

11. Italian social policies coping with fragility: the challenge of continuity in time, space and life pathways

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11.1 INTRODUCTION: THE ITALIAN WELFARE SYSTEM IN THE FACE OF SUBSEQUENT CRISES

Welfare systems deal, by definition, with fragility, namely with preventing and contrasting the fragility that stems from social needs and social risks. Western countries' welfare systems assumed the shape and features that make up the very concept of welfare state during Les Trente Glorieuses, the 'Thirty Glorious Years' after the Second World War. A basic trait of that period of generalized growth, that contributed to the development and consolidation of welfare protection, was the general stability and predictability of socio-economic conditions and thus the roughly foreseeability – not the absence – of social risks. This allowed the development (and funding) of institutional protection programmes intended to be in operation for a long time, with minor and mainly path-dependent adjustments. The enlargement of social protection was possible thanks to a strong social and political legitimation for the socialization of risks. In its turn, welfare policies contributed to the stabilization of the socio-economic systems. Changes – as risks – were not absent; over the decades significant economic, political and societal transformations took place in Western societies, but these were absorbed into the 'dynamic balance' (Crouch, 1999) that characterized them.

In the mid-1970s, though, convergent and mutually reinforcing economic, social and political changes cracked the pre-existing balance. The deindustrialization process, triggered by the oil shocks, and the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, changed the premises for the 'mid-century compromise' (Crouch, 1999). The fair stability of socio-economic conditions started to fade away, while the decrease in the legitimation for the socialization of risks made way for an increasingly individualized understanding of risks, of possible

failures, and of consequent needs. This paved the way for a deregulation of employment relations and for a recasting of welfare policies, both at differentiated degrees and in different manners according to contexts. Labour market integration, which had represented the pivotal element of social integration for the whole Golden Age, was increasingly characterized by insecurity. In parallel, concerns were growing about hazards variously linked to modernization – and thus to the role of mankind – and to the accelerated pace of globalization, such as the ecological risks, with a turning point in the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986. Thus, in the last segment of the 20th century, we were already living in societies aware that risk and uncertainty are here to stay (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990; Bauman, 2000; Castel, 2003).

On the verge of the new millennium, though, the pace of crises of various natures accelerated. The upsurge of international terrorism and of armed conflicts marked the early 2000s, together with an intensification of natural disasters and growing concerns about climate change and its consequences. The sharp global recession brought about by the financial and economic crises of 2008 and 2011, notably treated with austerity recipes (in some countries more severe than in others), had major impacts on the labour markets and in terms of impoverishment. In late winter 2020, then, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the related measures to contain the contagion (especially the general lockdowns) swamped the economies all over the world. This affected more severely those countries that had been hit particularly hard by the great global recession, and whose economic systems and labour markets had turned out to be less resilient than others, and that were therefore still striving to recover from its effects. The political reaction to this crisis was completely different from the previous ones. Also based on the lessons learnt from the negative spirals that resulted from applying austerity measures after 2008, the response has been an expansionary macroeconomic policy, allowing deficit spending to finance rather robust public measures to support individuals and families, employees and the self-employed, employers and non-governmental organizations (Pavolini et al., 2021). The awareness of increasing global weakness, nevertheless, while the strain to recover was still ongoing worldwide, did not prevent a war from starting at the boundaries of Europe, with major humanitarian consequences and producing a key energy shock with global impact.

Within this global frame, the Italian welfare system, like the other Mediterranean welfare systems, underwent a less complete and partly delayed development during the Thirty Glorious Years, in comparison to Nordic and continental European countries. Large responsibilities remained devoted to families, both in carrying out care tasks (for children, older and disabled people) and in granting income and housing support to family members (especially the young, typically supported by their family of origin for longer periods of time). The Bismarckian core of Italian welfare historically aimed

at protecting the (male) breadwinners, through strictly category-based monetary measures. Those who, although being in need, fell through the mesh of a safety net designed in this way, were left to the assistance of their relatives, if they had any, or of the local governments and/or charity organizations. Other typical features of the Italian welfare systems are worth mentioning here. First, the fact that expenditure towards service provision has always been lower than in other countries, with a strong prevalence of monetary transfers and a residualization of social services (Ascoli and Pavolini, 2015), mainly acting as providers of social assistance rather than actors of social development. Second, the fact that housing policies have traditionally been scant, fostering homeownership – which has long been comparatively high – and that a minimal provision of public housing has been virtually stopped in the last 30 years, and even resources for maintenance have been largely lacking (Belotti and Arbaci, 2021; Arbaci, Bricocoli, Salento, 2021). Third, the remarkable and growing role assumed by third-sector actors, ever since the 1980s, in managing social services, both autonomously run, or contracted out by public local bodies (Ascoli and Ranci, 2002). Fourth, the historical presence of very deep territorial inequalities in welfare provision, with a sharp Centre–North/South divide, but also with notable differences between urban and remote areas. The regionalization of welfare policies, certified in the constitutional reform of 2001, and an increasing role also of local governments (at the city level) were intended, on the one side, to pursue more effective, place-based policy responses, but in the absence of adequate balancing measures they brought about controversial effects in terms of growing disparities in the provision of social protection (Kazepov and Barberis, 2013).

The emergence of new social risks has been challenging all welfare systems, calling for a recalibration of their objectives and, therefore, of the expenditure destination: a complex process, touching upon consolidated practices, vested interests, and thus generating (sometimes sharp) social conflicts. In Mediterranean countries, though, the transition was even harder, since new social risks are better tackled by universal measures than by category-based ones, and typically call for service provision rather than (only) monetary transfers (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Ranci et al., 2014). Against the backdrop of ‘permanent austerity’ (Pierson, 2001), countries that had already developed thorough networks of service provision (among others, for childcare, for eldercare, for employment services), proved to have a competitive advantage as opposed to those countries that, at the beginning of the 2000s, still displayed minimal provision and basically had to build service systems almost from scratch (Bonoli, 2007). In this frame, Italy had remained the only European country, together with Greece, without a national minimum income scheme. In parallel, the local infrastructure of service provision, the one people in need who fell out of category-based protection would turn to in search of support,

was harshly jeopardized by cuts to transfers from the central state to local bodies during the great global recession. This reduced resources available for local welfare – also in terms of staff – and interrupted the weakly expansive dynamics of the previous years (Barberis and Martelli, 2021).

As mentioned, impacts of the great global recession on the labour markets were harsh, and poverty rates, both relative and absolute, featured strong growth. One consequence was the possibility to put on the public and political agenda the need to reform unemployment benefits towards a more inclusive system, to finally introduce a national minimum income scheme in 2017, and even – in connection to significant and rapid political turnover – to soon substitute it with a new measure with wider funds in 2019 (Gori, 2020).

Differently from what had characterized the responses to the great global recession, then, when the crisis related to the Covid-19 began, the Italian welfare system counted on a rather generous minimum income scheme, despite several flaws, especially related to the activation mechanisms (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2021). Additional measures were introduced to cope with the exceptionally hard conditions brought about by the restriction measures. These were, especially, income-support measures and paid leave for workers, and monetary transfers for employers, including the managers of social services (Pavolini et al., 2021). In a country with high indebtedness and low economic growth such as Italy, this was only possible thanks to the radical change of perspective undertaken at the European level, with a new expansive macroeconomic policy permitting an enlargement of public expenditure in a deficit-spending regime. Despite this unprecedentedly large public intervention, though, the pandemic and its implications had major impacts, reiterating and exacerbating inequalities among people and territories (Brandolini, 2022).

Against this backdrop, it is relevant and challenging to investigate and discuss the role that social policies play in the face of fragility, and what constitutes antifragility when it comes to social policies. As we discuss in the next section, we propose to interpret antifragility in social policies in terms of continuity.

11.2 ANTIFRAGILITY AND SOCIAL POLICY: A MATTER OF CONTINUITY?

As mentioned, welfare support deals with fragility, and provides actions and resources to sustain individuals and families who are fragile or to prevent them becoming fragile when social risks hit them. Yet, welfare policies and programmes are themselves fragile. They are exposed to risks that may jeopardize their scope, or even their existence in some circumstances. Scarcity of economic resources and, even more, of social and political legitimacy for their funding, threaten their margin of manoeuvre and over time have led to its

quite significant reshaping. But also the very features of social policy systems, meaning by this both the set of measures and the practices that have consolidated around them, may be the source of fragility of the system itself, as well as of individuals and groups. Particularly, in our view the lack of continuity in welfare support compromises the appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions, opening up the risk of fragility, instead of building the conditions to cope with it. It is, in fact, when support fails although it is needed that the social pact behind social protection gets cracked, if not broken. It is when support is interrupted without its mission being accomplished, that crises – individual or social – are not faced in their consequences, paving the way for major impacts. In the perspective of this book, then, we propose to consider continuity as a crucial feature of welfare support, that allows the development of practices and actions that may support antifragility of individuals, organizations and territories, and that may even be antifragile themselves.

Three elements of attention emerge with force and are worth consideration as key features for an antifragile social policy in terms of continuity: continuity of access/provision across categories of entitlement and life pathways; continuity in space, across administrative borders; and continuity in time, across segments of interventions and of budget.

Conversely, three factors contrasting continuity therefore deserve attention here. A first factor of discontinuity is the segmentation among different categories. Introduced to define conditions and profiles of entitlement, and to organize the specialization of intervention, categorization has become a very consistent principle in the organization and administration of welfare policies and services, defining homogeneous groups (deserving needy people, entitled beneficiaries, traditional recipients), and classifying accordingly both the recipients and the services that deal with them. The primacy of the subsistence of requirements necessary to be included in the supported category over the existence of need, though, causes several paradoxical consequences. Typically, an individual may drop out of the system of support because of a change in their profile, that determines their sudden exit from a category. This is, for example, the case of age. Minors, once they reach adult age, may lose the entitlement to a whole set of social protection measures, starting from housing solutions that had been carefully defined for them. Older people, as needy as they may be, are often not entitled to support until they reach a certain age; which, moreover, varies according to measures.

A second relevant factor of discontinuity is the territorial fragmentation that may occur in the spatial distribution and organization of welfare services and institutions. Devolution is based on the strong arguments related to the virtues of vertical subsidiarity (Kazepov, 2008). Yet, in the absence of adequate tools of territorial compensation, the effects of local welfare policies in terms of

determining differences – if not inequalities – in provision and access, according to the place where the need happens to manifest, tend to be exacerbated.

A third factor of discontinuity that may jeopardize the antifragility of social policies and services is their duration over time. More and more, welfare services are relying on short-term projects and initiatives, and these may be affected by interruptions linked to the ending of funds, or related to abrupt shocks, marking a caesura in service functioning.

The impact of discontinuity in the provision of social protection may be harsh and disruptive on individuals and their life pathways, threatening their capabilities in facing change and sudden shocks. In the perspective of our reflection, setting the conditions for antifragility concerns in a way constructing the conditions for continuity in the co-design and organization of an extensive and inclusive system of services for support and empowerment. In this respect, we assume antifragility as a feature of the system, more than a character of individuals. In this sense, some welfare systems – namely, the Mediterranean ones, for the features described above – are structurally more discontinuous in their action than others. Therefore, Italy is a case in point, and it is particularly interesting to explore examples of continuity/discontinuity in policy programmes in the Italian context.

In the following sections, with specific reference to some emblematic case studies, we discuss how each of the three mentioned elements – (dis)continuity across categories, in space and in time – relates to conditions of fragility and, conversely, under which conditions antifragility can be pursued in each of the three areas.

11.3 OVERCOMING CATEGORY-BASED SEGMENTATION AND REACHING OUT TO NEW NEEDS

Starting from 2011, the new Milano City Administration promoted a significant turn in the governance of local welfare interventions, reinterpreting the best features of the Milanese tradition of horizontal subsidiarity, and recalling a relevant coordination role in the hands of the Welfare Department. Facing the several challenges at stake (a significant decrease of transfers from the national Ministry and the growing and more articulated social needs), the Deputy Mayor for Social Policies launched a thorough process of organizational change that deeply redesigned the local welfare system. Social services had been traditionally organized in pillars, according to a category-based system. Assistance used to be organized and targeted to each category corresponding to a variety of socio-demographic profiles or specific conditions of need. The most important pillars corresponded to households with underage children, the elderly, disabled persons, and adults without underage children. Separated

specialized municipal offices had their own staff and facilities and a dedicated budget. The reorganization process was complex and challenging for the whole staff, and implied managing a significant cultural turn (Bertotti et al., 2017). The category-based articulation was reorganized into three new transversal areas, on the base of three major types of interventions: residential (implying temporary housing solutions), territorial (being displayed at the neighbourhood and community level), and home-based (being delivered and organized at the recipients' home) (*Residenzialità, Territorialità, Domiciliarità*). In parallel, the provisioning system was restructured into two different levels: a first level of universal access, open to all the citizens expressing a need without any filter or category-based restriction; and a second level, consisting of those specialized services and structures to which citizens can be directed when necessary and appropriate. A similar organizational change was developed in other Italian cities, with an orientation to make the local welfare system more responsive and effective in being more transversal and accessible to more articulated social needs and demand. The case of Bologna is particularly interesting for the decentralization and reorganization of social assistance access points at the neighbourhood level (Marani, 2021). Yet, many aspects of the recent Bologna and Milan developments can be traced back to the pioneering and pivotal programme that was developed in Trieste starting from 2005. The 'Habitat Microaree' programme was developed as a partnership between the local health authority, the City of Trieste, and the public housing agency. The programme was aimed at improving the quality of life and health conditions through a reorganization grounded at the micro-territorial level, integrating different fields of action and narrowing the gap between citizens and institutions, while offering more appropriate and integrated responses to their needs (de Leonardis and De Vidovich, 2017).

Within this broad reorganization process, a specific programme was developed in Milan with a focus on the patterns of access to social services. The pioneering programme was awarded funding from Fondazione Cariplo, a prominent Milanese banking foundation, in 2014. The 'Welfare in Azione' (Welfare in Action) funding programme aimed at supporting initiatives developing new forms of welfare services and providing a collaborative action between public administrations, local communities and third-sector bodies (Bricocoli and Sabatinelli, 2017; Bricocoli et al., 2022). The municipality of Milan set up a partnership including 16 local actors (public, private and third sector, and university departments) to develop the 'Welfare di Tutti' (Welfare of/for All) project, which was shortlisted and financed. Welfare di Tutti, later renamed 'WeMi' (an acronym for Welfare Milan and We Milan), targeted the fragmentation of services provision, developing innovative answers to changing social needs while extending the access to social assistance services to a broader range of citizens. A specific focus was on extending and

facilitating access to welfare services for those who may not be entitled to means-tested support, but still need orientation and intermediation to access reliable services through co-payment or out-of-pocket payment. The project focused on home-based services, whose previously scattered and heterogeneous supply was being reorganized through a revision of the municipal accreditation system of non-public providers. The project aimed at testing two significant modalities of access to services. An online platform (www.wemi.comune.milano.it) was created to provide information on all the home-based services delivered by the third-sector bodies and certified by the municipality of Milan. The system was specifically designed to support and facilitate the matching between demand and supply. In parallel, ‘territorial platforms’ – soon relabelled ‘WeMi spaces’ – were conceived as hybrid and innovative low-threshold places favouring and providing access to welfare services. The concept was to locate, in different areas of the city, terminals of the welfare department where citizens could find information and support, but also offer their contribution as active citizens. The logic was to be complementary to the online platform, and to contrast the potentially adverse effects of the digital divide and the informative asymmetries that could be produced. Also, they aimed to increase the capacity of social services in detecting new needs, through exposing social workers to a looser setting and supporting citizens in expressing their needs. Starting from two pilot spaces in 2014, 20 WeMi spaces are currently located in different contexts and neighbourhoods in the city of Milan, and significantly contribute to promote innovation in offering new shared types of care and assistance services that are usually provided on an individual basis (that is, babysitters, caregivers, after-school activities), lowering production costs and users’ fees, but also supporting the development of social bonds. Last but not least, the appealing and friendly spatial and communication concept that was designed ensured that the outlook and image of the WeMi spaces explicitly conveys openness in the access to social services (Bricocoli and Sabatinelli, 2017; Bricocoli et al., 2022).

11.4 CONTRASTING TERRITORIAL FRAGMENTATION AND BUILDING ON TERRITORIAL RESOURCES

The potential strength of local welfare systems lies in the possibility to draw on the context-specific combination of local resources, to fine-tune answers to needs that may well vary in their features across localities (Andreotti et al., 2012). In the Italian welfare system, though, in absence of effective coordination tools, and in the frame of an incomplete reform of the intermediary institutional bodies (the former provinces), the administrative boundaries among

municipalities tend to become walls that impede the building of solutions across municipal (not to mention regional) borders.

Programmes aimed at supporting access to housing of fragile individuals and households are a case in point. A first mismatch deals with the fact that housing solutions are more affordable in the suburbs and in more remote areas, while work opportunities are concentrated in the big, attractive cities. The latter are also, typically, the ones that display the larger, more consolidated local welfare system, counting on more resources in terms of national transfers, own municipal budget, and – not least – the contribution of third-sector actors and active citizenship, and that can all together dedicate more efforts and attract more resources for social and policy innovation (Sabatinelli, 2016). On top of this, individuals and households who have established a relation of trust and support with the social services in one city are often reluctant to move to another one, as they fear they would lose such support and, at best, it would take a long time to understand how the municipal welfare system works in the new locality. On their side, local administrations may not be ready to ensure rapid support to new residents coming from other cities. The mismatch between temporary and affordable housing supply and opportunities on the job market may, then, foster conditions of fragility and result in significant inequalities.

Innovative policy programmes, though, can take stock of the fact that not only social needs, but also welfare resources do cross municipal boundaries. The ‘Temporary Social Hospitality’ (Residenzialità Sociale Temporanea – RST) of the Municipality of Milan is a clear example. In 2015 the Welfare Department of the City of Milan reorganized the municipal system for emergency hospitality. A municipal call was launched to third-sector actors willing to make beds, rooms and dwellings available to host individuals and families with an urgent housing need (typically, evicted households waiting for a public dwelling), with monetary support provided by the City (Bricocoli et al., 2016). The result was a wide and diversified pool of residential resources, that crossed not only the boundaries of the city, but in some cases also those of the metropolitan area. This was possible as the third sector actors that did respond to the call, while being based and active (also) in Milan, have structures available that are variously located, and that they receive in diverse ways: through inheritance and donations; through the entrusting, for social uses, of properties confiscated due to organized crime; through the externalization of former public properties, which may include buildings that used to host functions that have been lost over time, and may be located quite far from the city (summer camps, for instance). This ‘pop-up’ supply (Bricocoli et al., 2022b), while it may jeopardize traditional and top-down approaches to planning the supply of services in time, as we shall see in the next section, at the same time challenges territorial boundaries. In doing so, it calls for innovative and more comprehen-

sive forms of governance that may allow the best use of resources where they happen to be, questioning the significance of administrative borders.

The need emerges, therefore, to rethink the configuration of the governance of housing and hospitality policies, allowing the creation of paths towards autonomy that are not limited within the administrative boundaries of the individual cities, as well as supra-municipal management of fundamental resources such as the housing agencies (Bovo et al., 2022). This would allow greater room for manoeuvre, both on the part of the social workers and on the part of the subjects themselves, in seeking the most effective match between the resources for support (such as education, training, employment, housing), which can be located at different points of the territory, and the specific profile of individuals and households who are building their path to (re)gain independence.

Furthermore, the supra-municipal coordination is also necessary to maximize the potential for innovation that each municipality, each body active in welfare provision, each partnership linked to a project, each social worker, realizes by starting each time (almost) from scratch. Building better conditions for the institutionalization of solutions and tools that have proven to be effective would free up resources for those aspects that really require innovative, customized and/or place-based approaches (Bovo et al., 2022).

11.5 ENSURING CONTINUITY OVER TIME

The three declinations of (dis)continuity explored in this chapter can and often do interrelate and overlap. As we have seen above, the strict definition of a category eligible to support often produces the consequence of an interruption of support after a period because the person's or household's profile does not fit into the category description any more, not because the need has ceased. The transfer of a family or individual from a city to another also may entail a stop to (part of) the support that they were receiving.

Some support programmes, though, are born with a predetermined duration. This may be related mostly to two factors. The first one is the existence of a legally defined duration of support. The main argument typically at the basis of this is the attempt to prevent 'welfare dependence' and to support processes of emancipation of the recipient. The risk, nevertheless, is that the opposite result is obtained, with a 'revolving door' effect. As a matter of fact, the optimal duration of support cannot be standard, as beneficiaries, even if embedded in similar contextual conditions, move within structures of opportunities that are highly diversified depending on many factors (age, gender, nationality, religion, disability, personal experiences, and so many others) that do impact on their possibilities and capabilities to exit the condition of need. Dismissing an individual or household from support before the conditions for

autonomy have been reached may, and often does, pave the way for a longer and even permanent condition of dependency on welfare support.

The second factor is related to the tendency, that has become prevalent in the last decades, to design, fund and develop public policies on a project-based approach (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2006). Targets, rhythms, constraints and schedules of policies and programmes are dictated by the rules of competitive calls. The profile, content and perspectives of social interventions have been increasingly pervaded by such a philosophy, since projects are typically temporary. One main argument supporting this orientation is the promotion of innovation through experimentation. However, such experimental programmes often end up substituting basic support measures that are missing. At the same time, they are also hardly institutionalized and generalized. The risk, therefore, is that experimentations explore possibilities and raise expectations that are bound to be let down as soon as the temporary programme is over or the dedicated resources have been used up, with similar results as the ones discussed above. The risk that is detrimental both at the individual level, that of the single persons or households that have been supported only for a limited period, as well as at the territorial/system level, that of a collectivity that has been denied the possibility to exploit and learn from experimentation, to draw on experience and to count on a (new) instrument of support (March, 1991).

The already mentioned ‘pop-up’ character of many projects (Bricocoli et al., 2022), which are literally popping up wherever there are good and contingent context conditions (availability of space, local competences, strong community ties), further jeopardize continuity in time. Contrasting the downturns and controversial side effects of a project-based local policy system is currently a major challenge for ensuring continuity over time, and antifragility of local welfare systems. A strong leadership and coordination capability on the side of the public administration can play a key role in ensuring that an overall – yet versatile – policy framework is defined, in which specific actions and projects can be developed as elements to put policy into action, while organizational change is promoted and monitored to ensure long-lasting change. In this respect the above-mentioned WeMi case is quite emblematic: the effectiveness and endurance of an initially experimental project is grounded in the reorganization of the social services municipal system that was being meanwhile implemented.

11.6 CONCLUSIONS AND ORIENTATIONS

In the perspective of this book, we have proposed to consider continuity as a crucial feature of welfare policies, that allows the development of practices and actions that may support antifragility of individuals, organizations and territories, and that may even be antifragile themselves. We have untangled

three dimensions of continuity. First, continuity across categories of entitlement allows the prevention of subjects in need falling into the void at the intersection between one category-based protection scheme and another, or losing their entitlement at the very moment in which their profile changes (as happens to minors when they turn 18, for instance).

Second, continuity across borders limits disparity in provision among localities, contrasting the fact that similar needs receive unequal support, according to the place where the person in need happens to reside. Territorial continuity also allows the pooling of available resources athwart administrative boundaries, so as to bridge segments of support that make sense and to match them with specific profiles of people in need, enhancing their chances to (re)gain autonomy. From the point of view of policies, continuity across borders also refers to the possibility for localities to adopt innovations that have been thoroughly tested elsewhere, by drawing on their institutional learnings, thus maximizing the use of local resources to develop genuine place-based specifications. This would mean not simply reiterating local experiments in new contexts, but rather magnifying the territorial peculiarities, without abdicating from pursuing universalism as a guarantee against inequality. All these considerations highlight the importance of defining an antifragile paradigm in social policies to effectively fight against spatial inequalities and territorial gaps.

Third, continuity in time allows the prevention of interruptions of support that are related to project-based funds and budgets, or to predetermined durations of entitlement, that do not consider whether the conditions of need have in fact been superseded. From the point of view of individual beneficiaries, this may guarantee that they are supported until autonomy is (re)gained. From the point of view of the system of support, this allows overcoming the stop-and-go character of the support provision, as well as the temporariness of resources that it is possible to devote to the maintenance of the system itself, including professional staff and dedicated structures, technology and instruments.

With the end of state monopoly in the provision of welfare support, in order to be antifragile, social policies need to be developed by plural constellations of actors, to be able to draw on the variety of resources that they can contribute to the field. At the same time, for continuity to be assured in the three declinations seen in this chapter, there is also a need for a strong public coordination. This is fundamental to guarantee continuity to the action of non-public actors active in the field of welfare support, while at the same time preventing the risk that they may privilege self-conservation over the public good.

Having discussed what we understand as continuity, and why we propose to interpret it as a condition for antifragility in social policies, we also need to specify what we do not consider as continuity in this definition. First, continuity, as a condition for antifragility in social policies, does not imply that beneficiaries keep on receiving support indefinitely. Continuity, as we

have shown, is a feature of policies and of policy systems. The support should be activated if, when and as for long as it is needed, and should chiefly aim at not being needed any more, by contributing to create and consolidate the conditions for autonomy and independence. Second, continuity, as a condition for antifragility in social policies, does not coincide with conservation, with the reproduction of consolidated modalities of intervention. Continuity as a condition for antifragility needs continuous innovation and reinterpretation, to keep pace with unrelieved changes that will generate ever new gaps in continuity. In this sense, continuity is an aspiration towards an ideal, a tension towards the policy objective of bridging those gaps, thus pursuing antifragility.

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