

## [Upcoming Rights and Obligations]

### New Challenges for the European Citizenship

#### *Main issues and assumptions*

Perhaps as never before in recent years the issue of European citizenship has been the focus of attention of national and EU authorities. The problem regards not only the functioning of the higher-level institutions. Nor does it concern only the question of the still persistent diversity of the “local” juridical systems on the matter, for instance, of granting citizenship status to migrants from other Member Countries or from territories outside the EU borders. What is being discussed, despite the fact that those aspects are an integral part of the picture, is whether it is now possible to identify a basically “shared” sense of membership by the different populations in a larger collectivity than the decentralized ones in which they live. Obviously, the question is very complex and raises many questions. Is it correct, for example, to talk in generic terms of a “sense of membership” without distinguishing the many motivations on which it is based? Moreover, given that it is possible to make these clarifications, what does it mean to speak in an equally absolute way of a sense of shared citizenship by entire populations? Social groups and categories are extremely diversified by financial, professional, generational, gender and territorial circumstances. Therefore they have different conceptions of the broader collectivity and are bearers among themselves of very heterogeneous senses of identification.

The sum of these issues cannot be dealt with in the short space of an article. We intend, therefore, to approach the issue on a more theoretical level of analysis, supporting our considerations empirically by reference to some of the more recent research on the topic and to the latest data provided by the “Eurobarometer” survey program. The hypothesis we want to investigate is how the bases of a sense of citizenship and inclusion are modified with the transformation of the processes of the construction of social and personal identity of individuals in the aftermath of the profound changes that have affected the structures of daily life in the advanced industrial countries of the West since the spread of postmodern cultural models and post-fordist modes vis-à-vis the economy, production and the workplace. In this paper, therefore, we will move in two directions. On the one hand, what we intend to argue is that the decline of the great collective “narratives” has displaced the way in which people construct their sense of self-awareness. With the progressive weakening of coherent cultural frameworks capable of providing groups and individuals with recognizable horizons of sense for defining objectives and strategies of conduct, today those “coordinates of relevance” are formed more and more in networks of membership “at the local level”. This contextualization means at once greater contingency, mutability and higher exposure to the emotional components of behavior. It also means - the second direction - a substantially different way of conceiving the rights and duties that authorize and regulate the sphere of personal legitimacy.

Let us begin with a preliminary definition (which we will examine in-depth in the next section) of the concepts, interconnected but analytically distinct, of citizenship, culture, rights and duties. The first term has two meanings. One refers to the set of institutionalized procedures and codified rules that govern the processes of recognition of social demands. The other refers to the sense of community through the shared destiny of a collectivity, in which the sense of membership is tied to a set of common values, standards, vision of things and of the world, and sensibility. Reeskens and Hooze (2010), referring to Kohn (1944), have recently spoken of *civic citizenship* and *cultural citizenship*. Without ignoring their close relationship, we will focus on the latter. Unlike those who even

today see cultures as almost reified realities, we will part from a more dynamic, processual and multidimensional idea of them, derived from the interpretation of collective representations proposed by the social psychology of Moscovici (with and edited by Farr, 1984).

In our third and final section, we will ask ourselves whether today it is therefore possible to speak of a European identity in formation. The quantitative data, even though disjointed into individual categories, are incapable of grasping the possible different content of meaning. The populations compared are often very different entities in their political, cultural and constitutional configurations. The manifestation of a feeling of rejection, as of an attitude of openness, may display a variety of gradations and motivations. Not to mention that European integration is an ongoing process, a gradual extension to new realities that constantly alter the image of “others”, always a constitutive condition of any identity construction. To overcome these difficulties, we will rely on Elias’s concept of *social habitus* (Elias 1939; 1987), useful for reflecting on the social and economic conditions of a future corpus of rights and duties on which to base a renewed covenant of plural coexistence on our Continent.

### Citizenship

The term “citizenship” is one of the most difficult to define. In the case of nation-states, like those of most of the Union<sup>1</sup>, things seem simpler. Here, over the centuries, even at the cost of conflicts that have separated culturally cohesive populations or lumped together heterogeneous realities, single power centers have been forming that have imposed in the space under their jurisdiction clear rules of access to the distribution of resources and cultivated relatively shared sentiments of membership. However, there are controversial situations, for which the codification of values, standards and rules about the prerogatives and constraints attributed to insiders can only correspond in part to the range of rights and duties that people concretely have. Social integration, which is based on the granted status of citizenship, is only in part a matter of form. The recognition of others as being included also involves the application of attitudes that respond to rules of informal conduct that are not written into law but that are part of the common sentiment which underpins both effective compliance with official regulations (the constantly invoked gap between “formal constitution” and “material constitution”), and the manner in which individuals and groups are in fact treated and considered<sup>2</sup>. Without taking into account that the real life chances of individuals rest on the existence of a legal framework that establishes *options* and *restraints* for the actors but also on their ability to act, being put in a position to do so, in order to seize available opportunities and correspond to the obligations they presuppose.

Examples of situations in which the term “citizenship” undergoes these sorts of shifts are, in Europe, stateless nations such as Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or Catalonia, very tight-knit communities subject to national institutions felt only in part as legitimate and in which EU membership has generated mixed feelings of rejection and identification with a supranational entity seen (in Scotland by its irredentists) as a possible guarantee of local autonomy. Or, again, the “cross-border nationalities” (the Hungarian is one), culturally and linguistically homogeneous populations for which membership in a secondary political-jurisdictional order is felt by many as a way to protect “at a distance” their cross-border minorities. The most striking example, however, is the European Union, which, as we know, is neither a confederation of states nor an intergovernmental body but an organization “halfway” between those two modes, whose member countries delegate to it – in a process that has developed since the EEC was founded in 1957 – important parts of their sovereignty in the fields of economic, monetary and energy policies, up to, more recently, policies dealing with security, defense and international relations.

Since the early 1990’s, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty which established it, there began the difficult process of building a fully political entity capable of recognizing for the citizens of its member states a status of “extended” membership with respect to that conferred by national authorities, and a set of rights and duties

1 Cyprus and Malta are two special cases: the former an “asymmetrical” state devoid of a unified national sentiment; the latter a nationless state (Loizides 2007; Constantinou 2007; Baldacchino 2009; Abela 2005).

2 In this regard, the case of the Rom and Sinti populations is emblematic, since most are European citizens though they are largely treated as non-EU citizens.

that can strengthen and generalize the “local” ones but that can also contest them in the event of a breach in their decentralized environment. In 2000, the signing of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union - which adopts, in founding its new supranational institutions, the principles of inviolability of human dignity, freedom of conscience, expression and organization, freedom of movement, equality before the law and non-discrimination - established for the first time a clarification and an expansion of the ways in which those prerogatives can be enjoyed. Not only are they safeguarded throughout the Community, but the citizens of the member states may exercise their right as an active and passive electorate to make nominations to the European Parliament (to which they can present petitions), even when residing in a Country other than their own, and the same is true in the case of the consultations for the municipal councils of the “foreign” cities where they reside. They can demand impartiality in the administration of the issues that concern them and, against any violations, turn to the figure of the European Ombudsman. The sense of a broader membership therefore emerges clearly from the norm according to which those who find themselves in trouble in a foreign Country in which their own is not represented diplomatically, have the right to the assistance of Embassies and Consulates of other Union States present there.

However, this process of building an effective European citizenship encountered in subsequent years no few setbacks, which reveal the discrepancies between formal and substantive meanings of the term we referred to, and make it imperative to stress the sense of cultural membership that is always associated with that expression. In the middle of the last decade, the Proposal for a Treaty of Adoption of a Constitution for Europe, considered necessary for a peaceful handling of German reunification and to counter the proliferation of applications for membership by the countries of the former Soviet bloc, ran aground before the negative results of the ratification referendum in France and the Netherlands, with Great Britain postponing its decision indefinitely. Most of the institutional and procedural innovations planned came into force only with the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. However, the aim of formalizing a true Founding Charter was abandoned in the name of an intergovernmental character that, though confirmed, has now been downsized. This setback revealed above all, in terms of the sense of attachment to a broader community, an ambivalent situation difficult to comprehend.

First, it stems partly from a gradual deterioration of the economic situation, which has become structurally manifest since 2008 but was developing beneath the surface since 2001, with the change in the geopolitical and economic equilibrium triggered by the 9/11 attack. Political factors have therefore played an important role, both in terms of the widespread uneasiness toward immigration and the risk of religious fundamentalism (hence the tendency to reinforcement of local identities and claims for sovereignty in matters of defense and internal order), and on the more diffuse level of the increasing difficulties of national authorities to deal with global changes, which at that time were identified with the new European scenario. Yet, inasmuch as the Eurosceptic attitude has undoubtedly grown since the early years of the new millennium (Eurobarometer 2007; 2012; 2013a), recent research has uncovered very complex meanings behind those tendencies to mistrust and lack of interest (as well as behind those of confidence and involvement).

The Lisbon Treaty of 2007, for example, meant only in part a kind of return to the original model of “regional”-type integration that had inspired the birth of the European Economic Community (the conviction, that is, that a supranational political entity could only come about by gradual negotiated increments in the number of areas delegated at a multilateral level of government). A collective identity is never a definitively stable and time-settled attribution of meaning. It is always the product (and the more so the more complicated the world’s interdependencies become) of a communication process in which social groups and power groups change their opinions strategically in line with the shifting circumstances in which they find themselves. Billig (1995) spoke in this regard of a “trivial Europeanism”, nourishing itself on the concrete dynamics of the everyday life and that suggests considering any cultural sentiment of membership as something depending mainly on how much the institutions of the community in question influence the practical, immediate aspects of people’s lives. The same holds true for the Eurosceptic attitudes, which may for example take on the meaning of a *permissive consensus* (Inglehart 1997), an instrumental acquiescence (based on a cost/benefit calculation of how much membership will make it possible to give and receive in terms of material resources), to the point of actual rejection (typical for example of the older generation) because of a radical attachment to the values of one’s national tradition.

These disparate motivations are ultimately affected by the limits that that negotiating strategy of integration has determined regarding the effective status of European citizenship. Morviducci (2009) pointed out that if all the rights stated in the Founding Charter are clear and well defined, the same cannot be said of the duties. The right to protection in a foreign land by the authorities of a member state other than one's own is for example linked to the still scarce preliminary agreements of mutual assistance between the European states, as well as cooperation between them and the third state where the deeds take place. It foresees even today not diplomatic protection in all its aspects but only support in the event of humanitarian situations or traumatic events for the traveler or for those who live permanently abroad.

Then, given the diversity of national legislation on the topic of internal immigration and conferment of local citizenship, great disparities are also reported about movements within the Community's territories themselves. Cross-border sojourns of more than three months are conditioned, depending on the profile concerned (tourists, students, workers, etc.) by economic self-sufficiency, the holding of a job and a health insurance policy. But the possibility that this recognition also applies to family members "attached" to those traveling for educational and professional reasons (with important repercussions for staying together) is still an unresolved question, about which the European Court of Justice itself has issued controversial rulings. That of the *denizenship* - the "halfway citizen", having rights segmented by the absence of a coherent legal framework supported by comprehensive cooperation - is not an exquisitely juridical figure, nor in the last analysis referable only to non-EU visitors. It is a social and cultural identity, if it is true, as research shows (Zanfrini 2007; Ambrosini 2014; Benton 2014), that the sentiment of integration seems everywhere less rooted among those who live for average periods in such ill-defined conditions, compared to those staying abroad for shorter or longer periods.

### Culture

For these reasons, the problem we would like to reflect on now is not how widespread is a *civic* sense of citizenship in today's Europe, but how present (and in relation to what conditions, even contextually differentiated ones) is a *cultural* feeling of membership. The functional effectiveness of the mechanisms of official recognition, representation and decisive appraisal of social demands is a prerequisite for the strengthening of a collective identity. However, *civic sense* and *cultural sentiment* of citizenship are analytically different. The idea of a civil coexistence basically based only on a functional logic is in reality contradicted by the fact that the people one meets and interchanges and dialogues with are always rooted subjectivities, "individualities in interaction", which relationally construct the frameworks of meaning that guide their actions in the contingent, unpredictable circumstances which they must deal with. To address the issue from this point of view, we must first briefly discuss the concept of "culture".

Usually, by this term we understand the heritage, formed in time, of world views, patterns of definition, criteria of moral, aesthetic judgment, and taste, which mediates the relationships of a group toward the environment in which it lives. From this perspective, cultures seem equipped with a distinct reality, different from that of the natural things to which they give meaning<sup>3</sup>. Above all, their "historic" character urges conceiving them almost as consistent, compact bodies of sense, as systems of orientation which, on contact, tend to collide and resolve their conflict through dynamics of juxtaposition, subordination, incorporation or antagonistic impact.

If this hard form of cognitivism is adopted, the data of the latest Eurobarometer survey (2013b; 2014a, 2014b, 2014c) unequivocally show an increased sense of distrust and a weakened sense of membership. Nevertheless, there also emerge some relevant indications of changes in feeling not easily comprehensible by simple interpretation. While in the mid-1990's, after the peak reached in the aftermath of German reunification (71%), the number of the then fifteen member states that believed participation in the Community was a positive thing accounted for 54% of the total, in mid-2013, after a slight recovery of that value between 2004 and 2007, those who still held that opinion amounted to only about one in two, with the highest percentages of distrust in Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy, and with rather less critical positions in the Center-North of the continent (Sweden, Finland and

<sup>3</sup> On the persistence and negative consequences for sociology of this as of other dualisms, see Elias (1970; 2009a; 2009b).

Germany). The turning points were 2004 and 2008. This was the year of the beginning of the economic crisis that has affected the entire industrialized West. The worsening of the international situation has certainly been one of the causes of the growing disaffection. However, as demonstrated by some econometric studies (Serricchio *et alii* 2013), the material factor that seems to weigh most is not the generalized fall in GDP or the equally widespread unemployment increase in almost all Member States, but the largely internal ones of budget deficit and the ineptitude of the national ruling classes in facing this problem. The cultural dimension of citizenship responds to a more complex logic than closeness or openness in relation to the deterioration of the global economic situation. A logic that reveals a number of issues which call into question the “hard” interpretive key mentioned above.

From this point of view, of greater significance is the other point of rupture. In 2004 the European Union expanded to other Countries, including some of the former Soviet bloc (Poland, Hungary, Romania and the three former Baltic Republics). As it is known, one of the conditions essential to any process of identity construction, personal or collective, is the sense of otherness. Self-awareness comes about in a dual movement of *identification* and *individualization*: of positioning the other as someone different but not entirely different; of taking one’s distance from him as an affirmation of one’s own specificity. It is never a linear, resolved process, but one constantly marked by conflict. A manner of proceeding that, while enabling us to formulate a more problematic interpretation of the survey data cited above, also allows us to grasp the multidimensional, stratified, contextual character of the dynamics by which the sense of citizenship reproduces itself, shifting over time.

Moes (2009), in studying for example the European spirit of young Poles with higher levels of education, noted the paradox of the coexistence, also present in other segments of the population, of two conflicting orientations: a widespread attitude in favor of entering the EU and a strong attachment to the values of their national culture. The author explains this apparent contradiction not only by recalling the distinction between “civic” citizenship and “cultural” citizenship (once the first is acquired it tends to be taken for granted, and there emerges the weight of differences of credo and convictions). He does even by stressing how the increasing familiarity with different customs and lifestyles (the free movement across borders, the more numerous opportunities for educational experiences abroad) often translates into a greater awareness and proud affirmation of their own traditions. Such reasoning would seem to apply also to the changes in the public opinions of the “historical” Union States. That drop of confidence in the positivity of membership, registered between the 1990’s and 2000, can certainly be interpreted as the product of concern about what a widening of the boundaries would mean in terms of economic uncertainty and confrontation with credos and ways of living experienced as geo-politically antagonistic ever since World War II. How then can we account for the fact that, in the immediately subsequent period, that attitude of confidence started to grow again? And how do we square all that with the fact that at the same time (Eurobarometer 2013a; ECFR 2013) the perception of an affinity of values among different peoples was first strengthened (accounting for 48% of those interviewed in 2006, and rising by as much as six percentage points two years later), then weakened on the eve of the deepening crisis of 2008, and has settled today at 42% in 2013 (albeit with above average peaks precisely in those economically solid countries that might be driven to see, in aiding those in need, a potential threat to their high level of well-being: Germany: 42%, Denmark 47%, Austria 50%, the Netherlands: 44%)?

To try to make sense of these conflicting data, we must start from a more dynamic conception of cultural universes. In recent years, the social sciences have proposed different interpretations for grasping the nature of the always contextualized process of mechanisms that produce personal and collective identities. The guiding principle, beyond the different approaches, is that the meaning of action is inconceivable if disjoined from the practices it informs. Values, norms, customs, beliefs, information enter into the channels of interpersonal and group communication, and, through the interpretive adaptation that the actors carry out, they come out at the same time confirmed and renewed, in a practical and symbolic movement that makes order and change multidimensional processes. However, such a dynamic conception tends at times to underestimate both the emotional dimension and the different density of the nuclei of meaning that make up the horizons of reference. Collins (2004) shows that the “shading” of the ways that those orientations are experienced and applied depends on the *energy*, the humoral exchange that is active in every contextual encounter into which subjects enter in the course of their daily lives. He explains that these situations of interchange, with their affective impact, whether



enabling or discouraging, motivating or depressing, depend in turn on the type of socially differentiated circles that one frequents, and the kind of resources that circulate inside them. On theoretically similar bases, psychologists who have studied *social representations* and their spread among the collectivity (Farr, Moscovici 1984 eds; Abric 1994) have shown how the symbolic pictures that guide actors do not make up a coherent, linear corpus of beliefs. They resemble rather a stratified set of meanings, which has at its center a core of fundamental sense (made up of those categories by which individuals endow the world with relevance, classify its objects, judge them, name them) and, in the surroundings, peripheral areas of more malleable and flexible sense (regulatory frameworks, preconceptions and stereotypes, aesthetic styles and tastes, attitudes of opinion), invested with different emotional value and likely to change in contact with the unpredictability of events more quickly and haphazardly, with the function of safeguarding, as far as possible, the resilience of the deepest cultural codes.

This theoretical perspective seems very useful for understanding the sentiment of membership and the complex nuances with which it occurs. First of all, the contents that make up its substance, while always responding to an insuppressible need for recognition and identification with a group, may be different and often not aligned among them, given the diversity of circles of reference (especially in a complex, technological era like the present) about which we can define and mature the expectations of our lives. And second, those strata of sense should not be thought of as sedimentations encapsulated and independent from each other but as orientations that influence each other reciprocally. The perception of membership in a group different from one's original group (without one awareness excluding the other) is nourished on multiple occasions of everyday life that especially the younger (and educated) generations experience today more and more frequently, such as travelling abroad at low-cost, studying in schools or universities in other countries, or even just familiarizing, in one's own increasingly multicultural cities, with food, customs, practices and lifestyles typical of foreign communities. The biggest advantage of this approach, however, is being able to rethink the "bricks" that make up citizenship, the "rights" and "duties", in a certain way also in this case more as process and less as reification.

Usually, when it comes to these things we tend to believe that social inclusion is a linear, cumulative path, punctuated by the conquest and recognition first of *civil* liberties and freedom of expression, and then of *political* liberties and of the vote, and lastly *social* liberties consisting of access to work and assistance that this active participation in the operation of society deems must be guaranteed with equity (Marshall 1947). Every prerogative is felt as a condition of possibility of the next one: the dignity of human beings manifests itself in its capacity to make its voice heard, and this is the more authoritative the more people are not threatened in the satisfaction of their need for material subsistence and social security. What comes later is perceived as a principle of legitimacy of the preceding ones: the lack of occupational certainty damages people's psychic, physical and social integrity, and the interests of the most vulnerable end up depending on those who are economically stronger. In the background, the irrepressible role of the state, a source of institutionalization of constraints and permissions, a prerequisite for the recognition of their holders, *super partes* guarantor of respect for obligations and ambitions.

This way of looking at things is, however, only partially satisfactory. The situation of non-EU migrants, who for example in our country are granted (conditionally) certain services but no active or passive election rights, shows how the enjoyment of certain prerogatives does not necessarily entail the fruition of others. The state is therefore a variable of crucial importance, especially at a time like the present when the policies on labor, social welfare, health care and the fight against poverty, remain a national responsibility, despite the broader strategies coordinated at various levels. However, focusing the explanation of this institutional factor does not enable us to fully understand the increasing difficulties that the systems of representation and government encounter today everywhere in intercepting the new social interrogatives that arise in the public sphere and that expect from it attention and answers. The biggest limitation is in many respects the ethnocentric nature of the approach. Here we are not questioning the validity of certain values of Western culture and the possibility of a cross-cultural comparison with different worldviews. The reference to work and the significance it still commands is emblematic. It is everywhere an essential condition for self-determination and the construction of social and personal identity, and a likewise inalienable prerequisite for effective citizenship. But it has not always had the standard form of employment, nor has the legal system that has preserved its quality always been that of the *thirty glorious years* of the European welfare state. It is for reasons like these that with the changes in the concrete social and economic conditions the

content of those assumptions and values has also changed, in order for them to maintain a prescriptive relevance for those involved.

### *Rights, duties*

If we adapt a definition Coleman gives to it (1990), a right (along with its corresponding duty) can be thought of as the possibility that an actor can receive from his interlocutor a conduct he deems fitting to satisfy his need to transform a given situation in which he finds himself at that moment into a future he feels is better for the protection of his interests. This definition evokes an extremely complex concept articulated in a series of analytical dimensions that open the way to a reflection also on the many variables involved that we have previously referred to. First the use of the term “better” in place of “more appropriate” makes it possible to transcend, while not denying its importance, the strategic, utilitarian perspective that determines the rational choice perspective of Coleman’s reasoning. Secondly, we talked about “possibilities”. The codification of a right and the formalization of a duty do not mean automatically a surefire practicability of the former or prompt respect for the latter. There are, as we have seen, declared rights and denied rights, prerogatives established only as principle and constraints delineated only as an indication of future developments to be pursued, and all this recalls the issue of power relationships and the role of the state in governing them. However, what is more important to emphasize are the relational nature of the phenomenon and the dual contradictory character, individual and collective, that it invariably presents.

When it comes to rights and duties, the claim for permission to do something is not the unilateral claim of an individual but the request he makes in belonging to a group that society has decided to benefit with special treatment. The question itself is not addressed to an interlocutor as such, but to him as member of a category likewise socially judged as duty-bound to perform a service. The entitlement to rights and duties is always individual, but it is so in function of a collective logic that involves, in addition to the afore-mentioned relations of authority, the common reference, by *requester* and *requested* (both *sub judice* of a third-party public actor with sanctioning powers), to an accompanying set of standards and values that lie at the basis of that system of requests. In the definition from which we began, we talked about “reputation of compliance of the attitude of the interagent” and of “perception” concerning the desirability of a future situation with respect to the one currently experienced. Whoever makes these assessments (and the same holds true for whoever is obliged to respond) is at any rate one who affirms the recognition of his faculty to conduct himself in a certain way, and he does so not in objective terms but always from his specific perspective, which constantly changes in response to the changing circumstances he must deal with. The claim to a right, just as the compliance with a duty, are therefore something inevitably embodied in the “local” context in which both mature. And in this “locality” includes both the contingency of the events that defy over time the institutionally defined boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion, and the unpredictability of the emotional reactions and rationalizations caused by the repeated succession of those unexpected events. Lastly, it includes the heterogeneity of the social circles in which those meanings are formed whereby the opposing parties give meaning to their demands and thus move one another to action. The dynamics of rights and duties, the dynamics of the sense of citizenship, run on the thread of this dialectical logic, contradictory but never divisible. On the one hand the collective component, which establishes the codified architecture of the prerogatives and constraints that, in a historically determined moment, respond to the complex play of social questions and answers; and on the other, the individual and subjective one, which tends to call that order into question and to orient it towards different forms of regulation.

The field in which this process is revealed today to its full problematic extent is that of work and the politics of reform that Western countries have promoted over the last thirty years in an attempt to adapt the different regimes of the welfare state to the changing economic and social conditions. The issue is very delicate. Since 2008, in the face of a situation of substantial stagnation that has affected almost all the current EU Member States, the unemployment rate has risen on the Continent by 4 percentage points, especially among young people under the age of twenty-five (+8%) and with a worsening of its temporal and qualitative characteristics (long-term

unemployment has risen by +2.6%). The lack of a job and, when one has it, its insecurity (in the last five years, temporary workers have increased by two million and part-timers by 10 million, 60% of whom from the lack of full-time positions), are still the main cause of the “old” and “new” poverties (Eurostat 2013a; 2103b; 2014; Paugam 2013a; 2013b). What is in doubt therefore are the integration in the perimeters of a citizenship that the European Employment Strategy has reiterated since 1997, as anchored at the entrance of the labor market and the conditions of possibility of an active participation in the social life which is for example at risk for the by now fourteen million 15-29er NEETs (Not in Education, Employment and Training). The delicacy of the problem, however, lies above all in the fact that the interventions by which, in all national contexts, an attempt is being made to stem this hemorrhage of resources seem to call into question, in the context of industrial relations models as well as in that of the regulation of contractual forms of employment, the overall system of rights and duties that for sixty years marked the boundaries of social and political democracy.

Since the 1980's, with the computerization of production cycles and the adoption of methods of business organization based on the principle of flexibility in labor supply, all the advanced industrial Countries have had to face an increasing financial unsustainability of their welfare systems. The diversification of the profiles, induced by the up-/downgrading generated by those innovations, soon turned into a segmentation of the labor markets. The disarticulation of professional careers has gradually reduced the size of the tax base, creating endurance problems for these systems. New needs for assistance, caused by the transposition of economic vulnerability into existential embrittlement (and vice-versa), have put a strain on the efficiency of public service agencies, paving the way for their privatization and decentralization of operations. Everywhere, though with adaptations due to specific national traditions and local work cultures, income support measures have been increasingly linked to the availability of individuals to mobilize actively in the search for employment.

Over time, according to an ideal-typical classification and an analytical periodization, the employment policies of individual States were geared first towards a liberal Anglo-Saxon workfare approach (accredited by the international economic authorities until roughly the mid-1990's), then to an approach largely influenced by the experiences of the Central European welfare-on-work experiences (with a reprise of neo-Keynesian interventions such as the experimentation of reductions/redistribution of working hours and enhancement of socially useful and volunteer activities), and lastly, since the middle of the past decade, with reference to a welfare-to-work model inspired by the Danish experience of flexicurity (Muffels, Wiltshagen 2013; European Commission 2013). Flexibility of labor relations, greater management freedom to hire/fire, decentralization of the system of industrial relations, tax exemptions on social security contributions paid by employers, went into the alternative offer of a more incisive action of reintegration into the labor market, made up of personalized programs of vocational training, managerially organized employment services by objectives, generous bonuses and unemployment benefits, albeit conditioned upon compliance by users with the duties of upgrading and acceptance of offers even if at a lower career level and pay scale.

Behind this strategy, what is taking place is a shift from a conception of place as property to one as liability, as “function of responsibility”. Even more, it is a radical change in the way we understand work and the modes of social security that instill a sense of group membership. Work differs according to its flow and dilution in a plurality of contractual frameworks, and, by organizing it in differentiated fashion, it gradually abandons the “occupation” form to take on that of an irregular commitment, alternated with training sessions and increasingly structured inter-company career paths. With obvious consequences in relational and existential terms: a job is not only a function but a place for relationships and socializing, from which people never detach themselves easily; the unpredictability of work turns in the long-run into biographical uncertainty and an obstacle to planning one's life. What matters most are the implications in terms of mentality and the way individuals think about their self-subsistence and social recognition. While until now the awareness of being considered part of a community, and therefore of having the right to help through difficult periods, it depended on mechanisms of compensation directly linked to one's own work status, today those props depend more and more not on the job one has but on the activities undertaken for finding it and the search for replacing it in case it becomes obsolete on the labor market. The conditions of one's certainty wriggle free from one's social position and get linked to the unpredictable dynamics necessary to win and maintain it. It is as if the sentiment of citizenship were no longer given once and for



all but had to be constantly reconquered. And this in particular through the continued demonstration of a sense of personal responsibility which, while it opens to the hope of success thanks to one's merits, runs the risk of easy failure understood as due exclusively to one's personal inadequacy.

According to many authors (Gallino 2007; Schömann 2014), this new approach to the politics of employment is nothing more than the revival of a neoliberal model that considers the welfare state as a burden and that tends to dump its costs on the workers, safeguarding businesses and gradually eroding people's fundamental rights. Some stress the inapplicability of flexicurity principles outside of the specific context in which it was formulated (Berton et al 2009), while others doubt its durability as a paradigm in light of the deteriorating employment situation of the Danish experience following the onset of the international economic crisis in 2008 (Andersen 2011; Madsen 2013). Above all, the fear is that the kinds of policies and relationships of solidarity that it outlines risks not corresponding to the widespread need for social security that is sweeping across Europe today, and pushing the peoples of the continent to still seek in the nation states the safeguard of their quality of life and therefore contributes to a further strengthening of the national habitus at the expense of forming *habits of thought* marked by a broader and more cosmopolitan sense of membership (Crouch 2012b; 2013).

In order to judge not the obvious plausibility of this hypothesis but the degree of probability that the scenario it outlines will come true, let us reflect for a moment on the concept of *social habitus* and its relationships with those of culture, rights and duties as we have redefined them above. As is known, that concept, coming out of an ancient tradition, was introduced into the sociological debate by Elias (1939; 1987; 1989: 207), who meant by that expression the "social structure of personality" or "phase and model of individual self-regulation", namely that particular way of reasoning, feeling, thinking and acting which characterizes life within a specific, historically determined community, and that plays its part in determining the patterns of perception, cognition, ethics and aesthetics of its members through the processes of socialization and participation in the daily practices of that group. Contrary to what is said by the other theories of action, Elias's processual sociology does not consider that sort of imprinting in an abstract, deterministic way. Habitus, to recover a definition given to it in a fairly similar way by Bourdieu (1972; 1980; 1997), is not a mentality shaped by the introjection of values and norms that act internally in random fashion. It is an *attitudinal predisposition* that is configured as a constantly dynamic, changing process. It is first variably modulated in function of the social circles in which it is concretely involved, and the more these multiply and differentiate, as is typical of the present time, the more that is articulated, complicated, organized in diversified contents of meaning and significance that influence each other, suggesting the image of several habitus, each hinging on the other. Secondly, it is a system (or a plurality of systems) of relevance that, in addition to being internalized, are yet more deeply *embedded* in people's psychic and organic nature, in the sense that they shape sensory, cognitive styles of judgment and taste by which individuals relate unreflectively to the world, but at the same time they are subjected to constant micro-adjustments, modifications and innovations due to the unpredictability of real contingencies that occur in actual relational situations that those orientation frameworks make it possible to face. On a par with rights and duties - which are therefore a part of it as founded perception of a need to demand a particular service and the legitimate request for an obligation to respond to it on the part of one's interlocutor - the social habitus may also be represented as the product of a dynamic dialectic between two dimensions only analytically thinkable as opposite and yet always symmetrical and complementary. From one point of view, the collective dimension, what Elias calls the *We-identity*, refers to a common horizon of meanings that detects the presence of others, though not as a negation of one's own specificity in the name of which one demands respect for a prerogative but as an irrepressible condition of one's self-awareness and the personally founded legitimacy of that request. From a second perspective, the individual dimension, the *I-identity*, rooted in the lived experience of individuals and their groupings, results as it were from the transposition, on a reflective level, of one's own distinction thanks and with respect to those from whom one takes his distance; and it is immersed in that weave of emotional exchanges, of power relationships, suffered or exercised attitudes of inclusion and exclusion in which social demands and acts of conflict develop.

We-identity and I-identity are both integral parts of a person's social habitus. The contents of awareness of which they are made up - just as their endurance in the horizon of sense of the people and the emotional

investment that distinguishes them, marking them with a certain *hysteresis* despite changing social situations – get altered over time in relation to the transformation of the configuration of networks of interdependencies that connect the actors, the positions they hold, the courses of action they undertake. The more those *figurations* become differentiated and complex, the more so those who are immersed in it are driven to ponder the possible consequences of their choices and to develop an unconscious ethos of self-control over their own emotional urgings and their possible impulsive reactions. The process of western civilization - Elias writes - is marked by the tendency of *longue durée* of the prevalence of the “I” consciousness over the “We” consciousness. But this group reference is still an irrepressible one. Not only because, as mentioned, it is the condition of the reference in itself, but because it is the *constitutive human response* to a need for survival that is not just physical and cultural but which likewise concerns basically one’s self-recognition as a human being. In these terms, the national habitus is simply a historically determined form of the social habitus, corresponding to the long historical period during which, starting from the High Middle Ages, the gradual formation of the nation state has emancipated individuals from relations with violent authorities typical of the local “survival units” (tribes, clans, families, feudal communities) and has transformed them into “citizens”, guaranteeing their civil, political and social rights and seeing “in person” to their sustenance and social recognition. However, since the configuration of interconnections is increasingly overrunning national borders, what values do the I-identity and We-identity, as well as their dynamic relationships, tend to take on? Does the possible change in the content of sense of these processes as a kind of idea of subjectivity seem to emerge? Lastly, what social and occupational policies correspond to the possible culture of rights and duties deriving from such a self-representation?

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