

Neoliberalism, Welfare crisis and Social Work in Italy: the analysis of the M'Imprendo Project

Neoliberalismo, crise do Welfare e Serviço Social na Itália: uma análise do Projeto M'Imprendo

Maria Alexandra da Silva Monteiro Mustafá^a

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9011-6597>

Abstract: This article, the result of a Postdoctoral research, sought to understand the interconnections between Welfare and Italian Social Service and analyze the impacts of its crisis and the advance of neoliberalism in social policies, based on the study of the M'Imprendo Project. He identified that there is a culture of rights and citizenship in Italy, heritage of Welfare, and that such impacts threaten the training/practice of the social worker who has an influence of Sociology and Social Sciences in the academic sphere.

Keywords: Welfare. Neoliberalism. Italian Social Work. M'Imprendo.

Resumo: Este artigo, resultado de pesquisa de pós-doutorado, buscou apreender as interconexões entre o Welfare e o Serviço Social italiano, e analisar os impactos da sua crise e do avanço do neoliberalismo nas políticas sociais, a partir do estudo do Projeto M'Imprendo. Identificou que existe uma cultura de direitos e de cidadania na Itália, herança do Welfare, e que tais impactos ameaçam a formação/prática do assistente social que tem um influxo da Sociologia e das Ciências Sociais no âmbito acadêmico.

Palavras-chave: Welfare. Neoliberalismo. Serviço Social italiano. M'Imprendo.

^aUniversidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE), Recife/PE, Brasil.

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Introduction

The post-doctorate in Italy and the interest in researching the M'Imprendo Project were born within the scope of the exchange between Brazilian and Italian Social Work that was created by us in the 1990s, when we were carrying out our doctorate in philosophy at the Università Salesiana di Roma. The contact that was established between us and the Italian social workers, as well as between the sociologists of that country, has favored the exchange of experiences, the conduction of joint research and the creation of agreements between Brazilian universities and Italian universities, particularly Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, Università Milano Bicocca and Università Ca'Foscari di Venezia, which Brazilian students and professors have collectively developed studies at the full doctoral level, Sandwich PhD, joint scientific events and, currently, research related to internationalization of Social Work, through the Print Project.

It was precisely in this context that I discovered M'Imprendo's proposal: through Brazil-Italy exchange, I met social worker Anna Maria D'Ottavi, then president of ISTISSS (Istituto per gli Studi Sul Servizio Sociale) and coordinator of the M'Imprendo Project, and the sociologist Roberto Cipriani, both professors at the aforementioned Università degli Studi di Roma Tre.

Previously, a bilateral survey had been carried out, jointly with the aforementioned authors, which aimed at a comparative study between M'Imprendo and Projovem. Therefore, this research has resulted in the International Meeting of Ethics, Social Research and Human Rights that took place in Brazil, in 2010, with the participation of Brazilian and Italian professors, intellectuals and students, and gave rise to the book *The social being: ethics, research social and human rights* in 2012.

The postdoctoral research has focused on the study of the objectives, nature and implementation of M'Imprendo, precisely to try to identify how an entrepreneurial experience can extrapolate and overcome the limits

normally imposed by the logic of capitalist society, which establishes only the objective of the economic enterprise for such activity, in the perspective of creating the illusory image that social mobility is possible in the working class youth, especially if the worker starts to see himself as a future capitalist and, therefore, a future exploiter of the workforce of those people who will be their employees. The desire to succeed, to become a business owner (and, therefore, an “oppressor” — in the words of Paulo Freire) and to “change one’s social class” seems to be the main driver of these experiences. In this sense, it has been up to us to analyze the M'Imprendo Project since its conception in 2005, when it was launched in a room at the Campidoglio in Rome (D'OTTAVI, 2007), using the content of the speeches of those who were promoting it and who acted as their coordinators.

In order to understand the logic that guided the project and its dynamics of operation, we have carried out documentary and bibliographic research, interviews with its coordinators and teachers from the schools where the project was implemented, in Rome we have participated in training workshops for students, in the award events of the project and, including myself, in the first person, was appointed to take part of the project’s Scientific Committee, which was responsible for defining the contents to be passed on in the process of training teachers and training students who were involved in the project.

We will then present the project itself, its origin, authors, entities involved, objectives, operating dynamics, and we will analyze the socio-economic and political contextualization of its proposal emergence, in the context of the Welfare State and the dismantling of social policies, due to the advance of neoliberalism.

Since the project presented itself as a challenge for social intervention with young students from the outskirts of Rome, for the Sociology and Social Work courses at the Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, our analysis privileged the study of Italian Social Work and its interrelationship-relationship with Sociology and with the impacts of the Welfare crisis, as presented in the following items.



1. The M'Imprendo Project

1.1 *Historical context: Welfare and social policies*

Italy is one of the European countries that have experimented more intensively the Welfare State model. This experience lasted approximately 30 years, starting on the post-World War II period, and began to show signs of a post-1990s crisis, especially with the economic crisis that broke out in the world from 2007 onwards.

It is worth mentioning here that the experience of Welfare or Welfare State is contextualized within the scope of the alternatives of capitalist countries, as a response to the demands of the working class that showed signs of adherence to socialist regimes, inspired by the governments of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe.

From a theoretical point of view, the proposal for structuring the Welfare State in advanced capitalist countries is based on the theses of John Maynard Keynes, as opposed to those of Friedrich Hayek, with regard to the sustainability of capital in facing the cyclical crises of the economy even as they promote mass unemployment, inflation and working-class discontent. This controversy has existed since the 1929 crisis (WAPSHOTT, 2016) and it will present a continuing relationship in the context of the Cold War, after World War II.

For Keynes, a strong state, intervening and regulating the economy, capable of promoting workers' well-being and full employment, is the most convincing way out that the capitalist mode of production is viable and that is possible for capital and labor to coexist, without having to opt for socialist or communist regimes. In short, it is about promoting conditions so that the risks of threat to the order of capital are minimized and a favorable mentality to capitalism is created, capable of convincing the working class itself that coexistence in inequality is possible, provided that it is controlled, and that the profits achieved by the bourgeoisie do not exceed the limit which would provoke an increase in pauperism. Within this logic, social assistance and policies are created that ensure



both a “dignified life” for workers, and represent a denial of the socialist or communist alternative, which is seen as unnecessary, since the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the countries which have adopted Welfare responds positively to the yearnings of employability and sustainability, in a climate of “freedom”, understood as “free enterprise”, in the order of capital.

This ideology was supported for approximately 30 years, but the fall of real socialism represented the end of the communist “threat” in the world and, consequently, Keynes’ theses were called into question, since the crisis of capital demanded other more offensive alternatives in the world that refers to the sustainability of the levels of profitability of the bourgeoisie and, at the same time, the “ghost” of communism was no longer a plausible threat to be taken into account, especially given the theories of the end of history and postmodernism that presented as impediments to the resumption of the direction that the working class had been giving to its struggles, since the Revolution of 1917. The resort to conservatism gave rise to a political and economic path that promoted adherence to Hayek’s theses (to the detriment of those of Keynes, which came hitherto being the most accepted), explained in the form of neoliberalism, which represent the intensification of income concentration, to the detriment of a proportionate intensification of pauperism, delegating to the private sector, through unbridled privatization, control over the market that causes, simultaneously, a precariousness of living and working conditions and the dismantling of social and assistance policies.

But we cannot discuss neoliberalism before analyzing the meaning of the so-called “Thirty Glorious Years” for countries that have lived through the Welfare experience. This period is understood, by most scholars, from the following characteristics: State intervention in the regulation of economic and social interests; universalization of education and health policies; articulation of the system of social protection policies and social services, with special attention to the most vulnerable; policy orientation to reduce inequalities (ASCOLI, 2011).



Following the line of reasoning developed by Ascoli, we have identified that many social needs began to expand and reconfigure the European and Italian scenario with the crisis of the Welfare State. Among these needs, it is worth mentioning:

- the needs of the elderly segment, which has grown significantly in Italy;
- the weakening of child care services;
- the high unemployment rate among young people;
- the low rate of female employment;
- the need for more effective policies to address the issue of migration, which is at a very high level and increasingly growing, given the conditions of misery, hunger, civil wars and external conflicts that, from time to time, devastate countries of the East European, African and Asian (especially the Middle East);
- the absence of policies aimed at training for work.

In view of this situation, it is even stated that:

Analyzing the Italian case, it is evident that the problems connected with territorial inequalities emerge in the foreground, the severity of which has no parameter for comparison with any other country in the European Union. All indicators show us a country in which inequalities and territorial fractures have been widely widened, especially in the last ten to fifteen years (ASCOLI, 2011, p. 15).

It is also worth considering that the process of globalization of capital and the advance of neoliberalism “has promoted the displacement of companies, the precariousness of the labor market, low technological innovation due to a decision by the State to reduce labor costs, and the dismantling of social protection and workers’ rights” (BARDANZELLU, 2007, p. 17).



However, some traces of what has proved to be a successful experience of the Welfare State can be found in the social policies of Italy, especially if we consider that some scholars describe the current situation as “a system still in transition towards a new configuration” (NATALI, 2009, *apud* ASCOLI, 2011, p. 5).

It is in this context of crisis and the attempt, on the part of some rulers, to maintain the balance between neoliberalism, the crisis of the Welfare State and the maintenance of some of its social characteristics, that the Bersani Law¹ emerges, with the objective of providing resources in lost background to finance small companies that can create jobs in the periphery. This law favored initiatives by artisans, opening of bookstores, green companies, companies of migrant citizens, entertainment companies, reaching a total of approximately 700 benefited small companies and creating 3,300 jobs.

It is precisely within this initiative that the proposal from the City of Rome to present this perspective of entrepreneurship to young students from the outskirts of the city arises. This is how the demand arises that propitiates the gestation of the M'Imprendo Project in partnership with the Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, the ISTISSS and public schools.

1.2 Objectives of M'Imprendo

Initially, the objectives of the M'Imprendo Project were established by the Department of Policies for Local Development of the Municipality

¹ The Bersani Law allocates resources to infrastructure, family policies, youth policies and public spending. With regard to policies for youth, it establishes in its article 19: “With the aim of promoting the right of young people to cultural and professional training and insertion in social life, whether through the right to housing, access to credit for acquisition and use of goods and services, under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, a fund called ‘Fund for Youth Policies’ is set up, to which the sum of 3 million euros for the year 2006 and 10 million euros from the year 2007”. Available at: <https://www.altalex.com/documents/leggi/2008/03/19/decreto-bersani-infrastrutture-famiglia-e-spesa-pubblica>. Access on: 23 Oct. 2021.



of Rome and presented two directions that were inserted in the very proposal of entrepreneurship that provided for the Bersani Law and the broader attributions of this department, especially with regard to the promotion of actions aimed at meeting the needs of territories, or communities located on the periphery of Rome.

It should be noted here that, with the precariousness of the world of work and the adoption of policies of austerity, control and reduction of resources for social policies, typical of neoliberalism, poverty increased considerably in the world and also reached Italy, who went through the Welfare State crisis. Thus, M'Imprendo's proposal presented the possibility of a partnership between communities and public administration, through action in the sense of awakening in young people from the periphery, the interest for training for work, from the perspective of self-management, as well as expand their vision of subjects capable of thinking about their own community problems as being possible to be answered through their initiatives, which would be judged as to merit and feasibility by a Committee formed by the entities that consisted of the team responsible for the project.

Therefore, the objective of M'Imprendo necessarily involved training for work, self-entrepreneurship and the creative ability to solve problems in the territory, in particular, those of an environmental nature.

According to the Rome City Hall Department, the consistency of the proposal would lie precisely in the following argument:

Local development today can be understood almost as synonymous with participation and governance, in the sense of the confrontation between the living forces of the local context and the Administrators as political and economic decision-makers, in order to obtain the maximum appreciation of social capital (XIV Division *apud* D'OTTAVI, 2007, p. 5).

Thus, it is clear that the objective of the project was precisely "to train young people for self-entrepreneurship, providing them with the



ability to articulate the economic, environmental and social aspects of human development” (XIV Dipartimento *apud* D’OTTAVI, 2007, p. 5).

This development proposal, according to City Hall managers, among them the social workers Adelaide Norcia and Patrizia Giganti, is in line with the notion of development elaborated in the 1990s, in the first Report on Human Development of the UNDP (Program for the Development of United Nations), which gives centrality to human development, by stating: “Human beings are the true wealth of a nation, the essential objective of development is to create a favorable climate for a healthy, lasting and creative life” (UNDP, 1990, *apud* D’OTTAVI, 2007, p. 9). This vision calls into question the concept of development aimed exclusively at profit to the detriment of the lives of individuals and populations, and also questions the chaotic growth, the result of wild speculation that is, as known, a factor that disrupts life in communities.

Implicit in this conception is a disapproval of capitalism and its individualistic and social-Darwinist principles, which are based on the unbridled pursuit of profit at any cost.

Thus, this project presents a different proposal from the other entrepreneurship proposals that are inspired by the formation of entrepreneurs obeying the same logic of seeking profitability, having the merit of the fact that these young people, “future entrepreneurs”, come from the subordinate class.

However the differential of the M’Imprendo Project goes further when the criteria that guide it are analyzed, as we can identify through the words of the sociologist and professor of the Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Educazione at the Università degli Studi di Roma Tre, Roberto Cipriani. According to him, three criteria are essential in this process of training young people: innovation, autonomy, and creativity.

Without innovation, one is destined for decadence, for the loss of all possibilities on the occupational level as well. Innovation is the key to our speech. The City Hall and the University give the general guidelines, but



each school, each group, each student will be able to decide how they consider the work, the objectives, type of sector in which the activity itself is inserted, at least at the proposal level. [The Project] is aimed at young people who are at the height of their creative ability. [...] Even in the most resource-poor communities, there is a possibility of survival and a better existence. Invention is necessary — serendipity — “thinking a little is everything and more” (CIPRIANI, 2007, p. 20).

These criteria are of fundamental importance for a conception of disalienated work, as they rescue human beings’ teleological capacity, i.e., planning and executing actions that represent their autonomy from the impositions dictated by the social and technical division of work, as well as it frees them from the determination imposed by the capitalist mode of production itself of submission to the dictates of alienation of the means of production, the work process and the work product. These characteristics represent the possibility of an emancipation that, even if verified within the limits of the logic of capital itself, since the social structure remains capitalist, it can have the meaning of a laboratory experiment to verify what it would be like in an emancipated society and overcoming the capitalism, the exercise of free and disalienated work. These experiences, in essence, create a new mentality, especially among young people who start to see possibilities other than those restricted to the work experience in which the worker is just a labor exploited for the purposes of profit and enrichment of the employers. In short, it is about creating objective conditions that allow the development of research that can support the thesis that another type of work is possible, that another type of work relationship is possible, and that in order to put into practice its teleological capacity — which is inherent to the human being —, it is necessary to experiment in the laboratory that scientifically produces the ideal conditions for analyzing the viability of this future society, and not to fall into the fatalistic determinism that the way of Capitalist production is the ultimate and most suitable form of organization for living in society.



To ratify these considerations, we bring, once again, the words of Roberto Cipriani (2007, p. 21): “The essence of all human activity is substantially and, in the first place, the cognitive activity”.

It is for this reason that it is required that young people who apply to participate in the project must be enrolled in public high schools, and that these schools, through the teachers who were also motivated to be involved in the project, receive special training, in order to meet the previously stated principles and the objectives proposed by the Municipality of Rome. This training content for teachers and students is defined by the Scientific Committee and corresponds to training for self-training of purposeful subjects; training for identifying needs in territories or communities in which young people and schools are inserted; training for the elaboration of company projects that meet all the qualities required in the criteria and objectives of M'Imprendo and the dynamics of a company's functioning.

Projects developed by students will be judged by a team of evaluators as to the quality of the proposal, its consistency with the principles established by M'Imprendo and its feasibility, in accordance with existing community resources and the resources of the City of Rome. Therefore, young people will naturally develop their ability to work in groups, with schoolmates, and will receive support from teachers and specialists in the fields of Sociology, Social Work and entrepreneurship itself.

Teachers will be oriented to include in their school curricula subjects and contents that establish a connection between school and the world of work, as well as the notions of preparation for the research that will materialize in the communities, in order to facilitate for young people the identification of those needs that are more emerging and possible to be answered from the proposal of a company and the management of the city, through the City Hall of Rome.

Regarding the territory or communities, Roberto Cipriani warns us of the need to introduce a scientific and investigative attitude, especially because this locus constitutes the habitat of the young people of



M'Imprendo and, for this reason, for being such an environment familiar to them, their most urgent demands, which can serve as a potential for the creation of answers to their solutions and referrals by managers, can go unnoticed by the young people themselves. It is, therefore, the need for a rigorous and studious knowledge of the community, which awakens in young people a critical look at reality and its potential:

We cannot imagine a company in the territory if we do not know the territory beforehand. We cannot base ourselves on what we imagine reality to be, because we are all capable of imagining reality, but a confrontation with reality is necessary — that research is carried out (CIPRIANI, 2007, p. 21).

As a sociologist, he outlines the indispensable steps for a scientific understanding of reality, and proposes this as a methodology to be used by teachers and instructors, responsible for the seminars and workshops that will accompany the young people in the making of the project:

The first point is research on the territory, as to study the territory, collect data from different sources — libraries, institutes, chambers of commerce, unions, parties, etc. The research methodology must be the best — quantitative and qualitative (talk with people, with entrepreneurs, who work in the territory, with municipal managers). [...] Young people and schools, families, are inserted in the community, thus, the distance to the knowledge of this reality is also necessary, as well as the creation of a network of relationships because they have an experience and a knowledge best of their reality (CIPRIANI, 2007, p. 21).

This theoretical-methodological dimension for the knowledge of the territory has a meaning that goes beyond an entrepreneurial proposal that is limited to the domain of techniques and a practical apparatus for building a company. It contains a dynamizer that enhances students and professors to start stimulating the cognitive capacity, the creation of a true and proper scientific “spirit”, even before the students enter the



university. It awakens in them the desire for a scientific, investigative attitude, which allows them to go beyond common sense and interpret reality with a research instrument that exercises their potential for discoveries, critical and propositional analyses, and increases the level of commitment to the working class, since the study focuses on the living and working conditions of this social segment, in which everyone is inserted.

This potential intrinsic to M'Imprendo's proposal is called "protagonism" and is manifested from the moment that it is the young people who decide to participate in the project and not the coordinators or teachers who appoint or elect them. In addition, this protagonism accompanies the entire project development process: "It is not the teachers who will say what to do, but the young people themselves who will also decide what to do, how to proceed, based on the prior knowledge that the program provides" (CIPRIANI, 2007, p. 21).

In short, protagonism consists of "being at the center of reality, imagining one's own future and perhaps what the project can become as an implementation, when the school curriculum is completed" (CIPRIANI, 2007, p. 21).

2. The role of the university, Social Work and Sociology

Università degli Studi di Roma Tre was contacted by the staff of the XIV Division of the Comune di Roma, through its director, F. Bardanzellu, and the social workers, Adelaide Norcia and Patrizia Giganti, to develop the Project "Sviluppo locale e occupazione: scuola come laboratorio" (Local development and occupation: school as laboratory).

The request was made to the Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione of the University, which has courses in Pedagogy, Sociology and Social Work, and which had as professors: Roberto Cipriani and Anna Maria D'Ottavi (who, at the time, held the position of President of ISTISSS — Istituto per gli Studi Sul Servizio Sociale).



It is worth mentioning two aspects here: the insertion of Social Work within the scope of social policies, in the context of a State of Social Welfare; and the dialogue that characterizes training and intervention in the areas of knowledge — Sociology and Social Work, in Italy.

2.1 Social Work and social policies within the scope of Italian Welfare

The origins that mark the history of Italian Social Work date back to the 20s of the 20th century, when the first experiences of factory Social Work took place, considered an expression of “industrial paternalism”, and with the creation of the Istituto Italiano di Assistenza Sociale, having as the protagonist, the figure of Paolina Tarugi, who was involved in the process of creating the first schools of Social Work and represented the most significant trend of the time, which was practical feminism or political feminism, considering that, also in Italy, the profession had, initially, an expressive adhesion of women as its first professionals.

We cannot forget that, at that time, Italy suffered a political-ideological attack that lasted until the post-Second World War, which manifested itself through fascist domination, in the figure of its greatest leader, Benito Mussolini.

This is how the fascist tendency appropriates the practice of social assistance and begins to give theoretical and methodological direction to nascent schools. In this regard, Dellavalle and Lumetta (2008) have written:

In 1928, the Istituto Italiano de Assistenza Sociale is absorbed by the Social Assistance Department of the Confederazione Generale Fascista dell'Industria Italiana and, in the same year, the regime institutes the School for Social Workers of San Gregorio al Cielo. The fact that the staff can combine technical training and a “deep vocation with a fervent fascist





sentiment [is considered] a guarantee of the ever-greater development of assistance in the educational sphere of the Regime”.

The break with this trend will represent a moment of Rebirth of Social Work, both in the scope of professional practice and in the scope of training. This rupture took place at the Convegno di Tremezzo of 1946 and represented the liberation from the fascist dictatorship and Nazi domination in unity with the democratic perspective, which united all those who fought against fascism and Nazism during World War II, constituting the political force and history of opposition groups, such as the partisans, who played a significant role in the dissolution of the fascist regime and the expulsion of Nazi troops from Italian territory.

It is, therefore, a matter of redefining professional identity through a process in which exponents of anti-fascism and Resistance are involved, in particular, women who had assumed assistance activities as a form of participation in public life, already experienced in the scope of political philanthropy (DELLAVALLE, 2008).

The Convegno di Tremezzo represented, therefore, the watershed between the traditionalism of the profession in Italy and its renewal, which corresponded to an insertion in a democratic perspective and reconstruction of the country, in line with the guidelines indicated by the governments that were instituted in the post-World War II, as well as the desire of the Italian population to overcome the problems arising from the fascist dictatorship and the war.

The book written by social worker Maria Lorenzoni Stefani — *Le origini del servizio sociale italiano: Tremezzo: un evento fondativo del 1946* — is the record of this renewal of Italian Social Work and its insertion in care practices and social policies that, from then on, became the *modus operandi* of social workers in the process of implementing Italian Welfare, under the strong influence of the US government, since the funds for





the reconstruction of Italy were part of the scope of the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of countries in the post-war period:

Convegno was promoted by the Ministry of Post-war Assistance, and by the Delegation of UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). [...] It was organized in three sessions: a) social assistance and labor legislation; b) assistance to children and minors; c) post-war problems. [...] In particular, social services were given a central role in the performance of public policies to reform the assistance system. [...] The social assistance that Tremezzo's Convegno foreshadowed was an instrument of change, it was the means to create a new society that was more just, respectful and responsible for guaranteeing everyone's rights. Therefore, such a broad vision also included health care, the right to work and social security, in the awareness that for a society attentive to the needs of the population, these are interdependent aspects, to be faced in their interrelationship (STEFANI, 2012, p. 12-14).

This is how a synchrony is established between Welfare's social policies and the Italian Social Work. And that is why the Welfare crisis caused the dismantling of social policies, with harmful impacts for the most vulnerable segments and for Social Work. According to the analysis of Ferrario (2011, p. 37):

[Welfare] is a social system based on the assumption, by a political state, of primary responsibilities for the social and individual well-being of all citizens through legislation, the activation of specific public policies and their implementation through governmental bodies and entities.

In this context, a trilogy is established between needs, demands and supply of social policies, which use social legislation to have materiality. However, Ferrario himself admits that all this logic of action and governmental response to social needs takes place in the context of capitalist society and that, despite advances in reducing pauperism in the





societies in which it was implemented, Welfare finds structural limits that become an insufficient system to cure pauperism once and for all.

It is for this reason that the Welfare crisis could not have generated a return to situations of misery and growing inequalities:

The globalization of the economy reduced the ability of national states to control, with their policies, the economic factors that had allowed them to achieve, at the same time, economic growth and income redistribution. The opening of markets and the growing mobility of resources, including those of human resources, put the high levels of employment in crisis, even contextually using consistent migratory flows (ORTIGOSA, 2011, p. 14).

However, one cannot fail to recognize that, since Italy has lived the experience of Welfare, a culture of respect for social rights and citizenship has been created there, which explains why remnants remain, at a political level, of social policies on the part of the government and an awareness on the part of the population of their right to demand that their social needs be met. Austerity policies, which represent a drastic reduction in social costs, are imposed in a generalized way throughout the world, but the exercise of citizenship, developed in times of Welfare, produces in the Italian population, particularly in the Social Work professionals, the hope that this crisis cannot affect the rights acquired and implemented through social policies. Moreover, this is reflected in the initiatives that the profession insists on keeping alive, when opportunities arise from more democratic-social governments, as is the case of the M'Imprendo Project.

3. Final considerations

According to the considerations made so far about Social Work and Italian Welfare, and based on information from Dellavalle and Lumetta that the inclusion of Social Work training in the university system in





the country started in 1987, we understand that the social policies were the object of study and intervention of social workers at a time when Welfare was at its height, but university education itself took place at moments close to the crisis of this Welfare itself.

In addition, Social Work, in Italy, entered the academic sphere under the strong influence of the disciplines that are part of the curricular corpus, insofar as the insertion in the university took place within the departments of Educational Sciences, Sociology and Political Sciences, while training in Social Work should focus on the study and intervention of social policies:

In accordance with the regulations in force, since the academic year 2008-2009, the triennial course of studies in social work aims to provide adequate knowledge and mastery, based on the basic disciplines, methods, and techniques specific to social work, and a good interdisciplinary culture aimed at understanding the characteristics of modern societies and collaborating in the construction of individual and social intervention projects (DELLAVALLE; LUMETTA, 2008).

Postgraduate courses in Social Work emerged and gave great inflow on the profession, especially with regard to the production of knowledge, but bearing in mind the non-autonomy of the so-called central disciplines of Social Sciences, and the Welfare crisis process itself, which had very negative repercussions on social policies, the training process was impacted in a way that compromised the survival, mainly, of doctoral courses.

Thus, recalling the words of Annamaria Campanini (former president of the Italian Association of Teachers of Social Work — AIDOSS, and current president of the International Association of Schools of Social Work — IASSW-AIETS), in an interview given to us in October 2019, the current challenge of the Italian Social Work is to reaffirm itself in the academic and intellectual world, maintaining its autonomy, without losing the dialogue with the Social and Human Sciences, in particular with Sociology.





Indeed, the strong interconnection with core disciplines of the Social Sciences has been one of the reasons that favor the existence of projects such as M'Imprendo, considering that a very positive partnership prevails among Sociology and Social Work teachers, capable of promoting initiatives in which both areas of knowledge complement each other in the preparation of the proposal and in its implementation.

If we consider that the M'Imprendo Project was created in 2005 and that, currently, neoliberalism has accentuated its action to cut social spending, the impact on social policies becomes visible, through the neoliberal tendencies that are adopted in the training process of M'Imprendo students.

Regarding Social Work, there is a tendency to reduce its performance, according to the reduction of resources with social policies and a resurgence of its performance in the scope of research and production of knowledge, to the detriment of other core areas of social sciences, such as sociology.

This trend can be seen in Italy, but it spreads throughout Europe and around the world, representing for the world Social Work (including the Brazilian Social Work) a warning sign for the continuity of its effervescence as a knowledge and intervention area to reduce social inequalities and respect for social and human rights.

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About the author

MARIA ALEXANDRA DA SILVA MONTEIRO MUSTAFÁ – Social worker, Master in Social Work, PhD in Philosophy from the Pontificia Università Salesiana di Roma — Italy. Associate professor at the Federal University of Pernambuco. Coordinator of the Movement for Exchange between Brazilian and Italian Social Work. Member large of the International Association of Schools of Social Work — IASSW/AIETS. *Email: ethisophias@gmail.com*

