

Long abstract – Open section

Community Welfare and Cultural Welfare

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This paper seeks to explore the unfamiliar way of new and more recent changes in Italy welfare. The aim is to provide food for thought in order to stimulate debate on the current condition of the welfare system in Italy (the observation of economic policies, now being revised and changed, in favour of public or private contexts –in agreement with public systems– that provide services is left out here). However, some space is also devoted to an in-depth examination of new welfare models, in particular, community welfare and cultural welfare.

The puzzle that inspires this paper is whether community welfare and cultural welfare are new welfare schemes that are struggling to find fertile ground and space for action in Italy. However, in recent years, thanks also to the crisis of traditional welfare, a space has opened up that allows us to glimpse possible applications of such systems –in public-private partnership combinations or in entrusting to associations of the Third Sector in an exclusively private form.

Does this represent the terminal stage of the decay of traditional Italian welfare? Or is this the starting point of a new, far from being decadent, phase of transition of welfare?

Starting from scouting the literature review, mainly from other disciplines, we have built a solid theoretical framework that allows exploring and defining the two welfare models. On this relies the impact analysis that these new emerging models have on traditional welfare.

Both models are part of bottom-up social policy.

Community welfare is a recent development of *welfare-mix* models. Originally meant as European community welfare, referring to the European Community, now it represents the model of welfare that applies to and originates from a local community. It provides the so-called “services to the person”. What is innovative is that –by being part of a set of bottom-up policies– beneficiaries also become stakeholders that are actively part of policymaking. Moreover, in a long-term period, community welfare affects positively public expenditures since it doesn’t rely on public offices and finances, but on the Third sector private initiatives.

Cultural welfare is a new model for promoting the well-being and health of individuals and communities through practices rooted in visual and performing arts, as well as cultural heritage. It involves cultural activities that the World Health Organization recognises as particularly effective in promoting health and well-being. This understanding is based on its capacity to operate through the trilateral collaboration and integration among health institutions, social policy, and cultural systems. With its implementation, significant effects are observed on the quality of life, enhancing it. Furthermore, it does not have an economic impact on the welfare budget, as it is precisely a type of self-sustaining model, likewise for community welfare.

To sum up, these new and emerging models of welfare, without affecting public expenditure or involving public offices and avoiding the bureaucratic impasse, provide more efficient welfare

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services to citizens in local communities. Moreover, people in the communities take part, with their own needs, ideas, and suggestions in the policymaking process. Unlike the most recent active welfare policies implemented by Italian governments over the past years, community welfare and cultural welfare seem not only to provide support to traditional welfare, but also to aim at bridging the gap in a fragmented society.

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