

Social assistance governance in Europe

Towards a multi-level bottom-up perspective

Eduardo Barberis* & Yuri Kazepov*
University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"

Paper presented at the 8th ESPAnet conference
"Social Policy and the Global Crisis: Consequences and Responses"

Session 8.2. - Social assistance
Chairs: Thomas Bahle & Kenneth Nelson

September 2-4 2010, Budapest, Hungary

D R A F T

English not revised, references incomplete, do not quote without permission

Abstract

In the last decades welfare policies in Europe underwent relevant changes affecting in particular two dimensions: a) the territorial organisation; b) the number of actors involved not only in managing and implementing, but also in regulating specific measures. The joint effect of both changes could be labelled as the "*subsidiarisation of social policies*". The concept of subsidiarity captures well the synergies of the two processes of change, because it points to increasingly complex multi-level governance solutions to social policy reform needs.

In this paper we will address these changes considering social assistance as our main focus and trying to answer two questions:

- 1) Are the subsidiarisation trends taking place homogenous both in terms of dynamics and outcome?
- 2) What are the main similarities and differences across the different countries?

In answering these questions, we will focus on the outcome of the subsidiarisation process and in particular on how the emerging governance arrangements influence the coping strategies of specific welfare users.

Triangulating different methods, the main being the use of "vignettes", i.e. typical cases submitted to street-level bureaucrats to acknowledge coping strategies in policy networks, we will make use of data collected within in the *Rescaling* project. *Rescaling* is an international research project carried in 8 European countries: Spain, Italy, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Poland under the auspices of the European Centre in Vienna.

(* University of Urbino "Carlo Bo")

Department of Studies on Society, Politics and Institutions (DiSSPI)

Via A. Saffi, 16

I-61029 Urbino (PU)

Italy

eduardo.barberis@uniurb.it and yuri.kazepov@uniurb.it

+39 0722 305739

Introduction¹

The territorial dimension of social policies has for long been a neglected perspective in comparative social policy analysis. Scholars took for granted that social policies were *national* policies and almost all comparative work which has been done after World War II based comparisons on national data. This applies also to the analysis of social assistance, even though the relevance of other territorial levels, namely the local and regional level, has been acknowledged much earlier.

Since the end of the 1970s, the deep structural changes that occurred kicked-off processes of territorial re-organisation of social policies. The structural changes – mainly socio-demographic and socio-economic – are well known and investigated in all industrialized countries. These changes undermined the functioning of welfare institutions and the effectiveness of social policies by affecting how social risks were produced and the ways in which resources fuelled social policies (Castel, 1995; Taylor-Gooby, 2005; Bonoli, 2006).

Post-war policies had developed to address specific risks in a context of economic growth, increasing available resources and relatively stable needs, foreseeing a virtuous *positive-sum-game* in which re-distributive conflicts were kept under control through the availability of *more* resources. The breaking down of this “system”, often labelled as *Keynesian Fordism*, brought about new conflicts and needs (from unemployment to care) which accelerated the emergence of a deep fiscal crisis of the state (O’Connor, 1971), unable to find a new balance between (less) available resources and (new) needs in a context asking for structural reforms (Ferrera, 1998; Ranci, 2010).

The resulting intense reform activity covered, in the last two decades, most policy areas including social assistance. The emerging picture is complex and not always easy to disentangle. Reforming welfare states in a context of budgetary constraints is a challenging task, in particular due to the difficulties of intervening on established constituencies as well as to the path dependency of social expenditure (Boeri, 2005). Moreover, changing access criteria and shifting the boundaries of citizenship always brought about resistance to the new power balances. In this scenario, most reforms addressed both the territorial dimension of social policies and the actors involved in their design, management, implementation and funding. The combined effect of these two reform processes has been called the *subsidiarisation* of social policies (Kazepov, 2008).

The concept of subsidiarity captures well the two processes of change because it addresses both the *vertical* – i.e. the territorial reorganization of regulatory powers – and the *horizontal* dimension – i.e. the multiplication of actors – of social policies, pointing to increasingly complex multi-level governance solutions to social policy reform needs.

The definition of subsidiarity implies that matters ought to be handled by the smallest (or, lowest) competent authority, meaning that a central authority should perform *only* those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a lower (territorial) level (Waschkuhn 1995).

This does not necessarily mean that the local level is the best solution for all problems. However, as we shall see, the joint effect of two ongoing processes predominantly brought about a decentralization of regulatory powers and an increased role of non-governmental actors. In fact, the relationship between territorial rescaling and the spread of new governance arrangements becomes also evident in the involvement of civil society in the policy making process, justified with the need of “getting closer” to the citizen (Powell, 2007).

In this scenario, scholars started to reconsider the territorial dimension in their analytical frameworks taking it no longer for granted, but as a privileged perspective to understand the ambivalent character of the processes of social policy re-organization and reform (McEwen, Moreno, 2005; Ferrera, 2005; Zürn, Leibfried, 2005; Clarke, 2005). The spread of the subsidiarity principle as a legitimate basis for both more

1 This paper is based on the project *Rescaling social policies towards multilevel governance*, which has been coordinated from the scientific point of view for the European Centre for Welfare in Vienna by Yuri Kazepov. For a full account of the projects results and methodology see Kazepov (2010).

effectiveness on the one side and stakeholders' empowerment on the other influenced the reform process providing ground for an increasingly complex picture.

The aim of this paper is to explore this complexity from the point of view of social assistance policies, attempting to highlight their specificity in the *subsidiarisation* process. In particular, drawing on the intersection between the vertical and the horizontal dimension of inter-institutional relations, we will try to identify which contribution can be made to the debate over social assistance models by adding the perspective of the rescaling processes.

The focus will be on the 8 countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and Poland) included in the *Rescaling* project and we will provide a closer analysis on four cases, i.e. Finland, France, Italy and Poland, following their evolution over the last decades.

In § 1 we address the relationship between social policies and the production of scale, i.e. how defining redistributive collectivities through borders with spatial consequences. In § 2 we related social policy models and social assistance considering the rescaling process and focussing on our cases. In § 3 main features and changes of the cases themselves are compared according to their potential outcome. . In § 4 the different spatial and actor's configurations are shortly presented. The nearly prosaic working hypothesis is that the subsidiarisation of social policies is a converging normative rhetoric in most European countries' social policy reforms, but in most cases not necessarily a convergent practice. Variations in the implementation of this rhetoric into substantive rules occur according to the specificities of the respective institutional frames at national and/or sub-national levels. This assumption is shortly addressed in the conclusions of the paper, considering the *pros* and *cons* of the processes at stake in particular in social assistance schemes and the main critical dimensions that emerge as open questions.

An appendix illustrates the method of the vignettes we used.

1. Social policies and the production of scale

In general terms, scale can be defined as "the result of marking territories (...) through boundaries and enclosures, documents and rules, enforcing agents and their authoritative resources" (Marston *et al.* 2005: 420). It might also be defined as "the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of different size" (Delaney & Leitner 1997: 93)³. There is now some consensus that scale is not a fixed category, but rather a socially constructed dimension (Marston, 2000). Conceiving state territoriality as a static background for regulatory processes and running into what Agnew (1994) termed the *territorial trap*, is no longer possible : scales are changing in the cultural, economic, political and social dimensions and evidence of these processes are widely acknowledged. Despite this consensus, however, there is quite a debate on how this construction takes place, who are the actors, groups and powers involved and what is the dynamic which develops out of their interaction.

The political economy of scale gave rise to a relevant but contested debate in human and economic geography and other related disciplines sensible to "spatial" views of social phenomena. This debate has been going on for some decades now, in particular since the spatial arrangements of economic activities started to change substantially from the 1970s onwards through globalization and localization as the result of capitalist forces reshaping their scalar relations.

Political-economy explanations argue that rescaling has to do in general with the process of creating conditions that are more favourable to capital accumulation (Somerville, 2004). In particular, it is seen as

3 The existence of a nested hierarchy does not prevent the existence of multiple scales and hierarchies that might also be mutually disconnected and follow sometimes de-synchronized trends (Jessop, 2005: 227). Within social policies this is more common than one might expect, in particular within highly fragmented and categorically structured welfare states like some continental or south European ones. The de-synchronized reform trend existing between labour market and social assistance policies in Italy is a striking example (Kazepov, 2008).

the attempt to find a *new territorial fix* to the development of capitalism (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Brenner, 2004), i.e. new scales at which regulatory settings favour the development of a neoliberal frame for economic activities. From this perspective, Cox (2002: 342) sees the main driving force of rescaling in the explicit strategy “of outflanking opposition and resistance (organized mainly at national level)” to capital accumulation. The debate developed further and the territorial arrangements do not seem anymore as fixed as they were considered before, because they are increasingly embedded into *strategic relational networks* (Jessop, 2008) which, in a relatively flexible way, change over time both the territorial dimension of regulation and the actors involved in the negotiations about the boundaries of those regulations. Despite these developments, the *rescaling* process remains functional to capitalist accumulation.

What happens when we use the concept of scale in addressing social policies? Social policies indeed play an important role in the construction of scale. This holds true since the very beginning when they fuelled the construction of the nation state, its legitimacy and identity. Social policies structure redistributive communities as the result of the states’ capacity, ability and power to define regulative frames, allocating duties and rights and redistributing resources. A scalar perspective on social policy analysis should consider the *scale of social policies* as the peculiar extension or characteristic of regulative capacity, i.e. as the jurisdiction within which “the rule of law” can exercise its power in relation to redistributive issues and services provision. This meso-level institutional approach considers the ability of the state to define and change the boundaries within which to impose its rules and regulations. From this perspective, the welfare state can be seen as the last step of the long term historical development through which territorially bounded political communities came to introduce redistributive arrangements for their citizens (Ferrera, 2005). The issue, however, is that the territorial bond of political communities is changing scale, shifting also the redistributive capacities states have in different directions, in particular downwards to sub-national levels. How can we interpret this change, in particular considering social assistance?

If we follow the critical political economy approach and apply it to social policy changes, we have to consider rescaling and the multiplication of actors as an explicit answer of the capitalist system to the collapse⁶ of the positive-sum-game of economic growth and redistribution. This characterized and legitimized the capitalist system during the *trente glorieuses* in the post-war period, by allowing most actors to improve their economic and social position. While I share the concerns of scholars highlighting the drawbacks of neo-liberalisation in both the political economy of scale and social policy analysis, I also think that the processes taking place are more complex than single ideologies are able to represent (Pickvance, 2008). Neoliberalism critics are able to describe only a portion – even though an important one – of the changes taking place and might underplay (or even neglect) the role of other co-existing processes which in social policy analysis are gaining relevance. For instance, both the spread of individualization tendencies in social assistance design and delivery and the new participatory arrangements necessarily entail a rescaling process downwards to the local level, where disadvantaged people or groups with increasingly differentiated needs can be empowered with tailored – and therefore more effective – interventions, up to their inclusion in the decision making processes (Craig and Porter, 2006; Powell, 2007). For these reasons, state theorists and social policy analysts tend to embrace a more middle-range theoretical approach, which is not developing a *grand theory* but attempts to consider the co-existence of different ideologies (e.g. Leibfried and Zürn and Leibfried, 2005). The outcome of their interplay is influenced by a pragmatic orientation of the actors involved in the policy making process and by the compromises they bargained. In this paper, we tie in with this middle-range approach and take some first steps in exploring processes of rescaling and emerging governance arrangements within the area of social assistance.

2. An introduction to the territorial organisation of social policies

Understanding the processes of subsidiarisation of social policies can’t avoid considering what the main features of European welfare systems are. It is these very features and the underlying regulative principles

6 The literature on the reasons why this happened and the relation with the welfare state is quite extensive and varies according to ideology, discipline and aims. See for instance O’Connors (1971), Gough (1979), Offe (1973) for the neo-marxist account, while see Murray (1984) and Mead (1991) for the neoliberal perspective.

that translate the common transformation processes into context specific outcomes and practices which influence the allocation of resources and responsibilities in the different countries and sub-national territories. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) put it, the right equation is: “context+reforms=outcomes”.

Welfare typologies allocate welfare systems, models or regimes (i.e. countries or group of countries) following specific criteria (e.g. access criteria, generosity, duration of entitlements, etc.) referring to specific policies (pensions of APW, unemployment benefits, etc.). We will not dig into this huge debate, but will take the existence of four models of social Europe for granted (see among others: Ferrera, 1998) and add a fifth model for countries in transition (Kazepov, 2010). One of the main problems of the conceptualization of these systems is related to the fact that it does not consider the spatial dimension, which is what we are going to address here.

Our *Rescaling* project attempted precisely to start a line of research, investigating the privileged relationship between the different scale arrangements and actors’ configurations in the different welfare systems. In this paper – out of the three policy areas we investigated – we will consider social assistance as our main focus. Both dimensions of scale and governance are intimately related as the analysis of the vertical organization of powers and the institutional frame within which actors and single policy measures are embedded define actors’ degrees of freedom, influencing the ways in which they interact and coordinate in the policy process. Agency is – from this point of view – never free floating: it’s always embedded within a specific institutional frame of reference providing both opportunities and constraints (Giddens, 1984; Jessop, 2002 and 2008; Kazepov, 2005).

What is the territorial organization of social policies in the different welfare systems? How does this affect social assistance provisions in the interplay between welfare models and scale? Answering this question is not an easy task and we will provide just an overview of some of the results of the *Rescaling* project. Here we identified four main ways in which scale contributes to structure policies in different ways:

- 1) Countries with strong *local autonomy* which is however *centrally framed*;
 - 2) countries with a strong national/*central frame*;
 - 3) countries with strong regional (or federal) frame;
 - 4) countries with *mixed frames in transition* from one frame to another.
-
- 1) In the “*Local autonomy centrally framed*” countries the regulative responsibility (i.e. legislative power) belongs to the central state, while managing and funding of social assistance benefits is a responsibility of municipalities to which a high degree of autonomy in implementing the benefit itself is granted. It’s important to note that this autonomy is “framed” by the central state through several institutional tools, i.e. national guidelines, basic amount centrally defined, etc.
 - 2) In the “*centrally framed*” countries the legislative power belongs to the central state in a context in which also the degree of freedom allocated to the sub-national territorial levels having managing and funding responsibility is very low: access criteria, amount, duration etc. are strictly regulated by the central state. This implies a strong limitation of the intra-national variation and a social assistance benefit that is almost the same across the country.
 - 3) In the “*regionally framed*” countries the regulative responsibility belongs to the subnational level, which has an exclusive legislative responsibility in the field of social policies and social assistance in particular. As far the managing and funding responsibilities are concerned, this group of countries is characterized by different sub-national arrangements varying from a more “*regionalist variant*” to a more “*localist variant*”, where municipalities play the main role. In terms of intra-country variations this group of countries presents a strong territorial differentiation of the amount of social assistance benefits. This might occur mainly at a regional level – in the *regionalist* variant – or even at the municipal level in the *localist* variant. In the latter, the territorial differentiation is at its highest.
 - 4) In the countries with “*Mixed frames in transition*” we found features belonging both to countries with centrally framed policies and countries with a high local autonomy. Regulative responsibility

belongs usually to the national state (similarly to types 1 and 2); while the local dimension has increasingly high degrees of freedom *vis-à-vis* the nation state (similarly to type 3). This increases the territorial variation, even though to a lesser extent than in type 3. What characterizes this type is the important changes occurring in the last few decades in term of territorial organization of social policies.

How do these different ways of organizing social policies and social assistance territorially distribute among welfare systems? In the following paragraphs we will provide a territorialized overview of European welfare systems considering both the vertical and horizontal dimensions.

2.1. Scalar configurations, welfare systems and social assistance

2.1.1. Local autonomy centrally framed countries

Finland, Norway and Sweden – as an example of the *social-democratic Nordic welfare system* – are characterized by a *local autonomy centrally framed*. They have a strong commitment to full employment, a universal system of minimum benefits with income-related supplements and a single general scheme granting a legally enforceable right to social assistance (*Social Bistand* in Finland, *Sosialhjelp* in Norway, *Socialhjälp* in Sweden). This implies that citizens have legal rights to social assistance benefits and services and local governments cannot legally deny benefits and services for those fulfilling eligibility criteria (Minas and Øverbaye, 2010). The rights (and national standards as well as monitoring capacities) are established in national framework laws (or national guidelines), granting a high level of autonomy to local governments and street-level administrators in delivery and management. Municipalities retain a high autonomy in managing and funding policies, but this is embedded in a national defined regulatory context, which contributes – through the direct provision of many benefits and services or specific guidelines – to keep territorial differentiation under control. Sellers and Lidström call it *nationalized local government* (2007: 622).

As far as the horizontal dimension is concerned, the scope of private actors is quite clearly circumscribed and strongly contractualised. The role of private actors is minor and confined to the provision of individualised activation measures, linked to the labour market. Hence, the primacy of the public actors remains largely uncontested, although in some cases it is complemented with quasi-market delivery patterns. The involvement of voluntary/third-sector agencies is even absent in some of our empirical cases (e.g. in Norway, case B.1.). In general terms, we can say that State redistribution keeps a major role, even though with increasing conditionality in access ruling.

The vertical dimension, usually involves just two tiers (national and municipal), with a division by function between the legislative and planning powers on the one side (State), and the management and delivery responsibility on the other side. Mid-level agencies and bodies (namely the Counties) have been the main losers in the rescaling process, and their responsibilities has been divided between Municipalities and State during the 1990s: Municipalities become more and more responsible (also for a consistent part of financing) in order to make local authorities accountable, while state-level agencies (e.g. the *National Board of Health and Welfare* in Sweden) have responsibility for the assessment of outcomes, thus counteracting municipal autonomy. Thus, decentralisation is complemented with control over local authorities, that in the last years is somehow shaped as a re-centralising trend (e.g. by the definition of national thresholds and guarantees).

Command over the relational structure is tied with a rather defined structure, with a short list of intervening bodies. The low level of institutional complexity (in comparative terms) reduces veto-points and makes coordination easier. Obviously, this does not automatically prevent coordination problems between active and passive measures, between labour and social activation and monetary assistance, between territorial levels. These are common issues throughout all the studied countries, and Nordic ones are no exception.

On the one hand, we have interesting examples of joint intake. For instance, Swedish vignettes record a joint

case management for Mr. E.: the officer at the social welfare office responsible for social assistance would contact the local public employment service to better cope with that case. The neighbourhood in Oslo where the vignettes were administered is responsible for activating social assistance claimants, which is otherwise the responsibility of the labour office (a decentralised state body). This situation involves an integration of passive and active measures that interviewees report constitute an effective practice.

On the other hand, difficulties are reported in the relationship between the social insurance office, a decentralised state body, and the social welfare office, which is a municipal body (e.g. in the case of Mr. H. in Sweden). Interviewees pointed out problems in the coordination for multi-problematic clients, and conflicts over financial responsibility for these “joint” cases. Similar patterns apply for Norway in the case of Mr. E.’s activation: the unsettled question concerns who should control the budget allocated to activation between the local (State) Labour Offices or the local (Municipal) Social Assistance Offices.

Furthermore, the coordination of Social Security and Labour Offices at all institutional levels can create other complex issues. In the Norwegian case, where a merger was set (to be implemented in the period 2006-2010), the division of labour within the municipal social services has been an open question. If a better coordination is expected by the policy-makers, the merger of so important State bodies also means that Municipalities have to cope with a stronger actor, and this could push the State’s primacy over municipal autonomy even further.

Nevertheless, this case does not hinder territorial variation. Framework laws may result in territorial differences, depending on the details of the reference framework law itself and on local social, economic and institutional differences. Thus, local variation can be set by laws providing local autonomy.

The amount of freedom left to municipalities concerning management, delivery and financing indeed make such differences possible. Differentiation happens along an urban/rural (and sometimes South/North) divide, which affects available resources (labour market and chances of employability; organization issues like scale economies and, the number and qualification of service providers) (Scarpa, 2008). Though, the State rule of law usually allows at least basic common ground, while differences often concern services above this minimum standard.⁹ An example from one of our cases can help clarify how this may work in practice.

The housing allowance for Mr. E¹⁰ in Finland follows different lines of provision in different local cases. Mr. E. can apply in both cases for the national housing allowance. In one case the municipality provides a supplementary social assistance benefit if the national housing allowance is lower than a “reasonable housing expense” (a threshold defined by the municipality itself); in the other local case studied, no municipal supplement benefit exists. There is a difference in the local provision but there are also minimum standards valid throughout the country.

In general, we can say that the State retains its primacy and decentralisation takes place with strong attention paid to control over processes – consistently with Osaghae’s (1990) distinction between *discretionary decentralisation* (it depends on the will of a central authority) and *constitutionally guaranteed decentralisation*, where power is constitutionally transferred from the centre to other *foci* of power, usually regional governments (Minas and Øverbye, 2010). Unitary states may pursue both centralisation and decentralisation, thus having a larger control over the process, since a central authority can decentralise as well as recentralise power (Barberis, Bergmark and Minas, 2010).

This difference has a consequence also on social assistance organization, since France, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Poland have national social assistance legislation while Switzerland, Italy and Spain have primarily regional social assistance legislations. As a consequence, attempts to counteract regional variation can enjoy different scopes and opportunity windows.

The Finnish case

In Finland, during the Nineties the role of Municipalities in the management of social and health policies

⁹ In Sweden and Finland the common ground is based on legally binding guidelines, while in Norway they are not compulsory.

¹⁰ For a short description of the single cases see the appendix of the paper. For an in-depth presentation of the methodology and the cases see Barberis (2010)

grew. In 1992 the VALTAVA¹¹ reform concerning planning and management hollowed out the control role of Counties (recentralization) and increased local autonomy through block grants and more autonomous planning (decentralization). The role of the central government became mainly advisory, based on recommendations, while compensation and coordination concerns found their way through amendments in 1996 and 1997, that tied the grants to municipal wealth (tax revenue) and potential need profile (according to population structure) – even though some unbalances still persist, especially in the health area (Heikkila and Rintala, 2006).

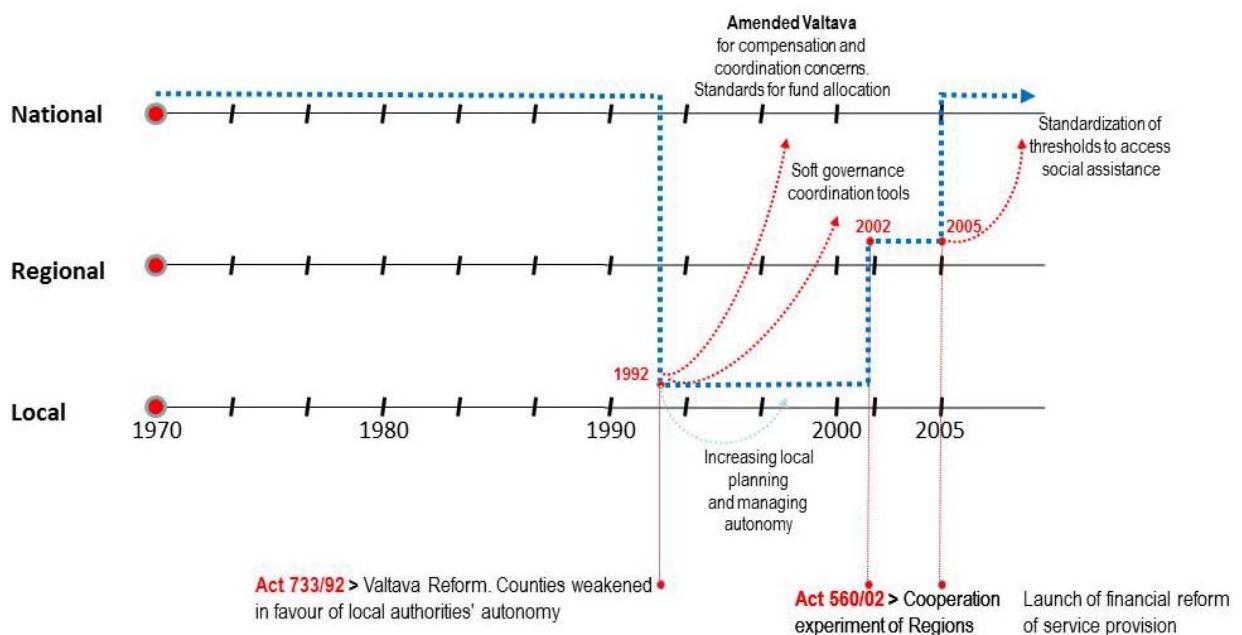
More recently (at the beginning of the 2000s) there has been an attention on integration and coordination between policy areas and neighbouring towns, also with an attempt to reduce micro-level variability. After a first “soft” recentralization occurred through *soft governance* tools (recommendations, guide-lines, circulation of good practices), binding measures to achieve stronger homogenization were passed from 2005 onwards (e.g. standardization of income thresholds to access social assistance and elderly care) – thus limiting local selection criteria.

All in all, the current configuration shows a strong State control: of the three most relevant “safety net” benefits (social assistance, housing allowance and unemployment benefit), only the first is up to local governments, while the other two are nationally regulated, funded and even delivered in a centralised manner. Anyway, also the social assistance benefit is State-framed: the level of benefit and the eligibility criteria are centrally defined through national laws that make it a subjective right of all legal residents, thus limiting local degrees of freedom (Heikkila and Rintala, 2006).

At the same time, we can observe that the local responsibility on poverty relief increased in the last years, since more and more social assistance benefits had to complement unemployment benefits lagging below the “statutory minimum” of social assistance poverty line. Many clients are double users of State and local benefits, a trend of co-governance further enhanced from 2006, when municipalities became co-funders of the basic unemployment benefit.

In such a context, centralization and decentralization seem inadequate definitions, since we can identify different and contemporary scale shifts and arrangements concerning management, delivery and finance of measure, with a mix of responsibilities, duties and opportunity windows.

Fig. 1 – Rescaling trends in Finland



11 In Finnish “valtava” means “huge”, a word here obtained with the acronym of “Act on Planning and Government Grants for Social Welfare and Health Care”.

2.3.2. Regionally framed countries

Italy and *Spain* (an example of the *South-European or Mediterranean “familistic” welfare system*) show, from the point of view of social assistance, low and locally defined benefits characterized by poor formal entitlements (in general no legally enforceable social rights within national framework laws or fixed national minimum standards), so that local differentiation and social workers’ discretionary power do cumulate with budget constraints. As a consequence, regional and local disparities are particularly important in comparative terms, considering also the regionalization process occurred in the last decades. These features tie in with the overall characteristics of the respective welfare systems which, despite the strong post-war centralism, shifted a great deal of regulatory capacity to the regions since the second half of the seventies. From the territorial point of view policies are, therefore, to a large extent *regionally framed*, highly segmented and targeted to particular categories. Unlike countries of the corporatist welfare system, the regional differentiation does not take place within a frame of relatively well guaranteed rights. On the contrary it might be even more fragmented, like in the Italian case, drifting towards very *localist* variations with cities having often a high autonomy in the design, management and implementation of social policies.

Focussing on social assistance in Mediterranean countries, Eardley *et al.* (1996) identified common trends like a “localised, discretionary relief, linked to social work and with wider kin obligations” (p. 170), together with a small number of beneficiaries due to budget constraints, stigmatisation and social workers’ discretionary power.

This description seems to fit Italy and Spain, while it fits less Switzerland which is also characterized by *regionally framed* policies. All these three countries, in fact, have a second legislative level besides the State: *Kantons*, *Comunidades autonomas* and *Regioni* have in particular legislative power also on social assistance. There are, however, very relevant differences in the generosity of the measures (Obinger, 1999); in the size of the country (that makes a difference in the organization of subsidiarity);¹⁴ in the type of federalism, Switzerland being a primeval federal country by aggregation, while in Italy and Spain regionalism is taking place by decentralization after a long unitary period (also with nationalist dictatorships in the XX century) that implies a deep state re-organisation (see also Obinger, Leibfried and Castles, 2005).

Despite these differences, some organizational features are quite similar. This emerges clearly when we contrast these countries with the Nordic ones considering Ms. G’s vignette: for the Swiss, Italian and Spanish cases a reference to family obligation is contained in the Civil Code, which is national. Despite this, no consequence ensues from this provision, and the actual support and enforcement taking place is regional or even local and the national (or Federal) power of control or the definition of minimum standards is rather weak.

Regionally framed countries are characterised by a fragile last resort protection. Italy still does not have a national minimum income scheme (it is among the few EU countries in this situation, together with Greece and Hungary), with few regional experiments. In Spain regional schemes have been introduced in the last decade by the *Comunidades Autonomas*, with wide degrees of variability in coverage and access. The same applies to Switzerland, where the Francophone cantons (e.g. Vaud and Geneva) introduced measures inspired by the French RMI, called “Revenue Minimum de Réinsertion” (RMR), while German-speaking cantons didn’t. Differences go along with linguistic and administrative culture cleavages influencing the way in which management and funding responsibilities are taken up in the different local administrations.

At the horizontal level, private actors play – in comparison to the other groups of countries – an important role, sometimes exhibiting very strong lobbying activities and a substitutive role towards the State in different arenas. As a matter of fact, besides their role in the contracted-out delivery of some measures, our empirical evidence shows also their involvement in the management, planning and decision-making. A NGO (the SKOS)¹⁵ in Switzerland provides guidelines for nation-wide standards of welfare provisions, while local bargaining arenas involving private providers play a role especially in the projects for the employability of the disadvantaged; in Italy the role of *Caritas* and similar organizations is relevant both in the delivery and in

14 Switzerland is the country (among the ones we analysed) in which legislative power is given to the smallest territorial level.

15 Schweizerische konferenz für sozialhilfe (Swiss Conference for Social Welfare)

the negotiation of measures (for example, the “area plans”, a negotiation arena for public and private actors on the goals and priorities of local social measures).

True, NGOs and social parties are important in other national contexts as well: in Nordic countries and in France, for example, they play a major lobbying role as well. The point is about coordination and the freedom of action: hierarchical or quasi-market regulation available in Nordic countries or in France, with quite clear-cut roles for NGOs, are replaced by more complex network arrangements in regionally framed countries, with serious problems of coordination in arenas where a pervasive and continuous bargaining among actors can be inefficient and even hinder welfare development (Obinger, Leibfried and Castles, 2005).

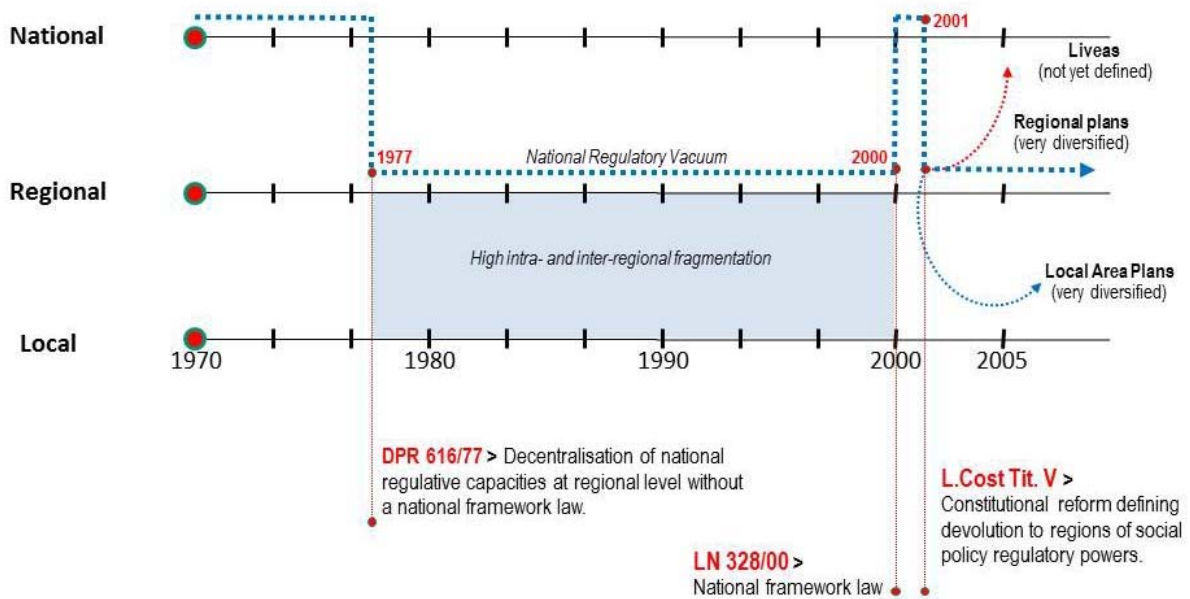
The Italian case

Italy started its decentralization in the Seventies, with the institution of Regions and the devolution of some administrative responsibilities to municipalities, especially in the area of social assistance (Vandelli, 2004), though limited by a centralized public expenditure, cutting down local financial autonomy and policy planning with severe budget constraints. This issue has to be framed in the traditional residuality of social assistance in Italy, a welfare system where the majority of provisions are category- and insurance-based (Benassi, 1999).

In the 1980s a wave of Regional laws on social assistance often devolved further tasks from Regions to Municipalities, with a growth of institutional unevenness (Kazepov, 1996; Fargion, 1997).

A further devolution took place in the 1990s, starting from the framework law on Local Authorities in 1990. In 1997-1998, laws on the public administration devolved many responsibilities to regions and local authorities, enforcing the principle of subsidiarity and reaching the maximum level of decentralization possible with the existing Constitution: some 40% of State functions were devolved to Regions, Provinces and Municipalities (Raimondo, 2001), with a cutback of external controls, the introduction of bargaining arenas between the State and local authorities, the increase of financial autonomy.

Fig. 2 – Rescaling trends in Italy



At the same time, a concern for equality and rights produced an attempt to provide general and policy area framework laws, the most important being the one on social services (2000), that created also a National Fund for Social Policies, to be transferred to the Regions according to national policy guidelines (to be

implemented and complemented autonomously by the Regions themselves). Though, this attempt was further challenged by the 2001 Constitutional reform, that gave the Regions the legislative power for social policy.

So, the usual local fragmentation of social assistance found a new way, with further pluralized sources of institutional differentiation. The difficult negotiation among territorial level led to the actual disregard of national standards (even though rules on this issue exist and a recent debate tied with fiscal federalism is in the political agenda).

2.3.3. Centrally framed countries

France – an example of the *corporatist-conservative continental European welfare system* – is characterized by *centrally framed* policies. It had, until 1988, a social assistance system characterized by categorical schemes for specific social groups, deriving from a detailed state regulation of social assistance. The introduction of the RMI as a general national scheme, foreseeing income support and socio-professional insertion, changed the outline of the French social protection system. The RMI was rather selective and played a residual role in the welfare architecture (which is still based on a set of category-based *social minima*, covering a wide range of social needs and risk groups). Notwithstanding a process of decentralization of financing and delivery, benefits and criteria are regulated in detail by a national legislation, with a strong limit on local autonomy. In this sense social policies are *centrally framed*. This does not always limit local discretionary power, due to the huge amount of partly competing and overlapping category-based measures, but keeps local differentiation limited. The 2009 reform introducing the RSA (*Revenue de Solidarité Active*) has strengthened the emphasis on the individual responsibility and employability of beneficiaries.

We will analyse the evolution of this system here below.

The French case

From a vertical point of view, between the 1980s and the 2000s two decentralization periods took place, creating the actual four-tier system (State, Regions, Departments, Municipalities). The first decentralization concerned mainly the devolution of delivery and management, though under a strict State control (Schneider, 2003), and democratization (*Départements* became locally elected authorities). *Départements* became responsible for social assistance provisions and policies (e.g. childhood, the elderly and the disabled), but for some categories, that the State retained under its own control.

In-between, in 1992, the law on the territorial administration of the Republic and the *Charte de la déconcentration* stated as a principle and started as a practice the *déconcentration*, increasing the relevance of the local State branches (in particular the Prefectures) in order to provide local authorities with a territorial State counterpart, made more flexible also due to the introduction of New Public Management tools (Gramain, Exertier & Herbillon 2006).

The second devolution further enhanced Departmental responsibilities: for planning, regulating and managing policies for the elderly, the minors, the young, the disabled and for the active policies. This made the *Département* the scale of sub-national government taking most advantage of the decentralization process:¹⁶ it has a general responsibility in defining and implementing social policy, and coordinating actions made by other government tiers in this respect (mainly municipalities and decentralized State bodies). Furthermore, in 2004 it acquired an important role in the financing, delivery and management of RMI – and partially in planning, since they can have a word on the implementation strategy of in-kind measures.

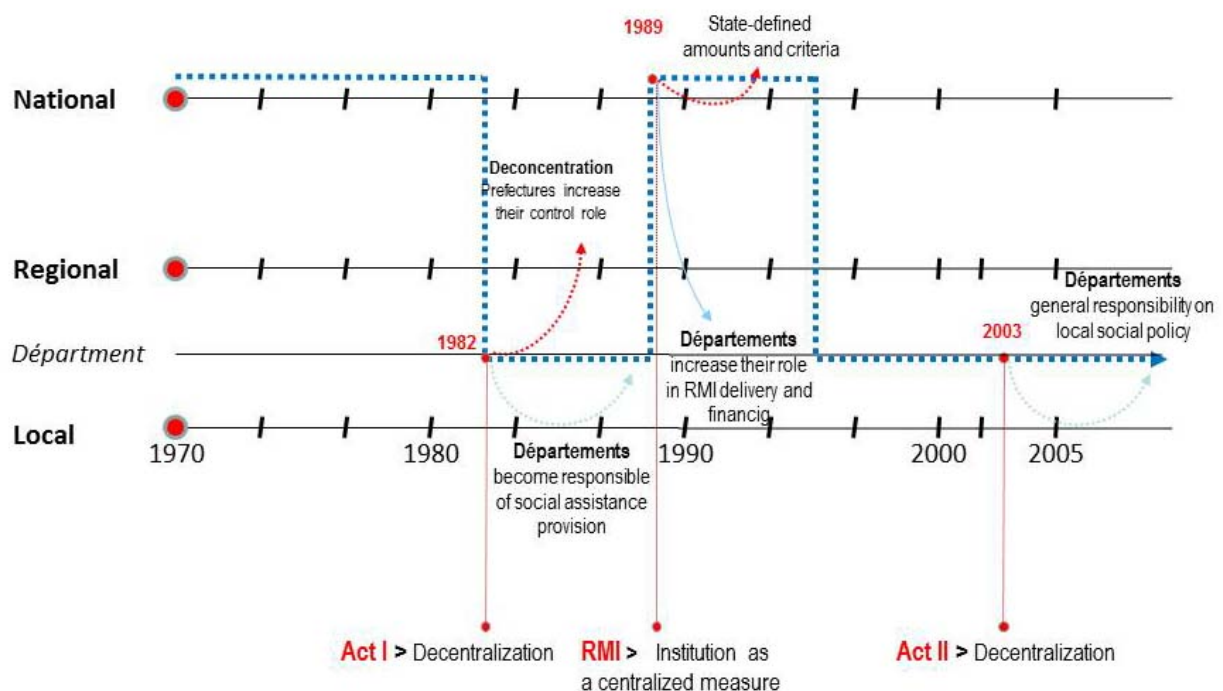
On the other hand, also the coordination role of Prefectures was enhanced (they became local representatives of all the ministries – including the ones relevant for social policy), while municipalities retained a limited role in social policies, but the biggest ones through the CCAS (*Centre communal d'actionsociale*).

16 The choice of this level has also a coordination function, in order to counteract negative effect of an over-atomized municipal structure (Pinson & Le Galès, 2005).

Again, as already hinted above, centralization and decentralization interact: *déconcentration*, for example, can be seen both as a form of downloading responsibilities through subsidiarity, and as a way to better achieve central control over local authorities. Though, the rescaling process in France has been mostly a top-down process (from the State to territorial authorities and to local branches of the State itself), with little attention to horizontal coordination (but the attempt to introduce inter-municipal bodies to overcome local fragmentation).

All in all, twenty-five years of territorial reforms resulted in a still focal role of national standards and categories – also with some new coordination problems between decentralized state agencies and autonomising Departments: for example, it can be noted that, to a certain extent, responsabilisation of *Départements* resulted in a limitation of their autonomy, since the increase of devolved tasks forced them to limit autonomous measures to answer State requirements. Furthermore, the actual structure of *Département* decentralization raises issues of uneven coverage and re-balancing: the freedom of local actors is so limited that they find difficult to fine-tune measures according to local needs, and the same uneven coverage persists before and after 2004 RMI decentralization. Anyway, the empowerment of the *Départements* implies also an increase of “voice” chances, so that they claim for more decision-making power (Gramain, Exertier & Herbillon 2006).

Fig. 3 – Rescaling trends in France



2.3.4. The transition model

Poland (an example of a *transitional system*) is a good example of how the political regime change also implied an important scale change, bringing about devolution processes and a reformed sub-national organization of powers. This also affected the definition of social assistance and its practices. Notwithstanding the steering role of the national government, in fact the Polish social assistance national framework interacts with a decentralizing structure, characterized by a fragmented power allocation and a relevant discretionary power of local social workers (Cerami, 2006). Therefore, as far as the scalar and governance trends are concerned, Poland can be described as a country in transition from a centrally-framed towards a multilevel model: territorial reorganization is still ongoing, so it is not clear which configuration is going to be stabilized.

In general Central and Eastern European countries did not prioritize the institution of mid-level authorities: from this point of view, Poland was quite an exception (Kulesza, 2002) when the reform of public administration was kicked off in 1990. On the other hand, it is also a large country that entered the transformation period with a significant regional diversity along the rural/urban and agriculture/industrial divide. Even though it is one of the few Central and Eastern European countries that introduced a relevant regional level of government, a *regionally-framed* outcome seems unlikely – given the command role of central authorities, as we will see below.

The Polish case

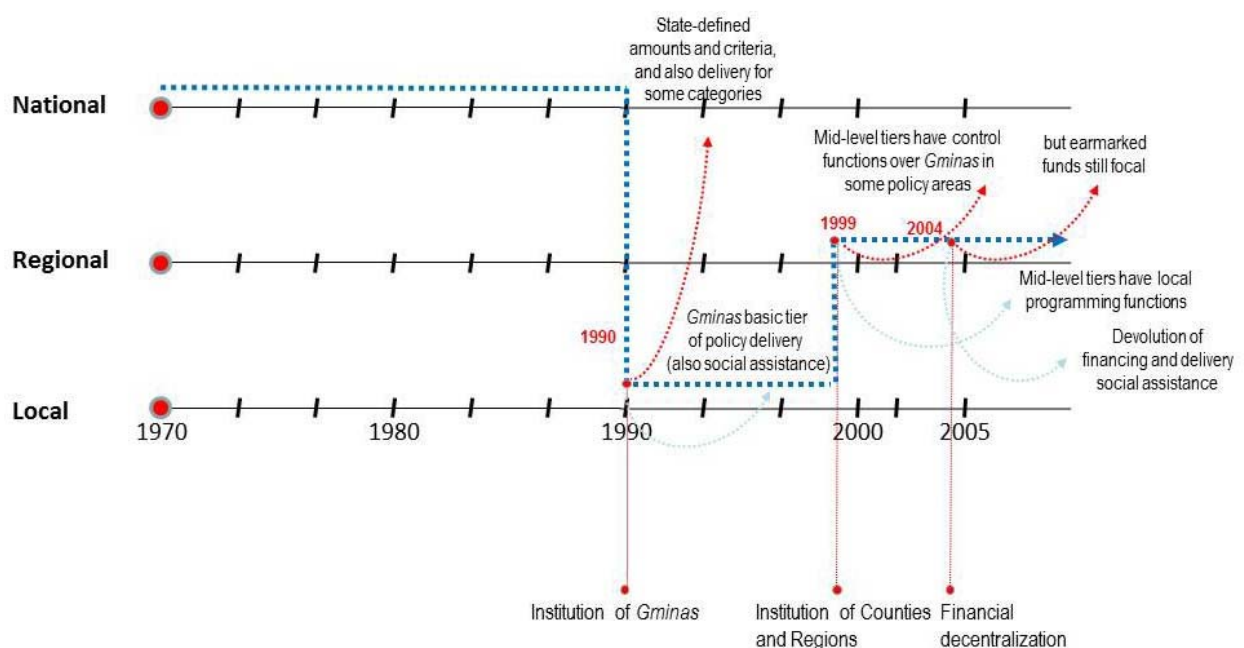
At the beginning of the Nineties, social assistance allowances were strongly centralized, with amounts (or ranges) fixed by law. At most, social workers could decide the exact amount for some short-term allowances, according to the need profile of applicants, even though the lack of funds meant that usually the lowest amount allowed was paid.

In 1990 municipalities (*Gminas*) were instituted. Building brick of the new decentralized institutional setting, their role was long constrained by their financial dependency from central State: they took up responsibility in paying some of the allowances, though with earmarked grants. During the Nineties, reforms mainly aimed at cutting benefit expenditure, changing their target and strengthening conditionality, though without really changing the organization of funding and delivery.

The number of territorial tiers increased over the following years. The new 1997 Constitution introduced the concepts of subsidiarity and decentralization, and in 1999 two other institutional tiers are introduced: *Powiat* (Province/County) and *Województwo* (Region). They gained more and more responsibilities, especially from 2004 onwards, after the financial decentralization. In that year, the reform of means-tested benefits was accomplished also through a strong devolution of financing and delivering the benefits: all social assistance allowances and family benefits are financed by the *gmina* budgets (though always with earmarked grants from central state budget) (Starega-Piasek *et al.* 2006).

The role of the other territorial tiers concerns more activation and labour market, with complicated procedures including also a limitation of municipal autonomy through the role of Voivodship administrations.

Fig. 4 – Rescaling trends in Poland



From this point of view, Poland shows a rather relevant degree of territorial and institutional fragmentation. Different territorial authorities intervene consistently in the management, delivery and planning of social assistance measures. Even though the municipal level is the building brick of the delivery and management system, the *Powiat* is gaining new role, while Voivodships provide new planning arenas. At the same time, the Polish social expenditure for family benefits and social assistance is among the lowest in the EU: the risk is that institutional pluralisation can produce inefficiency more than pooling in the use of resources and in the targeting of clients.

For example, Mr. E. could meet with a wide number of public actors coping with his case for slightly different and poorly coordinated activities: a social worker from a municipal office, a career advisor from the employment office (*Powiat* level), and another career advisor at the employment office managed by the *Województwo*. Furthermore, the management profile is remarkably different among different areas, even though our research did take into account only urban districts, in this way not considering a relevant part of uneven distribution of poverty and resources concerning the rural/urban cleavage. In this context, the role of private actors is often substitutive, as in the Mediterranean countries.

3. A Comparative analysis of scale and governance

Starting from the above description about national social assistance configurations, we will analyse here similarities and differences concerning scale relations, the role of actors, the impact on users, and the level and type of discretionary power available to practitioners. Then, we will spend some words on the outcome on users that these aspects can produce.

3.1. Scalar relations

What makes a difference in the organisation of social assistance provision, from the rescaling point of view, is the size, the institutional allocation of responsibilities and the heterogeneity of actors.

Considering the scales involved in the different steps of policy implementation, the vignette cases provide a concise picture of the diverse social assistance models (see Fig. 5).

Nordic countries have a two-tier system, in which management and delivery are local, while the regulation and planning are national. For some measures, a direct role of the state (often exerted through decentralised bodies) can be detected. The French case is not so different if examined on the vertical dimension.¹⁷ A significant role is also played by decentralised state authorities.

In the three countries with regional legislative power (Italy, Spain and Switzerland), the national level only provides some general orientation services, and the role of meso-levels is particularly strong, with a remarkable intra-national differentiation of rules – not only in the less affluent Mediterranean countries: the coping of vignette cases is often very different due to the rules and strategies autonomously adopted by the Cantons, with different policy lines on integration, activation, generosity...

With its recent regionalisation of social policy, Italy exhibits an increasing role of local authorities.¹⁸ Spanish vignettes show that, even in a small *Comunidad* like La Rioja, measures taken by neighbouring municipalities can be strikingly different. For example, four neighbouring municipalities in that *Comunidad* deal with Mr. E. in rather different ways: through municipal social assistance or through integrated assistance/labour market bodies, or through the regional labour office.

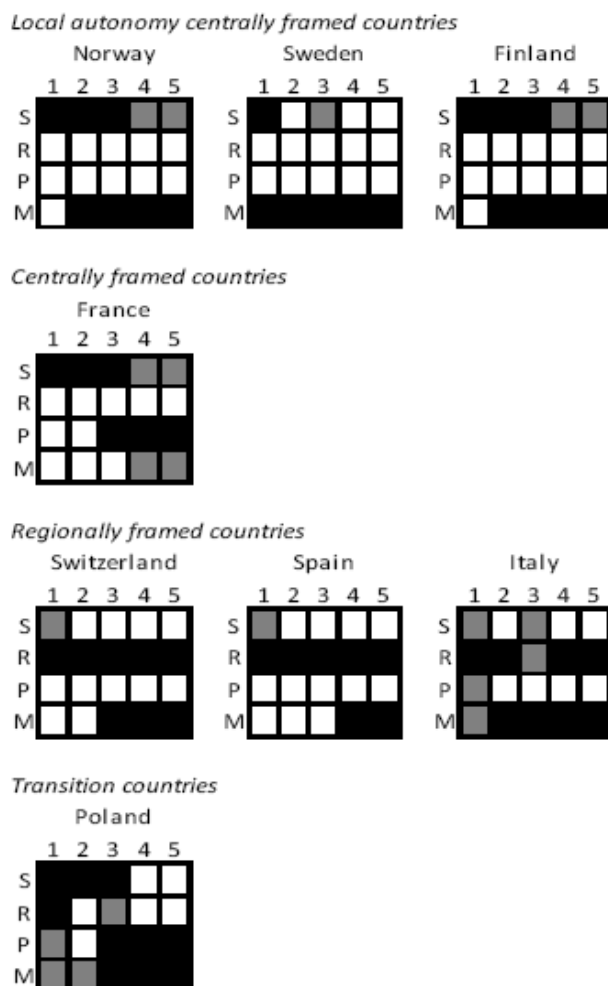
Poland has a more complex picture, mixing a role of the state typical of unitary states (a long-lasting legacy) with an increasing role of intermediate and local authorities as well as a certain number of overlapping or

17 Besides the fact that the preferred “local” is not the smallest territorial unit, but the *Département*. Though, their relative size (area, population) is not so different from an average Nordic municipality, since the latter is usually much bigger than an average French municipality (cfr. Barberis, 2010).

18 It seems anyway more “in transition” than Spain and Switzerland, with an unclear balance of Regional and State functions, especially as far as financing is concerned.

ambiguous responsibilities. Vignette cases in Radom show, for example, limited cooperation between labour offices (PUP) and social assistance offices (MOPS), which means that the employment activation programmes are largely kept separate from social integration programmes: they offer quite overlapping measures with no reciprocal coordination and/or clear division of labour. As a consequence, it is not unusual that the PUP and the MOPS do the same work with the same beneficiary twice. On the other hand, Siedlice, the other Polish case-study, represents a good practice in terms of integration, with positive effects on clients' care.

Fig. 5. Responsibility of public actors for different policy functions in social assistance



Legend

Columns: 1) Planning; 2) Eligibility criteria; 3) Financing; 4) Management; 5) Delivery.
 Rows: S) State level; R) Regional level; P) Province/County/Department level; M) Municipal level.
 Colours: Black = Main responsibility; Grey = concurrent responsibility for some measures.

Source: National Reports, Vignettes. See also Barberis, Sabatinelli & Bieri (2010).

3.2. The role of private actors

The evidence we gathered about the role of private actors is quite diversified. In some vignettes from *local autonomy centrally framed* countries no private actors appear (e.g. B.1. in Norwegian cases). According to our findings, we can say that in Nordic countries there is usually a national lobbying by social partners, and quasi-market local regulation for delivery. In France this pattern is matched with a larger role of social partners at different levels, and an increasing role of complementary types of intervention, also with public-private partnerships. Anyway, the role of private (including voluntary) actors is mainly complementary in providing *in-kind* services (Feiock and Andrew, 2006; Bergmark and Minas, 2010).

With different extent, the other countries show a more complex picture in which sometimes there is ambiguity among complementary and substitutive roles and an acknowledgement of the autonomous role of social (and market) forces. In Spain, Italy and Poland, however, the substitutive role is wider than in Switzerland, as some private (third-sector) organizations, including voluntary ones, also provide last resort services due to the lack of public provisions.

So, it can happen that a public institution itself addresses client to voluntary/third-sector agencies, acknowledging their substitutive role. In such a case, non-public actors become part of the public strategy; however, the public actor itself has poor control over the latter. An example from Poland illustrates this: MOPS would send Mr. H. to TPD (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci* – the Association of Children’s Friends) in order to benefit from a mediation and conflict resolution therapist; though, after that they “lose” the case. Also in the Italian case interviewees declared that the social assistance service, due to scarce resources, sends “*the applicants to voluntary/third-sector organisations like Parishes, Churches, philanthropic and/or religious associations that can provide them with small amounts of money... Most of these organisations are linked to Caritas...*”.

In other cases even this minimal form of coordination can be missing: again, MOPS in Poland often show a lack of acknowledgement of and coordination with NGOs. For example, in Radom there is a relevant charitable institution, Karan, whose activities – even when consistent with public goals and users’ needs and when acting as a substitute for public action (e.g. in the temporary housing care for Mr. H.) – are largely unknown and disconnected from assistance and labour offices. The result is a fragmentation of available assistance resources, with reductions in efficiency and effectiveness.

3.3. Discretionary power: not all is the same

Our vignettes show that there is room in every country and case for a certain degree of discretion. However, a number of institutional constraints and relationship structures can be identified, enabling actors and users in different ways. Variation in the discretion levels and types is a product of power relationships and interacting organizations (Rhodes, 2007). Drawing from relevant literature (Dworkin, 1977; Lipsky, 1980; Evans and Harris, 2004; Saruis, 2009), we can identify different types of discretionary power in street-level bureaucrats:

1. *Within a standard-rule*. There is a general rule, and the practitioner uses his/her professional skills to determine the level of the measure and its implementation within a given set. The rule itself allows different ways (with check and balances) to achieve the goal it states.
2. *Interpretative / among standards-rules*. The elusiveness of rules, their overlaps and “holes”, the way in which they can be interpreted (Sosin, 2010) allow a more creative role of practitioners. They can define which measure to apply, ranking the standards (Galligan, 1992), negotiating them time by time according to resources and/or “deserving” target categories.
3. *Contrasting / against or beyond the standard-rule*. The criteria for decision-making are also up to the practitioner, and he/she has room to act even *extra legem* to support (or not) the user, either because there is no formal rule (or no shared informal rule) to deal with that specific case or because there is no way of binding the decision.

Usually *local autonomy centrally framed* and *centrally framed* countries lie within the first type of discretionary power: more or less binding national guidelines, sometimes complemented by local guidelines, steer street-level bureaucrats’ decision-making. This is done with policy tools like standardized file cards to categorize users and software to manage cases that are shared among different bodies, or rules about sanctions.

Regionally framed countries and Poland have a more wavering discretion, falling under the second type, in some cases as a complement to the first type of discretion (as in Switzerland). In others discretion exists as

social worker's choice within a tangled set of available measures (as in Italy, but partly also in France), i.e. as a way to promote "deserving" categories or to dissuade "undeserving" ones. Cases of rule-breaking or wide autonomy concerning the choice of targets (i.e. the third type of discretionary power) are rare, but some hints can be found in Polish, Spanish and Italian cases.

For example, a head of a municipal social assistance office in Italy reports that the sole standard used in the decision-making over the client is her own professional expertise, and she guarantees for equal treatment. Polish vignettes report similar features: the negative side of a discretionary use of social support services is that the effectiveness of in-kind benefits is largely subject to the individual social worker and manager of the MOPS rather than to the legal frame of the system or to the combination of needs and resources of applicants.

3.4. Outcomes for users

The configuration of actors' involvement and bureaucrats' discretionary power is related to clients' rights through the issue of accountability. In some countries, especially Nordic ones, transparency and accountability are dealt with through "one-door-policies", appealability and standard assessment of access criteria and decision making-processes. Usually the lean structuring of multilevel governance potentially allows quite specific attribution of responsibility, responsiveness, rather defined steps and paths through service provision. On the other hand, social assistance in *regionally-framed countries* is organized through a larger number of institutional actors, with intertwined roles and multiple veto-points. They contain different, overlapping responsibilities among levels and/or actors. Where the assistance is more fragmented and the public last safety net weaker, a functional substitute can be found in the family, primary social networks and the volunteer sector, thus further increasing the complexity of the system in the sense of increasing low predictability and accountability of the involved actors.

So, there's a possible relationship between the low degree of institutionalisation by decision-making arenas and the high number of arenas themselves as well as the actors taking part in them, even though we cannot say that regionalization is *per se* a cause of weak organisation. It depends on checks and balances, and path-dependent efficiency and effectiveness of state and welfare making. Actually, among the regionally framed countries, the Swiss cases show a certain degree of effectiveness in coping with the vignette cases, also besides its generosity (see Table 1).

Obvioffusly it is clear that just "simplifying" the structure of these countries doesn't allow to achieve "Nordic-like" results and to increase effectiveness. Rather, such institutional complexity mirrors a persistent internal differentiation that affects the making and the development of welfare measures. In countries with numerous and heterogeneous institutional arrangements the negotiation between actors is usually wide-ranging, and not focused just on the benefit provision, nor on individual cases. Private actors, non-profit charitable organizations and social parties can often have a word, for example, on eligibility criteria and on the design of measures, since they have rich know-how and are not strictly bounded by public resources and specific definitions of delivery roles. In a way, partnership, lobbying and competition roles and interests overlap.

In contexts with selective and residual policies, complex institutional structures and social differentiation, actors assumed to be the "nearest" to the individual case (from territorial institutions to NGOs), mediate between applicants and access to benefits. Such a mediation supports further particularism and the ability of social partners to bargain for their own protected categories more than aiming at a clearly defined profile of the truly needy according to rights, public guidelines and policy priorities. In this sense, private actors enter heavily into the public decision-making process with their own goals and targets, which also means a certain increase in transaction costs. Coordination solutions, in fact, imply greater investment in negotiation, and do not necessarily lead to a clear definition of the relevant authority and the fittest decision (given the pool of veto-points), with poorly transparent and accountable decision processes. Regionally-framed country with a long history of local autonomy and established check and balances (in our case: Switzerland) seem to avoid some of these shortcomings.

To sum up, how do networks of vertical and horizontal structures and relations affect users? We can have a quite plain view of this by analysing cash benefits. In almost every case involving local autonomy centrally framed countries, we can find a common base provided by the role of national ruling and clear-cut rights that tend to have a common ground for people in need. On top of that, specific elements can be provided by local autonomy in complementing national measures, which also depend on the role played by social workers' discretion in developing individualized paths. Intra-national variation between cases is hence usually given by a share of local flexibility in the framework of national standards.

In the case of the *centrally framed country*, the structure is similar, though with a stronger idea of state primacy and a more dependent role of local authorities. The consequence is a quite wavering interpretation of local variability, that in such a large country can happen. Local "special" policies are anyway somehow controlled centrally, while spaces for local adaption is mainly up to the increasing role of *Départements*, nevertheless enjoying poor autonomy.

In the *regionally-framed countries* differences already start at the core of basic cash measures, since they are autonomously defined (even though sometimes national guidelines exist) by regional or sub-regional authorities. This remarkable disparity is true whatever the level of benefit is: generous (Switzerland) or low (Spain and Italy). In these countries, the fragmented overview of "not available" data in Table 1 also shows a higher level of discretion, which does not only refer to the level of the monetary benefit, but the entitlement itself. Even the administration of existing national measures is affected by considerable local variation, as an effect of a network of functional alternatives and over-regulation set up by different bodies.

The Polish *mixed model* shows some consistency with other unitary countries, for instance, in terms of equal provision of benefits in different parts of the country, but this is not true for all vignette cases. The result is at times differentiation concerning levels and entitlements (including an unclear definition of rights) at the intra-national level.

Tab. 1. Social Assistance benefit levels for different cases[#] in territorially differently structured welfare systems (2006, 2008)

Model	Local autonomy centrally-framed						Centrally-framed		Regionally-framed						Transition	
	Finland		Norway		Sweden		France		Switzerland		Spain		Italy		Poland	
Country																
Case	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
B1 (allowance+ housing)*	331 + 206	317	457 + 157	410 + 253	365 + 391	345 + 347	494	494	528 + 423	549 + 366	416	n.a.	146 + 243	n.a. + 251	190	190
B2-like** (child + child tax savings)***	178 + 0		174 + 0		194 + 0		281 + 43		n.a.		0 + 86		47 + 96		n.a.	
Income related?	(No)		(No)		(No)		(Partly)				(No)		(Yes)			
B3 (allowance)*	730	517	1803	1803	155	268	648	648	882	505	508	n.a.	243	n.a.	55	14
B3-like**** (allowance + child + housing)***	176 + 124 + 293		0 + 1190 + 197		482 + 93 + 479		423 + 154 + 347		n.a.		496 + 45 + 0		252 + 38 + 209		n.a.	
B4 (allowance + housing)*	206 + rent	254 + rent	458 + 577	411 + 577	n.a.	311 + rent	n.a.	279	292 + 164	n.a.	n.a. + 661	n.a.	306 + 302	n.a. + 251	76	76
Intra-national variation	+/-		-		-		--		+		++		++		-	
Duration	Need		Need		Need		Need		Need		Limited		Limited		Limited	
Clear right	Yes		Yes		Yes		Conditioned		Conditioned		No		No		Conditioned	

Source: Own calculations on vignette cases of the *Rescaling project* and *Family benefits Matrices Project* (for cases B2-like and B3-like) (Kershaw *et al.* 2009-2010).

(*) PPP (2005) EU-27.

(**) Couple with two children aged 2 and 7, one earner and average earnings.

(***) PPP (2008) EU-27.

(****) Lone mother with a children aged 2, no earner (all income from social assistance).

4. Conclusions

In all countries, with different extent and pace, we can find a rather common trend in the rescaling process: decentralization. The trend is accompanied in most countries also by an increasing degree of control exerted by higher instances. From this point of view, the idea of a zero-sum game between centralization and decentralization seems inadequate to grasp ongoing changes. Local (or regional) autonomy either from a financial point of view or considering planning, managing or delivery is increasing. At the same time, in particular in some countries, central institutions take up the coordination challenge with *soft governance tools* and new supervision and evaluation instruments, allowing them to monitor and assess the *performance* of subnational territories e.g. by defining boundaries of negotiation arenas, setting up standards to be met by sub-national territories or requirements to be performed in exchange of an increased autonomy.

Considering the fact that different institutional contexts tend to pre-structure both the impact of the rescaling processes and of the multiplication of actors as well as the directions of change, in our conclusions we will provide a synthetic account of the *pros* and *cons* emerging from these processes. We'll do this in more general terms and considering the territorial dimension specifically.

The *pros* are mainly related to the new role that non state actors are gaining. In particular, the options for local experimentation during which the new (and old) actors and scales can find new solutions have widened. This offers freedom for grassroot action allowing the valorisation of existing differences and contributing to legitimize those political choices which impact on the very same actors and territories (Mouleart *et al.* 2007; Silver *et al.* 2010). If these characteristics are met, cities become again social laboratories for social policy innovation²².

There are, however, several *cons*, which are related to the ways in which the territorial re-organization of social policies and the new governance arrangements modify the way in which vulnerability and social risks are produced and institutionally addressed. In particular we can highlight the following critical issues:

- a) *the territorial coordination of the actors involved in the policy*: the multiplication of both private and public actors at the different territorial levels triggers the need of coordination and – at the same time – opens up opportunities for discretion, for potential conflicts and *policy implosion* (reciprocal vetoes, inability of taking relevant decisions, policy stagnation,...) (Øverbye *et al.*, 2010);
- b) *the de-synchronization of policies*: many policies' reforms are not synchronized anymore. This increases the potentially divergent directions of change and their pace. Clearly economic policies change faster than social policies and within social policies those related to the labour market might change faster than those related to poverty;
- c) *the institutionalization of the increasing disparities among sub-national territories*: the increasing localisation of the decision-making processes tends not only to consolidate differentiated practices, but also the development of differentiated regulations, legitimizing the development of local models which might further differentiate along socio-economic and cultural cleavages institutionalizing uneven treatment;
- d) *the accountability of the decision-making process*: the multiplication of actors and their territorial fragmentation tends to weaken the democratic control over actors' responsibilities within the decision making process, the management and the implementation (Crouch 2004; Benz 2007; Bovens, 2007; Brodtkin, 2008).

These criticalities are related one another and tend to distribute differently in the different European countries. Their unequal distribution depends on the interplay between the intra-national structural socio-economic divides and the socio-political specificities and reforms, which grant different degrees of freedom to different territorial sub-national levels and actors in a given country. Tab. 2 shows some of the striking differences existing in the European countries in terms of intra-national variations taking place at NUTS 2 level for some selected (mainly) labour market related indicators. The total employment rates as well as

22 The German Federal programme *Soziale Stadt* is a good example (<http://www.sozialestadt.de/>).

women's employment rates – for instance – are evenly distributed in Scandinavian countries, while are very unevenly distributed in Southern Europe: Italy displays dispersion rates that are 10 times higher than in Norway, just to mention the two extremes.

Table 2. Dispersion rates of selected indicators at NUTS 2 level (1999-2007)

	SE	NO	SF	DE	FR	IT	ES	PL	UK
Total activity rates									
1999	4.8	2.4	6.7	5.4	7.1	17.4	10.8	4.8	7.5
2007	4.4	1.7	5.5	6.0	7.1	15.6	8.7	6.4	6.0
Women activity rate									
1999	5.6	3.0	7.4	6.9	10.0	30.2	17.6	6.5	7.3
2007	4.3	2.3	6.2	5.8	9.0	25.7	14.8	7.6	6.5
Youth unemployment									
1999	28.3	n.a.	30.5	36.0	21.7	57.3	29.2	32.3	25.4
2007	9.2	n.a.	37.3	40.1	20.1	46.3	20.7	14.4	18.0
Long Term Unemployment									
1999	18.9	19.0	9.3	8.1	14.1	33.9	17.1	16.4	29.4
2007	20.5	31.6	14.9	9.9	12.8	25.8	24.9	15.7	22.4
Elderly dependency *									
1990	10.4	9.2	15.1	10.7	20.7	19.5	4.5	16.1	n.a.

Sources: Own calculations on Eurostat online database (2008). Data for Switzerland not available. Kazepov (2010b).

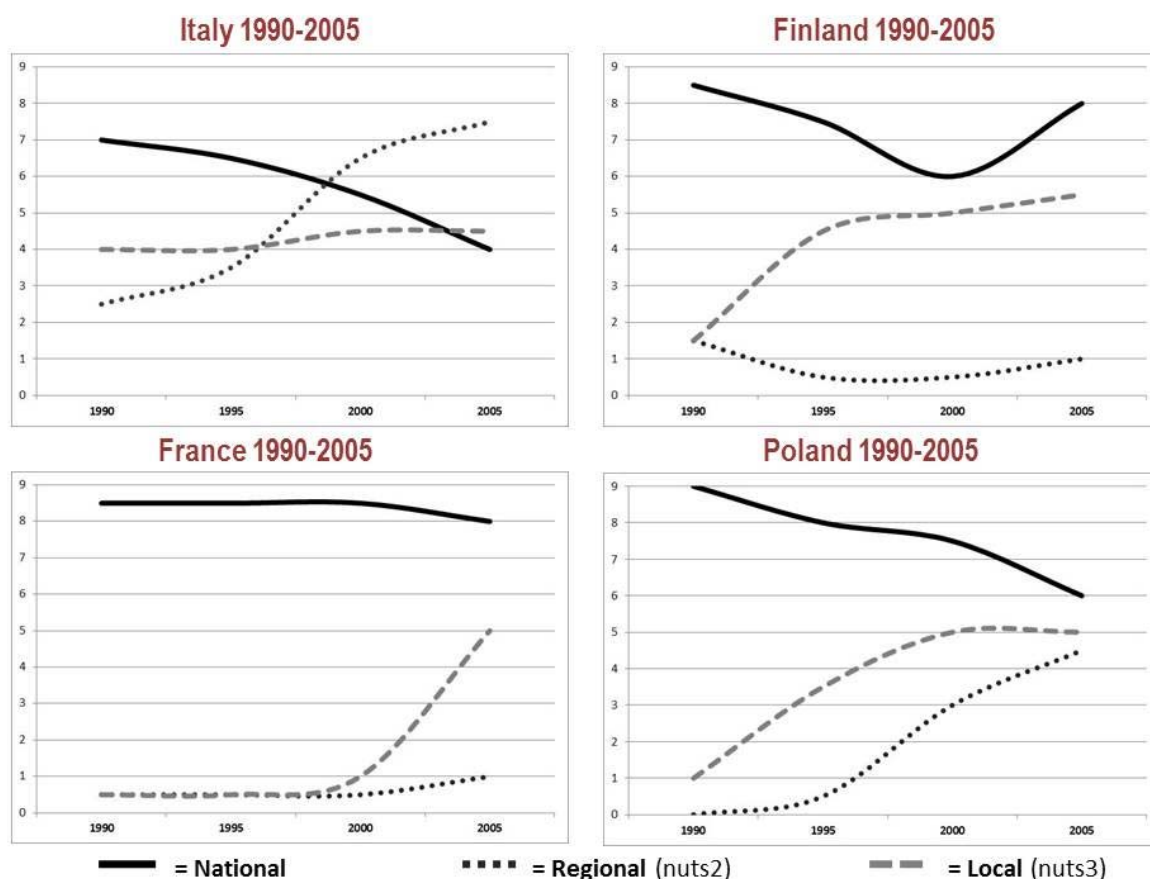
(*) Spain: Ceuta and Melilla excluded; France: Guadalupa, Martinica, Guyana and Reunion excluded; Finland: Åland and Lapland excluded.

If we want to assess the impact of rescaling and of the multiplication of actors we have, therefore, to consider these degrees of variation and the way they interact with the redistributive capacities of social policies and other relevant contextual indicators we have presented in this chapter. In synthesis what we need to understand is the synergic interplay between processes of change and the regulatory contexts within which they take place: similar processes of change *filtered* by different regulatory frameworks might produce divergent impacts. Hollingsworth, Schmitter and Streeck maintained that “capitalism can no longer be studied as a whole, but must be broken down into its parts (...) both to capture the diversity of capitalism and to render it manageable [empirically]” focusing “on sectors as key units for comparative analysis” (1994, 8-9). The same is true for social policies and their territorial dimension and it might become a new line of research for future projects considering the impact of the territorial fragmentation of social policies on social citizenship.

In general terms we can maintain and conclude that sub-national bodies (cities/municipalities, but most prominently regions) have become increasingly important (see Fig. 6). The strong accent that recent reforms put on devolution, decentralization and active welfare policies has provided them with new regulatory powers which, in a framework of an increased overall fragmentation, brought about the need for coordination of the increased number of different actors. The degrees of autonomy regions and cities (but also other sub-national bodies like provinces, departments, etc.) have and the resources at their disposal, however, still depend to a large extent on the overall regulation existing at national level. In fact, social policies retain often a double territorial nature which we should keep in mind. They are both national and local. Often *passive contributory based policies* (e.g. unemployment benefits) are still defined mainly at the national level in almost all countries considered, while *activation policies and in-kind provisions* are increasingly defined at the local level, in particular those attached to social assistance measures. It is for this very reason that the nation state's influence on local policies is still relevant in European cities (Kazepov, 2005).

Fig. 6. Changing scales of social policies (social assistance, elderly care and activation measures) in Italy,

Finland, France and Poland (1990-2005 approx).



Source: Kazepov (2010) based on the *Rescaling* project's results. For the methodology used see Barberis, Bergmark and Minas. (2010) and Barberis (2010).

This holds true in particular in relation to redistribution, which plays an important role in most European countries, despite the differences in the redistributive capacity of the different systems (see indicators in tab. 3).

Tab. 3. Redistributive capacity in selected EU countries (1990-2007)

Welfare systems	Liberal		Social-Democratic		Corporative		Familistic		In Transition		EU-25	
	UK		Sweden		France		Italy		Poland		1990	2007
	1990	2007	1990	2007	1990	2007	1990	2007	1990	2007	1990	2007
60% median pre-trasfers ¹	32.0	30.0	n.a.	28.0	26.0	26.0	23.0	24.0	n.a.	27.0	n.a.	26.0
60% median post-trasfers ¹	20.0	19.0	n.a.	11.0	15.0	13.0	20.0	20.0	n.a.	17.0	n.a.	16.0
redistributive capacity ²	37.5	36.7	n.a.	60.7	42.3	50.0	13.0	16.7	n.a.	37.0	n.a.	38.5
Gini Index ¹⁵	32.0	33.0	21.0	23.0	29.0	26.0	33.0	32.0	n.a.	32.0	n.a.	30.0

Sources¹⁾ Incidence (%) of persons with available equivalent income, pre and post social transfers, under the relative poverty line (established at 60% of the equivalent median national income). In some cases, provisional data. First year: 1995. Source: Eurostat (2009), on-line: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

²⁾ Own calculation taking into account two indicators (23 and 24), according to the following formula: $[(23-24)/(23)*100]$.

³⁾ In some cases, provisional data. For all, first year: 1995 (except S = 1997). Source: Eurostat (2009), on-line: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>.

In this sense, the new forms of multilevel governance that are emerging may well be differentiated and

partly fragmented, but as long as relevant resources are regulated and redistributed at the national level the degrees of coherence with national welfare systems are – at the local level – higher than one might expect. Of course the process of rescaling affects significantly this state of affairs, in particular when also the institutional design of provisions and access criteria are decentralized to sub-national levels. Here the pioneering studies by Lipsky (1980) on the role of street-level-bureaucracy in modifying, adapting and influencing the outcome of policies through the discretion power social workers have, are not to be underestimated. Nevertheless, also the discretion power of social workers is embedded in different regulatory contexts which offer tools and resources which differ substantially. If a social worker has a series of institutional tools to rely upon, both passive and active ones like, for instance, a guaranteed minimum income which lifts families above the poverty line, he/she can concentrate on the development of a personalized – and eventually designed involving the claimant – insertion plan. If he/she cannot do that, then one of main tasks will entail the building of creative (but more often precarious) solutions for each case or its demise due to budgetary constraints.

Comparative data presented in tab. 4 provide a rather articulated picture of the development of the Gini index measuring income inequality over the last 25 years. Despite its almost generalized increase, the diversities among countries still persist in a rather path-dependent tendency. In particular, the countries belonging to the European social model display a lower degree of income inequality than countries, like the US for instance, where the low level of policy intervention exposes people in need to the increased speed of change of the market and where *privatized Keynesianism* (Crouch, 2008) was not able to redistribute – almost by definition – resources in an equal way. Markets change faster than more resilient political redistributive institutions. This resilience, however, offers sub-national bodies the opportunity of being actors of institutional innovation. Being bold we could say that sub-national levels of regulation are – once again – laboratories of how social policies construct citizenship, social inclusion and participation (Le Galès 2002; Kazepov 2005; Silver *et al*, 2010).

Tab. 4. Trends in Gini coefficients of income inequality in selected OECD countries (1985-2005)

	Mid-1980s	Mid-1990s	Mid-2000s	Δ 1985-2005
Finland *	0,207	0,228	0,269	+ 0,062
Sweden *	0,198	0,211	0,234	+ 0,034
Norway *	0,234	0,256	0,276	+ 0,042
France *	0,300	0,270	0,270	- 0,030
Germany	0,257	0,272	0,298	+ 0,041
Italy *	0,309	0,348	0,352	+ 0,043
Spain*	0,371	0,343	0,319	- 0,052
Poland*	n.a.	n.a.	0,372	n.a.
Switzerland*	n.a.	n.a.	0,276	n.a.
United Kingdom	0,325	0,354	0,335	+ 0,010
United States	0,338	0,361	0,381	+ 0,043
OECD-24	0,293	0,310	0,313	+ 0,020

Source: OECD Questionnaire on income distribution (Sept. 2008)

The real challenge plays out in the definition of who is included and who is excluded and the way in which rescaling and the new governance arrangements affect the outcome. From this point of view, the different European countries provide interesting perspectives into the potentially positive and negative consequences of the subsidiarisation of social policies process ranging from empowering practices and participatory configurations to differentiated landscapes of rights (and duties) which shape the *unequal citizen in the unequal city*. However, *the devil is in the detail* and going into detail is what new research on

local welfare should do. In particular, some unsettled features should be disentangled in relation to the intrinsic challenges to political accountability, effectiveness and efficiency of welfare provisions. The resulting fragmentation can, in fact, engender an inconsistent division of labour (with overlapping and/or missing coverage) among involved actors and increased transaction costs (Bergmark and Minas, 2010).

The emergence of joint-government processes seems quite a common process, in which more actors (public, but also private) acquire more functions at the same time, without hollowing out other actors. Thus, new bargaining and bridging skills and functions are needed, and coordination becomes a key feature – a cross-cutting issue, but also a function by itself, requiring a conscious meta-governance thinking about policy networks.

Methodological appendix

A note on the research programme and its methodology

This paper is based on the research project “*Rescaling of Social Welfare Policies. A Comparative Study on the Path Towards Multi-level Governance in Europe*”, conducted within the activities of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research under the scientific coordination of Yuri Kazepov. The project involved local case studies in 8 European countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, France, Spain, Italy), with the aim of improving the information and knowledge base for assessing intended and unintended consequences of policies concerning multi-level governance, centralization and decentralization processes in social welfare domains such as social assistance and local policies against poverty, employment policies, care for the elderly. In this paper we will focus on results concerning social assistance.²³

The fieldwork has been conducted with multiple entry levels to scale arrangements, hence providing a macro-, a meso- and a micro-view on the issue. The macro-perspective has been covered by national reports, based on expert interviews, literature analysis and secondary data collection aimed at describing contextual conditions, institutional settings, rescaling processes. The meso-perspective has been covered through interviews with stakeholders and key informants to understand working logic and practices, and to reconstruct processes and pressures, driving forces and networks of actors. The micro-perspective has been covered by vignettes (we will elaborate on them in the next paragraph). Actually, the aim of this important part of the research has been to gather information on the potential effects of rescaling processes on claimants’ entry doors.

The use of vignettes

Vignettes are stimuli constructed in the form of short realistic descriptions or representations with precise references to events and situations that the respondents could hypothetically encounter in their personal or professional lives, and for which they are asked to simulate a decision-making process (Finch, 1987; Wilks, 2004). They are aimed at eliciting responses, so that the vignette narrative is followed by a series of questions focusing on interviewees’ reaction according to the vignette case characteristics.

It is obviously impossible to completely mirror real experiences both of *dramatis personae* in the vignettes and of interviewees. So it is necessary to be aware of biases on this issue, and to balance specific and generic points in the vignette narratives. From this point of view, one of the main methodological points underlined in the vignette literature is the “it depends” issue (Hughes, 1998).

Vignettes cannot reproduce the real world, so that often there is not enough information to give an answer different from, exactly, “it depends”. This is a disadvantage of the tool that can be turned into an advantage: the “it depends” situation allows to go beyond the micro-situation of the vignette narrative, and to discuss

23 The following paragraphs are mainly based on Barberis, Sabatinelli & Bieri (2010).

influencing factors and decision-making criteria, hence uncovering some taken-for-granted procedures, especially in comparative terms.

Another issue to take into account when using vignettes is the generalisation and the problems of predictability (the difference between self-reported behaviour and actual behaviour). Aware of these limits, we mainly used vignettes to gather information on factors influencing decision-making processes (prioritisation of issues, normative references, relevant actors considered by the interviewee, macroscopic differences between formal and actual practices...). When we collected data on potential outcomes of the decision-making process (e.g. amounts of cash benefits), we triangulated them with other data and information from different sources. Methodological triangulation is considered here a good solution to cope with these limits: we triangulated expert interviews, different vignettes administered to different interviewees, in order to enhance the quality of existing data and to generate data that were not covered by other techniques.

Besides these limits, anyway vignettes are a powerful tool to compare context starting from needs: we did not focus on policies by themselves, but on policy problems – analysing policies insomuch as they were used to answer those problems. This aspect can be seen as an advantage in comparative research: by facing a puzzling panorama of policies, actions and actors in the production of welfare, with variable rhetorical features and practical relevance, researchers can lose control over actual configurations of benefit entitlements. Starting from needs – and potential users' features in all the investigated welfare systems – allows to frame if and how the same need and problem is coped within different contexts and by different actors. So, vignettes can potentially provide comparable data for different contexts, in research areas where fragmentation and complexity are always difficult to face, so that they can be a good starting point for comparisons.

In the case of social assistance, we designed three vignette profiles to be discussed with the interviewees:

- 1) Vignette B.1.: Mr. E. is a lone 45-years-old man, unemployed since 5 years being previously a manufacturing worker but with no entitlement to unemployment benefit anymore;
- 2) Vignette B.2.: The F. family, a low-wage couple with three children (aged 14, 7 and 2) that cannot make their living;
- 3) Vignette B.3.: Ms. G., a 19-years-old teenage mother with a 2 years old daughter having difficulties in making her living.

For further info on the methodology see Barberis (2010).

References

- Agnew, J.A. (1994) The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory, *Review of International Political Economy*, 1(1): 53-80.
- Barberis, E. (2010) Methods and Contexts in the Study of Rescaling. In: Y. Kazepov (ed.) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate, 431-469.
- Barberis, E., A. Bergmark & R. Minas (2010) Rescaling Processes in Europe: Convergence and Divergence Patterns towards Multilevel Governance? In: Y. Kazepov (ed.) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate, 367-387.
- Barberis, E., S. Sabatinelli & A. Bieri (2010) Social Assistance Policy Model in Europe: a Comparative Perspective. In: Y. Kazepov (ed.) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate, 177-202.
- Benassi D. (1999), *Le politiche nazionali contro la povertà in Italia. Rapporto per la Commissione di Indagine sull'Esclusione Sociale*. Mimeo: Roma.
- Benz, A. (2007) Accountable Multilevel Governance by the Open Method of Coordination, *European Law Journal*, 4(13): 505-522.
- Boeri, T. (2005) *Social Policy: One for All?*, Mimeo. Milan: Bocconi University
- Bonoli, G. (2006) 'New Social Risks and the Politics of Postindustrial Social Policies', in: K. Armingeon & G. Bonoli (eds.) *The Politics of Postindustrial Welfare States*. London: Routledge, 3-26.
- Bovens, M. (2007) Analysing and Assessing Accountability: A Conceptual Framework, *European Law Journal*, 13(4): 447-468.
- Brenner, N. (2004) *New State Spaces. Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brodkin, E.Z. (2008) Accountability in Street-Level Organizations, *Journal of Public Administration*, 31: 317-336.
- Castel, R. (1995) *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Cerami, A. (2006) *Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Berlin: Lit.
- Clarke, J. (2005) Welfare States as Nation States: some Conceptual Reflections, *Social Policy and Society*, 4(4): 407-415.
- Cox, K.R. (2002) *Political Geography: Territory, State and Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Craig, D. & D. Porter (2006) *Development beyond neo-liberalism: governance, poverty reduction and Political economy*. London: Routledge.
- Crouch, C. (2004) *Postdemocracy*. London: Polity Press.
- Crouch, C. (2008) What Will Follow the Demise of Privatized Keynesianism?, *The Political Quarterly*, 79(4): 476-487.
- Deacon, B. (1993) Developments in East European Social Policy. In: C. Jones (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Welfare State in Europe*. London: Routledge, 177-197.
- Delaney, D. & H. Leitner (1997), The Political Construction of Scale. *Political Geography*, 16: 93-97.
- DiGaetano, A. & E. Strom (2003) Comparative Urban Governance. An Integrated Approach. *Urban Affairs Review*, 38(3): 356-395.
- Dworkin, R. (1977) *Taking Rights Seriously*. London: Duckworth.
- Eardley, T., J. Bradshaw, J. Ditch, I. Gough & P. Witheford (1996) Social Assistance in OECD Countries. Vol. I Synthesis Reports.. *Department of Social Security Research Report*, 46. London: HMSO.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Evans, T. & J. Harris (2004) Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion, *British Journal of Social Work*, 34: 871-895.
- Fargion, V. (1997) *Geografia della cittadinanza sociale in Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

- Feiock, R.C. & S.A. Andrew (2006) Understanding the Relationships Between Nonprofit Organizations and Local Governments, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 29: 759-767.
- Ferrera, M. (1996) The Southern Model of Welfare in Social Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 1: 17-37.
- Ferrara, M. (1998) 'The Four "Social Europes": Between Universalism and Selectivism', in: M. Rhodes & Y. Mény (eds.) *Future of European Welfare: A New Social Contract?*. London: MacMillan, 79-96.
- Ferrera, M. (2005) *The Boundaries of Welfare. European Integration and the New Spatial Politics of Social Solidarity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Finch, J. (1987) The Vignette Technique in Survey Research. *Sociology*, 21: 105-114.
- Galligan, D. J (1992) *Discretionary power. A legal study of official discretion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gough, I. (1979) *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*. London: Macmillan.
- Gramain, A., A. Exertier & J.-M. Herbillon (2006) *Rescaling Social Welfare Policies in France*. Country Report, European Centre. Downloadable at: <http://www.euro.centre.org/rescalingDocuments/>
- Heikkila, M. & T. Rintala (2006) *Rescaling Social Welfare Policies in Finland*. Country Report, European Centre. Downloadable at: <http://www.euro.centre.org/rescalingDocuments/>
- Hollingsworth, J.R., P. Schmitter & W. Streeck (eds.) (1994) *Governing Capitalist Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, R. (1998) Considering the Vignette Technique and its Application to a Study of Drug Injecting and HIV Risk and Safer Behaviour. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 20(3): 381-400.
- Jessop, B. (2002) *The Future of the Capitalist State*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jessop, B. (2005) The Political Economy of Scale and European Governance, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 96(2): 225-230.
- Jessop, B. (2008) *State Power. A Strategic Relational Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kazepov, Y. (1996) *Le politiche contro l'esclusione sociale*. Rome: IPZS.
- Kazepov Y. (ed.) (2005) *Cities of Europe: changing contexts, local arrangements and. the challenge to urban cohesion*. London: Blackwell.
- Kazepov, Y. (2008) The Subsidiarisation of Social Policies: Actors, Processes and Impacts. Some Reflections on the Italian Case from a European Perspective, in *European Societies*, 10(2): 247-273.
- Kazepov, Y. (ed.) (2010) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Kershaw, P. et al. (2009-2010) International family benefit data collection, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- Kuivalainen, S. & K. Nelson (2009) *Eroding minimum income in the Nordic countries and abroad? Reassessing the typical character of Nordic social assistance*. Paper presented at Espanet Conference "The future of the welfare state", Urbino, 17-19 September.
- Kulesza, M. (2002) Methods and Techniques of Managing Decentralization Reforms in CEE Countries. The Polish Experience. In: P. Gabor (ed.) *Mastering Decentralization and Public Administration Reform in Central and Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Open Society Institute - Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 189-214.
- Le Galès, P. (2002) *European Cities: Social Conflict and Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemma of the Individual in Public Service*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.
- Marston, S. (2000) The social construction of scale, in *Progress in Human Geography*, 24: 219-242.
- Marston, S., J.P. Jones III & K. Woodward (2005) Human geography without scale. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30: 416-432.
- Mead, M.L. (1991) *Construction of Poverty: Welfare Reform in America*. London: Sage.
- McEwen, N. & L. Moreno (eds.) (2005) *The Territorial Politics of Welfare*. Routledge, London.

- Minas, R. & E. Øverbaye (2010) The Territorial Organisation of Social Assistance Schemes in Europe. In: Y. Kazepov (ed.) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate, 203-239.
- Moulaert, F. F. Martinelli, S. Gonzalez (2007) Social Innovation and Governance in European Cities: Urban Developments between the Path Dependency and Radical Innovation, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 14(3): 195-209.
- Murray, C. (1984) *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980*. New York: Basic Books.
- O'Connor, J. (1971) *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Obinger, H. (1999) Minimum Income in Switzerland. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 9(1): 29-47.
- Obinger, H., S. Leibfried, F.G. Castles (eds.) (2005) *Federalism and the Welfare State. New World and European experiences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Offe, C. (1973) *Strukturprobleme des kapitalistischen Staates. Aufsätze zur politischen Soziologie*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.
- Osaghae, E.E. (1990) A Reassessment of Federalism as a Degree of Decentralization. *Publius*, 20(1): 83-98.
- Øverbaye, E., S. Vabo & K. Wedde (2006) *Rescaling Social Welfare Policies in Norway*. Country Report, European Centre. Downloadable at: <http://www.euro.centre.org/rescalingDocuments/>
- Øverbaye, E., R. Strohmeier Navarro Smith, V. Karjalainen, J. Stremlow (2010) *The Coordination Challenge*, in: Y. Kazepov (ed.) (2010) *Rescaling Social Policies: Towards Multilevel Governance in Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate, 389-413.
- Pawson, R. & N. Tilley (1997) *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Peck, J. & A. Tickell (1994) 'Searching for a New Institutional Fix: the After-Fordist Crisis and the Global-Local Disorder, in A. Amin (ed.) *Post-Fordism: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 280-315.
- Pickvance, C. (2008) *Is There A New Conventional Wisdom in the Study of Urban Politics?* Paper presented at the First ISA-Forum of Sociology, Barcelona, 5-8 September.
- Pinson, G. & P. Le Galès (2005) State Restructuring and Decentralisation Dynamics in France: Politics is the Driving Force. *Cahier européen du pôle Ville/metropolis/cosmopolis*, 07.
- Powell, M. (ed.) (2007) *Understanding the Mixed Economy of Welfare*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Raimondo, L. (2001) *The process of decentralisation in Italy: a focus on regional governments*. Paper submitted for the International Symposium on Fiscal Imbalance, Québec City, 13-14 September.
- Ranci, C. (ed.) *Social Vulnerability in Europe. The New Configuration of Social Risks*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (2007) Understanding Governance: Ten Years On. *Organization Studies*, 28(8): 1243-1264.
- Rhodes, R.A.W. (2007) Understanding Governance: Ten Years On. *Organization Studies*, 28(8): 1243-1264.
- Saruis, T. (2009) La discrezionalità nel lavoro sociale. *Prospettive Sociali e Sanitarie*, 19: 7-10.
- Scarpa, S. (2008) The Scalar Dimension of Welfare State Development: the Case of Swedish and Finnish Social Assistance Systems. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 2(1): 67-83.
- Schneider, A. (2003) Who Gets What from Whom? The Impact of Decentralization on Tax capacity and Pro-Poor Policy. *IDS Working Papers*, 179.
- Sellers, J. & A. Lidström (2007) Decentralization, Local Government, and the Welfare State. *Governance*, 20(4): 609-632.
- Silver, H. Scott, A. & Kazepov Y. (2010) Participation in Urban Contention and Deliberation. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (34): 1-24.
- Somerville, P. (2004) State rescaling and democratic transformation. *Space and Polity*, 8(2): 137-56.
- Sosin, M.H. (2010) Discretion in Human Service Organizations. Traditional and Institutional Perspectives. In: Y. Hasenfeld (ed.) *Human Services as Complex Organizations*. London: Sage, 381-404.
- Starega-Piasek, J., P. Matela, I. Woycicka, B. Piotrowski (2006) *Rescaling Social Welfare Policies in Poland*. Country Report, European Centre. Downloadable at: <http://www.euro.centre.org/rescalingDocuments/>
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (2005) 'Pervasive Uncertainty in Second Modernity: An Empirical Test', *Sociological*

ResearchOnline, 4 (10), on-line: <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/4/taylor-gooby.html>

Vandelli, L. (2004) *Il Sistema delle Autonomie Locali*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Waschkuhn, A. (1995) *Was ist Subsidiarität. Ein Sozialphilosophisches Ordnungsprinzip: von Thomas von Aquin bis zur «Civil Society»*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Wilks, T. (2004) The Use of Vignettes in Qualitative Research into Social Work Values. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3 (1): 78-87.

Zürn, M. & S. Leibfried (2005) Reconfiguring the National Constellation, in: S. Leibfried & M. Zürn (eds.) *Transformations of the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-36.