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**Law 328/2000: urban governance
and public-private relations in the
city of Rome from the welfare
reform to today**

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Law 328/2000: urban governance and public-private relations in the city of Rome from the welfare reform to today

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Since the 1980s, a change in the socio-economic conditions that characterized the previous thirty years of prosperity has been registered throughout Europe. Different welfare systems have been put under various pressures and taken a range of directions in response to change: the private sector has been given an increasing role. The reform of Italian welfare - law n. 328 of 2000 - draws up a system of social policies and services based on a subsidiarity between public and private sectors. This institutional construction presupposes the public's ability to manage the overall governance of the system - programming, direction, regulation, integration, and control - without incurring the risks prevalent in the private interests, upon the social rights of citizenship. This article intends to investigate how law 328 has been applied at the Roman city level since the time of its approval to the current day. In particular, the ability of public players to plan policies and manage the overall system of governance, along with the role of the third sector in the light of the new regulatory framework created by the reform are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, a change in the socio-economic conditions that characterized the previous prosperous thirty years has been felt throughout Europe. New social risks emerge (Fargion and Gualmini 2014; Paci 2005; Saraceno 2006; Esping-Andersen et al. 2006) which welfare systems are unprepared to respond to. The need for financial equilibrium has become increasingly pressing (Andreotti and Mingione, 2016). With the change in the socioeconomic context, contradictions and tensions that existed in traditional Fordist systems (Benassi and Mingione 2017) emerged in all their strength, resulting in a long wave of reforms (Palier 2013; Pavolini and Ascoli 2012) aiming to reduce social spending and, albeit differently from country to country, to favour a gradual transition from direct public management to a private one (Lodigiani 2013). This has

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particularly concerned the areas of social assistance and social policies, however, not only where reforms aimed at cutting performances have been drawn (Pavolini and Ranci, 2015) but also where ways of conceiving social intervention, supply-side mix, and the changed nature of social risks have been reconfigured. In the face of these changes, different welfare systems are put under pressure and undertake different approaches to change: rescaling (Kazepov 2010), retrenchment, recalibration (Hemerijck, 2013), and conservation are some of the strategies put in place to try adapting to the changed context. Especially since the nineties, new combinations of welfare mixes (Bertin 2013; Kazepov 2013) have been experimented with, which give a growing role to the private sector. Italy is fully involved in this process of transformation, and the 2000 welfare reform's framework law (Ferrera 2012) draws up a system of social policies and services based on subsidiarity between the public and the private sectors. Private companies have been called not only to manage the services - as increasingly happened during the previous decade - but also and more importantly to co-design the system (Bifulco and Facchini 2013). The different territorial stakeholders thus become co-protagonists in the construction and implementation of territorial policies. This plurality of players now involved in the new welfare mix makes it crucial for the public's ability to take on the role of «regulator», and as a guide, and process coordinator. Within this framework, governance of local socio-welfare policies requires a capacity to plan, regulate, organize, control, and provide organizational rules guiding the actions of those involved (Vitale 2015). The challenge of governance is a more delicate issue as increasing sections of power slip away from the national and local administrator: globalization, migratory flows, and transformation of productive structures are just some of the factors that have an increasing and exogenous impact on welfare systems. With the 2000 reform, the programmatic level is shifted downwards (Polizzi, Tajani and Vitale 2013), to make it more responsive to the constantly changing needs of the territory. Law 328 removed many barriers to the gathering of services within the body of the administration, with a determined push towards the outside, even in respect to functions which until then had been considered of exclusive public prerogative. This «openness to the private» does not only characterize the Italian context: it is part of a general process of European systems' transformation (Borioni 2011). It changes the structure of the relationships between players and this is for some authors the most important transformation: «Each regulatory model presupposes a specific form of coordination between policy-makers, within which only certain relations and organization modes assume a specific sense. Moving from one regulatory model to another implies a more general change in the relationship between public and private, involving institutional, political and cultural changes» (Ascoli and Ranci, 2003). After law 328, the governance of the system - intended as the ability to program, adjust (Piga 2012), coordinate, integrate, and evaluate - become a core business of the public actor, compared to the more traditional function of the service provider. Governance declined not only at a regulatory level, but as an organizational field of contingent interaction between social, public and private actors. As emphasized by Massimo Paci (2008), «the regulation of local welfare in our country (...) is not only a legal-institutional architecture, resulting from the national or regional legislative

statements, but it is also and above all an organizational field of relations between sectors (public and private) ».

The concrete mode of this relationship - and the public's ability to govern the system of social policies and services (Vitale 2015) - is thus central to ensure that the implementation of the reform does not create distortions. In the absence of a public entity capable of formulating strategies that are strongly anchored to collective interests and suitable for addressing social risks and problems, and capable of using public and private resources by finalizing them to the relaunching of social citizenship, the real risk is that «opening to private feeds a downward trend of public irresponsibility towards a social citizenship that in Italy already suffers from many frailties» (Bifulco, 2015).

The transition from the old to the new model - based on «piani di zona²» and new arrangements in public-private relations - in the city of Rome has already been investigated at the municipal level (the urban level is divided into 15 sub-areas, called «municipalities») in research from 2008³ (Paci 2008). This was conducted by a team from La Sapienza University of Rome, which focused upon the participation of players from the third sector at the local welfare institutions following the approval of Law 328/2000. It reconstructs how members interact to build a model that may explain the degree of inclusion of private actors in welfare programming and the influence that such inclusion has on policy decisions. The implementation of the new set is influenced both by the level of internal cohesion of the third sector and by the formalization and structuring of the co-programming process, which in particular depends upon the personality - leadership ability - of the politician in turn called to achieve the L. 328 dictate. This research, however, limits the field of the survey at the municipal level.

THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This article intends to investigate how Law 328/00 has been applied at the local level in Rome since its approval to the current day. In particular, the ability of public entities to plan policies and to manage the overall governance of the system, since «precisely when austerity and social issues destabilize with greater strength local welfare (..) the ability to govern through the programming of social policies becomes even more salient and necessary. Different government styles correspond to very different outcomes for the well-being and protection of citizens» (Vitale 2015).

This research will retrace the history of co-programming, which is perhaps the most significant innovation of the law, in the city and the capacity of the public actor - limited

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The *piani di zona* are local social plans, where the *zona* corresponds to health district. Rome has fifteen health districts, which coincide with the fifteen municipalities (the areas Rome is divided in).

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The research was conducted by a team of La Sapienza University of Rome, consisting mainly of authors of the Department of Innovation and Society (Dies). Research has allowed the publication of the volume: Paci, Massimo. 2008. *Local Welfare and Participatory Democracy*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

to the political component, in the person of social policy makers - to handle the governance of the system.

This survey then extends to the more complex private-public relationship resulting from co-management and the co-design of services to analyse the role of the third sector in the light of the new regulatory framework created by the reform. This work has been conducted through semi-structured interviews with privileged witnesses and documentary analysis. From the point of view of the methodological approach, this article aims to reconstruct in a diachronic key the relationship between public and private participants involved in the social programming, with special attention paid to the city level. Although most of the programming has in fact been elaborated - in an uncoordinated way - by the municipalities, it is important to consider the metropolitan macro level, because of the persistent influence that it has continued to exert on local (of the municipalities) programming and because it represents the institutional construction which brings together the multiplicity of territorial fragmentation. In doing so, we will adopt a procedural style. We are interested in entering the evolution of public-private relationships, particularly the social factors and the breaks and events that in the Roman context have marked various phases of «piani di zona», including the latter characterized by distortions and corruptive phenomena too.

URBAN SOCIAL PLANNING OF THE LAST SIXTEEN YEARS, FROM THE APPROVING OF WELFARE REFORM IN 2000s TO TODAY

The first government called to implement the welfare reform in the Roman territory was the Veltroni's (centre-left) administration, which was set up in June 2001. The new social policy assessor, Raffaella Milano, developed the idea of drafting a city social regulatory plan, designed to guarantee the overall metropolitan welfare system in its urban dimension, alongside municipal planning, the expression of local autonomy and the recognition of specific territorial needs. On the impetus of the assessor, a pool of external experts were set up to draft the municipal plan over a three-year period between 2002-2004⁴. Milan's choice of entrusting the programming to a group of external consultants instead of the internal department' team was criticized by the public staff, which - although consulted in the drafting of the plan - was seeing this externalization as belittling the role of the public service, both centrally and, subsequently, municipally. The stated aim of the assessor Milano, regarding subcontracting, was to strengthen the relationship between the third sector, in the wake of the driving force given by L. 328, which provided subsidiarity and co-programming of services. Here, however, a first fragility is noted: the public representative, seemingly lacking in the necessary professionalism, contracted out programming to private consultants - albeit of a high profile - which was one of the key roles of the new welfare governance. An interviewee demonstrates that recourse to external experts has not always meant delegating policy

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The plan was approved by the city executive committee in August 2002 and - very lately - made effective by the city council in March 2004, with resolution number 35. Even so obsolete, it is still the only existing social regulatory plan in force (note: a new regulatory plan is currently being drafted).

choices. In the first Social Regulatory Plan, the assessor, Milan and her staff led the whole process and made important decisions, leaving the consultants with a technical role. Also in the second plan, the political bodies were involved. Once the city plan was approved in 2004, the process for drafting the *piani di zona* of the various municipalities started. This stage of the programming is communicated by witnesses as characterized by great vitality: the novelties introduced gave rise to some enthusiasm and desire to innovate. The whole path was backed by a strong investment in training for the staff of the municipalities, the social policy department and the ASL (the local health public utility) followed up by courses accompanied by consultants who guided everyone in the use of the new tools. The basic vision of the plan was to involve and integrate everything that was present in the territory and integrate the social policies with the other local policies. It was a season of great vitality for urban programming, backed by the injection of new funds. The addition of supplementary funds in the earliest years after the approval of the 2000s law was one of the driving forces behind the reform. The relationship between the public and the third sector was very alive. It was a laboratory that analysed the new needs of the territory to design a participatory system. We could define this large initial investment - of time, resources, training and implementing of new processes - as the «start-up» of L.328 on Roman territory. It hasn't however, been accompanied by the appropriate organizational measures that could enable the process to be structured for the long-term - to survive political changes – which could have assured that the most innovative actions envisaged by the plan were implemented, together with the monitoring system and the planned integration – which has never been realized. An executive structure wasn't created that could give continuity to the implementation and monitoring of the plan, with the risk that its application remaining arbitrarily linked to the individual personalities of executives and politicians which change from time to time, and often was completely dropped, nonetheless it is still the only officially approved city social plan. This does not mean that the regulatory plan remained completely inapplicable: many innovations in the services were implemented, giving a shape to the structure of services that still exist to this day in Rome. But the overall governance of the plan and systemic actions - those that needed the greatest political and administrative push as «structural», and thus were harder to implement - were underestimated: they were too difficult to be realized. An interviewee states: «It is not enough to think about innovations within the plans, because it is their implementation process that becomes crucial. The process of applying the changes is itself innovation as it needs real transformations, which need a strong political impetus to overcome the many resistances». This episode was not followed with enough attention by the Veltroni's administration, which gave a strong initial impetus to co-programming and delivering the city's first - and nowadays unique-Roman social regulatory plan, but underestimated the implementation aspects, the systemic actions necessary for a true transformation of the structure of the social policies; these actions, although partially provided within the plan itself, were not realized. It seems to be true what Lescoumes and Le Galés (2007) said: «The focus on programming must not forget the importance of policy implementation».

Following the resignation of the mayor and the resulting city elections in 2008, a new centre-right administration - the mayor being Alemanno - was established with Sveva Belviso as the new assessor of social policies. After approximately six to eight months from the settlement, the assessor decided to develop a new updated regulatory social plan

and assigned the task to one of the external advisors of the previous city program, excepted the policies related to Rome. The outsourcing of the management of the programming process was thus again confirmed. This new plan was drawn up with a participatory method, through a series of meetings that involved different players but the process was not successively politically governed. It took almost three years to get the executive committee's approval in October 2011, an unreasonable long time considering that the drafting and approval of a plan should take a few months at most. This second plan, ready and approved by the executive committee, would have required the approval of the city council to become effective, but it has never been implemented. Here two frailties are manifested: the initial will of the assessor ran aground, once she assumed the role of deputy mayor in 2011 she essentially left the government of social policies in the hands of the department's director and didn't care anymore; and the lack of will - or resistance? - of the Capitoline council was clear too. The plan wasn't even examined and remained a non-entity. On the front of structural actions, the assessor created the office for «Systemic Actions», with the intention of overcoming the previous impasse in the implementation. However, it still provides more coordinating actions than real innovation processes, and the institutional architecture of the Roman social policy system continues to be highly deficient. During this period, the head of the department of social policies was a person who would be afterwards investigated in relation to the corruptive phenomenon called «Mafia Capitale». The lack of political interest in programming could perhaps be explained later, after the corruptive bubble came to light: «programming» is antithesis of «emergency», whereas - in the light of the investigations - we understand that 'emergency' was functional to the illicit system that was under the management of migrants, even minors, and Roma. Missing programs leave an ample space for arbitrary actions, within emergency management.

The post-Alemanno phase, from 2013 to 2015, was characterized by absolute stasis from the point of view of programming. The Belviso's plan - precisely because it was drafted by external consultants, was not politically linked to the Alemanno administration - and could quickly be updated and approved, with the adjustments needed to suit the new centre-left Capitoline administration - with Marino as mayor. However, no progress was made. The first assessor of the social policies of the new administration is described by the interviewees as completely superfluous to the department and the municipalities, so that after continued pressure she was replaced. During her mandate, she did not relate to the internal staff, except for the reform of the home care. The assessor decided to plan a «new system of social care», a supply chain with a range of services to meet the more complex and emerging needs of people, however her resignation interrupted this aspiration as just outlined. Francesca Danese took her place, in full emergency mode due to the emergence of the «Mafia Capitale», scandal that highlighted how parts of the social service providers were corrupt. Danese's mandate was characterized by a continuous management of urgencies, which prevented any structural action: she spoke about a plan of rights to be elaborated, but never even extended the draft. Both the dual responsibility of social and housing policies, and the shortness of the mandate, implied that no strategic progress was made. The situation was further aggravated by the inertia of the Region. Regional Law 38 of 1996 stipulates that there should be a regional social plan every three years, but until the spring of 2017 the only approved regional plan was that of 1999. The regional law of the welfare reform - in the fulfilment of national law 328/2000 - was

approved only in July 2016, with 16 years of delay, and only this spring in 2017' was finally approved as a new regional social plan. Regarding the municipal level, the related councils to the contrary have consistently approved different «piani di zona», with a cadence of three years until 2011 and then every five years. However, this programming has not always been a real innovation process, and sometimes it hasn't run out of its formal fulfilment. As recounted by a municipal social worker regarding the 2011-2015 programming: «The path was attended, with the opening of the tables and the writing of reports entrusted to an external consulting company. However, on a practical level, in my work, I have not felt any difference between «first» and «after» the drafting of the new *piani di zona*». The absence of a comprehensive unifying strategy has affected the social system of the city, where each municipality has had its own management; and as a whole the Roman territory is undergoing profound inequalities and differentiations.

This negative evolution seemed to have a reversal between 2016 and 2017. The regional law of welfare reform in application to the national law n. 328 was finally issued, and the regional social plan was approved. The city administration of the new major Raggi – with a populist government since 2016 – under her own direction, forged a fresh path for the drafting of a new and updated social plan of the city. To this end, she has started a cycle of meetings «Rome Listens to Rome», with a participatory path for the construction of a new social plan: a series of public appointments were held in the local territories on various topics related to social policies. At present the staff of the social policy's department is working to draft the plan: work is carried out within the department without external consultants. However, the new plan has not yet been born: it is therefore necessary to wait for the events to occur, bearing in mind the experience of the Alemanno's government, where a plan approved by the executive committee was never made effective by the council.

This historic reconstruction - conducted through interviews with confidential witnesses – highlights that in the Capital, the process of co-programming at the city level has been highly deficient, with an overall system of substantially non-governed social policies. Each municipality has its own history, without the presence of an overall programming framework that could give back to the city its unity. The city has deep territorial disparities; it is like a body in which limbs move each to their own accord.

THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLIC SECTOR AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The reconstruction of the last sixteen years of city social programming has simultaneously touched on issues surrounding the more general relationship between the public and the non-profit sector. The relationship between the two sectors that occurs in the city of Rome, as in the rest of the country, is changeable over time. From the seventies to the nineties of the last century it seemed to move within a paradigm that looks like that of mutual accommodation, where in «third sector subjects that receive public funding, are not subject to both competitive mechanisms and controls on the activity, but remain largely excluded from public decision-making processes» (Pavolini 2003). In the nineties and early twentieths, in the wake of the diffusion of a culture more oriented to evaluation and quality standards, local authorities began to define criteria for

accreditation and evaluation of services, with greater use of a public call for bids than the previous years, characterized by particularistic management. The use of the public announcements and the dissemination of a culture of evaluation led the big organizations of the third sector to specialize in certain fields, to gain growing slices of the market, also thanks to the qualification of the staff. These organizations were successively called upon, with the advent of the welfare reform's framework law, not only to manage outsourced services but co-programming the services themselves, according to the principle of subsidiarity. This sometimes has entailed real open participation whilst at others, especially in the case of the strongest and most specialized organizations, has led to negotiation and an almost monopoly of situations. A politically appropriate interviewee states: «I found projects that were always been entrusted to the same highly-specialized subjects since 2000 through the L. 328 participation tables. There was a whole healthy world that produced innovation but that was out of these tables⁵». This differentiation between large structured cooperatives and smaller realities was also identified by the previously mentioned research (Paci 2008) carried out in four Roman municipalities, where occasionally – as in the case of municipality number II -there was an almost monopolistic situation in the allocation of outsourced services in favour of some of the larger and structured cooperatives. Further evidence of some repercussions of this law, comes from a head of the Social Policy department: «I do not want to make an axiom between co-designing and partying resources, especially on the emergency wave, but unfortunately this sometimes seems to have happened»: as if in some cases the L. 328 participation tables have served more as a resource-sharing tool rather than a participative engine.

We cannot, however, determine whether the logic of the participation introduced by L. 328 has favoured in some instances a sharing-out dynamic, sometimes causing the «dishing out» of social policies' resources, or whether the mechanisms of allocating the resources have simply adapted to new normative instruments available. And in any case this statement cannot be considered a generalization, but only one of the many implications of applying a participatory process. Without prejudice to the wide internal differentiation of a city as large as Rome, it can be argued that on a general level, over time, the mandate of the third sector has assumed - at a city level - an overwhelming scope, up to and include functions which should be reserved for public accountability, such as the direction of social programming or juvenile justice. Since the involvement of the third sector in the planning and management of the integrated system of social services and interventions, on the push of L. 328, there has been a real over-delegation by the public service (Accorinti 2011), so that the professional association of caseworkers felt the need to draft a «Manifesto of Welfare» - signed by a number of organizations⁶ - in 2016, underlining the excessive use of outsourcing and the consequent draining of the

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Regarding the difficult participation of voluntary organizations in the call for services, it should be emphasized that legislation and jurisprudence are not unanimous. In some cases, participation in competitions is explicitly prohibited. It is good to distinguish between types of services: you cannot entrust a complex service - that needs stability and continuity and requires high professionalism - to a group of volunteers.

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AIDoSS, ANCI, AssNAS CENSIS, CGIL, CISL, Confcooperative, EISS, Fondazione Emanuela Zancan Onlus, FORMEZ PA, Gruppo Abele, INAIL, IRS, ISFOL, ISTISSE, SOSTOSS, SUNAS, UIL.

public social protection system, which is «likely to deform and to vanquish the most authentic meaning of the principle of subsidiarity» (ibid). The Manifesto expresses the public prerogatives which, according with the signatories, cannot be outsourced: «The Municipality, in addition to managing its services or entrusting them, must, in accordance with the principles of good administration, program, direct, coordinate and regulate local social policies and must control and verify the interventions and services addressed to the persons». The almost unanimous response of the interviewees causally links the excessive outsourcing to the shortage of public staff and its inadequate training.

The relationship with the third sector underwent a further evolution by the «Mafia Capitale⁷» investigations, aggravating the already difficult situation of the entire system of city social services. As previously outlined above, over time, the recourse to the third sector became strategic within the general system of Roman services, with its role as a «crutch» to the public service. Following the investigation, however, in many cases there was a slowing down, if not outright cessation, of the mechanisms of reliance on non-profit services. Accordingly, the system became paralyzed, with a public apparatus that remained deficient, and a third sector that was greatly slowed down. The daily management of social policies was shaken. In December 2014, following the «Mondo di Mezzo» investigation, dozens of people were arrested, overthrowing the corrupt bubble existing in some areas of social policies. Investigations, with the consequent tightening of controls on all allocation procedures of services and the establishment of a restrictive directive on contracts and bids, had a very strong influence on the daily activities of public services and on the relationship between the public and the private sector. The presence of controls created a slowing down in allocation procedures compared to the previous period; a lot of managers and staff time was absorbed in meeting the needs of magistrates, the National Anti-Corruption Authority and the general accounts department, rather than carrying out the normal daily duties. The atmosphere among staff was very low, according to various testimonies, and public staff suffered from generalized humiliation and mistrust, as if every employee in the department of social policies could potentially be colluding with a corrupt system and, it is good to reiterate that it, only affected a part of the whole social policies system. In this general climate, and with the following inquiries, the attention to procedural regularity become very intense, paralyzing in fact the system of services. All the «fluid» - a description that does not necessarily mean collusion or vested interest - mechanisms with which things had been moved forward previously were stopped. An inside expert to the Roman dynamics states: «There is a great distance between the norm and what is actually done. Despite the lack of programming, in fact some things are done the same. However, they are not carried out within a regulated framework, but through 'practices' where people assume responsibilities that go beyond what the single manager or assessor could do. This is not always related to particularistic interests - which also exist and are nourished by this lack of programming - but sometimes arises from the desire to do something, to open positive spaces of action. In the last few months, after Mafia Capitale, no one has assumed any responsibility, and this has paralyzed everything. There is a bureaucratic lock down that immobilizes everything. The constant change of assessors and managers in recent years

has also contributed to paralysis». The force of 'practice' with respect to the norm is not a new issue, however. «The Italian political and administrative system has long been characterized by an apparent rigidity of laws, accompanied by clientele mechanisms and 'consociational practices' in their application» (Paci 2008). Quoting Sabino Cassese, the same author emphasizes that: «The Italian state is a double-bottom, in which the authoritarianism of written rules are attenuated by the laxity of their application». Where, for a long time, even in Rome, the public-private relationship was characterized by dynamics that we could call «fluid» - without attributing to this description a judgment of positive or negative value - at some point it went into a hyper-structuring and over-regulation of procedures. This has had a very heavy impact on the amount of services provided in the city and on the very survival of many associations, especially the smallest ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1980s there has been a general transformation of socio-economic conditions that made the expansion of welfare states possible. European welfare systems began a process of transformation that, following disparate guidelines varying from country to country, led them to redefine themselves in response to the pressure of the changed socio-economic-demographic context. So-called welfare mixes - differently configured - gave a growing role to private sector. In Italy, the 2000's welfare reform has drawn on an institutional framework in which the third sector has become the co-author of policies, with the public taking on a larger role as guarantor - of the overall governance: programming, direction, integration, regulation, appraisal - than of service provider. This new infra-structure has modified public-private relationships, and the guarantee of social citizenship rights against private intervening interests has been entrusted to the public's ability to properly carry out its new role (Bifulco 2015).

What has happened in the city of Rome, in a diachronic perspective, from the reform, to today?

The public managing of system's governance at the city level has been highly deficient. Apart from an initial positive impetus in the field of programming - the phase that we have called «start-up» of Law 328 in Roman territory - it was basically abandoned at the metropolitan level. This has created a profoundly diverse picture, where each municipality went its own way, without being able to guarantee a basic common level of service for all citizens, regardless of their territory . The integration of policies had been poorly realized. Monitoring and evaluation have also been weak, when not entirely absent. The city social policy system still does not have the IT and organizational infrastructure that would be needed.

The relationship with the third sector has had a contradictory evolution over time. The highly deficient situation of the public service has in the long-run made the third sector an indispensable tool not only in providing social services but also by sometimes substituting the public sector in its prerogatives. This has led to a gross imbalance in relationships, with excessive recourse to outsourcing, within a framework of public weakness. In municipal social programming (piani di zona), co-programming in this framework of public weakness has sometimes led to some forms of ambiguous negotiation, especially with the larger organizations. The risk of co-programming as a

catalyst for a process of privatization of social policies has been noted in several studies (Colombo and Gargiulo 2016; Accorinti 2011). This unbalanced relationship with the third sector was then abruptly frozen by the explosion of the scandal called the Mafia Capitale, when the public administration - alarmed by a degenerate climate of suspicion for everything and everyone - greatly slowed down the allocation of services to the private sector, causing a sharp reduction in the amount of services provided to the citizens. There was therefore a paradoxical passage: from a system of excessive delegation and «fluid» relations between public and third sector, to a hyper-stiffening of procedures, where full attention to the formal correctness of the process was given, instead of evaluating the actual impact on the quality and quantity of services. This over-regulated and hyper-structured process caused a rise in staff and procedural costs of private contractors to participate in allocations, which resulted in a disproportionate duration and amount of assignments. Many small well-functioning associations, in this phase , were forced to close.

The relationship between the public and the third sector therefore appears at least in the city of Rome, to be far away from the harmonious design of the welfare reform's law, with its weights and counterweights assigned to encourage involvement and innovation, whilst at the same time guaranteeing social rights. What appears to be confirmed, in the light of this analysis, is that without the involvement of the public sector, and especially political players responsible for the overall governance's management of the social system, the welfare mix drawn up by the reform's law drain content and meaning, and the guarantee of social rights is put at risk. In fact, the Roman contest is permeated by wide gaps, territorial differentiations, and structural inadequacies. Without an active role, political investment and the capacity to manage and coordinate processes, the social planning – which are at the heart of the welfare reform - remains a non entity, as has partly happened in Rome at the city level (municipalities have had a separate development, although in many places collimating with the city one); and the relationship with the third sector oscillates between excessive delegation and the formal reappropriation of the public's authority which can become counterproductive without an underlying assumption of substantial responsibility by the public players , in terms of resources, personnel, and training.

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