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# Social Workers between Care, Proximity and Community

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Social Policy Change between Path Dependency and Innovation

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- Dimensions of analysis\_

1. Territorial welfare involves different policies and actors

→ The role of social workers in territorial planning of services with third sector.

2. Political dimension of social work

→ How the mediation role of social workers changes, such as professional skills and emerging vocational training contents.

- Presentation\_

1. The territorial dimension of welfare policies and the place-based approach
2. The third dimension of community social workers
3. Situated knowledge and policy practice evaluation
4. Research perspective



“The Cure” (Emanuele Orma Mannisi), Ponticelli - Naples



# The territorial dimension of welfare policies and the place-based approach

Care and proximity work + the social infrastructure of services: **how does social work change?**

1. A different approach focused on capacities, of **people and places**.
2. A **method of programming and governance** of local welfare, considering:
  - ❖ Access.
  - ❖ Upscaling.
  - ❖ Generativity.
3. Cohesive welfare policies, social infrastructure and **the role of social work at local level**.  
→ **Two cases: “Micro-aree” in Trieste + QuBi Program in Milan.**



## *Make a place-based approach in local welfare*

1. Reorganize territorial services based on **mechanisms of rescaling** between state and public actors.
2. Social construction of information and **data analysis**.
3. Assume the **territory** as a reference for policies.
4. Address in a **targeted and integrated way** a set of problems - social, physical, economic - in delimited and fragile areas.
5. Building community welfare to counter the traditional limits of local welfare through **citizens voice**.
6. Co-planning is a **process** that must be supported.
7. Municipalities and planning offices need to redefining their role, acting, and thinking of themselves **as facilitators (and not as regulators)** of community processes.
8. New services and **new professional figures** in response to new needs.



# The third dimension of community social workers

- Social innovation mechanisms - social workers are «agents of change», between professionalism and SLB.
- The relevance of context - often overlooked by research.

Tab. 1 - Types of social workers from the perspective of local welfare with *place-based approach*

	<b>Strong Social Innovation</b>	<b>Weak Social Innovation</b>
<b>Local Welfare with place-based approach</b>	<b>Community social worker</b> (policy practice as “political soul” and policy change)	<b>Street-level worker</b> (discretion as agency)
<b>Local Welfare without place-based approach</b>	<b>Situated agent</b> (innovation broker and advocacy strategies)	<b>Professional social worker</b> (bureaucrat)



# Situated knowledge and policy practice evaluation

How do social workers become agents - reflective and critical - of change, capable of deconstructing policy practices, promoting social innovation, affecting decision-making processes and communities?

1. Community welfare approach and different use of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP).
2. EBP must be both technical and instrumental, with a focus on «what works».
3. Working from a community perspective asks to social workers to invest in knowledge of contexts and in the analysis of what is done.
4. Integrating professional actions with research and using evaluation with “street level” approach and positive terms.



# Research perspective

“It is not the economy that drives the social, but the opposite”

1. Analyse the **interdependencies between local welfare and social work** to improve content of policies.
2. Study in deep **local welfare policies and community processes where social workers are involved**, strengthening local actors, networks, and infrastructures through a participatory and co-planning method - **with data analysis at local level**.
3. Strengthen and use the systems of **monitoring and evaluation as a strategic analysis of local welfare policies** (and European resources).





Thank you

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