

## LA CRITICA 5

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M. Anselmi, A. Costabile, R. De Luca, I. Giannopoulou,  
V. Ilyin, A. Montanari, M. Negri, A. Pirni, A. Putini,  
L. Raffini, M. Ruzzeddu, F. Saccà, R. Sampugnaro,  
N. Sarris, G. Tsobanoglou, L. Viviani

# GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS

*Edit by* Flaminia Saccà

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## PREFACE

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Globalization studies have, through the years, addressed different fields: communication, economy, citizenship, defense, politics, movements. It is a consolidated field of study although the definitions of globalization can be as many as its various aspect, even if it is generally and primarily referred to the globalization of markets made possible by the development of communication technologies. This book collects essays on the different socio-political aspects of globalization and its effects at the dawn of a financial and geo-political crisis that has invested Europe, as well as other emerging economies.

The first part of the book addresses globalization and new socio-political trends both from a theoretical perspective and from that of a series of case studies, whereas the second part addresses some important changes that have occurred in civil society, institutions, and the idea of the common interest.

The various parts, although heterogeneous, are interrelated by the common effort of analysis of a rapidly changing world, whose traditional socio-political categories are losing their consolidated meaning.

The very notion of nation state, at the basis of modern politics, is being challenged by supranational forces and dynamics. The globalization of markets and finance, has brought a reconfiguration of the idea of state, institution, politics, power. It has made nation states weaker. Institutions and politics are losing their credibility and decisional capacity, while the concept and praxis of democracy is shifting towards new meanings.

In recent years a vast literature has concentrated on the possibilities of grass roots and informed political participation disclosed by the internet.

The first essay presented here addresses the topic by analyzing the content actually searched for and shared by social network users, the consequences of information overload on the type and quality of the decision making process and, more generally, the impact on the democratic fiber of the digital citizens of the world, produced by internet activism.

Grass roots participation and the crisis of traditional parties and their form of representations is further discussed by Viviani's and Anselmi's essays on the rise of new forms of populism worldwide. Whereas Arianna Montanari and Vladimir Ilyin, from different perspectives, address the paths undertaken by countries that are undergoing a deep process of changes, whose XXth century legacy seems rapidly fading away: European countries and Russia, the first opting for a yet uncertain and debated federalist model while the latter is shifting towards a conservative turn.

European political dynamics are further explored by Sampugnaro's case study addressing 2014 elections and by De Luca's analysis of “vote of exchange” in Italy.

The second part of the book addresses innovators ferments resulting from civil society (Sarris, Tsobanoglou, Ruzzeddu) as well as the risks of new obscurantisms brought by the rise of Islamic extremism from the Middle East to the heart of Europe (Saccà). A crisis that fatally invests security policies worldwide (Negri) as well as legality concerns at a more national level (Costabile, Pirmi, Raffini).

A complex and apparently fragmented picture of how globalization is affecting political change: its dynamics, crossed by often opposing tendencies, are linked together but seem far from being settled.

PART I

GLOBALIZATION AND  
NEW SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS



## PART I - A

### GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS FROM A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE



## POLITICAL CULTURES AND DIGITAL RHETORIC

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### **1. Introduction**

We are witnessing a time of deep political changes. Not only the world's geo-political division of the Nineteenth's Century has dramatically changed, bringing new conflicts, different power ratios amongst nations and what could be defined as the process towards a new political and economic world order. But the progress and the wide spread use of new information technologies have contributed to change political processes, organizations, participation and of, course, communication. In a fast moving globalized, liquid society, there is no longer space for long complicated deliberative procedures, in spite of the fact that they had guaranteed a certain degree of political parties internal democracy even in times of democratic centralism (at least in certain parties and in certain Countries, as is the case of the Italian Communist Party or its French equivalent, for example). Long, elaborated, deep analysis prove to have "formats" that are no longer adequate for the *new media*. Political parties structures change, losing their "mass" character. The great ideologies which had inflamed spirits worldwide during the Nineteenth's Century

weaken to the point of disappearance along with the evanishing of a clear division of classes (at least in Western democracies).

Mass media and television in particular had already had an impact in the relationship between politics and the base. Slowly, political leaders started to be selected not only or not necessarily on the basis of a political or administrative competence. Their communicative, rhetoric and story-telling skills started to prevail. Of course communication has always been a crucial factor in politics, in any time and in any Country, but now we seem to witness a shift of its role. It seems to have become predominant. Charisma – although has always been an important factor of political success - has become crucially predominant even in those Countries, like Italy, where collegial decisions, ideological horizons and political projects used to play a crucial role. In the information age we tend to select candidates not on the basis of who they are or proved to be but on how they manage to represent themselves. So political discourse actually becomes more and more a narrative plot, if not a fictional one, shifting the object of our evaluation: from past results to promises for the future. Politics becomes then less adherent to territories, social and economic problems and to reality itself. The latter counting less by the day.

In this process the public, the voters and citizens in general, lose the practice of measuring results, truth, reality, while the oneiric dimension of hope gets expanded.

Thanks to television first and to the Net in more recent years, a political leader can avoid the intermediate and collegial deliberative party structures and turn directly to the citizenry, in the hope of turning it into its own electorate. In this process the leader becomes more autonomous from the party and its internal democratic practices<sup>1</sup>.

If *cartel parties* introduced the idea of “leaders accountability” to the base, the shift towards the *catch-all parties* and the contemporary growth of the relevance of the leader’s figure brought by the affirmation of mass communication, produce a double effect: on one side we will find that the base is increasingly atomized (due to the lack of places where active discussion and decisions can be carried out in a collegial and not individualized manner) and, on the other, leaders become more

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Ignazi, *Forza senza legittimità. Il vicolo cieco dei partiti*, Laterza, Bari, 2012, also T. Poguntke, P. Webb (ed.) *The Presidentialization of Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, and R.S. Katz, P. Mair, *Cambiamenti nei modelli organizzativi e democrazia di partito. La nascita del carte party*, in L. Bardi, *Partiti e sistemi di partito*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2006 p. 36 (tit. or. “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party”, *Party Politics January*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1995 5-28, Sage)



autonomous while, at the same time they can claim to have a direct contact with the base (real or potential as it might be).

Mass and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) dissolve political content (or at least political communication content) in slogans, witty lines, sharp statements. Stressing on the emotional level rather than on the rational, analytical one.<sup>2</sup> Twitter and Facebook's format do not allow complex explanations on policy making, issues to be dealt with, decisions to be taken. Rather, they tend to favour – just as it had happened in the advertising industry in the XXth Century - suggestions, collective aspirations, amusement, and the creation of divisions (like electoral market segments), which, from a linguistic point of view, become simple phrases, slogans, advertisements.

In Italy these processes have been literally incarnated by some political leaders who have succeeded in interpreting (and in taking a step further) the new trend. Back in 1994 Silvio Berlusconi founded his personal party, based on his own name, success, industry (a mass communication one), and oratory skills. After this first experience, other political leaders have tried to found a personal party (or election lists) characterized mainly by their name (Fini, Casini, Di Pietro for example). But it will be necessary to wait another ten years before the communicative skills of another political leader manage to top Berlusconi's success. When Beppe Grillo and his 5 Star Movement arise on the political scene the road had already been tracked. Private television (mainly belonging to Berlusconi) had favoured infotainment instead of information. In order to compete in the television arena political leaders had to become witty, funny, angry, ironic, emotional. And certainly, rapid. The most theatrical actor wins. So who but a comedian would fit as well for the role?

A further step in this direction has been made possible by the recent widespread access to the social networks. Under this respect, Internet is proving to be today what television used to be in the past.

Internet allows even more direct communication than television, and it allows citizens to respond back. Its messages are even shorter and emotional participation is even higher. Of course this is not all there is to say about it. But while analyzing its democratic possibilities it is also

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<sup>2</sup>See also Giuliano Santoro, *Un Grillo qualunque. Il Movimento 5 Stelle e il populismo digitale nella crisi dei partiti italiani*, Lit edizioni, Roma, 2012, pp. 155-156

important to introduce these characteristics that are too often underestimated by many opinion leaders, activists and scholars.

If *knowledge is power* certainly a free, open, just in time access to information brought by CMC brings with it the possibility of enhancing people's empowerment. With, thanks and through the Net it's possible to be informed, to counter inform, to discuss and may be most importantly to *organize* political action, (the No Global Movement and the Porto Alegre meetings have probably been amongst the first to realize and benefit from this potentiality).<sup>3</sup> In short we could say that these new technologies allow new categories of citizens (not previously influential) to take a stand or play a role of some level in the global (or indeed local) political arena. As we have witnessed in more recent years during the so called *Arab Spring*, CMC has gone further than radio and television. Not only do they inform, not only do they let people have a say on any type of matter but they have gone to the extent of becoming the *means AND the place* for political organization and debate. Not only the information technology and the social networks have coagulated protesters in Egypt, Tunisia, Iran and other parts of the world. In certain cases, after the successful organization, it has led some of the movements to institutionalize themselves into a party. It's the case of part of the young protesters in Tahrir Square and it's the case of the Italian 5 Star Movement which, in spite of the fact that it refuses to be labeled as a party, it still functions as one and now sits in the Italian Parliament (albeit in the opposition).

Protesters worldwide now can use Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, mobile phones in order to denounce abuses by authoritarian regimes and get as far as turning them upside down, given certain conditions. But even before then and besides that, these activities penetrate into collective consciences beyond borders interfering not only with the way we perceive the world, political processes or with our sense of justice, they become part of the way we perceive, feel, evaluate the political sphere as a whole, contributing to the formation of a supranational collective political culture.

Computer Mediated Communication certainly implies great potentialities of grass roots political action, and it can contribute to the

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<sup>3</sup> See also M. Andretta, D. Della Porta, L. Mosca, H. Reiter (2002), *Global, noglobal, new global. Le proteste contro il G8 a Genova*, Laterza, Roma and D. Della Porta, M. Andretta (2006), *Globalization From Below: Transnational Activists And Protest Networks*, University Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

widening of what Habermas called the “public sphere”, but is it really happening? Together with the positive and at times idealistic view of the matter<sup>4</sup>, some less romantic aspects should be taken into consideration too. The reduction of political debates to an emotional and schematic level, accompanied by populist temptations for example<sup>5</sup>. Or, even more incisive in certain Countries, the possibilities to give authoritarian regimes an even more powerful control over the opposition and the citizenry in general, as we will soon see.

In a context of deep changes where, as mentioned above, political parties tend towards higher levels of personalization or even presidentialism, affecting and diminishing the intermediate deliberative level, the Net’s role and dynamics emphasize the characteristics of the new course risking, paradoxically, to threaten political party internal democratic life as well. Who needs long discussions, thoughtful, carefully analyzed programmes, voting in local, regional and national party assemblies, if the leader can benefit from a popular mandate deriving from his communicative skills? It the amount of likes to his/hers 140 characters long statements on twitter can instantly certify the level of support he/she is getting?

Computer Mediated Communication’s features, easy access and low costs, have made many commentators imagine a near future of possible grass roots revolutions, of people claiming new levels of freedom and participation. For instance, this new digital optimism narration embellished the Arab Spring Story: some young protesters in Egypt and elsewhere, managed to banish old time dictators thanks to Facebook and Twitter. Unfortunately, things turned out to be a little more complex. The role of the military organization in Moubarak’s deposition has been underestimated to say the least (and its relevance should have been pretty clear, at least after Morsi’s had been deposed too). So has the impact that traditional communication (via the Mosques not via the Internet) can still have in many Countries, not to speak of the role of what was considered to be the only long time, well known opposition to the regime, like the Muslim Brotherhood. Which should not have been disregarded.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example C. Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody. The Power Of Organizing Without Organizations*, Penguin Press, New York, 2008

<sup>5</sup> E. Morozov, *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, Public Affairs, New York, 2011

More generally CMC gives us the perception of a simplified reality even when it is actually getting more and more complex. And, may be most importantly, we should remember that like in any other type of media, technology can give us a potentiality but it's the people, or indeed the regimes, who decide the use they want to make of it. For the good as well as for the bad.

Evidently, not only CMC can be used by the oppressed to organize the revolts that would lead them to freedom, but it can also be used by Al Qaeda, Daesh, and other terrorists organizations to threaten the world and recruit new terrorists, or by clandestine organizations to spread racial or sexual hatred, not to mention pedophiles trafficking<sup>6</sup>. Foreign fighters and ISIS are using the new technology in a very modern and knowledgeable way.

The same regimes against which protesters organize their liberation demonstrations have proved to be very effective in using the same media to censure, obscure, infiltrate the Net. In order to spot and imprison opposition leaders, to falsify news, facts, perceptions and opinions.

Indeed the Net can also be used to control citizens, foreign governments, political leaders, business competitors, trades, etc. Not necessarily in authoritarian regimes. The Datagate scandal is an eloquent example.

Espionage is of course as old as the world but new technologies have brought intelligence activities to another dimension.

Truly the old say *knowledge is power* couldn't be better represented than this and maybe it is about time that we revise sociopolitical categories in order to reach a fuller comprehension of present geopolitical dynamics revealed by the Datagate scandal as well as the consequences of emotional, irrational political participation through the web and its risks of political disengagement.

## **2. A new land of the free?**

The Internet utopia has many followers: from influential scholars, powerful political leaders to the enthusiast masses of social networks users worldwide<sup>7</sup>. This ideology depicts a Net that's free for anybody to

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<sup>6</sup> See also H. Clinton, *Speech at the Newseum*, Washington, 2010 <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>

<sup>7</sup> See, amongst the most famous examples Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital*, Knopf, New York, 1995 and C. Shirky *Here Comes Everybody. The Power Of Organizing*

use, for whichever -but mostly noble- purpose and, most importantly as far as we are concerned, for the improvement and empowerment of democracy. But as sociologists we should make the effort to try of trying to analyze any new technology in the social context where it lays. For technologies may have an impact (at times a very powerful one) on society, but will succeed and will be used according to the socio-economic-political and cultural context they are brought to. There is no predetermined destiny in technology, it's society with its dynamics and its human beings - with their cultures, aspirations, capabilities and possibilities - that will make its outcome.

In order to state that the new technologies will empower democracy worldwide, we should assume that societies and indeed individuals worldwide:

- a. actually *do aspire* to reach democracy, seen as the best of all possible political systems
- b. are willing to take action for the improvement of society
- c. are strongly politicized, or willing to be
- d. have a fore standing democratic political culture
- e. agree on what democracy entails
- e. live in a context where information or indeed counter-information circulates freely or at least can circulate freely enough
- f. benefit from typically democratic rights, such as the freedom of expression
- g. do not fear counter-action from the regime ruling in their country
- h. are free from economic interests of states and private companies alike
- i. are free from political interests of local, national or global nature.

And last but not least, we should assume that the socio-economic conditions that are necessary to reach democracy are present world-wide.

Is that really so? May be this list is stretching the concept to the limit, but how can we - as sociologists- assume that any of the above will NOT

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*Without Organizations*, Penguin Press, New York, 2008; H. Clinton, *Speech at the Newseum*, Washington, 2010 <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>; W. Ghonim, *Revolution 2.0. The power of the people is greater than the people in power: a memoir*, Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt, 2012 and in Italy, the 5 Star Movements representatives and followers and, partly, the explanation of the philosophy underlying its web procedures written by the son of the movement's co-founder, D. Casaleggio, *Tu sei Rete. La rivoluzione del business, del marketing e della politica attraverso le reti sociali*, e-book, Casaleggio e Associati Ed., Milano, 2012

have an influence on how these technologies will be used, why, by who, for what purposes, with which outcomes and at what rate of success?

In order to take *cyber-utopian* theories for good we should make a certain number of assumptions regarding the will for democracy and political power of the population worldwide, before even starting to discuss the actual effects of these new technologies. Now *that* is a real stretch.

Not every country with potential access to social networks also presents the socio-economic conditions that are necessary for democracy to develop. The debate on which these conditions are or, from a different approach, on whether it may be more appropriate to speak of “facilitating conditions” rather than “necessary conditions”, would take us far.<sup>8</sup> But we can briefly try to analyze here at least some of the other assumptions.

*Can we actually assume that the people in every country and/or political culture where electronic devices are widespread, really aspire to reach democracy (a liberal one we should add)?* At present we have evidence of the contrary. From Daesh to Russia, China, the Gulf States and an array of different countries with regimes other than liberal democratic ones, billions of people go from joining enthusiastically what they call a wholly war *against* liberal democracies, to comfortably accepting the different regimes they live in, to simply passively not engaging a battle for democracy. Certainly in those countries there are *some* people who demand at least more democracy, (just as there are also *some* people in democratic countries who aspire to different regimes) and we cannot generalize and assume that that's what the whole population wants. Not only because any regime, as Weber taught us, needs some kind of support in order to be legitimated and last during the years, so if a regime is successfully in power for decades we should rather assume that it benefits from at least a certain degree of consensus, but also because in

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<sup>8</sup> Although the debate is far from being conclusive, in favour of the hypothesis of the necessity of certain socio-economic conditions for democracy to develop, there is a wide and heterogeneous literature going from Karl Marx's theories to Nobel Prize Milton Friedman (*Capitalism and freedom*, University of Chicago Press, 1962), to political scientists such as Seymour Lipset (“Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy”, *American Political Science Review*, 53 (March), pp. 69–105, 1959). For a more recent and critical approach: *Economic Growth and Development, A Comparative Introduction*, M. McCartney, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. On the relationship between economy and democracy see also: *Economia di mercato e democrazia. Un rapporto controverso*, R. De Mucci, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2014

certain geo-political areas religion and/or ideologies other than the liberal one play an important role in the political culture of its citizens, who actually feel loyal to them.

So when analyzing the potential brought by new technologies we should not only make the effort of taking into consideration the social, political and economic context they are brought to, but also of avoiding its analysis with the lenses of *our* political culture.

*Are the citizens who have access to the new media worldwide showing a will to take action to improve their society or indeed its democratic qualities?* If we look at the number of people who use the social networks and we look at the most shared contents we find that politics is not at the top of the list. In 2011 Morozov<sup>9</sup> noted in his *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, that social network users shared more lolcats<sup>10</sup> and sexy ladies than political topics. In 2015, according to various sites of viral trends, music videos have received more shares than other contents. The charts show that nine out of ten of the most viral contents shared on all social media were music videos: the first -undisputedly, with 16.8 millions shares - is British singer Adele's "Hello" and two are from Justin Bieber. The only exception is represented by the second position held by a CNN article on a highly debated dispute on a former Republican candidate (Scott Walker) who dropped out of the presidential race in the U.S.<sup>11</sup>

Now, nine out of ten musical videos do not exactly represent a confirmation on the will of net users for political engagement.

### **3. Fox News first news is not on politics but on Zombie Cruises**

Even if we limit the chart to the ten most viral *articles* (instead of all types of *contents*) shared on all social media, the situation doesn't seem to improve much. The first position in the chart is soundly held by the CNN

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<sup>9</sup> E. Morozov, *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, Public Affairs, New York, 2011 (*L'ingenuità della Rete. Il lato oscuro delle libertà di Internet*, Codice, Torino, 2011)

<sup>10</sup> Lolcats are pictures of funny cats with witty lines, they are made and spread around the social media for amusement

<sup>11</sup> Chart from Ruzzit.com

<http://www.ruzzit.com/en->

[US/Timeline?media=All&timeline=Year2015&networks=All](http://www.ruzzit.com/en-US/Timeline?media=All&timeline=Year2015&networks=All)

article mentioned above regarding the Republican candidate (10.8 mln shares) followed by a self-consolatory and amusing article which allegedly indicates that optimistic people are always late (read: don't worry if you are always late, you "aren't helpless, [you] are hopeful!")<sup>12</sup>. And the third position is equally shared by three different posts with 1.4 mln shares each. One is represented by a much debated case on what is considered to be a viral trend on the social media: zombies! Although the site that posted the article on new zombie themed cruises<sup>13</sup> is actually a very well known one - Fox News (Travel branch) - with many news and comments, we must add that it was not the fame or the reputation of the site itself to make this post a success, but its very content, for it received five times the shares of its close popular articles.<sup>14</sup> Five times. And Fox News is meant to be a news channel, not an amusement site (although for obvious market reasons they also have leisure branches of it too), so it is quite revealing that its more shared article did not contain any serious political news. Of course there is a certain widespread distrust towards Fox News as a reliable news source in the U.S... there are endless jokes on the matter told by comedians, politicians, commentators and so on, but it is still striking that a news channel should decide to include so much entertainment in its broadcasts and that in the global 2015 chart of the most shared articles just two or may be three (I have doubts on the latter as we will soon see) out of fourteen<sup>15</sup>, are actually *news* or politically related topics, whereas the remaining eleven (or twelve) are amusing, entertaining, disengaging articles<sup>16</sup>.

Always at the third position (with the same amount of shares as the previous one: 1.4 mln), we find a gif (an animated picture) of a kitten rubbing heads with a horse. Cute. And an article on a private blog ridiculizing fast food workers who demanded higher wages. Now, this

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<sup>12</sup> The article originally published here:

<http://elitedaily.com/life/culture/optimistic-people-have-one-thing-common-always-late/1097735/> obtained a 1.6 mln shares and the second position in the chart, according to Ruzzit.com.  
<http://www.ruzzit.com/en-US/Timeline?media=Articles&timeline=Year2015&networks=All>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2015/06/26/zombie-themed-walking-dead-cruise-setting-sail-in-january.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://buzzsumo.com/blog/go-viral-lessons-shared-content-2015/>

<sup>15</sup> We are talking about a top 10 chart here but some articles received an equal amount of shares, so 14 articles in total were taken into consideration

<sup>16</sup> Article here is meant in the broad sense used by the website that issued the chart: i.e. contents that are not videos, but the list actually includes gifs too



could be considered news or a discussion with political insights and points of view, but the tone of the article makes me doubt that it is not for the sake of examining in depth the socio-economic conditions of low wages workers that it reached its success, but for its amusing and unusual political incorrectness.

At the fourth position we find an article on a man who has built a train just for dogs and their amusement, followed by a gif of a cat rescuing her kitten that kept on shifting down from a slide. Followed by an “article” that promised to make you earn money with a mobile phone's app. Whereas the last politically related article is an interview with Malala, the young Pakistani activist for girls education, victim of a taliban's attack and now Nobel Peace Prize. It is placed at the eighth position with 987.000 shares, after “The 33 insanely clever things your small apartment needs” and just before “The 21 things you only know when you have been best friends for over 10 years”.

Closing the list, with 959.000, shares is one husband who wants to publicize his appreciation for his wife's devotion to their family and quantifies (in money) how much her work at home is worth.

Altogether these charts indicate more an interest for amusement and evasion rather than for politics and news demonstrated by the much celebrated “people of the web” but they regard the single most viral items shared in 2015. Would the chart improve if we analyzed the broader spectrum of the general type of contents shared internationally? A research conducted over 24 countries by a marketing research in 2013 showed that the vast majority of contents shared on social networks was mainly personal/social, not political nor engaging or necessarily informative. This shouldn't come as a surprise for social networks were not born to substitute newspapers or political organizations (although they have done so at times): Facebook, the most famous and most used social network in the world, was meant to reunite school time friends, not to “inform the people”. The point here is to underline how misleading can be the digital rhetoric that sees social media as potential enhancers of democracy for not only people don't necessarily seek democracy worldwide, but also because social networks tend to be used for different scopes. The number one shared content is actually represented by pictures (43%). Following next we find: “‘my opinion’ (26%), a ‘status update of what/how I’m doing’ (26%), ‘links to articles’ (26%), ‘something I like or recommend, such as a product, service, movie, book, etc.’ (25%), ‘news items’ (22%), ‘links to other websites’ (21%), ‘reposts from other people’s social media posts’ (21%), ‘status update of what I’m feeling’

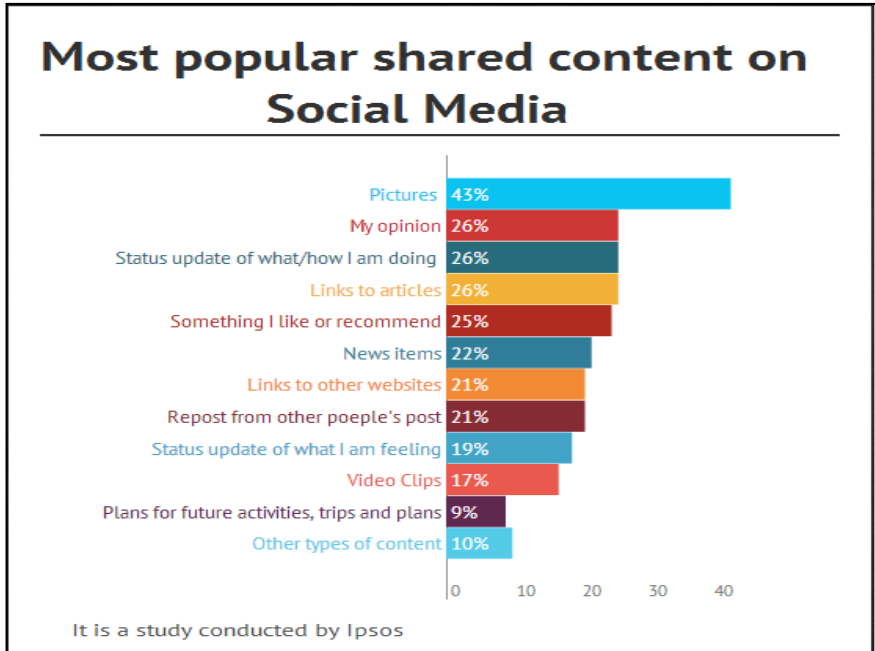
(19%), ‘video clips’ (17%), ‘plans for future activities, trips, plans’ (9%) and ‘other types of content’ (10%).”<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately politics is not as popular a trend as zombies or kittens are in the social network arena. Not only in countries with limited freedom of expression where people may fear their regime to control the kind of information searched or produced on the web but also in Western democracies. And even when they do deal with politics new technologies seem to be a double edged sword rather than a facilitator:

- a) because they seem to have taken television formats and dynamics even further: short, amusing or emotional lines prove to be the most adequate for this new media living hardly any room for engagement, thought and reflection;
- b) because they tend to occupy our attention with easy, leisurely, self-consoling contents.
- c) because internet is not necessarily a reliable source per se.

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<sup>17</sup> Research carried out by Ipsos on 24 countries here are findings of the research led by Ipsos Open Thinking Exchange (Ipsos OTX) collected by Ipsos Global @dvisor as part of Sociologue, an ongoing publication that features conversation-starting commentary on social media trends and behavior. The research was conducted on the “G@44” wave between April 2 and April 16th, 2013. The monthly Global @dvisor data output is derived from a balanced online sample in 24 countries around the world via the Ipsos Online Panel system. For the results of the survey presented herein, an international sample of 18,150 adults aged 18-64 in the US and Canada, and age 16-64 in all other countries, were interviewed. Approximately 1000+ individuals participated on a country by country basis via the Ipsos Online Panel with the exception of Argentina, Belgium, Hungary, Indonesia, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey, where each have a sample approximately 500+ <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=6254>



Source: Ipsos via [socialmedia.com](http://socialmedia.com)

#### 4. A neutral media for democratic empowerment?

In fact, internet as a source of information can be anything *but* reliable. It is just a media where anybody can publish, write, send messages to their friends or to the world alike. There is no control of the sources, no journalist professionalism in the process. Even more importantly may be, there is such a massive quantitative of information on any topic for anybody to access to, that it becomes very difficult to keep up with it. As many studies from different disciplines have proven, *information overload leads to confusion, rather than to better knowledge.*

This problem has not arisen just in recent years with the World Wide Web, it seems to be rising at any turning point in the history of education/information technologies. The first to conceptualize the problem was probably Diderot in his *Encyclopédie* (1775), where his concerns concentrated on the growing amount of books that started to be published in his days and that would have made any single person struggle

in the effort of studying them all. Alvin Toffler's famous *Future Shock*<sup>18</sup> then brought the concept to a wider audience even if the first social scientist to address the issue is recognized to be Georg Simmel, who warned about the difficulties of taking sound decisions at the dawn of the industrial urbanization era, when citizens received such a high amount of different information that it would prove difficult for them to react appropriately to new situations<sup>19</sup>. Later on psychologists, social scientists, experts of organizations management have conducted experiments on the effects of information overload and have demonstrated how it generally leads to poorer decisions, uncertainty or even immobility<sup>20</sup>.

Analyzing the effects of social media along these lines and from a broader perspective, we should conclude with Geert Lovink that the information overload leads to psychological confusion, that government and companies can and do use them for pervasive surveillance, their formats and multiplicity of sources produce an impoverishment and fragmentation of public conversation, not to mention the commoditization of social life and power concentration in tech-companies<sup>21</sup> given the fact that social media, being owned and used by companies for profit are everything *but* neutral. As Morozov pointed out at the recent International Festival of Journalism in Perugia (April 2016), social networks propose us their model of auspicious social life, they ask us to exchange our privacy for social services (or it would be more adequate to say, targeted marketing) on these platforms.

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<sup>18</sup> A. Toffler, *Future Shock*, Random House, New York, 1970

<sup>19</sup> G. Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' in K.H. Wolff (Ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, London, The Free Press, 409-424 (or. title *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, 1903)

<sup>20</sup> There is a vast multidisciplinary literature on the topic, but some milestones in the field are considered to be the studies of G.A. Miller, *The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information*, *The Psychological Review*, 1956, vol. 63, pp. 81-97; of J. Jacoby, D.E. Speller and C. Kohn Berning, B. *Choice Behavior as a Function of Information Load: Replication and Extension*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jun., 1974), Oxford University Press, pp. 33-42, whereas communication researchers have concentrated on how to cope information overload K. Kim, M.L.A. Lustria, D. Burke, N. Kwon, "Predictors of cancer information overload: findings from a national survey", *Information Research*, Vol. 12, 4, October 2007

<sup>21</sup>G. Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media*, Polity Press, London, U.K., 2011

Now not only the secret service police of an authoritarian regime, but most frequently marketing companies can trace us in just a flash. By tracing our e-mails, Facebook shares, credit cards, what we Google, and what or where we've booked a dinner, a trip, through on line travel sites, they know what we like, how much we can spend, where we'll be likely to go, if we are sick and what mood we are in and who we hang out with. Truly The Big Brother needs to be reconfigured.

Not only we should start acknowledging that as any other big company, social media ones are there to make money and not exactly to empower democracy, but we should also start thinking of them as any other media. With interests and possible editorial lines. Even social platforms such as Facebook, that claim their neutrality, have recently found themselves in the need of specifying how that "neutrality" works, basically through algorithms that work at a double level - generally and individually - selecting what people like the most and proposing it back to the vast public of FB users under the Popular Trends News Feed (note: they are not present in every Country).<sup>22</sup> The issue is still object of highly inflamed debates after former Facebook workers denounced that the company constantly erased Republican's news from the Popular Trends News Feed, therefore implying that it was subtly helping Democrats to orient the public of FB users<sup>23</sup>. Replying that everything is in the hands of an algorithm of course does not per se guarantee the neutrality of the algorithm itself for its orientation and what it processes depends on how it is constructed<sup>24</sup>. Although the debate is still on and far from being concluded, the discussion is useful for it gives us an insight on the fact (if not yet really on how) that the information is or at least can be processed on the web. Even if it should turn out to be true that Facebook's algorithms merely select what people seem to like the most, this should make us reflect on how useful could be in enhancing our capabilities and possibilities as citizens, a media that merely proposes us what the majority of its users like, without taking into account, facts, proves, or, more

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<sup>22</sup> Justin Osofsky (VP, Global Operations & Media Partnerships at Facebook), *Information About Trending Topics*, May 12, 2016, <http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/05/information-about-trending-topics/>

<sup>23</sup> The article appeared on Gizmodo's website and enflamed the web and the traditional media alike <http://gizmodo.com/former-facebook-workers-we-routinely-suppressed-conser-1775461006>

<sup>24</sup> For a brief recount of the debate see Zeynep Tufekci, *The Real Bias Built in Facebook*, *The New York Times*, May 19, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/19/opinion/the-real-bias-built-in-at-facebook.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/19/opinion/the-real-bias-built-in-at-facebook.html?_r=0)

generally speaking, what other people, cultures, ideologies - who are not trend setters but minorities - like, think or propose.

Furthermore or may be linked with the above process, Facebook and the other main social networks have proven to work on a *confirmation bias* scheme. Just as media scholars found out when analyzing publics exposure to television content as well as the effects of political campaigns on the possible voters back in 1944, a recent statistical analysis conducted by Seth Flaxman at the University of Oxford on a champion of 50.000 U.S. residents who browse the web in search for on line news confirmed that indeed people reaching out for information on internet are largely exposed to conforming opinions<sup>25</sup>.

If at the dawn of communication studies, scholars theorized that the mere exposure to a message would influence and somewhat affect the receiver, in the mid '40s various authors had started to realize that in fact the process was not that simple. The findings of Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet published in their famous *The People's Choice*, demonstrated that even when exposed to an election campaign people reinforced their previous opinions rather than converting them when listening to more and/or different arguments<sup>26</sup>. Later on (1957) cognitive theorists Leon Festinger and his *cognitive dissonance* theory laid the basis for the *selective exposure* theories to come, sustaining that when confronting with contrasting ideas people feel a discomfort that they will try to reduce by avoiding the source of this "dissonance"<sup>27</sup>. From then onwards, many researches demonstrated how people tend to choose what messages to get exposed to or to avoid, usually along the lines of what then has been called the *confirmation bias*, i.e. the process of exposing oneself to comforting, non stressful messages that tend to confirm what we already know, value or think.

Further studies show how this tendency is still very actual and is reproduced on social networks too in spite of the fact that being easy and free for everybody to access/produce information/write opinions/share them, etc., they should also make it easier for anybody to reach a greater

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<sup>25</sup> S. Flaxman, S. Goel, J.M. Rao, "Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 80, Issue S1, Oxford University Press, pp. 298-320

<sup>26</sup> P.F. Lazarsfeld, B. Berelson, H. Gaudet, *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1948 (1st ed. 1944)

<sup>27</sup> L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1957

variety of opinions. And some studies seem to confirm this possibility<sup>28</sup>. Along these lines and reminding that by now we have studies that seem to go in the two opposite directions, Flaxman wonders on the effects of such technological changes on ideological segregation: “On one hand, with more options, individuals may choose to consume only content that accords with their previously held beliefs. Commentators such as Sunstein (2009) have thus predicted the rise of *echo chambers*, in which individuals are largely exposed to conforming opinions. Indeed, in controlled experiments, subjects tend to choose news articles from outlets aligned with their political opinions (Garrett 2009; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Munson and Resnick 2010). Additionally, search engines, news aggregators, and social networks are increasingly personalizing content through machine-learning models (Agichtein, Brill, and Dumais 2006; Das et al. 2007; Hannak et al. 2013), potentially creating “filter bubbles” (Pariser 2011) in which algorithms inadvertently amplify ideological segregation by automatically recommending content an individual is likely to agree with. Moreover, individuals are more likely to share information that conforms to opinions in their local social neighborhoods (Moscovici and Zavalloni 1969; Myers and Bishop 1970; Spears, Lea, and Lee 1990; Schkade, Sunstein, and Hastie 2007). If realized, such information segregation is a serious concern, as it has long been thought that functioning democracies depend critically on voters who are exposed to and understand a variety of political views (Downs 1957; Baron 1994; Lassen 2005)”<sup>29</sup>.

Flaxman's empirical study demonstrated that ideological segregation not only exists through the web, just as it had been evidenced through traditional media decades earlier, but that this segregation can be even higher within the web, at least as far as articles and web search engines are concerned: i.e. people tend to look for -and therefore be exposed to - news, opinions, articles that conform to their way of thinking *more than*

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<sup>28</sup> See for example Y. Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006; S. Messing, S.J. Westwood, “Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online”, *Communication Research*, 41:1042–1063, 2012; S. Goel, J. Hofman, M. Siner, M. Irmak, *Who Does What on the Web: A Large-Scale Study of Browsing Behavior*, Proceedings of the *Sixth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 1–8. ACM, 2012, and others

<sup>29</sup> S. Flaxman, S. Goel, J.M. Rao, “Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption”, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 80, Issue S1, Oxford University Press, pp. 298-299

when just reading one of the main traditional newspapers on line. There may be a slight distortion in the result due to the very algorithms mentioned above: they tend to learn what you like and/or prefer and will keep on adjusting to your tastes, with the risk of actually reinforcing them while keeping on re-proposing similar contents in the future, *de facto* narrowing down the variety of topics, news, positions and values that reach our eyes.<sup>30</sup>.

## **5. Conclusions**

More generally speaking, social network users are seen and treated as consumers, not primarily as citizens or even less likely as activists. The companies that own social networks are there to make money not politics. And just to remind us that the Net is not as equalitarian as people tend to think it is, we should note that not only the platforms used (Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks) are from Western companies, but also that the most popular *contents* shared are from Western cultures (musical or political alike, as we have just seen), giving us a distorted perception of the world we live in and actually reproducing power ratios amongst the different geo-political cultures at a global level. There are many marketing oriented analysis on the behaviour of internet users and the results are used by companies trying to sell us something. Every time we browse the internet to look for a hotel or a book or whatever else, we will soon after be bombarded by similar advertisements on our social networks or even e-mails. Every time we do something on internet, we live traces, and give companies or even the police if we are living in an authoritarian country, a pretty good idea of who we are, what we like, where we go, and with whom.

Those digital traces give a potential analyst a pretty interesting insight on the type, frequency and kind of social interactions undertaken in a specific geographical zone *and* on their content.

So much so that not only security agencies worldwide have started analyzing them, marketing companies have started exploiting them for economic purposes, but a new branch of the social sciences has started to

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<sup>30</sup> Although, somewhat counterintuitively these channels are also associated with exposure to opposite perspectives. Yet still, another findings of Flaxman's research is that the web replicates traditional news reading habits: people who are used to read a specific, ideologically oriented traditional newspaper will keep on reading it on line. Flaxman's *et al.* cited article p. 318



affirm itself, called *Computational Social Science*<sup>31</sup>, on the assumption that we live in a life of networks and that the relationships, activities and contents of these networks are traceable and analyzable, making it possible to draw conclusions on these social experiences and meanings and, more generally, on social change as a whole. “To date, research on human interactions has relied mainly on one-time, self-reported data on relationships. New technologies, such as video surveillance , e-mail, and “smart” name badges, offer a moment-by-moment picture of interactions over extended periods of time, providing information about both the structure and content of relationships”<sup>32</sup>.

Just as the founding fathers of sociology recommended about the study of human interrelations, we could be on the edge of a sociology 2.0, studying human behaviour, meanings, values, relationships and experiences, inferring them not by a process of observation (participant or not) in natural life (or in laboratory), nor by directly asking individuals what they think, perceive, do or desire through surveys, but by analyzing the actual digital behaviour within the Net. Of course human social life is not (yet) totally developing through the web, and limiting its analysis to this particular sphere would be partial and misleading, but communication, markets, jobs, news, politics, finance, education, religion and even sex are -at least to a certain extent - more and more present if not carried out on the web. Therefore, it is possible - thanks to the growingly sharp tools of data mining analysis - to obtain an in depth view of a growing number and type of social behaviour.

Indeed, as in any technological revolution, not only a wide array of new possibilities is offered to the population that has access to it, but also scholars are compelled to rethink their theories and categories in order to better understand and explain the world they live in. This also entails the necessity of fine tuning or even of abandoning altogether previous hypothesis. After an enthusiastic initial reaction to the disclosure of grass roots participation possibilities brought by the new media, we should - now that we have started to collect the data – start analyzing its actual effects. And read these effects not as the mere outcome of technology but, as sociologists are trained to do, as used according to the society, culture and habits they are embedded in.

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<sup>31</sup> D. Lazer, *et al.*, *Computational Social Science*, *Science*, 06 Feb 2009: Vol. 323, Issue 5915, pp. 721-723

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*

If, as we have discussed so far, internet brings with it psychological confusion due to information overload, pervasive surveillance and impoverishment and fragmentation of public conversation to say it in Lovink's words, shouldn't we start acknowledging that as for today social media are taking us in the opposite direction of the "public sphere" theorized by Habermas, rather than helping us constructing it?

If the majority of people share pictures, their opinions (based on who knows what) and what they are doing. If amongst the most shared contents in 2015 we find Justin Bieber and Zombie Cruises, in a year of turmoil, crisis, Daesh attacks and of the rise of new forms of cold war between the U.S. and Russia. If the information overload deriving from the social media produces uncertainty and cognitive dissonance so that we tend to filter the messages and news we get exposed to in a way that instead of reaching out for different opinions we actually perceive just echo chambers. If internet reproduces a digital ideological divide instead of producing a better informed population, well then how can we possibly rely on the web for the enhancement of our democratic political culture?

And even when people *do* use the internet for political/social reasons they may be in danger, for in certain countries the police might use these new technologies to trace regime opponents more easily than they could in the past. Or again internet can be used for political but anti-democratic and illegal causes as it is the case of terrorists movements worldwide. Or, in the best cases, people may use internet to get support to a cause they care about. And will perceive themselves as politically engaged for the improvement of humanity. But are they really? Before inferring this type of correlation between expressing an opinion and/or signing a petition on the web and political activism, we should analyze the actual effects produced by those activities. May be we can even compare the status of the average social networks users who manifests a political opinion and that of those "off line" activists all over the world who have actually spent a consistent part of their time, and have taken their risks for a cause they believed in, in order to change things for the better. Occasionally risking imprisonment and life itself in the process. This is why Morozov argues that the web entails the risks of transforming people from potential activists into spectators.<sup>33</sup> The outcome could be a widespread democratic

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<sup>33</sup> E. Morozov, *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, Public Affairs, New York, 2011, (*L'ingenuità della Rete. Il lato oscuro delle libertà di Internet*, Codice, Torino, 2011, p. 189)

disengagement in a time when democracy seems already weakened both by endogenous and exogenous forces.

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## NATIONAL MODELS AND FEDERALISM IN EUROPE

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*1. The idea of federalism - 2. German federalism - 3. The Swiss federative model – 4. Conclusions*

### **1. The idea of federalism**

Probably linked to the events which have arisen with globalization, the federalist idea has gained great relevance in all its forms within the global political debate: as a federal unity of states or of independent political entities, or on the contrary as a means of division, if not dissolution, of national and centralized states that can thereby obtain greater autonomy while remaining connected in more moderate forms. The issue of federalism is connected to the crisis of the nation-states and became evident during the 1980s with the emergence of regional and local aspirations in areas ranging from Lombardy to Catalonia, from Scotland to Corsica, that began questioning the traditional unitary order. We are dealing with issues closely linked to the process of globalization and to the inability of governments to cope with the increasing power of multinational enterprises and international organizations. Such factors have contributed to shifting the balance toward forms of greater integration on a European level that were translated into the introduction of a single currency and the implementation of treaties such as the Maastricht Treaty that have defined the current organization of the European Union. This is an unprecedented political system traced back to

a model different from the one adopted in North America which is founded on the Constitution and confers unifying functions to the President regarding foreign policy and economic and monetary policies, while however granting considerable autonomy in legislation and judicial areas. On the contrary the European Union appears to be inspired by the legacy of the Holy Roman Empire, inherited, as Le Rider claims, by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Mittleuropa, and is seen as an element of stability and peace, rather than a new state, for the old continent.

The Holy Roman Empire, as defined by the peace treaty of Westfalia, was a structure of stability which prevented a return to bloody civil wars and gave rise to a complex of institutions that limited and provided the means for controlling the imperial power.<sup>34</sup> Rousseau praised confederate systems such as the Swiss Confederacy and the United Provinces, as well as the Empire, because he believed them capable of granting peace.<sup>35</sup> As Le Rider points out, this was a revaluation of the Empire in an anti-monarchic key which placed the princes as the servants of the public good. It can be interpreted as an international model of a social contract<sup>36</sup> that would soon end with the French revolution and the Napoleonic conquests, however leaving behind an heir: the Hapsburg Empire, that according to many commentators, would maintain the transnational traits and common institutions that were at the heart of the Holy Roman Empire. Hofmannsthal writes that the Austro-Hungarian Empire played the role of a stronghold against Russia and a bridge connecting the East and the West. The Austrian idea was based on synthesis and compromise, it connected the Germanic world, the Slav and the Latin worlds, and was based on the fundamental aspects of “conciliation, synthesis and mitigation of contrasts”<sup>37</sup>.

The fact that the federal institutional model remained particularly strong in German civil political thought is somewhat demonstrated by the creation of the German Federal Republic from the ashes of the National Socialist state: a participatory model of federalism based on the idea of cooperation between the central state and the Lander. This type of institutional cooperation tends to become manifest, although in unprecedented forms, in the current organization of the European Union,

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<sup>34</sup> See F.E. Schrader, “Le Saint-Empire romain germanique dans les représentations européennes 1648-1789: «équilibre», «milieu», «centre»“, *Revue Germanique Internationale*, 1994, 1.

<sup>35</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Alcan, Paris, 1964, vol. III, pp. CXXX ss.

<sup>36</sup> J. Le Rider, *Mittleuropa*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1995, p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.



sparking the question whether we are witnessing the return of proposals of old confederate models and whether these are in opposition to the concept of nation-state typical of Western nations.

## **2. German federalism**

The Federal Republic of Germany was born in the wake of the collapse of Nazi Germany. The decision made by the political leadership emerged from the ruins left by the war and the tragic collapse of Hitler's totalitarian state and took the direction of a form of state plurality based on specific local traits and territorial representatives, a model that had been characteristic of its history, aside from the parenthesis of National Socialism. In fact the German speaking area united by the ties of the Holy Roman Empire, far from the centralist principals of the French national state, had been characterized by a strong political and administrative decentralization. The new German state drew upon this tradition in the postwar period, conciliating the powers of the national Parliament and the regional assemblies with the Bunderstag constitutional body, that is, the house representing the Lander. In federal Germany a compatible system was established, with a unitary legislation within a framework that did not contemplate any disparity regarding the entitlement of rights or the level of economic development of citizens of the various Lander. This equality in the spheres of both civil and social rights resulted in the development of a collaborative welfare model between regions and the state, concerning the allocation of resources and the redistribution of wealth among the various areas of the country.

The Bundesrat regions counts 69 members appointed by the single regions in proportion to the populations they represent. According to the constituent assembly, its role was to facilitate integration between regional and national policies, leaving responsibility for government decisions to the State. But in fact, although legislation matters fall under the competence of the Bundestag, while administrative issues are dealt with by the Lander, it must be noted that the Bundesrat has had an active role in national policy making with jurisdictional and veto power on issues of great relevance such as constitutional reforms, the state of emergency, international treaties and European Union policies. The power of veto was originally intended as an exceptional measure, however rulings, procedures and legislative reforms have in time greatly changed the role and the weight that the second house has gained within the German system which has proven able to influence national measures thanks to the

right of the legislative initiative. It is interesting to note what shape this increase of jurisdiction and power has assumed. In actual fact the requests for exclusive jurisdiction have diminished while the effort for the co-decision of national policies has increased, with the Bundesrat in a more and more central position, leading to the decrease of importance of the single regional assemblies.

This participatory model has mostly been transferred to the European level because, with the Maastricht treaty and the Bundesverfassungsgericht verdict in 1993, regarding their jurisdictional affairs the Länders influence Germany's position on EU issues through the Bundesrat. The Federal Senate's right to co-decide has led on some occasions to the unavoidable choice of abstention in those votes regarding matters of regional jurisdiction that did not gain prior support. This has led to obvious complexity in dealing with European Union relations, since these must take account of the plurality of decision centers that have become part of the EU decision process, through constitutional German law and the rights recognized for the Bundesrat.

In recent years this system has witnessed a crisis, bringing the German legislative power to intervene in relations between the central state and the Lander and regarding the role of the Bundesrat. This has led to a division of jurisdictional power between the federal state and the Bundesrat with the approval of a detailed list of issues falling under national or regional authority. The clause of necessity introduced with the constitutional revision enables the Bundestag to legislate without restrictions imposed by the Länders, while the subjects with concurrent decision-making powers have diminished, with the prerogative, furthermore, of the central state to take upon itself the legislative procedures when it considers this necessary. This has induced not only a greater centralization of state jurisdiction but also resulted in a simplification required due to the overlapping EU regulations. New legislation has been aimed at clarifying the spheres of exclusive or shared competence and has reaffirmed the primacy of the state. At the same time the single Lander have been made responsible for the European Community. In fact, they will be held accountable for the failure of implementing EU policies, therefore ratifying a direct relationship with Europe only partially mediated by the national state.

Summarizing, we must acknowledge that the German federal model holds within it many elements that resemble the functioning of the European Union in the shape it has taken on, not without difficulties, over the past decades. The various treaties have designed a complex based on two fundamental institutions: Parliament, whose members are periodically

elected, and the Commission, composed of members representing the single nations within the European Union. The Commissioners are designated by the national governments through a selection criteria guaranteeing the participation of all national components. As in the Bundesrat, members are not directly elected to the European Commission. Notably, throughout time governmental procedures have conferred more and more power to non-elected commissioners than to members of Parliament, similarly to what has happened in Germany between the Bundersrat and the Bundestag, called to ratify more than to decide EU guidelines that are the result of negotiations between member countries, officials and representatives of economic and social interests.

### **3. The Swiss federative model**

At the heart of Europe, Switzerland represents an extraordinary and unique example. Since its constitution, it has been characterized by independence from royal and aristocratic powers, and by the forms of direct democracy implemented throughout its valleys. Protected by the harshness of the land and the climate, throughout the centuries Switzerland has elaborated an absolutely unique institutional system, only partially comparable to the ones effective in other European states. The slow formation of the state over a long period of time by means of consecutive alliances for mutual assistance, beginning at the end of the 13th century, has contributed to the creation of a greatly decentralized organization in which the cantons have retained strong autonomy in relation to central government powers. The expansion of the Confederation did not result from the use of military power but from pacts and alliances.

Switzerland's origin can be defined as bottom-up, arising from the efforts of the farmer and city communities to find a common identity within the peculiarity of Swiss institutions despite language, religious and cultural differences. The Swiss Confederation is based on the ample autonomy of the twenty cantons that constitute it. Each canton has its own constitution and legislation body and its own judicial apparatus. Because the population is remarkably heterogeneous the government's legitimacy is not based on issues of language, race or religion, as we have witnessed to be the case in many parts of the European continent, but on its institutions. The Swiss people feel part of a social structure that provides effective guarantees for the possibility of direct intervention in political matters and they believe that their set of laws reflects the popular will.

This is why Switzerland is considered to be a direct and consensual democracy.

The Swiss system is based on a federal assembly composed of two houses: the National Council which counts 200 members and the Council of States with 46 representatives. Members of the National Council are selected through a proportional electoral system and represent the entire population. On the contrary the 46 representatives in the Council of States are chosen by popular elections, two per canton and one for each half-canton. As cantons are not all alike in extension and population the choice to overlook the number of electors is due to the spirit of autonomy that the cantons have always displayed throughout Swiss history. Even the smallest canton has the right to the same number of representatives as larger and more important cantons. The Swiss form of government is defined as directorial and is characterized by a series of traits unfamiliar to other liberal democratic systems. The Federal Council organ of government counts 7 members elected by the Federal Assembly for a four year period; it cannot be subject to a no confidence vote and it cannot announce new elections. The process for selecting members takes into account national ethnic, religious and territorial requirements. According to what has been called the magic formula since 1959, government composition must respond to the following criteria:

- on a linguistic basis there must be between 7 and 4 German speaking representatives, 2 French and 1 Italian
- on a political basis there must be 2 liberal members, 2 members from the Democratic Union of the Center, 2 Socialists, 1 Popular Democrat
- on a religious confession basis the division calls for 4 Protestants and 3 Catholics
- on a territorial basis the presence of 7 cantons is required.

This magic formula certainly would not appear to be very democratic in Italy and in most of Europe: where is the will of the majority, so often invoked by our politicians for legitimizing their position? But in fact we are describing a system that acknowledges the principle of broad inclusion as a founding element of democracy, preventing minorities from feeling excluded from the power plays. The possibility of making one's voice heard in political decision making is guaranteed by a number of institutions of direct democracy, the most important of which is the Referendum, that contrarily to the Italian model is not only abrogative but also positive. Referendums as means of direct democracy take place often in Switzerland. There are about ten referendums a year, since 1875 to our

days a total of 537 referendums have been held, half of which (257) with positive outcomes.

Another tool for direct democracy on a federal level is the popular initiative regarding constitutional changes. The initiative must be signed by at least 100,000 citizens in order to be proposed, or must be requested by a canton.

There are other direct democracy instruments on a local level. In the two cantons of Appenzell Aussers Rhoden and Glarus the Landsgemeinde or Cantonal Assembly is still active: the assembly of all the citizens meets in the public square to approve political measures for the community by a show of hands. Equally, on a town hall level the annual assembly often serves as a legislative organ in which the political course of action and the most important city issues are decided by a free debate of those present.

The widespread perception of being able to determine public issues is one of the most unique elements characterizing the Swiss model. Contrarily to the rest of Europe where citizens lament their distance from politics, in a continent of bureaucrats secluded in their buildings of power, surveys in Switzerland show an elevated level of satisfaction with political institutions.

The Swiss model is important for Europe because it demonstrates how beginning from the grassroots and promoting autonomy it is possible to build a state with a strong identity, balancing different and at times conflicting interests, life styles and cultural traits, through collective institutions and means of direct democracy.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The idea that the European Union is following a process similar to the one undergone by Germany and Switzerland and that it is a federal system developing by means of an extraordinary force of attraction, appears to be confirmed by the events that have taken place during the past twenty years. The implosion of the USSR and the end of the polarity in international relations that had frozen relations between states in Europe, contributed, beginning in the 1980s, to making the European Union a remarkably strong element of attraction for post-communist countries, representing a model that could be defined, as Khanna puts it, as neo-imperial.

According to Khanna, "The EU is by far the most appreciated and well-constructed empire in history, because instead of dominating, it educates. Incentives for Europeanization - subsidies from Brussels,

guaranteed mobility, the single currency- are too favorable not to be well received.” With these policies the European Union is expanding without resorting to the use of force, but through the attraction it exerts on its neighbors whom it obligates to comply with “a concrete path of assimilation of the laws and rules of the Union”<sup>38</sup>.

The structure the European Union has adopted resembles the German model of state more than the American one, it embraces a method of progressive ratification of pacts between nations instead of the adhesion to a central state and to its constitution. On the other hand Germany cannot be accused of proposing a model dear to its historic tradition because the rejection of a single common European constitution was due to the response of the French and the Dutch citizens who determined the European direction in favor of international treaties between sovereign states. On the one hand this explains the impression of incompleteness surrounding the European Union and, on the other, it has granted a certain liberty and originality to the institutional creation.

The European Union has devised three main government organs: - the European Parliament elected by all citizens of the Union representing their rights and interest - the European Council that represents member states and their governments and lays out the general political agenda - the European Commission that functions as the government authority and elaborates the guidelines to be approved by Parliament and implemented by the legislation of member states. Other EU institutions include the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives, the European Investment Bank.

As can be noted it is difficult to claim that a federalist organization does not exist, also because European legislation has greater power than national legislation and therefore, for example, our parliament cannot oppose specific measures concerning legislation and now financial and budget issues unless it is willing to meet sanctions. Because almost 60% of the regulatory measures in the economic sphere originate from European guidelines it is evident to what extent national governments have lost sovereignty and are continually forced to negotiate their national policies in European Headquarters. Certainly states have maintained wide margins of discretion in the international sphere, an example being the

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<sup>38</sup> P. Khanna, *I tre imperi. Nuovi equilibri globali nel XXI secolo*, Fazi, Roma, 2009, p. 40.

French military intervention in Africa, and it must be noted that the European Union intervention in cases of policies not complying to European guidelines in any sphere is not always simple, despite the presence of the European Justice Court. Everything is held together by policies of moral suasion and economic retaliation that have succeed in convincing even the most difficult allies, at least until now. Clearly the system is decidedly a concertative one, requiring continuous and extenuating mediation, first of all between governments, nourishing the impression of an elite sphere deciding the fate of European nations behind closed doors. Furthermore, measures approved by governments are merely guidelines, and the legislation is elaborated by the Commission officers, who are either appointed by the government (Commissioners) or have passed open competition (Officials).

The European Parliament has generally tended to ratify very complex pieces of legislation with no detailed examination, contributing to give credit to a certain image of Europe as dominated by bureaucrats insensible to the needs of the population and far from the people's will. As a matter of fact, this perception clashes with a number of initiatives carried out by the Commission with the aim of responding to such criticism. The most important initiatives concern regional policies on the one hand, and are aimed at giving local communities the possibility to resort to measures directly agreed upon on a European level, and on the other hand the possibility for stakeholders to interact with the Commission on specific sectorial legislation.

This complex of measures reaffirms the consultative and cooperative model of the European Union following three main guidelines at the same time:

- to achieve a more centralized confederative political system. Initiatives approved by the Lisbon Treaty go in this direction: the European Parliament, not the national governments, appoints the permanent President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs. These decisions have been made with the aim of strengthening the role of the Parliament, seen as the holder of the European people's will, and at the same time with the intention of giving one voice to the international European agenda and to build a leadership selected by the majority of European citizens and not the expression of negotiation between states.
- to increase the possibility of local subjects to interact directly with the European centers of power, skipping national mediations. This occurs in various spheres and especially at a regional level with projects tailored for specific sectors, from innovation to infrastructures,

favoring transnational initiatives and promoting exchange and relations between local authorities.

- to give citizens the possibility to affect European Union political choices. Following the Swiss example, the establishment of the right to popular initiative, for European citizens should allow them to propose new measures in the field of legislation within the EU's spheres of competence, giving rise to new forms of direct democracy despite the difficulties of their implementation. Equally, the establishment of a Transparency Register attempts to institutionalize the interactions between European institutions and the third sector, private enterprises and trade unions in legislative processes shaped by practices of participation.

All this contributes to giving the European Union a different image from the one advertised by media, especially in our country. The limits we face, for example in matters of budgetary policy, are not arbitrary losses of national popular sovereignty but are the expression of a wider sovereignty, a European sovereignty. This concept leans towards the idea elaborated by Beck of a new type of state derived from cosmopolitanism. This is an imperial model not “linked to the raising of borders and conquest, but to the fall of national borders, to free will and consensus, to transnational interdependence and political surplus value derived from cooperation”<sup>39</sup>. This is a landmark shift in the conception of the state, a state losing its top-down and binding qualities linked to national sovereignty as defined in by Weber’s thought , towards “consensus as the means to exercise shared sovereignty”<sup>40</sup>. The main trait of the empire imagined by Beck lies in the idea that it may include national states, overlapping with them, yet not eliminating their functions of state sovereignty. Within stable borders, national states must continue to guarantee internal homogeneity and national policies, while the Empire operates with different criteria for the inclusion of differences, asymmetrical territorial relations and variability of borders. The aim is to achieve a post national order able to promote differences within a system based on sharing and cooperation. According to Beck the European Union could become a cosmopolitan empire if it were able to create a shared sovereignty and a form of integration based on law, consensus and

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<sup>39</sup> U. Beck, E. Grande, *L'Europa Cosmopolita. Società e Politica nella seconda Modernità*, Carocci, Roma, 2004, p. 75.

<sup>40</sup> M. Pendenza, *Ulrick Beck: il progetto di un'Europa cosmopolita*, in M. Pendenza (edited by) *Sociologia dell'Europa*, Carocci, Roma, 2011, p. 36.



cooperation. This is a clearly opposite vision to the one generally spread by the media, proposing a model of centralization necessary to guarantee European governability. The contradictory path followed by the European Union is certainly inspired by the typically German federalist standards, more than the British procedures. The crisis it is witnessing and the answers provided follow a model that we have already seen established in Germany and in Switzerland: negotiation policies, processes of territorial inclusion, participatory forms of government. We are certainly light years away from the speed, the effectiveness and the unity of North American federalism, but are we sure we prefer American federalism to the slow elaboration and negotiation of Swiss or German federalism?

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NEW CLEAVAGE IN OLD EUROPE: TOWARD A POLITICAL  
SOCIOLOGY OF POPULISM

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**1. Introduction: a new cleavage politics?**

The European political systems are at the centre of a long process of transformation of the players in traditional cleavage politics, from the viewpoint of identities, functions performed, and type of organization.

The diminishing capacity of the mainstream parties to represent the demands that come from new social groups has progressively favoured the growth of a sentiment of opposition toward the political class and toward traditional parties, which can assume the forms of apathy, with voter abstention, and protest, with the foundations of anti-establishment parties.

The cartelisation of political parties and their having become almost State agencies and organizations comparable to public utilities since the 1990's (Katz and Mair, 1995; 2009; Mair, 1997, Van Biezen, 2004), are phenomena attributable to a broader process of advancement by societies, the political consequence of which is the definitive supersession of the forms assumed by the mass European democracies, with the symbolic

watershed of 1989. The end of international polarization has “sewed up” the divide between the progressive removal of traditional social fractures and the resilience of parties which arose among those same fractures by way of their ability to freeze the political conflict. An enduring stability persisted until the 1990’s (Mair, 2001), but the dynamics relating to the processes of secularisation, individualisation, transformation in a post-Fordist sense of society, globalisation, and supersession of the “compromise of the Welfare State” as it occurred in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently weakened in the ability of traditional parties to generate affiliation and to carry out political representation. Nevertheless, the end of political mobilisation of mass democracy does not in itself equate to the end of any possible socially founded political mobilisation, and the same perspective of cleavage politics is not unequivocally filed away, particularly if it is considered as a combined effect between social structure, reaction to collective identity, and political organisation (Bartolini and Mair, 2001). In this regard, for there to be a political mobilisation, social and cultural transformations are not sufficient; rather, there needs to be an actor who is able to make them politically active as a challenge to the dominant political system, and to mobilise on this participation and consensus. Furthermore, it should also be taken into consideration that there can exist different combinations relative to the process with which traditional cleavages disappear or transform, and with which new cleavages emerge. In particular, two types of misalignments can be observed, one a structural type and the other an expression of the behaviour of social groups: the first relates to the fading significance of the fractures themselves, and along with them the parties’ ability to transform them into political identities; the second relates to when new significant issues emerge that redraw the lines between political affiliations without turning society upside down (Boschier, 2010, p. 61). In this regard, as Kriesi (2010, p. 675) observes, in the current phase of European society, an analytical perspective from political sociology is needed, one that is able to gather social divisions in a fluid and mobile context, theoretically and empirically reconstructing how new political and party political options form. Since the 1970’s the literature has highlighted the creation of new cleavages founded on values, especially attributable to the post-materialist *New Left*, and subsequently to the emergence of a radical *New Right* no longer fascist in origin, but in radical opposition to the establishment. As Kriesi observes (2010, p. 678), in a society in which the interactions between individuals respond less and less to a structural criterion (i.e., as attributable characteristics such as gender, age, and family begin to lose importance), and the same acquired status

connected to social class and profession, identities tend to construct themselves in relational terms on the basis of culture and the orientation of values, which redefine the political positioning of segmented and fragmented groups, thus creating new types of social foundations. However, if on one hand, one recognizes the creation of a value-oriented cleavage and the presence of social roots albeit unstable in terms of class, education, generation and nation, on the other hand one must identify with particular care both the phase and specific context of modernisation in which these political divisions intervene. In this regard the emergence of the fracture relative to the *New Left* and to the *New Right* is variously indicated as GAL/TAN (Green-Alternative-Libertarian vs. Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2004) or as libertarian-egalitarian/traditionalist-communitarian (Boschier, 2010), themselves contradictions not to be exempted from a critical analysis. In fact, the right-wing of Jean Marie Le Pen is not that of his daughter, Marine, Bossi's Lega is not the Lega of Salvini, and in general the forces of the new radical right-wing have recently transformed since the 1990's and early 2000's. In the same way the newest parties of the new radical Left, from Podemos to Syriza, are not comparable to the (now) traditional parties of the *New Left* (Poguntke, 1987; Kitschelt, 1988; Damiani and Viviani, 2015).

How much, then, does populism represent a political option for reorganising a political fracture or, on the other hand, does it qualify as politicisation, a transitional phase between the deconstruction and the soon-to-be reconstruction of a socio-political conflict? For a sociological analysis of *populism* it becomes important to critically analyse if and how much such a phenomenon is destined to appear and disappear as a contingent political form that is triggered in times of crisis, but not as a solution to the crisis, or if instead it is a matter of a social fracture, with its own ideological nucleus and a politicisation at the foundation of a stable, systematic transformation. Further, it is not insignificant to determine how the populist parties may be heralds of a challenge to democracy itself, or instead how they may represent the indication of a missing redefinition of content and form of political representation in the European democracies. In the first case the populist parties would be, in fact, attributable to the traditional anti-system parties (Sartori, 1976), whereas in the second case they would express a selective rejection with regard to the actors of traditional politics, setting themselves on the "periphery" but not "outside" of representative democracy. More generally, the emergence of political, anti-establishment phenomena in representative democracies has a close relationship to the inclusion process of mainstream parties at the

heart of the State and the “collusive” practices in defending one’s own assignment of power, the cartelisation described by Katz and Mair from the 1990’s, and the diminishing expressive and identitary capabilities of traditional politics. The emergence of an alternative plan of conflict in European political systems, the dynamics of populism and in particular the emerging phenomenon of the new radical, populist Left in Southern Europe, constitute a field of research in which political sociology, and particularly the sociology of parties and leadership, are more able than other disciplines to grasp the relationship between the transformation of the social foundation of democracy, the role of the masses and the leader, the type of politicisation of anti-political-establishment sentiment, and the change of political representation in advanced democracies.

## **2. The different interpretations of populism: ideology, thin ideology, or non-ideology?**

Populism firstly presents a difficulty concerning precisely the relationship that develops with democracy. If that which effectively constitutes a common appeal, vague semantics with a loose definition, is the appeal to the people (Canovan, 2005, p. 79). Therefore, populism is a concept that is hardly comparable to an ideology such as socialism, liberalism, or nationalism. Firstly, because there is no coherence in historical references, because the reference is not toward a specific social class, the cognitive grid in regard to political, economic, and social facts presents differences from case to case, and lastly because the term populism is more often than not assigned from the outside. As Ghergina and Soare (2013, p. 3) observe, populism has been variously defined as an ideology, a mind-set, a movement, a syndrome, or a social identity. While not joining the wide debate that the political and social sciences have dedicated to the theme of ideology, let us here assume that ideology is a belonging based on a system of coherent, explicitly expressed beliefs, equipped with a system for interpreting political phenomena, and capable of reproducing a sense of solidarity inside a group by way of shared symbolic codes, and a system of mutual recognition (Shills, 1968). Further, ideology delimits a perimeter of an identity of one group from others, requiring its members to obey and observe the rules, giving themselves some sort of organisational structure as well as an emotional and affectionate significance (*idem*, p. 66). As for the studies on populism, the distinction between those who support its ideological nature and those who, on the contrary, deny it, is actually much less polarized than it might



seem. A portion of the literature interprets classic populism as an ideology that places its own origins in a sort of “romantic primitivism,” with an echo of egalitarian moralism indeed from some Christian sects, and with nods to life on the edges of the Western world (MacRae, 1969, p. 162; Shills, 2001, p. 468). As for the supporters of neo-populism as ideology, their acceptance is anchored in the existence of a recurring platform of ideas, the core of which effectively returns to societies and politics as an ideology that, as Zanatta (2013, p. 15-17) claims, presents its own cognitive grid of social and historical facts. However, the need to identify a definition that itself has wide margins of ambiguity leads to introducing “precautionary” formulas, such as “thin-centred ideology” (Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2014), or “transdoctrinarian and processual type of ideology” (Sandru, 2013). An ideology, then, but of a thin centre, that does not want to change the society like other ideologies, but wants to radically modify its own status on the inside of the active political system. It is precisely for this flexibility that populism finds itself incorporated into other, more structured ideologies, from communism to environmentalism, from nationalism to socialism. Populism does not produce a platform of defined, replicable policies in the diverse contexts in which it emerges, while the common thread of its political manifestations goes back to the opposition of the active power structure. In this regard one risks chasing a fleeting idea if one begins to search for a social fracture on par with traditional critical junctures, whereas the common core can be sensed when one evaluates the social and political process that provides the structure of opportunities for the emergence and politicisation of populism. Therefore, what ideological, partially ideological, or non-ideological content can one attribute to populism?

Amongst the theoretical perspectives that do not recognise populism as ideology, some authors trace its nature back to a syndrome that is characterised by the rise of an opposition to the establishment and to intellectuals, with scarce coherence of policies and an high dependence on leaders (Wiles, 1969). For others, however, populism presents itself as a “mind-set that is connected to a vision of social order based on the conviction of the innate virtues of the people, whose supremacy is required as a source of legitimacy for political activity and government” (Tarchi, 2013, 123). This definition in particular, according to Tarchi, allows for the interpretation of populism as an ideological framework for reading social dynamics, as a style of political behaviour, as an ensemble of beliefs or principles that underlies political culture, as a rhetorical register, as a method for legitimizing a regime, without the dual risks of leaving the idea to common sense or defining its characteristics

normatively. Remaining in a non-ideological perspective, Hermet (1985; 2001) points out a moral appeal in populism, a call to a primitive order in which representative kinds of political mediation are not necessary, and he underlines the crucial role of a leader who is symbolic of the people. For the French sociologist, populism represents a paradox on the deconstruction of time of politics, which becomes evident in the contradiction between the complex problems that representative democracy is unable to solve and a time that is desired to be immediate in affirming the power of the people. Populism does not cement itself in the concreteness of policies, but rather underlines the strength of the people as a majority ousted from government, which relies on a leader who is also an outsider and who puts himself against the political class and the traditional parties. Lastly, an even clearer stance is the one taken by Taguieff (2003, p. 80), for whom the concept cannot but make references to its most basic meaning, and as such cannot be associated with either a given political regime or with specific ideological content (one can add to ideologies), but as a “political style susceptible to shaping diverse, symbolic material and therefore to adapting to multiple ideological environments, taking on the political colouration of whatever it touches”.

The inherent risk of proceeding with an intent to define is the perpetuation of the Cinderella complex, that in the search for a “pure” populism she creates an inextricable labyrinth. Alternatively, observing recurring themes reveals a common core to populism: the people are one unit and intrinsically good; the people are sovereign; the people’s culture and way of life are fundamental values; leaders and the movement/party are one with the people (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008, p. 6; Bryder, 2009, p. 8). On one hand populism exalts the virtues of the people against the elite (political and otherwise) accused of putting their own interests ahead of the interests of the community, and therefore object of distrust and condemnation by the people themselves. On the other hand, they create the Other on their own, that is, they identify the enemy (most notably the “foreigner”, the “immigrant”), object of a functional representation to the idea of an imagined community.

### **3. Leader democracy and populist democracy**

Generally speaking, one couldn’t fully encapsulate populism as a political movement without evaluating its relationship to political representation, democratic processes, and most of all the action of leaders and parties. This aspect takes on even more significance in times of crisis

or transition of the forms taken by democracy itself. Starting from the catch all party up until the arrival of the cartel party, the tendency of political systems and parties is that “leaders become the party and the party is none other than its leaders” (Katz and Mair, 2002, p. 126). This is a phenomenon that determines the breakdown of political representation interpreted by collective interests charged with the task of social and political integration, from the construction of an identity and affiliation, in order to achieve a clearer separation between the political class and citizens, according to the already well-known perspective of cartelisation (Katz and Mair, 1995; 2002; 2009).

During the difficult transition between different political and social systems, the all but obvious question is whether populism is a shadow or, by contrast, a mirror of democracy - whether it can thus be considered a phenomenon that is born, rises, and falls all within representative democracy, or if instead it poses the threat of not just a post-democratic regression, but a more openly anti-democratic regression. In recent literature the most popular opinion is that populism is a phenomenon on the margins of democracy (Urbinati, 2014), that it does not present itself as an opposition to democracy, but rather as a challenge to reconfigure democracy itself along the lines of a (not entirely defined) new narrative of politics and society (Meny and Surel, 2001; Taggart, 2002; Canovan, 2004; Deiwiks, 2009). Even more explicitly, Taguieff (2003, p. 17) affirms that “populism is a part of the story of adventures and misadventures of democracy, which it seems to follow like a shadow,” and with this perspective we can add that populism can even be the product of representative democracy and that the same representative democracy remains after populism disappears, albeit with possible elements of innovation, more so in the political class than in relation to the institutional framework.

The theme of representational politics is not a debate that arises with the emergence of populist and neo-populist movements and parties. Ever since the crisis of parliamentarism and the entrance of mass membership parties onto the political scene, the sociological and politological literature have raised questions, as well as alarms, about what qualified even then as a crisis of representation. Furthermore, it is necessary to make sense of the emergence of some phenomena, in particular the rise of anti-political and anti-party sentiment, both of which are the manifestation of a certain disaffection, discontent and hostility toward politics “as a regulatory principle, as a profession, or as collective action” (Mastropaolo, 2005, p. 66), but it is not naturally translatable into populism. Some of the elements that characterise the change of representative politics in western

democracies are superficially attributed to populism, particularly in the plebiscitary relationship between leader and people, the personalisation of politics as moving beyond the use of intermediaries between citizen and politician, the personalisation of top-level leadership as new empowerments, the transformation of parties with new selection processes for leaders and new powers granted to its leadership. The passage from a democracy of parties to a democracy with a leader is a process that the same Weber spotlights in the rejection of the “dangerous” grassroots democracy (Cavalli, 1992; 2001), and as such is of a different nature than populism, who takes one of its key traits from “grassroots” rhetoric. In this regard, Pakulski and Körösényi (2012) observe how leader democracy may be a political process that follows a top-down course, in which the nature of the vote is a type of trustee in regards to the leader. Democracy consists in approving, selecting, and authorizing the leader to govern, where the relationship between leader and citizen provides a broad mandate, and the reorganisation of the parties does not consist in them dismissing the preceding democratic process as waste, but by them becoming parties with personalised leadership. With respect to leader democracy, populism goes back to a different conception of democracy. As Canovan (1999; 2004; 2005) democracy has two sides: a “redemptive” and a “pragmatic”, both distinct but interdependent, and by however much the distance between the two grows, there is created space for the emergence of populism (1999, pp. 9-10). At the same time, the two forms of democracy are not alternative; actually, Canovan traces them back to a spat between two “conjoined twins” within the context of a thin line between populist democracy and liberal constitutionalism, in which neo-populism ranks as “the cat among the pigeons”, pushing for the first at the detriment of the second (Canovan, 2005, p. 67).

The question arises, then, of which “type” of democracy is opposed by populism. Is populism headed toward opposing democratic principles in general, or is it going in the direction of opposing the current political class (and therefore not against democracy in itself but against liberal-democratic representative democracy)? The matter has been re-proposed yet again by the major part of the literature on the tension between a democracy as a government of the people, popular democracy, and a constitutional-procedural democracy (Meny and Surel, 2001; 200; Mair, 2002; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). The representative democracy of the 20th century was a political and institutional system founded on parties, and as such has held together an efficient element, government, with an identity, redemptive element, namely ideologies as a blueprint for identification and transformation of society. The decline of party politics,

the melting of traditional political identities (particularly following the disappearance of the international fracture between East and West after 1989), and at the same time the complexity of centres of power, institutions, and entities that have access to the sphere of decision-making, can lead to diverse phenomena. On one hand we can see the growth of abstentionism, political apathy, and a sentiment of detachment and distrust, which sows the seeds of anti-politics but does not constitute, as we have previously seen, a critical juncture on which definitive social groups are formed. On the other hand, we can see the crisis of traditional parties and the emergence of outsider leaders that politicise the anti-establishment sentiment as fuel for the advent for populist democracy, for *partyless democracy* (Mair, 2002, 89-91).

Upon closer examination the same partyless democracy highlights how the will to “change the political class” represents the unifying trait of all of the possible reactions of opposition to the establishment - this can combine itself and be combined with the desire for a greater accountability in government action and with a widening of the participational dimension, two dimensions that give different perspectives to the construction of anti-establishment politics (Barr, 2009, pp. 37-38). The relationship between populism and democracy cannot, therefore, be interpreted in a unidirectional way as a “negative” defiance, where the pretence of the unity of the people may produce a regression of the democratic principle that consists in overcoming the very conflict by calling on the plebiscitary investiture of a leader. On the contrary, populism in its diverse historical phenomenology can also have, as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012, p. 21) observe, positive aspects, given that it brings previously excluded social groups into the circle of representation, where it builds an ideological “bridge” able to redefine the connections and limits of social and political coalitions, when it increases the accountability of the political class, and lastly when it accomplishes the “democratisation of democracy”, revitalizing civil society and social movements.

#### **4. Leaders and populist parties in European political systems**

Populism is therefore composed of various constants, to which political actors usually give a negative sense, the reference to the people as a unitary body with moral and political superiority, a “light” ideological dimension without an effective theoretical construction, the opposition to the establishment, the artificial construction of an imagined community

and relative enemies, a leader that assumes a central role in the anti-party party, a plebiscitary call, a demagogic rhetoric that offers instruments for simplification, identification, and cognitive mapping. Like every phenomenon that bursts into society and generates forms of conflict, populism is also faced with the choice of organization and type of strategies for politicisation. In this regard, in order to take the political-electoral option, the same populism needs a process of politicisation and institutionalisation, in which the emergence of an anti-politics and anti-party sentiment is not sufficient - instead there needs to be one or more political entrepreneurs able to take those sentiments and make them into a political option, which can be, only apparently paradoxical, itself a party (Schedler, 1996; Abedi, 2004; Eatwell, 2004; Mudde, 2007). The populist party does not assume the physiognomy of a distinct organisational model, and as much as it is proposed as a neo-communitarian dimension, it has nothing of the mass party-community described by Duverger (1961), in which the organisation is heavily institutionalised and in which the party articulates and aggregates the demands of its society, which is not only filtered but simultaneously orderly and “socially simple”. On par with other parties, first and foremost among all personal parties and parties of a charismatic leader, the organisational form of populist parties presents a weak institutionalism, with an internal structure that varies in correspondence with the choices of the leader at its head (Viviani, 2015, p. 197). An attempt to reconstruct some common indicators for the empirical analysis of these parties has been put forward by Tappas (2012), who takes into consideration the capacity for absolute control of the leader over the organisation, the emotional relationship between the leader and his followers, and the nature of delegation and missionary attitude of the followers in place of the participatory and deliberative procedures. A reconstruction that nevertheless risks not taking into account the dynamics that can develop especially in those populist movement-parties with regard to the differences between grassroots activism in single territories and the role of top-level national leadership. One must therefore keep in mind the possibility of a stratararchy, somewhat similar to that identified by Katz and Mair (2009) and by Carty (2006) for mainstream parties, given that grassroots activism can be autonomous in regard to individual local issues, but (for example, in the case of the M5S in Italy) is nevertheless led by the direction of national politics, through the certification and concession of the symbol to local groups. In the organisational arrangements of these types of parties there can thus be found the interaction between participatory and deliberative practices, and at the same time the recognition of a central role to national leader(s).

Potentially in conflict with one another, the two faces of the party can nevertheless be diminished in their power to insert themselves in top-level decision-making processes, and indeed configuring the horizontality of activism as manipulation by the leader, portrayed on the outside and diminished on the inside. Further, on the inside of representative institutions or governmental (national and local) institutions, the inevitable platform weaknesses and political fragmentations can erupt, and in this way reveal the scarce cohesion of the elected political class, thus resulting in the removal (or expulsion) of deputies, advisors, and mayors, effectively in opposition to the top-level national leadership. This aspect is of particular interest, also with regard to the undeveloped empirical research on the elected political class of populist parties, because the establishment/anti-establishment fracture becomes relevant and polarizing in moments of transformation of political systems, but they need to be redefined from the point of view of politicisation and organisation. In this regard, populism has a short horizon in the history of European democracies and in the expansionary, electoral phase until it completes the political and partisan transition in and of advanced democracies. Therefore, in general, populism does not present itself as an ideology, but as a mass movement guided by an outside leader looking to obtain, or maintain, power through an anti-establishment message and a linkage with plebiscitary electors. This definition of processional, functional populism has the merit, on one hand, of not being static (and therefore can be adapted to different situations), and on the other of not evaluating time after time only the anti-establishment orientation, the presence of an outside leader, or the immediate relationship to the masses, but encompassing the combination and different interactions between all of these phenomena (Barr, 2009, p. 44).

#### *4.1 Populist parties and the New Politics*

The establishment/anti-establishment fracture is traced back with difficulty to the traditional division between the Right and Left, however populism as an ideological addendum is most prevalently associated to New Politics in reference to the birth of new radical Right movements in Europe. The difference in the relationship between populism and the new radical Right and the new radical Left must take into consideration the social transformations in a period of time now quite long, in which the concept of New Politics has in its turn redefined itself since its appearance at the beginning of the 1960's. The same anti-politics as opposition to the mainstream parties has evolved alongside social, economic, and cultural

changes that have characterised - and do characterise - the continued processes of modernisation by European societies. As Tarchi (2015, p. 366) observes, in the case of Italy, elements of populism are found in both the left and right wings, until the case of the M5S which presents a “pure” form of populism, positioning itself outside of the traditional lines of conflict. In the course of social change in Europe there have been different phases, some of which are the manifestation of parties and movements that have cited a greater participation from the bottom and demonstrate a lesser propension, or an opposition, to a strong leadership, developing unconventional forms of political participation and becoming bearers of postmaterialist values (Inglehart, 1998). Following the processes of “advanced modernisation” of European societies, the New Politics has transformed itself, and the same politicisation of the personal experience of the conscious and reflective citizen has become anti-party. In this regard, the most important thing to underline is that the traditional categories and theories prove to be less and less able to read the progressive change of New Politics in general and, in particular, that of the new radical Left.

The emergence of a new, populist and radical Left and a new, populist, extreme Right must be viewed in the wider context in which the same cleavage politics is called upon to confront the surpassing of the freezing hypothesis and the adaptability of the traditional social fractures described by Lipset and Rokkan, of both the silent revolution of postmaterialist values analysed by Inglehart, and also of the silent counter-revolution, the reaction of closure and fear which leads to the emergence of a new conservatism (Veugelers, 1999, p. 96; Kriesi, 2004, p. 57). The impact of new cleavages has progressively determined the creation of a second level of conflict, different from the traditional one, wherein new parties emerge that have been defined as GAL (Green/Alternative/Libertarian) and TAN (Traditional /Authoritarian/Nationalist) (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2004; Marks, Hooghe, Wilson and Edwards, 2006). In the formation of the two new orientations is the cultural dimension that plays a fundamental role as a dividing line, where the New Left is characterised by universalist-libertarian values, and the New Right by communitarian-conservative values; meanwhile the economic dimension is removed from the equation on the Left which seeks more institutional intervention to regulate the market, whereas the Right favours a free market (Boschier, 2010, pp. 25-26). In this regard, one needs to identify, in light of what has been found regarding populism as a thin ideology, if and how the birth of a populist political grouping presents itself, and if the parties that it comprises - or would comprise - have



effectively common platforms and organisational profiles. Is a thin ideology therefore in itself able to give shape to an autonomous party family? In the formation process of cleavage we have observed how a fracture in society gives rise to a process of opposition if a political entrepreneur intervenes and mobilises the fracture, giving it stable, coherent, and recognisable borders for creating identity - because otherwise the fracture remains latent or will be reabsorbed into the organisation of other cleavages. At the same time the party “spiritual families” indicate “a kinship” that derives from the same worldview that inspired the sense of political community (Massari, 2004, p. 87).

To scramble up the cliff that is the systemisation of populist parties on the basis of the traditional categories of the literature on parties is to run a slippery slope; one runs the risk of forcing the comparison with them and other party families, or alternatively stretch the nature of its phenomena, each with their own set of peculiarities. In particular, one must distinguish between the populist parties from those that in the classical literature are consigned to the category of “anti-system”. The definition of anti-system belongs to the analysis conducted by Sartori (1976, p. 132) on Pci and Msi, but it does not address the juxtaposition between mainstream parties and anti-political establishment parties. The opposition of anti-establishment parties is oriented toward the de-legitimisation of the democratic system down to its roots, not only identifying the caste of major parties as self-referential and distant from the people, but also proposing to overturn the democratic institutions themselves. In different ways, the populist parties place themselves on the margins of the democratic system, while nonetheless being inside it; their opposition is selective and directed toward the dominant political class and not on the value of the institutions of democracy (Schedler, 1996; Keren, 2000). Starting with the definition of populism as a thin ideology, the populist parties are traceable not to anti-system parties that develop an opposition to institutions and to democracy on principle, but to political actors that express a semi-loyalty with regard to the current democratic system - a non-involvement that opposes the political actors who hold power in a precise moment. Further, the populist parties of the New Right, on par with those of the New Left, find themselves in front of the possibility of entering into the area of government, particularly in political and electoral systems of a proportional type or that places a premium on majority to the winning electoral coalition. Unlike the traditional anti-system parties that were excluded from government (and in some cases denied even the possibility to participate in elections, such as the Communist Party in Germany since 1956, or in others where the reorganisation of the party

has been prohibited, such as the Fascist Party in Italy), populist parties participate fully in elections in order to conquer members of government.

Since the 1990's, the effects of globalisation, the economic and financial crises, and the ever more pronounced process of individualisation, have been identified as a structure of opportunity for the birth of "populism of fear and close-mindedness", namely the new extreme and radical Right, united by a greater availability of their own electors to identify with a strong leadership, without instead reclaiming new spaces for political participation. In this regard the parties that are commonly associated with the populism of the New Right are the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) in Austria, the Vlaams Belang (Vlaams Blok until 2004) in Belgium, the Danish People's Party in Denmark, the Front National in France, Alba Dorata and ANEL in Greece, the Lega Nord in Italy, the Party for Freedom (PVV) (and previously the Lista Pim Fortuyn), the Congress of the New Right (KNP) in Poland, and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in Great Britain (Ignazi 2003; Swank and Betz 2003; Mudde 2012; 2013). The electoral dynamics in the advanced European democracies highlights how, precisely since the 1990's, populism has taken root in the political space of the anti-establishment right wing, nonetheless different from the fascist and neo-fascist radical right wing (Taggart, 2000; Taguieff, 2003; Ignazi, 2003). The new populist Rights, as Taguieff (2003, pp. 74-75) observes, on one hand politicise the sense of anxiety and resentment of the middle and working classes that feel threatened by the change taking place (of which they suffer the risks but enjoy no benefits); on the other hand they offer contradictory and vague plans that make reference to policies for combating immigration, lean toward economic liberalism and anti-statism, and an opposition to bodies of supranational regulation, as in the case of the European Union and its currency, the Euro. The problem of the coherence of populist parties' platforms represents a field of research of particular interest that is still not entirely explored, whether in terms of the existence (or lack thereof) of an elaboration of their policies in domains of governance beyond the themes of the "aforementioned identitary and anti-political opposition", or in terms of comparison between parties that could be associated to the populist phenomenon in various advanced European democracies. The question then becomes if and how much the parties that oppose the phenomenon of cartelisation of the mainstream parties represent a social demand that exceeds the phase of protest; this runs the risk of making their own political offer more specific, thereby exposing themselves to the possibility of losing a significant amount of political consensus, and

indeed bringing themselves back into the heart of the political conflict of those parties inside the area of government. In this regard, Borschier (2010, pp. 33-35), who groups the populisms of the Right into a “subgroup” of the wider political family of the new European extreme Right, proposes three criteria in order to establish if and to what degree a party can be traced to this type of party. One regards the position in the political space, and the other two regard the style of mobilisation. The first of the three criteria makes no reference to the ideological positioning on the traditional axis relative to economy, but is founded on the polarisation of the cultural orientations that juxtapose the libertarian-universalist forces of the New Left with those of the traditionalist-communitarian of the New Right. The other two criteria instead reference the more traditional dimensions, namely the anti-establishment character of the party and the type of internal hierarchical structure. More generally, then, in the case of populist movements in both the New Right and the New Left, one must create indicators that are able to make comparisons between the demands of these political entities and at the same time analyse the processes by which they emerge and develop in singular, national contexts.

## **5. Beyond the Right: populism and the European Left**

If populism is “hosted” by different types of ideologies and is most prevalently associated with the formations of the new radical Right, this has nonetheless stopped the progressive emergence even in Europe of populist movements and parties on the radical left wing. The populism of the Left has a complex process composed of different phases of interaction with the structural change of social and political opportunities since 1989 and since the fall of Communism and the parties that related to it. The disappearance of an ideological backdrop and an organisational model for a party, however, is not the only element that introduces transformations in the Left in general and, in particular, in the movement parties of the New Left. In this regard, it is useful to trace populism back to the radicalism of the two opposing polarities on the left/right continuum, without precluding that the same mainstream socialist and social-democratic parties could be the heralds of populism (Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015). In this perspective, populism is therefore a phenomenon attributable to the importance that the connection to the people as well as the opposition to the elite and the political establishment are present in the party’s identity. However, given that the reference to left-wing populism appears in the European literature only recently, unlike

left-wing populism in South America, one must make some differentiations in order to avoid distorting once again the nature of the concept, making it once again merely a manifestation of a demagogic attitude or to just a strategy for communication. First of all, the transformation process of left-wing parties is composed of two separate trajectories. On one hand the socialist and social-democratic parties, with the diminishing representation of the working class, took a sort of catch all orientation, even before the solemn stride into the practice of cartelisation along with the other mainstream parties. These parties adopt an ever more adherent approach to an economically liberal policy. They begin a destructure of the organisation of the country and become fully a part of the process of personalisation of the top-level leadership, with the marginalisation of the party's leading and intermediate-level bodies, the party members and officials, in favour of a direct relationship with the electors. In line with this perspective we could associate a type of "soft populism" to the leadership of the mainstream left-wing parties, although it needs to be clarified whether this belongs to a different interpretation of the relationship with democracy itself, if populism can characterise traditional left- and right-wing parties. The presence of an anti-establishment component of a left-wing party may depend on the historical background of breaking and overcoming a political and institutional equilibrium, as happened with Gonzales' Psoe in Spain or in Papandreou's Pasok in Greece (March, 2011). However, traces of populism that are present in the mainstream parties' leaderships recalls chiefly the dynamics of acquiring consent in the occasion of elections, and even more so as a means of creating conflict to substitute the dominant coalition, and lastly as a search for legitimacy by way of the call to electors not mediated by the filter of organisational entrenchment of leaders and campaigners. If populism is a thin-centred ideology, likewise one must remember that it is not possible to reduce it to a leader's strategy for communication. In other terms, in the left-wing mainstream parties one can identify various elements of a soft populism, so long as one distinguishes between the integral components of the populist phenomenon and the transformation process of parties in the field of political and leadership personalisation. In reference to traits of populist democracy in mainstream leaders and parties, Mair (2002, p. 96) is nevertheless more radical, arguing that the leadership of Tony Blair, for example, is easily attributable to populism based on his policy of party change and government action, beyond the construction of his image. The leadership of Blair, in Mair's opinion, is firmly placed within a partyless democracy (Mair, 2000; 2002), a manifestation of populism precisely

because the intermediation and responsibility of the leader to his party is surpassed, because it creates an undifferentiated appeal to the people, and lastly because the government works in the interest of everyone and no longer just that of specific social groups. In line with this perspective we can identify components of partyless democracy in other left-wing parties as well, particularly in the Democratic party in Italy. If we observe the leadership of Matteo Renzi we can see similar traits to those described by Mair for New Labour, from the selection of leadership through primary elections (open to electors in the case of Italy) to the progressive surpassing of the party as a place of decision-making and political responsibility. Moreover, Renzi's leadership is marked by many elements that recall the phenomenon mentioned, namely the appeal to the people, the summoning of the party of the nation, the construction of an us/them conflict, with "them" from time to time identified as the representative of the old dominant coalition, the academics nay-sayers (the *professoroni*), the critics (the *gufi*), the unions, European bureaucracy, all together destined to be scrapped. Whether in the case of Blair or of Renzi, or in the case of other parties and leaders of the mainstream Left, it remains to be seen the extent to which the presence of this type of anti-establishment discourse can effectively be attributed to that set of thin-centred ideologies that comprises populism, given that the principle objective is the struggle for power within their respective organisations, while government action does not move away from the mainstream of economic policy, from the presence in supranational bodies (the European Union), and from the agreements with other political actors, choosing the path toward personalisation of top-level leadership (which is not in itself part of the populist ideology).

Apart from the traditional Left, the most relevant link between populism and the Left is not, however, attributable to the transformation of these mass parties into catch all parties with personalised leadership, as much as it is to the emergence of movements and parties that can be identified in two typologies: the populist social parties and the social populist parties (March, 2011, p. 208). The first type of party is a fully-fledged member of the socialist political family, a sub-type that presents some peculiar characteristics does not create a distinct genus. These parties maintain the ideological anchorage to socialist references, particularly in regards to economic policy, but have a higher grade of anti-establishment sentiment, greater ideological contamination, and maintain a heavier emphasis on their own identity, even in terms of geography. The parties of the second type identified by March (*idem*, p. 209), instead show a greater resemblance to populist movements, due to both the

presence of a personalised leadership and the loose organisation, as well as the weakness of an ideological backdrop that allows them to keep together left- and right-wing issues in the same party, just like the appeal to electors from different cultural areas on behalf of the “people”.

### *5.1 Left wing populist parties: Syriza and Podemos*

In the current transformation process of European political systems, various movement-parties have been introduced that pose a new challenge to political sociology in reference to the evolution of populism in the field of the new radical Left, particularly the cases of Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) in Greece and Podemos in Spain (Mudde and Kaltwasser, Deiwinks, 2009; Stavrakakisa and Katsambekisa, 2014). Both of these parties show particular characteristics with respect to the other aforementioned parties, in terms of how they appeared, the type of political plan, the type of leadership, and even the relationship they have with populism. Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) was founded and developed out of the redefinition of parties and movements in the Greek Left since 2004, as “synthesis of the values of the working class movement with those of environmentalist, feminist, and new social movements” (Syriza Manifesto). Syriza’s success, guided by Alexis Tsipras since 2007, started with the political elections of 2012, becoming the second largest party, to then in 2015 become the largest Greek party and take over government. If Syriza was initially configured as a movement-party in support of the mobilisation against the G8 in Genoa and the political and financial dynamics of globalisation, with a platform of opposition to austerity policies and radical social reforms, it is from 2012 that it can be even more directly traced back to a populist dimension. The Greek economic and political crisis which demanded the coalition government with Pasok offered Syriza the opportunity to combine its own social platform with a strong opposition to the political establishment (as well as the economic and financial establishment). If we observe Syriza’s “platform and election manifesto” we find the presence of references to ideologies typical of the radical Left, from the nationalisation of the banks to interventions in favour of the less well off, from public health to reduction of military spending, from hostility toward NATO to the welcoming of migrants, as well as a strong critique of the traditional political establishment, while in no document declaring the exit of Greece from the European Union, but rather a radical transformation of its policies (Syriza Manifesto). Can Syriza therefore be defined as a populist party? Syriza presents a central characteristic in the “light” populist

ideology, namely the juxtaposition between “us” and “them” (where the concept of “people” substitutes the more traditional concept of “social class”), since it is the Greek people in their entirety that are summoned against the political, national elite, and against the European Union and its policies of financial rigour. The appeal of Syriza is therefore populist in the sense that it recognises the people as a unified political actor that lies at the heart of its platform, whose issues recall the policies of the radical Left but, as Stavrakakis (2015, p. 277) argues, reference even more so a positioning in the political space that is different from the traditional Left, the Pasok, and in conflict with it.

The founding and development of Podemos in Spain have different characteristics than the founding and development of Syriza, first of all for the constituent process of the movement-party and for the same political platform. Podemos does not originate from the plethora of Communist initials of various orientation, and does not take the road of traditional institutionalisation with the natural priority objective to become an electoral body. Podemos’ journey began from the forms of protest and conflict sparked by a series of social movements, first and foremost the housing struggle, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) movement, so within the mobilisation of the youth, students, and occasional workers with little security (particularly in university student organisations and also from the emergence of the *Indignados* with the *acampada*); the manifestation held on May 15th, 2011 at Puerta del Sol in Madrid then spread to other Spanish cities, from whence the 15-M Movement was launched (Pucciarelli and Russo Spina 2014). The context in which Podemos emerges references the mobilisations that intensified with the economic crisis of 2008 as well as the structure of political opportunities created from the disrepute and distrust of the mainstream political forces, first of all the PSOE just back from the experience of the Zapatero government before the defeat in the 2011 elections. Podemos, unlike Syriza, has in its cultural heritage a lesser ideological backdrop, not only with respect to previous parties of the Spanish Communist left wing (first and foremost Izquierda Unida), but also to the season of the Social Forums in the early 2000’s. Further, the initial nucleus from which the party derives highlights a characterising trait, namely the provenance of a large part of the leaders from the Complutense University of Madrid, including the leader Pablo Iglesias. The same organisation of the party, the general rules for selection of leaders pro tempore and candidates, as well as the very drafting of the platform, recalls on one hand the assemblearism of university committees, and on the other hand the organisational mode of the 15-M Movement. Relevant is the rapid

increase of members (in clear contrast to the traditional parties, and in line with the populist parties, both left and right); between the official foundation of the party in January 2004 and the local elections in 2015 there was an increase of approximately 350,000 members (Source Podemos). The members of Podemos participate directly in the assemblies on the decisions of the party (even by way of the Internet platform that characterises the its “online” structure), including the decision to participate in the European elections of 2014, winning roughly 8% of votes, as well as the decision to support local candidates and platforms by not presenting themselves directly with their own symbol in the local elections of 2015, securing important victories, first and foremost in the municipal elections in Barcelona.

Even though it is possible to find elements of continuity between the platforms of Podemos and Syriza, in Podemos’ platform presented at the European Elections of 2014 (in both the platform presented by Iglesias at the secretary general election and in the platform brought to local elections in 2015) the opposition to the “caste” and the political and financial establishment, the fight against corruption, and the proposals relative to the involvement and direct participation of the citizens in politics and institutional decisions are strongly accentuated. On one hand, then, there are the social issues such as the right to homeownership, public education, the overcoming of job insecurity, the nationalisation of sectors of the economy, basic income, new forms of public regulation of the economy, civil rights, and wealth tax. On the other hand, issues such as “governing the common people” and “building democracy” represent major points on the platform of transformation of liberal-democratic, representative democracy, from participatory budgets to popular laws, referendums, reforms that abolish the privileges of politicians, the role of citizen assemblies with the task to monitor the use of power. Indeed this last aspect clearly distinguishes the populism of Podemos from the traditional interpretations of populism of the new radical Right, since it takes a form that resembles that which Rosanvallon (2006, 2012) defines as counter democracy.

The crisis of traditional political representation has seen the transformation from citizen-electoral to citizen-vigilant, that substantiates the democracy of civil society due to arrangements that recall the notion of vigilance, denunciation, and verification (Rosanvallon, 2006, p. 21, p. 237). Two complementary phenomena find each other and rekindle - the process of individualisation in the sense of attribution of an active membership in society by the individual, and the creation of networks external to political-institutional power, but within the sphere of political



decision-making. Podemos in particular, more so than Syriza, declares its will to enhance that transformation process of democracy, making use of the opportunities provided by new media, not only in the sense of expressing electoral preferences over the Web, but by referring to that form of surveillance that, within the perspective of Rosanvallon (2012, p. 55), emerges from the Web itself as active participation able to create community bonding. The risks and limits of this interpretation of populism are nonetheless the ones to undervalue the possible manipulation of the processes of participation, just as undervaluing the weight of leader personalisation inside the movement (in this case of Tsipras and Iglesias) emphasizing the assembly dimension. Beyond Podemos and Syriza's capacity to present - and represent - themselves as an anti-caste alternative of a participatory type, a significant role is played by the leadership, but its direct dialogue with the citizens through media, traditional or otherwise, able to expand the political consensus "beyond the Right and Left", juxtaposing "upper", the elite, and "lower", the citizens. In this regard, we can identify the populism of the new radical Left as a "civic populism", all the while characterised by two pillars: the appeal to the people and the opposition to the establishment (Canovan, 2005; Meny and Surel, 2000).

Podemos and Syriza arise within a now advanced process of deconstruction of class identity, and in both cases we find ourselves in front of political phenomena that are occurring in countries of Southern Europe of the "third wave of democratisation". At any rate the two parties show some differences, which presents us once again in critical terms with respect to the possibility of identifying them as parts of a coherent political family. Despite the closeness and continuous reference to a common vision, the two parties find themselves at odds with a different structure of social, economic, and political opportunities - even more so in the case of Syriza, that since January 2005 has occupied the position of governance in Greece. First of all, the structure of the two parties that derive from the relevant Statutes highlights a level of greater institutionalisation in Syriza, whereas Podemos has a great characterisation as movement-party, with a political participation structured on constant assembly processes, also via Web platforms which offer the possibility of an online connection to members beyond the connection to participants on the ground.

A suggestive but not always considered difference, furthermore, is the European positioning of the two parties, not on the level of adherence to the Eurogroup in the European Parliament, but to the adherence to supranational political parties. If in fact both take part in the Eurogroup GUE/NGL (European United Left/Nordic Green Left), Syriza, unlike

Podemos which has no direct affiliations to Europarties, is part of the Party of the European Left, which has among its members: French Communist and Trotskyist parties, Izquierda Unida and other Communist parties in Spain, the German Die Linke, the Communist Refoundation Party and generally the ideologically communist parties of the European States. Podemos, and particularly its leader Iglesias, have a greater cultural and political backdrop to the recent Latin American socialism, especially the leftist populism of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. This difference highlights once again how Podemos neither arises as a process of unification of previous parties, nor references itself in its manifesto in terms of leftist communism. If, for example, we observe the Manifesto for the administrative elections in 2015, we don't find reference to "Left" and "Right", but to repeated affirmations such as "Somos distintos, pensamos distinto, actuamos de forma distinta" (Manifesto Podemos, p. 11), "Somos la gente; no somos políticos" (*idem*, p. 13), with a call to and constant identification with the "people" and with the "citizens", the people of reference of the party. In the same founding document of the party, titled "Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio político", it appears evident how Podemos makes an explicit call to the people in their entirety, contrasting to the government of the elite a "democracia real basada en la soberanía de los pueblos y en su derecho a decidir su futuro libre y solidariamente".

The comparison between the two principle parties of this new, radical, European, populist Left highlights even further the necessity to tackle the field of research on populism, on both the left and the right, avoiding distortions, and attempting to unite the study of single cases to the reconstruction of a theoretical framework able to shed light on the phenomena, without making interpretations that are too simplistic, biased or not scientifically proven.

### *5.2 A "different" populism?*

The majority of the literature traces European populism back to the heart of the development of the new radical Rights (Taggart, 2000; Betz, 1994; 2004), however there are different perspectives that analyse its relationship with the Left, in many cases in terms of a comparison with the forms populism has assumed in the Latin American left-wing. Different historical and social phenomena, with a different interaction between modernisation and democratisation, however, that which makes them comparable is the reference to various reforms and the appeal to the people, with the juxtaposition of the upper against the lower, i.e. the

popular mobilisation against the different castes that comprise the society. The differences between the populism of the Left and that of the Right is articulated in binaries: inclusivity/exclusivity, egalitarianism/differential nativism (Laclau, 2008; Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2015), beyond the libertarian/authoritarian binary with regard to civil rights. The populism of the Left emerges during a phase of transformation of European democracies as an opposition to oligarchical and cartelised forms of government for the cause of a re-democratisation of the political system (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2015, p. 124). If the study of European left-wing populism is still in its embryonic stages, given the recent emergence of the phenomenon, the literature that looks at its recent political manifestations should not consider the appeal to the people and the opposition to the establishment as a political indistinct opposition. In reference to the ideologies, it is not sufficient to take populism for an abstract, thin ideology, but it needs to be verified which form populism takes as it approaches political identities and platforms.

In the analysis of left-wing populisms the reference is not to the “people as a nation”, the “*ethnos*-people”, typical of right-wing populisms, but it can neither be, in the words of Meny and Surel (Meny and Surel, 2001; Meny, 2004) just the “sovereign people”, the “*demos*-people”, nor the traditional “people as a social class”. The discursive theory of Laclau (2008) in particular finds itself in this perspective, where “discursive” does not refer to a dialectical practice of a Habermasian nature, but to a political and social process of the construction of identity and belonging. For Laclau populism does not represent solely a destructive phenomenon of a political order in crisis, but a movement in itself subversive and reconstructive of a new order. Based on the fact that “popular identities are in fact always based on equivalential chains of unsatisfied social demands” (Laclau, 2008, p. 169), the populist discourse emerges where such demands are unable to be integrated into the system, on account of the fact that the differential demands actually have the possibility of a nexus that unites and organises them. Laclau recognises that in contemporary societies there not only exist differences between the expression of ethnic and cultural groups, but the principle characteristics are the subjectivity and plurality of social demands, which nonetheless can have an equivalential narrative. Indeed the construction of a people represents the interpretative key with which Laclau reads the phenomenon of populism, stripping it of its negative connotations, or better yet making on the inside a distinction between right-wing, authoritarian forms and that which can be identified as left-wing populism. Further, with respect to the difficult relationship between leadership and the parties of the post-materialist *New Left*, Laclau (*idem*, pp. 174-175) recognises a significant role played by the party leaderships, recalling, among

others, the role of Togliatti in the Communist Party in Italy. In this case, even before the party as organisation, the leadership works to make an instrument of the party, one that is able to construct a common, unitary reference on a substantial and nominal level, based on a series of heterogeneous elements. In this regard “nomination”, as Laclau defines it, is for turning heterogeneous elements, such as the “working class”, into a people as a “historical singularity”. This perspective not actually new, given that in the relationship between social class and parties, Sartori (1990, p. 179) already highlighted how the existence of a social class of reference was a “facilitating condition”, but not an explanation, for the rise of a party, because it is the party that creates a “subjective class”, the class consciousness, and not vice-versa.

In light of Laclau’s theory, then, we can observe some common developments in the populism of Syriza and Podemos. Both parties are characterised by their opposition to the “caste”, but at the same time they equip themselves with a platform of social reforms that does not cast them in neutral terms, compared to the radical Left and Right. That connection to the nation made by both Syriza and Podemos falls within the process of redefining the left-wing populist discourse, where concepts of nation and homeland take on a different significance from that of the populists of the new radical Right. Despite the formation differences of the two political actors, the social, cultural, and political context in which they emerge, the type of political class, a common profile can still be recognised, that if it is not sufficient to define an autonomous political family, in practice, however, they contribute to redefining the development of the new radical Left. In this regard, both Syriza and Podemos make a call to the “people”, all the citizens who make up the “lower” part of society and who oppose those that are “above”, the elite (Bayon, 2015, pp. 17-18), and in the case of Syriza, with a greater emphasis on the defence of the “Greek people” in the face of the elites of the European Union.

## **6. Populism, democracy, parties: conclusions**

Based on what has been argued here thus far, a sociological interpretation of populism cannot reduce the reach of this phenomenon to a form of “political strategy” (Weyland, 2001, pp. 13-14), focused on the ability of a leader to establish a direct report with an unorganised mass of citizens, and to mobilise them by leveraging his own charisma and the continuous appeal to opposition in the face of those who hold power. Furthermore, there is the need to distinguish between populism and other concepts, namely the personalisation of politics, the personalisation of top-level leadership, charismatic leadership, in the same way that populist

democracy, partyless democracy, is not comparable to leadership democracy. In this regard, if Weber (1999, p. 235) asserts that “in every leadership there exists a charismatic component”, we could say that in every contemporary leadership there exists a populist component. The need for caution is once again necessary in order to distinguish the dynamic of a direct appeal to the people by the candidates holding party, institutional, or top-level monocratic offices, and populism as a phenomenon that emerges within the perspective of a new cleavage politics. In particular, the effects of the process of advanced modernisation require an evaluation in reference to the transformation taking place in European political systems, with the redefinition of representative politics just as it was in the democracy of the parties of the 20th century. Once the capacity of (and in certain aspects the need for) mass political parties to act as intermediaries between citizens and institutions begins to fade, the party finds itself facing the paradox of a greater attribution of power “moving” from society to the State, and a lesser attribution of trust generated by the disappearance of the ideologies’ capacity for legitimisation. The short-circuit created entails the rise of a political fracture that goes with the previously identified social fracture, with the growing distance between citizens and traditional political actors, and with the consequent growth of an anti-political and anti-party sentiment. The strategies of the mainstream parties, the parties that operate in conditions of increasing cartelisation (maximum in terms of participation in governments of a grand coalition), focus on forms of internal democratisation, among which the primary elections as a tool for leadership selection can represent the formal attribution of highest power. However, the participatory-procedural solutions mend neither that which is either a distance (in terms of aggregation capacity of social interests and demands that emerge from a society in radical transformation) nor the political fracture that is created between citizens and political establishment. The mainstream parties, otherwise identifiable as parties of traditional political families, parties of the establishment, cartel party, instead defect to a significant resource for legitimisation, namely the capacity to get involved with an identity affiliation able to generate trust in the political class. In opposition to the latter an alternative plan of political conflict is thus progressively created, one that is activated as a result of anti-political-establishment parties and populist parties (Schedler, 1996; Mudde, 1996; Abedi, 2004; Barr, 2009).

Populism transforms the protest potential that otherwise would remain latent in the form of apathy and detachment from politics, and at the same time construct a “people” of reference, also in the form of an imagined

community, mobilising it in anti-elite gear. In this regard, one can trace back to populism the creation of two types of linkage, on one hand participatory linkage, i.e. the expansion of participation and the decision-making power of the people, on the other hand plebiscitary linkage, the identification and consensus given directly from people (Roberts, 2015, pp. 145-146). If a plebiscitary relationship can be attributed with more ease to a right-wing political formation, and a participatory and deliberative involvement can instead recall the left-wing perspective, the analysis of the parties that make an appeal to the people against the political elite presents instead a situation made up of mix-ups, paradoxes, and possible tensions deriving from the co-presence of two linkages.

In general, populism emerges in social and political contexts characterised by the crisis of the previous systems and by the difficult transition to a new configuration of the system. On its own it assumes the character of a spy on the very quality of the political and democratic processes. If populism then is the thermometer of a *malaise démocratique*, rarely can it be associated, at least in European democracies, to the solution to the crisis. At the same time one can give two types of functions to populism: the first is that of reducing a potentially destabilising sentiment (with regard to the system) to the inside of the democratic electoral context; the second is that of working as an exogenous force that obliges the principle political forces and institutions to change. The populist political formations can also become part of the government majority, and even to directly taking lead of it, as is the case with Syriza in Greece. In those cases, however, the risk is that the two cornerstones of the populist building may crack. Unlike the experiences of Latin American populism and the populism of post-communist countries, the direct participation in government has a negative impact on the capacity to call on the people against the elite, as well as on the capacity to include heterogeneous political interests and identities when called upon to decide in terms of policies. In conclusion, in the processes taking place in Western European societies, with the economic crisis, migration, multiple dynamics of globalisation, the trajectories of individualisation, and the difficult transition from mass democracies to advanced democracies, populism inserts itself fully into that “waltz” that distinguishes the relationship between social change and political change, which makes it a fertile field of research, rich with empirical and theoretical prospects, particularly in the areas of analysis of the processes of democratisation, as well as the role of leaders and parties as actors in advanced democracies.

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## PART I - B

### GLOBALIZATION AND NEW SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS: SOME CASE STUDIES





POPULISM, SOCIAL POLARIZATION AND HYBRID REGIMES:  
THE CASE OF VENEZUELA

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*1. Introduction - 2. What is a hybrid regime? - 3. Social polarization and political polarization before Chávez and after Chávez - 4. Evolution of populism and rule of law - 5. Conclusions*

**1. Introduction**

In the last few years populism has become one of the key themes of social sciences, but the majority of the sociological world, with a few considerable exceptions like Paul Taggart, Taguieff and Jansen, still doesn't seem to dedicate sufficient attention to it. If we look at Italian and foreign political sociology manuals, this lack is even more evident. In many cases you will not find a specific dissertation on the subject at all, and if by chance it is referred to, it is hardly likely to be presented in all of its complexity and fecundity of arguments. It almost seems to be a theoretical subject unworthy of attention and study on the part of sociology. But as I will attempt to explain in this book, populist phenomena and their relative scientific questions provide important theoretical and empirical elements for a reflection on the sociology of democratic processes and on the evolution of political consensus in contemporary political systems.

From this point of view political science and political philosophy have forged ahead, especially in Italy. Studies by Margaret Canovan, Cas

Mudde, Tarchi, Mastropasqua, Chiapponi and many other exponents that we will encounter in the course of this treatise have provided noteworthy contributions to the study of populist phenomena, often giving very interesting sociological input.

As has already been observed by various other sources (D'Eramo, 2013; Tarchi, 2015), books about populism have almost exponentially increased in the last few years. According to what may be gleaned from the Melvyl system of cataloguing of the University of California, in the early years of the twentieth century it was possible to count 11 publications on this subject, in the 50's 40, while in the 90's the number increases to 1336 and in the first decade of the new millennium the number rises as high as 1801. This data clearly tells us that we are facing an all out populism renaissance, which is involving a community of thousands of scholars throughout the world with different approaches, leanings, and points of view

The main reason is the real increase of this kind of political phenomena. We have been witnessing a progressive expansion of populist political forces on a worldwide scale for at least thirty years, which have profoundly changed the operation of the political system where they have become insinuated. These populist phenomena include situations very different from one another: the 5 Star Movement, the Venezuelan revolutionary Bolivarism of Chávez and the Bolivarian Cocalero Movement of Morales, the National Front of Le Pen, the Northern League and Forza Italia, just to name a few. Only a few years ago, many of these democracies seemed completely immune to these kinds of problems, but today they represent very significant case studies.

Along with an increase in terms of quantity, there has been an increase in terms of quality. A conspicuous sphere of the bibliography on populism is completely focused on its categorical definition. This diffusion has been characterized by a great variety of populist phenomena. To get an idea of all this, just consider the plethora of neologisms with the suffix of populism, such as web populism, neopopulism, or even media populism.

Many explanations are highly influenced by the prevalent theories of the historical period when they were formulated, but especially by the historical typology of populism being examined. Thus, formulating a general theory on populism is a challenge as fascinating as it is arduous. Certainly if we speak of a resumption of studies on populism, it is because in the last decades there has been a wide diffusion of the phenomenon on a planetary scale. A diffusion characterized by a great variety of populist phenomena. To have an idea, just consider the plethora of neologisms

with the suffix –populism, such as web populism, neopopulism, and media populism.

The relationship between populism and democracy, or more precisely between populism and new forms of democratic risk, makes for an interesting research development. Some clamorous examples, like Venezuela, Ukraine, and Turkey, demonstrate that populism can have a debilitating effect on democratic structures, contributing to a process of hybridization which leads to a dimension of soft authoritarianism.

In this essay I will particularly linger on the case of Chavez's Venezuela as an emblematic example of a democracy transformed into a hybrid regime largely because of a widespread and institutionalized populist power.

## **2. What is a hybrid regime?**

Hybrid regime is a new label for a problem which is in reality old for both political science and for political sociology. It is one of those definitions that were created to explain a form of regime which is no longer democratic but cannot be called completely authoritarian either. Different expressions were used in the past to define this kind of mixed forms of authoritarianism and democracy. Many authors, while keeping in mind Linz's lesson on the distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, have tried to indicate this kind of form of intermediary regime with various labels: democraduras, semi-democracies or pseudo democracies.

The great difference with respect to today is that up to the so-called third wave of the processes of democratization, these regimes concerned only a few countries which were, for the most part, at the margins of the so-called developed democracies, or however did not regard economically strong countries in their own area. After the end of the cold war and the end of the soviet bloc, we can observe a progressive increase of these cases in many parts of the ex Soviet Union and in countries similar to Venezuela, which in the sixties and seventies had represented stable democracies.

But, what are these hybrid regimes? Leonardo Morlino defined them in this manner: «Such a regime does not fulfill the minimalist requirements of a democracy, such as (a) universal suffrage, both male and female; (b) free, competitive, recurrent, and fair elections; (c) more than one party; and (d) different and alternative media sources. One important aspect of this definition is that in the absence of just one of

these requirements, or if at some point one of them is no longer met, there is no longer a democratic regime but another political and institutional setup marked by varying degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity” (Morlino, in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*). It indicates a form of soft authoritarianism, which may be the result of a democracy which has lost some fundamental requirements to keep the definition of full democracy, or else a non democracy that still lacks at least one of the fundamental requirements be defined as such.

### **3. Social polarization and political polarization before Chávez and after Chávez**

A fundamental study for understanding the advent of Chavism demonstrated how the social structure of the country had already changed profoundly in the twenty years prior to the year of 1999, year of the establishment of the first Chávez government. The two scholars, Ellner and Hellinger, pointed out how the social conditions of the Venezuelan population were dramatically worsening and were upsetting the social class structure between the last part of the eighties and the end of the nineties (Ellner S. & Hellinger D., 2004)

Ellner and Hellinger considered three orders of factors: the percentage of widespread poverty, the rising crime rate, and the modifications of the social classes.

The two researchers took into consideration the increase in housing for the poor in order to evaluate the country’s growing poverty. As we can see from the diagram, in the twenty years preceding the first Chávez government the country had undergone a drastic process of impoverishment that had accelerated exponentially at the beginning of the nineties. What had once been one of the richest countries of Latin America in the sixties and seventies was generating a wide segment of citizens with a lifestyle well below average. This impoverishment affected a sector of the population which came to form a massive socially marginalized and politically excluded sector.

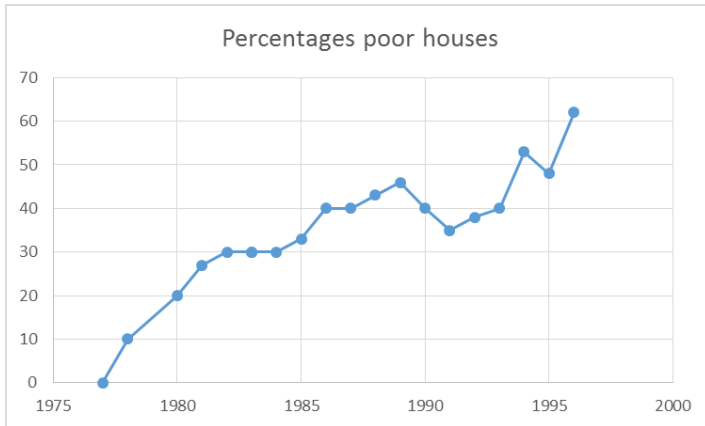


Fig. 1 – Percentages poor houses - *Source: Consultores 21, Estudios de temas municipales, Caracas 1997.*

If we consider an analogous study conducted by the Universidad Simón Bolívar of Caracas (fig.2) on poverty trends during the second half of the nineties up to the year 2014, an interesting evolution of the phenomenon emerges. The first years of the Chávez government see a decrease in poverty which remains stable for the duration of his life at around 8.000.000 poor people. Then almost immediately after his death poverty rates rise and double within the year. This diagram clearly shows how Venezuelan society is returning to the crisis levels of the pre Chávez era from the point of view of basic social conditions.

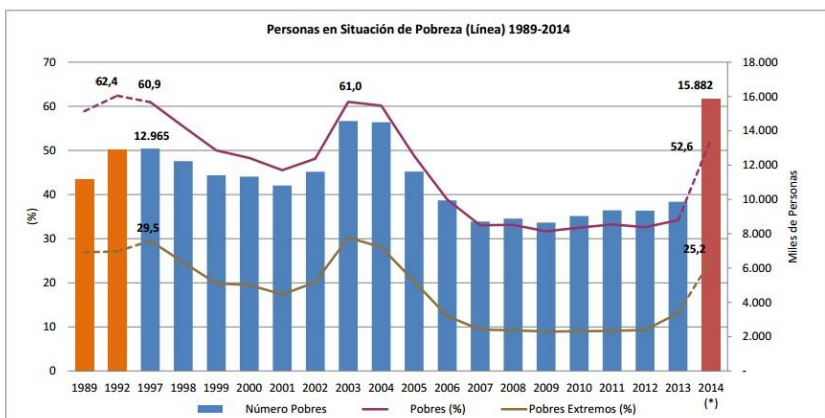


Fig. 2 – Personas en Situación de Pobreza - *Source: Universidad Simon Bolivar*

Another factor highlighted in Ellner and Hellinger's study is related to the growth of the crime rate in the twenty year period before the arrival of Chávez.

According to another diagram presented by these scholars, violent crimes committed in those years quadrupled, going from about 1500 in the eighties and reaching about 4500 in 1996.

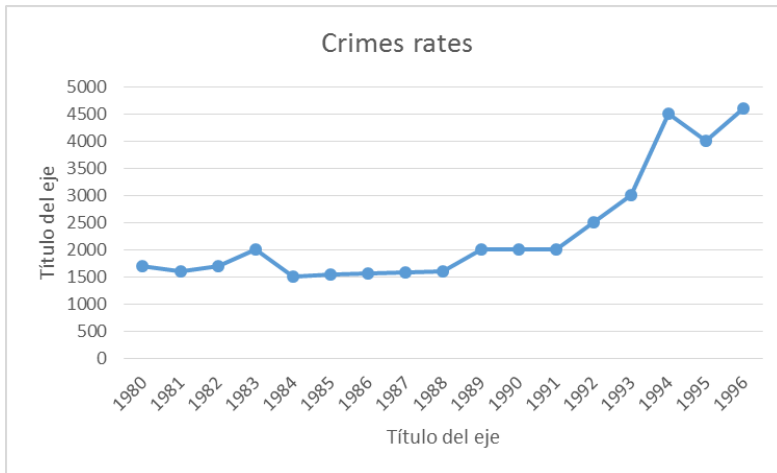


Fig. 3 – Crime rates 1980-1996 - Source: Consultores 21, Estudios de temas municipales, Caracas 1997

We note in this case as well another aspect of the dramatic decline of Venezuelan society at the end of Punto Fijo's system. Nevertheless, if we look at the most recent data of the latest research on the same theme a situation just as dramatic comes to light.

Statistical analysis by the Venezuela Observatory has shown in reality that the levels of homicide and violent crime actually rose instead in the final years of Chávez's administration and the first year of Maduro's, reaching about 25000 deaths per year. This is a situation of enormous social danger, which places Venezuela among the most dangerous countries in the world and gives the measure of a context in which impunity and an objective difficulty on the part of the judiciary system to carry out its fundamental duties prevail.

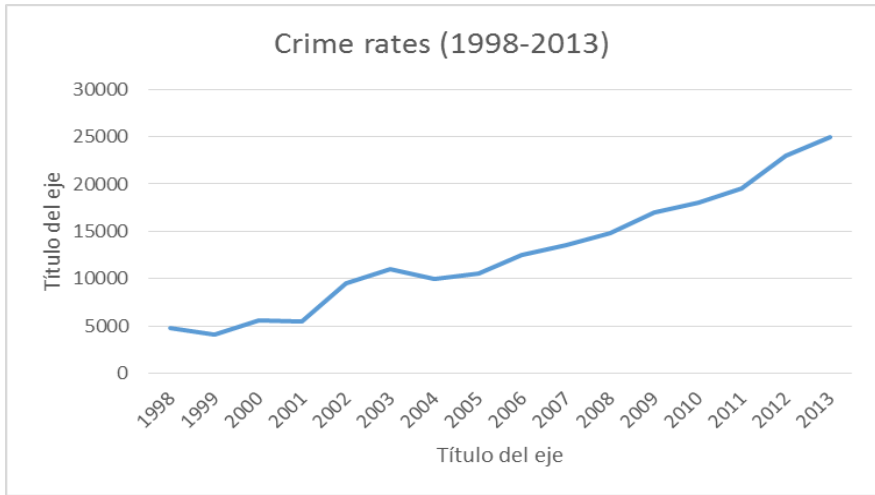


Fig. 4 - Crime rates 1998-2013 - Source: *Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia*

In Ellner and Hellinger’s line of thinking, social polarization is the final dimension to consider in order to grasp the profound transformation of Venezuelan society before Chávez. With this term we mean the shrinkage of the middle class and an intensification of the disparities between the upper class and the working class.

If you look at the graphs (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6), you will perceive how the advent of Chávez was preceded by a drastic process of social polarization.

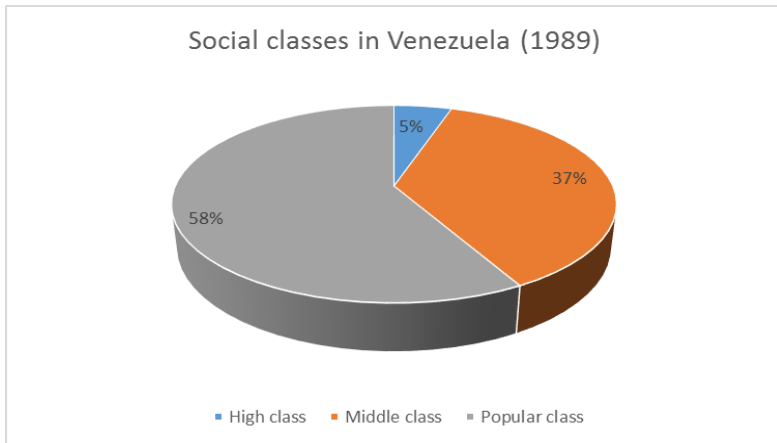


Fig.5 - Division of social classes in percentages in Venezuela in 1989 - Source: Consultores 21, Estudios de temas municipales, Caracas 1999.

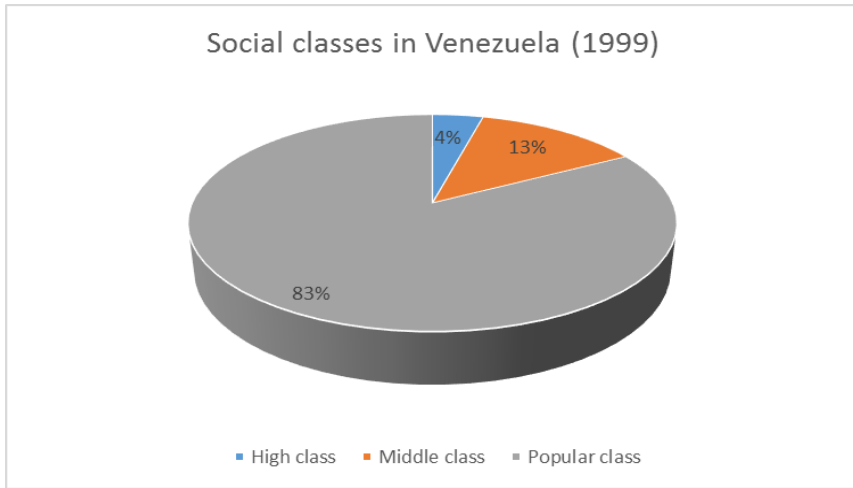


Fig. 6. Division of social classes in percentages 1999 - Source: Consultores 21, Estudios de temas municipales, Caracas 1999.

At the moment no works exist about social polarization during Maduro's period, however this data can be read if it is placed in relationship to the political evolution of Chavism and the current situation of the country's political blockage.

To be clearer: the near disappearance of the middle class and the social exacerbation between a massive working class and a tiny upper class allowed the advent of a populist movement like Chávez's. Indeed, it is recognized that the Bolivarian movement (Anselmi M., 2013), like many populist movements of the South American left turn, allowed the political inclusion of the more disadvantaged social sectors, which had been excluded from the electoral process in the preceding system. Chávez had effectively brought the poor to the polls and they obviously voted for him.

Social polarization has been to all intents and purposes one of the fundamental social conditions for the advent of a populist power like the Chavist movement. The interesting thing in this context is the evolution of social polarization within political polarization during the arc of Bolivarian power, first with Chávez and later with Maduro. Chavist political discourse (Reyes, 2013) was built upon and nourished by underlining the social polarization between a poor majority which he represented politically, acting as their voice, and an elite wealthy minority representing the rich.



The outcomes of the numerous administrative and public elections from 1999 to 2013 demonstrate that Chavism achieved dominance, transforming social polarization into political polarization. Two electoral and political blocks of almost equal strength were created under Chávez and he was able to guarantee a majority only thanks to his charismatic leadership. The national election of April 2013 which decided Maduro's presidency was emblematic. The socialist government, left an orphan by the loss of Chávez, won by only 50,66% against 49,7 % which went to the opposition coalition of Capriles. This result illustrates the great dependency of the public consensus apparatus on the leader figure. For all that he was designated by Chávez himself as his best successor, Maduro does not find the same level of support. One might say that, from a structural point of view, the social polarization which characterized Venezuela before the appearance of Chávez, after his death and with the rise of Maduro has remained constant but a phenomenon of political polarization has been added which is a critical factor and a block to the political system. If, on the one hand Chavism deserves the merit for promoting social and political inclusion, on the other hand it has created a political system which is greatly dependent on the cult of personality of its founder. This dependency has caused a problem of blocked democracy upon the leader's death.

The lack of this charismatic element is one of the major critical points of Maduro's government and even represents a new phase for the political life of the country, marked by the completion of political polarization. Half of the country is aligned with the government and half is aligned against it. Chávez's charismatic figure was able to overcome this stalemate on the level of representative balance and maintain the country's governability, but today we have a deadlock situation blocking the government's activity and inducing the opposition into constant protests in the attempt to delegitimize Maduro.

#### **4. Evolution of populism and rule of law**

The complete transformation of social polarization into political polarization is one of the structural elements and thus a critical factor of the orphan Bolivarian populism. When I use the expression "orphan populism" I mean a populist system where the figure of the charismatic and founding leader has ceased to exist. This kind of transformation concerns the profound relationship between a populist power and the social dimension, between populist power and the consensus base.

Another important aspect of the evolution of the Venezuelan political system is also the relationship between political power and the country's institutional dimension. An evaluation of the passage from Chávez to Maduro and of the current Venezuelan political system cannot disregard the implications of the populist methods on democratic operation and on the *Rule of law* (Maravall J.M. & Przeworski A., 2003).

Bolivarian populism has profoundly changed the institutional machinery of the Venezuelan system of government. The alteration of democratic operation and of the state of law on the part of Bolivarian leadership from the first Chávez government to the current Maduro government has increased to the point that some analysts speak of a regime that is not fully democratic, but rather is a case of soft authoritarianism. That is to say, a political system with many serious issues within its democratic structure.

Venezuela has altered its normal condition of *Rule of law* to the point of being defined a hybrid regime, and as Levitsky and Way explain, hybrid regimes combine “democratic rules with authoritarian governance” (Levitsky S. and Way L., 51).

With the passage to Maduro's government we have a political power that first experienced a strong populist distortion and direct conditioning on the part of a charismatic leader and then, in this deformed and populist centralized system, the centralizing power was suddenly substituted by a weak, contested, and externally controlled leadership. The theme of the alteration of the Rule of Law in Venezuela is thus the theme of its political hybridization. It is a good idea to discuss some analytical elements to get an idea of this issue: the centrifugal nature of the new power, the spread of penal populism and the resistance to change.

The first point is the condition of centrifugal forces which Chavism fell into as a movement and as a de facto power after Chávez's death. This expression was used opportunely by Corrales (Corrales, 2013), who underlined that after Chávez's death not only was the capacity of the Chavist movement diminished to produce consensus in society, but there was also a diminishment of control within the movement and within the highest spheres of government to follow the same line. Rather, an adversarial aspect was launched in which different factions of Chavism each follow a different line and go in different directions and propose separate strategies from one another, although about general choices as electoral strategies, economic policy and foreign policy they agree. This kind of balkanization of Chavist power began immediately after the presidential elections of 2013 and still continues today. All you have to do in Venezuela is turn on the television to note that Chavism no longer has

one person at the helm, but many figures that often have different opinions and often express divergent and even contrasting lines in different regions and in different sectors of the state. According to Corrales, the centripetal nature of the opposition contrasts with this centrifugal attitude. In my opinion this is not entirely exact. The ever more centrifugal configuration of the new Chavist power actually creates expectations of immediate change in the opposition that then finds expression in street protests; but, as the facts demonstrate, still not under a united and organized leadership. Hence, the government's external control is seen as a pretext to initiate a public action to delegitimize the government. This short circuit is actually very dangerous because it constitutes a radicalization factor of the political conflict. On the one side, expectations of overturning the force of legitimate power are generated in the opposition camp; while on the other side, the ferment created by the protests induces a repressive behavior ever more justified by the logic of exceptional circumstances.

Another fundamental element of political hybridization is the spread of penal populism, with Chávez, Venezuela became one of the most evident cases of Penal Populism on a global level. As John Pratt defined it, *Penal Populism* is the conditioning of a country's judicial system on the part of a political power (Pratt, 2006). In Venezuela's case, the centralized Chavist populist power intervened on several occasions or pressured the judicial system, undermining its independence. The penal code reform of 2005, for example, is an evident demonstration of this. In this reform measures against disrespectful acts towards the government were reinforced and the use of public spaces for protests was greatly limited. Even more significant is the fact that the high positions of the Supreme Court of justice have always been assigned to men near the Chávez movement. All of this gives the measure of a Rule of Law which has been highly conditioned by political power.

After having presented these first two critical elements it would almost seem obvious to reach the conclusion that the period of Maduro's government represents a critical phase and hence of short duration. After a reflection on the passage from Chávez to Maduro, it is natural to wonder how long this kind of situation can last. Contrary to what you might think, the problem of calculating the duration of the Chavist system is much more complex and in many respects seems to resolve itself in a scenario which is far from negative for the Bolivarians.

The fact that the government stays in place despite the reduction of consensus and growing protests indicates that the interpretation of its duration may be tied to its entrenchment in the territory according to a

strategy of territorial control by *Colectivos* and other forms of political organization activist. Two factors explain the resilience of Maduro's government to all these critical factors, which include the economic crisis, growing violence, and social decline.

First of all, the near proximity of political power to the military apparatus. The praetorian element confers strength and resilience that other forms of political power don't have. In order to have it, other governments would have to make recourse to paramilitary or guerrilla formations. Military support confers the Bolivarian power with a special anchor to the territory and permits a system of control of the state bureaucracy both in terms of governance conditioning and in terms of clientele, since soldiers have often been used by the government for extra-military assignments such as social missions.

A second element is the theme of the durability of a revolutionary political system. Although it came to power with democratic elections, and even though the revolutionarism of the Chavist movement has always been more rhetorical than real, it is not possible to neglect this important feature of its political style. It is in fact true, that differently from Cuba, for example, Venezuela has expressed its own revolutionary objective in a constituent form, radically modifying the system of the Venezuelan state according to the objectives of Chávez's populist power. If this has avoided the use of force or the recourse to violence, it has, however, obtained similar results on the level of state and social changes, however much in minor form.

Two political scientists, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, analyzed the problem of the durability of revolutionary regimes, taking into consideration the political regimes of the last few centuries. As they underlined, without a doubt, revolutionary regimes characteristically last longer than other political regimes. According to these two scholars, the reasons for this peculiarity depend on four orders of factors:

- 1) the destruction of Independent Power Centers
- 2) Strong ruling party;
- 3) Invulnerability to Coups;
- 4) Enhanced coercive Capacity.

Each of these factors can be adapted to the Venezuelan case.

First of all, the destruction of independent forms of power is clear in the long process of reconvertng every form of institutional power in a Chavist key. On the juridical level, the Bolivarian constitutional reform was the first act that set this dynamic in motion. The numerous actions of Bolivarian welfare, such as the social missions, have de facto taken the place of the social presence of the state. Meanwhile, from an

administrative and bureaucratic point of view, the socialist party is notorious for facilitating the appointment to state jobs to those close to them.

The strength of the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela is demonstrated by the last two years of Maduro's government. In spite of the centrifugal forces and the differences among the internal factions, his government still remains firmly in place. The role of the military and militant organizations, such as the *Colectivos*, which often have an almost military presence in the area, help to keep this party's position strong, stronger in fact than any other party of a western liberal democracy.

As for invulnerability against coups d'état, the case of the coup of the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2002, attempted by some sectors of the opposition and failed because of Chávez's return after three days, is emblematic. From that moment on, anti-coup measures on the part of Chavist governments have enormously intensified, and they also receive strategic and analytical support from Cuba and other allied countries.

Examining enhanced coercive capacity, the Chavist system has established itself throughout all the country, following a model of dominance advocated by Gramsci; and has developed a very strong conditioning strategy, beginning with the media and reaching significant presence in the institutions.

## 5. Conclusions

In this essay, I wanted to examine some structural aspects of the passage of the Bolivarian political system with Chávez to the post Chávez one governed by Maduro. I have particularly dwelt on two aspects: social dynamics (the evolution of social polarization and political polarization) and the transformation of the Rule of Law.

We may therefore conclude that when Chávez came to power, Venezuela was socially polarized, and this very polarization helped form and consolidate the Chavist populist power. This social polarization remains with Maduro, but now it is the basis of a political polarization that is expressed in parliamentary representation and in the ideological polarization of Venezuelan public opinion.

If we instead consider the impact of the country's institutional system, it is interesting to reflect upon the alteration of the Rule of Law and the progressive political hybridization of the country to the point of it having been defined a Hybrid Regime.

The critical scenario could make us think of a system on the brink of crisis, and yet another less evident aspect must be taken into consideration: the durability of a revolutionary government, though nonviolent. Its territorial entrenchment, the organizational capacities of Chavism and its hegemonic dimension make up a strong element of resistance to the critical situation, making the entire situation more complex

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## ANATOMY OF THE RUSSIAN CONSERVATIVE TURN

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*1. Introduction - 2. Political conservatism - 3. Anti-Americanism as an element of the conservative turn - 4. The Russian Orthodox church (ROC) as a conservative force - 5. Islamization as an alternative globalization - 6. Moral conservatism - 7. Conclusions*

### **1. Introduction**

Two opposite tendencies, penetrating all levels of social life - from geopolitics to everyday life, - go throughout the history of Russia. On the one hand, it is the catch-up development based on widespread borrowing of foreign experience (mostly Western) and, on the other hand, it is the strategy of the original (traditional) national path intersecting with the isolation. These tendencies have also been linked with dilemma: democracy vs autocracy, open national market vs protectionism, the primacy of human rights vs the cult of the state, cultural homogeneity vs pluralism, bordering with relativism, ethics of service vs individualism and hedonism, coping of Western forms of consumerism vs the preservation of traditional patterns, the quality of goods and services neutral to places of production vs consumer patriotism, liberal vs fundamentalist religiosity.

Impasses of the Soviet isolationist path in the late 1980s - early 1990s has created the fertile soil for the turn of the Russian society to the globalization and liberalism in different forms. The crisis of this project in 1990s paved the way for today's conservative turn in Russian society in

the direction of the original path, which implies the historical reconstruction of the elements borrowing from the past of the the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This turn is stimulated by the geopolitical conflict between Russia and NATO as well as by economic crisis that began in 2014.

Conservatism is a universal phenomena. However, each country has a particular, often unique past. It means that conservatism is a mixture of universal and unique national and religious elements. The aim of this article is to show main forms of the conservative turn and its logic.

## **2. Political conservatism**

Conservators see the political future of Russia through the experience of past epoch. One part of them look back on the Russian Empire, the second one search inspiration in the Soviet history. «The term “conservatism” has various meanings, depending on a country’s political culture, since this culture determines what it seeks to conserve. In the United States, for instance, it means less government, whereas in Russia it means more government» (Pipes 2006).

Liberals see perspectives of political system on the path of the modern Western democracy. They had «caught the wave» in the beginning of the 1990s. «Rejecting the Soviet past at first seemed acceptable to many Russians in 1990 and 1991, in part because of the widespread - almost euphoric - expectation that the collapse of the Soviet Union would enable Russia to quickly join the ranks of the prosperous and democratic powers» (Sherlock 2011: 101). The harsh reality of neoliberal reforms overturned this expectations and hopes and paved the way for political conservatism.

Political conservatism in modern Russia is of two main types: «white» (oriented to the time of the Russian empire) and «red» (oriented to the Soviet Union). Both types have at their basis an idea of order.

White conservatism is relatively weak but visible. Every tenth Russian is in favor of monarchy when choosing between monarchy and republic (11%). The share of those supporting the autocracy is twice more in metropolitan areas (19%). The share of those who do not oppose monarchy is 28%. Most of them represent the LDPR electorate (36%). However the republican form of government is supported by the overwhelming majority of the polled persons (82%). Two-thirds of Russians oppose monarchy (67%). Those who are loyal towards autocracy cannot name a person who could be the Russian monarch today. When asked to name a person who could be the Russian monarch, most of



Russians proposed to find him amongst public figures and politicians (13%), rather than amongst descendents of the Romanov Dynasty (6%). Seventy percent of Russians believe it is impossible and wrong to restore the Russian monarchy today (VCIOM, March 19, 2013).

Red conservatism has its reference in the past Soviet time. The crises of 1990s stimulated disillusion of population in liberal path. «In this context, the Soviet past was increasingly reassessed in positive terms, either as a re-legitimated model for social and political development or as an historical frame with the capacity to stimulate pride and reinforce individual and group identity, particularly in memories of the extraordinary Soviet sacrifice and victory in World War II» (Sherlock 2011: 102).

A majority of Russians in 2014 (55 percent) thought “it is a great misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists.” (58% in 2009, 50% in 2011) (Pew Research Center, May 8, 2014).

Putin himself in 2005 had called the Soviet demise “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century.” Yet, it should be recalled that popular regret for the Soviet collapse was already commonplace when Putin took office (Sherlock 2011: 100-101). However Putin’s attitude to the Soviet past is ambivalent: “those who do not regret the collapse of the Soviet Union have no heart,” but those who want it to be restored “have no brain.” (Putin 2010). Red conservatism takes different forms. One of them is so called «Soviet nostalgia» which is visible in different spheres of public and private life (see Kalinina 2014).

The Communist party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) being the second largest party of the country is the main political force representing this ideology of red conservatism. This party looks in the mirror of the Soviet past trying to find there Russia’s future. The party's stated goal is to establish a new, modernised form of socialism in Russia. This political program has a stable support from the essential part of population. The party got 12,4% of votes in parliament election in 1993, 22,30% in 1995, 24,29% in 1999, 19,2% in 2011 (Statistika, vybory).

The most radical part of the red conservatives more or less sympathize with stalinism. They are a rather visible minority. More and more Russians consider the role of Stalin in the national history as rather positive (from 15% in 2005 to 26% in 2010). A relative majority of respondents still believe his role is ambiguous (39%). 41% of the Communist Party supporters think that Stalin did more good than bad. Stalinists are not so visible among members of the ruling United Russia (VCIOM, Apr. 27, 2010).

In your opinion, what are the attitudes of the American government towards Russia: friendly, not friendly enough, hostile? ** (closed-ended question, one answer, %) –VCIOM, Aug. 31, 2015		
	1990	2015
<i>Friendly</i>	35	3
<i>Not friendly enough</i>	40	32
<i>Hostile</i>	2	59
<i>I do not exactly</i>	23	6

In the same time Putin tries to distance himself from Stalinism, condemning Stalin’s “mass crimes,” arguing that it is both “unacceptable” and “impossible” to achieve economic development through repressions. In 2009, the Russian government made Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago a required reading in Russia’s high schools. It was an important step in the politics of memory.

Much more popular is post-Stalinist time, especially 1960-70s. It was a period without mass repression and without totalitarian regulation of everyday life, when the years of hunger suffering had gone past.

One of the many aspects that both white and red conservatism share is post-empire nostalgia. The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a redrawing of political maps and most of the Russians population believe that parts of their country were unfairly lost in the process. 61% agree with the statement “There are parts of neighboring countries that really belong to us.” Only 28% disagree. Views on this question have remained more or less consistent since 2002. However, results were quite different in the early 1990s. For instance, in a fall 1992 poll, conducted by the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press, just 36% agreed that parts of neighboring countries belonged to Russia while 26% disagreed. Nearly four-in-ten (37%) offered no opinion (Pew Research Center, May 8, 2014).

### 3. Conservative turn in geopolitics

The conservative turn in the geopolitics means the reconstruction of Russia as an independent actor of the global politics as Russian empire and the Soviet Union used to be. Emperor Alexander III (1881 - 1894) believed that Russia had only two allies – her army and navy – and that the other European nations were not interested in a strong and powerful Russia. These words became a modern slogan of Kremlin's geopolitics in 21st century. This slogan is often repeated by many journalists and politicians too.

This turn has been shaped by both external and internal factors. After the end of the Cold war the Russian Federation has been treated by the U.S. and NATO as a defeated state with dangerous potential. This view didn't coincided with the perception of the situation held by the majority of the political elite and of the population. For them the end of the Cold war was a result of internal struggle for the freedom and efficient economic system. The idea of the American victory over the USSR sounded strange and even humiliating both for the political elite and population. Putin in his speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy (Feb. 10, 2007) declared: «We should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia – a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all the members of the big European family». It was an alternative narrative of the Cold war.

All attempts of Russian neoliberal governments in 1990s to enter Western world led only to the politics of the taming of the Russian Federation by means of NATO extension. According to Dmitri Trenin, Russia had aspirations to join the West throughout the 1990s and then during Putin's first years as president: «These efforts failed, both because the West lacked the will to adopt Russia as one of its own and because Russian elites chose to embrace a corporatist and conservative policy agenda at home and abroad». Russia then returned to its «default option of behaving as an independent great power» (Trenin 2009). «Western partners» (common expression from the Kremlin's diplomatic vocabulary) didn't trust Russia, didn't believe that it became a radically new country. Soon the Russian political elite and the rather wide part of population stopped to trust NATO. Both sides had their own reasons for such distrust. A typical case of self-fulfilling prophecy. It was easily predictable that politics of the taming Russia through NATO extension could lead only to the reconstruction of traditional Russian geopolitics and to the rise of

nationalism. This extension of military block to Russian boundaries shaped the siege mentality of the Russian political elite. The conservative turn in the Kremlin's geopolitics began visible after the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. This event has changed the attitudes of the essential part of the Russian political elite and population towards «Western partners». The conclusion that Russia can't trust NATO and that only strong army could be a guarantee of the national security began to acquire popularity. This process was also rooted in the revival of traditional Russian mentality.

Putin's speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy (Feb. 10, 2007) became a program of the conservative turn in the Russian geopolitics. He «avoided excessive politeness» and refused «to speak in roundabout, pleasant but empty diplomatic terms». His key thesis was that «the unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place». Putin argued that, «the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world». «However, today we are witnessing the opposite tendency, namely a situation in which countries that forbid the death penalty even for murderers and other, dangerous criminals are participating in military operations that are difficult to consider legitimate. And as a matter of fact, these conflicts are killing people – hundreds and thousands of civilians!» Putin accused NATO of the provocative politics aimed at Russia: «I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today?».

The declaration of the right of Russia to conduct independent politics based on priority of its national interests became a logical conclusion from this diagnosis: «Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today». It was an obvious conservative turn to the Cold war rhetoric.

The declaration of the return to the independent foreign politics based on principles of own national security was followed by preventive decisive acts against NATO expansion in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014 - 2015). Putin in his U.N. General Assembly speech (Sept. 28, 2015) stated: «It's not about Russia's ambitions, dear colleagues, but about the recognition of the fact that we can no longer tolerate the current state of affairs in the world». Soon after this speech the Kremlin ignored NATO's refusal to cooperate with Russia in Middle East has started there

an independent military operation. It became the first case of the Russian military activity beyond the territory of the former Soviet Union since the collapse of the USSR.

The Kremlin's politics is more or less supported by the essential part of population. The majority agrees with the Kremlin that the country is surrounded by unfriendly states and faces the danger of aggression. 64% of respondents supported active action of Russian government in Syria, and only 29% have opposite point of view (VCIOM. 9.10.2015).

The standoff with the U.S. also gives everyday Russians a sense that their country is reestablishing the greatness of the Soviet Union. The survey showed that modern Russians are more confident about their nation's military power today than in the end of the Soviet history, when the country was recognized as a global superpower. Thirty-two percent of respondents to the poll in 2015 said Russia's military force was the strongest in the world, compared to only 5 percent in 1990. Another 49 percent said that the Russian armed forces were among the planet's most powerful, compared to 21 percent in 1990. In 1990, almost half of Russians said the Soviet armed forces either lagged behind the rest of the world or were flat-out weak (VCIOM. 15.10.2015).

This geopolitical turn of Russia is articulated in terms of neoeurasian ideology. According to Alexandr Dugin, one of main ideologist of Neo-Eurasianism, «It is planet-scale strategy that admits objectivity of globalization and termination of «national states» (Etats-Nations), but at the same time offers different scenario of globalization. No unipolar world and united global government, but several global zones (poles). This is alternative or multipolar edition of globalization» (Dugin 2010). Now it is a rather visible intellectual movement which tries to acquire political influence (see more: Dugin 2012). These ideas are often consonant with political declarations of the Kremlin.

#### **4. Anti-Americanism as an element of the conservative turn**

Anti-Americanism is a phenomenon of a global scale, so such sentiments in Russia are not something special. And it is no coincidence that the issue of anti-Americanism in its various forms, is the subject of lots of fundamental research. The interest in this subject was intensified particularly after September 11, 2001, when many observers saw a single

terrorist act as a manifestation of the tense relations of America with the world (Berman 2004; Chandler 2008; Farber 2007; Holsti 2008; Lacorne & Judt 2005; McPherson 2003; Krastev 2007; Kull 2011; Katzenstein & Keohane 2006; Markovits 2007; Rubin & Rubin 2004; Sardar & Davis 2002). There are seven of the more popular theories about foreign disenchantment with the U.S.A. — the end of the Cold War, globalization, America's virtues and values, irrationality, strategic scapegoating, ignorance, and U.S. policies (Holsti 2008: 173).

They are all in varying degrees applicable to the explanation of anti-Americanism in Russia too. However, in each country a critical view on the U.S.A. has its specific roots. Anti-Americanism of Russian public opinion in significant part derives from a long historical tradition.

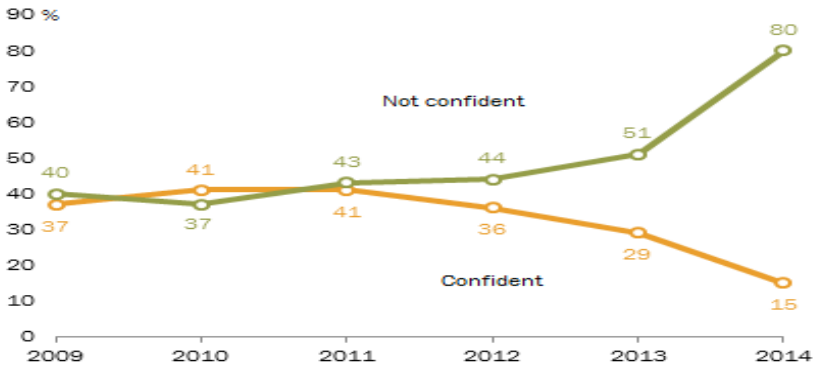
First, the essential part of the population shares an imperial mentality. Russia for several centuries played the role of a great power which has never been, except in the 1990s, anyone's dependent ally. The rise of national consciousness, which is partly painted in the colors of anti-Americanism, was a response to what many Russians thought to be a humiliating situation for post-Soviet Russia after the Cold war. In this sense, the strengthening of anti-American sentiment of the population became one of the important aspects of the conservative turn.

Secondly, the country has been lived for centuries in relative isolation from the outside world. A sharp turn to the globalization that took mostly the form of Americanization, has led to negative affects in many countries.

This process in Russia was manifested especially sharply and mixed with the background of historical memory about the past when the country had self-sufficient economy, and original culture. America has become for many Russians the epitome of the troubles of globalization. In addition, Russia has retained the traditions of Soviet anti-American propaganda, which are rapidly updated in the context of deteriorating relations with the West. This propaganda (vehicle especially by television) is a powerful factor in the reproduction of anti-American sentiment (Volkov 2015). This factor was absent in countries whose leadership follows the lead of allied relations with the United States or that have left the Soviet block.

### Negative Ratings for Obama in Russia

*% who are ... in President Barack Obama to do the right thing regarding world affairs*



Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey, Q41a.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Now Russian opinions of the U.S. are at their lowest point since Pew Research began polling in Russia 13 years ago. It is a result of conflicts around Ukraine. Only 23% give the U.S. a favorable rating in 2014, down sharply from 51% in 2013. Previously, the lowest favorability rating for the U.S. was 37%, registered in 2003, shortly after the start of the Iraq war, when ratings for the U.S. were at a nadir in many countries (Pew Research Center, May 8, 2014).

## 5. The Russian Orthodox church (ROC) as a conservative force

A significant marker of the specific way the Soviet Union was active and pervasive in creating an atheistic society that strongly contrasted with loyal or neutral attitudes towards religion in the Western States. Religious life was preserved, being driven deep into the niche of private life. Religious institutions continued to exist, but under the strict state control and occupied a purely marginal position.

In the late 1980s, the policy of state atheism began to relent, taking the ultimately form of religious tolerance. In the 1990s a new state openly disassociated itself from atheism, taking a benevolent attitude toward religion. The liberal globalist trend in policy was manifested in a loyal politics to all religious sects. On the one hand, the state provided support, including financial all traditional Russian confessions (the largest was the

Russian Orthodox Church - ROC). It was a policy of moderate conservatism, shared by a part of the then ruling elite. On the other hand, a quite tolerant attitude was shown to the missionary activities of foreigners. Among them, the most prominent place was occupied by American Protestants, less ambitious was the activity of the German and Korean protestant churches. Together with the preachers went to Russia foreign investments in the formation of religious infrastructure (construction of churches, organization of educational institutions).

Since the late 1990s, the change in state religious policy took form of the shift from globalism and tolerance without limits to preferences for «traditional confessions». It was facilitated by a number of factors. The Russian Orthodox Church was concerned that a significant portion of the spiritually active population, inclined to the religious quest, is seeking God not in the walls of Orthodox churches. At the same time gradual cooling of interstate relations with the United States was the cause of the growth of the suspicious relation of state bodies and officials to the activities of foreign missionaries. Some religious movements were included in the category of dangerous sects and prohibited. The Russian Orthodox church made serious steps in its attempts to influence different spheres of society's life. «Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» was adopted by the church in 2000. For the first time, since the Byzantine Empire, the church proposed such guidance to the faithful and to the world. Since 2009 the Russian Orthodox Church is headed by the new Patriarch Kirill and has gradually increased its efforts to expand the influence of the Church on a variety of non-religious spheres of society. The position of the ROC began loudly to sound when discussing a variety of issues: education, morality, and medicine, healthy lifestyle, history, foreign policy, etc. The ROC as a conservative institution is not a unique Russian phenomenon (see for example Anderson 2014) but have essential unique features.

The ROC is a conservative institution by definition. It searches ways of legitimizing modern life mainly in ancient sacred texts borrowing from them patterns of behavior in different spheres. Some of them are in dramatical contradiction with liberal trends of social and cultural transformation. The concept of human rights is in the centre of these contradictions. «In the contemporary systematic understanding of civil human rights, man is treated not as the image of God, but as a self-sufficient and self-sufficing subject. Outside God, however, there is only the fallen man, who is rather far from being the ideal of perfection aspired to by Christians...», - states the «Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church».



It is a foundation for many particular disagreements, especially in the field of morality. The ROC's position is in open contradiction with the concept of gender as a social construct. «The sexual distinctions are not limited to the difference in constitution. Man and woman are two different modes of existence in one humanity. <...> In the fallen world, relationships between the sexes can be perverted, ceasing to be an expression of God-given love and degenerating into the sinful passion of the fallen man for his ego» (Bases 2000). This position leads to legitimization of the patriarchic vision of the woman's role in society predominantly as wife and mother. «While appreciating the social role of women and welcoming their political, cultural and social equality with men, the Church opposes the tendency to diminish the role of woman as wife and mother. The fundamental equality of the sexes does not annihilate the natural distinction between them, nor does it imply the identity of their callings in family and society» (Bases, X. 2, 2000). The orthodox vision of family structure is still rooted in the Old Testament: «Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church...».

One of the most sensitive point of disagreement and conflicts with the liberals is homosexuality which is treated by the ROC in frame of Bible's logic: «Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Church unequivocally deplore homosexual relations, seeing in them a vicious distortion of the God-created human nature» (Bases, XII. 9. 2000). The ROC treats homosexuality as an illness: «While treating people with homosexual inclinations with pastoral responsibility, the Church is resolutely against the attempts to present this sinful tendency as a «norm» and even something to be proud of and emulate. This is why the Church denounces any propaganda of homosexuality» (Bases, XII. 9. 2000). Such position of the church supply the religious part of the homophobic with fundamental arguments.

In its positions on marriage, family, abortion, sex (including homosexuality), and education, the ROC is not original and shares, with some exceptions, Roman Catholic positions (West 2002).

However, the ROC being the influential institute doesn't represent the whole Russian society. It is very difficult to evaluate the share of population following the ROC position. Even when their attitudes are similar, arguments could be different.

Formally speaking, Orthodoxy is the most common religion in Russia. 74% call themselves Orthodox believers, while 7% say they are Muslims. Less than 1% profess other religions (Catholics, Protestants, Jews and

others), according to the *Levada-Center* poll (*Interfax* 2012). However, belonging to Orthodoxy is a part of modern Russian ethnic identity (Richter 2014: 63) and has a very weak correlation with faith and authority of the church.

Church membership is expressed through the performance of rituals. 76% of Russians who describe themselves as Orthodox believers are church-goers. 33% of them go to church to light a candle and pray; 29% attend baptisms, church weddings or burial services, and 11% attend church services or liturgies. 29% go to church whenever they wish, 8% have been to a cathedral on an excursion, and 7% go to church to make a confession and take communion. 61% of the respondents said they had never opened the Bible. Of those who did, 24% read the Gospel, 16% read the Old Testament and 11% read the New Testament (*Interfax* 2012).

The leadership of the ROC tries to keep up the moderate conservative line, however there are influential groups among clergy which belong to the radical and fundamentalist wing. In addition, in the ranks of the faithful appeared category of so-called “Orthodox activists”, which is not only in word but in deed began to fight manifestations of sinfulness in Russian society, and then engaging in open conflict with the liberal public, occupying active anticlericalism position. In addition, this public was crystallized and the radical wing (“liberal activists”) began to organize protests, directly aimed at provoking a conflict with the conservative and especially the radical part of Orthodox believers. The most striking event of this kind was “punk prayer” group “Pussy Riot” in the main Orthodox temple of the country (2012). In the conflict between liberal and Orthodox activists, the state clearly sided with the latter. The punks have got stiff sentences (two years of colony). Less loud conflicts between provocative works of liberal artists and the “Orthodox activists” began to emerge systematically.

## **6. Islamization as an alternative globalization**

Globalization as Westernization of the world faces the alternative project of Islamization as conservative globalization. This process takes two conflicting forms both in Russia and in many other countries. 1) It is an historical reconstruction of Sufism, a traditional form of Islam based on local ethno-cultural customs, so-called “popular” Islam. 2) It is a process of historical reconstruction of early Islam of Saudi Arabia (the Salafi movement or Wahhabisma or fundamentalist interpretation of Sunni Islam sometimes called “Arab”) (see more: Choueiri 1990; 1998).

Both forms represent a conservative alternative to westernization as globalization. The frequently used category of “revival of Islam” is unfortunate, because it distorts the essence of the processes. In reality, there is a historical reconstruction as a pure modern process of symbolic play with ancient symbols and meanings. This process has a double meaning. On the one hand, it is a barrier to globalization as Westernization. And in this sense, the Islamization in this form coincides with a conservative and anti-Western turn in Russian society as a whole. And state support of traditional Islam fits to the logic of such a strategy. On the other hand, is in one way or another turn “towards Mecca”, i.e. in the direction of the foreign Islamic world. At the same time, the revival of traditional Islam encourages ethnic conservatism, because the ethnic traditions of the Muslim peoples are inextricably linked to religion.

Traditional islamization is a form of the conservative turn with the support of the state. The Social Doctrine of Russian Muslims was presented in 2015. It is based on the Quran and every single recommendation regarding various aspects of Muslims’ life in a secular society relies on its text. The social doctrine encompasses practically all possible spheres of life: morality, healthy lifestyle, family, children and citizenship. Sometimes islamization of society takes radical forms. For example, the head of the Czech Republic Ramzan Kadyrov as matter of fact has enforced Sufism as a regional state religion. Chechnya now boasts Europe’s largest mosque, women are covered and polygamy is encouraged. Traditional Islam in considered by fundamentalist as one of main targets in their djihad. 41 leaders of this confession had been killed in the 5-year period from 2009 to 2014, plus 2 in 2015 (Caucasion Knot. Sept. 9, 2015). In 2015, V.Putin opened Moscow’s cathedral mosque, the new Europe’s biggest Muslim place of worship.

Islamic fundamentalism is a rather new phenomenon for Russia. «The philosophical roots of Islamic fundamentalism are largely the result of a conscious attempt to revive and restate the theoretical relevance of Islam in the modern world. This philosophical system postulated a qualitative contradiction between Western culture and the religion of Islam» (Choueiri 1998).

With the help of funding from petroleum exports the movement underwent fast growth beginning in the 1970s and now has worldwide influence (so called ‘Petro-Islam’) (Kepel 2002:69 - 80). This wave of fundamentalism had reached some region of Russia in 1990s. Over the past twenty years hundreds of foreign imams from Arabic countries and missionaries preached in Muslim regions, challenging the local Islamic traditions. Tens of thousands of young men have taken opportunities of

liberalization and have received Islamic education in the Middle East. Many of them came back to preach Salafism. Salafis won support among young Muslims mainly in Chechnya and Dagestan.

Islamic radical fundamentalists oppose Westernizing influences and the infiltration of secular patterns and seek to institute Islamic law in very strict interpretation in all spheres of society, including strict codes of behavior in everyday life. Salafis have a common distant enemy – the West, especially the United States and Israel, Westernization and globalization; they called it *al-makduniya* (“McDonaldization”). Their common close enemies are: traditional Russian Islam, in particular secular lifestyles, and the political system of Russia in general (Akikberov 2013).

There are two groups of Salafis. The first one consists of people following fundamentalist’ way of life and believes without accepting *djihad* against unbelievers. The second one is represented by militant jihadi groups seeing their final purpose in the war against believers for the *halifat* and establishment of the Islamic state in the Southern Russia. The Ghost of the Islamic middle ages appears to the fundamentalists as a bright future of mankind. The Islamic state (ISIS) is a visible example of the conservative utopia’s materialization. ISIS uses Russia as a recruitment pool, and the Russian Federal service of security estimates in the middle of 2015 that about 2,500 muslims from Russia are fighting in the Middle East. Some experts state that share of fighters from North Caucasus was in the end of 2014 between 7 and 10 percent (The North Caucasus...). Leaders of the former al-Qaeda associated “Caucasus Emirate”, which has done attacks in the region and terrorism countrywide since 2007, are swearing allegiance to ISIS.

## **7. Moral conservatism**

The liberal revolution in the 1990s had brought in Russia moral relativism which became a reaction to the strict moral regulation in the Soviet Union with rather obvious contradictions between official rhetoric and practices. Social disorder which followed neoliberal revolution was strongly intervened with moral disorientation of masses. Freedom from the communist morality often took form of freedom from any morality. The rise of the conservatism in moral field is always reaction to the moral anomia. Russia wasn’t an exception. Conservative critics of the anomia emerged just from the beginning of neoliberal transformation but had a marginal character. The situation has changed dramatically in the 21st

century when the conservative critics has been integrated in the dominant ideology.

Liberal and cosmopolitan trend faced with the crisis in the end of the 1990s when the obvious mass demand has emerged in conservatism. Putin has «caught this wave». In his annual State of the Union (2013) speech President Vladimir Putin for the first time clearly articulated the philosophy that guides Russia's leadership conservatism. He has asserted Russia's role as a counterweight to Western values since his return to the presidency in 2012. In his state-of-the nation address he presents himself as a defender of conservative values against the “genderless and infertile” Western tolerance that he said equates good and evil. Quoting early 20th-century Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, V.Putin said conservatism does not stop society from progressing but “prevents it from falling backward into chaotic darkness and the state of primitive man».

This declaration of the state conservatism in the field of morality reflected conservative ideas in international scale. For example, the prominent American conservator Patric Buchanan (1992) made diagnosis of the USA which is consonant to alarmist declarations of Russian nationalist and patriots: «Americans are locked in a cultural war for the soul of our country». He supports his alarmist ideas by quotations from F. Dostoevsky novel 'The Devils'.

After Putin's State of Union Patric Buchanan (2013) looks on the Russian conservative turn globally and put the question: 'In the culture war for mankind's future, is he [Putin - V.I.] one of us?' And he gives an answer: 'While his stance as a defender of traditional values has drawn the mockery of Western media and cultural elites, Putin is not wrong in saying that he can speak for much of mankind'.

Moral (or social) conservatism in many countries generally follow several principles, and Russian conservatism shares most of these positions.

1. It favors the pro-life position in the abortion controversy.
2. It supports a traditional definition of marriage as being one man and one woman.
3. It views the nuclear family model as society's foundational unit.
4. It opposes expansion of civil marriage.
5. It is against child adoption rights to couples in same-sex relationships.
6. It promotes traditional family values.
7. It strongly supports prohibition of prostitution.
8. It is very sensitive to questions of obscenity or indecency, supporting strict censorship of pornography.

9. It opposes euthanasia.
10. It is generally against sexual education in schools.

Key political parties publicly declare their commitment to the principles of the conservative morality. This block includes not only the ruling United Russia and oppositional Liberal-Democratic party but also the Communist party of the Russian Federation.

One of the main battlefield in the cultural war between liberals and conservatives is sexual culture. The 1990s was a period of its liberalization.

In the 1990s, all main Russian political parties and majority of population shared the belief that homosexuals had the same constitutional rights as the rest of citizens, as well as a right to be let alone. The only visible conflict took place in Moscow where LGBT activists several times tried to organize the Gay Parade and local government was strictly against it.

The cultural liberals all over the world state that sexual conduct, so long as it is consensual, is irrelevant to moral character. The conservators all over the world take the opposite position. *«To most of us, - stated Patric J. Buchanan (1992), - it is the codification of amorality to elevate gay liaisons to the same moral and legal plane as traditional marriage»*. The majority of population in many countries believes that the sexual practices of gays are both morally wrong and medically ruinous. The Russians are no exception. Conservators's beliefs are rooted in the Old and New Testament or/ and in 'natural law' and traditions.

Gay marriage is one the aims of the moral liberalism. However this institution is unacceptable for the conservators all over the world, and majority of states and population support conservatism in this respect. Only 16 nations out of more than 190 have recognized this institution.

Russia (not only the Kremlin) was getting more and more conservative in 21st century. This spirit of time found its expression in preoccupation with problem of spreading of homosexual culture. The federal law banned "propaganda of non-traditional relations" (2013). The official commentators state that it does not discriminate against gays, but gay rights group say it has given a green light to harassment and intimidation. Critics defined this legislative act as 'anti-gay law'. Russia's restrictive laws on propaganda of homosexuality coincided with the rise homophobia in the conservative part of the society.

Conservatism of political elite in the field of sexual culture more or less reflects dominant moods in Russian society. 85 percent of adult Russians said they were strongly against a law that would allow same-sex marriage, the Levada Public Opinion Center (2013: 114-119) reported. 87

percent said they opposed the idea of holding regular gay pride events in their cities. The survey had shown that the percentage of supporters of same-sex marriage in Russia fell from 14 to just 5 percent over the past three years. The number of those who do not oppose gay pride events is a consistently low 6 percent. 27 percent said that the society must provide 'psychological aid' to gay people, compared to a previous 22 percent. On the other side of the spectrum, some expressed strong opposition to homosexuality: 16 percent of those polled suggested that homosexuals should be isolated from society, 22 percent argued that the treatment of homosexuality must be made compulsory, and 5 percent said that homosexuals should be 'exterminated.' Respondents' attitudes towards adoptions by same-sex couples were roughly the same as towards gay marriage: 80 percent of those polled said it was unacceptable, 5 percent approved, and 15 percent said they had no opinion.

## 8. Conclusions

Russia is moving from the liberal period to a conservative one. This transition is rooted both in globalization and in internal processes and covers nearly all spheres of social and private life. This transition has a form of trend with open end and goes through sharp conflicts because the Russian society is divided. This struggle could be interpreted in terms of «Cultural war» as do American conservatives. The conservative turn is visible both on the levels of state politics and that of public opinion, of macro processes and of everyday practices. The conservative turn in the Russian society is an internal phenomenon but with a serious impact on the international relations.

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BETWEEN POST-MATERIALISM AND POPULISM:  
THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF FIVE STAR  
MOVEMENT ACTIVISTS

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## **1. The raising of the Five Star Movement**

The Five Stars Movement (FSM) is one of the most recent and popular parties within the Italian political arena. Since its first participation into a political competition its electoral trend has showed a constant growth. In fact, starting from 2008, when some civil lists participated in local administrative polls under the name of “Amici di Beppe Grillo”, reaching percentages of voters between 2% and 7%, the movement achieved its best electoral performance in 2013, on the occasion of national elections, by harvesting a flattering 25.6% of votes.

In the past two years, despite the predictions by those who thought that the movement should be destined to a radical reshaping, this actor has been able to substantially confirm its performance by reaching a 21.1% during the last year European elections and by showing rates between 14% and 22% in the recent regional administrative polls. Moreover, this

last result was achieved without the significant engagement of Five Star Movement front-man and well-known flagship: Beppe Grillo.

The latest political opinion polls (May-June, 2015) assess the FSM voting preferences between 20% (SWG) and 25% (Ipsos) of the constituency, confirming the substantial political retention of this actor.

These political results and trends seem to strengthen the concept highlighted by Edoardo Greblo in his study about Five Star Movement philosophy: an informal and disorganized political subject has been existing before Grillo's attempt to create the movement (Greblo, 2012). According to this view, the role of the Italian comedian seem to be related more to a media catalyst (or organizer) than to a political demiurge, in spite of the disputes concerning the expulsions within the party and the lack of transparency of M5S online procedures.

According to Greblo, the merit of FSM leader has consisted in intercepting the different voices raising from dissatisfied voters and civil society activists towards the existing political establishment. Grillo and Casaleggio have given unrepresented and disaffected people the chance to express their political will and aims and to participate in a brand new political challenge based on freshman candidates without any implication with the already existing parties.

Nevertheless, these features cannot hide the populist tendencies nor the extreme heterogeneity of positions existing in and expressed by the party: on one side, we find the claims concerning environmental issues, direct democracy appeals, an in-depth, almost pathologic, accuracy reserved to financial and budgeting public political expenditures; on the other hand, we have witnessed to anti-euro and xenophobic declarations as well as constant protests and attacks against the political, economic and intellectual national and international élites (Mello, 2013).

Many scholars have focused their attention on the political and communicational features of its leader, Beppe Grillo; the identity of the Movement (Corbetta and Guelmini, 2013), its internal organization (Fornaro, 2012); the reasons of the electoral outcome (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2012; Biorcio, 2013).

The aim of the present essay is to give evidence of some political culture and political participation modalities peculiar to Five Star Movement activists.

## 2. Five Star Movement political features

Since its earlier appearances, the Five Star Movement has drawn the attention of many scholars because of its uncommon features: according to its leaders and activists it is not a party, as it is based on a total refusal of any hierarchical structure or formal organization. Nevertheless, by competing for the electoral consensus, it can be without doubt inscribed within the traditional definition of a political party (Schumpeter, 1942; Panebianco, 1982).

In a similar way the FSM deals with mutually conflicting actions and proposals: it relies on inclusiveness and high participatory initiatives, such as online polls, interactive digital platforms, and claims like “one counts one” (Putini: forthcoming). Contemporarily, it figures as a “private association” under a legal point of view, because its brand, its copyrights and its main communicational platform belong to a unique private subject, Beppe Grillo.

Thus, the Five Star Movement shows a dichotomous nature: an inclusive and horizontal movement based on direct-democracy practices, on one side; a private and “franchising” association on the other. A flat, large and popular political subject and, at the same time, a leaderistic and personal organization.

According to some elements which appear in the most common definitions of populism (Viviani, 2015; Taggart, 2004; Mény and Surel, 2001) a certain number of populist features belongs to the Five Star Movement, more specifically:

- arising during a period of economic and political crisis;
- weak organizational structure;
- being a protest movement against political and economic élites (la casta);
- absence of a proper *weltanschauung* or ideology;
- presence of a charismatic leadership;
- self-declaration of being the custodian of a “real democratic legacy”;

The Five Star Movement has actually raised consensus while being outside the institutional arena, during the years 2007-2009 which mark the starting wave of an in-depth critic towards representative and traditional political parties (the first edition of Italian bestseller book “La Casta” was published on May, 2007); then it increased its popularity and conquered

its electoral goals during the deepest years of crisis, that is between 2010 and 2013.

The starting organizational structure of the movement was set up totally online (Fornaro, 2012), thanks to a massive use of social platforms like MeetUp and Facebook. This does not mean that within M5S there are no face to face interactions or physical meetings, but the greater part of the organizational functions, including the most important internal electoral ones are managed through online tools.

Since its very first appearance, with the “V-Day” initiatives the core-argument of Five Star Movement has been that of an anti-elitism rebellion against the national politicians, the technocratic power of Monti Government and that of the so called “Troika” (ECB, EU and IMF), and the manipulation by the establishment’s intellectuals. For instance, in his book on the Five Star Movement, Mello refers of the Italian journalist Giuliano Santoro what a negative experience it can be to write an article against Grillo or the Five Star Movement, in general: in fact, as soon as one of his articles appears online, it becomes a target for negative post against its author based more on emotional contents than on rational arguments (Mello, 2013).

Moreover, the Five Star Movement didn’t developed an actual ideology, to be intended as an explicit and coherent interpretation of the political, cultural and economic reality at the basis of the praxis to lead a social group towards a renewal of society (Friedrich, 1963; Easton, 1965; McClosky, 1964): despite its cyber-utopianism message (Natale and Ballatore, 2014) and its continuous claim in favor of direct involvement and e-democracy, the Movement has not yet provided a clear, coherent and solid vision to be implemented. Rather, it seems to gain ground thanks to a constant reference to different claims, such as honesty, which belong to the populist discourse (Viviani, 2015).

Grillo represents without any doubt the leader, the “voice” of the people, as he uses to depict himself. Both his online and mass-media self-representation, his actions (i.e. the swimming crossing strait of Sicily) and some statements released by Five Star Movement representatives (Putini: forthcoming) describe the comedian time after time as the “familiar authority”, the wise, the older companion that can give the right political advice at the right time.

Regarding the last populist aspect, that is the claim of being the only “custodian” of a true democratic vision, scholars have underlined the continuous appeals towards an “hyper-democratic narrative” that epitomize the Movement since its beginning (Lanzone and Rombi, 2014).



But populism can also be depicted as a peculiar disposition towards politics and the institutional system to be found within the people: according to Meny and Surel (2001), populism as a grassroots cultural expression is characterized by a broad hostility towards political parties and institutional representatives, a wide disillusion in respect of the political class responsiveness and a large distrust towards any regulatory capability coming from institutions.

Moreover, amongst the values considered to belong to a populist attitude, Rosanvallon (2009) underline a “moralist bent” which can be shaped as a constant call to people’s integrity against the corruption of politicians. Thus, honesty seems to be the recurring value within a populist political culture ideal-type.

Close to the populist features a “post-materialist” (Inglehart, 1996) and environmentalist soul within Five Star Movement political programs is also existing: starting from meanings of “five star”, which represent water (to be intended as a common), sustainable mobility, development, connectivity and environment.

These features bring FSM close to the green-wave (Poguntke, 1987) or the libertarian left-wing political actors (Kitschelt, 1988), to which a “cybernetic” profile must be added (Margetts, 2006; Putini, 2014), due to its references to the added reality of online tools (see connectivity).

Furthermore, the left-libertarian spirit of the Five Star Movement, can also be traced also within its historical appeals against corporates and financial powers, and in favor of critic-consumerism (Colloca and Corbetta, 2014: 375).

### **3. FSM voters: demographic, social and cultural features**

According to the majority of the studies Five Star Movement voters profile is in a constant reshaping: 2012 and 2013 samplings, for instance, show that the demographic profile is represented by male, ageing between 35 and 44 years old (31%, Corbetta and Gualmini, 2013: 96), while in the most recent surveys (Maggini, 2015: p. 4) it is still composed by males, but its most represented age-class has shifted to age-group 45-64 (26.8%).

For what concerns the territorial distribution, while during the 2012 sampling potential voters of the Five Star Movement seemed to be well-balanced among Northern, Center and Southern Italy, in the last samplings a “southernization” of the electorate appears to be taking place, with 57% of potential votes coming from the Southern Italian regions, 31.4% from the Northern ones, and 11.6% from the Central area.

The educational level variable seems at first to maintain a certain stability in respect to the previous features, and to place Five Star Movement voters once more closer to the populist area than to the NSM or “left-libertarian” parties: in fact both in the 2012 survey and 2015 ones it shows better outcomes within the class of medium educational level.

This claim fits with a populist voter profile (Taggart), while all the previous researches agree in identifying post-materialist electorate in young people with an high educational degree (Inglehart, 1996).

The inclination of FSM voters towards populist traits is also visible by analyzing their occupational status, despite the changes that occurred in their composition between 2012 and 2015. While post-materialist professional categories are mostly endorsed by civil servants, employees of third-sector associations, and, among the non-working population, students and unemployed persons with a high-degree education (Poguntke, 1987), populist electorate finds its highly represented professional cluster within private sector employees (Taggart, 1995), even if it generally presents the *catch-all* party features in terms of occupational status. In a 2012 survey, the Five Star Movement electorate composition by occupational status presented a low rate of differentiation: “*FSM is able to reach a broad consensus in every of the occupational categories. A factor shared by FSM with populist parties*” (Pedrazzani and Pinto, 2013: 101).

In the latest voting-inclination polls, some changes have occurred: while pensioners and housewives continue to present lower rates than the overall sample categories (so as to remain underrated), private sector white collars and, above all, the unemployed presented the higher overrating percentages (20% of FSM voters instead of the 9.7% of the sample; Maggini, 2015: 4).

Regarding the political values and the right-left scale positioning, FSM voters present an high degree of incoherence (Colloca and Corbetta, 2014:377): for instance they are in favor of both reducing tax-rates (a typical right wing claim) and empowering public health-services (a soundbite promoted by left-side parties). This represents a further feature that should contribute to place FSM electorate within the populist field.

Nevertheless, as Colloca and Corbetta states, this incoherence can be seen both as the trait of the lack of a political culture (due to incompetence or ignorance) or as the presence of a “post-ideological” frame. Using a filter-variable represented by voter’s level of political information the authors affirm that the incoherence regarding the political positioning could be a result of a political culture shift towards a position which cannot be resumed within the traditional dichotomy “left-right”

dichotomy. In this sense, a higher percentage than the general sample of incoherence expressed by politically informed people with high education degree can confirm the hypothesis that a cluster of “post-ideological” people linked to post materialist values and political culture also exists within the FSM.

The last issues regarding FSM electorate’s value-attitudes concern the religious practice and the involvement within civil society. The first aspect represent a continuum amongst Five Star Movement voters. That is FSM supporters present high level of secularization (Pedrazzani and Pinto, 2013: 102).

Concerning civic participation, while it could be thought that FSM voters should have presented higher percentages of civic involvement compared to the rest of the electorate, data state a substantial equality between them and the others citizens.

In fact, excluding religious associations (in which FSM voters show a modest 13.6% of participation instead of the 21.2% of the total voters), the other associational dimensions show similar rates between Five Star Movement voters (or potential voters) and the rest of the electorate (Pedrazzani and Pinto, 2013:103). The peculiarity is that in spite of its environmentalism and ecologist claims, the participation of voters to these kind of associations is just only slightly higher than the one registered in the rest of the sample (16.8% versus 14.9%).

#### **4. Five Star Movement Activists socio-demographic and cultural features**

After depicting the forest and its leaves, I will provide some insights about the trees by analyzing some data harvesting during the last Five Star Movement convention, which took place in Rome on October 2014.

Data have been harvested by administering 500 questionnaires to participants to the meeting, with an 81% of response rate (N=405).

Since it was practically impossible to determine the universe of Five Star Movement activism, as this political subject doesn’t provide any information regarding its total number of supporters registered on the “SistemaOperativo” political platform, or their geographical distribution, nor does it give an affordable mapping of its local MeetUp-based organization, our results have to be assumed for their sociological significance rather than a proper statistical meaning, that is by giving outcomes which can fit a probabilistic or random sampling method.

In fact, a convenience, or purposive, sampling method has been applied by assuming that Roman convention should have been attended by a large number of activists more than by simple voters or common spectators.

Despite these limits we hope that data produced by this sample could be of aid for furthers and in-depth analysis of Five Star Movement activism.

In facts, while previous studies have described the demographic, social and political features of FSM potential voters (Corbetta and Guelmini, 2013; Bordignon e Ceccarini, 2013; Colloca and Corbetta, 2014; Maggini, 2015; Chiaramonte and De Sio, 2014), our aim has been to acquire and harvest more specific data concerning the grassroots of this Movement, specifically of its activists. These profiles are the core-part of the Movement as they develop all that field-related activities able to mobilize potential voters (by founding local MeetUp, campaigning, presenting electoral registers, organizing local demonstrations).

The starting hypothesis, according to which we could have found a high percentages of FSM or MeetUP adherents more than simple voter or spectators) appeared to be verified when tested: in fact more than 60% of respondents are Five Star Movement members, and more than 45% are MeetUp followers. The percentage concerning those who participated either directly (within the movement) or by taking part in a MeetUp rose to 66.5% of the sample; while those who are enlisted both to the movement and in a MeetUp group reach a 40%. On the contrary, respondents who can be considered only as supporters represent a third of the sample (33.5%).

Beginning with the demographic features, 60% of the respondents are males (N=243). The mean age is 39 years while the largest age-group is between 25 and 29 years of age (N=61; 15.7%). It must be underlined that by aggregating the demographic class as to produce a ten-years cluster distribution, the sample outcomes reflect the 2012 movement composition more than the recent one. The general sample composition is younger than the potential electorate. The central age classes (25-44 y.o.) represented 60% of FSM potential voters in 2012 while in our survey this class represents the 51% of the sample.

Activists participating to the survey come from all the Italian region, with the exclusion of the Valle D'Aosta area. Aside from Lazio (that cannot be take in account due to the geographical location of the convention and therefore a potential overrating representation of local activists), the regional provenience reflects the political areas which had given the first or best political performance: Emilia Romagna (N=58;

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14.5%), Tuscany (N=35; 8.7%), Lombardy (N=33; 8.2%), Puglia (N=27; 6.7%), Campania (N=20; 5.0%).

Moreover, the geographic distribution give us a further information: the sample was administered following a completely random modality and shows that FSM activists come from 75 of the 110 Italian provinces. This means that FSM has reached a wide territorial penetration, and that its organizational net is not limited to a specific area (as is the case for the so call red-zone, of Italian central regions) or within a metropolitan environment, but throughout the entire Italian territory.

Concerning the occupational and educational status, 63.3% of the respondents are employed while 14.6% result unemployed. Students represent 18.4% of the sample.

The larger class according to the education-degree is represented by respondents with medium level schooling (48.9%) even if the higher education level (BA degree or higher) is overrated compared to the national mean: 34.1% compared to a modest 12.7% of the Italian population (Istat, 2014).

This datum could support the post-materialist hypothesis regarding the FSM activist belonging, but the professional composition goes in an opposite direction, presenting those catch-all party features proper of the populist trait: indeed, the sample shows an almost equal distribution amongst apical positions (manager, executives, professionals, entrepreneurs, medics, scholars, which gained a 25.5%), intermediate working class (public and private officers, teachers, technicians, with a36.6%) and lower-position working class (that is workers, occasional collaborators, and other atypical job figures, which reach a 22.3%). Students represent a further 11.6%, while 3% of the respondents did not explicit their professional collocation.

The dichotomous nature of Five Star Movement activists can also be found concerning their values and ideological inclinations.

On one side the most rated value has been honesty (a value belonging to a populist register), with a 32.7% of total responses in spite of the presence of post-materialist oriented values (like sharing, informality, altruism, reciprocity, solidarity) that, all together, reached a modest 7.4%. The second scoring value has been freedom (25.5%), which only in an indirect sense can be placed within a post-materialist domain, according to Beck's thesis that post-modern societies are freedom societies, and thus freedom represents both an opportunity and a risk for people (see Beck, 1992). In any case, freedom is traditionally associated to a liberal thought belonging to the right-wing political domain, and this shifts FSM activist features away from *green-wave* or left-party membership.

On the other side, by asking participants which ideology framework better respects their political vision, the overall axis seems to be re-positioned towards a post-materialist pole, as environmentalism and the degrowth theory gained the highest scores, with respectively 77.2% and 40.6% of affirmative answers (representing the sum of the 4<sup>th</sup> (mostly in agreement) and 5<sup>th</sup> (totally in agreement) degrees of the scale).

The political collocation of Five Star Movement activists significantly reflects the voters trends confirming the general overcoming of the right-left political dimension. Even if 26.7% of activists placed themselves within a left-wing political dimension (fostering the thesis according to which the FSM was born as a left-wing anti-establishment movement) and a residual 3.2% placed themselves in the right-wing one, the majority (56%) expressed an external self-collocation the percentage of which is directly correlated to the level of activism.

In fact, members of FSM answered that they did not find any collocation within the right-left continuum in the 61.2% of the cases, while for the non-members this percentage decreases to 46%. The same trend can be found concerning MeetUp affiliation: while 60% of MeetUp members do not recognize their collocation within the cited political space, non-member percentage decreases to 54%.

The political collocation of the Five Star Movement according to its activists' opinion, follows a radical trend: according to the 66% of them FSM cannot be placed within a left to right scale (while the 14.7% thinks it belong to the left, 10% to the centrum, 7.7% to the right and 1.6% has not answered the question).

Another way to assess the political collocation can be measured by asking the participants to give a hierarchical placement of several political themes, each related to a specific position (i.e. policies against pollution, or fostering commons and technological innovation can be depicted as post-materialist arguments; policies regarding education, health care services, employment, or equal tax distribution traditionally belong to the left; while measures against corruption or migration can be placed within the populist ground).

In this case as well, activists have shown their dichotomous belonging, but in my opinion with a higher inclination toward the populist area. Two reasons explain this statement: the first is that the highest priority was given to corruption (85% of respondents gives it the highest rate, 5 on a 1 to 5 scale), followed by the solution of pollution emergence (75.8%). The second is that by summing the answers given to both 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degree (that means the percentages of policies assuming the higher priority levels) the picture assumes a "chameleontic" aspect, just like in the

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Taggart description of populism: both corruption, pollution, health care, education, unemployment and under-employment struggle, and anti-tax evasion policies reach percentages between 90% and 95%.

In this case left-wing policies (health care, education, tax evasion struggle, unemployment) seem to be more attractive than post materialist ones (protection of commons, fostering of tech-innovation and digital rights warranty). But these policies are also historically linked to a highly active role of the State, which brings back to a populist, if not an authoritarian, message: the political subject called out by people for taking care of and protecting citizens by giving them material securities and certainty.

## **5. Participation Modalities of FSM activists**

The last issue regarding FSM activists' features concerns their political participation modalities.

Amongst the persons who answered the survey a percentage of 12.9% declared to have been previously enlisted to other political parties. This percentage demonstrates two important facts: firstly, that FSM has been able to attract displeased activists from other political forces (mainly from the Democratic Party and the leftist political parties, in general); secondly that the movement presents a high power of mobilization: for more than 200 activist (52.7% of respondents) the FSM membership is the first political party membership of their lives.

Despite the initial hypothesis, that is Five Star Movement activists should have presented a higher score for civil society participation than the rest of the Italian electorate, the results don't show a significant difference between the two groups: for instance, those who participate to cultural associations are 32.9% within the FSM activists and 27.6% in the rest of the electorate (Corbetta and Gualmini: 2013, p. 103).

A worst trend can be found concerning the participation to both non-religious and religious charity organizations: only 5.4% declare to participate to religious associations instead of a 21.2% of Italians; while only 15.5% of activists take part to non-religious associations compared to a 21.8% of others voters.

The only civil society group that the FSM activists participate more to is the environmentalist one: 24.8% versus 14.9% of Italians.

This last datum and that referred to religious involvement go toward supporting the "post-materialist" hypothesis.

How do activists participate?

To answer this question the different participation modalities have been divided according to two dimensions: the first is related to the offline/online active participation modalities; the second regards the level of involvement from low (i.e. reading a post on the official FSM site) to high (i.e. presenting a candidature or being part of a list).

Amongst the active online participation modalities, the most rated has been that of “writing and sharing posts on FB” (51.5% of affirmative answers), while Twitter doesn’t seem to be used by FSM activists: only an 8.3% declares to tweet or re-tweet messages regarding the movement.

The “mailing list” information tool also doesn’t seem to show a large use by activists, while FSM online platform (*SistemaOperativo*) is mostly frequented for interactive purposes (i.e. voting e-polls, 36.4%; commenting on draft laws 23.2%) more than as a mere information source (“*I read the most interesting issues on SistemaOperativo*”, voted by 18.7% of the sample).

Amongst the “informative” tools the FSM platform plays the main role (78.8% use this instrument for remaining well-informed). This insight also contributes to show how homogeneous and unilateral the sources of information used by FSM activists for gathering information concerning political arguments are: in fact, their trust towards other media is quite absent. Almost the 91% of respondents declared a total mistrust in television as a media-information source, while the confidence-level towards radio amounts to 29.5%. Respondents who declared to trust newspapers as an information source are only the 4%. On the contrary, the Web is considered to be a reliable media by 60.2% of respondents. The percentage arises to 80% if referred to the FSM blog .

These insights show us that FSM activists are informed people. But, they almost only use a partisan integrated online platform composed by the blog and the social page or groups belonging to the movement.

Concerning the active participation (i.e. the activities played by activists for or within the movement), important information has come from the analysis of the results. Contrarily to our initial expectations (fostered by the particular attention reserved by scholars to the online dimension of the FSM) activists participate more to offline modalities than to the online ones. For instance, respondents have declared to participate to local offline meetings in the 53.6% of the cases, while only the 51.5% writes a post and shares it on a social network. In the same way, they attend national conventions in the 78.5% of the cases while only in the 18.7% of the cases they interact with each other using a mailing list.

Thus, outcomes give us important details of activism within this Movement, in particular they show a more dynamic offline activism



dimension compared to the online one. For better synthetizing this result we provide to set up a raw participatory index (achieved by measuring the mean of each affirmative percentage concerning both online and offline active participation modalities).

The online dimension has been represented by summing the following actions: posting on FB or Twitter, voting during e-polls consultations, presenting an emendation to online law draft, disseminating campaign issues or programs online, being inscribed and writing messages in a mailing list, commenting proposals or topics within the SistemaOperativo platform, voting during e-polls primaries.

The index score concerning online participation amounts to 2.81.

The offline modalities instead (summarized in: attending local and national meetings, contributing in local campaigns, contributing to organizing local meeting and assemblies, managing the organization of meeting and assemblies, fostering the movement by founding it) has reached a score of 3.84.

This aspect contributes in resizing both the “cyber” nature of the Movement and its post-materialist features, showing us a different reality from the one commonly depicted by previous studies and general opinions.

## **6. Conclusions**

The essay provides some features concerning FSM activists. It aims also to give them a specific identity collocation within the continuum composed by, on one hand, populism and, on the other hand, post-materialism.

These dimensions seemed in fact to represent the opposite side in which previous studies attempted to place both FSM as a political subject (Greblo, 2012; Mello, 2013) and its voters (Corbetta and Gualmini, 2013; Maggini, 2015), due to their high level of dichotomies.

The importance to give a collocation to FSM activists according to their political culture and their political participation modalities can contribute to show some potential trends and tendencies regarding the future development of the Movement.

Considering that activist represent the potential candidates of local and national elections, as well as one of the main factors of mobilization to gain voters, their political culture traits and their political participation features can contribute to better shape further developments of the whole movement.

The placement within one of the two political and cultural poles has been achieved by describing activist features according to the following indicators: class-age; educational level; job positioning; values and ideological positioning; social and political participation.

Our survey has underlined a “chameleontic” aspect concerning activists’ features.

In fact, according to some indicators FSM activism can be placed within a post-materialistic sphere; while for others it better corresponds to populism.

Specifically, schooling indicators show us an overrating of high-educated people within the sample (34.1%) compared to the general population (12.7%), so to potentially collocate activists within a post-materialist field (according to the hypothesis that the higher the level of education the easier a citizen could embrace this paradigm).

On the contrary, professional collocation contributes to relocate activists towards the populist pole, because of their homogeneity amongst the three cohorts representing high, medium and low working class.

As well as for the professional indicator, activists can be placed within the populist dimension also according to the best rated value (honesty, 32.7%). In fact, the anti-establishment position typical of populist parties is resumed by a “moralist” bent, as Rosanvallon (2009) states, which can be translated into a claim for honesty.

As for the values, the level of trust can also be used as an indicator for collocating activism within our continuum. High levels of trust (at least towards neutral or local institutions such as the President of the Republic, the Supreme Cort or civil society actors) can be inscribed in the post materialist field. On the contrary, a low level of trust belongs to populism and its anti-politics and anti-institution spirit.

According to the sample results, the level of trust maintains a high rate (more than 80% of total trust) only for what concerns FSM leaders – Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio – and its most known representatives, while every other subject has received a very low rate (in some cases close to the zero, as for instance for other parties or party’s leaders). This aspect contributes to collocate FSM activists within the populist frame.

On the contrary, both ideological positioning and social participation are indicators according to which FSM activists can be inscribed in a post-materialist frame: environmentalism and the degrowth theory are the ideologies that activists feel to be closer to their “political point of view”. Both environmentalism and degrowth are political visions that with no doubt belong to the post-materialist dimension.

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Concerning social participation, data give us a fuzzier response: in fact, if the general social participation rates are equal to those showed by Italian voters (which cannot contribute to place them in a specific field, or, if it does, it will be the populist one), both the overrating concerning environmentalist associations involvement and the downsizing of the participation within religious charities give us reasons to affirm the substantial secularization of social participation and, for this reason, its belonging to a post-materialistic frame.

The last indicator is political participation: as Meny and Surel (2001) stated, populist parties tend to mobilize citizen according to traditional modalities more than by using new forms of participation. Even if FSM has used online instruments as seminal communicative tools since its beginning, we expected to find better response rates within these modalities rather than in those related to face to face and offline interactions. The results have instead shown us a different trend: the traditional/offline index of participation gained a better score (3.84) than the online/unconventional one (2.81). Thus, according to this indicator FSM activists belong to the populist area.

In the end, the indicators used for depicting activists' features can also give us a general picture that seems highlight a slight trend in the direction of populism instead of post-materialism.

The results are still to be refined with an in-depth and more elaborate analysis and they will surely require further understanding. Nevertheless, two more aspects concerning the Five Star Movement in general can be undoubtedly inferred by this analysis: both the territorial distribution of the activists who answered the questionnaires and the general absence of previous political experiences demonstrate not only the power of mobilization concerning this political subject, but also its territorial penetration. These last features can be considered as indicators of stability and continuity of this movement, reinforced further due to the offline political participation modalities.

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EUROPEAN PARTIES AND CAMPAIGN PATTERNS  
IN THE 2014 ELECTIONS

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*1. The indirect election of the President of the European Commission by Europeans and a strong personalization of the head role (President of the Commission) in 2014 - 2. Towards a true European campaign - 3. One candidate, one programme and two strategies - 4. Conclusions*

The indirect election of the President of the European Commission produced a deep change in European electoral campaigns. In 2014, “second order” and “low intensity” campaigns give way to postmodern ones: more personalized, more professionalized and more expensive. In spite of many similarities, two major parties planned different paths for their electoral activities, in line with their history and traditions. Therefore, there are many differences between the EPP and the PSE: one has a more traditional centripetal approach, the other a new and experimental centrifugal approach, summarized in the claim “To convince people, you must include people”: it synthesizes a new type of electoral campaign that Less-Marshment defines as “partnership model”. In my research, I explain features of these two models of campaign and, at the same time, try to understand the political implication of their adoption for the construction of a European public sphere.

## **1. The indirect election of the President of the European Commission by Europeans and a strong personalization of the head role (President of the Commission) in 2014**

The study of the 2014 European Elections Campaign shows that these are no more “second order elections” (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Many elements explain this transformation, in particular, the personalization of the election and consequently of the political campaign. Regarding the profound change in the personalization of the electoral campaign, three elements need to be remembered: firstly, European parties can use more funds to plan and implement their electoral campaigns, because the regulatory frame has changed; secondly, sociological studies highlight a new drive of public opinion toward personalization in European Institutions, and finally there has been significant institutional change.

With respect to this last point, institutional personalization has been observed. In this case, personalization “has to do with changing in electoral and institutional system that locates single politicians at the core of voter choice” (Rahat, Sheaffer, 2007). The Member States – for the first time – had to use the results of the European elections as the basis for putting forward a candidate for President of the European Commission: this latter is formally elected by the European Parliament, but is actually selected by European citizens through their voting choice.

The personalization of the President’s role has been going on for some years (Decker and Sonnicksen, 2009; Schmitt et al. 2014). The debate about opportunities for full “presidentialization” started in the late ’90s. European politicians were aware of the “emotional distance” between institutions and citizens. To avoid the deepening of the gap between the European power and its citizens, John Bruton, ex *Irish* Prime Minister proposed the idea of the direct investiture of the Executive Head, during the Convention on the Future of Europe (2003): he suggested a two-round election system and an *ad hoc* ballot with the candidates’ names. The idea, however, was not yet ripe fruit. Many steps would still be needed in public opinion and in political institutions before indirect election could be arrived at.

Some of these political steps can be mentioned. Firstly, there is the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), which stressed that consultation between Parliament and Council should precede selection of the President of the Commission. In his State of the Union address in 2012, José Manuel Barroso spoke of changes to the Treaty, and called on European parties to nominate leading candidates for the position of President of the European Union. This reminder was reinforced by a resolution of the European



Parliament (22 November 2012) and by a recommendation of the Commission. The Treaty changes were applicable to a new “round” of European Elections. A communication of the Commission explained the reasoning behind having candidates for Presidency of the Commission as follows: “in accordance with the Treaty, the outcome of the European elections should play a key role in determining which candidate becomes President of the Commission”. The meaning of “Spitzenkandidaten” is evident: “if European political parties and national parties make known their nomination for the function of President of the Commission and the candidate’s programme in the context of the European Elections, this will make concrete and visible the link between the individual vote of the EU citizens for a candidate for membership of European Parliament and the candidate for President of the Commission supported by the party of the candidate”.

Therefore, the citizens are able to identify who they will support with their vote. The European Institutions and, in particular, the decision-making process would thereby be enforced.

A secondary result could be “raising the turnout” for European elections by strengthening the link between the election of citizens’ representatives and the selection process of the head of the European executive.

This change was possible because Europeans were ready for the election of the president. In its official communications, the Commission referred to opinion poll research: citizens would feel more inclined to vote if “each of the major European political alliances put forward a candidate for the function of President of the European Commission, on the basis of a common programme”. In recent years, Eurobarometer<sup>41</sup> studies have highlighted that European citizens were interested in playing a part in electing the president: an absolute majority of respondents said that “this would give them added encouragement to vote” (55%). The data said that there is almost no difference between euro zone (56%) and non-euro zone

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<sup>41</sup> For the second time since June 2012 (EB/EP77.4), the following question was posed (EB79.5, 7-23 June 2013, CAPI, Europeans over 15): “Imagine that, at the next European elections, the major European political alliances present a candidate for the post of President of the European Commission, based on a joint programme. The citizens of every Member State would therefore indirectly participate in the election of the President of the European Commission if his\her political alliances won the European elections. Would this encourage you more than at present to vote?”.

(55%)<sup>42</sup>. On the idea of holding direct elections for the President of the European Commission in the future, a substantial majority of people are in favour (70%), while 13% have no opinion on the matter. Only 17% of respondents are against this option. The reasons for support are associated with “the development of democracy and citizenship”<sup>43</sup>.

For a long time, *Europarties* were not real parties, but “organizations of organizations”, despite the political groups within the halls of parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg. Considered as confederations by many scholars, parliamentary groups show greater similarity with parliamentary parties, being, in the first half of the 1900s, projections of alliances between local notables. Political agreement among national political organizations - at least until the 2009 campaign - was concluded *ex post* after formation of the parliamentary group which also had, within it, very different parties in terms of their programmes.

Thanks also to reorganization of the system of economic support for European parties (Ciancio 2009; Allegri 2013; Fusacchia 2006), parties decided to allocate more resources to political campaigns. The legal framework and the changes in the opinions of citizens influenced the European campaign in 2014: the parties had to plan new personalized campaigns with candidacy for the presidency of the commission at its core. After more than 30 years of a directly elected parliament, this was the first campaign to support candidacy for the presidency of the Commission. In this new context, a common strategy of European parties and their national affiliated parties is necessary. Many national parties (belonging to a single parliamentary group) must become a single political subject, attempting to overcome an anomaly of the European elections: while these latter are for a single body (parliament), they take place in the countries under influence and constraints, which are partly similar and partly different (Maier, Strömbäck, Kaid, 2011: 5).

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<sup>42</sup> At national level, the respondents most likely to answer in the affirmative are in Ireland (66%), Malta (65%), Romania (64%), and Sweden, Austria and Germany (all 62%). Those least likely to do so are in Estonia (43%), Portugal, Slovenia (both 44%) and Finland (45%). The greatest changes were observed in Poland (61%) and Malta (65%), both of which recorded an increase of 13 percentage points. Cfr De Sio et al. (2014).

<sup>43</sup> The more selected items are: EU decisions would seem more legitimate to Europeans, 31%; it would reinforce democracy within the EU, 30%; the EU would speak with one voice on the international stage, 27%; it would reinforce the sense of being a European citizen, 26%; it would reinforce the link between the EU and its citizens, 26%; it would give the EU a face, 11%.

This process is not obvious, nor simple. In this new framework, a common and shared campaign require more discussion about a real unitary “manifesto”, and more coordination of communication strategy. Methods of selection of the president suggest a focus on campaign personalization as a unifying element. Therefore, each europarty chose a particular model of campaigning, in line with its history and its traditions.

## **2. Towards a true European campaign**

The campaigns of the EPP and PSE show many common elements but some relevant differences. Concerning the planning and development of the two campaigns, many elements of the third age of political campaigns can be observed (Blumer, Gurevitch, 2001). As highlighted by Norris (2000), postmodern campaign must be of a long-term activity that party organization is not able to implement without external resources. In this phase, parties have outsourced some activities: study of political policies, polls on electorate preferences and planning and implementation of political campaigns<sup>44</sup>. Many of their functions, once performed by their complex unitary organizations, are now carried out from their margins. Other actors perform the same tasks instead of party departments: consultants, think tanks, associations, politics organizations or informal groups, etc. As we will see, the relation between party and other actors can assume different shapes: from top-down relation to peer relationship.

As far as political communication is concerned, parties can delegate functions through two different ways, that correspond to different stages of the outsourcing process. At first, there is a “buying logic”. In the television era and, later, in the digital era, parties need “media management” to influence the public sphere. Therefore, in a situation of membership crisis, parties urgently want to know electorate necessities. The acquisition of expertise for communication and for polling takes place through “buying” specialised services or hiring professionals, operating outside their boundaries. The training of consultants takes place outside the supervision of paid staff. Even if the campaign is “sales or market driven” (Lees-Marshment 2001), the party continues to exercise a partial control over political messages and content, a control that was lost in the subsequent and most recent “post-spin era”. Indeed, after 2000, the

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<sup>44</sup> About outsourcing and the de-differentiation of political parties, cfr. Raniolo (2004, 2006), Revelli (2013), Sampugnaro (2015).

membership crisis has got worse and parties have to deal with a reduction in their funding (Scarrow and Greznor 2010).

Planning a campaign became more difficult because parties have to cope with high levels of segmentation of their electorate: no more can they propose a unique campaign, but rather, many different campaigns for each relevant group. In the network society of late modernity, organizations lose their grip on individuals and are replaced by broad and fluid social networks (Castells 2009).

Consequently, “keeping in touch” with citizens has become very difficult. In recent years, some parties try to construct “parallel” linkages with groups, associations, social movements and, also, “individual membership”. The party aims to become a central hub of a network of groups and to mobilize more segments, improving the degree of social penetration. In this case, parties necessarily lose control over what they communicate. Between the two forms of outsourcing, there is another fundamental difference regarding the relation with the citizen-elect. In the “buying” solution, the voter must be persuaded: the political consultants “spin” the message to influence voters, but the politicians do not lose control over the content of communication entirely. In the post-spin era, supporters’ mobilization is strategically central and the principal purpose is the indirect activation of citizens, even if the party gives up control over messages. The parties aim for their supporters to become “producers” of campaign actions, especially on the web. In the “connective action” era (Bennett and Segelberg 2012), the user can autonomously produce and distribute campaign content (messages, photos, comics, videos). In 2.0 context, the sharing of personalized ideas, plans, images, and network resources is central to the mobilization of other persons, especially “apathetic” people. In other words, parties are no more the main actors of political campaigns, but rather share “the field” with other individual and collective actors.

### **3. One candidate, one programme and two strategies**

Two models – buying and postspin – can coexist, as the European campaign shows. Many similarities in the campaigns of the People Party (EPP) and of the Socialist Party (PSE) can be observed<sup>45</sup>. The campaigns

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<sup>45</sup> The study included the examination of official (and public) documents on the election campaign, found on the websites of the PES and EPP and on the websites of some political think tanks (FEPS, Robert Schuman Institute).

were developed in about six months, although planning activities started earlier. Campaign activities started from January 2014, with the full functionality of the war rooms. The latter would have to accommodate the campaigns of the European parties and, more particularly, of the candidate for President of the Commission: Junker for the EPP and Schultz for the Socialists. The intensification of activities occurred about 50/60 days before the election date, with constant monitoring of public opinion and with the planned distribution of posters and gadgets. For the first time, a changing legal framework produced a candidate-centred campaign, which may partly be considered an opportunity: to build activities around a unifying element. Two candidates were “crowned” in two European mega-events, and both were engaged in long electoral tours throughout Europe.

The European parties carried out a transformation from many national parties (belonging to a single parliamentary group) to a single political subject and to a unitary “manifesto”. In a phase of economic crisis, sharing a political agenda is very problematic, but parties were committed to this objective. In 2014 the EPP, for example, elaborated a unitary program that was deeply changed by affiliated parties, and voted on in the final version in the Congress of Dublin (March 6/7). For Shultz, the central event of the campaign was in Rome, during the PES Congress.

The choice of two parties to construct a unified campaign for all parties of the union appears as a unique event of its kind. The claim “Believe in People”<sup>46</sup> was the leitmotif of the communication of parties linked to the EPP: it recalled the acronym of the party and confirmed a Europhile vision. However, the innovative features were the constitution of a war room unit with headquarters in Brussels. A group of selected political consultants conducted the campaign with support from a team of young media professionals: 25 “e-campaigners”, who came from all the EU Member States. With regard to communication, the “senior” team envisaged dynamic action in the days of the “election race” and planned to act through social networks. Particularly in this last sense, the role of young professionals was very important: they dealt with communication on the web (facebook, twitter, pinterest, etc.), produced web-content (video, messages, photos, infographics) and reports about internet communication. Therefore, they were committed to fostering the communication flow between the EPP and its own affiliated parties.

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Therefore I conducted some interviews with PES and PPE paid staff in Brussels (in April) to reconstruct the “logical” motivations of the planned activities.

<sup>46</sup> Later, staff used the hashtag #withJunker to communicate on web.

Although this was not simple, their staff made efforts to “humanize” their candidate Junker, improving his public image and his empathy. They advised him to laugh more and to pay attention to supporters at public events.

In order to support the candidacy of Schulz for President, the PSE build a campaign (supranational in its aims), called “knockthevote”. Also in this case, there was a war room composed of paid staffers and external consultants in Brussels. In the staff, there were many young professionals, coming from different nations.

The aim was to initiate a “grassroots” campaign, referring directly to activists and, at a wider level, to the supporters of the political parties in each state, partially bypassing the national parties. Central staff<sup>47</sup> supported Shultz’ campaign in political events such as conventions and media programmes. They aimed to construct a popular image: a candidate near to ordinary people, embraced by in media representation. For example, Shultz ex-footballer, played football with supporters and picked up their children.

As its cornerstones, political staff wanted to increase supporters in order to enhance mobilization and, simultaneously, to take part in the political campaign with innovations. The main aims is the activation of wider supporters’ networks than those of the national parties and the building of a campaigners’ community.

In the communication strategy, the two parties afford same problems and produces many similar solutions. For instance, the socialist party are no longer main opponent for EPP as EPP is not the principal problem for PES. Others are the alarms: populist parties and the foreseen growth of abstention became principal issues. This produced a decrease of the programmatic differences between the two parties and between the two candidates for President: the results are sometimes paradoxical, as the television debates, for the reason that the principal opponent became populism. Because different levels of economic crisis, merging all national campaign is problematic for these two European parties: southern national parties were more sensitive towards the euro-sceptic “clime”, while northern ones can still preserve a European spirit. For the EPP, this change of prospective produced an increment of political messages against their opponents, whilst the other traditional political parties were found to be allies, with a consequent diminution of the differences

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<sup>47</sup> In particular Brian Synnott (responsible for communication), Marte Ingul (responsible for social media).

between the traditional European parties and candidates for the presidency of the European Commission.

Although there were similarities in 2014, the two parties had different approaches to the campaign. Within a centripetal approach, the biggest European party changed its traditional campaign strategy. Despite the difficulties in “*reductio ad unum*”, political communication was planned in Brussels. A central staff translated messages and published them in different Facebook Pages, one for each state, often without consulting national parties.

Also in the PSE, affiliated national parties partially gave up control over the European election campaign in a double manner: they delegated activities supporting the presidential candidate to a single communication board at a European level, and to the volunteers’ election campaign implementation in the territories.

Central staff coordinated the campaign without any official contribution from the communication offices of the national parties, but the logic of the PSE campaign was centrifugal because the party planned an “outside campaign”: at the centre, it was coordinated by external consultants and paid staff, while the campaign was implemented in a decentralized manner by supporters. The “*reductio ad unum*” was not crucial in the centrifugal model adopted by the PES: in this case, the campaign bypassed national parties and supporters had a wide margin for formulating the message (Sampugnaro, 2015). The essence of the “Partnership Model” (Lees-Marshment, 2013) consists precisely in the role given to volunteers. This new type of political campaign highlights the fact that political parties by themselves are not enough. Nowadays they must construct new alliances with new actors: individuals, organizations and informal groups. Moving from a “market driven” to a “political partnership model” means a radical innovation in political action: parties build “permanent volunteer-oriented organizations, develop engagement to suit the user, and view volunteers as partners in the campaign” (Lees-Marshment 2013, 227). As in a snowballing process, volunteers are overall “campaigners”, ready to support the policies and actions of a party. The logic behind returning to a “face to face” relation is that “to convince people, you must include people”. The PES hopes to enlarge the number of its supporters who are skilful in mobilization: acting independently, these citizens can form broader networks than those of the parties.

The PES documents<sup>48</sup> (programmes, conference papers, journals) show the adoption of this model in electoral mobilization, which is also seen in their recovering previous benchmark experiences<sup>49</sup>. The centrality of volunteers is accompanied by the relevance of the internet platform. ICT is useful “to draw in volunteers, to coordinate their work with the help of field organizers, and to provide a dashboard that indicates to party HQ where the campaign is on target geographically and where it needs more resources” (Liegey and Huggins, 2013)

In these documents, a scientifically approach is appreciated: methods are selected because the efficacy is empirically confirmed by studies<sup>50</sup> or by the electoral results of campaigns<sup>51</sup>. Therefore, the PES develops its monitoring of political outreach thanks to volunteers: a collection of data on mobilization activities in the area is compared with the results of the national parties.

Recruitment activity is central in the #Knockthevote campaign, especially through the internet platform. On the PES site (section-dedicated activists), each supporter can sign up and immediately receive news about the closest “organizer” in the territory and about campaign events. The latter is informed of a new volunteer and of his availability to engage in field activities. In this way, supporters can become activists, also without any formal registration in the member party<sup>52</sup>. This channel

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<sup>48</sup> I refer to documents produced directly (PSE) or indirectly (organizations or journals linked to a party). These highlighted the usefulness of a return to the origins of mobilization. In a new technological context, the meaning and the relevance of “face to face” is very different compared to the past (Sampugnaro, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> In particular, French experiences (Holland, Jean Paul Huchon) and Obama’s Campaign are recalled in official documents. Cfr. Liegey *et al.* (2010, 6), Liegey, Muller, Pons (2013).

<sup>50</sup> For example, the relevance of volunteers is confirmed by empirical results on the effectiveness of direct communication (Green, Gerber, Nickerson 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Ballarin Cereza (2014) and Micus (2010) on campaign modernization; a review on *Labour* campaign in April (2013), Sampugnaro (2006).

<sup>52</sup> Art. 18 of the Statute (version 2015) says “All members of PES member parties are automatically members of the PES. Those who wish to be active in the PES can register as PES activists. PES activists must be members of a PES member Party. PES activists can set up city groups. The PES Presidency adopts operating rules for PES activists”. In previous article about activists, Pes Activist “must be members of their national party”. In “Operating Rules for Pes Activist” (2013), PES includes new roles in local organizations of European Party (City Group): In particular there are “guests” that are a Pes “Supporters” who are not members of a PES member Party: they “may attend city group meeting or activists meeting as



would not be necessary to participate, because members of national parties were always enrolled in the PES, by statute, but the direct linkage between the PES and activists is not only of symbolic relevance. Indirect enrolment, mediated by the national parties, does not produce real involvement of activists and supporters, while direct adhesion could construct a new supranational form of political integration, based on the association of European citizens. In an official document, we find the following: “the aim of building networks of activists could facilitate the identification of European nationals and encourage them to vote in European elections” (Hertner 2013, 147) thanks also to the digital platform (see Esteve del Valle, 2014). This “small revolution” in ways of adhesion provides the basis for overcoming the “second order party” or the party without a base of subscribers. The PES has lost a key feature of this type of party, and is trying to become a new organization. This project of a true European party is supported by other actions: training and the construction of a community.

Intensive training is a precondition of this new phase. The staff project a snowball model that began at Brussels. In the central office, communication experts carry on direct lessons to “supertrainers” (from one to three people for every country). Coming back to their territories, these people become trainers for thousands of activists but, overall, they are the interface of the PES, assuming the role of national coordinators of the campaign. The supertrainers’ role is decisive: they adapt content to territorial needs, produce slides, documents and events on mobilization techniques and, particularly, on “door to door” methods.

In turn, these are linked to a network of volunteers - spread throughout the nation, though not in a uniform fashion - volunteers, who only partly coordinate their activities together with those of the parties that support the PES nationally. In this sense, there is a partial bypassing of traditional modes of vertical coordination of election campaigns, which were once entrusted to the internal hierarchy of the party, and now to a horizontal network of relations.

In this new context, the PES tried to construct a political community with the support of a digital platform. The EPP staff also placed a strong emphasis on digital communication, but their approach was centripetal and nationally oriented. The choice was to realize a unified campaign for all member parties, translating the political contents into national languages. This entailed platform multiplication, one for each language of

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an observer” and “are strongly advised to register in their Party List of supporters or equivalent”.

the Union. Facebook pages, for example, in general refer to each individual state, and are managed by a single e-campaigner. Similarly, with regard to Twitter, with the activation of single national accounts, they tried to convey the same message, translating it into the language of the territory, to reach as many voters as possible.

For the PES, the digital platform also has other functions: it is used for mobilization activities but, above all, for organizational aims, and for the construction of group identity. In practise, city groups realized local activities according to their targets and territories<sup>53</sup>, while Facebook, Twitter and Storify became the space of a shared and common campaign. These digital platforms collected manifestos, videos and, overall, photos that activists posted after political events. The choice of English as a common language in which to interact allows all volunteers to discuss texts, images and policies, to share the most important events and to produce a “common sense” of a political community. Therefore, sharing comments and producing European debate are very innovative aspects: activists are able to interact with each other using the Facebook pages of the party but, above all, to join in conversation on twitter with specific hashtags. This use of platforms allows the construction of a European community of activists and of a truly supranational campaign.

#### **4. Conclusions**

There are several reasons for consider this as the first “European” electoral campaign. In 2014, the unifying element of party mobilization activities is the indirect election of the President of the European Commission. The political reconstruction of the regulatory framework and the new climate of opinion explain the personalization of the campaign. Thanks to a substantial change in the system of financing of political parties, the main parties, the EPP and the PES, can plan a campaign on a European scale, with their candidate at the centre: Schultz for the Socialists and Juncker for the People Party. Operations were headed by Brussels and by highly professionalized teams. For the first time, the parties tried to construct “unified” campaigns with strategies of Europeanisation of the electoral message, but the profound economic crisis in South Europe made it very problematic because of the difficulty

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<sup>53</sup> Each local group has a Facebook page: sometimes open only to members, in others used as “windows” for the initiatives of the group. From the interviews, there is also extensive use of WhatsApp for local mobilization.

in reconciling the interests of the national parties adhering to the same European party. The attempt was, nevertheless, very significant. The planning and management of unitary campaigns became useful steps for building *Europarties*: this common activity induced national party stakeholders to reflect together with their European partners before the formulation of a binding program for the whole parliamentary group.

Despite many similarities, the two parties drew two different models of the election campaign that reflected different traditions and practises. Within a centripetal approach, the People Party intended to implement a unified campaign for all member parties, delegating “translation” (not to be understood in solely linguistic terms) to e-campaigners of the content of political communications. A supranational profile campaign was also present in the case of the Socialist Party, though with different implications. In the 2014 European elections, the campaign followed a partially centrifugal and “grassroots” model: it was centrally programmed and ready to be differently and locally defined in the individual states by volunteers in direct contact with their Brussels headquarters. The centrifugal campaign of the Socialist Party was able to stimulate user-generated contents (images, videos, documents, etc.) by militants; however, the party lost its centrality within the communication circuit. Instead, the creation of a common platform for all militants, and the choice to select a single language for the sharing of events, set the basis for the construction of a supranational political community of militants. Though limited to supporters of the Socialist Party, this model appears able to give life to a European public sphere without national borders, and has the merit of having identified and connected a potential social basis for the creation of a true *Europarty*.

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THE DEGENERATION OF THE “VOTE OF XCHANGE”  
FROM THE TYPOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES TO CRIME

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**1. Introduction**

In the well-regarded classification of electoral behavior elaborated by Parisi and Pasquino (1977), the “vote of exchange” is defined as the direct relationship between voter and candidate and it consists of a voter’s performance (the vote) to which corresponds a counter performance by the elected candidate (and/or by the party) that is usually sustained through public resources. The “vote of exchange” has been often identified as preferential voting *tout court* for a specific candidate within those electoral systems that provide such possibility of choice for voters.

In recent times, in Italy the expression “vote of exchange” is used “with different meanings and still referring to similar phenomena, but not

entirely coinciding” (Fruncillo 2014). In light of degenerative episodes that have compromised its expression, however legitimate, it has taken a completely negative connotation, appearing as a crime among the rules of the Italian penal code. Law 356 of 1992, in fact, changes article 416 of the Criminal Code by introducing the crime of “*politico-mafioso* electoral exchange”. Specifically, the law refers both to the relationship between candidates and organized crime involved in election campaigns, and to the actual vote-buying through a financial reimbursement.

Through the description of some cases, identified by the analysis of electoral and judicial reports, we will present an overview of the variety of the “vote of exchange” in Italian elections, starting with the legitimate forms of such voting behavior to arrive at a description of those on the margins of legality and illegal exchange. The different cases will be examined in the light of the legal context in which they occurred, that is, taking into account the part of the electoral mechanism which can encourage, or not, the emergence of such practices. Finally, by analyzing the electoral reform, known as “*Italicum*”, an attempt will be made at a discussion of the possible effects that the new rules on double gender preference may have on voting behavior and, specifically, on the vote of exchange.

## **2. The political exchange**

The category of the “vote of exchange” is understood in the wider context of “political exchange”. Sometimes, according to some authors, the two categories correspond.

In the theory of social exchange a direct dyadic relationship is hypothesized, founded, more often than not, on the asymmetry of power. Who gives, making a favor to another, has an expectation for a reward that is not always defined in advance (Blau 1964).

In political exchange “come into play resources such as the consensus and influence on public decisions” (Della Porta 1997). Ilchman and Uphoff (1971) define as political exchange all those situations in which (electoral and political) support is acquired by offering/providing a series of resources in return. These resources are usually distributed and granted by the politician in the exercise of his functions in the elected position or in any case for his political power.

Drawing on the principles of the economy and the market, Pizzorno (1993) uses the concept of political exchange mainly in the scope of collective bargaining between trade union representatives and business



associations. When in a situation of low market power trade unions can achieve significant benefits from the exchange, precisely, consisting of an intangible resource – the agreement to not destabilize the social order – we are faced with a “political” exchange.

From the scope of labor relations, political exchange has extended its conceptual framework becoming a fundamental element to explain some of the electoral dynamics in today’s democracies. As part of the logic of market exchange, political parties are treated almost like political entrepreneurs seeking profit that use decisions within institutions (policies aimed at social groups) to collect the most numbers of votes (Downs 1957, 295; Rusconi 1984, 22).

Ornaghi (1993) provides a systematic definition of political exchange: “political exchange means that political practice, typical of Western democratic systems, in which there is a transaction of goods of different nature between political system and economy. [...] political exchange constitutes a mechanism for political legitimacy and social integration to both the political system and the single governmental structure. “

According to Rusconi (1984, 19) political exchange is definable “as a situation in which goods of a different nature are negotiated between economics and politics.” He emphasizes the particularity of one of the goods negotiated that does not have an economic nature such as “political loyalty, democratic consensus or simply suspension of active dissent” (Rusconi 1984, 19). This means that “political exchange is not the equivalent or counterpart in politics of what takes place in the economic market” (Rusconi 1984, 24).

Legitimacy seems to be an important characteristic in the mechanism of political exchange, giving dignity to this mode of politics that, however, for common sense is considered negatively.

### **3. The vote of exchange**

It is above all through elections that a phase of political exchange takes place. The vote is nothing more than the expression of a choice of every citizen of a political program whose implementation is proposed by a party, or it can be the choice of a representative in the institutions who will guarantee benefits, or has already provided them, to the voter and a group of voters (Mancini 2001, 134).

A negative connotation is usually assigned to the vote of exchange but, by extending its definition, we can find, in some cases, characteristics of a positive sign.

Referring particularly to the electoral behaviors practiced in the First Republic in Italy, the vote of exchange must be framed in the broader category of political exchange where we can identify both positive and negative aspects. In an extensive definition of the vote of exchange, in relation to the political culture of the Italian southern regions, Cersosimo and Donzelli (2000, 94) state: “Whichever vote, in a democracy, is not a vote of “exchange”? Why should a voter vote for someone, if not for the fact that this last promises to be the bearer of his/her interests? And who will ever be able to indicate what are “noble” and politically sound interests, distinguishing these from those which are “ignoble” and pathological? ... As the political system changes itself, and the electoral game becomes more open, the spaces increase of what has been called the “electoral market”, a place of exchange by definition. “

In the narrower definition of the vote of exchange this concept is meant in its entirely negative connotation and that is as illicit electoral behavior, according to the moral principles of democracy and, sometimes, even according to laws. This illicit electoral behavior corresponds, in part, to the content of the regulation introduced in Italy relating to the crime of vote of exchange.

Referring particularly to the electoral behavior practiced in the First Republic in Italy, the vote of exchange must be seen in the broader category of political exchange in which, as we have seen, we can identify aspects of both signs.

The activity related to the concepts of political exchange and vote of exchange is usually included within the broader category of “political clientelism” (Eisenstadt, Roniger 1984). This last is a terminology that takes us far back in time, to when representation in the nascent democracies was reserved to a few “patrons” who “establish relations of belonging and/or trust with clients” (Fantozzi 1993, 62), the voters in a limited suffrage, that in exchange for their vote received favors or services. In the evolution of modern democracies, the political clientelism has changed deeply and has taken different forms and ways. Fantozzi (1993, 124-125) identifies at least four modes of expression of political clientelism, from that based on groups of familistic nature<sup>54</sup>, to one founded on reasons of business, to that kind oriented towards to some specific political groups (categories of groups) and that form of clientelism where there is the intervention of groups of criminals.

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<sup>54</sup> Assumptions of this mode, and more generally amoral familism, are contained in Banfield (1958).

In the world of the vote of exchange, more modes of clientelism can be included among which we can distinguish between legal and illegal activities. Major ‘buyers’ of consent use in their activity, often, even more than one of these modes. It is necessary to note that obtaining consensus illegally – through those forms of clientelism connected to Mafioso-criminals groups and to motivations of business involving the extortion of preference by threat, or motivations of a business with a real purchase of the vote – take up limited space in the electoral market, as it is evidenced by judiciary investigation<sup>55</sup>.

Among the four types of clientelism identified by Piattoni (2005; 2007) in the regions of Southern Italy a form of “virtuous clientelism” is mentioned. This particular kind of clientelism occurs when certain political conditions are involved and among these, when the governing majority, not in a position of hegemony, is challenged by the forces of opposition. The virtuous character of clientelism derives by the cautious use of public goods for the exchange, which is aimed at the implementation of economic development policies of the territory, in favor, therefore, of the whole community and not just to meet the needs of groups or individuals.

The political clientelism is, therefore, “a way of managing the power and organizing consensus” (Caciagli 2009) and, sometimes, it works as a “virtuous” form of social regulation (Fantozzi 1993). The special commodity of consensus, especially through the vote of preference for the person, feeds political clientelism.

In this essay, with the attempt to give a more complete picture of the behavior of voters and the mode of action of the elected in the competition for the vote, we will illustrate some cases in Italy of “champions of preferences”, that is political representatives who were elected with a high number of vote. This verifying the mode of licit, illicit and virtuous political action that has been used in the huge electoral market to win electoral consensus.

In this context, for the measurement of personal consent, we will use data on preferential voting, treating some cases of politicians elected within electoral systems that provide the preferential vote for a specific candidate, that is, the opportunity for the voter to vote for one or more candidates on a list in addition to the choice of the party (symbol).

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<sup>55</sup> For example, in the case of vote-buying, judicial investigations have led to arrests and convictions of candidates. Perhaps the most striking case is that of a sentenced politician regional director Santi Zappalà, of the elected center-right coalition in the region of Calabria in 2010.

#### **4. The “champions of preferences” in the First Italian Republic. The southern Christian-democrat Antonio Gava**

Antonio Gava<sup>56</sup> arrives in the national politics thanks, above all, to the heritage of the package of preferences of his father<sup>57</sup>. If in the scope of political exchange political entrepreneurs are involved, we may say of Antonio Gava that he inherits the family business. As his first experience in politics was fundamentally his activity of chairman of the board of the province of Naples, a position held when he was very young, just 30 years old, and maintained without interruption from 1960 to 1969. In 1972, Antonio Gava obtains 96,676 votes of preference, achieving the result of the sixth of the elected candidates in DC (Christian Democracy) party, in the same district of Naples-Caserta where his father, Silvio, had built his success that had brought him to being minister several times.

In the following three legislatures (1976, 1979 and 1983), he will be the second elected in the large district of Naples-Caserta, with a number of preferences that exceeds 100 thousand, with changes in line with the consensus obtained by the DC.

In his last mandate, in 1987, Gava will be the most voted of the electoral district, doubling the preferences of four years before. During the ninth legislature (IX), 1983-1987, Gava will assume key roles for the winning of consensus. In fact, he will be Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, succeeding Remo Gaspari, another champion of the preferential voting, a Christian-democrat. Evidently, it is the ministry that increases political “clientele”.

A government post, especially that of Minister but also that of undersecretary, implies a “responsibility” towards the “territory” not always based on the specific competences of the department to which one is assigned. The diffuse DC’s power system of those years – the *occupation of power*, according to a known definition of Ruggero Orfei (1976) – provided, in fact, that those who had been elected or nominated for government posts, had to take on the burden of following up the requests of voters-clients, trying to provide answers in any scope. Therefore, the area of competence/responsibility for – the often particularistic – individual and/or collective requests for the minister and

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<sup>56</sup> On the life and political career of Antonio Gava there is only one autobiography (Gava and Gava 2005). Other information on the political life of Gava can be tracked in the history volume of DC.

<sup>57</sup> In the year of his last election, in 1968, Silvio Gava received 120,736 preference votes, making him the first to be elected in Naples-Caserta.

the undersecretary was the territory, this last as the place where the voters resided of the (particular) electoral district, in the case of DC, belonging to the ‘political stream’ (*corrente politica*). Among other things, along with Forlani and Scotti, Gava was one of the leaders of the “Alleanza Popolare” (“Popular Alliance”) political stream, better known as a large center “doroteo”. With the division of power among the DC “streams”, the so-called “Cencelli handbook”<sup>58</sup> became famous, through which the criteria for the distribution of government posts were established among the DC streams, considering especially the votes of preference and the party cards under the control of members of the currents.

The dark side of the brilliant political career of Antonio Gava is represented in the pages written by the judges about his relations with the “Camorra”. With the accusation of vote of exchange, during the 80s, Gava was even arrested although for only three days. Gava was acquitted by the court even if in the judgment of acquittal disturbing elements can be traced about the relationship between politics and organized crime: “... the Court considers that it is proven with certainty that Gava was aware of the relationship of functional reciprocity existing between local politicians of his stream/current and the criminal organization the Camorra of Alfieri as well as of the contamination between organized crime and local institutions of Campania”.

## **5. The “champions of preferences” in the First Republic. The northern Christian-democrat: Mariano Rumor**

In his long political career (from the first constituent government after the Second World War, in the Italian parliament continuously for 10 legislatures, to his election in the first European parliament in 1979), Mariano Rumor was one of the leading representatives of the presence of Catholics in politics. Growing up in a deeply Catholic family, he was a member of the DC since the presence of the party in the first consultations in the new democratic regime<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> The manual, a few pages written by a DC executive, Cencelli, with the criteria and “weights” of DC “*correnti*” for the allocation of government posts. Manual Cencelli see Venditti (1981).

<sup>59</sup> On the life and political career of Rumor, as well as many works on the political history of the DC and the First Republic, see Reato E. e Malgeri F. (2007), Ciscato C. (2010) e Ghirelli G. (1970).

At the beginning, within the DC, Rumor was one of the leaders of the “Iniziativa Democratica” (“Democratic Initiative”) stream recalling the ‘principles of Dossetti’ on “the presence of Catholics in politics for a democratic reformism.”

Rumor is from Vicenza, a very Catholic province of a region in which the Catholic party achieved an absolute majority in consensus. The “white” Veneto, owed its position to the determining intervention of the Catholic Church structures that decided, in fact, who should be the representatives to be elected. And Rumor had all the requirements to be a valuable member of the Catholic party.

In his first legislature, in 1948, Rumor was elected (as third elected in the DC list) with 43,002 votes of preference in the district of Verona-Vicenza-Padova-Rovigo.

The number of preferential votes obtained has a continuous growth in the career of Rumor, in parallel – and consequently – to the importance of the power positions held both in the various governments and in the organization of the party. He almost doubled his support in the transition from the IV to the V Legislature (from 93 thousand to 168 thousand preferences). This expansion of his personal consent depends, in fact, on the post as national secretary of the party, from 1964 to 1969, which was a difficult period for the country and politics in which the alliance of government between the DC and PSI occurred. And, immediately after the elections of 1968, Rumor is appointed prime minister, forming three consecutive governments which lasted from December 1968 to August 1970.

In the elections of 1972, still the level of personal approval increases strongly reaching 266,710 votes. In his last mandate as deputy, in 1976, his personal consent descends steeply to 73,729 votes. Although it is difficult to establish precise hypotheses about the sudden drop of Rumor’s support, and despite the seal of the party, the fact of not having had any relevant position, after so many years, either in government or in the party partly contributed to his failure, as well as his having controversially abandoned the “dorotea” stream of which he was one of the leaders to take the position of the new secretary of the DC, Benigno Zaccagnini.

Measured through the preferential voting system, the path of the political career of Rumor suggests some insights to interpret the personal relationship between representatives and represented within the DC. The strength of the political career of Rumor is his being a Catholic and having the full confidence of the Church hierarchy.

The (dimension of) power management is crucial. When Rumor begins to assume positions of government, his electoral audience widens,

gathering support even among those voters of the party not directly “encouraged” to vote by the religious structures.

Another essential condition for his success is the reference to strong streams within the party. In the game of preferences, the political streams were decisive. In the years of Rumor, indeed, the electoral system for the House of deputies included the multiple preference; in this case, the voter could assign, in addition to his vote for the party, four votes of preference to candidates on the same list. With few exceptions, most of the voters who expressed more than one preference “chose” candidates belonging to the same DC stream, the so-called system of “electoral groups” (“*cordate elettorali*”): the strongest candidate urged a vote of preference for other candidates of the same party stream, as well as for himself. The electoral decline of Rumor occurred when he left the strong stream “dorotea”.

In the political exchange between Rumor and his faithful voters, the counter-performance may be identified especially in the protection of religious principles. More in general, the exchange with his voters takes place – as everywhere, and as a measure of the effectiveness of the action for the winning of consensus – through the implementation of public works.

For Rumor and other “champions” of preferences, the exchange of collective nature with voters occurs through the construction of public works. In the history of the early years of the Italian Republic, of the reconstruction and economic boom, many useless public work realized by the Fund for the South (*Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*) are often mentioned. But the territories of the North, where the DC obtained the highest levels of support, also featured public interventions and works which proved quite useless. In the case of Rumor, “his” highway has passed been added to the list of public wastes, a “duplication” of the existing one, in Veneto renamed PI.RU.BI. (The initials of the three DC leaders who supported the realization: Piccoli, Rumor, Bisaglia)<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> The sociologist Danilo Dolci, noting in Sicily the realization of many useless works with the financing of the “Fund for the South”, has written a book of over 400 pages with the significant title “Waste” (Dolci 1960). The “waste” of PI.RU.BI. is shown as a typical example of Christian Democrat clientelism in Veneto.

## **6. From the First to the Second Republic: Pino Gentile**

Currently in government post, Pino Gentile is the longest-serving regional councilor in Italy. He has sat, uninterrupted, on the benches of the Regional Council of Calabria since 1985.

His political career began in the city council of Cosenza and then in the “*Giunta*” as assessor and mayor.

He arrives in the Regional Council of Calabria, within the PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano – Socialist Italian Party), in 1985 obtaining 24,498 preferential votes (with the system of multiple preference), receiving the most votes in the province of Cosenza and the second in Calabria. In the next legislature (1990-95), he joined the council as assessor, first, for professional training and then for culture, and then assessor of public works.

In the regional elections of 1995, in the middle of the crisis of the party system, Gentile abandoned the PSI and found a place as a candidate in the Italian Republican Party. In this very small party, he has been able to accomplish the mission impossible. With over 10 thousand votes of preference of the total 18,300 votes of the list, Gentile won the seat for the PRI. Nevertheless, already the following year, Gentile left the PRI and ended up in Forza Italia Party, one of the parties that “refused” to accept Gentile’s candidature before the election. The bridges of gold offered, now, by Forza Italia lead Gentile to occupy since 1997 the post of vice-president of the council (*Giunta*) and assessor for the budget.

In the elections in 2000, still with the FI party, Gentile is still the first elected in Calabria and among the most voted-for candidates in Italy. Inside the *Giunta* of center-right he is designed, first, assessor responsible for personnel and local authorities, and then for tourism and productive activities.

In the elections of 2005, he is still the most voted-for with 18,684 votes of preference and he is the second most voted-for councilor in Italy. In 2005 the majority in the regional council passes to the center-left and Gentile has been appointed as leader of the largest opposition party, FI.

In the election of 2010, he holds the record of the most voted-for in Calabria with 14,676 preferences. In the *Giunta* of center-right will be the vice-president and assessor.

In the early elections in 2014 he obtained, with the New Center-Right 11,018 votes of preference on the total 18,200 votes obtained by the list in the district of Cosenza.

In this very long career, Pino Gentile has the way to open the doors of politics to his brother Antonio – who has been a senator since 2001, and



currently in office – and to his daughter Katia who was vice-mayor of the city of Cosenza.

Gentile represents many characteristics of a “champion of the preferences”. He started his career at the bottom, as an activist of the party and town councilor, then mayor, regional councilor and assessor. He does not project his career beyond the region, leaving, however, this opportunity to his brother.

Gentile maintains almost intact a substantial core of loyal voters who follow him – and vote for him – even when he is forced by circumstances to use different symbols under which to resubmit his candidature.

In his career as regional assessor, Gentile has been in charge, practically, in almost all the areas of regional competences, as it happened in the first republic to those Christian-democrat ministers re-elected several times of whom, evidently, was not required a specific skill but only the political capacity of the direction of the ministry. Perhaps in the list of honors of Gentile only the direction of the Department of Health is missing, this last is considered the most important – at least for the sums administered in the regional budget – although Gentile could get, for his electoral success, the contribution of “electors” coming from the health sector.

Finally, Gentile managed to pass unscathed, despite the hardships of the first election in the new regional course, in the transition from the First to the Second republic, and despite his party of affiliation, the PSI, being wiped out, in fact, by the investigation of the magistrates of the so called operation “Clean hands” (“*Mani Pulite*”), and by the negative judgment of the voters. Indeed, in his new political position within the transformed political system, Gentile manages to expand his “enterprise”, transforming it from an individual to family one.

## **7. The “champion” of the Second Republic: Franco Fiorito**

Franco Fiorito represents a new type of “champion of preferences” of the Second Republic. In fact, he has played with much arrogance, the role of the politician who takes possession of public money for the sole purpose of obtaining personal benefits and increasing his support.

Fiorito achieves a prestigious career under the transformations of the political system and within public institutions. When he was young, Fiorito militates in the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano, Italian Social Movement) and without the democratic “clearance” of this party and the new law on the election of mayors, he would never have become the

mayor of Anagni. The direct election as mayor of his city has represented the stepping stone to get to the region, emerging from the election as provincial councillor.

The confidence of his fellow citizens – and their votes – has been necessary to Fiorito to occupy a seat in the region. At his first regional election, Fiorito gets in the provincial constituency of Frosinone 17,296 votes of preference on 38,470 votes going to his party AN (Alleanza Nazionale, National Alliance).

In the elections of 2010 he is candidate for the PDL (Partito della Libertà, Party of Freedom), in which party he held the charge of provincial coordinator, and obtained 26,217 votes and the primacy of the most voted candidate of the Region of Lazio. The majority in the region goes to the center-right, but Fiorito is not allocated any post in the Giunta, despite his electoral success. He assumed, however, the responsibility of leader of the PDL. Taking advantage of the privilege of being the leader in the council – and the lack of strictness of the rules governing the matter – Fiorito used the funds for the functioning of the council for his personal expenses (purchase of apartments, cars, trips for a total of about 750 thousand Euro). From the subsequent judiciary investigation emerged a widespread system based on the “personal” use of public funds and, after the arrest of Fiorito and the involvement of other regional councilors, there was the consequent decision of the President of the Giunta to resign, causing the early dissolution of the regional council.

The start of the career of this “champion of preference” is not very different from the politicians of the past. A *cursus honorum* that proceeds by degrees and where voters’ confidence is crucial.

Unlike in the past, when the relationship of trust of voters with candidates was filtered by the party of affiliation, in the Second Republic, very often, the trust is part of the personal relations between politicians and voters that go far beyond the selection criteria based on programmatic orientations and on the choice of the party. In our case, a candidate for the regional elections can get much support from citizens who he administered as mayor, regardless of their political orientation.

Another feature quite common among the new “champions of preferences” is the identification of opponents especially within their same party, from the list proposed to voters. It can happen that the struggle inside the party determines the “sterilization of lists”<sup>61</sup> (Censis

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<sup>61</sup> In practice, the leader of a party, to ensure their election or that of a friend, avoids putting on the list candidates actual competitors that could threaten the election of list headers. In this way, failing to list the “personal” votes of

1992; De Luca 2004) with the result of a loss of support for the same list. It can also happen, as in our case, that the competition inside the party goes beyond the election with improper attempts to delegitimize the colleague/adversary of the party. The consequences of personal competition within the party, while they can have an effectiveness when it happens in the elections, are very damaging to the credibility of the political action policy when it is carried out within the institutions. The Batman case, this is the “nickname” of Fiorito, came to light from a public denunciation of the same Fiorito who accused his party colleague of having used public funds “personally”, that is the same crime, but more extended and with much more serious responsibility, for which Fiorito was jailed.

## **8. Vote buying: Domenico Zambetti**

Domenico Zambetti was arrested in October 2012 for vote of exchange and mafia association. Zambetti had been regional councilor in the House of Lombardy. The accusation against Zambetti is to have bought 4,000 votes at 50 Euro each for a total of 200 thousand Euro paid to a gang of ‘Ndrangheta operating in Lombardy, as well as to have made promises and favors. Zambetti was arrested along with 15 other people. The process is still ongoing. In his defense, Zambetti claims to have paid 200,000 Euro to the ‘Ndrangheta in response to threats received.

Zambetti’s political career began in the last years of the “first republic” in the DC party as city councilor in Cassina de’ Pecchi (MI), then as city assessor and mayor of the town. From 1995 to 1999 he was assessor to the budget of the province of Milan. He was elected regional councilor in Lombardy in 2000 with 3,354 (votes) and president of the council group “CDU – European Popular Party.” In 2005 he was re-elected Regional Councilor on the UDC list with 8,358 votes of preference. In 2005 he was appointed assessor for the office of the Environment and was also assigned powers over Crafts and Services.

He was re-elected, with 11,273 votes, in 2010 in the PDL, the party which he merged with his group “Christian Democracy for the Autonomies” and where he holds the position of regional vice-coordinator. In the new “Formigoni” administration, he was in charge as assessor for the Department of Home.

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potentially competing candidates, the list gets fewer votes and, consequently, at times, fewer seats.

Zambetti's story brings to light a system of relations between politicians and mafia. Political-mafia exchange takes on very concrete (votes in exchange for money) bases but also on promises and favors of much higher importance and consistence than a financial performance.

The other aspect of the story is the export of a model, widely tested in Calabria, to a region, Lombardy, with very different environmental conditions of the territories of domain of criminal organizations. Thus, though it is relatively easy for a candidate to give directions to 4,000 voters in the province of Reggio Calabria, it would seem no small effort in the province of Milan.

## **9. The (partial) reintroduction of the vote of preference in the House of deputies**

The new electoral law for the House of deputies has reintroduced the possibility for the voter to express one or two preferences (if the candidates chosen are of a different kind). This consists of a partial reintroduction, with some limitations, of the preferential voting in the elections for the Chamber of deputies, in the sense that the choice of candidates will be effective only if the list obtains more than one seat. In fact, each list has the first candidate "locked" to whom is assigned the seat obtained from the list.

Trying to analyze more deeply that part of the electoral reform called "Italicum" concerning our discourse on the preferential voting:

The territory is divided into 20 electoral districts which, in turn, are subdivided into 100 *collegi*. In every plurinominal *collegio* a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 9 seats can be assigned. That is, leaving apart the first name-candidate of the list – that may appear in a maximum of 10 *collegi* – in each *collegio* from 2 to 8 candidates can compete, with an average of five candidates for *collegio*. From the competition between the candidates are, in fact, excluded all the parties that are below about 20%, apart from the possibility of some runners as seconds, after the leader of the list, to be "rescued" from the game of the options of pluri-elected list's leaders.

Thus, competition among candidates will regard only those parties that propose their lists with the goal to get the absolute majority of seats. That is, those parties that in the largest *collegi* are able to obtain even 4-5 seats through/on a maximum of nine candidates. Being only those candidates in major parties in the competition and in the larger *collegi*, to be elected will take many votes of preference. The "vote of exchange", in that form which is prosecuted on the penal level, will be not so easily

The degeneration of the “vote of exchange” from the typology of the social sciences to crime

practicable for the specific conditions of the electoral mechanism. For instance, the economic trade of 4-5,000 votes could be useless for the election.

If candidates competing are few, in addition to having to meet the same high number of preferences to be elected, they all become indispensable to the success of the party, especially in those territories where the “personal” vote is much practiced. It becomes, therefore, essential for the party to select the “best” possible candidates that is all the candidates potentially eligible. And in the category of the “best” candidates should not be included, in a competition with these characteristics, those candidates able to gain support – even through illegal practices – but not preferred by a majority of voters who may turn their electoral preference elsewhere precisely because of the presence in the list of “talked-up” candidates.

Nevertheless, in matters of morality, only the will and the attention of the parties can avoid much of the rules, the access of “unpresentable” candidates.

## 10. Conclusions

Through the presentation of several cases of the “champions of preferences”, we have put in evidence how the concept of vote of exchange has undergone a deep transformation. The terminology “vote of exchange” is currently inserted in the text of the Italian Criminal Code – it became a crime – and in the public perception, in journalistic and political language, the vote of exchange has come to take on a meaning almost exclusively with negative valence.

The review of the various cases of the “champions of preferences”, in the two versions of the First and Second Republic, showed that the illegal component of the vote of exchange is residual enough in the counting of personal preferences. Only the recent case of Zambetti, who negotiated with the ‘Ndrangheta to get more votes (which, according to the intentions of Zambetti, these votes would be used to legitimize him as the relevant assessor in the future Giunta, and not for election as councilor, on which he had no doubt of being able to use his strong political relations established thanks to his previous activities as assessor and party leader) could generate in a part of the public opinion the conviction that preferential voting is always a “vote of exchange”.

The “blocked” lists contributed to keep voters away from the polls because, with this electoral system, they had no influence on the choice of

the elected. In the interminable debate that preceded the electoral reform in Italy, the demand for most citizens was to be able to choose, through the preferential voting, their representatives. The compromise solution introduced in the “Italicum” loosened only slightly the power of party leaders to form a parliament of “nominated”, a condition that does not affect positively the democratic structure of our country.

If the parties and representatives “elected” had interpreted the vote of exchange in its original meaning of mode of political exchange, we would probably have had an electoral system that would have returned a parliament more capable of responding to citizens' preferences<sup>62</sup>.

In this light, we can affirm that the illegal vote of exchange, in the terms of the crime, is only a minimum part of the “personal” vote assigned by the voters to the candidates. With the crisis of the political parties, electoral behaviors are increasingly characterized by a personal trust to the candidate with the resulting change of the weight/relevance of one of the actors of political exchange, that is from the party to the candidate.

Through elections remains intact “the mechanism of political exchange [...] as a channel of legitimacy, and therefore of social integration” (Rusconi 1984, 20), despite journalism – and the text of the laws of the Italian state – tends to obscure one of the principles of the functioning of contemporary democracies.

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<sup>62</sup> According to the concept of responsiveness introduced by Dhal (1971).

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## PART II

# THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON CIVIL SOCIETY, INSTITUTIONS AND THE COMMON INTEREST



POLITICAL CHANGE, POWER CONFLICTS  
AND THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF SEXUALITY

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*1. Introduction - 2. The social control of sexuality and power - 3. A brief history - 4. Political orders, conflicts and the social control of sexuality in modern times - 5. Conclusions*

**1. Introduction**

For a long time sociology seems to have taken social control for granted as a necessary mean for the survival of any social formation. Few words have been spent on its applications over sexuality.

By social control we here mean all phenomena and processes which contribute to regulate and organize human behaviour, establishing relations between more subjects in order to pursue collective goals, first of all the realization of some sort of social order<sup>63</sup>. Social control is carried out both at a formal (institutionalized) and at an informal level, through regulation, organization, political means, ideologies and culture. Categories that we will find again later in the essay when dealing with the brief history of sexuality. A history made of rules, laws, regulations,

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<sup>63</sup> See also E.A. Ross, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1896-1898 and *Social Control. A Survey of Foundation of Order*, 1901.

political devices aimed at – this is the thesis underlying the essay – establishing or keeping the social order in any society. A social order which is strictly connected to society's economic structures and relations.

Social control is usually realized through major institutions, like family, marriage, religion. The same ones the social control of sexuality tends to be based upon. For example Durkheim<sup>64</sup> affirmed that social institutions such as the family, marriage and religious cults are nothing but social control agencies, seen as the collective conscience which represses individuals.

The social control of sexuality manifested itself through the centuries in different ways in accordance to the necessities of the period and of the social system in which they operated. Nonetheless they seem to be universal: any society in any time has experienced some sort of marriage and family institutions together with ideologies, religions and legislations (or rules) aimed at strengthening and legitimating them.

Societies control the types and occasions of sexual behaviour mainly through legislations and various institutional mechanisms, although reprobation of individual sexual behaviour can also be highly informal, as in the case of gossip (still very frequent in Mediterranean societies).

Generally it is the dominant minority to impose its ideology on the population. Sexuality is no exception. Social control of sexuality seems to be more severe within the dominant classes which have more to lose in case of subversion of the stratification system, and this control is usually carried out through laws against adultery, homosexuality, sodomy or pederasty. But control doesn't necessarily aim at the subordinated classes: on the contrary, it often concentrates on the dominant ones in order to avoid their desegregation and loss of hegemonic capacity.<sup>65</sup> More generally, Sorokin affirmed that a high indulgence towards sexual behaviour weakens the entire society with the risk of seeing it collapse.<sup>66</sup>

As we can see, here and there it is possible to find an author mentioning social control in relation to sexual behaviour, but rarely a deep sociological analysis.

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<sup>64</sup> Durkheim E. (1895) *Origine du mariage dans l'espece humaine d'apres Westermarck*, *Revue philosophique*, 40, pp. 606-623

<sup>65</sup> Goode, W. (1959), *The Theoretical Importance of Love* in Coser, R.L. (ed) (1974) *The Family, its structures and functions* reprinted from *American Sociological Review* 24 (1)

<sup>66</sup> Sorokin P., (1956), *Fads and Foibles in Modern Sociology and Related Sciences*, tr. it.(1965) *Mode e utopie nella sociologia moderna e scienze collegate*, Barbera Firenze.

Functionalism, for instance, believes that one of a society's main characteristics is to enrol its members through sexual reproduction. There are also authors like Simmel<sup>67</sup> or Ratzenhofer for whom sexuality assumes a fundamental importance within any society since the very formation of a society would be due to the aggregating force of erotic-sexual impulses. Socio-biologists, on their side, stress that the formation of the first social aggregations is due to changes in female sexual receptivity and have focused on reproductive effects and needs.<sup>68</sup>

In general though, their analysis did not concentrate on sexuality as such. May be this intellectual attitude is to be related to the fact that sociologists tend to think that sexuality is not really a sociological issue. As a result, sexuality's sociological implications have been more explored by psychologists, anthropologists and philosophers, rather than by sociologists.

Our discipline (certainly this is more true in Italy) has preferred to target the family (or in recent years, the body) seen as the real foundation of any society. More specifically, family tends to be seen as a society prototype and as a society's first forming nucleus. Family is seen as the basic cell into which society reflects and reproduces itself. Kinship relationships have then been analyzed. Many authors, like Morgan, Mc Lennan, Marx, Engels<sup>69</sup> up till today, have illustrated how the "primitive" social order was dominated by kinship ties. But less debated has been the fact that within these very social formations, sexuality assumes central relevance due to the fact that the core of the kinship (relationship) system is represented by incest taboos and by endogamy and exogamy rules. Those rules structure descent, affinity and residence relations, but they are also and substantially social organization's fundamental rules which actually control sexual activity in the first place.

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<sup>67</sup> Simmel Georg (1923), *Soziologie*, 1923, tr. it. (1998) *Sociologia*, Ed. Comunità, Torino

<sup>68</sup> See also Gallino Luciano (1988), *Dizionario di sociologia*, Utet, Torino; (1994), *Manuale di sociologia*, (diretto da), Utet, Torino, Hrdy Blaffer Sarah (1981), *The woman that never evolved*, tr. it. (1985), *La donna che non si è evoluta. Ipotesi di sociobiologia*, Franco Angeli, Milano

<sup>69</sup> Morgan L.H. (1871) *System of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., Mc Lennan John Ferguson (1866), *Primitive Marriage. An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage*, tr. it. (1991), *Il matrimonio primitivo*, Pieraldo Editore, Roma. Friederich Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, Berlin, 1884, (1963 ed), Marx Karl e Engels Friederich (1844-45), *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, tr. it. (1969), *L'ideologia tedesca*, Editori Riuniti, Roma

In this perspective social control of sexuality, is to be found in close relationship with social organization in the apparent form of kinship and it actually represents the presupposition through which the social formation is reproduced.

The relevance of sexuality within social systems is not exhausted though in primitive societies matrimonial rules.

On the contrary, it is traceable along the whole human evolutionary path up to our days. The social control of sexuality arose at the very moment in which man emancipated from its more animal-like condition.

And for many authors this emancipation coincided with the first forms of labour<sup>70</sup>. In order to respond to their survival needs human beings have organized themselves in formations later evolved in societies. To maximize cooperation efforts a society needs to organize and orientate human activity. Society growth and survival capacities are then directly connected to its organizational level. Now, there is no organization without some sort of control. In the case of human organizations, control over sexuality seems to have evolved together with the organization of human societies. In this perspective the assumption underlying this essay acquires more evidence: in the world power structures have often taken form through the management and control of sexuality. By regulating sexuality, society has been regulated too.

In short, we could say that sexuality is at the very base of every society as reproduction (of its members) but also and not secondarily, as impulse, need, basic instinct which, as such, cannot be left at its wild or natural state.

As man stepped towards its social being and started to live in societies, the relationship with its instincts changed at a double level. On one hand he could growingly count on the additional support – precious for his survival – of culture, on the other hand, his instincts have

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<sup>70</sup> Marx Karl e Engels Friederich (1844-45), *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, tr. it. (1969), *L'ideologia tedesca*, Editori Riuniti, Roma. Marx Karl (1857-58), *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, tr. it. (1968), *Lineamenti fondamentali della critica dell'economia politica. Vol II*, La Nuova Italia Editrice, Firenze. Marcuse Herbert (1955), *Eros and Civilisation. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, tr. it. (1964), *Eros e civiltà*, Einaudi, Torino. Freud Sigmund (1905), *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, tr. it. (1993), *Tre saggi sulla sessualità*, Newton, Roma. Freud Sigmund (1930), *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, tr. it. (1949), *Il disagio della civiltà*, Edizioni Scienza Moderna. Bataille Georges (1957), *L'érotisme*, tr. it. (1991), *L'eroticismo*, Es, Milano

growingly faded, loosing capacity to supply man with a valid orientation for action.

It was then necessary to increasingly codify behaviour in a normative, i.e. social, way.

In other words, man has really become “human” since he has managed to keep distance from his primary instincts and his life has started to be less conditioned by them. During this journey he has had to organize, repress, canalize the nature he had found as given, somehow, overcoming it. And this is how sexuality became a primary problem during all times and civilizations, seen as an “anarchic” and powerful impulse. A threat to the social order.

Quite contrarily to common belief, sexual activity is, among human activities, one of the most subject to regulation, control and organization, although it tends to be seen as the outcome of merely natural, biological instincts. On the contrary, I believe it should be acknowledged that not only sexuality has a central role and function within any society, but also that society (especially due to social control) conditions and forms the expressions, modalities and feelings of human sexuality.

Nonetheless, the social control of sexuality is an ancient practice but quite new in its definition. Through the centuries it has been hid behind the so called “natural and against nature” practices, behind “God’s will and Evil temptations”, healthy needs and unhealthy vices. Sexuality social control issues have been dealt with only in modern times, and rarely by sociologists. In this way sexuality social meanings and sexuality’s and society’s mutual influence have, in my opinion, been underestimated .

It is very well known that Sigmund Freud discovered sexuality's “power of total invasion” towards individuals mental activity<sup>71</sup>. A systematic foundation of the antagonism between sexuality and civilization which will characterize following studies on the issue<sup>72</sup> until Foucault’s analysis will *de facto* contest this type of approach. Actually, Bataille had already argued that sexuality is not in real contraposition with society since it is constituted as a social activity (in relation to the prohibitions connected to it), but he had also sustained the historical need for sexual impulses control in order to allow labour and production development, which would have otherwise been threatened by anarchic and distracting (wasteful) sexual impulses.

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<sup>71</sup>Freud Sigmund (1930), *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, tr. it. (1949), *Il disagio della civiltà*, Edizioni Scienza Moderna.

<sup>72</sup> Marcuse 1955, Bataille 1957.

In Foucault, sex/society contraposition is weaker. Actually, from a certain moment in historical evolution, the two issues seem to blend into one. From the '700 onwards sex is no longer sex but, according to this author, becomes *sexuality*. I.e. something that man and society produced through the centuries, something that is no longer there as a given nature. It has become a socially organized activity.

On the other hand, society and power, are now based on new sexual management practices.

In Freud, sexuality and civilization antagonism is to be founded within sexuality deeply aggressive instincts which represent a threat to civilization, forcing culture to call against them every possible reinforcement<sup>73</sup>. According to Freud this is where restrictions over the sexual sphere lay. This progress towards civilization is first of all achieved through progress of labour, as Marcuse reminds us<sup>74</sup>. Repressed sexual energy is then redirected on labour and intellectual activities. The thesis isn't totally new. Some sociologists, philosophers and psychologists move from the assumption that society evolved by labour. Marx and Engels<sup>75</sup> had already argued that men started to distinguish themselves from animals when they started to produce their own means of sustenance. Always along these lines, philosopher Georges Bataille stressed that the organization of sexual activity is essential both for the production and for the maintenance of the social order.

In this sense we can say that the social control of sexuality is fundamental to society itself.

Here it's worth mentioning that also for the German sociologist Helmut Schelski<sup>76</sup> social regulation (here meant as a cultural superstructure) of sexual impulses imposed itself already at the rise of the first forms of human societies. It was one of the first cultural expressions and one of the first needs of our species. The regulation of sexual and reproductive relationships is here conceived as a primary social mode of all human behaviour, to the extent that reversing these norms would mean to undermine the established social form.

So, even if from different authors and disciplines it is possible to trace a common path according to which sexuality would appear in contraposition to society, to the extent that it has become necessary to

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<sup>73</sup> Freud, 1930

<sup>74</sup> Marcuse, 1955

<sup>75</sup> Marx and Engels, 1844-5

<sup>76</sup> Schelsky, Helmut (1960), *Soziologie der sexualität*, tr. it. (1960), *Il sesso e la società*, Garzanti, Milano.



repress it, canalize it. And this is where Michel Foucault comes into play reversing the analysis and explaining that the history of sexuality, instead of being the history of its prohibition is actually the history of its raising into “discourse”, the path that lead to its knowledge.

In the first of his three essays on sexuality Foucault polemicizes with the “sexuality repressive hypothesis” which opposes a long period of supposed sexual freedom to a period of strong sexual repression, usually coinciding with the affirmation of capitalism and of the bourgeois society. In his opinion it is not correct to speak of repression but it would be more correct to speak of sexual regulation instead. If until the XIXth Century sex is “an immediate signification”, from the ‘700 onwards, and increasingly with industrialization and urbanization, population issues arise and with them a set of new problems start to be dealt with: birth rates, wedding age, legitimate and illegitimate births, frequency of sexual intercourse, fertility and birth control, incidence of contraceptive measures. In other words, sex becomes science: the science of sexuality. Something that is “produced”, not just impulsive.

Confession is the hinge the new process is based upon (at least at the beginning). An increasingly intimate and detailed confession at first, until science came in support and later overcome it in this function.

## **2. The social control of sexuality and power**

This new overlook on sex represented a safeguarding process which has also brought to knowledge over human sexuality. Not a mere repression, since in order to regulate sex, it has been necessary to section, canalize and analyze it. In this process sexuality has been founded and discovered at the same time. A horizon and a meaning were given to what had been an unknown immediate experience. Its boundaries have been extended in a reflection which brought to a new way of experiencing sex, not more restrictive, but more human because more aware. It is still sex, but sex now is full of social meanings. Not repressed sex but more aware sex, which, in my opinion is already a form of consciousness, a common patrimony.

Nonetheless, one cannot deny that this process passed through a number of prohibitions, and yet prohibitions in Foucault’s view did not express repression but actually represented the *exercise of power*. More specifically, they represented power relations, which expressed themselves through regulations and organizations. The line between *power as repression* and *power as management* seems to be a fine one,

but there is actually a deep difference between the two. The latter type of power, even if uses prohibitions, ends up by enlightening the problem, creating the bases for its liberation. In other words its outcome is the opposite of repression.

Power creates perversions though. Power, in this perspective is organization, the power to organize, it can take the form of war or of politics. Foucault distinguishes four different strategic systems used by institutionalized power over sex: 1) women's bodies hystericalization, 2) children sexuality pedagogyization, 3) socialization of procreation, 4) psychiatric treatment of "perverted" pleasure.

For many years sovereign's characteristic power has been the power to give life or death. In modern times this is no longer true. Power shifts from death to life. It becomes power *on* life. Political power starts to manage life itself. This has actually developed along two main lines starting from the XVIIth century: the first by conceiving the body as a *machine*, to be maintained and "fine tuned", and the second (developed in later years, around the mid XVIIIth century) concentrated on the body as *species*.

In this scheme, power uses sexuality and pleasure as vehicles of its primary organization. Organization which actually uses prohibitions but those, before acting as a mean of power, record pre-existing practices and in recording them, bring them to the conscience, contributing to the building of the whole concept of sexuality.

Disciplines and conceptions regarding the body and regulations on population issues represent the two axes around which power over life has organized itself. It's the coming of the "bio-power" age, as Foucault calls it. Bio-politics rudiments, invented in the XVIIIth century as political techniques working at every level of the social body and used by very different institutions – army, family, police, medicine both at individual and collective level – have influenced society on an economic level and have operated as social segregation and hierarchization factors.

In modern times the *species* becomes at stake in political strategies, as we will soon see.

I find Foucault's analysis on the relationship between power and sexuality probably the most advanced one, for it gives us a remarkable overlook on the outcomes of the processes regarding the management of sexuality. What actually convinces me less is that everything seems to be subordinated to power which ends up by appearing as a mysterious absolute. Absolute because it's the axis around which all processes seem to rotate. Mysterious because it is not quite clear what power is and what

it derives from. In Foucault's analysis power is not a superstructure and political expressions are not subordinated to economic ones. On the contrary, its structural character makes it a founding reality of social life, within which production relationships do not give life to power structures but, quite differently, it is the form assumed by power that allows goods appropriation. Personally though, I find that the social control of sexuality, which is the outcome of the forms taken by the relationship between power, sex and social organization, is ultimately based on economic structures, and the type and depth of its influence is to be connected to the level of the economic formations analyzed. Certainly the social control of sexuality is exercised through power structures and, on the other hand, the social control of sexuality is, itself, one of societies power devices (as Foucault poignantly pointed out) but like any other power device it finds itself in strong relationship with society's economic structures and power relations. So much so that at any turning point in history, when a socio-economic formation is threatened, challenged or at risk, the social control of sexuality regains centrality, strength and meaning, as we will soon see.

### **3. A brief history**

#### *3.1. From horde to agricultural social formations: the rise of social control over women's sexuality*

Now, it should be stressed that prohibitions have not equally targeted all social categories and genders. In all times and cultures they have targeted women in the first place. Analyzing social control of sexuality during the different ages it is possible to see that the type and extent of control applied changes in relation to the type of social formation in presence and to its mode of production. This seems to be more evident during certain turns in history: when Man went from horde's to agricultural social formations, during Ancient Rome, during Medieval times and Courtesy practices, during the rise of industrialization, as we will soon see. But more strikingly, the social control of sexuality seem to become a major issue and an important power device (mean of power) whenever the acquired social order is threatened by new classes, cultures, religions. It can also be used by the actors of the new changes as a weapon for their affirmation. As it happened during the rise of the bourgeoisie in Europe and as we are witnessing now with the new forms of Islamic

extremism such as in Daesh supporters both in Europe and in the Middle East.

At a first overlook it would seem that the simpler the economic level the freer is the social structure, with few rules, prohibitions, religious beliefs and structures. C. Turnbull<sup>77</sup> for example, carried out a research on the Mbuti pygmies, a population dedicated to hunt and collection. Their social structure is the horde. Sexual liberties are rather strong. Sexual relationships amongst unmarried young people are frequent. Collection is regularly carried out by women organized in bands of labour and self-defence. Every horde is composed by twenty, thirty families. Within which family ties are feeble. Children go from one family to the other. Marriage is preferably contracted through the exchange of sisters and without dowry. It is almost always matrilineal. Incest is forbidden only amongst collaterals of the third grade but not amongst relatives of closer generations. There is no cult of the dead. Furthermore, no prohibition seem to involve serious consequences in case of violation. Women participate to all men's activities. No control is exercised upon them. There are no enduring ties. It is impossible in these conditions to exercise a centralized and constant political control. Every producer is the master of his own production tool (which he owns). Religious representations are few and abstract. The Savannah is friendly and the sky is the only object of religious practices.

With the hunt these characteristics are largely maintained, even if within the horde starts to raise a more sophisticated labour organization. But as with the collectors, the hunting mode of life is instantaneous. The product (of the hunt) is consumed at the moment one obtains it. Worries are focused towards present production instead of its reproduction.

In the horde no lasting tie bonds the young to the elderly. The son doesn't offer any guarantees of support to its parents when they will no longer be productive. There is no ancestor's cult.

According to Meillassoux<sup>78</sup> this mode of production offers an individual liberty which expresses itself in sexual behaviour, in the frailty of wedding ties, and in the instability of institutions.

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<sup>77</sup> Turnbull, C. M. (1961), *The Forest People*, Chatto & Windus, London, tr. It. (1979) *I Pigmei. Il popolo della foresta*. Rusconi, Milano

<sup>78</sup> Meillassoux Claude (1975), *L'economia della savana* (edited by P. Palmieri) Feltrinelli, Milano

The situation changes in populations devoted to agriculture. Some Marxist authors, have underlined the importance of the rise of private property. Control over women's sexuality is here strictly connected to the problem of inheritance transmission. When agriculture developed, a surplus started to be produced and together with it raised the problem of inheritance. How to make sure that the producer's real children could inherit from him? By controlling women's sexuality. At that stage women's functions were substantially confined to the reproducing of men's descendants.

French Anthropologist Claude Meillassoux (briefly mentioned above) has focused on the issue of women's sexual control in agricultural systems, carrying out a series of researches on the Guro, Savannah people who practice agriculture in a subsistence economy.

With agriculture the horde scheme is reversed. Future becomes a preoccupation and with it so does the problem of reproduction. Reproduction of earth fertility, of surplus, of the group's structures, reproduction of the arms at labour on the soil. Production relations become more complex. They assume the appearance of kinship. The son is subordinated to the father. Procreation becomes the most direct way to produce subordinated workers and the woman – producer of producers – becomes the most powerful mean of production orientated to the future. Therefore the most subject to restrictions, controls, constrains.

Preoccupations for the future make the people look at the past. The past becomes experience. Experience acquires new value. If the past is valuable then those who have experience, who possess a memory, become valuable: the elderly.

The protectress nature becomes hostile. The expulsion from the Garden of Eden is may be to be found in the passage from collection to hunting and from hunting to agriculture.

Now nature gives, but only through a hard work. And as it gives, it can take away. Natural elements like rain, drought or hail can be friends or enemies. It's the rise of religion, magic, of the men who possess the secrets of nature, who know how to blandish it when it's enemy and honour it when it's friendly.

Meillassoux in the *Economy of the Savannah* starts his analysis from the traditional social cell constituted by a set of individuals, of both sexes, inhabiting one common space (or who move together), “under the authority of a living man, recognized as important”, and who share kinship relations.

Kinship (Relationship) doesn't only express blood relations but it also, and may be primarily, expresses *social relations* which found social cohesion even if kinship itself is not sufficient to found it.

The elderly become increasingly relevant. They are the authority. But what does this authority base upon? On the control exercised on the other members of the community through the possession of knowledge but also, as far as we are concerned, through the control system exercised through a series of complex relations, mainly aimed at the control and distribution of women.

At this level "the simplicity and accessibility of the means of production... do not allow to exercise a strong control on the producer by the intermediary. This represents a fundamental difference in relation to more complex technological societies where the material importance of the means of production represents, for those who own them, the most capable mean of social control upon those who use them".<sup>79</sup>

In an economy where the product of labour can be controlled only by controlling the producer, becomes crucial to control who produces the producer: the woman.

And in virtue of this producer of producers function women become the object of prohibitions, restrictions, controls. Access to women becomes regulated by a set of institutions generally founded on an elderly agreement level.

It is in fact necessary an agreement on wide stair between the elders of the near groups to assure and preserve their respective authorities. If we consider the position of the young one to the dawning of the agricultural society, we notice that it is relatively easy for him to acquire vital knowledge, build utensils, occupy a free ground. Only that these «conditions will not allow him to access an authority position within the group». To reach it he must recreate a dependency of his own, recreate «to his advantage the social scheme that it derives from». He must get married, to establish paternity relationships with his children.

"The affirmation of elderly authority passes therefore through the control of the means of access to pubescent women". In an economy where it is impossible to control labour products "it is logical to control, and may be it is even more profitable, the producer of the producers: procreating women".

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<sup>79</sup> Meillassoux Claude (1986), *Antropologie de l'esclavage*, tr. it. (1992), *Antropologia della schiavitù*, Mursia, Milano, p. 86

It's not just by chance that young girls sexual relations are very free. Interest on women's behaviour comes into play only when a woman starts to be able to procreate.

At that point "access to women will be regulated by a certain number of institutions". Only the elderly hold this access and these rules and they represent the base and one of the sources of their status.

So, in agricultural societies women control becomes more urgent. Productive activities in these societies require long term cooperation. Reproduction becomes crucial for the whole community, since a sufficient labour force (both quantitatively and qualitatively) becomes necessary to social reproduction.

Matrimony and filiation become crucial. Through them communities obtain the necessary labour force for production, but it is also through them that hierarchic relationships are reproduced.

In occasion of the institutionalization of marital relations amongst neighbouring groups, marital goods are exchanged and their value is associated to the status of those administering them.

Young men are excluded from this process, whereas women enter in the circuit but as producers of progeny.

What is exchanged in a matrimony is not the woman but the progeny expected by her. And this "expectation" is symbolized by the exchange of marital goods, which, on their turn testify the social condition of those who possess them. Furthermore, their "circulation reinforces elderly authority within the groups".

When analyzing the circulation of these objects, their social value, one bumps into the complex politics amongst the various groups. A matrimony always implies an alliance and a marital good symbolizes it and in a way founds it.

The woman finds herself at the centre of the groups relationships. Both inside and outside the group (relationships amongst different groups). Social control of sexuality finds then in women its very foundation.

Generally, the relation between the two sexes is regulated by social norms due to the importance of its species' reproductive function. Not always though control is exclusively aimed at women. There are also types of male sexuality control, but they never reached the violence and persistence of women's control. Usually sanctions aren't heavy in case of transgression.

Control can also condition coitus styles, conferring it social meaning. An example for all is the one reported by Seward<sup>80</sup> amongst the Trobriand, where a plebeian man married to a noble woman is not allowed to stay on top of her during intercourse. The fact that women's control has always been tighter than that of men seems evident when one thinks that a similar prohibition has aimed at the expressions of women's sexuality. For a very long time Catholic women were not allowed to stay on top of men during intercourse, to underline their inferiority. But the restriction wasn't applied just in the case of social inferiority (like for Trobriand men): women were just seen as naturally inferior to men (in this case by gender and not by social class).

### *3.2. The "continence" theme. An example of social control over male sexuality*

Besides the Trobriand case, one of the most interesting and significant examples of male sexual control, is represented by the "continence" theme raised in Ancient Greece but also present in Ancient Rome. Nonetheless it should be stressed that male continence was not a forced repression of male sexual instincts but, on the contrary, the beginning of a reflection of men on men, a technology of the self (as Foucault would put it), in which male élites started dealing with the problem of a life-style adequate to their condition, which they felt should have been improved.

As man detaches from a more immediate animal condition the more he deals with the problem of the control of his functions.

From the Pythagorean, to the Stoics, to the Epicureans, man proposes to himself (even if with different perspectives and life styles) a continence model as a distinctive symbol of virtue and of self-control, preamble to the capacity of controlling others. Keeping control on one-self shows that one is really in control, that one has the dignity of a master, that one is worthy of exercising power on the rest of society. In Socrates it was a sign of wisdom. Continence was a life style which implied a more general self-control. It was not disapproval of sex or of homosexuality, as hypothesized by some authors, but it was the refusal of a love that was merely physical, therefore impulsive, uncontrolled. It is in this frame that the continence model should be considered. In any case, it was not a restrictive legislation through which to dominate the masses or inferior beings such

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<sup>80</sup> Seward Georgene H (1946), *Sex and the Social Order*, tr. it. (1962), *Il sesso e l'organizzazione sociale*, Feltrinelli, Milano



as women. On the contrary, it was a sign of freedom (from one's own impulses in the first place) for the happy few (male élites). It's a non prescriptive or normative morals. Laws and institutions looked somewhere else. They controlled women and subordinates. Not the free men who controlled themselves in order to increase their virtues.

As for the rest, men were free to have sexual relations before, during and after marriage, with whom they liked. That included having intercourse with other men too. They were only expected to finally get married once adults in order to give children to the Country (a duty they often stubbornly resisted to, since they could have more complete, more intellectual and more satisfying relationships with men since wives were generally not educated). Furthermore they were asked to assume an active role in homosexual relationships once reached the adult age.

Controls and sanctions were introduced only when both passive and active homosexuality became widely spread.

Only with wars and the subsequent demographic crisis, as well as the well established preference for homosexual relations, seed (semen) dispersion and demographic repopulation became urgent problems.

Ancient Rome shows us a slightly different picture. Although various of its traits seem similar to those of the Ancient Greek society, Roman male sexuality was lived in a different perspective and it can be read as a reflection of the economic and development model upon which the entire Roman society was based. A model of domination and conquest.

Homosexuality in Rome did not have the pedagogic function it had in Greece: in this model the passive partner was not a free boy but a slave. Young Roman men were more generally educated to conquer and dominate, their sexual ethics reflected their political ethics<sup>81</sup>. They were expected to subject women, slaves and every men other than the Romans. Their sexuality was basically one of rape. The rise of the Roman empire needed conquering, invincible and dominating men to affirm and maintain its power. Nonetheless, Greek culture started to filter and soon homosexuality lost its social overwhelming character. In Caesar times the dominant class started to break the rule which confined Roman male adults to active sexual roles only.

In the first two centuries of the Christian age Roman society and its ruling class went under deep changes.

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<sup>81</sup> Cantarella Eva (1988), *Secondo natura*, Editori Riuniti, Roma.

As demonstrated by Paul Veyne<sup>82</sup>, for centuries the chiefs of the various Roman family groups depended, in terms of power and prestige, on each one's capacity to impose oneself on the others. Now the social and power organization had changed. They had all become Prince servants and their chances of success depended on their ability to keep good relationships between their peers. If until then relationships were based upon imposition, now they are based upon respect. Respectability becomes the rule and as far as we are concerned it is interesting to note that according to Veyne the will for redemption, the search for a new dignity passed, by the social control of sexuality: "free men of less wealthy condition gave life to a sort of mass sexual self-repression"; before Christianity was affirmed "the Roman sexual moral changed, going from rape bi-sexuality to reproduction heterosexuality".<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, as in Greece, under the pressure of demographic loss, new sanctions come into play (from the IIIrd century onwards) aimed at repressing homosexuality. New medical prescriptions involved abstinence as a necessary mean to reach physical health, and sex starts to be judged as "natural" or "against nature". Acceptable sex is the one aimed at reproduction. It is interesting to note that the "against nature intercourse" concept arose as a reaction to the threats to the development model, which now needed to contrast demographic loss and keep respectable and equal relationships amongst family groups.

Jewish influence also played an important role. For the Jewish religion reproduction was an imperative and sexual intercourse was approved only if it was concluded with the deposition of the semen in the female uterus.

Christianity starts to rise within this picture. A moral that could not successfully affirm itself without taking into account the reality and needs of the civilization in which it operated. Christianity was able to take up the issues arising from different parts, giving them a systematic nature, whose evolution lasted various centuries and of which may be we are just about to see a starting decline. Christianity condemns homosexuality right from the start. Paolo (Paul) in his letter to the Romans affirms that it had been homosexuality (male and female) to make divine rage against the pagans explode. On this topic Eva Cantarella<sup>84</sup> affirms that "Christianity adds to the pagan disapproval of male sexual passivity the Jewish disapproval for

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<sup>82</sup> Veyne P., (1985) *L'Empire romain*, in Ariès P. e Duby G. *Histoire de la vie privée, I. De l'Empire romain à l'an mil*, tr. it. (1992), *La vita privata nell'Impero romano*, Laterza, Bari

<sup>83</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>84</sup> Cantarella Eva (1988), *Secondo natura*, Editori Riuniti, Roma

active homosexuality”. It will soon get to a global condemnation of sexual relationships, growingly restricting the field of what can be approved of. Basically sex can now take place only within marriage and actually not even that if Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian, affirmed the supremacy of continence with respect to marriage, seen only as the smallest evil (“...it’s better to marry than to burn”). Nonetheless the influence of this new conception will spread soon. Christianity found in marriage an important mean for its affirmation.

With Christianity women’s condition changes. According to the historian Santo Mazzarino<sup>85</sup>, the IIIrd Century represents a breaking point for pagan civilization. Women began to feel the need to choose their husbands beyond the social ties that forced them to marry only within their senatorial order (if they were *clarissimae*, coming from the high rank) and that discouraged (when not prohibited) weddings between different classes, especially between Roman female citizens and slaves or *liberti* (freed slaves). Obviously these marriages threatened the social order, especially if one thinks that the slavery structure could have wobbled after the manumission (freeing) of the slaves by their aspiring spouses. On these grounds Christianity, even if persecuted as a religion by the laws, operated with growing success, entering the private sphere, meeting women’s increasing need for independence in the choice of a husband, teaching women that the husband can be chosen, possibly amongst coreligionists. In any case they should have tried to convert their man to be. It’s the spiritual Christian revolution. The family was changing. Women were not only devoted at ensuring men a descent, but they had become the major mean for religious diffusion. It is true though that in this way the “weak sex” started to have some decisional autonomy and marriage began to have an affective base.

From Constantine onwards Christianity imposed itself, condemned secret doctrines and paganism, developed a conception of marriage which banned any form of sexuality which was not devoted to procreation.

And yet it should be noticed that the Church’s behaviour towards sexuality has not always been univocal. The theory developed slowly. Marriage was certainly allowed but was seen as a concession for those who could not live in abstinence and was still relegated to the margins of sacredness. Actually for a long time wedding rites didn’t take place in church. Marriage often happened through kidnapping, collective rape was usual and sexuality quite unregulated.

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<sup>85</sup> Mazzarino Santo (1959), *La fine del mondo antico*, Garzanti, Milano.

But at the turning of the first millennium a reorganization of the social order started to take place. This brought a re-evaluation of marriage as a tempering tool for sexuality. Augustine's conceptions returned popular, according to which fornication is a deadly sin but within marriage is a less serious sin. Furthermore marriage allows to multiply men and repopulate Paradise. Last but not least, it controls women's sexuality, for a long time believed to be uncontrollable and more powerful and pressing than that of men.

And marriage itself, at the time very oppressive and limiting for women, will become the very foundation of the economic model in Medieval times.

### *3.3. Medieval times and the distribution of land and power through the distribution of women*

Matrimonial rites ensure an ordered distribution of women, discipline male competition and formalizes births within them. Legitimate and illegitimate births are then distinguished, conferring to legitimate children the status of heirs. While regulating the passage of wealth from a generation to the other, matrimonial rules contribute to the keeping of the existing production system. In this perspective, I agree with Duby when he affirms that the "role of the matrimonial institution varies according to the importance of the legacy within production relations".<sup>86</sup> And in the feudal society legacy and alliance's systems assumed a crucial role.

Marriage reflected the political order. The king (still not totally resigned to ecclesiastic dictates on the subject) had to observe marriage rules according to Devine's will in order to keep the public order. But more specifically, it is through this institution that women can be peacefully distributed and, not secondarily, land and wealth with them; reinforcing vassals ties. Feudal marriage is first of all an important mean of power and a vital economic tool: it allows the reinforcement of alliances, the acquisition of goods and the founding of a lineage. Conjugal relations change. The husband acquires an increasing power, "family relations are restricted to the lineage picture... and family legacy is protected from divisions and the number of people who have the right to

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<sup>86</sup> Duby G., (1981), *Le chevalier, la femme et le pretre. Le mariage dans la France féodal*, tr. it. (1991) *Il cavaliere la donna il prete*, Laterza, Bari.

inherit it is reduced”<sup>87</sup>. Women were excluded from inheritance rights and their power over inheriting goods slowly faded.

In this type of society, women were nothing but the mean through which land was assigned, lineage was founded and stock was continued. It was not so important that the spouse was virgin nor that she was the legitimate daughter of some important lord. She was mainly expected to be able to procreate a legitimate descendant, and if she had already proved to be fertile... well, then the better.

Properties had to be handed to a legitimate son. If the wife wasn't able to produce one or more then one, given the high children mortality rates, she could easily be repudiated.

The feudal system based on land and loyalty organized relations between the sexes according to its economic and power dynamics and needs. But this system excluded a consistent part of its population from goods circulation and in the end produced a reaction. A reaction which was substantially connected to economic problems but which, once again, was based on the role women.

At the beginning of the XIth century feudalism characterized itself as a closed system in which the clan's chief would preserve his lineage splendour and honour by controlling his children marriages. He would let daughters go quite easily, but not his sons, condemning to celibacy the majority of cadets who, at that point, could only wander about trying to conquer a lord's favour and trust on the battlefield: in this case the lord would compensate them with a “spouse”, usually a widow, holder of estates<sup>88</sup>. Disinherited from their birth because the economic feudal system required the highest concentration of goods and properties, denied the possibility of getting married, it is no wonder that Courtesy made knights confer ladies such an unprecedented importance.

The reaction to those problems brought to the rise of heretical movements and chivalry. A part from the spiritual mood deriving from the approaching of the end of the Millennium, heresy was also one of the forms assumed by the resistance to the new distribution of power and economy brought by feudalism. Heretical sects gave hope and consolation to the oppressed: farmers, the poor, disinherited sons, women.

Especially the Cathars, which predicated a direct relationship between men and God. They lived in communities where men and women were equal and, at least theoretically, cast. They were preparing themselves for

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>88</sup> De Rougemont D. (1939), *L'amour et l'Occident*, tr. it. (1989) *L'amore e l'Occidente*, Rizzoli, Milano.

the end of the world. Forced to defend themselves from Christianity they started attacking the Church, blaming it to have gone as far as blessing the union of bodies within marriage. To women's defrauding, to feudal marital practices, to Christianity which was finding in marriage an acceptable compromise between continence aspirations and social order needs; to all these the Cathars opposed Courtesy, i.e. the Religion of Love. Knights followed the Courtesy loving ideal and, may be for the first time in history, dared to suggest that women should be loved and respected and not considered as a mere reproduction tool.

More prosaically, I am afraid, woman found herself to be the contended object between two different systems: chivalry and the feudal society. As mentioned above, the feudal society treated women as pawns in the lord's chessboard, in order to create alliances, whereas knights, who often were denied the right to marry, needed women to become land owners and to found a lineage.

### *3.4. The crisis of the Medieval society: Protestant Reform, witch hunting and catholic reaction*

As we have just seen, at the turning of the Millennium the Church was confronted by a new chastity theory co-opted by the knights and used against Christianity by Cathars congregations. We can say that in some way Christianity made some of Cathars conceptions its own. Cathars conferred new importance to women and to cast love and the Church opposed them the Marian cult which idealized a virgin woman, therefore a less dangerous woman, controlled in her sexuality. Female virginity became a model.

The Church won her battle and managed to affirm herself over the feudal power which had excluded her till then, as well as over the Cathars sects. Interesting for us to note that the Church organized her successful strategy over the management (and control) of sexuality by: 1) partially admitting sexuality but limiting it to marriage, 2) regulating sexuality, 3) banning every form of sexuality outside marriage.

The Church now regulated sexuality not only by canalizing it into marriage, limiting it to reproduction and by placing women to men's service in order to avoid men the risk to sin, but the Church went as far as defining a style for coitus. Every practice and caress which was not aimed at reproduction was banned. Furthermore, women should lay under their husbands, certainly because this position was thought to favour insemination but also because it well represented women's subordination to men.

But during the Renaissance, religious control over sexuality starts to loosen: the concept of sin is no longer sufficient to limit sexual excesses, and libertine costumes go together with power structures growing anarchy.

This new licentiousness doesn't involve lower classes only, but, on the contrary, was mainly spread within privileged classes and last, but not least, the Roman Church herself.

For example, under Alexander VI (Borgia) papacy, the Vatican Palace was frequently visited by courtesans, mistresses and bastards. On the subject Jacques Solé reminds us how in 1501 the Pope himself headed a party with 50 courtesans ended with a prize for the ones who showed greater virility with "those prostitutes".<sup>89</sup>

Those libertine habits were threatening the marriage institution. There was no longer a clear limit between marriage and celibacy and engagement became more engaging and serious than the religious "formality".

But greater threats to the Roman Catholic Church came from the Protestant Reform and its critic of the religious power and papal authority.

The new religion doesn't confer women a subordinated role in a hierarchy which saw priests coming first, then men and then women in the last position.

It's the end of the Augustinian *Civitas Dei*. Now women are just as active as anybody else in professing their faith. Martin Luther re-thought marriage in terms of a loving relationship to be placed at the centre of the believers lives. Within marriage sexuality is only natural. Virginity becomes an almost aberrant exception. This conception will have a persisting influence if one thinks that for many years the old spinster will be one of bourgeois society's bugbears.

The first medicine's manuals prescribing coitus and ejaculation as necessary practices for people's health start to appear during this period. In other words the Reform brought also to a new evaluation of sexuality.

But this had the effect of exasperating Roman Catholic positions in the attempt to defend herself from this new challenge. The religious fundamentalism which consequently hit Europe found in women its privileged target. Apparently history repeats itself.

Persecution of witchcraft had already started in the first few centuries of the second Millennium but reached its climax during the Inquisition in the XVth and XVIth centuries. It can be interpreted as one of the Roman Catholic Church's reactions to the threats coming from the heretical sects

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<sup>89</sup> Solé J. (1976), *L'amour et l'Occident à l'Epoque moderne*, tr. it. (1979), *Storia dell'amore e del sesso nell'età moderna*, Laterza, Bari.

and from the Protestant Revolution, which turned out in a tightening of women's sexuality and life conditions, just when these new religious doctrines had started to acknowledge women some dignity and, at least to a certain extent, the possibility of a more aware and autonomous sexuality.

The Church starts to prosecute witches (seen by some authors as women who don't oblige to the rules) and through the shield of witchcraft can repress emancipation and changes trends.

The witch prototype is a lonely, no longer young, woman. In other words an anti-Virgin, a woman which incarnated all superstitions on women and their sexuality.

But who exactly were those witches? In the majority of cases they were women that probably had known sex, like widows for example, and who had nobody beside them capable of "satisfying and controlling" them. Women who placed themselves outside the traditional "wife and mother" roles imposed to them by society under the Catholic influence. It's easy to imagine that the repellent witch stereotype fitted women's reality in that age, when many women's unhealthy conditions brought them, especially after many pregnancies, at the age of fifty with a flabby body and a toothless mouth.<sup>90</sup>

Dulong offers us an interesting interpretation for the understanding of women's conditions at the time. The French author thinks that women were so subject to men and pregnancies and so defenceless when facing life that sought redemption and freedom through witchcraft, which should be seen as a sort of "safeguarding criminality", a mean to enlighten women's burden.<sup>91</sup>

Maternity at the time was a moral and physical slavery. Women were relegated to that role but children belonged to their fathers. Delivery was painful and dangerous, not rarely fatal for the child or the mother. Consequently many women did not hesitate to turn to witches in order to attempt rudimental abortive practices. The Catholic Church bitterly condemned those practices, considering life suppression just as the refusal to give birth, the most dreadful of sins. According to Dulong children sacrifices to the Devil were a way to get rid of undesired children in times when contraceptives didn't exist and women underwent to continuous pregnancies. Furthermore, poison, a leitmotif in witchcraft trials, is the

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<sup>90</sup> Dulong C., (1984), *La vie quotidienne des femmes au Grande Siècle*, tr. it. (1991), *La vita quotidiana delle donne nella Francia di Luigi XIV*, Rizzoli, Milano.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*.



typical weapon used by weaker subjects. Women rights, even for women who had the means to take men to court, were far to be established and in many cases witchcraft can be seen as a mean to administer justice by themselves.

Sabbah's function should also be read in this perspective: in a society where women's sexuality was deprived, it represented the place for transgression.

In other words witchcraft can be interpreted as a reaction to a social structure which limited women's role to procreation. And its repression by the Catholic Church has known no borders.

### *3.5. From sin to madness. The social control of sexuality evolves*

Whichever practice is not aimed at reproduction becomes banned by law. If until then prohibitions were basically juridical and concentrated on the nature of marital relationships (as well as duties and rights), now, the new Christian pastoral focuses the attention on "flesh", body and pleasure.

At the same time though, this starts an unprecedented reflection on sex which will be carried on by medicine and science, with an important excursion in the meanders of psychiatry. Mental hospitals become the privileged hiding place for perversions from which society defends itself conferring them the status of mental illness, therefore alienating them as a pathology. Now the legitimacy of sex is not only judged from a juridical point of view but it can be considered natural or against nature, human or beastly. Medical science is engaged and a whole set of new pathologies, psychiatric and no start to arise. A number of new perversions.

Between the XVIIth and the XIXth Century regulation and reflection on sexuality move from religion to science. The Church still plays its role but less prominently. Scientific theories advance. Sexual issues become not only more laic but they also become a state affaire according to which the whole social body is called under surveillance.

The new social order passed through the suffocating of labour masses sexual impulses. The new mercantilist monarchy did not mean to moralize its subjects, but to make them work, and the fight against various forms of sexuality was part of a vaster surveillance operation aimed at controlling individuals. For this purpose institutions are strengthened and protected. Individual conduct is no longer a moral matter but becomes a state affaire.

And yet it would be misleading to read this new social control effort as mainly targeted at the lower classes. Foucault has actually underlined that it's not, as many have believed, the attempt of a rising class – bourgeoisie- to use those means in order to control and exploit the

working class. On the contrary, it's the bourgeoisie itself to firstly go under analysis and control. In those years there is actually the passage from a noble class founded on "blood" to an industrial bourgeois class founded on body efficiency, care and good state of its health. In other words, on medical science. In the XIXth century starts the analysis of hereditary factors and of genetically transmitted diseases, so that sex, matrimonial choices, venereal illnesses and perversions start to be seen in the perspective of "biological responsibilities" towards the specie. Bourgeoisie has hoarded (treasured) its own sexuality. The first target of this new control is the idle bourgeois woman, closely followed by the worries over the "wastes" of her onanist child. Only the bourgeois child in fact, had the responsibility of not compromising his intellectual capacities. His was the moral obligation to ensure his name and his class a healthy lineage. It is the vigour and longevity issue, concerning the progeny of the dominant class. In other words, it's the affirmation of the new class. The body as class differentiation. And not for the first time. Aristocracy had already based on "blood" its very foundation, legitimacy and strength. But basically, while aristocrats looked at the past, the bourgeoisie, which did not have a past, looked at the future. Instead of focussing on the ascendants, the ancestors, it has focussed on the descendants and on the health of present and future generations.

It is interesting to note that in a society where saving is an imperative, ideologists and scientists hurl themselves against any type of waste. Rousseau already thought that coupling was the most serious sin. Tissot, with his treaty on onanism contributed in great measure to the myth of the risks connected with the "solitary vice".

New formulas and ideologies try to replace the weakening of religious (Christian) control. An example can be found in Kant's categorical imperative, according to which man should find within himself the reason for his continence. Kant, as Tissot, thought that masturbation was an act against nature to be prevented at all costs. This ethic based on control is partially retaken up by Protestant Puritanism, which not by chance affirms itself against the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church (although admitted sexuality as natural within marriage). But at this time it is scientific support (not a religious one) the strongest mean of repression.

In the XVIIIth and XIXth Century madness and sexual deviance are confused and libertines, prostitutes and homosexuals are locked up in asylums.

Capitalism and the Western world advance. A new mode of production calls for every possible force, entering the private sphere, private houses, regulating everybody's sexuality. Foucault has reminded

us how the bourgeoisie was the first to undergo to such vast control, with its cult over the body and over the physical integrity of the descendents, it has growingly entrusted itself to medical science for its affirmation. For the affirmation of its class. (The process moves towards the bio-power as Foucault calls it).

But those controls, canalizing and defining impulses, establishing what, how and why a behaviour is to be allowed and another not, have also brought man to reflect on its sexuality. A knowledge that has made human sexuality different from animal sexuality or from a sexuality dominated by immediate impulses.

The way of living and perceiving sex has changed. Human sexuality was filled with social meaning. With the growth of knowledge on the matter it has unhooked itself from moral imperatives, founded on an unknown wholly order, unreachable by most people.

#### **4. Political orders, conflicts and the social control of sexuality in modern times**

As we have seen so far, sex has represented through the centuries an important political battlefield. Although prohibitions have ended up by giving us the necessary knowledge to sexual liberation, it is unquestionable that the social control of sexuality is still at work and that power, political and no, is still dealing with the issue at various levels. In Western Countries contraception, the pill in particular, abortion, homosexual marriages and artificial fecundation have been at the centre of many political battles, usually won, contributing to the liberation of women's sexuality in particular since it has finally been unhooked from procreation. But every issue is at the centre of ongoing political debate.

In many parts of the world sex has certainly become freer. In the 1920's the USSR experimented the communes, the Western world experimented the "sexual liberation" of the 1968. Nowadays pre-marriage, extra-marital, multiple, homosexual relationships are so frequent that around "free sex" a whole market found space which deals with anything related to sex: from advertising to sado-maso clubs. From fashion cat walks to luxury magazines extremely young models wink at lesbian relationships. Nightclubs for couple exchange are considered up to date, exotic trips are organized in "brothel countries" (or so are sold) for the use and consumption of rampant capitalists. Not to mention hard core shops, porno magazines, films and gadgets.

If one can't save, he should at least consume. It's the other side of the economic system.

It shouldn't surprise if in Islamic fundamentalist Countries the fight against the Western way of life is strictly connected to sexual repression (female, in particular).

But what actually arises from history and from the analysis of the measures adopted in recent years by the different Islamic Countries is that power and sexuality, political organization, power structures and sexuality social control keep going abreast.

Every Islamic Country in fact, adopts it's own demographic policy in relation to its economic or political situation at the time. So, for instance, Saddam's secular Iraq forbid the use of contraceptives and abortive practices in order to limit the preoccupying numeric inferiority towards the historical enemy: Iran. On the other hand extremist Iran authorized contraceptives and abortion because the demographic boom limited development. The case of Khomeini is exemplary: one of the Imam's first acts after his rise to power in 1979 was the abolition of the state "Organism for family planning" and the rehabilitation of the Islamic institution of polygamy, fiercely fought by the shah. Khomeini in those years defined birth control policies a Zionist plot, but ten years later, when Iranian population had doubled and reached 60 millions of inhabitants, Khomeini with a clamorous reverse in his politics issued a *fatwa* according to which "in the state of necessity" Islam authorized family planning defining birth control a "wholly duty". In later years, Iranian radicals opposing to President Rafsanjani tried to exploit Cairo UN Conference on Demography (1994) to question family planning and to destabilize the regime. So have done Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey during the same Conference. Quite strangely, since it was a Demographic conference, the discussion immediately focused on sexual control of women: while Western Countries stressed the need to grant women in all countries reproductive and health rights, Monotheistic Churches (Vatican ahead) were united for once by the struggle against the possibility of responsible and safe sex, not necessarily devoted to birth. But if Islamic slogans, extremists or not, aimed at the presumed libertinism of UN Conferences and Western customs in general, the real reasons underlying the protest became evident pretty soon. The Western world was accused of exploitation towards the Developing Countries. As if this wasn't enough it also wanted to arrogate itself the right to impose birth control in those Countries. Birth control which, in their opinion, would favour capitalistic economic growth in already developed Countries that would keep on unloading the

responsibility of unsustainable consumptions and development to the less favoured Countries. Instead of erasing the foreign debt of poorer Countries, instead of reducing their levels of consumption, Western Countries were asking the Third World to reduce their births.

So yes, again, behind the battle over sexuality social control, hid political and economic reasons.

Something that recalls us more recent positions between Islamic fundamentalists and the more secular Western World. For years, as Islamic radicalism was growing, the debate concentrated on the women's right to be free and independent (in the West), versus the necessity of veiling and strictly controlling them (in Islamic fundamentalism, even in Europe). Daesh has brought this tendency to an unprecedented level of extreme maniacal control over women. For its affirmation as model of virtuous, independent country (and economy) it has concentrated its efforts on two main pivots: terror and a suffocating control over women. Claiming it's due to a religious mandate (whereas it is not, even according to educated Imams) the Muslim women of the world (regardless if they were born in France or Syria) should be cast and basically disappear from social life. They should not speak to strangers, their steps in the street should not be heard, they should not laugh, let alone work in a mixed sexes environment, gather with friends, or walk around alone. In the unfortunate case they should go out of their house they should make sure that they are at least completely veiled and covered by the *abbaya* or even *burqa*, that they wear gloves and stockings even in the boiling heat of the summer, that they are accompanied by their *mahram*<sup>92</sup>.

Furthermore in many Countries where Islamic fundamentalism rules or exercises a strong influence, the social system is based on communities (often a form of widened family) and their rules are not attenuated by individual rights. Family plays a central role for it works as an economic nucleus and a life model. Control over women is more tight. Women represent the reproducers of producers, an exchanging commodity, a mean for economic, political, social alliances. They are the pivot around which the social organization is based and, as illustrated so far, the social organization, especially in these societies, is very much based on the control of women and of women's sexuality. This is why international organizations, individuate women's liberation as one of the main achievements for the social progress of these Countries, knowing though, that this liberation can only be achieved through economic development.

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<sup>92</sup> A male, unmarried member of her family with whom exists relations of kinship.

## **5. Conclusions**

Human sexuality and its social control seem to have many social implications and therefore should be of some interest to sociology. The history of the social control of sexuality shows us how it changes through economic, power and social changes. Whenever the social (economic) order is at threat, controls become more strict, usually affecting women's condition. Whenever a new social order starts affirming itself, its ideology and practice involves some kind of social control over sexuality, that is usually targeted at women and that is usually tighter than that of the social order that is being challenged. Different power systems found on the social control of sexuality their battlefield. This seems to still be true when considering some Islamic Countries recent history, let alone the rise of Daesh, that has made the social control over women's sexuality part of its manifesto.

And yet Foucault's analysis seems convincing when dealing with the effects of sexual prohibitions: at least in the West, they contributed to sexual liberation and have filled sex with social meaning changing it into sexuality. Medical science played its role both in the attempt to limit sexuality and in freeing it by unloading it from undesired procreative responsibilities. Women can be something other than mothers. If they want to. A cutting progress towards the appropriation of their persona, as well as of their sexual rights. Now, if it is true that social control has largely organized itself around the social control of sexuality, especially women's sexuality, then women's liberation could lead to a more general tempering of the social control of sexuality. And if that is true then it is possible to foresee a loosening of the social control in general. Until the next threat to the established social order.

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Can the emergence of the civil society in Greece substitute the lack of confidence in representative institutions and contribute to a better quality of democracy and governance in a period of crisis?

CAN THE EMERGENCE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN GREECE  
SUBSTITUTE THE LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN REPRESENTATIVE  
INSTITUTIONS AND CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER QUALITY OF  
DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE IN A PERIOD OF CRISIS?

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*1. Introduction - 2. Economic crisis and its consequences to the crisis of the political system - 3. The civil society in Greece before the economic crisis - 4. The role of the civil society in Greece in the period of crisis - 5. Conclusions*

**1. Introduction**

The unprecedented economic crisis in Greece highlighted in an elegant way the crisis of the political system. The main characteristic of this crisis is lack of confidence in representative institutions. This essay attempts to present, through a series of research findings (Eurobarometer, European Social Survey, etc.) the increasing distancing of citizens from the procedures of representation and the general lack of trust of the Greeks in institutions such as politicians, political parties, as well as the national and the European Parliament. Trust in institutions is a variable for the quality of democracy. The research data imprint a progressive crisis of the political system.

On the other hand, before the economic crisis, the Greek civil society was underdeveloped vis-à-vis political parties and the state due to a number of reasons. The economic crisis has opened a window of opportunity for the Greek civil society mainly through many informal groups and networks, which have risen as collective responses to the crisis, providing social assistance to vulnerable groups. Compared to the pre-crisis period, more citizens participated in collective efforts to preserve the living standards of the population and to exercise their rights. The economic recession also provoked a type of activism, which included attacks against politicians, occupations of government buildings, attacks by racist groups against migrants etc.

The aim of this essay is to examine the civil society's response to the crisis and the different forms, which were taken by civic activism. It also presents whether the different responses of the civil society in the period 2010-2013 were compatible with liberal democracy. Finally, the main question that is discussed is whether civil society mobilization can contribute to the deepening of democracy and social cohesion, to the reduction of the distance in citizen – policy relations and to a better quality of democracy and governance.

## **2. Economic crisis and its consequences to the crisis of the political system**

The current crisis is regarded as a crisis of competitiveness, the main aim of which is to achieve comparative advantages through more flexibility in the labor market and lower labor costs. In order to face the crisis especially in Southern Europe, the EU has developed a new form of wage policy interventionism. The Euro Plus Pact, which concerns the coordination of the economic policy and includes wage policy and the so-called Six Pack (five regulations and one directive), which is a comprehensive legislative package aimed at implementing the aims of Euro Plus Pact, are the two main EU's legislative efforts towards this direction. The EU's anti-crisis policies include austerity measures resulting in growing unemployment, falling real wages, cuts in the social security system and privatization of public property.

Greece has been severely hit by the current crisis. The need for fiscal consolidation has had significant impacts both on the economy and the social situation. Austerity measures implemented by the Greek government, rising unemployment rates, cuts in salaries, pensions and

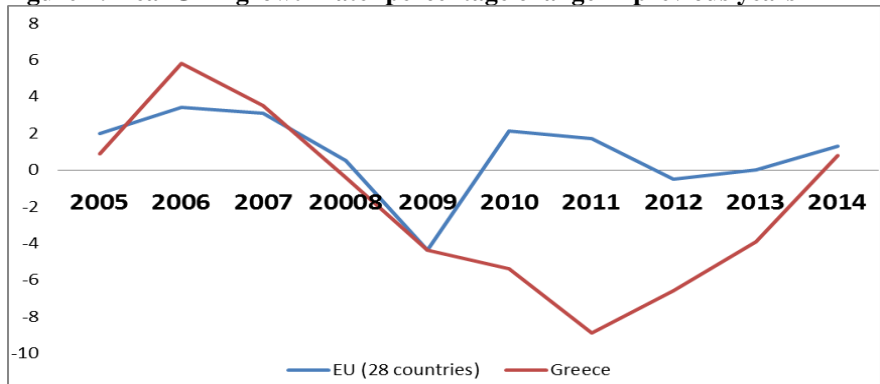
Can the emergence of the civil society in Greece substitute the lack of confidence in representative institutions and contribute to a better quality of democracy and governance in a period of crisis?

social spending, resulted in a growing number of people living under the poverty line.

The historical high level of unemployment, long-term unemployment and youth unemployment constitute key factors for severe poverty and social exclusion. Along with that, the number of households with very low work intensity has increased dramatically, homelessness is on rise during the last years and child poverty remains an important issue.

Some statistical data can illustrate the situation in Greece. First of all, since the outbreak of the economic crisis (2009) the real GDP has decreased by almost 25% (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Real GDP growth rate- percentage change in previous years**



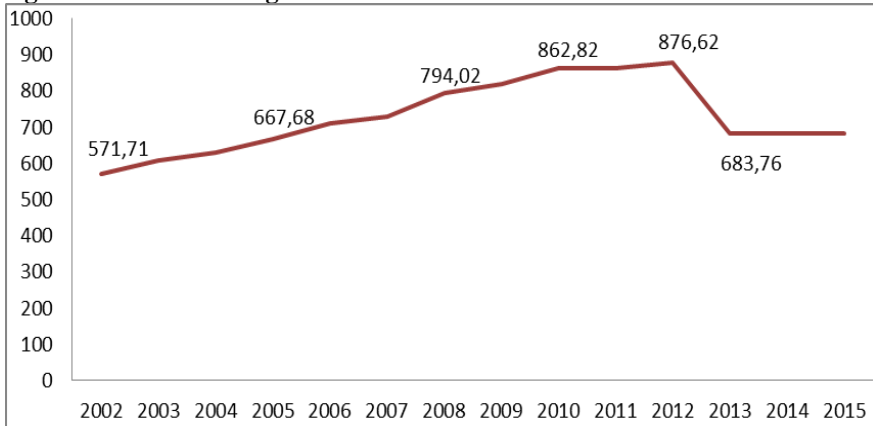
Source: Eurostat

In Greece, as in many European states, in the wake of austerity policy, the government has intervened directly in wage development. In principle, this offers to it three points of attack: (i) public sector wages (freezing or cutting), (ii) the statutory minimum wage and (iii) direct intervention in existing collective agreements (Busch and all 2013: 12). The first intervention was easy because the wages of public employees were not regulated by collective agreements but by law. In Greece the various wage cuts total amounts to 30% on average. The Greek government has cut its minimum wage by 22% in February 2012 and for young people below the age of 25 by 32%. Since February 2012 the minimum wage has remained stable (683.76 €) (Figure 2).

This is something of a new development, because in Greece the minimum wage is not set on a statutory basis, but laid down in a national collective agreement. The core of all collective agreement reforms lies in a far reaching shift of wage policy to enterprise level. Although the Greek employers' associations and trade unions protested against the cuts, they

were unable to prevent this direct intervention in free collective bargaining. A radical decentralization of the collective bargaining system, leading to the complete erosion of the sectoral collective agreement, is observed.

**Figure 2: Minimum wages in Greece 2002-2015**



Source: Eurostat

In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015 the number of the employed amounted to 3,504,446 persons, while the number of the unemployed amounted to 1,272,541. The unemployment rate was 26.6% compared to 26.1% in the previous quarter, and 27.8% in the corresponding quarter of 2014 (Table 1). The unemployment rate for females (30.6%) is considerably higher than the unemployment rate for males (23.5%). The highest unemployment rate is recorded among young people in the age group of 15-24 years (51.9%). For young females, the unemployment rate is 57.0% and for males it is 47.5%.

**Table 1: Unemployment rate (%) by gender and age groups**

Age Groups	2014			2015		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>15-24</b>	52.6	61.5	56.7	47.5	57.0	51.9
<b>25-29</b>	40.7	44.2	42.4	36.7	43.0	39.7
<b>30-44</b>	23.4	30.8	26.7	21.9	30.1	25.7
<b>45-64</b>	18.5	22.7	20.3	18.4	23.2	20.4
<b>65+</b>	14.4	7.9	12.6	12.3	3.6	9.3

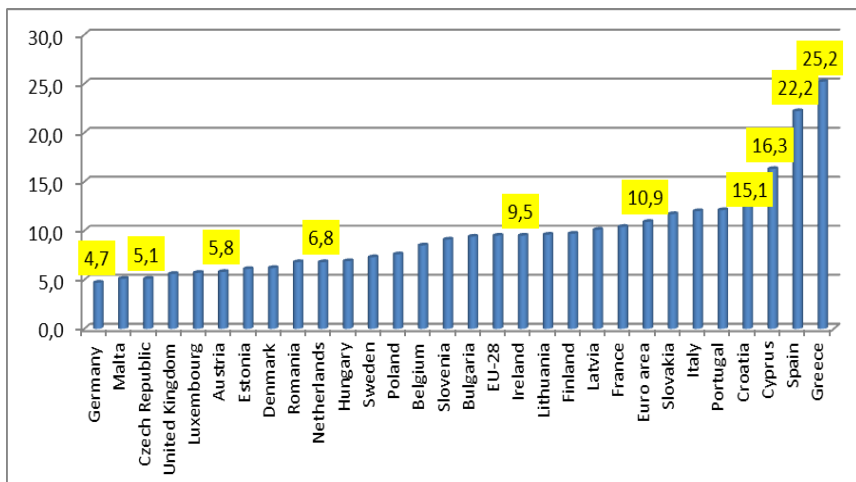
Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, September 2015



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In June 2015, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Greece was 25.2% compared to 26.6% in June 2014 and 25.0% in May 2015. The number of the employed amounted to 3,584,973 persons. The number of the unemployed amounted to 1,204,844 while the number of the inactive to 3,298,166 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, Labor Force Survey: June 2015). Among the member-states of the European Union, Greece has recorded the highest unemployment rates in 2015. Figure 3 presents the unemployment rates in the EU in July 2015.

**Figure 3: Unemployment rates in the EU in July 2015**

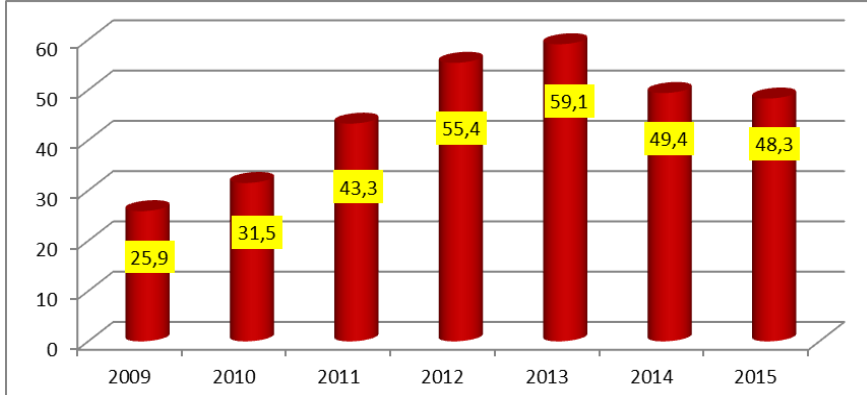


Source: Eurostat 2015, Data for Estonia, Greece, and Hungary refer to June and for UK to May.

Youth labor force participation in Greece has traditionally been one of the lowest in Europe. Young people have been hit the hardest in the labor market during the economic crisis. The youth unemployment rate in Greece was more than double the overall unemployment rate in 2012, 2013, and 2014. In June 2015 the youth unemployment rate in Greece was 48.3%, the highest rate among the member-states of the EU, compared to 20.4 % in the EU-28 and 21.9 % in the euro area. A main characteristic of youth employment in Greece is the prolonged transition period from education to the labor market. Based on Hellenic Statistic Authority data, more than half of the young people up to the age of 22 years have no working experience at all. Even up to the age of 25 years, 20% of the people surveyed have not gained any work experience. The highest rate of youth unemployment in Greece was observed in November

2013 (61.4%). Figure 4 presents the rates of youth unemployment during the period 2009-2015 (July of each year).

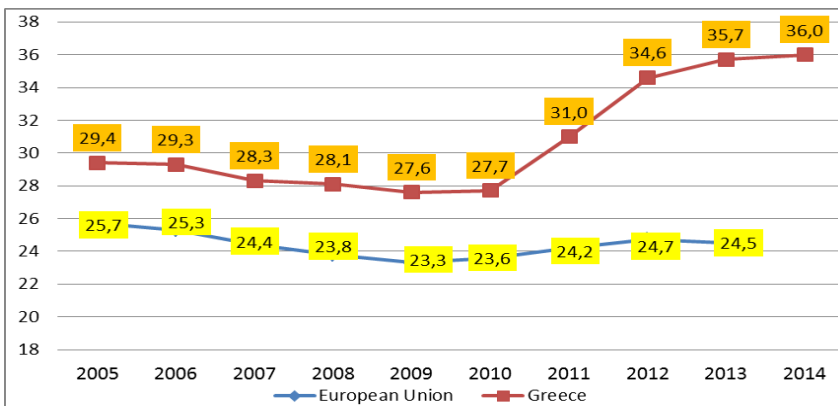
**Figure 4: Youth unemployment (15-24) rate in Greece 2009-2014**



Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, September 2015

Moreover, since 2012 more than a third of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Greece compared to almost 24.5%, the EU-28 average (Figure 5). According to the definition of Eurostat, this means that these people were at least in one of the following conditions: a) at risk of poverty after social transfers (income poverty), b) severely materially deprived, or c) living in households with very low work intensity.

**Figure 5: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Greece and in the EU**



Source: Eurostat

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At the same time, 23.1% of the Greek population in 2013 and 22.1% in 2014 were at-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers, meaning that their disposable income was below their national at-risk of poverty threshold.

The economic crisis and the threat of default have had significant repercussions on the Greek political system. Apart from the serious economic crisis, Greece is undergoing a protracted and serious political crisis. The main characteristic of this crisis is the lack of confidence in representative institutions. The trust of citizens in institutions and especially in representative institutions is crucial for the function of democracy for many reasons. First, trust creates links between citizens and institutions, which represent them, second, it contributes to the legitimization and the effectiveness of democratic governance, third, trust constitutes an evaluation of the politicians and the political system on behalf of the citizens, and, finally, it is a reliable indicator for the quality of democracy.

During the last decade all major surveys registered increasing percentages of political apathy, distrust of the political parties and disenchantment with politics. Data from two surveys (European Social Survey and Eurobarometer) concerning trust in representative institutions point out an increase lack of faith of citizens in institutions. According to the data from the European Social Survey's fifth round that was carried out from 6-5-2011 to 5-7-2011 in Greece, the average trust in politicians on a score of 0-10 was 1.36, in political parties 1.38, in the national parliament 2.04, and in the European Parliament 2.56. It is important to note that since 2003 (1st round of ESS) the lack of trust in representative institutions has dramatically increased. Table 2 presents the answers of the respondents on a score of 0-10. It is important to focus on the first column of the table.

**Table 2: Trust in institutions**

*How much do you personally trust each of the above institutions?*

Score 0-10 where 0= "not trust at all" and 10= "complete trust"

Score	0-3 Not trust at all- minimum trust		4-6 Relevant trust		7-10 Maximum trust- complete trust	
	Greece	Total	Greece	Total	Greece	Total
Politicians	86,3	56	12,1	34,8	1,6	9,4
Political parties	85,7	55,8	12,4	35,1	1,8	9
National Parliament	74,8	44,7	20,3	37,4	5	17,8
European Parliament	65,5	37,2	26,7	43,7	7,8	19,2

Source: European Social Survey, <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/ess/round5/download.html>

According to the Eurobarometer survey in 2012, 2013, 2014 citizens in Greece point out a very low degree of trust in representative institutions (the great majority of the respondents in Greece tend to not trust). At the same time, 60% of the Greek respondents believe that things are going in the wrong direction in the European Union, while 44% of the Greek respondents have a negative image of the EU. Findings are presented in Table 3. Moreover according to the Eurobarometer (Standard Eurobarometer 84, autumn 2014), 51% of the Greeks feel detached from Europe. The three main reasons are the economic situation, unemployment and the feeling that their voice is not being heard in the European Parliament. It is important to mention that 76% of the respondents in Greece think that their voice does not count in the EU.

**Table 3: Trust in institutions in Greece and in the European Union**

Institution	Greece			European Union		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
Political Parties	7	4	9	18	16	17
Government	6	9	16	28	25	27
National Parliament	12	10	16	28	26	28
European Parliament	27	29	33	40	41	37
European Union	19	19	24	31	31	31

Source: Eurobarometer 77, 79, 81

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm)

Another crucial point of the lack of trust in political institutions is the low percentage of participation of the Greek citizens in national and European elections. In the last Greek elections in September 2015, 56.57% of the voters voted, while in the European elections of May 2014 almost 60%.

### **3. The civil society in Greece before the economic crisis**

#### *3.1 The significant role of civil society*

Civil society, like most key notions in the social sciences, is a polysemic concept; its meaning varies according to the changing contexts, the changing theoretical and practical debates in which it is embedded

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(Mouzelis and Pagoulatos, 2002). Despite its overall ambiguous nature, 'civil society' is often combined with 'the third sector', as distinguished from the public and the private sector. Additionally, the concept was related to questions of participatory democracy and the mechanisms of democratization, as well as to questions of domestic and global governance, international relations (Afouxenidis, 2012). A significant number of authors have supported the role of an enhanced civil society in democratization, governance and an empowered public. Moreover, Roberts focuses on the positive role of civil society in mobilizing individuals, delivering a variety of social service and development programmes and actively participating in local governance (Roberts, 2005).

Civil society includes a vast array of bodies, such as NGOs, voluntary networks, charitable or religious associations, professional associations and trade unions, non-profit organizations, social movements, informal community groups and networks (Afouxenidis, 2014; Sotiropoulos, 2014). In these entities a series of initiatives, including informal, non-institutionalized organizations, can be added. These initiatives include protest movements, solidarity networks, and, often, local neighborhood associations.

In a democratic regime it is important that civil society is autonomous and independent from the government and political parties, in order to counterbalance the state, on the one hand, and from the market that seeks profit on the other hand. In most cases, society associations are deeply penetrated by the state, international donor organizations, or private financial backing. A strong and independent public sector civil society is associated with the quality of democracy (Diamond and Morlino, 2004). According to Colin Crouch, in periods of severe crises there is a chance for new mobilizations and entities to emerge, changing the predicted course of political apathy and the gradual decay of political participation (Crouch, 2003). As Putman argues, civil society makes democracy work.

On the other hand it is almost never actually revealed how and why organized forms of civil society meet the needs of people or marginalized groups. Moreover, it is unclear how the workings of such entities empower local voices and deal with the unpleasant realities of everyday life, especially in the context of severe social and economic crisis (Diamond, 2010).

### *3.2 The civil society in Greece in the period 1974- 2008*

The political system, which was established after the fall of the military dictatorship (1967-1974), has been dominated by the acute antagonism

between the two major parties (New Democracy and PASOK). During the last thirty five years the two major parties reinvented and reorganized the patronage networks through the use and abuse of their mass party organizations, which were exploited, in order to penetrate the state machine, as well as the organized interests and parts of civil society (Lyrintzis, 2011). The alternation of the two major parties in power led to political polarization and after each governmental change to massive allocation of favors to the party's clientele. The political parties were present in every sector of civil society stifling any autonomous collective action (Mavrogordatos, 1988). As a result, civil society remained underdeveloped, weak, and unable to evolve within an oversized Greek state (Makrydemetris, 2002). Such underdevelopment had a negative impact on the quality of democracy, particularly with regard to accountability, transparency and representation (Sotiropoulos, 2014). The entities of the Greek civil society could not control the political corruption and the large public sector.

The regulatory framework for non-profit volunteer organizations in Greece is based on the constitutional right to form a variety of not-for-profit associations (Article 12 of the Constitution). There are no other significant regulations to organize the space and the relationship between volunteer organizations, the state and/or local authorities. The main consequence of this type of regulatory framework has been that, over the years, various public agencies (such as ministries) developed their own internal mechanisms and administrative arrangements depending on their needs and areas of responsibility (Afouxenidis, 2014).

The weakness of civil society is not only due to the state-society relations, but also to internal problems of the Greek NGOs (Sotiropoulos and Karamaggioli, 2005). Most of the ones that operate in Greece have never become modern formal organizations. Except for a few associations, which were annexes of international NGOs, such groups lacked organizational structures and management skills, such as fund-raising and communication capacities.

Another reason for the underdeveloped and weak civil society in Greece is that some civil society organizations have been involved in corrupted practices, have forged close relations with state funding agencies, and have sought funding instead of offering to the society. There are also cases that some strong autonomous organizations and pressure groups have undermined democratic institutions in order to yield the benefits of close attachment to the political order. Corrupted practices have been associated with the emergence of fake civil society organizations, primarily set up by individuals with a business-like rather

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than a civic mentality (Sotiropoulos, 2014). Moreover, trust in traditional, formal, civil society organizations is undermined by a series of scandals implicating NGOs and their relationship with state funding, leading to several criminal prosecutions.

According to Afouxenidis, it can be argued that there are three main periods of the third sector development in Greece. The first period was in the 1980s, and it was mostly related to the presence of environmental activism and movements, which incorporated a slightly more ambitious and radicalized social and political agenda and opened up considerable spaces and possibilities for debating environmental degradation. The second period in the late 1990s is related to the emergence of a number of formal non-profit organizations, NGOs and humanitarian organizations, which competed for predominantly state funds and support at national and local levels. This period lasted until the end of the 2004 Olympics, and was combined with the benefits of volunteerism and the 'hospitable', 'caring' society. The third period starts after the Olympic Games and is combined with the severe economic crisis in Greece. The main characteristic of this period is the relative ambiguity with regard to the scope and the role of the third sector. Organizations were accused of public funding mismanagement, and, at the same time, exalted for their work (Afouxenidis, 2014).

Due to the lack of an official registry of Greek NGOs, it is difficult to estimate the number of NGOs and other non-profit organizations that operate in Greece. There are different numbers presented by researchers, academics, and newspapers. A research conducted by the National Centre for Social Research has shown that there are 263 registered NGOs in Greece, but only 201 are active (meaning they have taken part in one or more actions during the past two years). The rest of them are inactive or under restructuring, while some others are ready to dissolve (Afouxenidis and Gardiki, 2014). Table 4 presents the active NGOs in Greece per category.

It is important to note that 140 out of the 201 NGOs (almost 70%) operate in the area of Athens. Thus, spatial density coupled with fragmentation is the main characteristic of third sector organizations in Greece. In addition, most organizations are in competition with one another. Almost 19% of the active NGOs deal with environmental and sustainability issues, while 17% deal with health and welfare issues.

Moreover, some NGOs in Greece are annexes of international NGOs (e.g. WWF, Greenpeace, International Amnesty, Action Aid, Doctors without Borders). The two main categories that represent these international NGOs are environment and human rights. Many of these entities, which operate in Greece, are in close association with national

and international donor agencies, reflecting a particular ideological agenda coupled with specific means and resources in project implementation NGOs and non-profit organizations have functioned

**Table 4: Number of active NGOs per category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of NGOs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Environment –Sustainability	38	18,9
Health- Welfare	34	16,9
Youth and Children’s Protection	31	15,4
Human Rights	16	8
Social Solidarity	14	7
Humanitarian Assistance	13	6,5
Handicapped	13	6,5
Research- Education	12	6
Minorities- Immigrants- Refugees	11	5,5
Culture- Arts	8	4
Development	6	3
Consumer Protection	5	2,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: National Centre for Social Research – Alex Afouxenidis

under a guiding principle of small group mentality, governed by self-perpetuating boards, thus increasing the problem of transparency and social accountability. During the past 20 years, non-profit organizations became closely attached to the party system and the state, in order to secure funds. Therefore, any elements of authenticity were quashed over time as organizations became tied to state politics and governmental officials. This so-called “soft paternalism” has alienated the general public from being connected with the work of these organizations (Afouxenidis, 2014).

NGOs in Greece and in many other countries are a small part of the civil society. There are other informal networks that belong to the so-called broader civil society. These entities are usually unofficial associations; many of them act at a local level. A significant number of them, almost 350, have appeared because of the economic crisis. All those did not appear as registered organizations, but as loose circles of neighbors that face similar problems, like unemployment or loss of income. Table 5 presents the number and the various categories of these organizations.



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**Table 5: Number of organizations of broader civil society per category**

Category	Number of entities	Percentage
Human rights - Social solidarity	753	12
International and Development	63	1
Education and Research	366	6
Religious	387	6
Local Neighborhood Associations	1378	22
Children- Youth	119	2
Environment and Sustainability	311	5
Animal Protection	86	1
Sports	411	7
Arts-& Culture (museums- theatre- cinema)	1245	20
Elderly and Handicapped	290	5
Health-welfare	406	7
Hobbies-entertainment- consumption	402	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6217</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: National Centre for Social Research – Alex Afouxenidis

#### **4. The role of the civil society in Greece in the period of crisis**

The lack of confidence in the representative institutions in Greece and the crisis of the political system, which was expressed as political apathy and lower percentage of participation in the elections, led to the transformation and development of civil society. A series of issues gave impetus especially to NGOs to intervene, to undertake initiatives, and, in some cases, to substitute the role of the state.

A first issue was the increase of the number of irregular migrants to Greece (Sotiropoulos, 2014). The weakness of the government to manage the situation and the erosion of the social state left space for the development of civil society. Annex organizations of large international NGOs took care of migrant children and ill persons, especially after the onset of the crisis where the living conditions of these persons became worse. Moreover, active Greek NGOs in the area of social care and human rights voluntary associations have contributed, in order to face the problem. A second issue was environmental degradation. According to the

research of the Greek National Centre for Social Research, there are approximately 300 environmental organizations in Greece. Besides that, the field of the environment is popular to NGOs at a national and international level. A third area of action of the Greek civil society was the fight against corruption. Greek citizens became aware of the extent of graft among the political elites and the civil service, as well as the mismanagement of public funds (Sotiropoulos, 2014).

The last and most important transformation of the civil society in Greece is combined with the outbreak of the crisis. It is important to note that after the initial shock and embarrassment due to the draconian measures announced by the government, the Greek society began to show signs of reaction and political mobilization. The main reaction of the Greek civil society towards the social effects of the economic crisis was a variety of anti-austerity protests. The frequent demonstrations, which were organized by trade unions and organized interest groups, reached a peak in May 2010 (when three bank employees died when their offices caught fire during a demonstration). What is more important is the awakening civil society with the emergence of non-partisan “civilian” movements and Facebook-organized demonstrations. The most prominent action comes from the so-called “Den plirono” (I don’t pay) movement; it is a movement that refuses to pay the tolls at Greece’s under construction or in very poor condition national roads, and more recently refuses to pay the Athens public transport fares, which have increased by 40% (Lyrintzis, 2011). The crisis resulted in various groups of citizens, affected either by tax increases or salary cuts or both, gathering in the squares of Greek cities in order to demonstrate peacefully against government measures. It is notable that in some cases political cynicism and alienation took extreme forms and resulted in verbal and physical attacks against members of the political class, who were considered responsible for crisis. Protests in Greece indicated that citizens have turned away from political apathy (Sotiropoulos, 2014). Moreover civil society’s protest after the crisis was combined with anti-Europeanism.

On the other hand, during the period of crisis the emergence of a plethora of social solidarity groups is observed. These entities provided social assistance to the vulnerable groups of the population, such as the poor, unemployed and homeless people. The need for food, clothes and social services was mainly covered by informal networks of solidarity and self-help groups. These groups emerged through electronic media or local initiatives. A research has shown that in 2012 there were 22 social

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solidarity groups in 17 cities (Sotiropoulos, 2014). Local authorities also mobilized citizens by setting up municipally-based “social grocery stores”. Typically, the mayor of a city would provide some space in the town hall, while citizens and private companies contributed canned food and other consumer goods. Another significant action of the Greek civil society was the provision of food and services to people in need. For instance, in 2011-2012, a network consisting of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Armed Forces, the Greek radio channel SKAI and many super market chains collected food and clothes for distribution to the poor in the area of Athens. The Greek Church and the municipality of Athens (1400 portions of food twice daily) organized soup kitchens. A significant number of volunteers contributed to this task.

The provision of health care is another sector of action of the Greek civil society during the period of the economic crisis. Except for the organizations of doctors, which were annex organizations of large international NGOs, such as ‘Doctors without Borders’ and ‘Doctors of the World’, new health care provision groups emerged after 2010. With the help of local authorities, which usually provided the necessary office space, informal groups of physicians started practicing medicine together in small collaborative medical practices, where they treated patients for free. A research has shown that there are 33 social infirmaries in 29 cities that rely on the voluntary work of doctors and nurses.

In Greece there is a long tradition of individualism and lack of tradition in voluntary and community work. Data from researches point out that the Greeks normally do not engage in voluntary action and rarely register in voluntary associations. A European Union study, in 2010, classified Greece among the countries in which less than 10% of the population aged over 15 participates in voluntary activities, whereas the EU average was 22%. The European Social Survey in the fifth round (2011) shows that only 14% of the Greeks participated in voluntary activities in contrast to 26% of Italians, 15% of Spaniards and 12% of Portuguese, while the EU-27 average is 24 %. In the period of economic crisis in Greece the picture of voluntarism has changed, significantly increasing the participation of volunteers in various social actions. The recent spontaneous contribution in relation to the refugees and immigrants in some Greek islands, especially in Kos and Lesbos, and in the city of Athens, illustrate the substantial role of volunteers in facing the difficult situation.

All these initiatives, which were undertaken by the Greek civil society, point out that, in times of serious crisis, civil society wakes up

and manifests itself in all kinds of ways to help those in need. There have been many examples in the last few years.

## **5. Conclusions**

The bailout agreement, signed between the Greek government and the ‘troika’ of the IMF, the EC, and the ECB in May 2010, resulted in extensive wage and salary cuts, first in the civil sector, and then, from February 2012 onwards, in the private sector and the state owned enterprises. Excess personnel working in state schools, hospitals and social services without tenure was laid off. The drop in available income affected demand negatively and economic depression followed. Greece is facing a Great Depression, having lost over one fourth of its 2008 GDP, with unemployment hovering at 26% and youth unemployment at 50% levels. Much of the large output loss has resulted from the fiscal consolidation and internal devaluation policies, and has been aggravated by the uncertainty surrounding the functioning of the Eurozone.

In the current socioeconomic context Greek politics revolve around the “memorandum or default” dilemma, which was advanced by the government. The political parties, in a series of political electoral campaigns since 2009, did not manage to generate a discussion about the future development of Greek society and politics. The lack of a serious debate, as well as the lack of a confrontation of ideas and political projects, reveal a crisis of the political level and reflect a deep depoliticisation (Lyrintzis, 2011). The combination of the economic and political crisis provides fertile ground for the well-known aphorism that all parties and politicians are the same. Since 2008, all major surveys registered increasing percentages of political apathy, distrust in political parties and disenchantment with politics. Trust in traditional representation institutions seems to decline. The low percentage of participation of the voters in political elections proves the point. The citizens consider that politicians are responsible for the economic disaster and do not trust them.

In the question of whether the Greek civil society can substitute the lack of confidence in representative institutions and contribute to a better quality of democracy and governance in a period of crisis, the answer is that it depends on how strong or weak civil society is.

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Before the economic crisis in Greece, NGOs were weak vis-à-vis political parties and the government. Acute antagonisms among the major parties and a polarized political culture prevented the emergence of an autonomous civil society. NGOs not only suffered from financial dependence on the Greek state, but also encountered problems, such as the lack of skilled staff, efficient management structures and transparent procedures. NGOs' dependence on the state resulted in phenomena of corruption in NGOs.

The crisis has opened a window of opportunity for Greek civil society that was seized less by NGOs and more by informal groups and networks. These groups and networks seem to share the concern that, as long as the crisis exists, state authorities are unable to offer a range of services due to the lack of either funds or skills. In the period of crisis, one can argue that this trend is gaining ground within the civil society, resulting in a shift from the establishment of formal organizations to the creation of informal ones. In this sense, civil society is being transformed by becoming more politicized and oppositional, adopting alternative forms and radical means of action.

However, there are also racist groups that have emerged and have started attacking foreign immigrants, who were considered responsible for the economic crisis in Greece. This is a negative example of civil society mobilization, as racist mobilization is not compatible with liberal democracy.

The recent crisis indicated that although there were massive demonstrations, and many interesting questions with respect to issues, such as liberal capitalism and economic injustice were raised, there was no alternative political response proposed by mass movements. Nevertheless, while social solidarity groups cannot and should not replace the welfare state, the fact that vulnerable groups can resort to such civil society initiatives, while the government restores the welfare state, shows that civil society in Greece has potential, which has remained unexploited and can be further developed in the future. Since 2010, overall civil society mobilization in Greece has contributed to the deepening of democracy and social cohesion.

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GOVERNING THE COMMONS' INTERESTS: SOCIAL CRISIS  
IMPACTS UPON ASPECTS OF HEALTH PROVISION IN GREECE

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**1. Introduction**

The global economic crisis that started in late 2008 is still ongoing in Greece. The country undergoes the seventh consecutive year of economic recession, with a few prospects of recovery. Greek government was forced to implement severe austerity measures, starting in 2010, which included cuts to public sector jobs and salaries, to pensions (equivalent to almost 32pct of Greece's 2012 Gross Domestic Product), while it increases indirect taxes and the privatization of state-owned industries.

As a result, the economy shrank by almost a quarter (25pct) between 2008 and 2012, and unemployment nearly doubled, from 12.7pct in 2010 to 24.3pct in 2012 and to 26pct in 2014. By 2014, unemployment has more than tripled, as the total number of the employed population is standing at 3.482.345 (March, 2014) and the unemployed were recorded

as standing at 1.274.843 while the economically inactive population was registered at 3.393.042 (Roussos, 2014).

According to the statistics produced by the Public Employment Service (OAED) the unemployment figure was standing at 1.077.876 in 2013; last year a decline was recorded to 993.118 – down by 84.758 less unemployed (Roussos, 2014).

The difference in the labor employment accounts between the official statistics of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) and the Public Employment Service (OAED) represents a unique Greek variability among EU member-states worth considering when focusing upon issues of social and institutional convergence among EU States (Tsobanoglou, 2014). But the uniqueness of the Greek labor situation does not stop there. In April 2014 the unemployment insurance benefits administration was to cover only 102.026 of the unemployed workers.

From those receiving such benefits the 89.46 pct (91.273 workers) were drawn from the regular categories of the unemployed, while the 10.54 pct (10.753 persons) were from the category of the seasonal workers engaged mainly in the tourist sector. Seasonality at work is an important situation in the Greek work environment involving many undocumented workers working in the rural, the personal services care as well as the tourist sectors.

Regarding the unemployed who seek work the 41.39pct (342.861) are male and the 58.71pct (485.438) are female. In the category of the less than 30 year olds, the total number of the unemployed was standing at 24.86 pct (205.904), while in the age category “from 30 to 54” it was standing at 62.72 pct (519.486 persons). The age category of “55- over” was 12.42pct or 102.909 persons (Roussos, 2014). We see here a dramatically low number of unemployed whose majority does not receive any statutory benefits.

The most worrisome evidence however regards those in the Not in Employment Nor Training (NEET's) category. Their number increased dramatically from 11.7pct in 2008 to 20.6pct in 2012 (UNICEF Report Children in the Recession, 2014).

As Greece receives substantial sums for vocational training one can safely say that policy makers should look in this largely forgotten area defined by business-determined situations in our case.

## 2. Impacts of the economic crisis upon society

The main immediate effects of the ongoing economic crisis include unemployment, poverty and out-migration. An unemployment rate of 60.0pct in young people in the 15-24 age bracket (Tsobanoglou, 2014) has led to a veritable exodus of university graduate young adults in search of work opportunities in other EU, the Gulf States and/or other neighboring countries. More than 200,000 Greeks have left the country since the financial crisis hit the country (Guardian, 2015). Some 35,000 Greek doctors – the biggest foreign group of its kind – have migrated to Germany from 2010 onwards, according to German statistics cited in media reports. In sharp contrast to the *gastarbeiter* (guest workers) system organized in the 60s between Germany and Greece providing manual labor for Germany's key industries, the recent émigrés are highly qualified professionals who experienced their wages slashed under current state policy measures.

According to Athens Medical Association, from 2011 onwards, the number of doctors who left Greece concerns mainly specialists.

The impact of the economic crisis and the evidenced impoverishment of living conditions of the population have had a substantial effect particularly upon children. According to UNICEF (2014), the proportion of children who reside in households living in poverty has risen from 28.2 pct in 2007, to 30.4 pct in 2011 and further to 35.4 pct in 2012. Children of one-parent families (74.7pct) and three-child-plus families (43.7 pct) are the most at risk. The total number of children at poverty risk has been reported as having risen to 686,000 children (35.4 pct). Some 292,000 children live in households with no working adults and access to health care, an increase of 204,000 from 2008, (UNICEF, State of Children in Greece, 2014).

The UNICEF 2014 Report showed that the population of Greek children declined by 9 pct from the 2001 to 2011 censuses at a faster rate than the overall population decline. The increase in child poverty has an impact on other aspects of livelihood, such as food, housing conditions, educational expenses, leisure and free time, and enrollment in activities that promote educational development. The UNICEF 2014a report reveals an increasing number of Greek children receiving inadequate nutrition. Living conditions generally deteriorated leading to a high toll in suicides in the country (Economou et al, 2011; Kentikelenis, 2011). The following Innocenti Report Card (UNICEF c) table1 shows the great leap backward impacted upon Greece's status of children in comparison with other countries.

Table 1



Source: UNICEF-Innocenti Report 2014

Many families respond to economic loss by restructuring their resources (e.g. rearranging their living arrangements to facilitate relatives moving in due to loss of income, resulting thus in overcrowding at homes, in order to reduce expenditure for heating) and relationships. Resulting alterations in mutual nurturance puts families at high risk for instability (Elder & Caspi, 1988). Classic studies on employment during the depression provide ample evidence that job-loss produces stressful changes in the functioning of the family. These changes include a decline in the social status, associated changes in family roles (depending who is the unemployed), and a general loss of hope for the future, particular in terms of long-term unemployment (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1971). The economic depression as a result of “forced” early retirement, redundancy or job dismissal may have negative impact upon marital relationships (reduced satisfaction from the spouse, change of family roles and dynamics, frequent arguments, marital discord, etc.), which is much greater if marriage was weak before the crisis. When marriages end, whether through divorce, separation, or desertion, the child usually spends some time living in a single-parent household, most often (>90pct) headed by his or her mother (Antonopoulou, 2013). Families headed by previously married women typically experience downward economic mobility. These events and circumstances have effects on both the child’s development and relationship with the father, who due to job or income loss is unable to pay on a regular basis child maintenance, which often results in a conflict situation between parents. Another phenomenon often observed is that the dramatic decline in family income leads to parental decision to continue living together despite a broken marital relationship.

Data provided by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) indicate that the divorce rate in Greece has remained relatively stable during the five-year period prior to 2008. According to Greek Statistics (ELSTAT) in 2008 the divorce rate in Greece was recorded at 13,163 reaching the mark of 12,706 in 2011 (ELSTAT, 2014).

The impacts of the economic crisis on the neighborhood environments in urbanized areas (e.g. Athens) have had a substantial effect on children. The deteriorating social environment and the increase in the rates of burglaries and in mugging in the streets has increased parental anxiety regarding the child's safety, leading to his/her over-protection and to a reduction of the opportunities of socialization, which may result in developing emotional and behavioral difficulties. Young children often grow up "indoors", while spending hours of viewing television or playing electronic games with little physical activity. In adolescence, the neighborhood environment effects are usually mediated through social interactions with often delinquent peers and possibly greater exposure to violence. Schools in socially deprived areas are facing additional problems due to a larger number of students presenting with deviant behaviors, increased number of bullying incidents, and lack of psychological supportive services within the school.

The impact of austerity measures on Greek Schools has been severe. The schools face many challenges as a result of their chronic under-funding both at a material level, in terms of physical maintenance, and an organizational in terms of required staffing for their regular operation (Anagnostopoulos & Soumaki, 2013). Greek Schools do not have student restaurants or places for meal provisions. The current crisis has brought home the issue of poverty and hunger.

A letter sent by the Regional Director for Education of Attica, Administrative and Economic Support Directorate (26/05/2014) to the School Principals of the Region requests the registration of the number of the undernourished students in all public schools, to be sent by the 29/05/2014. The Ministry of Education is currently delivering to 406 schools nationwide (222 in Attica) a program for healthy diet, sponsored by the Niarchos Foundation. The Greek Orthodox Church with its NGO "Mission" has said that it sends parcels to 2000 students. The Ministry of Agriculture sends to 1.500 schools, in Athens and in Thessalonica, fruits and fruit salads for pupils. The Ministry of Agriculture is the link between the EU food-aid financing, the producers and the school system, a mediation designed and practiced via the open procurement market, which might not be the correct way to provide much needed fruits/milk for

students under emergency conditions. At the national level there are over 640 school applications to enter a program of school meals from which the 165 are in Attica (Tziantzi, 2014). One interesting issue defining this new situation in Greece pertains to the social nature of the crisis which affects many social strata across society.

The Regional Education Authority declined to provide information collected from the school system defining it as “classified”. On the other hand, the Primary School Directorship of North Attica Area declared that in 129 elementary schools, a total of 110 pupils were considered as malnourished, with most found in New Erithrea, Marousi, Melissia, areas regarded as upper-middle class. These suburbs are prosperous municipalities while the center of Athens and the western part of Attica suburbs, along with the City of Piraeus and its nearby municipal areas, have been traditional working class areas with higher long-term unemployment rates.

One other issue that we ought to register regards the fact that the whole issue of *child poverty and subsequent welfare provision* is still not embedded, as a special category with the associated support in finances, in the system of public policy. The current situation in the school system has brought to the forefront this issue and it shows a social lacunae in the Greek social administration.

### **3. Impact of economic crisis on health**

The recession and crippling austerity measures imposed on the country in the first rescue package in 2010, including cuts to social welfare and health, have deteriorated the health situation in Greece. The effects include increased rates of child poverty and undernutrition, HIV among those who inject drugs, suicides and suicide attempts, and stillbirths. The latest available data suggest a 19pct increase in the number of low-birth weight babies between 2008 and 2010. Researchers from the Greek National School of Public Health reported a 21pct rise in stillbirths between 2008 and 2011, which they have attributed to reduced access to prenatal health services for pregnant women (Simou et al, 2013).

Other health indicators might well worsen. To reduce costs, cancer screening has been cut and the management of cancer, as with many other disorders, has suffered from serious drug and medical shortages. Many Greeks who have lost their jobs have also lost the health insurance that came with them. Health-care costs that have been passed to patients through various health charges present barriers to accessing care. It is only

recently that uninsured people may have access to health care provided on a voluntary basis by social health practices (*koinonika iatria*) which have sprung in most of the country.

Unemployment in Greece *denotes also no health insurance coverage (asfalisi hygeias) as social security (koinoniki asfalisi) is indissolubly linked to health provision* and both are subject to the employment relationship. So while unemployment benefits are scarce covering some 20 pct. of the unemployed, and for a limited period of time, the health provisions for the unemployed and his dependents are also lost. The long term unemployed, the homeless, refugees and generally those under the poverty-line visit these clinics. These clinics are staffed with doctors from several fields, health professionals, and people who offer their time in a voluntary basis. The clinics initially started on the initiative of International NGO's based in Greece such as Doctors of the World, Doctors without Frontiers aiming at the refugee and other informal communities outside the official care system. Now this new generation of Health Clinics represent a new dynamic response to the social crisis in Greece.

The Hellinikon in the Attica Region, was established in 2011 and represents an emblematic showcase of recent community initiatives to respond to the crisis (<http://mkiellinikon.org/en>).

At present there are over 40 such clinics in Greece. This grass roots community action, however, has not been recognized by the statutory health authorities in order to realize their declared promises in providing health to all the uninsured workers. The Greek statutory authorities should understand that they need to further encourage and mainstream such initiatives and to recognize the work done by those practitioners in those circumstances and develop a comprehensive primary care system for all. This may allow them to understand what a social recovery maybe like. Further evidence of this acute situation is furnished as follows.

Analysis of mortality data obtained from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), which was conducted by Vlachadis and colleagues and published recently in *Lancet* (2014) showed that in 2012, after 4 years of austerity, age-adjusted mortality in Greece was lower than in 2008, and that age-specific mortality rates decreased for all age groups, with the exception of slight increases for individuals aged 5–9 years, 35–39 years, 55–59 years, 65–69 years, and over 80 years old. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2011, all-cause mortality was essentially unaffected, declining at a slightly higher rate (6.3pct) than in the 3-year pre-crisis period (2005–08, 5.7pct). However, this trend was reversed during 2011–12, driven by an increased mortality in individuals older than 55 years, but continued to

decrease in people younger than 55 years. The researchers conclude that 2011–12 increased mortality in people older than 55 years (about 2200 excess deaths) probably constitutes the first evident short-term consequence of austerity on mortality in Greece, probably related to barriers to access health care for chronically ill patients because of the drastic restrictions in health policies and the increase in uninsured individuals (Vlachadis et al., 2014).

#### **4. Impact of economic crisis on mental health**

Poverty, unemployment and mental health share a strong link. First, poverty itself is associated with psychological distress. Second, unemployment and /or job loss constitutes an important risk factor for developing mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and depression. Finally, people with serious mental health problems, or disabilities experience high levels of unemployment and are dependent on welfare coverage and are therefore at risk for poverty. The psychological and physical health outcomes of job and income loss are not uniform, but vary depending on several cognitive, personality, and social factors. During times of economic crisis and prolonged recession, people experience elevated levels of stress. Economic challenges pose even a greater risk to parental mental and physical health, if job or income loss is defined as a negative, crisis-producing event that may result in impaired ability to regulate emotional reactions leading to loss of self-control, increased consumption of alcohol or drug abuse, increase in psychosomatic symptoms, eating and sleep problems, which all in turn adversely affect psychosocial functioning and parenting ability (Price et al. 2002; Roberts et al. 2010; Vlahov et al. 2002). Thoughts of future uncertainty and unpredictability may cause feelings of enhanced anxiety, anger, frustration, hopelessness or worthlessness.

Few studies have been conducted on the impact of economic crisis on mental health in Greece. A study carried out by the University of Ioannina in a representative sample of approximately 5000 adults, aged 18-74 years old, found a significant increase in mental health difficulties among people with lower family income or those facing serious financial difficulties. The individuals who faced moderate to severe financial strain, irrespectively of their actual income, were almost 3 times more likely to suffer serious mental health problems, as compared to those who did not face financial challenges. More specifically, among individuals without financial difficulties, 3% presented serious psychiatric symptoms and 1%



suffered depression, as compared to 22% and 12% respectively among individuals who faced financial hardship. With regards to employment, the prevalence of psychiatric symptoms was lower among those who were in full- or part-time employment, whereas the unemployed presented a double risk of developing serious mental health problems, and were two and half times more likely to express “wishes of death”, ideas of worthlessness and hopelessness for future (Skapinakis, 2011).

Analysis of data extracted from information obtained during the calls made to the Depression Telephone Helpline for Depression operated by the Greek University Mental Health Research Institute, from May 2008 until June 2011, showed a steep increase in number of calls with direct or indirect reference to the economic crisis from the first half of 2010 and onward. The callers who referred to the economic crisis manifested depressive symptoms of clinical significance to a greater degree than callers who made no such reference. The latter exhibited increased levels of distress and agitation as well as drug/alcohol misuse. Concomitantly, a higher frequency of depressive symptomatology was ascertained among the unemployed, whereas employed people were found to experience anxiety symptoms to a higher degree (Economou et al., 2012).

A study conducted Economou and colleagues (2011) reported a 36 pct. increase between 2009 and 2011 in the number of people attempting suicide in the month before the survey, with a higher likelihood for those experiencing substantial economic distress. The inspection of data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority indicates that deaths by suicide have increased by 45 pct. between 2007 and 2011, albeit from a low initial amount; this increase was initially most pronounced for men, but 2011 data suggest a large increase for women as well (Kentikelenis, et al., 2014; Anon. 2012; Rachiotis et al. 2015).

## **5. Impact of economic crisis on child and adolescent mental health**

Previous research on the consequences of economic crisis and prolonged recession on people's health has focused primarily on adults, and to a lesser extent on children and adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable to stress. The increase in child morbidity and mortality, child labor, child abuse and neglect, violence against children and women and other forms of abuse, in addition to reduced school attendance, decrease in quality of education, as well as the quality of child care, are only some of the indicators of negative effects of economic crisis on children's well-

being. Researchers have stressed the close relationship between poverty and poor mental health and that the effects of economic crisis may be irreversible for the children's long-term well-being. For example, children who are underfed (undernourished), leave prematurely the school process, or are being forced to work, or become victims of neglect or abuse, are at increased risk of adverse effects on their cognitive and socio-emotional development, which is associated with worse outcome in adulthood. Among other things, poor mental health in childhood is associated with other health problems in young adulthood (e.g., substance abuse, violence, less educational progress, poor reproductive and sexual life), while higher rates of psychiatric disorders in adulthood are associated with multiple disadvantages during childhood (e.g., loss of parents through break-ups, financial hardship, mental disorder in parent) (Harper, 2005).

Poverty and social disadvantage are closely related to child's cognitive deficits and poor school performance (Maughn, 1994). Children whose families have experienced job or income loss have more mental health problems (Werner & Smith, 1982) and are more depressed, lonely and emotionally sensitive. They are less sociable and more distrustful (Buss & Redburn, 1983), are more likely to feel excluded by peers, have lower self-esteem and reduced ability to cope with stress, and are more likely to exhibit disruptive behavior disorders, which are more severe in children who grow up in families with permanent financial stress; the effects are more pronounced in boys than in girls, and in children rather than in adolescents. Most studies have shown that the effects of poverty on children's mental health is indirect – poverty is a main source of parental stress that impacts on parent's emotional availability and their parenting ability in recognizing and meeting child's developmental and emotional needs, and indirect - through increasing risk of applying inconsistent and punitive discipline strategies by parents.

Currently the studies on the consequences of the economic crisis in Greece on children's mental health are limited to anecdotal reports or small-scale studies, which show a substantial increase of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS); 120% increase in service use during 2010-2013 period (Anagnostopoulos & Soumaki, 2013). Indicatively, in CAMHS of Peristeri (West Attica catchment area, with 200,000 people under the age 18), the number of referrals has almost tripled in the first trimester of 2015, as compared to the first trimester in 2013.

At the same time, the demand for supportive work within the community (due to the collapse of social services) and schools (due to insufficient psychological services) has also increased. As a matter of fact,

the child mental health services are now called upon to substitute and assume the work of others, even the supervision of parent-child contact. Furthermore, an increasing number of patients seek care within the public system. A recent survey in a representative sample of both public and private child psychiatric institutions in Athens, Piraeus, and Thessaloniki compared data from 2007 and 2011 (two years before and two years after the implementation of austerity measures). Findings revealed a 39.8 % increase in new cases in public outpatient services for children and 25.5 % for adolescents, while percentages have dropped by a total of 35.4 % in the private sector between the years 2007 and 2011 (Anagnostopoulos & Soumaki, 2012). As a result, both the waiting list and waiting time are now longer. In CAMHS of Peristeri, the waiting time has tripled and is now longer than 2-3 months, while the waiting time for assessment of specific learning difficulties exceeds 1 year. Reduction by 40 pct. in salaries and substantial cuts in funding operating costs, as well as the intensifying the professional requirements has caused a drop in morale and work burnout. The accumulation of all the above factors has contributed to progressive in the quality of service provision (Christodoulou et al, 2012). The increased waiting list, caused also by the increased number of families with complex psychosocial adversities, leaves very little room for psychotherapeutic interventions. Nowadays, throughout public CAMHS, the diagnostic model seems to prevail over the psychotherapeutic model, for the benefit of private sector, which provides therapy to those, for whom the public sector fails to meet therapeutic needs, except those of pharmacotherapy. It is clear, therefore, that the most affected by crisis, with the devastating social consequences, are the economically weaker families, as well as, those without social health-insurance coverage (which is linked to employment status), who are unable to cover the cost of their child's therapy. Indicatively, the mean cost of therapeutic intervention program for a preschool child with autistic spectrum disorder is approximately 800 Euros monthly; the social security fund covers only the sum of 450 Euros, leaving the parent to pay at least 350 Euros for his/her child's therapy.

There is some emerging evidence that an increased number of children is abandoned in paediatric hospitals, as well as, that increased number of parents seek child's admission to institutions because they cannot meet their basic needs, i.e. food, housing, clothing, etc., which *heightens the risk of Greece regressing back to institutional care*. As an example, the Child Protection Center of Attica "Mitera" (formerly "Mitera Infants Centre") has recently re-opened the Newborns-Babies Unit, with an 8 bed capacity; with the aim of reducing to a minimum the time spent by babies

in maternity hospitals or hospital obstetric clinics. Data provided by “SOS Children's Villages” indicate an extreme increase in demand for support; five years ago, this International Organization was helping 47 households, today provides support to 9,000 households. Another example is the action of a non-profit organization named “The World’s Ark”, currently in Athens, Thessalonika, Ioannina and Chios, aiming at providing care to children (clothing, play, medical and dental care, remedial teaching, foreign language learning, etc.) who live in conditions of neglect and abandonment, most from single-parent families. The objective of this effort, founded and managed by Father Antonios, a priest (but is not a church based institution), is to prevent the institutionalization of children, and support their stay in the mother's care, who receives monthly financial aid to cover the rent and bills, while trying to find a job. Furthermore, the data provided by the largest Greek paediatric hospital indicate that the number of abused or neglected children admitted for child protection reasons has almost doubled - from 81 cases in 2011 to 170 cases in 2014 (Kolaitis, 2014).

## **6. Impact of economic crisis on child and adolescent mental health service provision**

In terms of service provision, in Greece investing in child and adolescent mental health has never been a priority, as compared to adult mental health and even more to physical health. This has to be understood in an environment of drastic cuts at the rate of 49 pct. In the public health expenditure during the past five years. This was confirmed by the evaluation of the National Plan of Action “Psychargos” for the decade before the economic crisis (2000-2009). With respect to meeting children’s mental health needs, the Group of European evaluators concluded that the development of psychiatric services for children has followed a different course compared to that for adults, as only 30 pct. of the planned community CAMHS, 5.5pct. of the planned specialized services for children with autistic spectrum disorders, 48 pct of day centers for young people with autism, 6pct. and 14.5 pct of long- and short-term stay facilities respectively, have actually been materialized. Furthermore, the report stressed that the distribution of child psychiatric services is uneven, as more services are situated in the Attica Prefecture (to which the city of Athens belongs), whereas other areas in the country are lagging significantly behind both in number and in type of services

provided. In some prefectures, there are no child psychiatric services (Thornicroft, Craig, & Power, 2010).

In Greece public and non-profit mental health service providers have scaled back operations, shut down, or reduced staff; plans for development of child psychiatric services, which has been in place within the framework of the psychiatric reform since 2000, have been effectively cancelled or abandoned; funding for mental health decreased by 20pct between 2010 and 2011, and by a further 55 pct between 2011 and 2012 (Anagnostopoulos & Soumaki, 2013). Today, many youth mental health services within the public sector are in great danger to collapse. Furthermore, a large number of specialized services and psychosocial rehabilitation units, run by NGO's within the framework of the mental health care reform program "Psychargos" with the financial support of the European Union that covered the large gaps that existed and continue to exist in the public sector, *have suspended their operation*. It needs to be stressed that these units provided psychiatric care to the most vulnerable population (e.g. children with autistic-spectrum disorder or severe learning difficulty), whose mental health and care impacts substantially on their psychological development, and the balanced functioning of their families.

In periods of economic crisis and extended recession, it has been observed that, while the demands for mental health services increase, because of the reduction in health and social services expenditure, their provision is progressively decreasing. This may result in a vicious circle that maintains and deteriorates further mental health problems (Triantafyllou & Angeletopoulou, 2011). The shrinking of child psychiatric and psychological services may create in the near future more psychosocial problems that will be passed onto the broader society (and to next generation), with even more unpleasant consequences. This means that children and young people will find themselves without access to psychological help that could potentially aid their psychosocial development and functioning, and not deprive them from the probability of successful integration into society. Moreover their families, who are already in a difficult financial situation due to the crisis, will find themselves powerless to cope at home with highly disturbed children, whose mental state or behavior deteriorates, will result in the deadlock leading to despair, search for alternative solutions, and secondarily in development by other members of the family of psycho-social problems. In terms of crisis the social supports are being enhanced and their budgetary and organizational capacity is being enhanced in order to facilitate a return to normalcy.

## **7. Conclusions**

The economic crisis has profoundly affected the Greek society, as a result of increased rates of unemployment, poverty and inequality alongside the huge cuts in social services, health, education and research. It has particularly aggravated the situation of all as well children in the country, due to the faulty social safety net. Many private initiatives came to fill in the void but the missing poverty eradication supports are much in evidence. It is also clear that poverty at present is not systematically being considered as part of a social policy for workers. We demonstrated that unemployment insurance is not universal and only a small percentage of the unemployed are being on the receiving end of a benefit system. Differing accounts for unemployment figures between state agencies (ELSTAT and OAED) indicate a weak capacity and understanding to tackle a very worrisome social situation whereby the very concept of social governance is being put into question. Families and children in such a situation seem to suffer from lack or lower quality services within the public sector; a huge bulk of psychological and psychiatric care can be obtained in the private sector but only by for those who can afford it. Those in prolonged unemployment and poverty are sliding in the shadow and lose their faith in democracy as the system of social integration in place, employment, schooling, seems to be contracting dramatically to extreme levels. The weak reporting and registration seems to be a strong characteristic of the situation. If a phenomenon, act, situation, condition is not registered, it is not accountable and it does not exist as a calculable issue. Those in the shadows, the long-term unemployed, the poor, the marginal seem to escape economic “care” by civil authorities and need to rely upon eleemosynary institutions for basic daily needs such as meals.

On a perspective “emergency” situations require emergency responses provided they are taken and understood as such. In the Greek case the humanitarian crisis of the domestic social situation seems to be rather secondary to the needs of the those who demand more resources to be taken from the basic social and health needs of the population. An emergency situation either caused by natural forces or by human systems, it needs to be understood as such and to be confronted in an equal footing. Of course the quality of a response in each state organization differs when it faces these differing types of disasters. Even though what is at stake is the quality of protection guaranteed to all the citizens. However the social catastrophe in Greece has not been seen as such but as an outcome of bad domestic policies or of maladministration and so on in order to address the country’s debt. The only aim has been to extract as much revenue for this

debt while ignoring the domestic social consequences. What is interesting, from a sociological point of view, is that domestic society is neither encouraged to articulate its resilience mechanisms nor is to receive by civic means (taxation) resources for repairing the damages to its domestic economy and society. It is a veritable Greek drama in a seemingly endless scenario.

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## COMMON GOODS AND ITALIAN POLITICAL CULTURE

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### **1. Introduction**

In June, 2011 four referendums took place in Italy: one on the construction of nuclear power plants, one on criminal immunity for elected administrators, and two on the privatisation of public water system. The campaign against the privatisation of public water<sup>93</sup> focused

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<sup>93</sup> Question 1 – *Modality of entrustment and management of local public services, economically relevant- Abrogation*. Turnout 54,81%- ‘Yes votes ’ 25.935.372 (95,35%) ‘No votes ’ 1.265.495 (4,65%); Question 2 – *Determination of the water service fee on the basis of an adequate remuneration of the capital- Partial abrogation of norm*. Turnout 54,82%: ‘Yes votes’ 26.130.637 (95,80%) – ‘No votes’ 1.146.639 (4,20%); Question 3 – *Abrogation of the norms that permitted the construction of new nuclear plants in the territory*. Turnout 54,79% ; ‘Yes votes’ 25.643.652 (94,05%) – ‘No votes’ 1.622.090 (5,95%); Question 4 – *Abrogation of the bill 51, April 7 2010, about legal impediment of Prime Minister and Ministers not to appear in court*. Turnout 54,78%; ‘Yes votes’ 25.935.372 (95,35%) – ‘No votes’ 1.265.495 (4,65%). Source: [http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/sala\\_stampa/speciali/referendum\\_2011/](http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/speciali/referendum_2011/)

on the fact that water is a common good -i.e. a property of all citizens- and cannot be the object of any dealing by public authorities. The extraordinary success of the Public Water Party demonstrated the interest of public opinion in this issue; furthermore, after the referendum, the issue of public water became closely related to the ideas of participation and democracy, and so did the idea of common goods in general (Pezzella, 2010).

More precisely, the belief arose that the referendum success was a sign that a good deal of public opinion was favourable both to direct democracy practices and to political goals related to respect for the environment, social justice and equality.

The contents of the site <http://www.acquabenecomune.org> show how the success of the referendum has been the paradigm for social representations very critical of the current cultural models that only foster personal financial success, rule-free capitalism and the accumulation of material goods<sup>94</sup>.

Another interesting example is that in the 2013 elections, the Partito Democratico's slogan (Democratic Party, left wing) was "Italy, the common good". In the corresponding, "declarations of intent" they declared that, "health, education and the environment are Common Goods, belonging to each and all. They are the expression of a community need that society expresses and thus must be part of a state political program<sup>95</sup>".

On sep. 18-20 a festival on Commons took place in Mondeggi - Bagno a Ripoli, by Firenze, where the members of the the network Communia discussed on how to fight austerity and new-liberism in Europe<sup>96</sup>.

These are just examples of a fairly complex reality, which has involved the most diverse categories of social actors all across the country; for example, in the city of Rome, the case of Teatro Valle is emblematic: one of the oldest theatres in Rome, built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it remained active until 2011, when it closed for lack of funds. It remained abandoned for a few months then a group of a few former employees of the theatre itself occupied the building: for three years, the theatre stayed open thanks to the occupants and hosted not only hundreds of shows of

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<sup>94</sup> See also the site [communia.net](http://www.communia.net), where the Common Goods are clearly represented as an anti-capitalist practice.

<sup>95</sup> See <http://www.partitodemocratico.it/doc/240668/italia-bene-comune.htm>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.communianet.org/il-network/communiafest-dal-18-al-20-settembre-alla-fattoria-senza-padroni-mondeggi>

prose, music and dance, but also a city and nation- wide debate about the nature of Common Goods and the strategies to defend and foster those goods<sup>97</sup>. Another category of Common Goods- related activities involves no longer used military housing<sup>98</sup>. For many different reasons, primarily the need for cash for public entities, a number of buildings that used to belong to the Italian Army are now empty and ready for sale. The opposition of a number of citizens, especially dwellers of surrounding areas, is based on the notion that the dismissed military housing just goes to the highest bidder, with no boundaries of use for the new owners and no regard for the community's needs. According to those citizens, the military buildings belong to everyone and everyone should take an active part in their management, according to collective needs. Generally speaking, these examples are evidence of a trend that has been taking place in Italy in very recent years: Common Goods are not just a theoretical category that describes a part of empirical reality; they have broadened their meaning in comparison with other traditions -especially the Anglo-Saxon. And, as we will see later, they have acquired a deep political meaning; in fact they imply, for the actors involved, effective representations of what the world is and outlines of what it should be as well as strong value-based orientations for social action. In other words, Common Goods seem to be performing, in Italy, the same functions of sense- making that political ideologies used to do in the recent past. This phenomenon is even more relevant if we consider that notions of Common Goods are strangers to Italian history and tradition and only recently could Italian public opinion become acquainted with this issue through scientific publications, especially Ostrom's works. The consequence is that Common Good theory, as an instrument for observing reality, has turned into an object to be observed itself through other theoretical tools; thus, a scientific approach to this phenomenon implies second level observations (see Simmel, 1890: 2), consisting of the description of how every social actor -whether individual or collective- has interpreted the "official" theory. The main goal of this essay is to

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<sup>97</sup> <http://www.teatrovalleoccupato.it>. Other similar examples in the city of Rome are the movie theater America and even Cinecittà. See <http://americaoccupato.org/> and <http://cinecittabenecomune.wordpress.com/>. Late in August 2014, public authorities cleared out both Valle Theater and America movie theater; nevertheless the groups of occupants have continued with their own cultural and political activities.

<sup>98</sup> See <https://www.facebook.com/forteboccea.benecomune?fref=ts> and <http://forteboccea.wordpress.com/>

suggest an explanation for this phenomenon by relying on the peculiarities of Italian political culture. The work will consist of the following parts:

First, I will draw a description of the Common Goods in Italy, i.e. the typology of the actors involved, the activities that take place and the representations that orientate those activities. In order to highlight the peculiarities of Italian Common Goods, I will rely on empirical cases, which have taken place in the social reality I know best, the city of Rome.

Secondly, I will try to demonstrate how the peculiarities of Italian Common Goods practices depend on the deepest part of Italian political culture. Thus, first I will draw a general schema of Italian political culture, based upon the existing literature, then, I will use this schema as a theoretical framework for Common Goods.

## **2. Italian Common Goods**

One of the main features of Italian Common Goods is that they are not rooted in a historical tradition, as in England or in other cultural contexts. In Italy, this is a fairly recent practice, based upon the interpretation of the scientific literature from other countries (especial Ostrom's works, whose popularity increased considerably after her Nobel award) rather than local heritage. Thus, it is no wonder that the category of Italian Common Goods includes items that are quite different from the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Deep differences already emerge from the Italian definitions:

“A definition for Common Goods might include the principles, the institutions, the resources, the instruments and the practices that permit a group of individuals to start a human community able to grant everybody's right to a life worth living. (Unimondo) (AA.VV., 2010; 20)<sup>99</sup>.

Or

“The Commons are a political practice, a kind of collective action. The politics of Common Goods spreads the power, does not collect it into the hands of a few. Common Goods are never a granted conquest. They exist when a relevant number of people physically retakes possession of them, cares for them and returns them to the citizenry. “Common” is different from “public”. State and administrative control cannot grant actual democracy and participatory management: common goods depend

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<sup>99</sup> Original text: “*I beni comuni possono essere definiti come l'insieme dei principi, delle istituzioni, delle risorse, dei mezzi e delle pratiche che permettono ad un gruppo di individui di costituire una comunità umana capace di assicurare il diritto ad una vita degna a tutti*” (Unimondo) (my translation).

on self-management, not top-down control. They are neither a neutral nor a pacified area. There are actual conflict lines: conquering and self-governing the common goods -knowledge, water and landscape. Valle Theater and Val di Susa are responses to the governments that undersell artistic and natural estates”<sup>100</sup>.

Nothing could be further from the instrumental rationality that characterizes the Anglo-Saxon Commons experience<sup>101</sup>. In fact, the Italian approach is characterized by a strong, value orientation, expressed as a critical attitude towards reality and a claim for direct participation in the political decision-making process. Consequently, the interpretative categories in this case are closer to the ideal type of value -oriented action, or even to the model of substantial rationality<sup>102</sup>.

Within this framework, Italian Common Goods is divided into two main categories, which share the same kind of rationality although they demonstrate a number of other differences. The first category, which on

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<sup>100</sup> Original text: *“I commons sono una pratica politica, una forma dell’agire collettivo. La politica dei beni comuni diffonde potere, anziché concentrarlo nelle mani di pochi. I beni comuni si conquistano, non sono mai dati. Esistono quando un insieme rilevante di persone se ne riappropria fisicamente, se ne prende cura e li restituisce alla collettività. “Comune” è diverso da “pubblico”. Non è attraverso il controllo dello Stato e delle amministrazioni che si generano democrazia reale e gestione partecipata: i beni comuni non si amministrano dall’alto, si autogovernano. Non sono una zona neutra né pacificata. Sono veri e propri campi di conflitto: conquistare e autogovernare beni comuni – dai saperi all’acqua al paesaggio, al Valle come in Val di Susa – è una risposta ai governi che svendono il patrimonio artistico e paesaggistico”*.

See <http://www.teatrovalleoccupato.it/category/beni-comuni>. (my translation)

<sup>101</sup> Ostrom (1990: 3 ff.) states that she conceived the problem of commons after reading a number of studies on policies of water supplies in Southern-Californian communities. In her studies the theory of commons appears to be an instrument for a rational approach to specific policies (whether local or not), for which traditional rationality appears to be rather ineffective). Furthermore, those policies are supposed to take place in the current international context, whose legitimacy in terms of global corporations, financial flows etc. is not under debate. Moreover, over the years, the notion of Commons has changed noticeably; it has broadened to include not only local resources, but also wider and even global items, such as “the oceans, the gene pool and the atmosphere” (Ostrom and Dolsak, 2003: 3 the web (Ibid.: 4; 26) and the environment (see also Ostrom, 2000).

<sup>102</sup> For a general view of Weberian theory of social action, see Kalberg, 1980

other occasions I have defined as *content based*<sup>103</sup>, is characterized by involving small groups, sharing their goals to provide a concrete contribution to public utility, mainly on a local basis. The name “content based” refers to the fact that the actors involved produce a commodity that did not exist before (food, housing, etc.); furthermore, they take place within very limited milieus, both in terms of space and the number of people involved. Content-based Common Goods is a wide category, including urban gardens<sup>104</sup>, experiences of cohabitation<sup>105</sup>, community-supported agriculture, and other activities<sup>106</sup>.

### **3. Representations of Italian Common Goods**

The second category of Italian Common Goods, which is the main object of this work, refers to wider and more abstract objects such as the environment, the Earth’s atmosphere, water (Molinari 2010), the cultural heritage or even the Internet (Mass Araya and Borsetti Gregorio Vidotti , 2011). These objects, in general, not only are larger and wider than the first category, but are also characterized as existing independently from the actions of involved actors, whose aim is, therefore, the legal/political acknowledgment of the status of Common Goods.

The definition of this category is “management based”, because it calls for different organizational criteria, different from the formal rationality of state and market. Of course, just like the content-based Common Goods, this practice is still based on substantial rationality, related to powerful selective incentives (Olson, 1971: 51); however, unlike the other category, in this case, the social action implies the intention of a general change of the worldwide socio-political structure and stresses the importance of direct political participation.

The most relevant feature of this category of Common Goods is, in

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<sup>103</sup> See Vallauri Lombardi, 2010: 45 and Ruzzeddu, 2012:76 ff.

<sup>104</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/ortigarbati/>; [http://www.italianostra.org/?page\\_id=209](http://www.italianostra.org/?page_id=209); [www.zappataromana.net](http://www.zappataromana.net/);

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.cohousing.it/>;

<sup>106</sup> One more list of possible example of content based objects “The laboratory of recycling, Effecorta- the first zero packaging store with over 200 short-chain items,, (...) water springs made public and free for all instead of bottled water, (...), renewable power plants, (...) building and renewing activities aiming to energy saving (...) a new dwelling culture against loneliness”. My translation (Biolghini, 2010: 115).



fact, a much stronger political meaning; this depends in part on the fact that social actors have to interact with public authorities and redefine political agendas according to the management needs related to the specific commodity which they are caring for. But the main reason for this political meaning is that, in Italy, Common Goods theory has evolved from a merely scientific tool into an ideology (for an outline of ideology in the 21th century see Gayil, 2005), performing the main functions of an ideology (Gerring, 1997: 971-2) especially sense making and orientations toward actions (Geertz, 1973: 213 ff.; se Benford and Snow, 2000; Benington and Dixon, 2005; Berbier, 1998; Cable S. and Shriver T. , 1995; Carlsson C. 2008; Carroll W.K. and Ratner R.S 1996 a; b; Davies, 1999) through meaningful representations of reality, as well as strong value-based criteria of social action orientation.

Of course, the contents of those representations are still about a critical attitude towards reality, especially global reality (Nonini, 2006), which, worldwide, seems unable to grant decent living standards for all human beings, and at the same time, that cause high levels of pollution and environmental degradation. In Italy, the idea that the theory and the practice of Common Goods can overcome all those troubles and grant freedom and justice for as many people as possible -even all of humankind is very strong.

The Common Good theory has become an object of investigation rather than an instrument for observing reality; consequently, a scientific approach to this phenomenon implies second level observations (see Simmel, 1890: 2), consisting of the description of how every social actor - whether individual or collective- has interpreted the “official” theory.

The rest of this essay will focus principally on the causes of this phenomenon.

#### **4. Modernity and Common Goods**

With this aim, it is necessary to reconsider the English experience of the Commons. It is historically acknowledged that a conflict regarding Commons took place in England from the XVI through XVIII centuries (process of *enclosures*). In the Middle Ages, many communities all across England had organized social production based upon the pasture in meadows, which mostly belonged to private owners (the renowned yeomanry), but where shepherds and peasants had the consuetudinary right of use (Mantoux, 1906: 138 ff.). The famous phenomenon of enclosures consisted of the struggle that landlords started in order to

retake control of those lands, with the aim of starting intensive cultivation. The consequences of the landlords' victory were relevant: a new regime of farming arose, which could feed not only a single small community, but much larger swathes of population; furthermore, land turned from a mere resource for sustenance into an economic resource and a springboard for profit. In the meantime, masses of shepherds and peasants were compelled to leave the countryside and migrate to urban centres, where, in the arising big factories, the demand for a cheap labour force was greater and greater. Hence, the enclosures gave rise to, not only a profit ideology, but also to urbanization, the working masses and a society-based way of living that took the place of the community-based one. For all of these reasons, most scientific communities consider the process of Enclosures as the actual beginning of the modern era. Nevertheless, among theorists of Common Goods (see for example Mattei, 2011; Hardt, Negri 2013; Fournier 2013), enclosures are the biggest crime of history. In fact, in those scholars' opinions, enclosures caused a condition of extreme misery for the masses, which could no longer make their own living from the common lands. Furthermore, -still according to the Common Goods theory- the enclosures encouraged the economic élite to use natural resources for profit purposes instead of for public utility, with that attitude of predation, which is said to be jeopardizing the environmental balance of the whole planet (Fournier, 2013).

But, above all, what enclosures did was to break the sense of community that used to make people's lives happier and richer, forcing them to live in a world of secondary, interest based, relationships, and producing that sense of isolation typical of big modern cities<sup>107</sup>.

Thus, within the theoretical framework shown above, considering the historical phenomenon of enclosures as the actual root of modernity implies representing modernity itself from a negative point of view and highlighting its darker sides (De Angelis, 2012). Consequently, the political project of supporting the Common Goods as a collective practice has a strong meaning because it fosters the belief that it might be possible to reduce the main causes of contemporary social dis- ease or even, for a

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<sup>107</sup> Within this framework, while modernity characterized for a clear distinction between a public (Habermas, 1991: 28) and a private sphere (Ibid.: 43 ff.) (which nevertheless were part of the same social order), a third category appears now necessary, the "common space" (see Arendt, 1998; 53 ff.), where citizens can meet other citizens, in a condition of reciprocal equality, and take care of issues that do not pertain to their private life, with no -or very limited- interference from central-local state authorities.

number of radical activists, achieve the ultimate subversion of the contemporary global capitalism. Summarizing, in other cultural contexts, especially the Anglo-Saxon, the phrases “Commons” or “Common Goods” refer to traditional habits arising spontaneously, at different epochs. Consequently the pertinent theory is an instrument that scientific communities have created for understanding these habits. In Italy, the process has been the reverse: Common Goods have first spread as a scientific and political theory; only later, a number of social actors highlighted the political meaning turning this theory into a sense-making instrument and producing social representations that could express their own negative attitude towards modernity; according to these representations, modernity amounts to an exclusion process starting at the end of Middle Ages (Blomley, 2008; De Angelis, 2007: 12; Federici, 2004), which caused the breaking of the communitarian links as well as the emergence of selfishness, individualism, and inequality; so that the only path to achieving actual social progress implies overcoming the modern approach to life.

Within this framework, it is possible to establish a theoretical link between the Italian interpretations of Common Goods and to question the latent representations (Parsons, 1964: 348) of what societies are supposed to be, in terms of common values, social differences and principles of power and inequality legitimacy (Petrella 2010).

## **5. Common Goods and Italian Political Culture**

All of these representations lie within a wider category, which will be the key operational concept for the rest of this work: Italian political culture<sup>108</sup> which is characterized by strong peculiarities in comparison with other Western countries. Already in 1963, Almond and Verba stated that “Italy, at least in the South and islands, has a pre-modern social and political structure” (Almond-Verba, 1963: 37). This pre-modernity consisted of the lack of a strong state structure, as well as a sentiment of not belonging to a national community, and is the result of a century-long condition of political fragmentation. The fact that the territory was divided into several independent states has strengthened a sentiment of identity based upon local belonging, that survived even after unification occurred

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<sup>108</sup> Almond and Verba define the political culture as the “attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes towards the role of the self in the system” (Almond and Verba, 1963: 13).

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The difficulty of developing a sense of national identity is also the consequence of long-lasting foreign dominations, which kept the local population diffident towards political and administrative institutions. All of those factors have triggered a strong attachment to local traditions as a reaction to changing processes, often perceived as external threats to their own existences.

Thus, in Italy, “democratic aspirational tendencies are also present, primarily concentrated in the left, but these are relatively weak in comparison with the widespread mood of rejection that affects the attitudes of the great majority of Italians toward their political system in all the aspects” (Ibid.: 40). Furthermore, “the picture of Italian political culture that has emerged from our data is one of relatively unrelieved political alienation and of social alienation and distrust (Ibid.: 402).

However, beside this historical reason, the mistrust in the state reveals a deeper cognitive cause: the Catholic Church. This institution has lain in the central part of the country for almost two millennia<sup>109</sup> and, although it formally ruled just over the central part of the peninsula, its cultural effects have been strong all across the country. In fact, from the fall of the Western Roman Empire (5<sup>th</sup> century) until Unification (19<sup>th</sup> century), a number of invasions and regimes occurred. Only the Catholic Church always remained stable and exercised political and moral authority over most of the known world.

Furthermore, as the etymology itself of the word “catholic” indicates (the Greek word καθόλου -katholou- means “universally oriented”), this was the message the Church addressed to all of humankind, regardless of their social and geographical origin; this has also affected Italians’ perceptions of reality, which always consisted of universalistic and meta-historical representations, for which no historical change is possible, unless it takes the shape of an apocalyptic end of the empirical world.

Hence, a deep social distance from the citizens and a diffuse belief in its impotence have provoked a deep mistrust of the secular state and, generally, of all public institutions, especially of the possibility of addressing people’s life conditions in the direction of a stronger justice and equality. The State has become a stranger entity, unable or unwilling to represent its citizens or to foster any idea of general good. This has deeply weakened the feelings of identification with secular institutions, whether representative of local authorities or foreign, occupying countries (Ibid: 403). Furthermore, because any public decision is only thought to

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<sup>109</sup> This is probably the main cause of the fact that the national unification happened much later than other European countries (Almond-Verba, 1963: 39).

defend the élite interests, disobedience is always legitimate (unless heavy sanctions are likely to follow).

Consequently, a gap developed between Italy and the rest of Europe, especially in the modern era, when the Reformation established a strong link between communities and local authorities (the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*) and when the new order that was arising in France, Great Britain and Spain gave birth to the idea of the nation state, made up of individuals tied to each other by the link of citizenship, rather than by local-familiar ties (Bansfield, 1958; Foot, 2003: 28). This *religious grand bass* (Bellah, 1974: 440; Alberoni, 1974: 470) deeply affected modern and contemporary Italian politics in spite of the achievement of unification and the democratic, secularist juridical order in force (Ginsborg, 2003: 85 ff.).

This influence is particularly evident among Italian social movements, which have always shown an anti-system attitude, stronger than in most other other countries. Although the fields of conflict are always about merely Italian issues (workers' rights, welfare state etc.), social movements' representations refer habitually to a wider range of causes, most of which are beyond national borders, such as global capitalism; similarly, the movements never aim to change a single social issue: in their view, any relevant local transformation is only possible within the framework of a radical subversion of the socio- economic system at a supranational -if not worldwide- level. So, while in other democratic countries collective action has always aimed to change a single part of reality- being the total subversion of the given social order of a minority project- in Italy social movements seem affected by what Ferrara (2001: 94) describes as a "totalistic push" (in Italian *spinta totalistica*).

This condition explains, for example, the enormous success that radical Marxism achieved in the '60's and '70's<sup>110</sup>. During that time, while other European left wings defined themselves as socialist or social-democratic, Italy not only had the strongest Communist party, but also a number of radical movements that demonstrated a revolutionary and anti-institutional attitude (Alberoni, 1974: 475) . Almond and Verba (1963: 404) wrote, "it is paradoxical that the majority of politically involved and informed Italians are opposed to the contemporary constitutional and democratic regime..."

Those movements (especially active in the '70's, like *Autonomia Operaia* or *Lotta Continua*; see Balestrini and Moroni, 1997: 349 ff.)

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<sup>110</sup> According to Alberoni (476) this notion explains a number of other Italian political phenomena, like Fascist movements

described themselves as forces of opposition to the existing social order, calling for the suppression of traditional class differences and the bourgeois state organization in the name of the international organization of the working classes that the multinational companies were exploiting without scruples. It is possible to assess that, for radical Marxism, the notion of a proletarian revolution mirrored catholic universalism: although they lay on the opposite sides of 20<sup>th</sup> century political conflicts, they both referred to the whole of humankind and were based on narrations that implied the soon-to-come end of the contemporary world, whether by natural creation or by a new social order. It is, consequently, easy to imagine the cognitive disease that the end of Marxism can have created in Italy after the fall of the Berlin wall, especially because no new universal and meta-historical representation arose that could provide social actors with the same logical robustness and interpretive power. Thus, most political actors that belonged to the radical left-wing suffered a lack of cognitive and value reference, with consequent difficulties in defining political goals and adequate strategies of achievement.

## **6. Conclusions**

In this condition of incertitude, the theory of Common Goods could offer some references<sup>111</sup>. As shown before, this notion arose in Italy when political battles arose against the choice of the national administration to sell away parts -often large parts- of the public estate; Common Goods theory provided one of the strongest arguments of the opposition: buildings, coasts, harbours, waters etc. are not the property of the state thus, decision makers are not free to trade these objects away according to market logic, only to earn some cash for the public coffers. The idea was that the state's duty was to keep those goods in a proper state on behalf of their actual owner: the whole social body; in other words, those goods are neither public nor private: they are just *common*. Furthermore, the short-sighted strategies of public authorities, which are selling public properties to earn quick money, appear as an actual bias of those commodities nature and a risk for their existence and/or the possibility for anybody to enjoy them. This implied an effort of defining a different set of rules and values for their management that matched efficiency and effectiveness and also

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<sup>111</sup> Of course this is not the unique cognitive reference for the social movements. Common Goods coexist with more traditional representations of the world, like Marxims and anti-fascism.

in preserving these resources in the name of the rights of use of every individual, now and in the future. Nevertheless, the Italian peculiarity soon emerges: in fact, the issues that belong to the notion of Common Goods, especially the management-based ones, have grown more and more numerous, so that now these notions can virtually include any issue that involves a group of citizens in opposition to decision-makers, whether local, national or supranational; the only shared characteristic is the adherence to the values of universal equality and justice as well as, needless to say, an attitude of opposition to the current global economic system<sup>112</sup>. The difference from the Anglo-Saxon model is clear if we reconsider the example of public water supply in southern California. In that case, no universal attitude emerged and none of the actors involved showed any intention of opening access to subjects others than the land-owners and the local appropriators.

Now, the general distrust towards state institutions is probably the best explanation of the peculiar interpretation of the Common Goods in Italy.

In other words, it is possible to conclude that the cultural structure of Italy has transformed the ideal type of Common Goods and made of it an ideology close to the radical left wing, with the aim of defeating the capitalist system and of building a different world based on justice and equality. This permits the inclusion of a wide range of political battles - defence of workers' or minorities' rights, antiracism, religious freedom etc.- that are doubtless strangers to the classical definition of Common Goods. So, an idea related to a limited and clearly defined range of objects, has turned into a universal principle and a criterion to embrace and to describe the criticalities of the current time on a global scale: liberalism, pollution, global warming, inequalities etc.

The main limit of such a reading of the Common Goods theory is that it shows a very limited logical robustness and a narrow applicability. While Marxism could really offer a reliable vision of the world, being able to give meaning to any social fact and to interpret any historical epoch as well as to outline a vision of the future, nowadays, it is rationally impossible to imagine a global economic order that is exclusively based upon Common-Goods-related practices.

Furthermore, although this theory can easily garner feelings of dissatisfaction about the current state of the world, the lack of clear conceptual edges prevents social actors from considering themselves part of that category, weakening any identity building processes related to this

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<sup>112</sup> Fournier (2013: 444) mentions the Italian Centri Sociali as one of the first examples of Common Goods in Southern Europe.

issue. At the same time, the Common Goods theory has, so far, not established any new repertoires of action: the groups involved still rely on the same instruments that other radical groups did in the past or that other actors, with different backgrounds, still do today. Generally speaking, while this theory seems able to offer a rational, critical point of view for representing any condition of unease towards the current reality; on the other hand, it does not allow for the outlining of a unique, detailed representation of how the world should be in terms of power legitimacy, production modes and wealth distribution.

The scientific challenge for the next years will consist of overcoming the conceptual bifurcation that currently is limiting a full comprehension of the phenomenon: in fact, the main challenge lies in understanding whether Common Goods theory will overcome the incertitude that it has been exhibiting since its origins or if this indeterminacy will remain, for the liquidity of the current world requires just such a light theoretical approach even for social movements and for the other actors aiming toward a radical change of the global social structure.

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DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICIES IN THE EU:  
FROM DECISION MAKING TO POLITICAL CULTURE

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*1. The question examined and the keywords for its analysis; 2. Diffusion as widespread and dissemination, not simply as translation: a political culture point of view and an organizational perspective; 3. Widespread organization and Policies Analysis: the Armed Forces in the Security sub-System; 4. The glocal operational environment of a national organization; 5. The political perspective: civic culture, interparty conflict and space-time orientation; 6. Conclusions*

**1. The question examined and the keywords for its analysis**

This essay is based on the research *The use of military force in security missions*, I directed in 2013-2014 for CeMiSS (the Military Center for Strategic Studies of the DMS/DM, Italy). According to both the most recent scientific examinations and classifications and the most common PK rules of engagement, the analysis performed shows that in contemporary Defense and Security Policies social roles and activities seem increasingly linked to concepts like diffusion, specialization and resilience. This kind of interpretation and keywords selection for analysis process was already and similarly used, except for the concept of resilience, in another study of the Italian Armed Forces PK missions in Somalia and in Albania I directed in the early nineties. The previous research had examined the specific weight of flexibility in one of the most

specialized kinds of organization (AF) and profession (the military). The result was an attempt to use a new concept: the complex soldier. This time the focus is a bit different: the specialization is considered the pivot phenomenon in a process starting from the “partial” functional diffusion to the resilient system building. This potential function can be considered coherent also with the civic participation in security activities, and with the teaching activities implemented by multinational contingents in the PSO in view of building more efficient and effective Armed Forces and homeland security in the new Democratic Countries. Indeed, in the second case a background action is required to produce a social and cultural change, together with an organizational and institutional change, extending beyond contingent needs and laying the foundations for an increasingly strengthening transformation, developing an enduring capacity, that is to say capable of becoming a resilient social actor, particularly useful within a complex context.

Which is the right way to reach this goal homeland and in an international context? And, above all, which is the most appropriate institutional and organizational dimension to accomplish it?

Catherine Ashton, High Representative and Head of the Agency during her speech at the EDA Annual Conference (Brussels, 21 March 2013) described three basic cases for security and defence: “The first is political, and it concerns fulfilling Europe’s ambitions on the world stage. The second is operational: ensuring that Europe has the right military capabilities to be able to act. And the third is economic: here it’s about jobs, innovation and growth”. Instead, Claude-France Arnould, Chief Executive of the European Defence Agency, in his presentation of a recent publication declared that: “The European Union is expected to be a security provider, not least so by European citizens. As such, it requires the full suite of tools: diplomatic, economic, development and of course military. The European Council made some concrete decisions on major capability programs for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Air-to-Air Refuelling, Welcome Word cyber defence and satellite communications. It also underlined the importance of the European Defence Industry, which depends on European programs to thrive. And finally, Heads of State and Government acknowledged the necessity of cooperation and tasked EDA to work on concrete incentives and a cooperation policy framework. While the European Council was a strong driver of the Agency’s work in 2013, this was not at the expense of other agreed priorities. The Pooling & Sharing initiatives made good progress; new activities, notably on certification, standardisation and European Structural Funds for dual-use research projects, gained further momentum.

EDA is now the focal point of the European Commission for the military in SESAR, coordinating closely with NATO and Eurocontrol, in order to ensure that the military views are well reflected. We intensified collaboration with external stakeholders. Croatia joined the European Defence Agency as its 27<sup>th</sup> Member State, an Administrative Arrangement was signed with Serbia. Enhanced cooperation with the European Aviation Safety Agency and Eurocontrol was put in place. The Agency published its first assessment of the implementation of the Code of Conduct on Pooling Sharing giving Member States an overview of the status of defence cooperation in Europe". Words like these are perfectly coherent with concepts like diffusion and resilience, and useful to think in a complex way.

## **2. Diffusion as widespread and dissemination, not simply as translation: a political culture point of view and an organizational perspective**

All too often phenomena such as perception, decision and opinion tend to be analyzed in a markedly dichotomous key. The same can be said in relation to the issue of security with respect to which assessments are proposed in which the alternatives rated are only rationality and irrationality. Actually it would be more appropriate to refer to a continuum and to consider the concept of bounded rationality and to contextualize the specific items compared. For example, the analysis on the levels of insecurity perception should be regarded as the kind of political and cultural context in which it comes to life. In the local contexts characterized by a participatory political culture, by virtue of the significant role played in a true civic culture, the citizen who is (or feels) excluded from decision-making processes, implementation and evaluation of policies for security, could feel the sensation of not having a real control of the situation. The security received as a gift from the institutions, in a similar cultural context, could never be considered fully satisfactory. A different approach should be adopted to assess perceptions of insecurity in a society characterized by a parochial (localist) political culture or a subjection political culture. In the case of a participatory political culture, the activation of a safe environment (based on the vision of security as a right) must (if considered as an efficient and effective experience) also rely on widespread participation of sector interventions. The management of the security issue cannot be fully delegated to the institutional representatives. In such a context, it is not sufficient to

merely join monitoring and evaluation processes. Although part of an overall design institutionally coordinated and regulated, typical of participatory democracy, the public-civil alliance should tend towards an equal dimension, with a well-developed and shared decision-making, implementation and evaluation. This could be achieved with what appears as widespread organization.

For a critical examination of the possibility to introduce in the organizational debate the concept of widespread organization, we must start from the consideration that the existence of diffusion phenomena, both as a fact of life and from the ontological point of view, cannot be disputed. The fact that it arises from stimuli or deep motivations socialized within a social aggregate does not represent a crucial element in the declination of the concept in organized areas (as generic reference to a phenomenon that can simply occur in organizations). The point is not whether it may be possible to refer to real widespread organizations. What may be questioned is rather the fully organizational dimension of the phenomenon of diffusion, or the existence of a social aggregate macro-level (not a small and typically micro-level group, as a family, nor a meso-level reality, as in the case of a network) or a corporate system.

The concept is broadly applicable to every social group to which a specific cultural connotation could, in whole or in part, be assigned, with respect to hierarchically superior distinctive social levels. Indeed, in every culture, the diffusion represents a significant element both in training and as a substantive condition at any given time. In the post-modern era, a similar reasoning is further complicated, because of the inability to rely on the categorization of identity of a social aggregate according to the "simple" sharing of spaces and times of life. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to use the same resources or the same kind of means to achieve anytime, anywhere and in any case a fundamental purpose and specific immutable objectives that never change, in the vain hope that the situation will remain under our control.

Galton proposes a diffusion theory of institutions and cultural phenomena in general, which appears substantially relational, according to which their development does not appear to meet inside functional requirements, but also and especially due to the contact and contamination between cultures. The author was actively involved with Tylor in a famous anthropological debate on the cultural comparative analysis. The phenomenon appears to affect social life according to the first author, while the critics of the diffusionist theories, such as Tylor, emphasize the value of contextualization of content and cultural forms. From an organizational perspective such contextualization could represent the



failure to provide a social function in specialized organizations and the corresponding discharge of sharing it between different organizations and many individuals who may have very different levels of specialization (from a non-expert to an expert figure). The reconciliation between diffusion and function seems possible then, provided the second concept is released from a theoretical expert characterization. In fact, in so doing, the concept of *widespread functions* can be easily introduced.

The distinction between non-experts and experts recalls, at least in part, the distinction between those who simply adapt to the environment and others (mainly organizational figures) who are able to determine, or to enact according to a constructivist logic: in both cases they are two sides of the same coin.

The organization widespread can therefore be described as the one that manages to be everywhere, thanks to its ability to fill all the local spaces and is constantly present, as a 24/7 year-round presence, to use a military metaphor.

It knows and learns from the past, oversees and monitors the present, is mobilized in time to act in the future and to predict it. Such description may seem neither more nor less than a utopian organization. Actually, it is a common post-modern organization, which aspires to efficiency and, above all, to be fully effective. The conceptual framework and operational security, with its organizations and professionals, seem to be particularly appropriate and promising for a successful application of the widespread organizational model.

It is primarily individual participation rather than the associated and organized one to be challenged by the concept of diffusion applied to security policies. In this regard and with respect to the analysis of political cultures, it should be emphasized that this method of citizen participation is typical of the new political generations, largely overlapping the concept of civic culture (in which the extent of participation takes the form of a sequence of policy actions related to individual issues, each of which characterized by a bounded space-time dimension).

However, the interpretative and proactive key identified insists on the need for a system and on the representativeness of the various forms of participation as a precondition for effectiveness, thanks to its ability to combine the individual, associative and organizational dimensions, as well as the quality and quantity of citizens involvement.

The diffusion seems to be the prerequisite for the creation of a safety culture in which thought and feeling are not separated from action. This does not exclude the performance of specialized tasks related to the implementation of the safety function, but evaluating the actual potential

for extended support does not reduce nor impair its efficiency and effectiveness.

Special attention should also be reserved to the institutions and specialized organizations acting in the security system, to facilitate the diffusion and at the same time to prevent it from developing randomly and excessively in a non-professional direction (hardly competent, responsible, recognizable, etc.).

From the theoretical point of view, it is important to remember that the concept of diffusion was criticized by Czarniawska, albeit with reference to the propagation of ideas (rather than of actions, functions and organizations, such as the use proposed herein). Bonazzi (2008, p. 490), points out that "to describe the journey of ideas we need a different model from the one based on the widespread, and Czarniawska finds him in the translation [...] that involves an active role of individuals in transmission of ideas [...]: the spread in time and space of anything - claims, orders, artifacts, goods - is in the hands of the people; each of them may act in many different ways: it cannot drop it, edit it, deflect it, betray it, add to it [...] While the model based on the diffusion assumes a homogenous society, centralized, hierarchical, where people only have a pier passive transmitters, the model based on the translation implies an open society, differentiated networks, where all the local circumstances of the points are interconnected at the level of communication". The meaning of the concepts of widespread organization and of disseminated role herein proposed does not appear to be entirely consistent with its meaning as a translation process or a translation result, because it does not refer to the mere application of practices defined by others, in various capacities far away in space and time, but it is based on the participation of all authentic social actors, especially as concerns the adaptation of contextual and individual, considered as a need and not as a possibility.

The diffusion added to the specialization can be interpreted in terms of the construction of a socio-cultural system (societal level) organized in such a way as to be facing challenges of ecological and socio-economic extremes not only in adaptive mode, but rather as a truly resilient social aggregate. In this sense, the diffusion can be seen as the factor that determines the systemic resilience and the specialization may represent, in turn, the premise of the diffusion itself (if the individuals and organizations who are its bearers shall endeavor to achieve it). In this regard, in a recent policy document, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) of the United States of America declared that its mission "is charged with coordinating activities and improving information sharing efforts among federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies

and the private sector. More specific the DHS has multiple 'missions', i.c. (i) preventing terrorism and enhancing US security (this includes aviation security, chemical security, law enforcement, protecting infrastructure, etc.), (ii) securing and managing the US borders (including customs, export/import container security, small vessel security, coast guard, IPR, fraud, etc.), (iii) enforcing and administering US immigration laws (including legal/illegal immigration, human smuggling, etc.), (iv) safeguarding and securing cyberspace critical infrastructure, classified information, computer crime, etc.) and (v) ensuring resilience to disasters (preparing individual families/persons, disaster response, disaster recovery, communication, and so on)" (p. 167). It also specified that: "In the 2010 Strategy for Homeland Security one of the main objectives is to strengthen 'security and resilience at home', for example by encountering radicalization, enhanced emergency capabilities and more public-private partnerships" (p. 168).

### **3. Widespread organization and Policies Analysis: the Armed Forces in the Security sub-System**

The concept of widespread organization, which is crucial in this work and already introduced above, calls into question the involvement, in the performance of a social function, of a wide range of players. This widening of the ranks of the actively engaged actors tends to progressively shift from professionalism to "amateurism". As a matter of fact, the latter should simply represent the extreme of a continuum that, hopefully, should never be reached, but that is to be understood in a negative way, as a relative reduction of the professionalism or competence and responsibility, as well as of *esprit de corps*. For example, in this regard, the second security package (Italian Law 94/2009), enriched contents and redefined procedural aspects. Instead, the former package (Italian Law 125/2008) had established the principle that the various stakeholders involved in security matters might assure outstanding professional skills. In fact, citizens are called upon to use, as a priority, the associations formed between the members on leave of the police, of the armed forces and of other public security institutions. Moreover, they must be competent and voluntary associations without ontological, categorical and operating characteristics and potentially confrontational, discriminatory or even violent (political, religious, or ethnic organizations or other realities with a strong character and identity or social conflict) values. It also provided for the participation of citizens, either alone or

associated in small groups, playing the role of "volunteer observers". However, the observation must be carried out only in specific areas.

Throughout the country, the extensive involvement of the military is the "simple" use of logistics assets, which perform both direct and indirect military functions (first of all, in order of importance, the release of law enforcement resources and other safety organizations of the public sector, which may be designated for other important uses). In this area, apart from the protection of critical infrastructure and antiterrorism commitment, whose military significance can hardly be questioned, the other measures implemented are extraordinary and traditional at the same time because of their too frequent repetition over time, in combination with various environmental disasters and other emergency situations. The range of work is extensive. Aside from the constant commitment in the field of civil protection, a real change was initiated in 1992/1993 when the army was deployed in the operation *Vespri Siciliani*, as well as in Sardinia and in other regions of the South, with a very challenging quantity of human resources, which was in addition to the constant activity of the Army. Today we cannot fail to notice, as part of the work carried out in the field of security, a very interesting relative continuity between the activities carried out either abroad or in Italy. Typical objectives such as the protection of homeland security, the supervision of vulnerable targets, with a presence essentially intended as a deterrent, represent activities similar to those carried out abroad, albeit in a different mode. This is an important convergence that facilitates the organization of a multi-purpose (as it is the case in territorial contexts of implementation) training. The commitment in the country is remarkable. For example, the activities carried out under the "Safe Streets Operation" see 4,000 men and women of the Army currently involved, with tasks ranging from security at the shelters to the supervision of the fixed sites.

As pointed out by the Chief of the Italian Army Staff during an interview for RAI2 programme "Next-Economia e Futuro", December 11, 2013, these missions have helped to reduce crime and raised a sense of vigilance and security in the citizens, linked to their visible presence on the territory of the State (in continuity with the missions of the early nineties, but also with respect to the control of embassies and other sensitive areas). In addition, they have also determined indirect, nonetheless very relevant results, as the availability of human resources, hence allocable in other activities.

This is not the proper context to trace the history of international missions conducted over the past twenty years by the Italian Armed Forces. In security-related matters, the analysis of civil-military relations

deserves special attention. In the international arena, what in the mid-nineties appeared as simply emerging trends, has gradually turned to a genuine mixed (civil and military) macro system involved in joint operations. These collaborative and operationally united tools are basically engaged in the activation of the environment (Weick, 1977) consisting of three essential purposes: a) crisis management, b) conflict prevention and c) peace building. The post-Cold War era now covers more than two decades. The Italian armed forces are again a fully operational institution, because they have been relatively more engaged in many activities, typically or atypically, carried out by a military organization. They experienced a radical change in their organizational culture in the era of peace support missions. This kind of operations, among non-insiders, however, are known as peacekeeping, a concept that represents a typical case of stretching terminology, as it was introduced in very diverse situations. The specific tasks of the Defense System are multiple.

Today's instruments and activities are very different from those used in the past, but it is the staff to have taken the most innovative characterization. Conscription has been suspended indefinitely. Professional military organization has put an end to issues regarding women exclusion from the military. Over thirty years ago, Moskos (1977) developed the famous Institution/Occupation dichotomy, which has proved to be a highly effective heuristic interpretation of military-sociological phenomena. In terms of motivation, in the new post-conscription era, the Italian armed forces seem marked by a kind of aseptic employability. The image of the profession, with the gradual disappearance of the conscripts, has been gradually normalized. Not only the officers but all human resources have significantly improved their level of education, digital and language skills (thanks to Eurotraining Defense experience), thanks to theoretical and academic learning and also training on the job. Huntington (1957) considers competence, responsibility and corporatism as the fundamental characteristics of a profession. This connotation seems indisputably a current feature of the Italian professional military organization. But it is not enough. Expertise is organized today in a rich body of knowledge and skills. Organizational segments engaged in international peace and security building contingents, continue to take absolute risks and an extra-organization life is basically non-existent. What emerges from this context is not a total

institution (Goffman, 1980), but a sort of *totalizing adhocracy*<sup>113</sup>. We should, however, like to emphasize that the commitment of the Armed Forces in the operations of Defence and Security is not limited to the implementation phase, but also to the preparatory steps, in the educational-instructional processes and, before that, in the decision-making. In this latter respect the role of the military in the activities preparing the final decision should be particularly developed, it is the case for the remarkable role played by the Italian Armed Forces in the European Security Research sponsored by the Commission for Civil Security improvement.

The contribution of the Armed Forces to security operations is generally inherent in any military activities typically in formal terms. The invariably interactive nature of postmodern military organization mainly takes the form of relationships with other organizations: Italian and foreign military (including supranational), both Italian and foreign civilians, on a national or sub-national level.

The organizational learning shared by many of the current members of the Italian Defence and Security System represents an extraordinary asset available to the associations and civil organizations (NGO) engaged in various activities as well as in all security related matters both in Italy and abroad. Human resources recruited by these organisms are often non-professional figures, sometimes performing their assigned duties on a voluntary basis, temporarily, without training and without an explicit reference to a code of ethics. It is therefore clear the outstanding potential of the Armed Forces, especially the Italian, in activities aimed at strengthening educational, informational and synergistic elements of other components typical of the systems of pacification and security building, even and especially in the presence of a *capacity building* inclination, consistent with a resilience perspective. The construction and restoration of security as far as regards the contribution of a specific organizational actor can be clearly divided into three basic types. The first consists of a total flow of activity (since it establishes the need to take actions targeted towards the achievement of effective results, hopefully matching the expected or, in any case, positive goals). The second refers to the participation in several stages of the process (for example, planning and developing implementation procedures, as well as evaluating an intervention), refraining from engaging in some other steps (the

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<sup>113</sup> We use this concept to describe the global situation emerging in non-institutional contexts characterized by space and time limitations as well as by limited resources, aims and *ad hoc* means (Mintzberg, 1985).

implementation or a different one). The third type focuses on just one phase/step (eg, selection, training of the actuators or the construction of training contents). Even in the case of the Armed Forces, the field of professional and cultural, organizational and institutional activities, is not necessarily limited to the implementation level, but it can be usefully carried out in the early stages of decision-making, ongoing and ex-post evaluation. Involvement in the European Security Research, for example, can certainly be read in this participatory way. The argument could then be extended to include quantitative (amount of resources actually used) or qualitative (range of men and equipment used) considerations.

Security issues have strategic importance in the overall postmodern politics. The evolution of the related public policies that we have witnessed in the last two decades (at least with respect to the Italian case) represents a typical case of space-time reconfiguration of political power. Agendas, decisions, implementations and assessments have extended the range of their protagonists, thus overcoming, at least in part, the logic of role specialization. The concept of insider can therefore be used to describe various activities performed by a wide range of public and private actors. Even if the professional response is provided in a relatively efficient and effective way, it could also be necessary to encourage the development of a safety oriented awareness in an increasingly significant number of citizens. The responsibility of guaranteeing safe urban contexts could be similarly shared and extended to non-professionals. With respect to global public urban security policies, not only the recruitment, learning and ethics, but also other features typical of specialists groups, such as corporatism, membership in a linguistic community, social recognition, and so on, are implicitly called into question. Given these premises, it is of great scientific interest to verify, with respect to the Italian case, the real need (procedural, substantive or otherwise) of an orientation to carry out *continuous and widespread operations*.

Western Armed Forces military (and not only) in the post-Cold War can be appropriately interpreted as a systemic test, at the end of which an international model of PSO took shape and consolidated. This model is clearly influenced by approaches such as the U.S. and the Italian one which, albeit not considered dichotomous alternatives, were for a long time seen as very different cases along the continuum of organizational arrangements, ranging from a relational to a self-referential system. In general terms, we could refer to a process of organizational learning that has taken life and has been implemented within a macro military system whose scope goes far beyond an ordinary and traditional national characterization. However, we cannot fail to point out that an

organizational model requires a long period of experimentation, by trial and error, (i.e. a learning period), to give successful results. The pre-modern and especially the modern warfare have gradually redefined their structures through decades or even centuries. Hence, we do not have to be surprised by the duration of the process of experimentation and learning typical of the international peace and security system as a whole and, before that, of the corresponding national systems.

The analysis and the resulting representations, developed by Hajjar (2013, 2014), clarify an evolution of military professionalism into a more complex direction, since it adopts a point of view mainly reflecting the American reality. This is to be related to the wider range of tasks performed. In terms of MAM (Military Advising Mission) the author observes that: “advisors traverse a tightrope and perform an intricate cross-cultural balancing act where they agilely adjust to numerous dynamic and diverse conditions by drawing on a range of cultural tools, including warrior, peacekeeper–diplomat, subject matter expertise, leadership, innovation, and other tools to succeed - and in combat to survive. The essence of the advising mission constitutes military members providing training, advice, mentorship, coaching, and other related activities to foreign counterparts (CPs) to enhance their capabilities and professionalism. Advising missions range from large-scale operations during combat conditions, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11, to much smaller peacetime advisory efforts in numerous locations worldwide. Although advising is not a new role for the US military (particularly for the Special Forces), the employment of many thousands of mainstream advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan represents a monumental adaptation in the conventional armed forces. Advising relationships can take the form of different kinds of structures, but at their core they involve three principal actors (see Figure 1 - the Military Advising Triad). The first actor entails the foreign security force member in the advising relationship who bears the title of CP. CPs receive training, suggestions, tutelage, information, and associated support from the advisor. The second actor entails the military advisor who provides the CP with tutoring, teaching, advice, recommendations, and other forms of assistance intended to develop the CP’s competence and performance” (2013, pp. 2-3).

The military of the complexity reflect the culture they belong to, in a holographic way: “contemporary military culture possesses tremendous complexity, fragmentation, contradiction and harmony, traditional and current features, and multiple overlapping spheres of influence including professional and bureaucratic, institutional and occupational, warrior, peacekeeper–diplomat, leadership and followership, multirole versatility,



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cross-cultural competence, power and influence, diplomacy, ambassadorship, and other cultural spheres” (Hajjar, 2013, p. 4). The same author shortly after also highlights how the complementary and contradictory aspects are reconciled in the postmodern military culture: “the strains stemming from the simultaneously disconnected and linked, nebulous and defined, and contradictory and complementary aspects of the armed forces’ culture that reverberate across the organization – from its largest subordinate units to individual service members”. In addition, Hajjar states that this concept refers to a professional toolkit and consists of a myriad of skills required by the organization they belong to: “The flexible and pragmatic nature of the military’ cultural toolkit allows contemporary service members to practice agency and postmodern cultural entrepreneurship as they create essential new tools and simultaneously help the organization to strike a balance among many discordant cultural orientations and skill sets as the military confronts and accomplishes dynamic, fluid, and challenging contemporary missions. The postmodern military cultural toolkit provides greater conceptual flexibility and comprehension of how individual military service members, groups and units, and the military at large pragmatically adopts (and sometimes fails to adjust) to the increasingly incoherent, confusing, unstable, and conflicted nature of their work and environments in the postmodern landscape – especially amid the volatile and unsettling chaos of combat and violent conflicts” (2014, p. 121).

The graphs below are identical in terms of concepts therein contained, ie the identity and professional characterization of the postmodern military. They differ in the magnitude with which some concepts are shown in order to emphasize their different weight/importance in case the figure before us is a military member who, on specific occasion or by virtue of his/her specialization, may be more willing to consider himself/herself as a warrior or as an advisor.



Military advisors' cultural toolkit - Source: R.M. Hajjar, 2013



Postmodern military culture – Source: R.M. Hajjar, 2014, p. 120

## Comparison of Two Major US Military Cultural Orientations and Sets of Tools: Warrior and Peacekeeper-Diplomat

Era	20 <sup>th</sup> Century Modern Culture (1900 – 1990)	Emergent Postmodern Culture (1990 – Present) (New Cultural Toolkit)
Major Identity (Role)	<b>Warrior Identity</b>	<b>Peacekeeper-Diplomat Role, Warrior Identity (&amp; Other Cultural Orientations)</b>
Associated Cultural Orientations and Tools	<p><b>Command Orientations:</b> -Actively Direct, Order, Impose, Tell, Demand, Take Charge</p> <p><b>Traditional Combat Orientations:</b> -Break, Destroy, Kill, Capture, Incapacitate, Dominate -Dehumanize: Systematic “Othering” Process Facilitates Insensitivity and Fighting</p> <p><b>Conformist Orientations:</b> -Rigid Rule Enforcement</p> <p><b>Ethnocentric Orientations:</b> -US-Centric Lens Encouraged: “Our Way or the Highway”</p>	<p><b>Cross-Cultural Competence:</b> -Multicultural Worldview: Sufficient Cultural Relativism -Humanize / Sensitivity: Develop Commonality, Trust, Relationships -Listen to, Follow, Work with, Learn About and From Diverse People</p> <p><b>Build/Teach:</b> -Mentor, Teach, Train, Advise -Build/Preserve/Sustain -Empower Diverse People &amp; Units</p> <p><b>Political Agent:</b> -Diplomat/Ambassador</p> <p><b>Adaptability/Suppleness:</b> -Stretch Rules: Unconventional Tasks -Agency: Invent/Create</p>
Archetype	<b>General George Patton</b>	<b>General David Petraeus</b>

Comparison of two major US military cultural orientations, R. M. Hajjar, 2013, p. 134

### 4. The glocal operational environment of a national organization

The Italian armed forces, not unlike those of many other countries, unfold an operational capability that cannot be simplistically classified in national and international terms, but which must instead refer to more complex political-territorial types, made up of at least five levels.

The first is the international level, which tends to a global or near-global dimension, with respect to both UN missions and NATO operations, whose value is geo-politically much wider than a simply Western scenario. The second level corresponds to the European dimension. It is the emerging one, which is potentially capable of becoming the main level in both political-institutional and organizational-operational terms. The third level can be labeled as “multinational limited”. It involves two, three or, in any case, a limited number of countries, not necessarily belonging to the same international or supranational organization, or even as a result of *ad hoc* agreements for emergency needs. It obviously falls into this level type even the hypothetical case of disagreement or conflict limited to two or a few

countries, and without the involvement of the supranational organizations). The fourth level is the national one. Every activity contemplated in this level is clearly national, as it is the case for the Armed Forces. It should be noted that decision-making, preparatory operations and strictly operational activities tend to expand to a limited extent.

## **5. The political perspective: civic culture, interparty conflict and space-time orientation**

As pointed out by Tebaldi (2013, p. 11), "Democracy is a complex political regime: it has three complementary - although analytically distinct - faces [...] The first configures the structure and processes of political representation and government functions: in a word, the characteristics of democratic *politics*. The second face identifies the structures and processes of public decision-making, that is to say the ways in which democratic *policies* are formulated and implemented. Both interact with a third dimension, that of the *polity*, inherent in the spheres of sovereignty and territorial autonomy of both the central government, and institutional peripheral segments that make up the democratic community *politics*".

The range of policies and safety is really endless, not only in terms of labels (which actually sometimes represent the only, or almost, element of difference between essentially identical interventions), but also as concerns its actors involved in the decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes, both from an ex post and an ex ante perspective. In the ex ante evaluation we can distinguish four basic kinds of Political agendas in the management of security issues discussed in public or at institutional level and as a cyclical issue or a structural one. The intersection of the two dimensions mentioned (place of discussion and urgency of the problem) gives rise to four basic types of agenda : 1) problems with conflicting solutions (public discussion, structural issue), 2) structural problems (institutional discussion, structural issue), 3) media alerts (public discussion, cyclical issue) and 4) emergency (institutional discussion, cyclical issue). In what kind of political agenda should public policies for security be placed? Security policies can be placed in each of the four types identified by Giannelli (2008, p. 25). However, it must be pointed out that not all questions produce a real decision-making process, nor are they effectively implemented. The same type and level of participation may vary widely.

In terms of political culture and political participation, it is interesting to ask a question that may also be analyzed through the policy perspective. Does or does not the establishment of a participatory political culture, beyond its consequences in electoral terms, tend to determine a relative closeness between the positions of the left and right? or, more generally, does or does it not downsize the traditional interparty conflict, possibly making room for a parties-institutions Vs. movements-associations opposition? The answer may be positive, but only in terms of participation covering single issues, rather than being ideological. Indeed, in this latter case, the participation would appear as the expression of inter-parties clashes of whatever nature, that is to say an effect and not the cause of a potential change. We can however distinguish progressive and conservative security policies.

The former offer a social justification for the figures creating insecurity, in the name of a responsibility shared by society as a whole (and, therefore, by all its members), albeit with certain individuals making a greater contribution. The latter, more individual oriented, emphasize, instead, single responsibility and indirectly, in a complementary way, authorize the majority of citizens not to feel guilty in the case of security attacks perpetrated by others. The first ones, based on a medium- or long-term perspective, suggest and implement interventions consistent with the above-described profile, while the latter rely almost entirely on a short or very short-term perspective.

The former tend to focus on the causes, the latter on the immediate effects. The first are analytical and, not only are they capable of gazing back to connect seemingly distant events, but they also imagine, plan and implement long term policies, focused on their output and outcome effectiveness. The latter require instant exams, instant decisions and instant actions. Undoubtedly, there are still different approaches to security policies, at least in part attributable to the differentiation between different parties and coalitions according to the classical bifurcation progressives/conservatives (largely inspired by the reality that distinguishes democracies majority<sup>114</sup>).

It is evident the importance of the temporal dimension in the bifurcation just described. Faced with a growing active participation in security policies, are we running the risk of flattening on the here and now space-time contextualization and of determining a consequent purpose

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<sup>114</sup> On this regard, see the distinction between majoritarian and consensual democratic models, based on a very detailed theoretical and empirical analysis carried out by Lijphart (2001).

postponement at an uncertain time and indefinite space? Or could we also witness a push towards a complex, comprehensive and *multi-temporal* implementation? The answer to such questions lies in a participation *continuum* whose extreme points are ideal types of participatory democracy and circular subsidiarity, respectively. In the first case, participation is entirely institutional. Civil society or individuals "enter" the institution (not necessarily or, rather, only exceptionally in a formal way), according to a cooptation-like logic. Should we be unwilling to sign statist theories of civil society, this situation will have to be interpreted as tending to a substantial cancellation of the civilian component and private participation. In addition, it is often a participation whose value is mainly communicative. In the second case, the participation of civil or private figures is independent from institutional commitment (decision-making, implementation and evaluation). When necessary, it can also develop forms of coordination, using or providing support to the institutions.

The question of the hypothetical need to adopt decisions with a clearly progressive orientation (preventive and long-range temporal security policies) and conservative measures (eg, situational) can be tested through more interesting elements of judgment. In particular, Ferrara (2001, pp. 93-103) has identified four factors of structural weakness in Italy's democratic political culture: 1) the attribution of charisma to those holding certain offices, regardless of any consideration related to the verification of their vocations, merit or exceptional qualities, 2) the characterization of the power elite, 3) the deep aversion to genuine challenge and the corresponding preference for mediation and 4) the reference to the judgment of posterity on political work, even when it is characterized by a very limited range of time. The corollary of this may be found, in the era of globalization, within an additional factor: 5) another type of judgment displacement (in this case space-related) outside the national system, left to foreign press, the public opinion or politicians from other countries.

It is interesting to make some reflections on the fourth factor described by Ferrara, in relation to the public policies for security. The suspension of judgment appears to be linked to a historical moment that only a few years away we tended to perceive as far away. This is to be related to the authentic short-term perspective revolution that has dramatically changed the practice of politics in our country. As concerns political action for security considering that the questions raised by citizens (even through the growing number of opinion polls on this issue) often connote genuine urgency, not only must the answers be instantaneous, but the political class is also called to accept the judgment of today's citizens. Posterity, however, is almost completely discharged

from the task of giving the difficult judgement. At best, it could be invited to comment on the preventive ability of the previous political generations, in the light of the effects found in their present. Nowadays policies (not only in the security sector) seem to have taken a drift absolutely contrary (short-term oriented, based on polls, immediate, and so forth) to the characterization by Ferrara, which is very appropriate to describe the 'era of the so-called First Republic. This could actually make us nostalgic about the supposed weakness of the political culture supporting a *sine-die*/indefinite suspension of judgment.

Contemporary policies are often focused on agendas and security policies do not constitute an exception. Furthermore their emerging temporal dimension could be characterized also in terms of space, ie ubiquity. However, looking at the strong diffusion of the present culture (or very short-term orientation) and the limited duration of social relationships (more and more frequent, but not only in the world of work) we could also refer to the project time or the modular time<sup>115</sup>.

Despite the considerable definitional difficulties as to the possibility of identifying policy categories characterized by sharply distinguishing features and sharp boundaries, a classification of security-related interventions can still be useful to the establishment and to the community of insiders. In the wake of the conceptual definition of the rule of law provided by Morlino and taking into account the theoretical and empirical contributions of Barbagli and Gatti (2005), Tebaldi (2013, p. 13) proposed a tripartite division of preventive interventions and stated that "in terms of the deterrence and of the crime prevention [...] the only mention of the penal system of the rule of law does not exhaust the scope of democratic institutions".

However, at least three further areas of public intervention should be mentioned, each one marked by specific public policies, actors and decision-making procedures: the field of *early prevention*, aimed at tackling the most influential agents of socialization at a young age, such as the family and the school; the scope of *social prevention*, which aims to control the environmental factors (quality of social life, urban decay, poverty, social atomization) capable of facilitating criminal activities; the field of *situational prevention*, aimed at containing threats to individual security through forms and instruments of deterrence (surveillance systems, alarm, formal and informal control) able to increase the

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<sup>115</sup> See in this respect the effective use of a metaphor, the "dance card", by O'Connell (2005) in the original manual for the postmodern worker, *How to do a great job and go home on time*.

difficulties and the risks of criminal practices, as well as decrease their efficiency". Therefore, affirming that "security concerns the degree of effectiveness of the *rule of law*, is to observe only one of the instruments through which it manifests itself [...] In fact, a substantial portion of the security policies is not included between procedural, organizational and regulatory measures aimed at suppressing the crime, but in the development of public tools and strategies aimed at its prevention" (*ibid.*).

The continuity with which the security building activities take place in different urban contexts is normally higher than it does in the case of the PSO (Peace Support Operations). Therefore, all the conditions exist for giving life, even in the field of security, to public-civic relationships, and appropriate inter-organizational learning processes. A model tested abroad could effectively inspire the relational and operational modalities to be implemented throughout the country and resulting into a widespread organization of local policies for security.

Pacts for Security are a typical example of this trend in policies design and implementation. Similar initiatives are based on the awareness that a significant role in security policies must be played not only by institutions and individual citizens, but also by civic organizations capable of mediating between these entities. In fact, they can put in place an operational competence based on a trustworthy relationship with the citizens, on which a security policy has an impact, as well as on a deep understanding of the operational context and so on. In addition, they act as selectors of the most virtuous population, in terms of their availability for a responsibly widespread commitment. This, however, does not automatically resize public institutions, especially at the national level, as in the case of the Armed Forces.

In the decision making, *ex ante* considerations converge not only on the environment, but also on the evaluation of the implementation procedures and the results of past transactions carried out in the same political-institutional and socio-organizational context. The Armed Forces tend to be partly involved only in national decisions, much less at the local level, mainly with regard to the definition of procedures. In the second phase of implementation in the field of *homeland security* and civil protection, the military organization is not the ordinary institutional actor, but it is instead a resource called to fulfill a subsidiary and supplementary function. At this stage, evaluative mechanisms can be implemented, like monitoring, validation of recruitment, and so on. After the implementation, the final evaluation may be looking at both the output and the outcome (that takes into account substantial effects in an extended space-time term, or at least partially deferred and with respect to which



the level of awareness of many of the actors involved often appears quite limited.

## 6. Conclusions

In the light of the analysis carried out we could refer to many specific uses within one of many possible "Security Modules", but it is even more important, on the national front, to highlight the involvement of the Armed Forces in the decision-making as well as in the process of strengthening the increasingly complex system of security. For example, it appears paradoxical that the Armed Forces are essentially absent in the Territorial Pacts for security.

In relation to the participation to the security policies extended to non-specialists, following mode of spread that in some cases occur without any selectivity, without a real trial, without a real learning and, thus, in really poor conditions of professionalism, areas of potential new military engagement could include, also for control purposes: the ex-ante, in itinere and ex post evaluation; the definition of increasingly standardized evaluation criteria; the "coin" of an "immaterial currency", expendable in the security sector itself, directly in the workplace or indirectly, for example in the academic world (individual certifications with UFC value, potentially useful in degree courses preparatory for works in the security sector); awards for organizations with a similar exchange value could also be studied.

One of the most urgent problems in security policies affects the most innovative part of the system, the civilian participation and the consequent new inter-organizational relationships. The most appropriate and effective way to address this issue would be through the development of real organizational learning processes. They could be internal (limited to the civilian component) or preferably sub-systemic, or based on sharing and promoting the best practices with the different parts of the whole system.

In the postmodern era, due to an increasingly evident crisis of institutions, especially at the national level, as a result of the relative downsizing both in terms of resources and actual political weight, it has become evident that the use of traditional specialist organizations and roles can no longer be optimal but only try to be adequate. Nowadays it appears appropriate to improve the participation and stimulate sympathetic mechanisms of social division of the work in contrast to the past, with the over-coming of pre-modern society and the advent of

modern society, since less specialized social roles become more and more frequent, and widespread roles come back into vogue.

The issue of the diffusion (as widespread, dissemination, and so on), both inside and outside the military organization, is a crucial aspect in the discussion on new commitments of the Armed Forces in the security sector, fundamental in this work. The risks of a widespread participation which develops itself spontaneously, building "naturally" a dimension of adequacy and balance, are many and consist, *inter alia*, in an overestimation of the amount and quality (understood as representativeness of the various categorial and group components), in the deployment of decision-making and implementing performance tending towards a more amateur dimension rather than a professional one, but especially in the absence of adequate structures, procedures, and measures to compensate for this deficiency.

In an institutional system, professional, specialized and civil on the one hand, or common and voluntarily participated, on the other, it seems evident that the role of the sub-system is partly privileged and partly uncomfortable compared to the latter. Citizens expect much from the expert members (both organizations and individuals), because it is the institutions that hold the legitimate power of coercion (to use the force) in a monopolistic way. They are more responsible because they must apply a plurality of regulatory codes (not only legal, but also ethical and procedural). It is on them that are focused the largest number of quantitatively and qualitatively substantial requests as concerns the development and the possession of a wide range of skills. This is not the case for a large part of the civilian front that tends to evade these forms of control.

There is therefore an area in the security policies where the Armed Forces may perform specific tasks and, more in general, perform a containment function about the possible relative amateurism of the operators which are far from being institutional or particularly organized. They are not entirely adequate in terms of skills, ethics and ability to act in an integrated way, as elements of a larger system than the ones they belong to more directly. The explicit and formal lack of the Armed Forces (with the exception of the Carabinieri) in the Territorial Pacts for safety must be overcome. An expert system accustomed to the extraordinary administration can play a crucial and major role in planning and implementing rational, scientific and potentially resilient policies. We cannot expect the military organization to simply be a tool, acting as an invisible presence except when it is expected to take a leading part on the stage and assure prompt action and maximum efficiency and effectiveness

and then just as quickly regain a low-profile status/position. The Armed Forces should play decision-making roles, at least from the technical point of view, synergistically acting with other system security organizations, also in ordinary times, playing a leading role in the construction of a resilient society.

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## Annex 1

### **Regarding the resilience of society in the European security**

Source: Esrif (European Security Research and Innovation Forum), 2009, Final Report, p.11,

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/security/files/esrif\\_final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/security/files/esrif_final_report_en.pdf)

*European security is inseparable from the social, cultural and political values that distinguish European life in all its diversity. Security research and innovation must address the long-term vulnerability of these values via European economic, cultural, political, and technological systems.*

Humans are at the core of security processes: they endure and respond to natural disasters; they perpetrate or are victimized by organized crime, trafficking and terrorism. Because security is inextricably bound to a society's daily political, economic and cultural values, technological innovation cannot fully contribute to security unless it focuses on the human being.

Security from a social perspective has three major characteristics:

- It is about *people* – both as the source and the object of insecurity
- It is about *society* – in the knowledge that some threats will target people's identity, culture, and way of life
- It is about *values* – and which proactive and reactive measures can protect Europeans while reflecting their values and way of life

Research and innovation in security demands a framework of legal and ethical guidelines – a "legitimacy perimeter" – to ensure social acceptance and trust, alongside effective political leadership and communication. These will open markets for trusted new solutions.

## Annex 2 –

### ***The civic resources enacted in the security policies***

Source: overview and translation of the classification developed by Fondaca (2009, pp. 10-12)

- ✓ *participation in the design of policies, programs and actions: actions concerning the structure of the urban environment and the operation of community services,*

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- ✓ *advocacy of the community or of persons in danger*: reporting and awareness-raising of situations of degradation or exclusion,
- ✓ *promotion of the community participation or those at risk in public life*: inclusion of ethnic minorities in participatory processes, understood as factors empowerment of individuals and groups;
- ✓ *community development*, meetings between citizens, representatives of the police and entrepreneurs to foster communication and collaboration in programs of community development and participatory planning;
- ✓ *civic information*: safety audit, community profiling, or risk maps, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and of the impact of public interventions for safety,
- ✓ *communitise the personal risks*: for example initiatives to educate men, engage influential figures of the community (such as religious leaders) to combat the phenomenon [of domestic violence], to train, to advice and to support women victims of violence,
- ✓ *social mediation and conflict management*: these activities, implemented by figures such as community mediator or street walker, concern relations between indigenous communities and migrant communities.
- ✓ *damages reduction*: services of “reception and material support, in order to avoid cases of secondary victimization,
- ✓ prevention activities and *control of the territory*: Neighborhood Watch, patrolling (about, for example, road safety),
- ✓ the revitalization and management of public spaces: "Taking charge" of places such as squares or public buildings or the recovery of degraded or abandoned public heritage,
- ✓ the proximity interventions: they reach the targets that would not otherwise come into communication with the institutions (for example the survival street workers),
- ✓ *information and advice*: information on the times and the spaces of the risk, legal advice, both face to face and via telephone or computer,
- ✓ *public awareness and education*: social marketing campaigns, in which data and information are advertised, and are also encouraged behavior likely to make communities safer,
- ✓ *education and training*: both for the public in general both for specific risk groups, but also public experts, whose actions or omissions are crucial, such as members of the police force, or the peer leaders,

- ✓ *creation and management of services*: of particular importance and value is that these services are managed by peer, by peers of those who receive them (eg women who have already had experience of domestic violence or even ethnic leaders engaged in empowerment services for the aboriginal communities).



LEGALITY, CORRUPTION AND RENEWAL OF POLITICS

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*1. Legality between ambivalence and contradiction* - *2. Representations of law and politics*

**1. Legality between ambivalence and contradiction**

Researchers of the phenomenon of social deviance have often highlighted how a certain degree of transgression of the law appears to be present in any society and that transgressions (if adequately dealt with, defined and contained) also carry out some of the latent functions necessary, altogether, to the balance of the entire social organization. In other words, a portion of deviance is part of every society and it appears to be even more inevitable, amongst other things, in those where the process of change is heightened, because in these realities change cannot be entirely organized, but it also constantly generates areas of disorder. Speaking of power, Franco Crespi has added that it is based on the ability of promoting regulations but also, at times, of going beyond them (modifying or even eliminating the previous ones) thus opening to new scenarios.

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<sup>116</sup> Antonio Costabile can be credited for the first paragraph; Andrea Pirni can be credited for the second paragraph.

From such a perspective of scientific, but also political and cultural, objection to the foisted and traditional absoluteness of the regulation, deviance becomes a challenge for social organization and political power, that must know how to interpret and confront it in terms of control, repression, integration depending on the case and, in another sense, also represents a resource and an incentive to change. In the background we have the question, so dear to classic-era sociologists (from Durkheim, to Marx, to Weber, to the elitists etc.) of the relationship between conflict and legitimate power.

Thus considering, it might be asked if, in light of this inheritance, in sociology and in social science there has not been a delay in the analysis of the wideness and the consequences of mass corruption and illegality in all of the contemporary world, with obviously different indexes of seriousness and profoundly different characteristics between countries, interesting rich societies, advanced and democratic ones, those that are developing, completely underdeveloped ones, and moreover in the presence of different political regimes (mature democracies; democracies in their consolidating phase; authoritarian regimes on a political, military or religious basis). It is also possible to formulate the question in the following terms: utilizing the usual conceptual apparatus in a static and unilateral manner, hasn't an important part of reality in transformation been lost from sight, continuing, on the contrary, to deal with the subjects of illegality and corruption as maybe even explosive phenomena but more or less occasional, local or at most regional, in other words as additions, as critical appendixes of social and political systems destined, sooner or later, to reabsorb these forms of deviance in a more advanced, more democratic level of development, in which the rule of law, citizenship, democracy, welfare would have progressively, and inevitably, brought the transgressions from the rules back to the aforementioned "functional" context?

The data and research of the current world, for example those reported by *Transparency International*, many other centers of research of these phenomena and many governmental agencies, show, instead, a rather worrying ensemble of illegal phenomena growing almost everywhere. In Italy more than 20 years after *Tangentopoli* (when for the first time the mixture of shadiness and

political malpractice was brought to light), the problems have, if anything, gotten worse, to the point where the judges of the *Corte dei Conti* have recently spoken of a systemic and no longer particulate-only dimension of corruption (to specifically indicate that in our country a certain structurization of the corruptive practices and strategies that surround society has been added to the previous widespread ramification, at the top and the bottom), just as unrelentingly demonstrated by the constant scandals and investigations regarding Expo, Mose, Mafia Capitale, of the Public Administration, on the corrupted forms of welfare, on white collar complicity and élites in the grey areas of organized crime. Scandals and investigations on corrupted politics also interest France, Spain, the USA, and it gets worse in Eastern European countries, in Russia, in China and even worse in South America and in Africa, not to talk about the various areas of the world where political and economical corruption go hand in hand with war and instigations.

All this calls to the responsibility, in first case, of politics, of its ability to legitimate and regulate, and therefore, to renew itself. It consists of operations on a legislative, institutional, administrative and practical level. For example in Italy, it consists of criminal laws, of inspections, of fair trial and firmness of punishment, of fair solution and conflict of interest, of the cost and financing of politics, of the transparent recruitment and selection of political personnel, of corrupted votes, of objection to neopatrimonialism, of regulatory intervention and an adequate allocation of humans, resources and structures to the fight against crime, with well-timed investments in educational, economical and cultural actions, of a redefinition of the balance between political and neutral powers (Judiciary, Public Administration), in a context of independence and collaboration that guarantee an upholding of the law, etc.

But there is, probably, much more that emerges from this data and phenomena: the systemic aspect of corruption affects the nature of the organization and principles of contemporary society as we know it, study it, imagine it, on an institutional, economical, religious and cultural level, in every social relation, generating forms of manipulative, or even worse violent, subcultures, that tend to weaken, to delegitimize all of the typical sources of direction and

regulation of the modern world (politics, institutions, market), deforming democracy and civil coexistence.

The classic, European and western, modernization model, in its presumption of uniqueness and unidirectionality has been facing a downturn for some time, we know by now that every country modernizes in its own way, in relation to its past on an anthropological, religious, cultural, historical and political level, based on the traits and the actions of the local élites, on the relation between the external incentives and internal resistances, just as modern scientific literature has known for a while (Eisenstadt etc.).

However the research has probably not paid enough attention to the fact that the paradigm of multiple modernity does not profile a peaceful and reassuring path (simply because it differs from the previous Eurocentric model), and it forces us to open our eyes on a long phase of bitter conflict. Within these, the element of regulation and value that consists of the *belief in legality*, for how we've learned from Weber, and so on, to consider it within the rule of law (intended as the government based on positive law, impersonal and universalistic, recognized and legitimized with certainty from the people), in the process of bureaucratization, in pluralist democracy, once projected on a world wide scale, has become not the generally agreed point of view that was hoped for but, on the contrary, the object of conflict.

In truth the model of rational-legal authority founded on the belief in legality even when it is analyzed in the realities of different countries in which it has been present for centuries (even in western ones, as in Italy, for example, and especially in the south) proves to be ambivalent and with many contradictions. The so called "pure" model finds, as a matter of fact, sufficient response (and even there, at a closer look, with increasing critical warnings) in very few countries of Central-Northern Europe and Northern America, where a few particular prerequisites of religious (the protestant ethic), economical (an autonomous path of economical and industrial development) and political nature (an absolute regime, or in any case a strong and untimely unification and national identity, for reasons connected to insularity, as for GB's example, or to the young nature and revolutionary birth of a new state, as for the USA) have sustained the process of modernization in a convergent way.

Conversely, in other European countries, as for example in the south of our continent, the affirmation of this model was more “spurious”, contradictory, because its origin and its consolidation had to come face to face with other religious, political, economical and juridical premises. Therefore, the boundaries between politics, economy, religion, law, and the own definition of supremacy and the limits of political power as sovereign, its relationship with the law, economic power, religious belief, are variable and conflicting results, and globalization has multiplied and intensified these arguments. As one of the effects of these diversities, the definition of deviance, of its contents, of the convictions, of what is right, allowed, legitimate, for political power, for religious authorities, for economical authorities, for scientific research, for the citizens, has a wide range of variability from country to country, just as how tolerance, or intolerance, is handled while dealing with transgression and corruption.

In this tumultuous scenario, some researchers have highlighted the signs of presidentialisation of politics and the incentives towards the concentration of political power, others prefer highlighting the tendencies towards the juridisation of politics (“the return of the law” of which Paolo Grossi has written about in a recent book of his), some others of the tendency towards the economization of politics (Poggi) or its hyerocratisation (Pace), generally concurring on the lack of self-reforming abilities of politics.

## **2. Representations of law and politics**

Legality is compliance with the law. In traditional societies the law - written or not - is an expression of the established social order, sacred and, therefore, essentially unchanging. Even in modern societies the law is the expression of the established social order. In the latter case, however, compliance with the law is no longer inextricably imbued with religious sanctity - this does not, obviously, mean that religious elements do not influence or redirect it -. Here, social order is characterized by an increased mutability – keeping in mind the dynamism of contemporary societies - furthermore as "order" it should exert a regulatory function to avoid

social disintegration. The mutability of social order is related to the tendentially pluralistic and inclusive nature of democratic society that is based on the renewal of its shared elements - for example, through elections -. Therefore, if, on one hand, the democratic nature favors the dynamism of society, on the other, the democratic political system, as a principle of command, identifies the minimum and solid core to which this dynamism must comply. The democratic political system consists, as a matter of fact, of the final - and firm - boundary of this mutability, namely social order may present some changes or variations provided they meet the basic principles of democracy. Democratic societies by valuing and ensuring the freedom of their actors expand their areas of mutation as the individual actor defines himself in an increasingly autonomous way. The principles that organize and regulate contemporary democratic societies, in short, tend to be drawn from the bases of society (Costabile), through social relations, rather than being imposed by its leaders: the State is functional to the "people" and this maintains its sovereignty. But the "people" are defined and transformed into relational contexts and the democratic political system, through a complex process, implements instances translating them into measures and laws that, on the basis of the authority granted to the State, have a legitimate claim to compliance - and legitimate power to control and sanction - on the behalf of the members of society. Some hasty confirmations can be found in what was said in recognition of the customs among the sources of the law - the conventional distinction between statutory instruments and customs - or the Civil Code's reference to the "good family man".

In this interpretative key the concept of legality is not only the unchanging principle of compliance with the law but also the symbolic terrain where the tension between the commanding trait of the institutions and the innovative impulse of this order on the behalf of the social bases is played. In essence, the rule of law is one of the connections between the individual, as an individual, and society as a system of institutions; it is a connection subject to a number of requests from the behavior of the individual in real situations - compliant or not to the law - but also from the representations of this that the individuals elaborate and adopt. The

levels of behavior and representation are both very interesting. Although – considering an extreme analysis of the mertonian type - in theory, on one hand, an individual acting in a manner always compliant with the law and, on the opposite side, one that acts in a manner that never complies with the law, can be assumed, in real contexts a varied range of hybrid behaviors can be found. It is believed that the variability of individual behavior depending on the real situations is connected to the representation that each one has of legality. This level of analysis is particularly fertile in a sociological perspective. An example may be helpful in this regard. Let us suppose that the Parliament changes a law that imposes a new tax. A citizen that regularly pays will engage in legal and lawful behavior. At the root of the same behavior, however, there can be very different motivations: simplifying, this could result from the belief that the laws must still be respected, or from fear of sanctions that could be imposed by the competent authorities in the event of non-payment. In the space that separates these different typical-ideal orientations, social reflexivity develops acting on the basis of the knowledge spread by evaluating the merits of the new tax or, for example, judging the government's actions from it. Of course if the situation in which the new tax is passed is particularly severe economically and financially, the spectrum of the mentioned dynamic is even more relevant.

Social reflexivity is a - potential – re-elaboration of all elements that regulate our living together (Giddens). Behaviors, practices, guidelines and values are involved in this dynamic. Social reflexivity, as "discussion" of the traits shared by society is a political phenomenon and finds a form of correspondance in the political field. Social reflexivity also develops from the daily sphere of action as this defines the space of realization of the autonomy of the individual actor. The sphere of law is certainly an area of particular importance. Not surprisingly, many argue that individuals can adopt behaviors deeply inspired by the law in some spheres of action - for example at work - but are significantly less upright in other areas of their daily life - for example when driving a car -. The actions of the lawful individual, it is believed, are often selective: in some areas they are very firm translating a reference to a certain value in action, in others they are flexible. The areas in which the

behavior is flexible - strictly speaking, therefore, even illegal – indicate the presence of a certain discretion on the part of the actor. This implies that some actions that do not comply with laws, rules or regulations are considered, all in all, acceptable or at least tolerable. Of course, this attitude does not get to "legitimize" behaviors that contravene the core of democracy mentioned earlier. However, some actions related to the everyday dimension are not only tolerated by others but also directly practiced. Apparently this has some empirical evidence in relation to politics. For example, in recent years it has strengthened the media coverage of scandals associated with politics. In some cases, regardless of the outcome of the trials, when the alleged wrongful conduct on the part of a politician did not specifically concern the misappropriation of public money, the support towards that politician did not disappear from the civil society. Many cases confirm this on a local and national level. Other parallels are traceable among those who tend to have a rigid representation of the law and those who choose not to vote being hopelessly discouraged by politics or, on the contrary, are animated with greater momentum within populist guidelines.

The level of social representations of legality is intertwined with that of "deviance" or behavior that deviates from the expectations established in society. In classical American sociology deviance is subject to a social control mechanism that is intentionally exercised by the community on the individual to induce him to comply with all of the values that make up social order (EA Ross, *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order*, 1901). The relationship between law, deviance and social control changes over time. Each society elaborates its own balance depending on the conditions it is going through, inflecting the outcomes in a slightly different way (Bettin Lattes) also locally. In essence, some deviant actions tend to be completely accepted or not by society, depending on the situation. Some examples. If we see an old person stealing food in a supermarket we may choose not to intervene and not to report the crime, especially in a time of economic crisis. Similarly to illegal labour in a period of high unemployment.

The economical situation in recent years has been particularly severe, not only in Italy. This environmental element brings a growing marginalization of an increasing portion of the population.



This trend leads to an expansion of the acceptance of deviance that emanates from the economic sphere also into other spheres. The spectacularization of recent scandals that have affected politics and civil service are involved in this dynamic and stimulate social reflexivity along certain lines. One of these leads to the progressive distrust towards the institutions based on the lack of credibility that tends to characterize their social representation. This may result in a definitive removal from politics that has electoral abstentionism or a strengthening of the importance of the minimum core of democracy and of the fundamental legal forms that qualify it among its achievements; in the latter case, a renewed political involvement in a populist or conservative variant can be noticed. Some electoral dynamics in Italy and Europe lend themselves to deepen the reading of political phenomena in this direction.

These suggestions recommend to explore with great attention the interaction between social representations of legality (Costabile and Fantozzi), reflexivity and social context of the economic crisis not only to seize a crucial challenge for the political sphere but also to observe some of its transformations.



BETWEEN LEGAL AND ILLEGAL ECONOMY:  
NEW FORMS OF USURY IN A CASE STUDY

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**1. Studying usury in times of economic crisis**

Usury, in common social representation, is an old phenomenon, almost a continuation of the pre-modern societies, which contradicts one of the values at the basis of democratic society: the autonomy of the individual. Usury, in fact, intervenes by weaving bonds of dependency, of control, in some cases of real subjugation that, under some aspects – even psychological –, far exceed other forms of criminal offenses against property. Despite this widespread representation, however, usury has deeply transformed itself, assuming distinctively modern traits, "especially in the manner of its exercise, in being able to disguise, in

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<sup>117</sup> Although the reflections of this essay are the result of the collaboration of the authors, paragraphs 2 and 3 can be attributed to Andrea Pirni and paragraphs 1, 4, and 5 to Luca Raffini.

keeping down the level of social alarm" (Cnel 2008, 5). Poorly covered by the media, unlike other types of more "spectacular" crimes, the subject has received little attention in the field of sociological research, with the exclusion of certain, significant, exceptions (Dal Lago and Quadrelli 2003; Spina and Stefanizzi 2007). It remains difficult to determine an estimate of the actual spread of the phenomenon; the picture is not very different at an international level<sup>118</sup>.

Approaching the phenomenon it is noticeable that recently the figure of the neighborhood "loan shark" has been gradually replaced by the presence of organized crime. At the same time, there is a process of professionalization that puts usury, more and more, in an area of intersection, in a gray area between legal and illegal economy. Usury is a sort of alternative credit market, which at the same time reveals elements that overlap with the legal credit system. The changes on the side of the "offer" of credit take place in parallel to the changes on the side of the "demand". The economic crisis, increased economic and social vulnerability, together with the corrosion of social safety nets (institutional and informal), are the breeding ground for the expansion of the phenomenon that, increasingly, involves families pushed to resort to usury to overcome a time of economic difficulty, a period of unemployment, or simply an unexpected expense, in a context where the path of resorting to the legal credit market is foreclosed, as an effect of the *credit crunch*, which particularly involves subjects that are not able to provide adequate financial guarantees. Finally to the "structural" factors that create the preconditions for the spread of the phenomenon of usury, cultural variables relating to the use of consumer credit and the increasing spread of illegal but also – and perhaps mostly – legal gambling, can be added.

The entrance of families in a state of usury often occurs at the culmination of a series of failed attempts, requesting loans to banks, searching for the support among friends and family, resorting to financial companies for credit; the latter, in some cases, represents the prelude of falling into the hands of a usurer.

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<sup>118</sup> Among the major efforts to quantify the phenomenon the contribution of the United Kingdom can be noted. Here the Department for Trade and Industry has commissioned the Personal Finance Research Centre of the Bristol University a pilot project to investigate the extent of the market of illegal credit in the British country. The results, published in 2006 estimated that the market of usury involves approximately 165,000 British households and that about half of them concentrate in poorer areas, for a turnover of about 40 billion pounds.

According to the *X Rapporto Sos Impresa* (Tenth SOS Impresa Report), on the verge of the economical crisis, namely in 2007, usury in Italy was already largely in first place regarding its turnover (30 billion) compared to other crimes such as racketeering, theft and robberies, scams, smuggling, counterfeiting and piracy, squatting, agromafia, illicit tenders and supply, gambling and betting; the share handled by organized crime is estimated to be at 36%. The *XIII Rapporto Sos Impresa* (Thirteenth SOS Impresa Report), in 2012, confirms this record, indicating a turnover of 40 billion Euros, 16 billion of which handled by the mafia, while the traders affected would reach 200 thousand.

To build a comprehensive framework, capable of grasping the complexity of the phenomenon in its evolution, it is not sufficient to limit the investigation to the analysis of official data, or the study of denounced cases of usury because, by definition, these are only the most visible part of a phenomenon that tends to, mostly, remain submerged. An estimate of the actual spread of the phenomenon, of the percentage of the population involved and the social categories at risk of usury, can be carried out by placing variable proxies, such as over-indebtedness of households and the impact of economic and social vulnerability, in the study analysis.

The contribution is based on data collected as part of a research conducted by the University Centre of Political Sociology of Florence (CIUSPO) and financed by the Department of Social Policy, Security and Legality of the Province of Florence. In the research, as well as a critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the phenomenon of usury, official data available from several sources was collected and processed, a press release in order to study the media representation of the phenomenon was made and in-depth interviews with privileged observers – such as cooperative bank managers, associations that deal with illegal economy and usury, employees of the Anti-Usury Foundation of Tuscany – were conducted within the Tuscan territory.

This essay is organized as follows: after rebuilding the spread of the phenomenon according to official sources (par. 2), including the analysis of variable proxies (par. 3), it provides a sociological framework of the phenomenon (par. 4) it then considers the relationship between socio-economic vulnerability and the spread of the risk of usury exploring the problematic link between legality and legitimacy (par. 5).

## 2. A karst and submerged phenomenon

Usury is a social phenomenon that consists of a crime. This makes its recognition, at first glance, easy. The fact that the data is registered does not, however, translate into its actual availability. But above all, emerged, or rather denounced, usury, is only a small portion of the phenomenon. It is a characteristic valid for all crimes, but for this one in particular because a number of elements – poorly explored by social sciences in this case – are involved, and they greatly reduce the tendency towards reporting the "loan shark". This makes it necessary to consider other variables and indicators – considered as *proxies* to the phenomenon under investigation – making it possible to reconstruct the extent and nature of the phenomenon even as it submerged and directly unnoticeable.

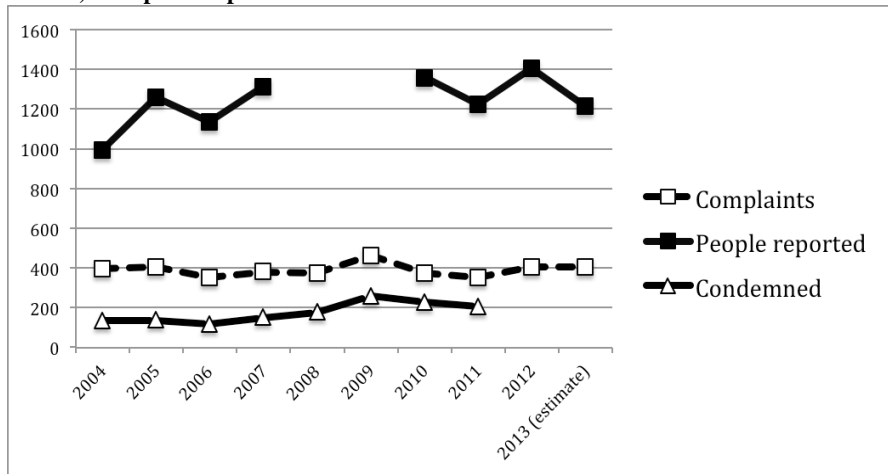
To try to provide a quantification of the phenomenon – in its emerged component – some official data available on the phenomenon, which has been reconstructed by integrating a variety of sources, is considered below: data from the Home Office (*Ministry of Interior*), including its Parliament reports, in relation to the activities and achievements of the *Directive Anti-Mafia Investigation*, re-elaborations produced by Sos Impresa on the same data, the Istat data on the number of crimes reported by the police to the court. Overall it can be seen that the number of complaints in 2004 compared with that of 2012 is essentially unchanged: on average about 390 complaints a year are presented with a relatively small deviation in the distribution (Fig. 1). The minimum recorded value was in 2011 (352) – but in 2012 (405) they were above the average – and in 2009 there was a peak of complaints (464). The latter figure seems consistent with the effects of the crisis that, starting from 2008, begin to appear significantly in the following years. However, the reduction in the number of complaints in 2010 and the general stabilization of the phenomenon in the following years is surprising: this trend is counter-intuitive because one would expect an increase in the phenomenon of usury with the ongoing crisis.

The number of people reported increases significantly between 2004 and 2005 reaching between 1,200 and 1,400 units in the 2010-2012 (and, presumably, 2013) period. On average for every complaint there are about 3-4 individuals arrested or under investigation: this finding suggests that, in some cases, more people than the single "loan shark" may be involved in managing of the usurious practice.

The number of those sentenced by final court ranges from about 10% in 2006 to around 17% of 2010-2011: therefore, a significant increase of

the number of convicted people in recent years can be detected, although the difference with the amount of reported people still remains large.

**Figure 1: Official complaints, people reported and condemned – Series (various sources): comparison period 2004-2013**

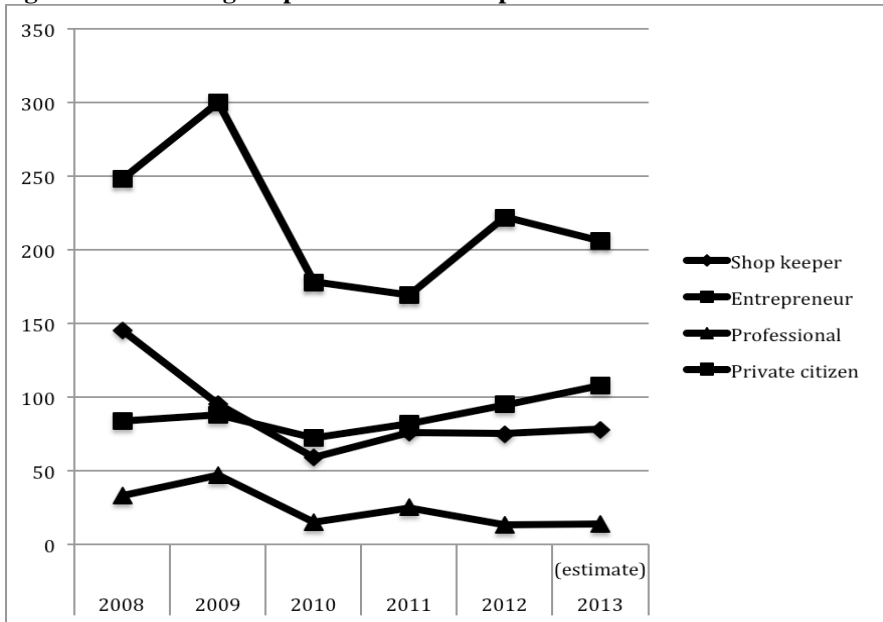


Source: DIA, I, 2013 and earlier (non-consolidated data). Note: "other" is not taken in account

The *victimological* profile shows how private citizens are the most affected by the phenomenon of usury, or they are at least those who make official complaints more frequently (Fig. 2); the tendency, after a sharp drop between 2010 and 2011, shows a recovery in 2012-2013. Self-employers are the least "strangled" by usurers and gradually continue to decrease. Cases of usury on entrepreneurs and traders are equivalent in the 2008-2013 period, but, as for traders it is falling sharply until 2010 before stabilizing in the following years, entrepreneurs are growing among the victims of the loan "choke".

A matter of great interest highlighted by the DIA, regards the increasing connection of usury with the activities related to various Mafia associations. In particular, the crime of usury is closely linked to that of extortion. However, considering the performance of the two types of crimes from 2007 to 2012, there are some unusual dynamics (Fig. 3): until 2008 usury and extortion have performed with a similar trend – the data is confirmed in previous years –; in 2009 we are seeing a strong divergence in this trend, the gap persists in 2010 while in 2011 and 2012, the two phenomena return to present a similar trend.

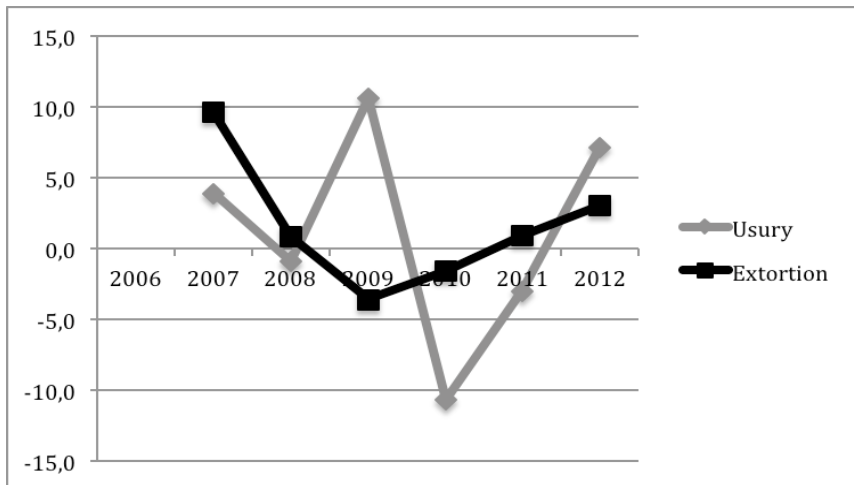
**Figure 2: Victimological profile of usurious practice**



These dynamics are open to multiple interpretations. What we wish to outline here is the possibility of an "incubation" phase of the phenomenon of usury in 2009-2011. It is believed that in these years both a profound change in the nature of usury, and the relationship it has shown to have with extortion have matured. It is also conceivable that this mutation is largely due to the situational factor of the economic and financial crisis that involved both directly – over-indebtedness – and indirectly – restricted access to credit – encouraging the use of resorting to the illegal credit market. These grounds may have favored an even further penetration of organized crime – of also *mafioso* nature – in the economy through new strategies.



**Figure 3: Crimes of usury and extortion indexed to 2006**



Source: Based on Istat data – number of crimes reported by police forces to the Judicial Authority (excerpt of 30.IV.2014). The percentage variation in the number of complaints was calculated in relation to the previous year according to the formula in example:  $[(\text{complaints number in } 2006 - \text{complaints number in } 2007) / (\text{complaints number in } 2006 + \text{complaints number in } 2007)] * 100$ .

### 3. A proxy variable: over-indebtedness

The reasons for the wideness of the difference between the spreading of the crime of usury and number of complaints are varied and potentially synergistic: they can be perceived moving from the specific needs that are potentially at the bottom of the use of the illegal credit market. Usury, before being such, requires liquidity: the reasons for this need can be very different. The need for liquidity has a specific feature: it is urgent and tends to becoming so, more and more. In the transition between the urgent need for money and choice to achieve credit by "choke" – after the refusal by the banks, or even skipping this step – the transformation from unsustainability of economic autonomy to a relationship of complete dependence is consumed, and although it based on the economic relationship it exceeds it by far.

To attempt to have a picture of the potential phenomenon it is therefore necessary all the same to consider some *variable proxies*: over-indebtedness and the social vulnerability. Below we will try to outline some elements related to the first of these indicators; it remains, however,

important to consider that there is not only one single path that leads towards the path of being loan "sharked", in fact, it is not only the conditions of over-indebtedness or vulnerability because some may resort to the illegal credit market before finding themselves in stringent debt situation or not belonging to a vulnerable group.

Considering the number of official complaints, individuals appear to be those most at risk of usury. To take a deeper look at this risk it is helpful to address one of the conditions that can potentially push towards the illegal credit market: indebtedness and, above all, the over-indebtedness. The Bank of Italy regularly conducts a biennial sample survey on the budget of Italian families<sup>119</sup>. Families are considered indebted when they hold at least one of the following types of financial liabilities: loans for the purchase or renovation of buildings; loans from financial intermediaries for the purchase of durable or non-durable goods; loans from relatives and friends; debt and bank loans related to the activity of a proprietary or family business; overdraft; negative balances related to credit cards.

This economic indicator should, however, be included in the Italian cultural subtext that, traditionally, discourages indebtedness. In fact, Italian families overall have always been and are less leveraged than in other comparable countries although in recent decades the volume has grown considerably. The increase in liabilities of households, in line with that of other European countries, is largely due to the dynamics of loans for purchasing houses. Also, the burden on the debt service has grown over the years remaining, however, low by international standards (Bank of Italy 2007).

The amount of families that contracted any form of debt (also coming from productive activities) was approximately 27% in 1995, decreased to 22% in 2002 but then began to rise again (25% in 2004) up to 27.7%. In 2012 there was a reversal of the upward trend of the percentage of families – with debt consisting of 26.1% – but not of the average amount of debt that in 2010 was 43,792 Euros while in 2012 it was 51,175 Euros (Bank of Italy 2012, 22). The most recent data shows that debt, as in the past, is more common among families with an upper-middle income, with householders under the age of 55, that are self-employed or with a high educational level. The liabilities largely consist of loans for the purchase and renovation of properties. Conditions of financial vulnerability, identified by the joint presence of an installment for the repayment of

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<sup>119</sup> The abundance of this sample survey in 2012 amounted to 8,151 families and the sample portion consisting of *panel* households amounted to 56.6%.

loans of more than 30% of the income and a monetary income below the average, cover about 13.2% of households in debt and 2.6% of the total families. The phenomenon appears to be increasing from the previous survey (+ 3.1% in indebted households, 0.4% of the total).

A source of financing that remains important is represented by the use of loans from relatives and friends: in 2012 the proportion of households that have incurred in this type of debt is 3.8% (2.6% in 2010). The use of this informal channel of credit, which can compensate for any increased costs or difficulties encountered in accessing financial intermediaries, is more common in the South (5.4%), among families lead by foreigners (10.3%) and among those with greater economic difficulties: about 70% of households that have used this informal channel of credit have also stated that they have a very hard time reaching the end of the month. Vulnerable households, defined as those who have a joint annual expenditure on debt of over 30% of the disposable income (before financial charges) and a family income below the average, are 2.6%, equal to 13.2% of indebted households. The phenomenon is on the rise compared to 2010 (+ 0.4% of the total; 3.1% among indebted households) (Bank of Italy 2014, 22). In 2013, families registered a lower disposable income than the previous year, which favored a further decline in debt. Low interest rates and support measures in favor of the borrowers have helped contain the vulnerability of indebted households. At the beginning of 2014, the contraction of bank credit was slightly reduced. Qualitative surveys conducted by the Bank of Italy on intermediaries detect more favorable offer criteria towards family loans (Bank of Italy 2014, 5-6).

Roughly and in summary, 2014 opens with about a quarter of Italian families in state debt; the tendency is reduced but the average amount of debt increases. Following this line of interpretation to assume the risk of exposure to usury it is necessary to consider how many of these families are over-indebted. Estimating this data is very complex; institutional indication is to be found in Law 3/2012 which defines as an over-indebted individual who has a) a continuing imbalance between the obligations assumed and highly liquidable assets to make front for them and b) a definitive failure on the part of the debtor to regularly fulfill his/her obligations. The first criterion is closely linked to an analysis of the individual components of the family budget. The second is more vague, but it can be traced to the existence of long periods of arrears in the repayment of debt.

The study taken as reference herein incorporates legislative guidance (Magri and Pico 2012, 20) and considers those more than 90 days overdue in the repayment of a loan. This criterion is used to identify the families

that have an objective inability to fulfill their obligations. It thus fulfills the second requirement of the definition of over-indebted borrower according to the Law. In 2010 5.5% of indebted households were in this condition, 1.2% of the total (about 300 thousand families). The proportion of households with more than 90 days of delay in the repayment of a loan and a persistent imbalance between obligations and payable assets was equal to 3% of indebted households, 0.6% of the total (about 159 thousand families). Most of these households (over 90%, 148 thousand families) have a lower-middle income, below the average.

As premised the operational definition adopted for over-indebtedness significantly affects the final amount. Recent researches suggest much stricter data. In fact, considering over-indebted a family in a chronic condition of economic budget deficit that is objectively not recoverable, a) reducing the standards of living and changes in consumption or b) alienating family assets without sinking into absolute poverty line or c) advocating a strict discipline in spending behavior for an average-long period (CNA 2012, 9) the number of over-indebted households has increased fivefold in the ten years between 2000 and 2010: from about 194,000 to about one million one hundred thousand units with a trend in the percentage of total families going from 0.9% to 4.4% (Milani 2012 quoted in CNA 2012, 7-8).

There have been many and interesting attempts to develop a usury risk index applied to specific territorial contexts (Giuso 1995; Goisis and Pallavicini 1999; Dalla Pellegrina *et al.* 2004; Fiasco 2005; Macis, Manera and Masciandaro 2005; Cnel 2008; Eurispes 2010): it is not possible to analyze each proposal in detail here, but in brief, it is believed that it is necessary to delve into the sociological phenomenon in order to refine these instruments in light of, above all, the profound transformation assumed and that is reconfiguring the phenomenon.

#### **4. The phenomenon usury: a sociological framework**

The phenomenon of usury, in the scientific literature, has been mostly investigated with an economic approach, centered on the analysis of demand and supply of loans as part of the illegal economy (Spina and Stefanizzi 2007, 37). It is an approach that allows to fully grasp the nature of the social phenomenon, to understand the interplay with legal and economic action and with the wider sphere of social action, to identify the reasons and characteristics of its actors. A deeper and wider contribution of knowledge to that effect can come from sociological analysis that,

despite the significant exception of two studies conducted on local contexts with qualitative techniques – in Milan (Stefanizzi 2002; Spina and Stefanizzi 2007) and in Genoa (Dal Lago and Quadrelli 2003) –, it does not appear to be particularly developed. Below we will make particular reference to the crisis of the productive and trade sectors as well as increasing unemployment and social vulnerability to investigate how these factors contribute to fuel the risk usury.

In terms of definition, usury indicates an illegal practice of borrowing money or other assets with disproportionate and illegal interest rates. To limit the presence of usury while respecting the request of lawful interests in front of a loan, the Law 106/1996 identifies a threshold level, beyond which it represents a form of objective usury. In the case in which the victim is in a condition of necessity, the crime of usury can be recognized by the court even below this threshold. Despite the definition of the crime is clear, the boundaries between the legal banking credit system and the illegal system remain characterized by overlapping in many areas.

Busà and La Rocca (2010, 19) propose a type of illegal credit market that distinguishes improper usury from professional usury. The first type of loan is within the neighborhood, also known as neighborhood loan. It sees families, small traders and artisans as its protagonists and it is based on small loans, often offering a pledge of granted bills or family jewels. It is a practice devoted to subsistence, which is used to pay the bills, the rent, or simply for being able to go to the grocery store in a time of economic difficulty, due to an unexpected event such as an illness or car accident. This type of usury is widely legitimized by those who use it, and is designed as a useful form of support from those who have the resources to be able to lend money to those who do not. The usurer is not usually defined as such, and is often a recognized landmark of the local community (such as a small trader in the neighborhood). It is a kind of usury that has not historically generated social alarm (Fiasco 2011). The second type of usury describes degenerated mutualistic activities, usually in work areas, which takes the form of an abusive additional non-banking activity, usually based on the exchange of post-dated checks. A third type of "improper usury" occurs between dealers and suppliers and is based on the imposition of interests on unpaid goods. Usury in its full sense is when the activity assumes a greater professionalization. One example is usury managed by local criminal groups, which provides loans of a medium-high quantity, accompanied by structured forms of collateral warranties, such as post-dated checks or termination of property and company shares. Those most exposed to this type of usury are individuals in difficult

conditions, such as gamblers, immigrants, drug addicts and those already in debt with legal economic systems. The action of a professionalized usury network is another step forward in the process of professionalization. Usury takes the form of an additional non-banking activity which likely aims at the acquisition of the assets pledged by the victims, who are mostly small traders and artisans. Finally, a mafia type organization makes large loans at very high interest rates, addressing big business and wealthy families and assumes an explicitly predatory nature.

The transition from neighborhood to professionalized usury is marked by a gradual expansion of the boundaries of usury, coming out of the traditional criminal subsystem connecting and setting its roots in legal economy. Dal Lago and Quadrelli (2003, 148-150) in this regard, suggest distinguishing white-collar usury from a more traditional usury practiced among borderline professionals, or in other words individuals that are active in a number of criminal activities, like running gambling dens and prostitution. On one end of the world of usury we thus find a form of slavery whose victims are mostly illegal immigrants, that are able to pay the debt only through working or practicing illegal activities such as prostitution and drug dealing; at the other extreme we find a form of widespread usury, of all those who, potentially, for reasons related to unemployment or job insecurity or because they are going through a crisis in their small business, are in a state of need that is not answered neither by the legal credit system nor by networks of family and friends.

And exactly this widespread usury, whose potential victims are families, is a phenomenon that is undergoing a process of expansion, favored by the economic crisis that began in 2008. The evolution of the phenomenon not only assumes a quantitative dimension but is associated with a qualitative transformation. Broader transformations reshaping work and social relations concur in influencing the development of forms of organization, the nature of the actors involved and their guidelines to action. No longer a phenomenon that affects the lower (borderline, deviant) and the highest (entrepreneurs and wealthy families) part of the social structure, usury as of today as increased its danger to society because it loses its marginal and residual characterization investing new social layers, businesses and families (Busà and La Rocca 2010, 10).

## **5. Usury in the context of new forms of vulnerability. An illegal but socially legitimized phenomenon?**

The risk of usury is fueled by the interlacing of cultural factors (the adoption of unsustainable consumption habits, the excessive use of credit and installments, gambling<sup>120</sup>) and economic factors (the objective state of, provisional or structural, economic difficulty). In reality the two dimensions often overlap.

The economic crisis, which began in 2008, resulted in an increase in the number of situations of objective hardship – due to the job loss of a family member or, in general, to a reduction of income – and increased the pool of "new poverty". This affects individuals and families who, despite having income sources, fail to cover their basic expenses, such as rent and utilities, health care and feeding costs. The reduction in spending power is not immediately reflected in a proportional reduction of the actual costs, and because it is hoped that this impoverishment represents only a transitional phase, and because it is not easy to give up the lifestyle and spending habits of spending connected to it and, above all, because families often took out loans, mostly mortgages for home purchases, according to a spending potential they are no longer able to cover. The result is a mismatch between revenues and expenses that pushes families to a greater use of credit, where each new loan, obtained in the most unfavorable conditions, is used to pay off a previous debt. This generates a spiral of over-indebtedness. The presence of a previous debt situation, of lower inputs than outputs, the exclusion from credit loans by the banks –

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<sup>120</sup> The phenomenon of gambling, as effectively illustrated by Libera in the Azzardopoli report (Libera 2012), sees a widespread in Italy among the highest in the world. It is estimated that each year the average expenditure per capita (including the entire population in the calculation, even babies), is equal to 1,260 euro. People who are affected by a real disease, recognized by Sert, the gambling addiction, are 800,000, while the total number of those at risk reaches 2,000,000. This is a consequence of an exponential growth of legal games, such as "*scratch and win*" and slot machines, spread around not only arcades, but in bars, tobacco shops and clubs, to the point that the same report by Libera, estimates presence of 400,000 slot machines in Italy, one in every 150 inhabitants. According to recent research, despite not having a tradition in this regard, Italy has become the first European country for the spread of gambling. In 2012 it is estimated that 88 billion euros have been spent in gambling, compared to 2000. The average figure a year per capita for this practice amounts to 1,700 Euros. The turnover relating to gambling represents 4% of the GDP (Cefaloni *et al.* 2015).

which affects those who are already over-indebted and all those who are not able to provide adequate safeguards – can push families address the loan companies, that require fewer guarantees but have higher interest rates, as an interim solution which is likely in the medium term, further aggravating the debt situation, heralding usury. A growing proportion of citizens, composed of businessmen and traders who are already in debt but also of families in difficult conditions, unable to provide the necessary guarantees, find themselves in a condition that precludes access to credit. These are pensioners, the unemployed, workers who need money to cover unforeseen or extraordinary expenses and, increasingly, temporary workers, whose employment status closes any doors to the use of credit, because they cannot count on a stable paycheck. In all these situations, the condition of difficulty can find resolution in the use of family and friendly networks of support. The appeal to the family, as an instrument of a surrogate deficient welfare, has traditionally characterized Italian society: one can recall the role played by the original family in supporting the transition to adult life of children, in terms of access to residential autonomy and of building a family. The effects of the crisis are reflected, however, in a decrease in the ability of families to exercise this surrogate role of the welfare state.

The overlap between economic weakness and social weakness, is the condition of complete exposure to usury. The image of immigrants comes to mind, especially illegal immigrants, who add up different forms of marginality. The concept of social vulnerability has a multidimensional nature, describing a variable mix of economic, social and cognitive weakness:

It is no longer strictly dependent on an economic difficulty, but instead appears to be the result of several inextricably combined factors. Thinking of all those people diversely positioned on the social scene (migrants, workers with little or no contractual guarantees, and so on), the concept of state of need can be reformulated intending it as a condition of overall social vulnerability that exposes a process of exclusion without making it, however, inevitable (Spina and Stefanizzi 2007, 46).

Since the portion of the population under the risk of social vulnerability is on the rise, we can understand how the practice of usury finds a large growth potential in front of it. The exposure to risk, in contemporary society, is no longer a prerogative of a few professions (for example, business owners) but is ingrained in social experience. This connection is well grasped by Dal Lago and Quadrelli, when they write



that "accepting money from loan sharks is not so much the last resort of someone unable to use networks that circulate in social, material or cognitive resources, but as the only possibility of a structurally isolated subject" (Dal Lago and Quadrelli 2003, 138).

Usury, ultimately, finds fertile ground in the crisis of social ties, as well as in the economic crisis, to the point of becoming a tool used by criminal organizations to build relationships and networks of loyalty and control other than the state.

The process of professionalization of the practice of usury is closely associated to its integration in the strategies of acquisition of territorial control and the entrance of organized crime into the legal economy. No longer "just" a predatory practice, aimed at obtaining illegal profit, usury becomes a strategy that allows the expansion of the control over other sectors of the legal economy and gaining control of companies and real estate. Usury allows organized crime to gain control, directly (through the acquisition of property) or indirectly (by building networks of influence and dependence) on territories and on production and business activities. At the time of the first contact between the victim and the usurer, he does not show up in the traditional robes of the "loan shark", but in the form of a soothing agent, with financial skills and an understanding attitude, who is able to secure a loan, allowing a moment of relief, to those who found themselves alone in front of closed doors. An element plays a role in fostering this perception: in a context in which households and businesses are in need of liquidity which banks are not willing to grant, organized crime has a substantial amount of money to invest, and needs access to the legal economy laundering of profits from illegal activities. The "bloody" strategy of depredation does not disappear, but is accompanied by a strategy of "soft" consensus-building, which is achieved by practicing interest rates that are not much different from those of the legal credit system, if not lower. The production, thanks to the intervention of the criminal organization, can continue its activity, and the contractor can continue performing his/her function, at the cost, however, of a subordination, in terms of willingness to use the enterprise to launder money, or take place in other illegal, environmental, labor, and other practices for the mafia.

The usurer, as we have said, can be welcomed as one who offers a support to those who feel abandoned by other social institutions, starting from the state, to the point of being at the foundation of the construction of a form of loyalty that is alternative from the law, typical of Mafia organizations, though, with the progression of the relationship, or through the use of violence, or softer means, the outcome is usually the

expropriation or loss of control of the property on the part of the victim. Nevertheless, the loss of control over the company, or in the case of the individuals, the personal subjugation to a criminal organization, may be seen as the price to pay for the protection "received". Another layer of complexity comes from the fact that the trait of illegality, that defines the distinction between felony and legal activity, doesn't necessarily overlap to a social representation of widespread illegality. The concept of law refers to, as a matter of fact, the legal rules that govern human behavior, while the concept of legitimacy refers to the express consent of individuals with respect to actions and behaviors, not necessarily in accordance with the rules codified by positive law (Spina and Stefanizzi 2007; Fantozzi and Costabile 2013). The discrepancy between legitimacy and lawlessness contributes to the silent expansion of the phenomenon and its difficult surfacing that is, after all, inherent to the multifaceted and changing nature of the phenomenon.

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