

Partnering with Civil Society Organizations. The role of volunteers and not for profit organizations in the provision of welfare services.

Federica Viganò, Freie Universität Bozen – Libera Università di Bolzano, Regensburger Allee 16 - viale Ratisbona, 16 - 39042 Brixen-Bressanone Italy. E-mail: federica.vigano@unibz.it.

Andrea Salustri, Sapienza University of Rome, Piazzale Aldo Moro, 5 – 00185, Rome (Italy). E-mail: andrea.salustri@uniroma1.it.

Research questions

Should civil society organizations (CSOs) play a role in the provision of welfare services?

If yes, what should they do and how should they interact with public administrations?

What is the
expected
impact of
CSOs?

CSOs are a group of non-profit institutions characterized by an extreme heterogeneity of purposes, resources and geographical scales of action, therefore their global impact might be rather unpredictable.



Civic engagement and CSO's empowerment

Even by recognizing the positive impact of a group of CSOs on a specific topic of interest, its magnitude remains unpredictable, as it mostly depends on the level of **civic engagement** that CSOs will be able to raise.

Civic engagement primarily depends on people's willingness to cooperate (often at least partially voluntarily) to the achievement of a purpose of civic interest, and only secondarily on actions (i.e. communication campaigns, events, participative processes...) that the CSOs might implement.

CSO's involvement in the provision of welfare services often requires a **public authorization** to proceed, therefore the effectiveness of their action is subordinated to the level of entitlement they receive from the public sector.

There might be political and sociological reasons to foster (or not to foster) CSO's involvement in the provision of welfare services whose relevance might overcome the economic evaluation of costs and benefits.

Which role for CSOs?

Laying on **Perez-Diaz's** analysis (2014), by CSOs we mean a wide array of institutions with heterogeneous aims and scopes that cannot be considered neither market nor state institutions (Appendix 1).

According to **Coraggio** (2015), CSOs should be placed within the set of SSE institutions operating at the borders between the public and the popular economy, therefore within an area of overlapping public and socioeconomic interests.



From a global to a local perspective

1. A consistent literature on CSOs focused on their role in **democratizing global governance**, i.e. on their relevance within the public sphere (consider, as an example, Fukuyama, 2000; Scholte, 2002; Lister and Carbone, 2006; Castells, 2008; Bernauer and Betzold, 2012).
2. CSOs, and more in general the institutions of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), might contribute to **democratize local contexts** by empowering marginalized people, fostering the accumulation of social capital and contributing to improve local welfare in partnership with local administrations (Utting, 2018).
3. In marginalized contexts a legal **democracy**, rather than being a starting point, **constitutes the outcome of a process**, and its achievement should be supported by a preliminary action aimed at **satisfying some practical needs**, i.e. a decent level of local welfare, improved market accessibility and a decent level of people's well-being.
4. This issue is also relevant in all those national settings characterized by a shirking welfare state due to the occurred unsustainability of public debt. In all those cases, **governments forced to achieve primary surpluses might** find extremely convenient to **involve the third sector in the provision of public services** (within a normative framework and under a constant monitoring process) in order **to avoid the collateral effects of spending cuts**.

The Esping-Andersen paradigm revisited

We contribute to revisit the Esping-Andersen paradigm by extending its field of the analysis, i.e. by **considering also non-Pareto optimal settings** as peripheral territorial and social contexts at risk of marginalization and exclusion.

While agreeing on the Pareto-optimality of a comprehensive welfare state, we cast some doubts on its implementation **in countries**, like Italy, **affected by a high and unsustainable public debt, low or even negative GDP growth rates and stagnant labour productivity.**

Within this discouraging scenario, **the Pareto-optimal equilibria are too far to be achieved in the short run.**

Rather, **the trade-off is between achieving a higher level of current public welfare at a cost of a higher public deficit and debt, and empowering CSOs and the whole third sector** to foster civic engagement and to identify and exploit untapped human and territorial resources.

The Esping-Andersen paradigm revisited

When the welfare-efficiency frontier is too far to be achieved, rather than extending the public provision of welfare services, **the public sector should work in partnership with CSOs to raise the supply of welfare services with an intensity that is inversely proportional to the distance of the economy from the Pareto-optimal frontier.**

Indeed, in less developed economies, or in advanced economies facing a protracted stagnation, **public finance constraints, underdeveloped markets, corruption and other distance costs might consistently reduce the effectiveness and the efficiency of the public sector.**

Consequently, **CSOs might achieve at least a comparative advantage with respect to the public sector in providing welfare services in local settings due to their proximity to local needs** and therefore to their lower exposure to the limiting factors affecting the public sector.

Remarks

1. This consideration does not exclude the role that CSOs might play in providing welfare services also **in central places**, but we believe that in those cases **CSO's contribution might shift toward the involvement in the public sphere**, with the public sector supplying the highest share of welfare services.
2. It is worth noting the case in which **CSOs might play, rather than a complementary, an alternative role with respect to the public sector**. This might occur when governments refuse to supply specific welfare services that instead are legitimately demanded by citizens.
3. Implicitly **it is assumed the existence of active citizens that, if mobilized, might contribute in the provision of welfare services**, raising the level of wellbeing of the beneficiaries.
4. This area of collaboration is positioned between social rights and social obligations, and provides a contribution to the improvement of the redistributive capacity and the effectiveness of the public sector, through **a participatory policy making that at the same time extends the borders of the public sphere**.

Traditionally, volunteering has been considered as an **additional source of economic value** for the labour market (Salamon et al., 2011).

Indeed, in most of our previous researches (Viganò, Salustri, 2015, Salustri and Viganò, 2017; Salustri and Viganò, 2018), we also have considered **volunteering and the third sector as instruments to achieve goals of economic interest.**

However, **volunteering**, while being exploited in the production of goods and services to the community, **also contributes to the accumulation of social capital** by intensifying the relations among individuals **and provides a contribution to the enlargement of the public sphere.**

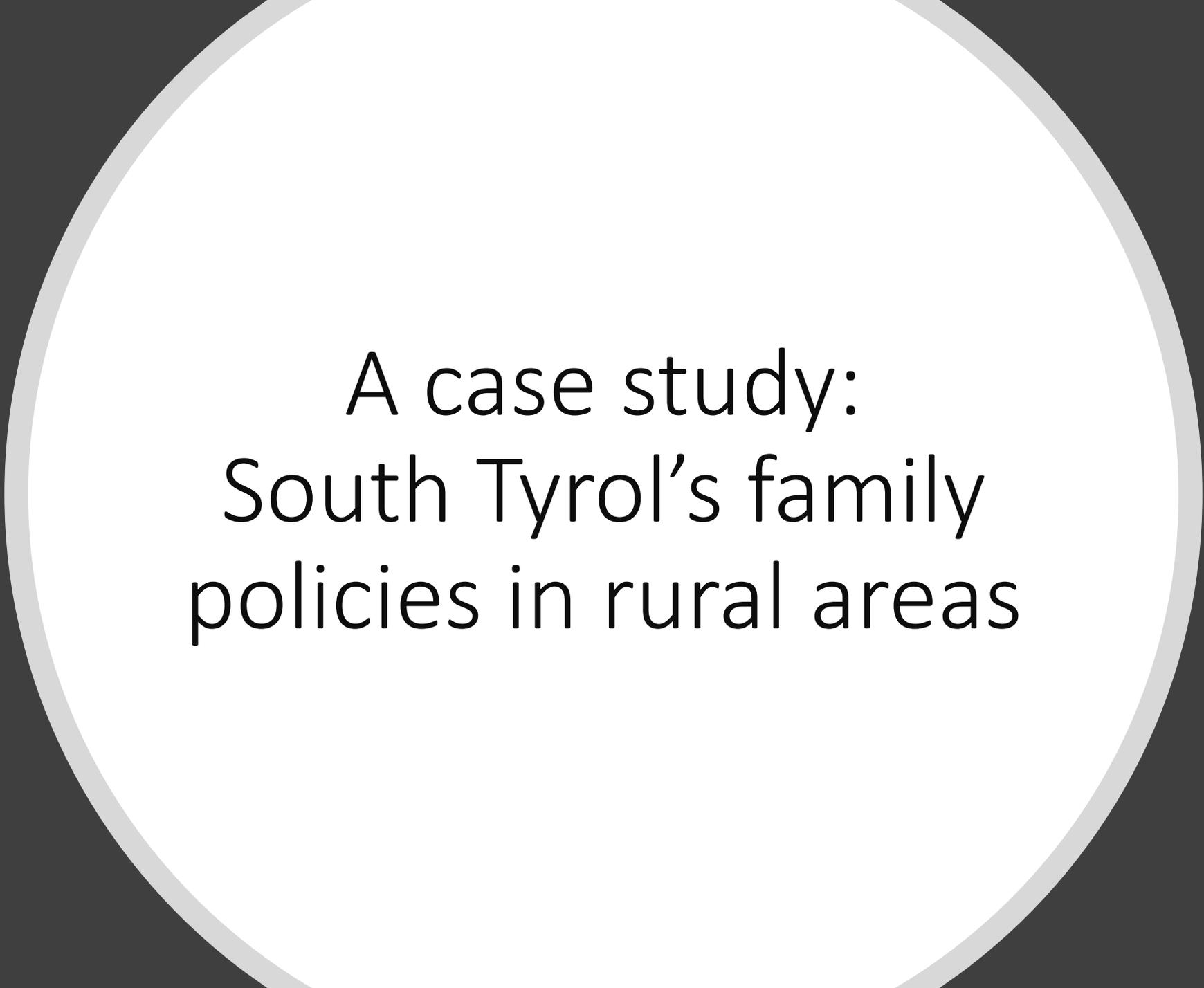


The value of volunteering

Even when the extension of the public sphere is subordinated to the provision of welfare services, it is worth noting how **volunteering implies an intrinsic motivation of the individuals** that at least indirectly fosters social integration and a process of democratization.

Saying it differently, **even when volunteering is valued only for its secondary value** (i.e., its economic value), **its real value is higher and primarily related to the extension of the public sphere** that is achieved, if not directly, at least as a by-product.

The primary value of volunteering



A case study:
South Tyrol's family
policies in rural areas

Family policies in South Tyrol are regulated by the **Provincial Law n.8/2013** on family development and support.

The Provincial administration is implementing a **network involving citizens, families, municipalities and other local administrations** animated by a decentralized process of governance and monitored by a public agency, with the aim of identifying specific family needs especially in rural areas characterized by lack of family services.

The social partnerships implemented in South Tyrol at the municipal scale create new connections among the local administrations and South Tyrolean families, and therefore represent **an attempt to overcome the marketization of welfare** by mean of new forms of co-development and co-determination of welfare policies at the municipal scale.

South Tyrol's family policies in rural areas

The emphasis on the provision of basic welfare services implicitly includes **an extension of the political sphere fostered and coordinated by the municipalities.**

The latter, indeed, compared to provincial and other local administrations, are more effective in targeting families' needs by supplying ad hoc services, as, by coordinating a **system of households' representatives (Familien Referenten)**, new needs are easily identified, and ad hoc projects can be quickly implemented.

The programmed actions are directly implemented by the interested citizens under the supervision of the municipality. The areas of intervention are selected according to the identified local needs concerning **households' work-life balance and training activities for young people** at risk of abandoning the peripheral territories in which they live.

The role of municipalities

Salorno and **Trodona**, respectively 3,829 and 1,026 inhabitants, are both characterized by a high risk of depopulation (especially the youth have strong incentives to migrate), low population density, few or null services of general interest, lack of a direct connection to the closest urban centres.

In both municipalities **social and territorial risks tend to overlap**, raising the need of welfare policies aimed at supporting household's quality of life and work-life balance.

An explorative analysis

Only few actions were implemented in both municipalities and only in few cases the Province was directly involved.

Family policies targeted **several classes of beneficiaries**, generating direct and indirect benefits for a consistent share of local dwellers.

It is worth noting the **wide array of activities implemented**, and, in most cases, their multipurpose and **hybrid nature** (economies of scope?).

Remarks

Concluding remarks

CSOs' involvement in the provision of welfare services might **improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of public policies** targeting social and/or territorial inequalities.

CSOs **create an interface between local administrations and active citizens**, therefore playing a role that is both of economic and of political nature. They play a peculiar role that could be hardly transferred to market and/or public institutions.

CSOs might also **contribute instrumentally to pursue goals of other nature**, i.e. by mitigating the negative effects of restrictive fiscal policy aimed at making public finance more sustainable, by offering a capability-enhancing workplace to the unemployed, and by contributing to narrow territorial and social imbalances.

Finally, CSOs might **empower active citizens to contribute to the achievement of goals of public interest**, by disseminating information and by implementing projects able to improve the efficient use of resources at the local scale by mean of the identification of economies of scope.

Concluding remarks

In the explorative analysis, **we noticed the extreme variety of the implemented actions** and, in many cases, an hybrid nature aimed at achieving economies of scope.

After having recognized the territorial and social needs, **we suggest that a selection of the most effective and efficient alternatives of development among the numerous activities implemented might foster the achievement of economies of scale** in the implementation phase without losing the benefits of the economies of scope initially identified.

Thank you!