political, and civil rights, as shown by the European conventions and treaties.

Social transformations are felt both in those who arrive and those who were already settled. While the immigrant faces a series of new challenges that change his daily reality, the host society also manages the presence of new elements (Galvín y Franco, 1996).

In this sense, the development of this theme was continued by reflecting on the objectives and results of the intervention strategies, highlighting as the main focus the commitment for social cohesion and integration through a systematization of participation as a central concept, common to the narratives of all the interviewees, which would allow the identification of the main characteristics for a shared intervention that contemplates the maximization of the resources of the community itself and its Social Capital (Duque, 2013).

Social capital consists of a set of values, norms and relations shared by particular groups or communities, through which people acquire and produce forms of development and social well-being (Durstun, 2000). This concept manifests social interaction as a resource for forms of communication and community participation between networks since the acquisition of social capital is not individual, but collective, transposing in the community its form of discussion and application of knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, or actions (Glaeser, Laibson & Sacerdote, 2002; Pastor Seller, 2004). When analysing the practice of social workers in a community context we consider that each neighbourhood, municipality, or institution has a level of social capital acquired by the very formation of their social identity.

Immigration constitutes a field for Social Work that allows the analysis and debate of theoretical-methodological, ethical-political and technical-operative issues fundamental to community practices. In this area, community intervention is based on a connection between theories, including complex networks, communication and social roles, with the aim of involving the entire community in the construction of a social and human development project (Mouro, 2014). Thus, the intervention of Social Work based on a community development approach is a strong contribution both in a more local and territorial domain, as well as for social and structural change (Forde & Lynch, 2015).

Portugal has a strong history in the field of migration and according the Organização Internacional para as Migrações (OIM) (2010) adopts a set of policies and measures that aim for the integration of immigrants and promote mechanisms for their reception and monitoring. In 2015, the Portuguese Government presented the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

for Migration as a public policy instrument for a more comprehensive migration strategy that encompasses migrants, refugees, and new Portuguese citizens, aiming to adapt the migration and multilevel integration policies to the most recent ones and migratory needs and realities. These populations need to be included and integrated, to live in communities and it is not only necessary to accompany them but also to integrate them to the native population. In this context social work can and should be an asset.

1. Methodological procedures

The question of choosing the methodology to be used in social research is a fundamental aspect in the practice of research and the construction of knowledge. However, not all methods apply, nor in the same way, to the reality that one wants to know; nor at his choice is it indifferent to the representation of the society of which it is part.

In this study we chose to collect secondary statistical data from Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE), European Statistical Office (EUROSTAT) and from Serviços de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras statistical portal (SEFSTAT) that allowed the characterization of immigration in Portugal, comprehending the current migratory trends and were the basis for choosing to interview social workers that intervene with immigrant communities. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, reinforcing the sample selection criteria for the interviews.

Thus, we opted for a qualitative methodology, which is part of the interpretative paradigm that considers the interrelations between facts and values, the historical, social and cultural dimensions of the different contexts, and the plurality and variability of the world view in a comprehensive context, and an inter-subjective perspective. According to Sierra Bravo (1988), qualitative studies are concerned with describing processes and to reflect on the events, emphasizing the specificity of a phenomenon in terms of their origins and reason for being.

Within this scope, it should be noted that this study is considered descriptive and exploratory. According to the perspective defended by Visauta (1989), exploratory research has as main its characteristic a provisional character, that is to say, to assume itself as a first approximation to the phenomenon that one wants to approach in more depth. We chose an exploratory study, starting from the fact allows the observation, and, from there, to be able to understand the phenomenon, providing a frame of reference, properly reflected and problematized, and supported by empirical evidence.

We chose the district of Lisbon to conduct the interviews because this is where most immigrants live in Portugal, focusing on the analysis of the intervention of the Social Work in Portugal with this population group. Collection of data was made through semi-structured interviews with five social workers who intervene in a community context in public and non-profit organizations in Lisbon. The sample was drawn from a universe of local institutions in the Lisbon district, with social workers intervening directly with communities with immigrants who stood out with good community intervention practices. The semi-structured interview allowed the social workers to orient their attention and responses with a focus on social intervention strategies practiced in the daily life, following the pre-defined categories and dimensions of analysis (Flick, 2005).

The collected data were processed and systematized through categorical content analysis. This is the type of content analysis most used and works by dividing information into categories (according to the following points) and according to a certain logic (Clemente-Díaz, 1992). The text of the interviews was cut into registration units, the paragraphs of each interview were summarized and categorized. These first categories were grouped according to related themes. Through this inductive or inferential process, we seek not only to understand the meaning of the interviewees' narrative, but another meaning or message through or next to the first message (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Analysis, reflection and interpretation of results was then carried out. The treatment of results, inference and interpretation, consisted in capturing the manifest and latent contents contained in all the material collected.

2. Current immigration trends in Portugal

The immigration wave that marked the last decades of the twentieth century made Portugal a destination for immigrants looking for new perspectives of life. According to Martins (2015), the Revolution of 25 April 1974 changed the political, economic and social structure of the country with the consequent independence of the so-called Portuguese-speaking Countries (PALOP). There were profound transformations on migratory characterization in Portugal, leading to the progressive growth in the number of foreigners from Angola, Cape Verde and Guinea. From the 1980s, beyond the flows of African origin, Brazilian immigrants began to gain visibility as a community to settle in Portugal, as well as the arrival of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The periods of economic growth, experienced in the 1980s and 1990s and the large public works

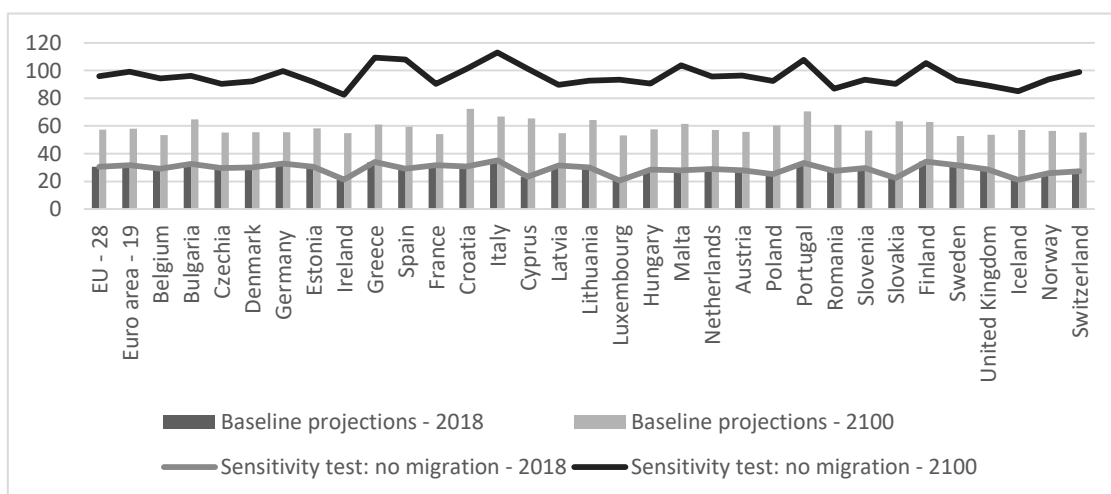
undertaken resulted in an attractive destination for immigration and consequently the entry of new flows of foreign labour (Martins, 2015).

According to INE data (2018) the resident population in Portugal in 2017 was estimated at 10 291 027 people, representing a decrease in the resident population of 18 546 inhabitants over the previous year, corresponding to a negative effective growth rate of - 0.18% (-0.31% in 2016). This keeps the downward trend in population since 2010, although it has eased over the last four years. This trend causes changes in the age structure of the population, namely the decrease of the young population and the increase of demographic aging, with an increase in the average age of the resident population in Portugal from 42.7 to 44.2 years, between 2012 and 2017.

In percentage terms, in 2017, the resident population in Portugal consisted of 13.8% of young people, 64.7% of working age and 21.5% of elderly. All regions show a decrease in the proportion of young people, except the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area and the Autonomous Region of the Azores were the regions with the highest percentage of young population (15.9%). However, the increase in the proportion of elderly people is transversal to all regions (INE, 2018).

Eurostat projections for 2100¹ confirm the current scenario and demonstrate the importance of migratory balances in combating demographic aging in Europe. These data show that Portugal is one of the countries with the largest demographic decrease and the largest aging, and its effects are mitigated by the effect of immigration, through the increase of the immigrant population, namely of working age (Figure1).

Figure 1. Projected old-age dependency ratio (2018 - 2100)



Source: Eurostat

The multiple changes in migratory phenomena, marked by the financial and economic crisis of 2008 that contributed to a decrease in the immigrant population and an increase in Portuguese emigration. This contributed to negative migratory balances that remained during the austerity period (Casquilho-Martins, 2018). The analysis of demographic indicators allows us to analyze and understand the evolution of migratory dynamics and the felt and projected effects.

A summary analysis of the SEFTAT (see table 1) allows us to observe the distribution of resident immigrants in Portugal by district. The data show there is a tedious increase in the number of resident immigrants in Portugal, contrary to the decrease observed between 2010 and 2015. The drop-in migration trends recorded since 2010 can be explained by the increased access to Portuguese nationality, the circumstances experienced by the economic and financial crisis in Portugal (Troika period), and changes in some countries of origin leading to the return (Martins, 2015).

In 2018 there was, for the third consecutive year, an increase in the resident foreign population, more than 13.9% compared to 2017, totaling 480,300 foreign citizens holding residence permits. This was the highest value recorded by SEF since its inception in 1976 (SEF, 2019). In obtaining these data, the design and extension of residence permits as well as the extension of long-stay visas were considered.

According to SEF data, the most representative foreign nationalities in Portugal in 2018 were from Brazil (23.9%), followed by Cape Verde (7.2%), Romania (6, 4%), Ukraine (6.1%), United Kingdom (5.5%), China (5.3%), France (4.1%), Italy (3.9%), Angola (3.8%) and Guinea Bissau (3.4%). However, it is noteworthy that the total of immigrants from other countries, without great representation by total nationality was 32.3%. The SEF report also indicates that the Bengali (165.1%), Brazilian (143.7%), Nepalese (141.2%), Indian (127.3%) and Venezuelan (83.2%) nationalities were the fastest growing in Portugal, as well as at the European level the strong growth of the Italian (32.7%), British (32.5%) and German (29.1%) communities.

Regarding the distribution of resident foreign population in Portugal by district, the total number of residents in 2018 was 480,300. According to Table 1 the Lisbon district is the one with a clear preference of immigrants as a place of residence in Portugal (44.36%). This preference is found to be constant over the years. Of a total of 213,065 resident immigrants in the Lisbon district, 105,748 are men and 107,317 are women, which shows a balanced

gender distribution. As for the municipalities of the district of Lisbon, it is in the capital of the country that about 37.4% (79700) of these immigrants reside.

Table 1. Foreign Population Resident in Portugal by district (2009-2018)

District	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Total	454191	445262	436822	417042	401320	395195	388731	397731	421711	480300
Aveiro	14206	14050	13716	13176	12566	11984	11700	11798	12487	13448
Beja	5667	6455	6966	6589	6781	6836	7445	7624	8497	9731
Braga	9769	10284	10174	9785	9280	9482	9537	10258	11322	14090
Bragança	1811	2129	2264	2273	2282	2337	2406	2685	3038	3273
Castelo Branco	3066	3174	3101	2999	3009	3072	3255	3642	4040	4318
Coimbra	11604	12082	12516	12326	11387	11182	11341	11906	12344	12673
District	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Évora	3934	3963	4077	4017	3702	3723	3724	3885	4037	4244
Faro	73277	71818	68953	62624	58839	57212	58246	63481	69026	77489
Guarda	1881	1833	1819	1814	1794	1707	1685	1845	2025	2171
Leiria	16989	17031	16720	15742	15076	14768	14649	15319	16487	17389
Lisboa	196798	189220	188259	181901	176963	176927	173521	173118	182105	213065
Portalegre	2801	2974	3078	2880	2715	2502	2437	2471	2457	2449
Porto	28107	27112	24824	23440	23701	23726	22972	24092	27486	32614
Santarém	14416	14460	14322	13362	12509	11692	10949	11008	11068	11606
Setúbal	49309	47935	45158	44197	41711	39763	36994	36175	35907	40209
Viana do Castelo	3141	3418	3444	3214	2994	2864	2860	3045	3158	3706
Vila Real	2098	2244	2268	2278	2140	1999	1939	1938	2067	2303
Viseu	4678	4854	4987	4846	4428	4186	3965	3960	3964	4339
Açores	3534	3461	3402	3341	3614	3536	3361	3371	3476	3605
Madeira	7105	6765	6774	6238	5829	5697	5745	6110	6720	7578

Source: SEF/SEFSTAT

In addition to the district of Lisbon, Faro and Setubal are the districts with the largest number of foreign residents with 16.13% and 8.37% respectively. These three districts represent approximately 69% of the total foreign population residing in Portugal, a preference which has been maintained over the last decade. Thus, we find that the south coast is the area of the country elected by immigrants as a place of residence.

The most relevant reasons for granting new residence permits were family reunification (26,660), professional activity (17,771) and study (8,369). The most representative reason is family reunification of third-country nationals of the European Union (SEF, 2019). Economic and social phenomena, notably the financial crisis, were also reflected in these changes along with legislative changes in the area of migration, such as Organic Law no. 2/2018 of 5

July, which extends the access to the nationality by origin and to the naturalization to persons born in Portuguese territory, making the eighth amendment to Law No. 37/81, of October 3, which approves the Nationality Law, SEF registered a total of 41,324 applications for acquisition of Portuguese nationality, a significant increase over the homologous period (+ 10.9%).

Demographic issues and migratory trends condition political choices in the field of social protection (Silva e Pereira, 2015). Thus, it was found that immigrants play a decisive role in combating demographic aging in Portugal and that their preference for staying is in the large metropolitan and coastal areas. These territories are spaces for intervention strategies that enhance social and human capital.

3. Demands and complexity of action in community development

The constant dynamic to which societies are subjected and the multidimensionality of situations that occur have an impact on people and their environment. New social problems, new risks and needs emerge, creating a new paradigm in the globalized world (Beck, 1992). The author tells us about a global society that presents several risks both individually and collectively and that complicates contemporary social reality.

Social problems and phenomena such as environmental pollution, poverty and social exclusion, migration, unemployment and increasing social inequalities have marginalized a systemic conception of relational processes in the interrelationship between people, society and nature, affecting quality levels of life (Rocha, 2015). For citizens, new social risks have a strong impact on their needs and are conditioned by a set of social, economic and political factors.

We find that it is important for the interviewees to consider the management of new risks, particularly with the most vulnerable groups that, according to Taylor-Gooby (2004), tend to be more exposed to situations of poverty and social exclusion.

“It is this stress of not having the money to pay the house, pay the water, pay the light, the two are undocumented and unemployed, children who are not entitled to SASE and who are in school and who have to buy the books and lunch. It's complicated and all of this passes through us.” (E2)

In the responses obtained, the interviewees focused on the fact that the financial and economic crisis of 2008 contributed to a greater exposure to risks. The impact of cuts to

social spending required greater attention to social problems, creating new and more effective, efficient strategies and innovative models seeking to act on within a logic of early intervention.

“Unemployment is one of the situations that we have the greatest difficulty in solving (...) We as technicians have to be attentive to the first signs to act before the problems get worse.” (E1)

Intervention developed in a community implies a "holistic" approach, without neglecting each component of the community supra-system (Rocha, 2015), that is, the interviewees consider that a systemic view allows identifying the subsystems and an ecological outlook to consider the environment and its specific characteristics contributing to territorial development.

“The solutions promoted are always integrated, specific and appropriate to their eco-systemic context.” (E4)

“It is important to take into account the various factors, family, social and economic, among others, and the context in which it is inserted, as well as the cultural aspect and its implications.” (E5)

Territorialized action contributes to community development when shared by its actors. Distinguish values and social strategies that move from the current context of models' pressure for productivity to the detriment of sustainability models.

“Promote a humanitarian action in the territory with a view to an integrated and sustainable social development.” (E3)

Improved living conditions and life expectancy have led to new social needs from which new risks have arisen. It is therefore important to link economic and social cohesion, particularly in strengthening the labour market, as social cuts lead to a reduction in employment, education and health opportunities (Ferrera, Hemerijck e Rhodes, 2000).

The sustainability of a community presupposes community development activities based on the needs of individuals and must be planned, developed and continued by community members. As such, the social worker, in their practice should concentrate on extending the capacities of individuals, groups, leaders, organizations and institutions to the develop participatory mechanisms of self-governance and management without unnecessary external dependence and interference.

4. The identification of social actors and their resources

Considering that the actors and sectors identified translate into systems within an ecological context of intervention - ecosystems - we must consider that each element has potentialities and resources that can be mobilized in the social life of the community, including the contributions on individuals and own institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1996; Ferreira, 2011a).

Guerra (2006) states that the participation of actors in development policies assumes a positive project change for both communities and the actors themselves, coexisting in networks. Social networks are organized around horizontal relations in the reach of common objectives and not through the vertical hierarchies manifested in power relations.

“We act in partnership by holding meetings and contacts with the various community services with a view to articulating, analysing and evaluating situations.” (E4)

“We consider our beneficiaries as active agents in their own process, to have an integrated view of problems, to establish partnerships and to work in networks.” (E5)

In complex societies, one strategy mechanism is a territorialized vision that allows for broader participation at the different levels of power by stimulating the relations of partnerships (Cardoso, 2012). Among the characteristics mentioned by the interviewees about a territorial vision as a contribution to the actors' relationship, the following stand out: i) greater relationship of identity with their environment; ii) greater capacity to recognize and solve problems (individual and collective) through the articulated mobilization of networks; iii) greater proximity between people; iv) more democracy in negotiations and decision making; v) more participation and guarantee of citizenship rights; vi) strengthening capacity building in the community's potential; vii) less oppression and; viii) more quality in institutional responses and policy decisions.

Social workers seek to be agents that mediate change, promoting participatory action, dialogue and cooperation among the populations. There are some difficulties because of the pressure that is often felt by normative instructions that overlap as actions of power, namely regarding the limitation of resources in relation to the number of requests / needs identified.

“We buy the minimum necessary to have the money for other things, to support the projects and to support the clients.” (E2)

“We also have other resources from the community, with other institutions with which we are often articulated in order to obtain more resources.” (E3)

Different social actors have been identified in the construction and operationalization of community strategies that integrate proximity relations for social intervention. Together with the population, technical teams intervene acting directly or indirectly in the territory. In these teams, social workers are the ones who take on diverse functions according to the organizational structure within which they are integrated. The local authorities (Parish) and the entities of the Third Sector (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity, NGOs, local non-profit associations) have a greater impact in community intervention and have played a growing role in proximity relations with the communities, integrating groups (participative councils) that count with the presence of partners and the population itself.

“Work in partnership developed with the community or with other institutions or informal groups that exist promote autonomy within the community.” (E3)

Creativity was pointed out as one of the competencies necessary for the intervention of the social worker, generating alternatives in emergency situations to provide an immediate response, even though often of a charitable nature due to the financial and economic crisis of 2008.

“[People] find themselves in a state of despair because they see the doors closing and, in some ways, running out of alternatives ... We have to think of new ways to respond to their needs and be creative.” (E3)

The results of the interviews reveal that social workers follow the whole process. However, they recognize there are limitations to their performance as austerity measures, along with the imposed bureaucratic and hierarchical process, conditioned the operationalization of social programs and projects by limiting and / or cutting financial and human resources.

Intercultural practices can be understood as an integration process that allows immigrants to access full citizenship, ensuring effective access to their rights and upholding the principles of equal opportunities and social justice. This manifests itself through ways of approaching cultures in a way to minimize adaptation shocks through positive interaction between individuals and groups. This process needs to contemplate ways for immigrants to participate in order for them to have an active and central role together with the society that welcomes them. “Es necesario que tanto inmigrantes como componentes de la sociedad receptora, quieran participar para crear un contexto que facilite la resolución de conflicto intercultural” (Galvín y Franco, 1996, p.64).

Two actors stand out as agents of full social integration: immigrants and host societies. Without considering both, there is no reciprocity, as this is a two-way social dynamic. The social transformations resulting from global mutations are felt both in those who arrive and those who were already there. While the immigrant faces a series of new challenges that change his daily reality, the host society also manages the presence of new elements that were not previously part of its basic structure.

5. Active participation as a contribution to the social and human development of communities

The 2008 crisis affected the quality of life of the population, especially after cuts in social spending, a consequence of austerity measures (Barata e Carmo, 2014; Ferreira, 2014; Soromenho-Marques, 2014). According to OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) social indicators (2014), the financial crisis has led to the worsening of social conditions in many countries, which is a challenge to properly designed policies and supported by adequate resources, by investing in the most vulnerable groups.

The fields of intervention of Social Work in social action with communities focus on combating and preventing the various expressions of social exclusion in different sectors of public policy in terms of the social promotion of local communities and their development. The operationalization with a territorial scope is not disconnected from the welfare models adopted by States, the debates about the meaning of community action or from the analysis and understanding of the problems and their interrelation with the global level and the national level, and the economic, cultural and political dimensions inherent to immigration issues. Some of the tools used by the social worker in community development aim to develop community awareness, identification and development of leadership and autonomy, the creation of strategic alliances, the formation of adults, collaboration and the construction of community training (Rocha, 2015).

Participation is an active process accomplished through social dialogue, where individual and collective contributions are converted into proposals for community development. The action focuses on issues of human development and equal opportunities and on seeking the involvement of all in the exercise of social rights, while making the actors responsible for integrated participation.

“Social integration and avoiding the risk of social exclusion is our main mission.” (E2)

The improvement of quality-of-life results in a process of "recognition, creation and use of resources and instruments by individuals, groups and communities, in themselves and in the surrounding environment, which translates into an increase of power that allows these subjects to increase the effectiveness of the exercise of their citizenship" (Lee, as cited in Rocha, 2015, p.109). In this sense, there is an objective for the autonomization of populations, in which participation refers to an effective citizenship, equal opportunities, social justice, recognizing their potentialities and fragilities as a result of a critical awareness and capacity.

"Our support is integration and change. What we work on is negotiating with them, seeing what they want to change, what needs to be done, and helping them take steps." (E2)

For those interviewed, the role of social workers is to reinforce the participation of the population, incorporating themselves as an element of trust that maintains the guiding principles of action, focusing on human and social potential in meeting the needs and promoting the value of citizenship. To invest in proximity is also a strategy to strengthen a relationship of trust that leads to the active participation of the users involved.

"The greatest potential will be the proximity relationship established with the people who live in the neighborhood (...) I think that from here we can create a relationship of trust and from there start the intervention plan." (E5)

The professional takes on the role of a resource in this process, supporting the community, stimulating participation, cohesion, and integration of all its elements. Data shows that it is the social worker who acts as a resource, helping the community solve its situation and meet their needs, encouraging participation, cohesion and integration. Working with the community is a challenge that seeks to mobilize individuals for active and collective participation regardless of their background, culture, religion, ethnicity, gender or age, planning and implementing actions for collective well-being.

In the case of the immigrants with whom these social workers work, the acquisition of cultural skills, particularly language skills, facilitates the integration process, developing new knowledge and the possibility of integration while the host society also undergoes transformations by raising awareness and transmitting a message of harmony between cultures, developing a tolerant mentality in the citizens.

Creating conditions for the integration of immigrants towards an intercultural model traces the path towards a cohesive society with mutual participation and dialogue between its stakeholders. This implies that conditions that establish effective forms of integration must be met: combating social exclusion resulting from inequalities to strengthening social skills and creating a mean in which equity and social justice prevail.

The notion of inequality according to Therborn (2006) is defined as an unwanted difference as it results in a distinct form of treatment between people or groups in relation to something, such as a good or a right, with one party benefiting over the other. However, there is a need to alleviate social inequalities and recognize them as a social and unnatural product. Immigrants are the target of this concept when their access to certain resources or rights is limited and contemporary societies are challenged to stimulate it without excluding and reinforcing a harmony in intercultural relations.

Thus, the host society, through community intervention, can work towards ensuring conditions for the active participation of immigrants in their socio-economic structures, and immigrants must respect the host country and collaborate in the integration process. Starting from the previous premises, there is a phenomenon of mutual adaptation that operates through the fight against social inequalities and the development of skills.

6. Dynamics for community intervention

Regarding the relationship between social workers and the population, the interviewees focused on the need to balance the decision-making powers in the search for solutions and debate of ideas, with a view to promoting a process of awareness and participation that gives autonomy to individuals.

“We want people to be empowered and to change their lives.” (E2)

Interactions between individuals and groups in communities or in society in general manifest a sense of belonging and cohesion that harmonizes the community's own identity with the social context, with a mutual adaptation that promotes values and principles that seek to reduce inequalities and forms of marginalization and social exclusion.

“Our values are the dignity and equality of people, we must have equal treatment.” (E2)

“Our intervention is guided by respect and in my opinion this should be the fundamental value of the intervention.” (E5)

In the projects consulted, participatory models were introduced with more or less openness, seeking to give people the opportunity not only to be represented but to represent and express themselves. There is a greater interest in finding more information to better understand their rights and duties through the mediation of the social worker.

“The users do not have much information on how to deal with their problems, (...) we try to include these competences in the action plans and projects.” (E5)

Teamwork and networking, the ability to mobilize resources, promoting the participation of citizens and partners in all areas, is also part of the skills required for sustained and effective intervention.

“The relationship between the users and the team made the intervention achieve the objectives.” (E3)

On the demands of training professionals to intervene in these contexts, they recommend that social workers understand the study and evaluate the phenomena that provoke transformations in the territories, identifying the various emerging needs and risks.

“We are always learning; we have a training plan in the institution. All our employees beyond the mandatory training, have directed training as religion, intercultural, etc.” (E2)

As for the models of community development, one of the proposals is the model oriented toward the system of action (Ferreira, 2011b). This model seeks to establish a shared responsibility that mobilizes the population where the problem is present; this includes groups and organizations in the case of immigrants. Thus, it counts on the participation of the actors directly involved in the situation finding solutions together. It uses local community leadership mechanisms at the individual, group or institutional level to achieve its objectives and seeks to mobilize and organize the potentials and strengths of the population by finding resources outside the community for their development (new ideas, opportunities, relationships).

For Ferreira (2011b), in communities, Social Work promotes an awareness of their needs and resources, taking a critical position on the reality and allows a dynamic organization of their resources to respond to needs. This democratic base allows intervening with greater

success to alleviate problems such as poverty, inequality, the integration of immigrants, the degradation of neighbourhoods, etc., which cannot be solved individually but through collective and organized action among citizens (Fernández y López, 2008).

Therefore, we can identify the results of social worker strategies in intervention with communities as a value to social and human development:

- Recognition of the needs of differentiated policies for the territories regarding their complexity.
- Platform for adequate responses to the problems diagnosed by the actors.
- Intercultural integration and respect for differences between groups.
- The need to involve the immigrant population in the participation, design, operationalization and evaluation of local programs and activities.
- Articulation of institutional networks and political partners in various areas: social action, culture, education, housing, health and safety.
- Decentralized meetings by working groups and / or matters of common interest (participatory councils).
- Opportunity to generate territories' autonomy and sustainability.

Beyond a democratic process, this intervention refers to practices of cooperation between the various actors minimizing the inequalities in their relations. Citizenship starts from the people political actions that see their rights established in different contexts and situations that enable citizens to participate actively (Mozzicafreddo, 1997) and this means a process that goes through the joint association of individuals in the sense of realizing common interests; by building capacity, trust and resources; by strengthening relationships within the community, ensuring that individuals are recognized as partners in production, service and democratic life, rather than being objects of decisions and policies outside the community. Thus, a set of knowledge and capacity for reality analysis are assumed in the field of social policies in favor of social welfare to which Social Work should be aware. In this way, Social Workers use a sustained ethical matrix when implementing a shared responsibility based on commitment and cooperation between the State, the institutions, the technical teams, and the immigrant citizens.

Final considerations

The strategies for community development aim to foster a discussion and debate on the contributions that the articulation of knowledge and experiences promote in favour of citizenship and the well-being of communities' development. In their practice, Social workers resort to an ethical matrix, supported by the implementation of a shared responsibility based on the commitment and cooperation between the institution, the technical team and the individuals.

However, social risks take various forms according to problems and territories, implying a focus not only on local action policies but also on global policies (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Ranci, 2010). According to the community identity and its context, social workers seek an approach that focuses on problem prevention and resolution, together with the populations that contribute to local development.

Supported action in community development models presupposes a set of knowledge and capacity to analyse reality in the field of social policies for the interests of the community, in the form of inclusion and integration measures, based on principles of social justice and human dignity.

Thus, social intervention in communities remains a challenge for social service in mobilizing individuals for active and collective participation regardless of their origin, culture, religion, ethnicity, gender or age, in the planning and execution of actions for the good and interests interaction in which participation is constituted as a mechanism of community intervention and is a way to social inclusion and integration.

Poor and marginalized individuals who have been repressed and weakened over a long period are not able to see beyond their current situation, finding themselves in states of apathy, indifference, helplessness and impotence. In this context, the essential task for social workers is to transform this situation and move towards change.

In community intervention, one always starts from the experiences and priorities of individuals. These priorities, defined by the people themselves, guide the action and the process of change that is carried through participatory practices. These characteristics are operationalized and focus on the collective dimension through collective action in an educational process of transfer of knowledge and skills to the community, social and political awareness about their life situation, the search for sustainable and lasting changes and the

use of a plurality of methods and techniques borrowed from different disciplines and supported by ethical values.

By networking among these groups, flexible structures and processes need to be developed for self-governance and management of a range of community development activities in the areas of health, education, employment, housing, culture, natural resource management, and economic production (Pawar, 2014, p.8).

The practice of sustainable community development should focus primarily on allowing oppressed groups to perceive that the cause of their situation lies in socio-economic and political structures and that they can change by redefining their conditions and taking responsibility for that change to ensure the sustainable development of the community, both in terms of ecological sustainability and the community itself.

Stimulating harmony in intercultural relations as a process of social and human development, in which social policies guide strategies for participation in community intervention in favour of citizenship and the realization of human rights is a challenge to contemporary societies in a globalized world.

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NOTES

¹ Database available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20190710-1>