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Stream 15. Social Assistance and Activation Measures: Mechanisms and Impacts

The Dark Side of the Moon
Generative Mechanisms and Perverse effects in the Implementation of Italian Poverty Reduction Policies

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Italian reduction poverty policies

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The last 20 years

1. **Permanent dualism**
2. **Non-universalism** (categorical measures and selected universalism)
3. **Conditionality**
4. **Work inclusion** and/or social inclusion
5. **Children**

The evolution of national measures

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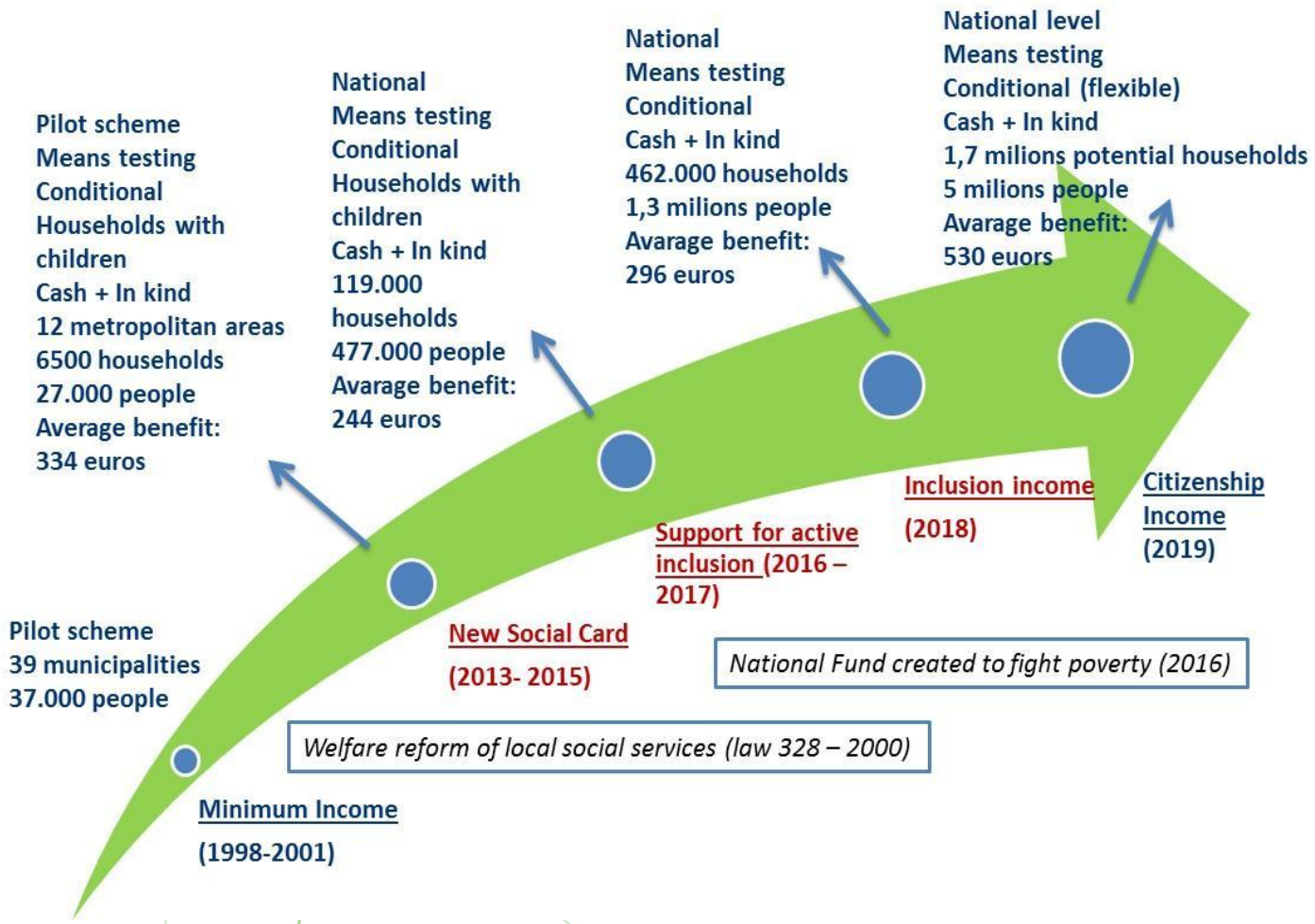

Poverty in Italy - 2018

10%	1 million	30.3%
Families in absolute poverty in the South of Italy	Minors in absolute poverty (12.6%)	Percentage of absolute poverty in non Italian citizens
5.8% in North 5.3% in Center	10.1% in the Center of Italy 15.7% in the South of Italy	Italian citizens 6.4%

ISTAT, 2019

Theoretical framework

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1. **Program theory** and Theory based evaluation (Weiss, 2007 and Rogers, 2007)

2. **Implementation** process (Wildawsky, 1984)

3. **Street-level bureaucrats**, Street level workers and discretion (Lipsky, 1980 and Brodkin, 2013)

4. **Street-level analysis** in Policy Evaluation (Brodkin, 2003)

The analytic challenge is to understand what is produced by policy, how, and, most importantly, why.

Research questions

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Paradigms in poverty reduction policies at local/regional level

- How do they impact local governance and street level workers practices?

Social workers and **implementation**

- What is the role of SLW in the implementation of minimum income support schemes?
- What strategies do they adopt?

Social workers as a **policy actor** and **agents of change**

- How have changes influenced the tasks and behaviors of social workers in their concrete work with beneficiaries?

Methods and field work

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New Social Card (CAS) - «Evaluation» process (2015)

Milano, Bologna, Firenze, Bari, Palermo, Venice, Verona, Napoli, Catania, Torino, Genova

Semi-structured interviews

- Ministry of Welfare
- Italian Social Security Institute (INPS)
- Officials and their staff

Focus groups

- 11 Focus groups
- 87 welfare practitioners
- 20 Hours of recorded and transcribed discussions
- Use of Atlas.ti software with theoretical reference to *Grounded Theory* and the *Hermeneutic Process*

Support for Active Inclusion (SIA) – Implementation analysis (2017)

Bologna
Trieste
Bari

Semi-structured interviews

- Regional officials and their staff

Focus groups

- 3 Focus groups
- 20 welfare practitioners involved

Inclusion Income (ReI) - Explorative analysis (2018)

Pomezia Social District

- Active observers in meetings between services and recipients
- Developing a local database on welfare recipients

Problems in managing interventions: Conditionality, Level of benefit and Governance

1. Difficulty of combining **practice** with **conditionality**
2. Regulation vs **Discretionality**
3. Integration as **“minimum level of performance”**
4. **Categories of beneficiaries**

Street level workers:
Perverse effects and Generative mechanisms

	Perverse effects (problems)	Generative mechanisms (learning)
Conditionality	Not conducive to the building of a **relationship of trust**	Working with **different/new kinds of welfare recipients**
Integration (social and employment services)	Different **linguistic codes** between different services	**New types of working partnerships**
Governance (national/regional/local)	Complex **management of information flow** and **time lag**	**Strategic role of regions**

Conclusion

Highlights for Research and Evaluation

1. **Evaluating** the **impact of social assistance** and activation measure in poverty reduction policies
2. **Opportunities** from **street-level research**
3. **Dilemmas** of street level workers and **strategies** in **welfare work**
4. **Activation** strategies for **local communities**
5. …and the **beneficiaries**?

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