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

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

Pilot scheme
Means testing
Conditional
Households with children
Cash + In kind
12 metropolitan areas
6500 households
27,000 people
Average benefit: 334 euros

National Means testing
Conditional
Households with children
Cash + In kind
119,000 households
477,000 people
Average benefit: 244 euros

National Means testing
Conditional
Cash + In kind
462,000 households
1,3 millions people
Average benefit: 296 euros

National level
Means testing
Conditional (flexible)
Cash + In kind
1,7 millions potential households
5 millions people
Average benefit: 530 euros

Inclusion income
(2018)

Support for active inclusion (2016 – 2017)

New Social Card
(2013- 2015)

Citizenship Income
(2019)

Welfare reform of local social services (law 328 – 2000)

National Fund created to fight poverty (2016)
# Poverty in Italy - 2018

<table>
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<tr>
<th>10%</th>
<th>1 million</th>
<th>30.3%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families in absolute poverty in the South of Italy</td>
<td>Minors in absolute poverty (12.6%)</td>
<td>Percentage of absolute poverty in non Italian citizens</td>
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<td>5.8% in North 5.3% in Center</td>
<td>10.1% in the Center of Italy 15.7% in the South of Italy</td>
<td>Italian citizens 6.4%</td>
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ISTAT, 2019
The analytic challenge is to understand what is produced by policy, how, and, most importantly, why.
Research questions

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

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

- **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)**

- **Semi-structured interviews**
  - Regional officials and their staff

- **Focus groups**
  - 3 Focus groups
  - 20 welfare practitioners involved

**Inclusion Income (ReI) - Exploratory analysis (2018)**

- 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

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