Article

Different Forms of Welfare Provision for Diverse Suburban Fabrics: Three Examples From Italy

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Abstract
Over the last 20 years, suburbanization has gradually turned into a key topic of analysis, whereas welfare policies have faced a significant public reconfiguration towards the local scale of provision and the development of local welfare systems. Combined in such a way, these two statements tell us little, and they appear to be separate and without any relation. This article aims at building the analytical and research interplays between these two topics. In so doing, the article addresses the governance and planning of local welfare services in suburbs, entwined with the post-suburban theoretical frame. By identifying the issues at stake—that is, the governance of welfare and services—the analysis investigates the uneven socio-spatial polarizations that are currently emerging in metropolitan areas. The research bridges a research gap between the unevenness of the suburban expansion and the changing provision of welfare services. The article discusses these insights with three Italian cases from the edges of the three main metropolitan areas: Milan, Rome, and Naples. The empirical discussion, which relies on the outcomes of qualitative fieldwork activities, discusses and compares the differentiation of welfare provision and the relevant diverse "suburban societies" amongst the three contexts. Through this focus, the article points out that a heterogeneous and unequal spatial distribution of basic services and social infrastructures is to be found amongst the constellation of towns located on the outskirts of an urban core.

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1. Introduction

After entering a "different welfare" (de Leonardis, 1998) shaped by considerable changes in service provision, several studies have addressed the new European paradigm of local welfare (Andreotti et al., 2012), which, since the early 1980s, has steadily involved issues related to the urban regeneration and revitalization of shrinking and marginalized neighbourhoods. This focus has unveiled a territorial dimension of social policies to contrast social inequalities and economic unbalances (Bifulco et al., 2008; Kazepov & Barberis, 2017). Against this backdrop, many territorial transformations have arisen in Europe by primarily focusing on cities (Crouch & Le Galès, 2012; Kazepov, 2005). Nonetheless, the contemporary "suburban century" (Clapson, 2003; Keil, 2018) calls for further understanding of how the provision of welfare services—broadly intended—is proceeding in settlements located on the outskirts of large cities. At a time of planetary urbanization (Brenner, 2014) and sub-urbanization (Keil, 2017a), where metropolitan governance comes as a result of a complex network of actors, investments, land use planning, and infrastructural developments (Cox, 2010; Dente, 1990; Lefèvre, 1998), the configuration of local welfare systems entails continuous updates from both the research and policy fields. However, the urban edges—largely identified as suburbs—have been partially left out of this debate, and a knowledge gap about how welfare provision is changing in the diverse suburbs of European countries has

to be bridged. In this view, the article examines the complexities related to the governance of local welfare at the urban edges by focusing primarily on social services, although local welfare also involves other policy fields (healthcare, education, and public utilities, such as energy and water, facilities, and public transport). Over the past 20 years, the research attention that has been devoted to suburbanisms—that is, suburban ways of living (Keil, 2017b; Walks, 2013)—and to suburbanization—that is, the combination of non-centric populations and economic growth with urban and spatial expansion (Ekers et al., 2012)—has resulted in the threefold subdivision of state-led, private-led, or self-led suburbanization. Although the article will not delve deeply into this subdivision, it aims at connecting the territorial dimension of welfare policies with studies in suburban governance. In so doing, the article aims at responding to the following research questions which benefit from three Italian cases: How is the governance of welfare services characterized in the suburbs located at the edges of large cities? What are the main governance challenges faced by the decision-makers? Considering the three largest Italian metropolitan areas, what are the main differences that run between these three contexts? The article discusses a number of aspects related to welfare provision in three towns located on the outskirts of the largest Italian cities: Rome, Milan, and Naples. In particular, the article relies on the outcomes of fieldwork activities conducted between 2018 and 2019. A qualitative research method has been adopted, with extensive use of semi-structured interviews with decision-makers and personnel of the municipal administrations. Yet, due to space limitations, no extended reference to this study will be provided. Rather, to unfold the complexities related to welfare provision, the article is organized as follows: First, it presents the theoretical framework by discussing the territorial dimension of European welfare on the one hand and, on the other hand, the debate about governance of global suburbanisms. Second, a note on research methods is provided. Third, to discuss forms of governance and emerging issues related to welfare and social services provision in the urban in-between, the article briefly discusses the governance of social services in the three target areas (see Sieverts, 2003). Fourth, a concluding discussion comments on the three cases as significant examples of the diversities that run between the suburban constellations (Keil, 2013), and which can be framed within the theoretical debate on post-suburban Italy (De Vidovich, 2020). Through a reflection on welfare, this article suggests that decision-makers still perceive Italian suburban areas as secondary places (De Vidovich, 2021b); as such, they are splintered into fragmented forms of provision that affect the "habitus," intended as the body of subjective cultural settings and schemes of perception, conception, and actions common to a specific group (Bourdieu, 1977) of numerous inhabitants.

2. The Interplay Between Welfare and Suburban Governance

2.1. The Territorial Dimension of Welfare: A Brief Discussion

The development of social policies is intended to address new social risks, including contrasting (or "combatting") social exclusion (Oosterlynck et al., 2019; Ranci et al., 2014), tackling citizens' activation (van Berkel & Borghi, 2008), and triggering social cohesion (Cassiers & Kesteloot, 2012; Cook & Swyngedouw, 2012; Novy et al., 2012). These are but a few of the key themes raised by contemporary welfare changes in Europe. Amongst these studies, increasing attention has been devoted to territory as a pivotal aspect of welfare recasting, and a new "territorial dimension" of European social policies has been debated (Faludi, 2013; Kazepov & Barberis, 2017). This territorial reorganization is a key component of governance (Gualini, 2006), as it calls for a new way to look at the reconstruction of the state's scalar structures (Bifulco, 2016). Inasmuch as the welfare state no longer has autonomy in welfare planning (Esping-Andersen, 2005), it also has a limited capacity to accommodate territorial minorities within existing political and institutional structures (Moreno & McEwen, 2005). Within the affirmation of local welfare that has arisen since the early 1980s, sub-state governments and local authorities have enacted area-based and local experimentations to foster local development, limiting the intervention of central bureaucracies, and leaning on new urban governances (Le Galès, 2002). The spatial dimension of welfare lies at the intersection between different disciplines and diverse administrative and regulative sectors. In Italy, many studies in the sociological field have identified territory as leverage for welfare policies and interventions on the one hand, and as a medium for the relationship between citizenship and governance on the other (Bifulco, 2016; Bifulco & de Leonardis, 2003).

Since the 1990s, public policies in Europe have experienced a process of "territorialization" concerning two intertwined phenomena: the territorial reorganization of public powers and the tendency to take the territory as the reference point for policies and interventions (Bifulco, 2016). The concept of territorialization refers to an integrated approach among diverse policy fields of welfare (social policies, housing, health) to address manifold issues (in the social, physical, or economic spheres), with a focus on specific target areas, and it attributes an active role to space (Governa & Salone, 2004), perceiving places and spaces as resources, objectives, trajectories, and settings of public action (Bifulco et al., 2008). In Italy, some national programmes fostered territorialization, such as the Local Area Plans (*Piani di Zona*; Previtali & Salvati, 2021) and Neighbourhood Contracts (Bifulco & Centemeri, 2008). However, territorialization is "an intricate phenomenon, and there is a need to gain a better understanding of the effects arising from

the combination of problems and opportunities" (Bifulco, 2016, p. 642). As argued by Bricocoli (2018), urban planning is focused predominantly on the physical dimension of spaces and the "material" aspects of welfare. Conversely, the territorial implications of welfare have found limited attention amongst social researchers and decision-makers. This attention has focused primarily on the quantification, localization, and enumeration of beneficiaries, services, and functions, with few investigations addressing governance arrangements. Such ambiguity increases the risk of intensifying territorial inequalities through localized and territorialized policies (Hadjimichalis & Hudson, 2007). After many years of virtuous local welfare experimentation, "the local" seems steered by a misleading rhetoric (Bricocoli & Cucca, 2016), resulting in episodic forms of territorialization entrapped in the local scale, with limited multi-scalar implications (de Leonardis, 2008).

2.2. Governance of Global Suburbanisms (or Territorialization at Stake)

On such a basis, one could argue that the territorial configuration of welfare provision is at stake, as it seems predominantly targeted towards a local scale of action identified with the city-scale. In this article, territorialization represents a keyword to observe how local welfare has proceeded outside of the urban cores. In this regard, a viable perspective to question the territorial implications of welfare may be fostered by repositioning peripheral and marginal conditions "from the outside in" (Keil, 2017b). Global suburbanisms—that is, suburban ways of living (Keil, 2017a; Walks, 2013)—play a remarkable role in the study of contemporary urban society with a focus on peripheralization and marginalization, as they unfold uneven and diverse ways of living in suburbs. The notion of suburbanisms grasps the diversity of suburban lifestyles and social interactions across suburbs (Drummond & Labbé, 2013), involving issues of redistribution, inclusiveness, sustainability, and segregation amongst unequal geographies (Ekers et al., 2012). Although the second decade of the 2000s witnessed a proliferation of suburban studies (De Vidovich, 2019; Hamel & Keil, 2016; Hanlon & Vicino, 2018; Keil, 2017b), the analytical relationship between welfare and suburbanisms remains unexplored, particularly in Italy, insofar as research efforts focused on welfare provision in the smaller, suburban municipalities of metropolitan areas are rarely undertaken. Suburbanisms may entwine studies of welfare by investigating the mechanisms of territorial and governmental integration at a metropolitan, city region, or mega-city region scale (Hamel, 2013), and also by facing the misalignment between political institutions and the rapid growth of both suburban expansion and decentralization development that continuously transformed urban regions (Phelps & Wood, 2011). In this respect, suburban governance refers to the differentiation between the diverse forms of suburbanization and

suburbanisms from country to country, involving a variety of agents, historical precedents, and institutional settings. On such a basis, suburbanization is the process behind suburban governance, and—as indicated in the introduction—it occurs with state-led, self-led, or private-led modalities (Ekers et al., 2012). According to this framework, studies in global suburbanisms meet welfare studies to question urban-oriented local welfare governance. Although close relationships and interdependencies run between city and suburbs, this theoretical framework perceives suburbs as entities of suburbanization, rather than pieces of an urban region that fuel the urban core. In so doing, challenges in local welfare provision and territorial organization of social services are investigated with the goal of stressing suburbs as territories that are worth further analyses in the field of welfare governance and in overall inquiries on metropolitan space.

3. Notes on Methods

This article relies on the outcomes of qualitative-led fieldwork activities carried out between June 2018 and May 2019 in three different suburban areas: the town of Fiano Romano, located on the northern urban edges of Rome; the town of Pioltello, in the eastern hinterlands of Milan; and the town of Villaricca, on the northern urban outskirts of Naples. On the whole, 36 interviews were conducted amongst the three target areas, subdivided as follows: Thirteen interviews were dedicated to obtaining knowledge of the local actors in the Roman context (with a sub-division into nine interviews with local administrators, and six interviews with inhabitants organized into local committees), 11 interviews were dedicated to the case of Pioltello (with four interviews with local administrators, including the mayor, and seven interviews with experts involved in the town's ongoing regeneration programmes), and 12 interviews focused on Villaricca, made possible by meeting with eight current and former local administrators in Villaricca and a neighbouring town (Marano di Napoli, due to difficulty contacting the current administrators of Villaricca), and four local experts (identified as a journalist, two professors, and a local inhabitant working in the transit network of the area). As it can be noticed, the collection of the interviews was not systematic and well-framed according to fixed criteria. Many differences regarding the typology of the people interviewed run between the three contexts. Furthermore, these interviews are not reportedly extensively in the following sections. The decision to focus on a threefold observation to compare three meaningful national contexts, rather than to deeply investigate a single case study, precludes a detailed use of the qualitative findings. Nevertheless, the choice of a qualitative-deductive approach fits with the research aims and questions as elucidated in the introduction. Because suburbs are transitional in time and space (McManus & Ethington, 2007), a qualitative case

study enables the researcher to read through this transition by observing past and present changes and by identifying the most important policy issues. In this respect, the article employs a "dialectical reading" of social welfare in a suburban area (see Peck, 2015) through a threefold focus that stretches between theoretical implications from the research field of suburban studies to the policy field of local welfare.

4. Three Different Forms of Welfare Provision

4.1. About the Target Areas

On this methodological basis, the article considers three examples that well describe the constellations of towns located at the edges of large Italian cities, amongst the networks of mid-sized cities that shape the "diffused urbanization" (Indovina, 2006) and other forms of "in-betweenness'' (Sieverts, 2003) that characterize numerous Italian settlements. A key principle lies behind the choice of these three target areas: They belong to the largest metropolitan regions of Italy—Rome, Milan, and Naples—and processes of suburbanization have ensued in the three areas at different times (Figure 1). Based on existing literature, three towns were selected within the three metropolitan areas: Pioltello (Milan), Villaricca (Naples), and Fiano Romano (Rome).

In Pioltello, suburbanization occurred during the peak of the industrialization phase (especially since the 1960s) that represented a pivotal period in the expansion of the metropolitan area of Milan, welcoming many new households from Southern Italy in a migration process that contributed to the demographic increase of many of the hinterland's municipalities. In Villaricca, the history is quite similar, as expansion at the northern peripheries of Naples was fuelled by the conversion of farmland into industrial and productive sites, together with a massive, and even unruly, residential growth. Furthermore, the 1980 Irpinia earthquake led to rapid building expansion across the Neapolitan peripheries. Conversely, suburbanization in Rome is more recent and resulted from extended urbanization (Cellamare, 2017) driven by the developments of single- or double-family dwellings in a context of scattered small-to-medium local enterprises, unlike the landscape of the industrialized hinterlands of Milan and Naples. Although this focus does not entail welfare challenges but is instead grounded in the field of

urban planning, it is important to account for a diversity that is reproduced in trajectories of service provision.

In this respect, the article addresses the ways in which welfare services are organized in three areas that present the common feature of being located on the outskirts of a large city, but which have expanded at different times and with different developmental trajectories. This topic entails many aspects of the contemporary governance of public services: decentralization and localization of services to develop sustainable local welfare systems (see Andreotti et al., 2012), inter-municipal organization of services towards a more pluralistic decision-making, rescaling, and territorial reorganization of power (Brenner, 2004; Kazepov, 2010) and the territorialization of social policies. Following the sequence of suburbanization phases, the next sub-sections illustrate the ways in which welfare services are governed and ensured to the inhabitants of the three target areas, and the "local insights," which is to say the most significant contextual tensions and emerging issues enhanced by the interviewees. Before this, a general scheme of the multilevel welfare services' scheme of provision is provided (Figure 2). In Italy, the legislative framework behind the governance of social services is sustained by National Law 328/2000, which entails a regional act of enforcement. On such a basis, each regional entity develops sub-regional units, which usually unite a number of municipalities for demographic reasons. This multilevel framework can then be integrated eventually by municipal efforts and investments. Such a scheme sustains the welfare issues that are discussed and explored in the following sections.

4.2. Local Welfare in the Hinterlands of Milan: The Example of Pioltello

4.2.1. Organization of Welfare Services

In the case of the Lombardy region (in which are located Pioltello and the metropolitan area of Milan), two specific Acts of Enforcement (Regional Law 3/2008, which regulates the network of interventions and services to citizens in social-health fields, and the subsequent Regional Law 23/2015, which updated the integrated social-health regional system) transpose the national legislation, whereas Distretto Sociale Est Milano 3 ("District 3") is the governmental actor for social services involving
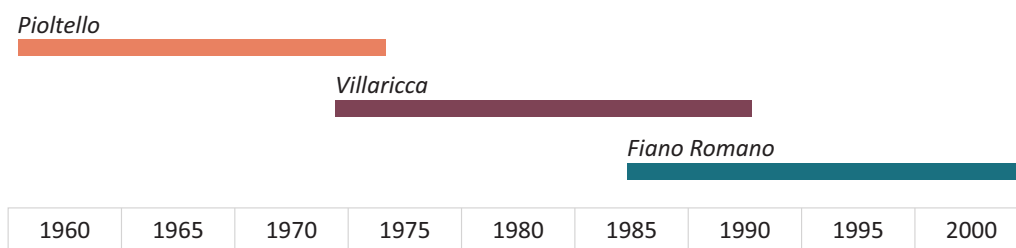

Figure 1. Sequence of suburbanization phases in the three target areas.
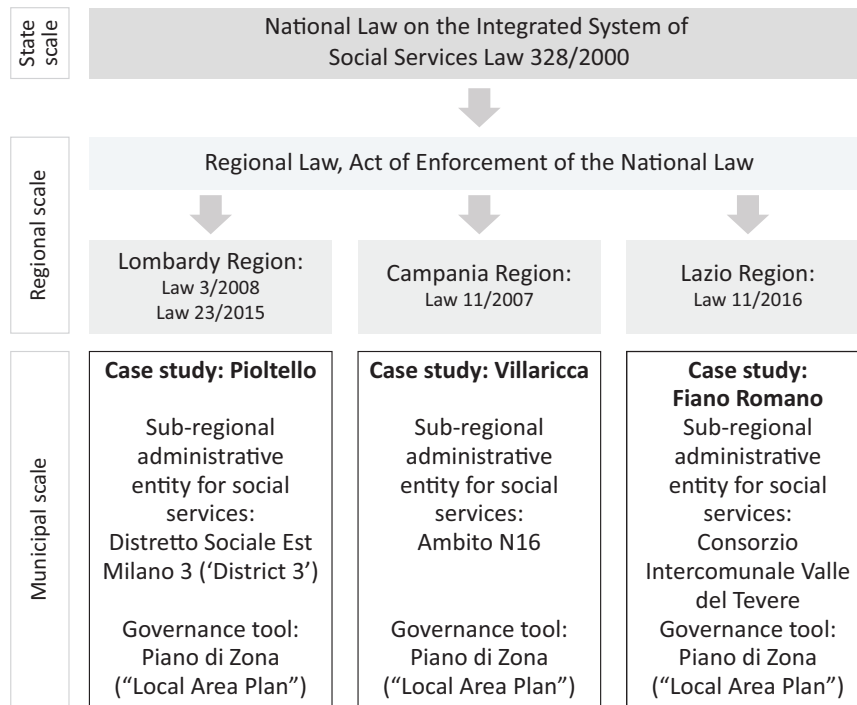
Figure 2. The scheme of welfare governance in Italy, with relevant details referring to the three case studies.

the municipalities of Segrate, Rodano, Vimodrone, and Pioltello. Pioltello hosts the Plan Office (Ufficio di Piano), the technical-operational structure for the implementation of the triennial Local Area Plan (Piano di Zona), aimed at achieving three policy goals: improving the coordination of services amongst the municipal-based "social secretariats" of each municipality, reinforcing the collaborations between District 3 and the relevant municipalities, and addressing the four strategic pillars (non-self-sufficiency; mental health; support to households, childhood and youth; social inclusion and combatting poverty). These areas of intervention are integrated by the "zonal" health planning developed by the regional health authority. As illustrated by the interview with the head of the social policy office, social services in Pioltello are organized using an omni-comprehensive rationale, through a territorialization that especially addresses multiculturality with two main interventions: a helpdesk service for foreigners (*sportello stranieri*) and the intercultural council (*consulta interculturale*) to gather the philanthropic actors involved in pathways for the inclusion of migrants in the local fabric. As a result of the high and heterogeneous concentration of migrant populations from North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, particularly in the Satellite neighbourhood (see De Vidovich & Bovo, 2021; Di Giovanni & Leveratto, 2018; Granata, 2004), multiculturalism is a key feature of Pioltello. In this multicultural area (but not only there), governmental attention is devoted to housing distress, new social risks, and poverty. Evictions, late payments of mortgages, and the consequent non-authorized occupations of dwellings with squatting practices are key issues that reveal the main urgencies for the local welfare agenda of the munic-

ipality, as stressed both by the mayor and the head of the social services office. Solutions related to social housing have been enacted by the administrators.

Inter-institutional relationships are sought by the social policies offices of Pioltello, but beyond agreements between the municipality and the third sector, the funding system is fragmented, especially since the metropolitan configuration of new strategic geographical areas of intervention (named *zone omogenee*) led to a rearranging of the governance of welfare services amongst the suburban municipalities of Milan.

4.2.2. Local Insights From Pioltello

The neighbourhood of Satellite can be seen as a "suburban arrival space" (De Vidovich & Bovo, 2021). A revitalization phase is ongoing as part of a wider programme promoted by the Metropolitan City of Milan, Welfare Metropolitano e Rigenerazione Urbana. This neighbourhood presents very peculiar socio-economic and socio-demographic conditions, and has a population of about 5,600 inhabitants, reaching almost 9,000 when non-registered citizens are included (Di Giovanni & Leveratto, 2018). As a consequence, and as highlighted by the mayor in an interview conducted in October 2018, housing in the area is identified as a highly critical issue. The ongoing planning phase in Pioltello and Satellite succeeded the vibrant period of area-based urban regeneration programmes launched in the urban peripheries of Milan from the early 1990s onwards. Yet, the metropolitan peripheries on the outskirts of the urban core have been left out of these processes. According to this misalignment, Pioltello seems affected by a sort of "welfare

offloading," a notion that describes a situation where "the city 'offloads' the persistent fragilities on its urban edges and then proposes the instruments, frameworks and possible solutions to cope with such vulnerabilities" (De Vidovich & Bovo, 2021, p. 15).

This process results from complex welfare transformations observed at a metropolitan scale involving both the city and its outskirts. The ongoing regeneration of the Satellite neighbourhood epitomizes the offloading process, by demonstrating how projects involving the most deprived neighbourhoods of Milan in previous years were, until recently, absent in suburbs. Nonetheless, this condition is not reproduced in the other two examples considered for this article, which present other problematic issues.

4.3. Local Welfare in the Hinterlands of Naples: The Example of Villaricca

4.3.1. Organization of Welfare Services

The massive sub-urban expansion of Naples that occurred during the 20th century was led largely by the decentralization of industrial plants and the modernization of road infrastructures (di Gennaro, 2014). The northern peripheries of Naples can be seen as a "conurbation" (Geddes, 1915) that encompasses the stigmatized urban peripheries of Scampia, Secondigliano, and Piscinola due to the presence of Camorrah and the sum of numerous hinterlands municipalities, of which many give shape to a non-administrative territorial unit known as *Comprensorio Giuglianese* (or *Agro Giuglianese*), composed of the main city of Giugliano in Campania (123,839 inhabitants, one of the most populated cities of the whole region) and the smaller towns of Qualiano, Villaricca, Marano di Napoli, Mugnano di Napoli, and Calvizzano. This context is characterized by diffused poverty and fragility. As argued by the municipal coordinator of social policies in Villaricca, the large majority of economic resources dedicated to service provision and social policies have a regional origin. The regional Law for Dignity and Social Citizenship (No. 11/2007) is the act of enforcement of National Law 328/2000, aimed at providing the normative framework for the development of a local system of social services, enacted through the Local Area Plans. According to the regional law, the organization of social services entails the supra-municipal governmental units, i.e., the *ambiti*, including different municipalities for demographic reasons. Villaricca belongs to the Ambito N16, together with Melito di Napoli (a town pressed between the *Comprensorio* and the northern periphery of Naples), Mugnano di Napoli, Calvizzano, and Qualiano. The Ambito responds to the social demands of 141,786 inhabitants and is run by the Ufficio di Piano (Planning Office). This governance actor carries out a number of tasks: social secretariat, care system for custody and adoption of children, implementation of measures to

combat poverty, home-care assistance to elders and people with disabilities, education support to children with disabilities, and children exposed to school dropout. Nonetheless, the planning office of Ambito N16 faces many obstacles from both the organizational and economic sides which have, since the late 2000s, hampered adequate service delivery. As a consequence, service delivery has been delegated, especially to the third sector. Based upon this scenario, the municipality of Villaricca experiences two particular hardships: The first issue concerns financial constraints. In 2018, a town council resolution accounted for public insolvency by notifying residents of the absence of an appropriate public accounting of municipal expenditures. In sum, despite the development of the Local Area Plan designed on a tri-annual basis (2019–2021), in recent years Villaricca faced, and is still facing, a significant shortage of economic resources to be allocated for the organization and delivery of basic services. Furthermore, the third sector is unable to fully satisfy the social demands of many households. The second pivotal issue of local welfare involves the policy field of education. Unlike the rest of Italy, the metropolitan area of Naples is not stagnating demographically, but it is facing high percentages of youth unemployment and NEETs (young people not in education, employment, or training), 23% in Villaricca for the year 2011, according to census data. In this respect, childcare and school infrastructure improvement—funded through operative national programmes by the Ministry for Education—are key projects for the governance of welfare in Villaricca.

4.3.2. Local Insights From Villaricca

According to many former governors of Villaricca, welfare planning relies mainly on regional and national funds, especially for schooling and education. The numerous weaknesses faced by the local administrators hamper the development of territorialization processes. The weak proximity, on the municipal scale, of a reasonable number of welfare services, the lack of public spaces to be used as leverage for new commercial activities, and persistent poverty amongst numerous households, are some of the main pre-existing features affecting the poor welfare provision. Moreover, the main commercial services are concentrated in the historical city centre and are unfairly distributed across the municipal perimeter. In this respect, the key transit road Circumvallazione Esterna di Napoli serves as a "market road" (*strada mercato*; Indovina, 2006), which represents a typical pattern of the model of the Italian "diffused city." In the context of Villaricca, it is a hotspot for commercial and food supply. Another insight invokes the local problem of waste mismanagement, with harmful consequences for the population's health (Mastellone et al., 2009; Pasotti, 2010). Looking at Villaricca, it is reasonable to wonder how a local welfare system is ensured in a context of fragilities, where the public

expenditure has no sufficient resources to foster an adequate provision. A former alderman for social policies argues that the organization by *ambiti* seems incongruent with the spatial features of the Comprensorio, where many municipalities are contiguous to each other, as is the case for Villaricca and Giugliano in Campania. Yet the *ambiti* simply merge a number of municipalities according to the municipal's population density, without an area-based localization of services into units that could better meet the social demands of a conurbation. The Ambito N16 encompasses four municipalities, with an incongruent rationale according to the spatial features of the area. Overall, the combination of municipal and supra-municipal organization of services, supported by the third sector, navigates the economic shortages and diffused poverties. However, the local community and its institutions reacted resiliently to such a downtrodden situation. Basic services (such as water, sewage, and energy) are fairly provided to households, although the large presence of unauthorized buildings complicates their delivery. The example of Villaricca illustrates how local welfare is ensured between numerous societal fragilities.

4.4. Local Welfare in the Hinterlands of Rome: The Example of Fiano Romano

4.4.1. Organization of Welfare Services

In the Region of Lazio, wherein are located Rome and Fiano Romano, the act of enforcement of National Law 328/2000 is Law 11/2016, which provides the main guidelines for local service provision within the implementation of the Local Area Plans. The suburb of Fiano Romano, located 30 km north of Rome, is under the umbrella of the Consorzio Intercomunale Valle del Tevere (Inter-Municipal Consortium of Tiber Valley for Social Services and Interventions), which was launched in 2016 and ties together 17 municipalities, for a total of 111,675 inhabitants within the administrative boundary of the Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale. To launch its planning activities, the Consortium maintained 2003's Local Area Plan as a guideline for the provision of social services during the economic crisis. Today, the Consortium organizes its policy-making through six "actions": (a) action on basic services, including home-based healthcare for elderly people, educational services, and daily care to the infirm; (b) actions tailor-made for small municipalities with a population below 2,000 inhabitants; (c) action on non-self-sufficiency; (d) actions on family, youth, and child protection; (e) action to tackle addictions; and (f) actions for social inclusion, to combat poverty, housing difficulties, and even mental health distress. These actions are sustained by a form of governance in which the regional authority defines the funding of the trajectories undertaken by the Consortium. According to the actions and the governance of the Consortium, the

interview with the director revealed the main issues addressed by the local administrators in terms of welfare: the development of social-health policy integration, the territorialization of social policies, and the difficulty of identifying inhabitants' needs beyond traditional welfare demands. Furthermore, because a landscape of single- or double-family dwellings reminiscent of the Anglo-American model denotes a "private-oriented" suburbanism and habitus, the unruled and disarticulated (sub)urban expansion of the area affects welfare planning and possible pathways to social cohesion. In addition, the city of Rome plays a cumbersome role: Due to manifold problems in public affairs, Rome absorbs most of the efforts and resources targeted to a metropolitan governmental rationale. In other words, some ambiguities characterize the metropolitan area of Rome, and these result in a sum of inequalities in terms of service allocation, infrastructures, political engagement, and environmental changes. In this respect, two aspects are worth noting (D'Albergo, 2015): (a) an economic gap between Rome and its outskirts, which are not identified by the decision-makers as part of the large "metropolitan fabric" of Rome, and (b) a weak political leadership that accounts for the governmental issues affecting the institutional and scalar changes in the suburbs of Rome. The sum of the material factors (economic and policy actions with physical impacts on the urban spaces) and non-material factors (representation, discourses, and scalar or transcalar relations) explains the ambiguity of and contradictions in the problematic metropolitan dimension of Rome (D'Albergo et al., 2019). Furthermore, a new suburban fabric has emerged over the past three decades as a result of ways of living that differ from those of Rome's urban core (Cellamare, 2016). These ways are more influenced by an Anglo-American car dependence, but also by the search for urban-rural liveability. Yet, as suggested by the case of Fiano Romano, this suburban fabric experiences a lack of adequate welfare provision.

4.4.2. Local Insights From Fiano Romano

The suburb of Fiano Romano "epitomizes the turbulence of the extended urbanization of Rome, resulting in a constellation of towns that strongly modified the countryside" (De Vidovich, 2021a, p. 244). According to Istat census data, the town saw a 64.84% population increase between 2001 and 2011, and this trend continues unabated, also as a result of a migration flow from Rome (Vazzoler, 2016). Due to the incessant process of urban sprawl and the inability of public policies to manage the increasingly difficult coexistence of urban and rural land uses, such a demographic increase retrofitted the rurality surrounding Rome into a changing territory (Lelo, 2017). As for the case of Villaricca, a little-ruled process of residential expansion affected the area, especially the recently developed neighbourhood of Palombaro-Felciare. However, the private-led

expansion of the area that began in the 1990s neglected the infrastructural provision of basic urban standards, with negative consequences even in the supply of basic services, such as water. In this case, the purification plants for water treatment and the pipelines for channelling the water supply to private houses were not outfitted with a system that could cope with such a massive expansion (De Vidovich, 2021a). Some investigations revealed that the residential development in Palombaro Felciare was made possible by the absence of governmental monitoring, resulting in an unlawful territorial transformation through unauthorized constructions. Between 2005 and 2011, this case received the attention of the Court of Rieti, which undertook a judicial review (De Vidovich, 2021a; Vazzoler, 2016). This process convicted members of the public planning authority, local administrators, and construction constructors. As a consequence, the local administrations of Fiano Romano launched a retrofitting phase for the neighbourhood's public facilities, designing a local masterplan, entitled Piano Urbanistico Attuativo (PUA), aimed at equipping the public roads system with adequate urban standards (such as sidewalks) by indicating the location of foreseen public facilities (such as education infrastructures) in specific, tailored land plots. Nonetheless, such developments foreseen by PUA have not yet been started, whereas new residential constructions (in specific plots according to the PUA) have been built, confirming the combination of private-led and self-led suburbanization. This brief focus on the recent history of the Fiano Romano and Palombaro Felciare neighbourhoods (for further inquiry, see De Vidovich, 2021a) reveals how a "new suburbia" is emerging at the edges of Rome, where suburbanisms represent leverage for recasting local agendas facing emerging demands.

5. Discussion: Diverse Forms of Welfare Provision for Diverse Post-Suburban Areas

These three examples suggest a tangible diversification in welfare provision amongst Italian metropolitan areas, although the rationale of multilevel governance represents a common groundwork. Welfare governance is not homogeneous, and the "area-based" organization comprising a certain number of municipalities (District 3 and the subsequent *zona omogenea* Adda-Martesana in Pioltello, Ambito N16 in Villaricca, and Consorzio Intercomunale Valle del Tevere in Fiano Romano) faces several local issues that affect the governance itself. Furthermore, as also introduced in the methodological section, processes of suburbanization have occurred in the three target areas at different times and speeds, thus raising different histories of suburbanisms and suburban expansions. Therefore, governance frameworks are consistently different—for instance, from the recently expanded town of Fiano Romano to the local community of Pioltello, which has evolved through a longer process of residential expansion initiated during the period of migration flow that occurred during the 1960s and which brought many populations from Southern Italy to industrialized Northern Italy. In this view, (post)suburbanization in Milan and Naples presents the common feature of an expansion process that engulfed, through long-lasting processes, former rural towns into an increasingly densified and urbanized context.

With these three examples in mind, it is possible to provide replies to the research questions posited in the introduction in such a way that they relate to the ways in which governance of welfare services is organized at the edges of large cities, especially in Italy's three largest metropolitan areas. The aim of these answers is to identify the main governance challenges in each case, as well as ascertain the main differences between the three contexts that, as illustrated, present significantly different patterns of (post)suburban expansion. First, a focus on local tensions and contextual features is to be addressed. Metropolitan Milan, with the case of Pioltello, presents a situation that involves the "offloading" of its main social vulnerabilities and fragilities from the city to its outskirts (De Vidovich & Bovo, 2021), with the consequence of a heavy burden on local municipalities of issues that concern social services. Despite the presence of encouraging planning activities in the field of urban regeneration, the new sub-metropolitan rationale devised with the new *zone omogenee* entail a need to revise the development of local welfare systems that involve several municipalities. Metropolitan Naples epitomizes the difficulties of a highly fragile area, where poverty, diversified difficulties for both households and young people, and a lack of economic resources jeopardize any attempt to develop a local area plan. In this respect, the case at the edges of Naples reveals a situation faced by local administrators that is the most difficult of the three selected examples. The case of Fiano Romano, in metropolitan Rome, where processes of "metropolization" have occurred at a later stage compared to the areas of Milan and Naples, discloses the grey areas of an unruled and uneven residential expansion, where social demands related to welfare are firstly related to access to a basic service (such as water), and secondly to the traditional policy interventions in the field of social services, which—although fair—lack innovation. Overall, the three cases reveal a secondary role played by suburbs in the governance of welfare in metropolitan areas, despite the presence of well-established national and regional governing frameworks (see Figure 2). Whilst general difficulty in innovating welfare provision is common in the three cases, diversies cana be found in the social demands on the local scale of the municipality, in the capacity of decision-makers at regional and sub-regional levels to implement local area plans, and in forms of (post)suburbanization that make any comparison between the areas difficult. In this respect, the main governance challenge for welfare at the urban edges is, literally, related to the capacity to cope with

overlapping diversities in the societies that inhabit each suburb, the economic capacity of local administrators, and the different local vulnerabilities, which, as discussed, are not homogeneous amongst suburban constellations (Keil, 2013).

6. Concluding Remarks

To sum up, from a theoretical standpoint, the diversity of suburban typologies in the forms of governance, suburbanization and social fabric, have been framed in the theoretical debate on post-suburbia (Teaford, 1997)—a notion that over the two past decades has assumed a particular significance in navigating the political and conceptual nodes of suburban expansions (Keil & Young, 2011)—by distinguishing a new era of urbanization (Phelps & Wu, 2011) that corresponds to post-Fordism and to the diffusion of diverse forms of suburbs (Phelps & Wood, 2011). Furthermore, the term "post-suburbia" captures the profusion of terms relating to diverse urban forms concerning which there is only a partial consensus (Phelps et al., 2006; Tzaninis, 2020). With the threefold example, this article aimed at entering the recent theoretical debate on post-suburban Italy (De Vidovich, 2020), which focuses on the centrality gained by hinterlands and periurban areas as they relate to an understanding of the contemporary features and complexities of typically Italian diffused urbanization (Indovina et al., 1990), where many dynamics related to the urbanization of rural areas (Lanzani, 2012) are combined with the expansion of the few metropolitan nodes (Ardigò, 1967). The attempt to provide a post-suburban perspective for Italy includes commentary as to how this notion is useful to move from global debates on how suburban areas have evolved in diverse forms to local specificities that are influenced by overarching contextual features embedded in each national context (see De Vidovich, 2021a). The focus on these local specificities has been addressed with a reflection on welfare provision in (post)suburban areas, which has revealed the fragmentation of such provision.

In this respect, the three cases demonstrate how hinterlands and urban edges face a lack of comprehensive governance and governmental agendas to govern the uneven (post)suburban expansions (De Vidovich, 2021b). Although several studies have advocated the centrality of metropolitan agendas (see Gross et al., 2019), this article, with reference to welfare governance, has briefly introduced the weaknesses of this centrality. Hinterlands seem affected not only by a splintered provision but also by heterogeneous local problems (from water supply in the case of Rome to historic waste mismanagement in the case of Villaricca) that hamper the identification of a common rationale to develop adequate governance agendas. Because this article has only briefly presented three examples, without a well-structured discussion of case studies, further inquiries are necessary to determine how metropolises can develop resilient local welfare governance systems that can be sustained in the face of a diversity of local tensions.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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