

Governance sussidiaria e welfare society: la sussidiarietà come preconditione

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ABSTRACT

In the wide debate about the crisis of welfare systems in Europe, the very role of the State has been challenged. The subsidiarity approach, in particular, has developed a very articulated theoretical discourse, showing the necessity to reform the social order in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The principle prescribes that the State needs to play a role of guarantee of the common good, while the provision of services has to be devolved to lower-level providers, with a public or a private status. This implies that the activation of private actors becomes a condition for the achievement of the common good. The research question guiding our analysis refers to how the State can act as the guardian of the common interest while its achievement is left to the mobilization of individuals and groups. After a presentation of the subsidiarity approach, and of its contribution to the debate on the redefinition of the role of the State, the analysis focuses on the Lombardy case as a model of “subsidiarity governance”. We concentrate our attention on the solutions identified by the regional government in order to promote the activation of people and civil society. In particular, we focus on the implementation of two policies presented by the regional government as “subsidiarity inspired”: a school voucher scheme, introduced in 2000, targeted at families choosing private schools (Buono scuola) and a policy of promotion of family associations introduced in 1999. The analysis aims at evaluating the success of these policies in promoting subsidiarity-inspired choices, in order to assess how top-down interventions by the State can have an impact in stimulating bottom-up mobilization by the civil society.