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Tematica vincolata: Coprodurre il welfare locale: collaborazioni pubblico privato e comunità nel welfare sociale in ottica comparata / Coproducing local welfare policy: public-private partnerships and local communities in comparative perspective

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Co-projecting in welfare services for migrants: a study on three international cases.

State of the art

Traditions of Public-private partnerships, that is the collaboration and agreement of two or more private and public actors on a specific topic, have a long tradition, dating mid 16th century (Schaeffer & Loveridge, 2001). It is only in more recent times, instead, that this field of institutional action has broadened its horizons and policy design tools with the so-called practice of co-projecting, that is the joint production and joint management of services. This helped to overcome one-sided shaped services, aiming at comparing, discussing and finding an agreement between all stakeholders of a given service. (Rossi & Colombo, 2019).

Over the years, each State has implemented its own norms to legitimate and regulate those practices. In Italy the first mention of co-projecting is dated in 2000, laying foundations to possibilities to co-operate for designing innovative and advanced projects (Fazzi, 2021). Later on with the Third Sector Reform, in 2017, with its article 55 defining spaces for joint administrations, and the 2021 guidelines, co-projecting is nowadays in Italy a popular practice. Nevertheless, literature differentiates co-projecting as a way to operate together and find agreements and, on the other hand, as a mere administrative tool based on juridical norms (Rossi & Colombo, 2019). While little interest will be given at the latter form, it's the former way of contemplating co-projecting, involving informal dynamics, and convergence of interest and point of view within the actors that will be the focus of intending those processes.

Also, while the literature on public and private partnerships (PPP) and co-projecting focuses mainly on structural diversities between public and private actors, emphasizing discourses on the – experienced or advisable - overcoming of the “bureaucratic paradigm” (Waring et. al, 2013, Guidi, 2019), there is also a need for studies that focus instead on private actors’ need to reform and joint changes.

Partnerships aimed at designing and eventually providing welfare services involve, necessarily, a joint of two or more different organizations for which uncertainty plays a fundamental role in shaping their behaviors (Rousseau et al., 1998). Moreover, partnerships made of public and private actors are likely to arise conflict related to different amounts of financial risk to be taken from each part. Also, depending on partners’ structural model, it can be more or less “tiring” to participate in tables for co-projecting (Marocchi, 2020).

As ways to reduce uncertainty in inter-organizational contexts, trust-building can be considered one of it (Schilke & Cook, 2013), together with processes of both intra and inter-organizational sensemaking that is, the processes through which people and organizations work to understand issues that are confusing or unknown. This is why it is interesting to analyze how trust-building processes and sensemaking of the other partners and the partnership itself are held either at the design and realizing stage.

Research objectives

This research aims at investigating the dynamics that allow, facilitate, or obstacle co-production processes in local welfare for migrants. The first aspect of the effectiveness of co-production

is the way in which the partnership (more specifically, the public-private partnership) is built and maintained. This includes forms of formal and non-formal relationships within members of each institutional actor involved, the potential creation of networks of knowledge exchange and inter-organizational learning, possible information and power asymmetries, good and bad practices of trust building, mutual processes of sensemaking in regard to the counterparts and in regard to the partnership itself. We will also consider the fulfillment of the project itself with its addresses,

in order to stress potential variables in the dynamics of success/unsuccess of joint production of local welfare for migrants.

We will focus on three main areas of both public and private organizational action:

- the intra-organizational area of each organization participating in the partnership (both private and public ones),
- the inter-organizational area, namely the physical and metaphorical space where different organizations meet in order to co-project and co-operate,
- the *extra* organizational area, that is the arena in which the organization(s) face the

beneficiaries of the project and the community.

This diagram-like schematization is exclusively for explanatory aims. In fact, these three areas of action are not considered in watertight compartments, but rather in continuous interconnection and mutual influence with each other. In organization theory the intra-organizational interaction has traditionally been kept separated from inter-organizational ones, especially in learning (Holmqvist, 2013) and sensemaking processes (e.g. Maitlis, S. & Christianson, M., 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). Building over these approaches, we want to move forward and integrate all different actors participating in the partnership, in a way that takes into account all the different level of action overlapping at any moment. This will generate a deeper understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the co-projecting processes,

Theoretical and methodological framework

The research develops from a post-structuralist framework. According to post-structuralism, the aim of the research itself is not to demonstrate that anything that had been represented and reported trustfully corresponds to each small particle of reality under study (Giorgi et al., 2013). On the contrary, emphasis is given on portraying voices and experiences of the singularities who take part in the research. When using this approach, one should keep in mind the subjective, partial, and socially influenced nature of each narrative – being them the participants' or the researcher's ones.

We will combine some aspects of the “narrative approach” to organization studies developed by Czarniawska (2000, 2008), with some other elements presented below. According to many organization theorists, communications and information flows are the cores of the organizations (Fuhse, 2015). These approaches stem from Luhman's theories of organizations, which recognize in communications the middle for those entities to distinguish themselves from the surrounding out-group and, therefore, the way to autopoiesis – to “auto” create themselves. Narrative approaches make on this sense more level of differentiation of communications: simple notes or lists, even if considered as communications, are not included in the narrative realm. Once the stories are identified, the second phase on the narrative approach is to identify the ones that are orally and/or writtenly transmitted: those only are the organizational narratives taken into account.

Analyzing narratives from within or between organizational arenas allows to have a simultaneous glimpse on structural factors as well as individual ones. Narratives are man-made and each and every one of them reflects membership categorizations and other organization-related points of view, together with individual ones.

We will broaden the above described approach with feminist-grounded theory of standpoint (Stoetzled & Yunal-Davis, 2002). This will allow to underline relationships

between the physical and metaphorical place the producer of the narratives stands out from and the narratives themselves. Each agent – narrative agent - is socially and culturally situated. Their gender, their status, the role played inside the organization itself and/or in the partnership, their personal and professional relations with the other individualities involved in the narratives – in one word, their standpoint - are all factors to be taken into account when analyzing someone's narrative.

As Czarniawska (2000) alerts, there will be inevitably many narratives of the same text, and also, many different narratives may report the same development but plotting them differently. Firstly, according to post-structuralist paradigms, narratives do not reflect real-life events, but personal interpretations of it. On the other hand, this eventuality is a practical way to observe opposition/informative asymmetries between interlocutors. This will allow, for example, to highlight possible structural causes of practitioners- led street-level bureaucracy. The researcher's role in this approach is not the one to find agreements between different narratives, as being respectful here means not to be truthful to narratives, but to take full responsibility of the narratives concocted. Moreover, the voices of the field do not speak for themselves (*ibidem*); rather, it is the author/researcher that makes them communicate, but at her/his own condition, stressing once more the importance to reflect also on the researcher's standpoint.

Recently, the heterogeneous group of the so-called "critical management studies" (Iacono et al., 2012) is gaining popularity. While not focusing on one specific approach, we'll keep the general Foucaultian set-up of power dynamics/asymmetries analysis from these studies, with a focus on spatial and material drivers of power relations.

For the achievement of the objectives of the research, mainly qualitative approaches/methods will be included in the research design. However, following reminders about the relevance of the use of mixed methods (Amaturo e Punziano, 2016), some qualitative data will be analyzed for better contextualization and understanding of the phenomena under study. We will consider an heterogeneous bouquet of fieldwork tools, combining methods commonly used in social sciences with others traditionally used in organizational research. We'll make an accurate choice of each tool accordingly to the need of the different fieldwork and the different aims.

We will start by analyzing calls for co-projecting, reports of round tables, and other written documents, as the first form of narrative. We will use the tool of diaries with practitioners and spokespersons – both within , as well as the spokespersons/representatives, will be asked to write a short diary for each working day of a typical weekly schedule. In addition to this, representatives will be asked to write short diaries at the end of each round table they participated in. The diaries will not only be acknowledged, as data themselves according to Czarniawska (2008), but the everyday situations reported in diaries will also serve as a basis for designing life-like situations that will be the ground of vignette technique-based (Finch, 1987; Hughes & Huby, 2004) semi-structured interviews. Vignettes, a sort of fictional but realistic short story, are usually designed to have insight into participant's perspectives regarding their everyday personal or professional activity,

reducing the influence of social desirability (ibidem). Moreover, this tool is also considered to be useful for stimulating self-evaluation processes and it's also used as a training tool (Finch, 1987). As a complement of the set of data expected from the above-mentioned tools, short ethnographic observation will be held during round-tables and within the partnership-resulted migrant local services.

Research design

The research will have international openness and will be based on the comparison of three case-study of co-projected and PPP-realized services for the reception and the integration of migrants and refugees within local communities.

Decentralization processes in Italy gave regions key role on welfare management, jointing political routing made at State level and impelmentetions, held at municipalities level (Ferrera, 2008). Not only welfare policies (Kazepov, 2009) and the way they are provided varies a lot from region to region in Italy, but also dynamics of regulation of public-private relationships (Rossi & Colombo, 2019) do. In order to extend institutional learning and create deeper-level comparisons, we propose to utilize two case-study drawn from two different Italian regions. Cases to be studied, for reasons that will be explained later on, still have to be identified. However, an example of possible "political stage" of the case studies may be considered the neighboring but radically different regions of Marche and Emilia Romagna. Those two regions, indeed, are put on opposite poles on which regards policies' symbolic and political value and have, therefore, different priorities in regards to migrant welfare. Allocations of funds to municipalities also differs on those two regions, as well as action is articulated in different institutional sub-units (Costantini e Bonacini, 2021).

Our comparative study will gain international focus with the inclusion of "Samen Hier" ("Here Toghether") project as a 3rd case study. Samen hier is a nationwide/locally-held project in the Netherlands, which originated from a pilot project launched by the human-right promoter international organization Justice and Peace Netherlands. After the success of the pilot phase in 4 different Dutch municipalities, Samen Hier became a nation-wide project in 2020, aiming at promoting resettlement of refugees inside dutch communities. Currently on the local level the Municipality of Rotterdam and the COA (central organ for reception of asylum seekers) are the public partners of the project, while JPNL (Justice and Peace Netherlands) and VWN (Vluchtelingenwerk, Dutch council for refugees) are the private stakeholders. Beside the relationships between those partners, considered all as leading and significant actors on nationwide panorama, another interesting part in this project is the main relevance of the local communities and

private citizens that open their houses and welcome in their places and in their communities single refugees and families.

Italian local welfare for migrants – especially regarding integration projects –, unlike other “traditional” welfare areas such as elderly care or disability, is often not planned for the long term, due to limited-time funding . Therefore, it’s hard to identify at the present time which projects will be ongoing at the time this field-research will take place. Selection of the case studies will be done accordingly to Rossi and Colombo (2019), adopting a theoretical sampling with the following criteria:

- early stage of projecting, in order to be able to monitor both the projecting and the actualizing phase;
- one or many public partners and one big private actor VS one or many public partners and many private small and medium sized actors;
- partners already co-operated VS first time partnership

As an example of local co-projected services for migrants we can take, to give an idea, local projects nationally funded for reception and integration as well as, on the other hand, EU-funded projects such as AMIF project included in 2021-2017 planning.

The openness and willingness of the organizations and the partnerships to participate in the study will play a key role for the achievement of the research objectives. For this reason, in the research timeline we planned to make a recognition of many new-coming calls for co-projecting within the first year. We plan to clearly identify the case studies by the start of the second year of the program.

Expected result

On 2021-2027 Italian Ministry for Work and Social Policies’ planning based on Next Generation EU funding’s objectives, big emphasis is given to the cooperation between welfare actors. Studying street-level and decisional level dynamics of public-private partnerships aimed at performing services for migrants and refugees allows to look at how those processes and services may be improved and what could be instead taken as best-practice to be shared with other institutions and partnerships. This can be serve as improvement in order to fulfill nation-wide expected objectives. Since partnerships outcomes are related to huge complexity in terms of variables, this research can be a contribute for literature to outline some variables for success and unsuccess of partnership not only in the limited field of migrant welfare, but also for what concerns other welfare areas.

On the other hand, considering the Italian state of the art of the reception field and claiming for its “original” mission, can be said that this study can serve as inspiration for the formulation of reception services designed outside the box of the public actor as governor and private actor(s) as implementing body.

Moreover, the comparison within different European countries can enlarge public-private partnerships understanding above the national level and enrich institutional learning. Findings will not only be accessible for academics; the research results will be indeed elaborated into a policy brief, useful to each actor attempting to join a PPP for projecting welfare services.

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