

Innovation and Sustainability

3rd Transforming Care Conference – Polytechnic of Milan, Italy

26-28 June 2017

Background

Care for children, adults with disability and frail older people have been among the most dynamic policy areas of welfare state development in the last two decades. Reforms and innovations have been introduced in response to changing needs and requirements for care. These changes are driven by ageing populations, women's increasing labor market participation, a decline in fertility and changes in family dynamics, technological innovation in care and health services, and a general trend towards marketization of care provision. In many countries, care policies have also become part of a wider social investment strategy, designed to strengthen people's capacities and support them to participate fully in employment and social life. While countries in different continents have experienced these changes –albeit to different degrees – their responses have varied depending on a number of factors, ranging from their institutional history of welfare evolution, industrial relations, migration regime and financial constraints to political discourses and social norms and values.

In the past decade, care as a policy field has been characterized by increasing turbulence. While a general universalistic perspective in care policies has taken root in many countries in previous decades, the world-scale financial crisis has reinforced tensions and conflicts since 2007. As a consequence, all care regimes today are facing a time of contrasting social, economic and institutional pressures. In some countries, a strong rhetoric focusing on the need for austerity and the search for “financially compatible” social programs (for example, through the introduction of marketization in care delivery systems) has been detrimental to policy and public discourse recognizing care as social right and promoting quality and adequacy of care. In other countries, the crisis has not prevented further developments towards more universalistic care services in the longer run. However, in various ways and with different orientations, policy innovation has been facing increasing sustainability problems, and these aspects have been often reductively considered more as a question of financial viability than social sustainability.

The conference

This conference is aimed at investigating how care is transforming in these turbulent, multifaceted and changing contexts. The previous editions of the Transforming Care conferences (2008 and 2010 in Copenhagen) were aimed at investigating how transformations were playing out in policy and in practice. This need for scientific and theoretical investigation is still highly topical and calls for further opportunities to develop mutual exchanges and confrontation among researchers. That is why we decided to start up a new series of Transforming Care conferences, to be held every two years, alternatively in Milan (2017) and Copenhagen (2019). In this new series, we would like to extend our perspective to include not only the context of single countries, but also global, international trends occurring in care policy. In addition, while contributions focusing on single policy fields are certainly encouraged, we also encourage contributions that include early child education and care, care for adults with disabilities and long-term care for older people in the same broad perspective, as different components of a more general policy field.

The 2017 conference focuses on the tensions between policy and social innovation in care policies on the one hand, and pressures for financial and social sustainability of care systems on the other. Care policies not only need to respond to changing care needs by providing good quality services, but also to be financially and socially sustainable, also in a long-term and inter-generational perspective, and from the perspectives of care users, their families and paid care workers. This is a difficult challenge for policies as well as for informal and formal care practices, with strong implications as to how care services and care work are organized and provided.

Four main dimensions of care will be addressed in the conference through parallel streams:

- The institutional setting of care policy (in terms of social rights to care, public regulation, public/private arrangements involving non-profit and/or for-profit organizations, marketization trends, inclusion/selection criteria, affordability, quality, etc..)
- Care arrangements and practices, organized through formal and/or informal channels (caregiving and distribution of paid and unpaid care work, organization and adequacy of care services and cash for care programs, etc.)
- The impact of recent technological innovation on care practices and care arrangements, and on the way organizations and professionals deliver care services
- Care workers and working conditions of care provision (qualification of care workers, contractual arrangements, salaries, career perspectives, migrant care work etc.)

The conference will address transforming trends in the following fields: childcare and care for frail older people as well as for people with disabilities, in an attempt to capture not only the specific features of these fields but also their commonalities and transversal themes.

Keynote speakers

Prof. August Oesterle – Vienna University of Economics and Business
Long-term Care and Social Sustainability

Prof. Chiara Saraceno – Collegio Carlo Alberto di Torino
Two different discourses on sustainability in social care with regard to children and the frail old

Organized by

Prof. Tine Rostgaard, KORA – Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research, Denmark

Prof. Costanzo Ranci, Social Policy Lab, Polytechnic of Milan, Italy

