



**Jonathan Zeitlin e Francesco Nicoli (a cura di)**  
*The European Union Beyond the Polycrisis? Integration and Politicization in an Age of Shifting Cleavages*  
Routledge, 2021

“The European Union beyond the Polycrisis? Integration and Politicization in an Age of Shifting Cleavages” è un libro curato da Jonathan Zeitlin and Francesco Nicoli e pubblicato per la prima volta nel 2020. I capitoli del libro sono costituiti da articoli originariamente apparsi nel *Journal of European Public Policy*, volume 26, numero 7 del 2019.

Il termine *polycrisi*, che compare anche nel titolo di questo numero di *Techne*, è stato utilizzato per la prima volta, e probabilmente coniato *ex-novo*, dal Presidente della Commissione Europea Jean-Claude Juncker nel 2016, come descritto dagli autori del libro qui analizzato (Zeitlin *et al.*, 2019). Con questo termine, Juncker si riferiva alle numerose sfide che l’Unione Europea stava incontrando in quel momento. Queste includevano “la peggiore crisi economica, finanziaria e sociale dalla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale”, “i rischi per la sicurezza nei Paesi vicini e in casa, la crisi dei rifugiati e il referendum nel Regno Unito”. Tutte queste sfide erano in grado di “nutrirsi una con l’altra creando un senso di dubbio e incertezza nei pensieri dei nostri cittadini”. Gli autori dei vari contributi che compongono il libro esaminano i diversi problemi che portano alla politicizzazione e polarizzazione della società Europea, e i conflitti che sono spesso artificialmente creati dalle parti politiche per espandere la loro area di influenza sulla società. Analizzano anche il ruolo delle istituzioni e di come queste sono in grado di rinforzarsi nonostante frequenti interruzioni del processo di integrazione

“The European Union beyond the Polycrisis – integration and Politicization in an Age of Shifting Cleavages” is a book edited by Jonathan Zeitlin and Francesco Nicoli first published in 2020. The content of the book are papers originally published in the *Journal of European Public Policy*, volume 26, issue 7, issued in 2019.

The term *polycrisis*, used in the title of the present issue of *Techne*, has been used for the first time, and likely invented from scratch, by Jean-Claude Juncker President of the European Commission in 2016 as reported by the authors of the book been reviewed (Zeitlin *et al.*, 2019). With this term, he was referring to the many challenges that the European Union was facing at that time. These included “the worst economic, financial and social crisis since World War II”, “the security threats in our neighborhood and at

home, to the refugee crisis, and to the UK referendum”. All these challenges were able to “feed each other, creating a sense of doubt and uncertainty in the minds of our people”.

The authors of the various papers that form the book examine different issues regarding the politicization of the European society, and the conflicts that are sometimes artificially enlarged by political parties to expand their influence on the society.

They also analyze the role of the institutions, and how they are able to strengthen themselves despite frequent interruptions in the European integration process, as occurred for example during the referendum in the United Kingdom and the consequent negotiations that led to Brexit.

Such missteps, in the European integration process are happening more and more often, at least from a public

opinion standpoint. In fact, as noted by Zurn, author of the second chapter, «the broadening of the integration process into non-economic issue areas led to the rise of identity politics, which entangled European integration in a growing conflict between elites and masses: from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus (Hooghe and Marks 2009)». This is indeed a very relevant topic that generated many of the single crises that constitute the polycrisis. When the economic dividend of each integration policy is reduced as it entangles social and cultural topics, the European Union has seen a progressively decreasing “appeal” among the vast majority of the European citizens.

These “incidents” in the process of European formation are always more frequent, at least in the perception of public opinion. In fact, as noted by Zurn, author of the second paper/chapter, «the broadening of the integration process into non-economic aspects has led to the birth of identity politics, which has developed the process of European integration in a growing conflict between the elite and the masses: from a permissive consensus to a limiting dissent (Hooghe and Marks, 2009)». This is certainly an interesting argument that has led to the birth of many of the single crisis situations that have generated the polycrisis. When the “economic dividend” of every new European integration policy is reduced, it is combined with questions of cultural and social character, the European Union has seen a progressive loss of its appeal in the eyes of the vast majority of its citizens.

The authors of the third chapter (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019) refer to van Middelaaar (van Middelaaar, 2016) underlining how the crisis is a “moment of truth” where the solidity of the political idea behind an entity (a country, an international union, etc.) is challenged. In crises, they note, these entities experience a “return of politics” that marks the difference to the business-as-usual routine of rule-based decisions that is often criticized to the European Union. The validity of this has been proved in recent years with the strong political response to the pandemic-generated economic crisis. And in fact, despite the relatively short amount of time since the book was edited and since the papers were written in the first place, the whole collection of papers seems to be written ages ago, as most of the crises that constituted the building blocks of the polycrisis have been wiped away by Covid.

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Nonostante il lasso di tempo relativamente breve trascorso dalla pubblicazione dei *paper* originali che lo compongono (2019) e del libro (2020) qui recensito, si deve tuttavia notare come tutta la raccolta di saggi sembri scritta in un'altra epoca storica. Il valore della pubblicazione come strumento di comprensione delle dinamiche europee risulta pertanto fortemente ridimensionato, considerando come la maggior parte delle singole crisi che costituivano la policrisi siano state spazzate via, almeno nella scala delle priorità dei cittadini, dalla mega-crisi generata dall'epidemia di Covid.

Nella lettura di questo libro è interessante inoltre notare una notevole differenza non solo stilistica ma anche di metodo nel modo di scrivere degli autori dei vari saggi. I contributi, che ricordiamolo nascono come *paper* accademici pubblicati da una rivista internazionale sottoposta a referaggio tra pari, hanno uno stile molto diverso rispetto ad articoli di carattere tecnico-scientifico. La rivista da cui sono tratti i contributi del libro è *Journal of European Public Policy*, rivista che in Italia è inserita nell'elenco Anvur delle riviste in Classe A per il solo settore concorsuale 14/A2, corrispondente al settore scientifico disciplinare SPS 04: Scienze Politiche. Gli autori, nessuno dei quali è inquadrato in un'università italiana, possono essere ascritti al settore ERC Social Sciences and Humanities: SH2 "Institutions, Values, Beliefs and Behaviour: Sociology, social anthropology, political science, law, communication, social studies of science and technology".

Le analisi condotte, si noti in particolare i capitoli 2, 6 e 8, sono esposte utilizzando la prima persona singolare "io", "I" in in-

of writing of the authors of the various papers. The contributions, which it must be remembered were born as academic papers published by an international peer reviewed journal, have a very different style compared to articles of a technical-scientific nature. The journal from which the contributions of the book are taken is *Journal of European Public Policy*, a journal that in Italy is included in the Anvur list of Class A journals for the sector 14 / A2 only, corresponding to the scientific disciplinary sector SPS 04: Political Sciences. The authors, none of whom is employed in an Italian university, can be attributed to the ERC Social Sciences and Humanities sector: SH2 "Institutions, Values, Beliefs and Behavior: Sociology, social anthropology, political science, law, communication, social studies of science and technology".

The papers, in particular chapters 2, 6 and 8, are presented using the first person singular "I". In fact, the value of the scientific contribution arises from the author's subjective interpretation of objective data, referring to events in the public domain. The value of the contribution lies not so much in the event described, as it would be in the case of a scientific experiment or the result of a laboratory test, but in the interpretation that the author of the essay gives of it. Thus, the order of importance of the scientific method, in which the object of the test must be described in detail in order to be repeated by other scientists, is reversed. The authors of the essays analyzed here must instead describe in great detail the logical steps that led them, starting from an incontrovertible fact (eg: a news event) to reach conclusions that denote their interpretative capacity and to relate different events.

glese. I contributi scientifici nascono infatti dalla soggettiva interpretazione dell'autore di dati oggettivi, riferiti a eventi di pubblico dominio. Il valore del contributo non sta tanto nell'evento descritto, come sarebbe invece nel caso di un esperimento scientifico o il risultato di una prova di laboratorio, ma nell'interpretazione che l'autore del saggio dà di esso. Viene così rovesciato l'ordine di importanza proprio del metodo scientifico, in cui l'oggetto della prova deve essere descritto dettagliatamente per poter essere ripetuto da altri scienziati. Gli autori dei saggi qui analizzati devono invece descrivere con grande dettaglio i passaggi logici che li hanno portati, a partire da un dato di fatto incontrovertibile (es: un evento di cronaca) a giungere a delle conclusioni che ne denotano la loro capacità interpretativa e di mettere in relazione diversi eventi.

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