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New Welfare Systems: Models and
Participation

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New Welfare Systems: Models and Participation

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Abstract

From this brief study, two key interpretations seem to emerge. Both at the national and local levels, welfare models, as well as institutional models, tend to persist through various phases and despite external influences. National and subnational traditions appear to strongly influence even the most recent experiments and developments. In attempting to provide a schematic representation, national welfare models and local participation models seem to operate along two axes: on one hand, there's the axis between the universalistic model and the corporate-occupational model, and on the other there's the axis between a model of informal relations and a more institutionalized model oriented towards governance.

National welfare models: historical dynamics and continuity

1.1. *The beginnings of welfare*

The welfare state is a set of public policies aimed at responding to risks and needs related to the modernization processes, following the patterns of assistance, insurance and social security. An analysis of welfare policies has to be done in relationship with the productive and labor context, since they are primarily concerned with compensating for what happens in the labour market in restorative terms or promoting employment. In fact, the long path of welfare proceeds essentially along two tracks that concern on the one hand people in occupation, gradually absorbed into the working-class and union world, and on the other hand people in poverty who do not have a job. Welfare is "the greatest work of social engineering" (Ferrera, 2019), particularly in the twentieth century, when social security and welfare institutions experienced their greatest development in terms of coverage and public spending.

Although it is only with state intervention that one can speak of a welfare state, it comes only at the end of a series of experiments, largely born as self-organization and secular and religious

associationism. Indeed, between the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe, we see numerous mutualistic and voluntary experiences promoted by individual professional groups and labour organizations. These forms of mutual assistance are aimed in particular at protection against the main occupational risks. These forms of membership, while maintaining strong links with pre-capitalist professional organizations with self-defensive character, already have a trade union dimension: the English Friendly societies, the French *Bourses du travail*, the Italian mutual aid societies. They experience rapid development in the provision of various services, from job placement to voluntary sickness and accident insurance. Just as quickly, however, they succumbed to competition from more competitive insurance market companies and to the emergence of the modern welfare state. Moreover, the workers' unions themselves favor the introduction by the legislation of compulsory insurance and the recognition of work-related rights, which constitute the first real introduction of welfare policies. It is on this occasion that a rupture takes place between the mutualist organizations and the nascent labour movement. The latter, in fact, established itself at the beginning of the 20th century as the main organized social force with strong claims for labour-protecting legislation. In Germany, a system of contributory social insurance against the risks of old age, accident, and illness for industrial workers came into being in 1881, according to a model defined as "Bismarkian."

With regard to poverty, the earliest initiatives date back to the 17th century, with the Act for the Relief of the Poor of Elizabeth I of England, which introduced a tax on the poor and required communities to take charge of the destitute (Ferrera, 2019) . The 18th century, also in England, saw the enactment of the "New Poor Laws," which were perhaps the first "modern" legislation in the area of welfare policies. This assistance to the poor had custodial and punitive features, with the aim of coercion toward the emerging capitalist labour market . In other countries, institutions of guardianship toward the poorest people develop more slowly. In Italy, the Crispi Law on the *Opere pie* dates from 1890.

1.2. *The consolidation and welfare models*

Beginning with the British laws of 1946, the post-World War II era saw the birth of welfare as we know it: throughout Europe, the state gradually recognized and incorporated pre-existing mutualist systems into state welfare institutions. It is welfare based on the concept of social "risk" and the work of the male breadwinner (Ciarini, 2012). This is even more true in the continental model, which sees a prevalence of professional categories and prevents and depends on the contribution. Among the main models of analysis, Timuss (1974) identifies the three different stages of welfare: the residual one, limited to assistance towards those who are unable to meet their basic needs through work and the market; the meritocratic one of continental Europe, based on compulsory insurance and whose benefits are commensurate with the level of contribution; and the redistributive-institutional one of Anglo-Scandinavian model, which tends toward universalist services with equal conditions of access and treatment. According to Timuss, these models are on a developmental line, in which the redistributive-institutional is the most advanced.

The best-known classification is that of Esping-Andersen (1990): the social-democratic-universalist model of Scandinavian countries, the liberal Anglo-Saxon model, and the conservative-corporatist model of continental Europe. In this classification, however, the Mediterranean countries remain out: although close to the conservative-corporatist one, they show a central role of the family, which largely takes over the care tasks, particularly for women. During the 20th century, there is essentially a bifurcation between two welfare models: the "Beveridgian" universalistic model (from the 1942 Beveridge Report) and the "Bismarkian" corporate-occupational model. In the Anglo-Scandinavian universalistic model, the social protection covers all citizens, regardless of their employment status; in the continental model, social protection is aimed at workers, with differences according to profession and wage.

For Europe, that of the post-World War II period is the phase of the so-called "consolidation" of the welfare state, in which from "workers' insurance" we begin to speak of "social insurance" . From the time of the state's entry into the sphere of social protection, the latter and related public spending have grown steadily, with the phase of so-called "expansion" between the end of World War II and the mid-1970s, named "Glorious Thirty Years". The advancement of social rights and public spending continues to be linked to the world of labour and trade unions. Indeed, it is with the expansion of collective bargaining and protections in the area of wages that welfare grows, according to Fordist

and Keynesian logic. However, this results in the exclusion of parts of the population, starting with women.

1.3. The crisis of the 1970s and the recalibration of policies

The welfare state entered a true crisis phase in the second half of the 1970s when slow or stagnant economic development, new demographic imbalances, and financial shocks caused acute problems in the sustainability of social spending. This favoured the explosion of neoliberal rhetoric, against public spending for welfare, starting with the American and British conservative experiences of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. As noted by Ciarini (2019), this new anti-welfare trend did not fully take hold in all countries, but it introduced deviations to the so-called "workfare," a model that uses active policies to achieve job placement as quickly as possible to reduce the burden on public spending. At the same time, as Ferrera (2019) points out, there is a "rebalancing" towards the needs of the post-industrial society still lacking coverage: increased female participation in the labor market, the spread of single-parent families, deindustrialization, the flexibilization of labor relations, the marginalization of vulnerable workers, require a rethinking of many traditional welfare state institutions. The new concept of "social vulnerability" emerges on the scene, which, unlike "risk," encompasses multiple fragilities, including family, work, economic, housing, and, in general, a condition of widespread precariousness and insecurity (Ciarini, 2020).

At the same time, with the emergence of the new problem of rising unemployment, the dichotomy between passive and active welfare policies arises. In the transition to the service society, the new opportunistic and neoliberal political sensitivity focuses on transforming welfare to support competitiveness, flexibility, and adaptability of work to the new, low-productivity, and low-wage tertiary jobs (Ciarini, 2020). In national responses, countries with a universalist welfare are located at opposite poles: Scandinavian countries heavily invest in public welfare, while Anglo-Saxon ones move toward strong deregulation. Occupational and corporatist welfare systems, on the other hand, maintain a focus on passive benefits in favour of salaried work while reducing spending. This comes at the cost of a strong labor market rigidity that leads to an increase in unemployment, especially among young people.

The principle of "subsidiarity" also emerges, with a transfer of national competencies and responsibilities downward (local authorities) and upward (the European Union). Similarly, the

responsibility for welfare policies tends to expand to external subjects, such as private entities and the families themselves. A similar process of decentralization occurs in the field of industrial relations, where collective bargaining increasingly takes place on a territorial or sectoral basis, legitimizing differences between categories and regions, effectively increasing dualisms between categories. In the context of deindustrialization and tertiarization, a polarization emerges between high-value-added professions and marginal, often low-paying jobs, leading to a further shrinking of the middle class (Ciarini and Paci, 2020). Workers in higher productivity sectors continue to benefit from passive policy tools that make them more protected categories, while for jobs in the tertiary sectors, social protections are essentially residual, with a "tolerance" towards inequalities (Ciarini, 2020).

In the 1970s, however, the trend to introduce income support tools for those not covered by compulsory contributory insurance systems also began to accelerate. As Ciarini (2020) points out, from the end of the last century, the number of so-called "working poor" has increased considerably, meaning those who, regardless of individual income, live in households at risk of poverty or whose overall income is below 60% of the national average income. Alongside a series of social assistance measures dedicated to the life cycle, the concept of minimum income emerges in the European landscape, generally associated with active labour policies. The United Kingdom already had its own "Income Support", adopted in 1948, followed by Germany in 1961. Other countries, from the mid-1970s, started to develop similar tools, increasingly towards a universal model, with the notable exception of Italy and Greece (Ferrera, 2019).

1.4. The new perspectives

In an effort to streamline European welfare systems undergoing restructuring or profound revision in the early 1990s, the paradigm of "Social Investment" emerged as a counterpoint to neoliberal criticism, championed by influential academics like Anthony Giddens and Esping-Andersen. It was conceived as a "third way" for welfare. The "first way" referred to welfare based on rights and resource redistribution, with little work incentives and limited citizen responsibilities. The "second way" represented a neoliberal welfare model, which proved unsuccessful due to rising unemployment and deepening inequalities (Costa, 2012). The "third way" of social investment was

embraced by contemporary social democratic figures like Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder. The European Union adopted its principles with slogans like "employability," "entrepreneurship," "adaptability," and "equal opportunities," starting with the European Employment Strategy (EES) of 2000 (De La Porte, Palier, 2022). This path incorporated social policy into Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union with the Treaty of Lisbon, followed by the Social Investment Package of 2013, and later initiatives like "Youth Guarantee" and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The European Union began to actively contribute to the welfare policies of its member states through funds like the European Social Fund (ESF), and through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). Thus, it increasingly aimed to assume a leading role in this matter through "soft power." The foundation of this approach is a general goal of convergence of European welfare policies towards "productive" long-term social spending and a significant shift from passive to active policies. According to De la Porte and Palier (2022), the adoption of the social investment model is a game played out in the dialectic between "economically oriented" actors (advocates for downsizing the welfare state and labour market deregulation) and "socially oriented" actors (supporters of a strong social dimension in Europe), in competition for the political orientation of the European Council. While the former advocate for labour mobility and financial austerity, the latter promote crisis protection policies and investments in human capital. In this perspective, social policies must represent an investment to support the competitiveness of both the workforce and businesses, within the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) adopted in 1997. It is, in fact, the opposite of the perspective of restorative welfare (Crouch, 2020). According to Hemerijck (2020), the foundations of social investment are three factors: stock (investments in education, training, and human capital), flow (active labour policies and reconciliation services), and buffer (inclusive social protection networks). The approach is highly focused on empowering and capacitating individuals and is influenced by the theories of Amartya Sen. It represents an active and enabling welfare, promoting the principle of horizontal subsidiarity that views recipients and social organizations as active participants in policies. Through the OMC, the European Union has guided the transition towards a "flexicurity" model, aiming to combine more flexible labour contracts with strengthened monetary protections and employment services for the unemployed. The "Community Action Program 2002-2006" to combat social exclusion gave rise to national plans for "economic dynamism and social justice" (Fedele, 2004).

The 2008 financial crisis imposed another phase of deep reorganization of European welfare policies, with national responses once again varying according to their identities and traditions. Firstly, the impact of the crisis varied, with severe unemployment effects in countries like Greece, Spain, Ireland, and milder impacts in others like Germany. In the years immediately following 2008, public spending on passive policies increased, but subsequently, many European countries focused on vocational training and regular employment development in the lower tertiary sector (such as German jobs), along with a restructuring of income support systems. The need to reduce public spending simultaneously imposed restrictive formulas and access conditions (Ciarini and others, 2020). What was intended to accompany the transition to a service society, however, did not resolve the dualisms between insiders and outsiders (Ciarini, 2013). On the one hand, work-first options seem to contribute to further job disqualification, and on the other hand, structural reforms required by European accounting rules have undoubtedly widened the gap between more and less "virtuous" countries (Ciarini, 2020). The countries with higher income levels appear to be those in Northern Europe, which have the highest spending on education, training, and employment policies (Crouch, 2020), even though they also introduce workfare conditions. The 2008 crisis and its varying effects from country to country have produced a dualism within the social investment paradigm. While the Anglo-Nordic model was previously the reference point, the Anglo-German model has also emerged, pushing for employment in low-wage services (De La Porte, Palier, 2022). The real convergence seems to be the increasing polarization between central categories of the productive system, supported by good levels of social protection, and peripheral categories, recipients of residual income support initiatives and active policies aimed at hasty labor reintegration. Simultaneously, the increase in the supply of social and welfare services tends to shift the cost burden onto low-wage social labour (Ciarini, 2020). The combined effect of this system seems to push wages downward (Ciarini, 2020), further widening the polarization gap. The austerity regime significantly contributes to compressing social spending, raising objections about the contradiction between this and the goals of the European Social Agenda (Ciarini, 2020). Hemerijck (2020) also argues that Eurozone countries, constrained by the Fiscal Compact, have actually taken steps backward, especially compared to Nordic countries that have implemented social investment strategies. Furthermore, there is a growing trend towards subsidiarity and a mix of public-private solutions (Ambrosi, 2019). Subsidiarity, multilevel governance, partnership, and co-design are the keywords of the new welfare

horizon (Paci, 2008). In 2011, the European Commission adopted an "Initiative for Social Entrepreneurship" (SBI), inaugurating a phase of strong attention to the Third Sector and social innovation, as evidenced by the report "Social Enterprises and their Ecosystems in Europe" (2020). Since then, several member countries have adopted new legislation, recognizing the role of non-profits in welfare services. However, this model carries the risk of shifting responsibilities and burdens from public to private and community institutions, using discourse about activation and empowerment and cost-shifting onto low-wage social labor (Ciarini, 2020). After a period of reforms, European countries still seem to maintain their welfare identity: countries with a traditional public vocation in Northern Europe; countries in continental Europe with a subsidiary vocation; market-oriented countries in Anglo-Saxon countries; subsidiary vocation and a strong component of undeclared work in Southern Europe (Ciarini, 2020).

2. Italian welfare: transition to the Governance model

2.1. The Italian model: polycentric complexity

In this context, even the Italian welfare system, despite having a series of innovative elements, tends to maintain its original identity, characterized by low expenditure on active policies and strong rigidity in the central sectors of the labour market, which remain the most protected. The Italian welfare model is influenced by the fascist corporatist-occupational model, starting with the forced institutionalization of mutual aid organizations, which resulted in the historical dualism between assistance and social security, excluding the poorest people from the more advantageous aspects. Moreover, the original centralization of the state leaves ample room for particularistic practices. According to Paci (2008), in fact, the Italian system exhibits "only apparent rigidity." This approach influenced the entire experience of the First Republic and still today is not truly overcome. Equally enduring is the influence of Italian regionalism, which characterizes the significant territorial differences in welfare services and the deep divide between the North and South. Ciarini (2012) speaks in this regard of a "polycentric complexity of center-periphery relationships." Therefore, in Italy, there seems to be a tendency at the sub-national level for institutional models and

administrative traditions to persist over time, sometimes rooted in pre-unification historical events (Ciarini, 2012).

These models at the regional and local levels are influenced, on the one hand, by the institutional dimension, sometimes influenced by other state models in the pre-unification period, and on the other hand, by the civil society, characterized for a long period by the competition between the two sub-cultures of Christian Democracy and Communism. The dynamism of the mutualistic and associative world in some contexts of the Center-North gives rise to innovative experiments, while in the South, dynamics marked by particularism and clientelism prevail, and there is also a familistic approach that limits the participation of female components and contributes to the state's deresponsabilization.

The Constitution itself reflects an imbalance towards social security, based on mandatory insurance for wage labour, relegating assistance to a secondary level. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the well-known case of the D'Aragona Commission, which was established in 1947 and proposed a universalistic welfare model but was rejected after the approval of the Constitution. Even the flexibilization of the post-Fordist labor market, with the introduction of various contractual forms and the subsequent abolition of Article 18 of the Workers' Statute, did not lead to a real reconsideration of the welfare model, leaving precarious work at the margins of social spending (Ciarini, 2013).

Between 2012 and 2015, Italy witnessed a reform of social safety nets, with the establishment of the *Nuovo sussidio di disoccupazione* (NASpi), an experimental allowance for long-term unemployment (Asdi), and a new instrument for the unemployment of para-subordinate workers (Dis-Coll) (Ciarini et al., 2020). However, a genuine anti-poverty policy has struggled to gain traction, as the entire social agenda has been strongly influenced by the alternation between center-right and center-left governments. After the short-lived experiment of the *Reddito minimo di inserimento* (RMI) in 1998 and *Sostegno per l'inclusione attiva* (SIA) in 2014, only in 2017 the *Reddito d'inclusione* (REI) introduced as a national measure against poverty, expanded in 2019 under the name of *Reddito di cittadinanza* (RDC). However, the stabilization of these measures is still uncertain, depending on the orientations of different political coalitions, as evidenced by the restrictive reform introduced by

the new center-right government with the Budget Law of December 29, 2022, No. 197, which tightened welfare measures.

In the field of social assistance, between the two centuries, Italy introduced a series of dedicated national benefits and funds, such as maternity allowance, the Fund for Rent Support, the National Fund for Childhood and Adolescence, and the Fund for Non-self-sufficiency. However, national regulatory production remains discontinuous, starting with the definition of the Essential Levels of Care (LEPs) provided for by Law 328/2000, which has never been truly implemented (Ferrera, 2019).

In terms of industrial relations, the decentralization, the recent phenomenon of bipartite agreements between social partners, whose institutes are increasingly delegated to intervene in welfare, and the growing weight of corporate welfare further exacerbate imbalances between productive sectors and territorial disparities (Ciarini, 2020).

In the background, the main characteristic of the Italian experience emerges, which is the weakness of the administrative structure, conceived more as a terrain for mediation than as a governing body (Ciarini, 2013). In the process of state-building, the legitimacy of institutions has remained low, and the national state has not systematically intervened to level territorial differences (Ciarini, 2012). This leaves ample space for particularistic forms of mediation and negotiation, which overlap with strong subnational differentiation. Particularism and a low stateness appear to be the two salient features of the Italian welfare system (Ciarini, 2012).

In the early 2000s, this context saw an acceleration toward an institutional model that aligns with European decentralization trends and citizen participation in policy processes. The Assistance Reform Act (Law 328/2000) attempts to synthesize these orientations in the methods of programming and management of territorial social services. It also arrived as part of a process already initiated through the "Bassanini reform" (Law 127/1997), which decentralized institutional responsibilities in various areas, including social policies. The Constitutional Law No. 1/2001 incorporates the principle of vertical subsidiarity, redistributing legislative powers between the State and the Regions and assigning the majority of administrative functions to local authorities. The state is assigned the role of guidance and coordination and the definition of essential levels of care (based on the principle of universality) (Paci, 2008). The principle of horizontal subsidiarity is also included

in Article 118 of the Constitution, which promotes "the autonomous initiative of citizens, both individually and collectively, for the pursuit of activities of general interest." In light of this new constitutional framework, it is the Regions that must legislate on social services, in a broader process of "rescaling" towards both the European and subnational levels (Ferrera, 2005).

Law 328/2000 therefore outlines the direction toward an increasing relevance of partnership forms between administrations and the private sector in local welfare (Ciarini, 2006). The shift from government to governance, in the words of Fedele (2004), embraces "a programmatic logic based on strong elements of vertical subsidiarity towards local authorities and horizontal subsidiarity towards the Third Sector, without giving up the exercise of an overall function of the public sector," in which the role of policy guidance and coordination continues to rest. In this changed context, peripheral administrative units are given a prominent and highly responsible role in building open networks of governance involving public and private actors (stakeholders) who, in various ways, influence the decision-making process (Paci, 2008).

Previous participatory experiences, from local development plans to territorial agreements, local partnership programs, and social plans of the 328 have over time resulted in a highly differentiated service offering depending on structural and financial resources, as well as a different specialization of interventions linked to the mix of public-private-third sector involvement (Paci, 2008). In essence, the framework contained in Law 328 has been applied in vastly different territorial contexts, where there was already a more or less strong tradition of negotiated local welfare programming. This system, which involves the interaction of a multitude of actors and levels of government, constitutes the model known as the "welfare mix," in the well-known definition by Ascoli and Ranci (2003); strong territorialization then outlines the "welfare community" (Ciarini, 2012).

Subsidiarity also encompasses the role played by families as the first social safety net. Taking a cue once again from Esping-Andersen (1999), in so-called familistic systems, families play a privileged role in meeting needs, with the state only providing support in a subsidiary manner. In de-familistic systems, the state assumes the main responsibilities for intervention through a developed network of territorial social services and monetary benefits. The familistic model is certainly very close to the Italian and Mediterranean countries, which owe their substantial underdevelopment of the public service network to this model, balanced by strong family and kinship solidarity. In the absence of a

clear strategy for developing personal services, the familistic model is also tied to the widespread use of informal labor, often by immigrants, in family care (Ciarini, 2020).

2.2. *The Third sector*

In addition to families, the elective interlocutor of the Public Administration in the process of planning territorial welfare services is the Third Sector. In the Governance model developed since Law 328/2000, the reception of European guidelines for decentralization and subsidiarity plays a central role, with a different role assumed by the policy recipients themselves. According to Ciarini (2006), this is a model of "meso-concertation," in which the network takes on a representative role for a very wide range of interests. The collective bodies involved are therefore recognized for their dual role, that of service providers (and thus representation of technical and managerial issues) and that of promoting civic participation (Ciarini, 2006). The Third Sector effectively plays the role of "catalyst for empowerment" (Ciarini, 2006).

The new governance model looks at a galaxy of experiences that try to provide answers to unmet needs or new needs. These realities are generally spontaneous in nature and revolve around horizontal welfare objectives such as job creation, the provision of mutual services, as well as the assertion of rights and the creation or redevelopment of shared public spaces, practicing principles of cooperation and solidarity. These organizations are often close to their local communities and thus contribute to the creation of community ties. These characteristics make them both service providers and aggregative forms that represent social needs. They have varying degrees of interaction with institutions. There are completely self-organized, sometimes informal, entities with no interaction with local institutions and they finance themselves independently while providing services, from psychological counselling to information and orientation services and recreational and social activities. Then there are formally established entities that, in the face of shared projects with the administration, manage to access funds, usually limited, but still manage to operate thanks to a strong voluntary work (Ambrosi, 2019). These are entities that essentially practice social innovation, as suggested by Saruis and others (2019), promoting "new ideas (products, services, and models) that simultaneously satisfy social needs (more effectively than existing alternatives) and create new

social relationships and collaborations" capable of generating "social value", which concerns aspects such as quality of life, well-being, and solidarity more than profit, and are social both in their goals and in the means they use to achieve them. This definition, prevalent in Europe, looks primarily at innovative practices that are "activating" for citizens, making them "(re)become productive economic subjects."

The aim of the new institutional framework is therefore to establish a relationship between innovative practices and the administration. Formally constituted entities, from the smallest to the most structured and professionalized, are collectively referred to as the Third Sector. Here, too, there is a strong differentiation, as the Third Sector encompasses various organizational forms, ranging from committees to volunteer organizations to cooperatives and other forms of social enterprises. Volunteer organizations generally implement what is known as "light" welfare, proximity-based, and not highly professionalized, while social enterprises are professionalized and deal with "heavy" welfare (Paci, 2008).

The Prime Minister's Decree of March 30, 2001, evidently related to Law 328/2000, specifically addressed the relationship with Third Sector entities, outlining guidelines "for enhancing their role in the planning and design of the integrated system of social interventions and services." The Decree, among other things, finally acknowledges the inadequacy of procurement regulations and competitive models based on economic undercutting, by outlining qualitative selection methods. It also attempts to rationalize previous negotiation and informal mechanisms by imposing public disclosure and transparency procedures. In this context, the new concept of co-design is also introduced, limited at the moment to "innovative and experimental intervention", in order to co-produce and also evaluate policies. Consequently, as part of the shift towards quality standards, local authorities begin to define criteria for the accreditation and evaluation of services, instead of the particularistic management of previous years (Ambrosi, 2019).

Hence, echoes of what Paci (2005) defines as an "active Welfare state," characterized by a promotional or enabling action of public intervention aimed at promoting greater responsibility and empowerment of citizens, can be observed. This is the recognition of the political value of individual action capacity in participation.

However, there are also strongly critical elements, regarding the dynamic of Third Sector incorporation into social service planning. Full inclusion in the governance of the welfare system can, on one hand, generate depoliticization of civil society organizations, resulting in a loss of their critical, conflictual, and innovative potential inherited from the mutualism experiences of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Ambrosi, 2019). On the other hand, there is the possibility that this process may lead to further de-responsibilization of the state (Cellamare, 2019). These organizations often propose a radical critique of the current social assistance model, in some ways renewing the spirit of original mutualism and proposing a vision of beneficiaries as active subjects of welfare (Ambrosi, 2019). Inclusion in planning processes is also pushing some of the larger Third Sector organizations, especially social cooperatives, toward hyper-specialization and personnel professionalization. Therefore, a phase of change has also started for the Third Sector (Paci, 2008). It is worth noting that in a research study from 2008 conducted by Paci, a certain divergence is observed between social cooperatives, which, starting from the outsourcing processes of the 1990s, have become increasingly entrepreneurial in structure, and volunteer organizations (Paci, 2008).

With the 2000 reform, the Third Sector is explicitly called upon to co-plan services, in addition to managing them, representing a significant increase in its weight within the general system of social services, and encouraging entrepreneurial traits (Cellamare, 2019). Only with the 2016 Delegation Law on Third Sector reform, this area is fully recognized. The law defines the Third Sector as "the set of private entities established for civic, solidarity, and social utility purposes that, without profit, promote and implement activities of general interest through voluntary and gratuitous actions or mutualism or production and exchange of goods and services, in accordance with the purposes set out in their respective statutes or articles of incorporation." Due to these characteristics, which effectively coincide with the public interest, the Third Sector is elevated in status, and with subsequent legislative decrees, co-planning and co-design become the ordinary method of implementing social services.

As this participation becomes aware and capable of representing aggregated demands in planning and service co-production, as mentioned earlier, the Third Sector is recognized as having the capacity to catalyze these forms of empowerment both upwards, towards the Public Administration, and downwards, towards individual citizens. Social planning thus embraces the principles of

participatory democracy, which not only provide the opportunity to update outdated service specifications but also allows the implementation of consensus-building stimulated by direct elections of mayors (Law 81/1993) and regional presidents (Constitutional Law 1/99) (Fedele, 2004).

3. Participation in Governance: models and research

3.1. From Policymaking studies to the study of welfare regimes

As Pavolini (2003) reminds us, the models and methods of regulating welfare (or “welfare regimes”) are diverse. The types of literature and reflections often tend to consider the dimensions of politics, administration, civil society, and social policies separately. For an understanding of decision-making processes and the regulation of local welfare policies, it is useful to draw from the literature on policymaking. Preliminarily, following Pavolini (2003), it is essential to provide a definition of regulation, which broadly encompasses the “ways in which a set of activities or relationships among actors are coordinated, resources connected to them are allocated, and related conflicts, real or potential, are structured (i.e., prevented or resolved).”

In the analysis of relationships among different actors, two lines of study can be identified: those that analyze the decision-making process along the spectrum of pluralism, where public administration is the primary source of regulation, at one end, and neo-corporatism, where private entities self-regulate without state interference, at the other end; and those that refer to the concept of policy network, interpreting public policies as the result of interaction among a relatively stable set of public and private actors (Pavolini, 2003).

In pluralism, the system is characterized by a multitude of actors competing to exert pressure on the decision-making process in fragmented and disjointed interest representation. In neo-corporatism, the decision-making process tends toward consensual relations through stable and restricted relationships with coordinated and almost monopolistic organizations that are also directly involved in the management of interventions. The pluralist approach updates the previous assumptions by assuming that interest groups may acquire different positions, with some generally being favored due to the availability of resources, information, and knowledge. Neo-corporatism, on the other hand, assumes a more dynamic relationship between the state and interest groups and between

these groups and society: first, the state can influence the aggregation and functioning of groups, and second, these groups are not only vehicles for transmitting the interests of their members but can also influence these interests. Regarding the concept of a Policy network, Pavolini emphasizes its attempt to incorporate (neo)pluralist and neo-corporatist analyses and distinguishes between two concepts: issue networks, characterized by a wide variety of actors loosely involved in the decision-making process and poorly coordinated, and policy communities, on the contrary, involve a limited number of organizations formally recognized by the public actor and fully engaged in policy development. Among the interpretative frameworks are also those derived from sociological neo-institutionalism, in which actors act according to principles of appropriateness and formal or informal rules considered acquired.

These interpretative frameworks appear particularly appropriate for understanding the dynamics that take place in decision-making arenas related to the planning of local welfare, especially since, according to other authors, decision-making and co-design processes range from genuinely broad and widespread participation to a “managerial” level of limited professional partnerships (Somerville, 2011). Paci (2008) also highlights the risk of creating new spaces of particularism. Local policymaking is well-suited for the development of an analysis of participatory mechanisms at different levels among public actors, citizens, and the third sector, especially because the latter, as mentioned, can play the dual role of service provider and promoter of civil society participation.

3.2. The main models of analysis

Following Ciarini's (2006) reasoning, several models belonging to the conceptual frameworks seen earlier become evident. Within the neo-institutional approaches, Elisabetta Gualmini (1997) has proposed a model that intersects the strength (or cohesion) of the government with the strength (or cohesion) of representative organizations. In the matrix, four quadrants are articulated as follows: the classic neo-corporatist model, with strongly coordinated actors and stable relations between the public actor and social parties; the policy-making model, characterized by weak public actors and organized and influential social parties; the induced consultation model, where the state tries to expand consensus by including organizations in the policy process; and finally, in the ritualized consultation, weak public and private actors attempt to legitimize each other in consultation, with

equally weak results on the political agenda. The limitation of this model is that it refers to the analysis of consultation processes with trade unions between the 1970s and 1990s, but it already provides some elements that can be found in later elaborations closer to "welfare regimes."

The most suitable interpretative framework for local governance seems to be the "Policy network" because it combines broad and decentralized deliberative arenas with the relational and communicative dimension, including the element of political leadership. Leadership has the challenging task of organizing composite coalitions, especially because the roles in the new legislation are not very clear (Paci, 2008). The L. 328/2000 indeed looks at a networked and cooperative model with a complex set of actors contributing to defining interventions with public direction. It is no coincidence that the recent debate on Policymaking is shifting towards the study of relationships in local consultation arenas, in the local "organizational field" (Paci, 2008). In these processes, which are also about "institution-building," each actor plays its role, which can be that of promoting innovation but also defending the existing structure (Paci, 2008).

Within the relational models, Ranci (1999) developed a matrix that intersects the extent of public responsibility in service provision and the administration's dependence on private providers. The intersection of these factors generates four quadrants: collaborative, dual, public-dominated, and private-dominated. From here, the author derives three additional models of local welfare regulation: a subsidiary model, in which Third-sector organizations provide public services and assume responsibility, heavily dependent on public funding; a public-dominated model, where public intervention is supplemented by that of the third sector, and public funding does not imply excessive dependence on nonprofit entities, preserving their specific characteristics; finally, a plural model (between the dual and private-dominated quadrants), involving competition among service providers, with Third-sector entities playing a prominent role due to their nonprofit and independent nature. Subsequently, the model was reformulated specifically concerning the welfare mix (Ascoli and Ranci, 2003) with the redefinition of the four models: the model of active subsidiarity, attributable to Germany, in which the third sector plays a prominent role in both social service provision and planning, with a predominance of public funding; the model of third-sector predominance, typical of Italy and Spain, characterized by the crucial role of the third sector in the field of care and assistance services, with low levels of public spending; the model, attributable to

France, of public predominance, with a prevalence of public provision over the third sector; finally, the model of market predominance characterizes the British case, where state intervention in welfare is limited. Even the subsidiarity and involvement in the Policymaking model follow national institutional and welfare traditions.

Pavolini (2003), looking simultaneously at the level of political programming and service implementation, has identified four modes of interaction at the municipal welfare level: the vendor model, in which private actors compete for service provision and remain outside the programming process; the mutual accommodation model, where collaboration between the local authority and private actors occurs within particularistic channels, which then assume extensive functions in service provision with limited competitive mechanisms; the negotiation model, which involves participation in policy-making and planning by organizations, with more stable relations over time between the public and private sectors and limited competition; finally, the accreditation model in which the public actor maintains regulatory power in preselecting providers and then delegates the choice of accredited providers to users.

3.3. Types of Participation

To transition from an analysis of actors' strategies in the planning and management of services to one that addresses the dynamics of participation and their degrees of development in local decision-making arenas, following Ciarini (2006), we can recall the work of D'Albergo (2005) on participatory practices that characterized the construction of the General Regulatory Plan in the city of Rome. The model is constructed by intersecting social interactions among system actors (aggregative or deliberative) and the role that participatory practices play within the political-institutional system (consultative or decision-making). Four models emerge from this framework:

The aggregative model is characterized by negotiation practices among vested interests and a recognized decision-making role for participating actors.

The decisional-deliberative model: In this model, involved parties play a decision-making role, but instead of negotiation, there is a mechanism for building shared opinions (deliberative).

The deliberative-consultative model: While maintaining a deliberative process, institutions take into account the orientations provided in a consultative capacity.

The aggregative-consultative model: This model involves negotiation-type interactions with purely consultative recognition.

As mentioned before, in local-level policy-making, among the determining factors for the type of participation, the political-administrative leadership is crucial, especially since the direct election of the mayor has shifted the dynamics of consensus between the administration and the citizenry, eroding the traditional mediation mechanisms of political parties and city councillors (Paci, 2008). On the other hand, we find the Third Sector, within which various dynamics exist, indicating varying degrees of cohesion and coordination.

In Paci's (2008) research, an interpretative framework is defined that intertwines two factors: the degree of institutionalization of participatory procedures and the degree of integration within the associative fabric. This framework leads to four types of participation:

The particularistic participation model, characterized by informal relations promoted by the political level and a poorly integrated associative fabric, resulting in the formation of particularistic networks.

The open participation model: In this model, a highly integrated Third Sector engages with the Public Administration within deinstitutionalized mechanisms.

The incremental participation model: The presence of leadership oriented towards the formal construction of participation stimulates the coordination of a broad but still poorly organized associative fabric.

The institutionalized participation model: This model features strong political-institutional leadership capable of guiding the policy process and collaborating with an organized Third Sector capable of coordination. This is facilitated by the presence of new institutional mechanisms that promote effective participation.

Conclusions

In conclusion, from this brief study, two key interpretations seem to emerge. Firstly, both at the national and local levels, welfare models, as well as institutional models, tend to persist through various phases and despite external influences. National and subnational traditions appear to strongly influence even the most recent experiments and developments.

Secondly, in attempting to provide a schematic representation, national welfare models and local participation models seem to operate along two axes: on one hand, there's the axis between the universalistic model and the corporate-occupational model, and on the other (as Paci (2008) suggests), there's the axis between a model of informal relations and a more institutionalized model oriented towards governance.

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