

# SOCIAL POLICY AND THE CITY

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Social policy is concerned with human well-being and the improvement of living and working conditions in society. It involves the actions of governments, public institutions, NGOs and, to some extent, private organizations that aim to provide fair access to essential resources and opportunities. Its goal is not only to solve social problems but also to prevent them by creating conditions for a dignified and independent life.

The main spheres of social policy include income and living standards, employment, healthcare, disability support, education, housing, migration and family welfare. These areas are closely connected, and instability in one sphere can negatively affect others. Social policy works through different sectors: globally through organizations such as the UN or WHO, nationally through state institutions, locally through municipal services, and also through civil society organizations that address specific social needs.

There are several misconceptions about social policy. It is often wrongly associated only with poverty assistance, while in reality it benefits all social groups by ensuring equality of opportunity across society. It also enables people to remain independent, for example, childcare services support parents so they can work and sustain their families. Another stereotype claims that social policy is a waste of money. In fact, preventing social problems is more cost-effective than dealing with their long-term consequences such as unemployment, illness or crime.

A key issue in social policy is social exclusion, which refers to individuals or groups being pushed to the margins of society and denied access to rights, services or participation in economic and social life. Social exclusion often results from limited access to education, employment, healthcare or social networks and can be reinforced by discrimination, disability, health problems or addiction. It is closely connected to poverty, forming a vicious circle: poverty increases exclusion, and exclusion makes it harder to escape poverty.

Social exclusion can also be reinforced by spatial and infrastructural barriers. Unsafe environments, poor public transport, lack of social services, inaccessible buildings and housing poverty create inequality in everyday life. Gentrification concentrates wealth in certain areas while pushing low-income groups to marginal urban zones, deepening inequality and limiting social mobility. When people lack access to safe, inclusive and supportive environments, their chances for participation in society are reduced.

For these reasons, social policy is essential for building fair and cohesive societies. If we want to reduce poverty, prevent exclusion and ensure that vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, migrants, seniors or single parents can live with dignity, we need accessible services and environments. Social policy must therefore work to remove structural barriers and support equal opportunities for all.

Improving safety, accessibility and participation is not only an ethical objective but also a foundation for modern social policy. Strong societies invest in people and remove barriers

that prevent them from contributing to social and economic life. Social policy is therefore not a burden but a long-term investment in human well-being and social progress.