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Crises and change processes of the welfare systems

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Abstract

Our passage from a modern into a post-modern society has activated the profound transformation of the relationship between economics and society. Of consequence, the welfare systems, which have characterised economic development in the majority of the more industrialised countries since the end of World War II, have also undergone intense transformation. The studies of national welfare regimes, which started with the analysis of the situations in Western countries, are no longer able to represent a situation that is undergoing rapid evolution and diversification. The changes in act are influenced by dynamics that are both exogenous and endogenous to the system and which make it difficult to predict the possible future outcomes. Today, different and at times adverse dynamics can be noted, but certain constant aspects are also apparent. Of these aspects, it is worth noting: the failure of the market as the sole support strategy for the development of social well-being; the central role of community dynamics; the de-standardisation and personalisation of interventions; subsidiarity and the necessity to support families with regard to care work; and the necessity to redefine the role of the state and its governing technologies.

Keywords: welfare system, economic growth, crises

Introduction

The development of the welfare systems and their critical issues have characterised the debate on social policy and culture over the second half of the last century. The 1960s witnessed the consolidation of the Fordist model of economic growth, the process of modernisation and the increased provision of social protection against social risks (invalidity, old age, poverty and illness). The development of systems of social protection has not brought about a decline in social networks or the culture of solidarity, which have instead continued to consolidate despite the growing diffusion of individualistic values. However, this expansive process, which gave rise to societies defined by Castel (2004) as “welfare societies”, has been interrupted. The economic crisis and the financial crisis and progressive delegitimation of the state have thrown into crisis the expansive trend of the social protection policies. The new century has seen the reopening of discussions on the social pact between productive work and care work, and between the production of value, solidarity and social protection. This new scenario has given rise to a discussion on and activated a process of re-visiting the previously consolidated models of welfare all over Europe. Such a process cannot concern specific sectors, or exclusively regard social policies, but it addresses the system as a whole, the dynamics of local development, the mechanisms leading to the construction of a collective identity and the legitimisation of the state, as well as its connection with the processes of democratic representation. In fact, to speak of welfare does not imply speaking about the processes of service production that regard the most disadvantaged individuals, but it involves speaking about the social contract that underlies the workings of society. It involves an examination of the individual or social nature of the construction of well-being in people, and an examination of the independence, or dependence, of economic and social dynamics. To define the boundaries involved, we can refer to several studies:

Bauman (2007) posed the problem of the social dimension of risk and of unease from an ethical perspective. In a somewhat provoking manner, he reposed a biblical question and declared that each individual must respond to the question: “am I my brother’s keeper?” The question is posed in a rhetorically way in order to emphasise the “non individual” dimension of unease. This question can be posed all individuals and it reminds us of the responsibility of being a human, it demands that solidarity is considered as a social responsibility and as an occasion to comprehend individual ethics. If we pose the question on the societal level, and not on the individual (or community) level, we run the risk of the ethical dimension clashing with that of feasibility. From this perspective, we could reformulate the question and ask: “to what extent are we responsible for our brothers?” With the term: “to what extent”, we put the following two elements into discussion:

- which needs and risks is society responsible for?;
- should there be a limit with regard to the resources that are made available, beyond which “responsibility” returns to being individual?

These questions pose the problems of relative valency and socially determined ethical values. Their importance is not absolute, but it is correlated with the material and concrete possibility of achieving them. The dimension of rational economic behaviour ends up coming into conflict with the dimension of ethics/values. This risk comes from considering the development of individual well-being as “a personal asset”, left to the responsibility of the individual, and which becomes public only when it does not enter into conflict with economic growth. The production of economic resources is considered to be a condition in itself able to define the conditions that allow the individual to create their own individual well-being. In this scenario, the economic crisis redefines the resources that can be directed towards the production of well-being and the type of risks and needs that are considered public and to which the society assumes responsibility for. Nevertheless, this perspective clashes with another problem that regards the social contract between citizens and society. To start considering certain social risks as individual and no longer as collective would lead to an increase in the perception of social insecurity in the individual and sanction (or inevitably experienced by the individual as such) the inability of the society to respect the social contract. This translates into a reduction of social cohesion, a dissipation of social capital and the delegitimisation of the organisational forms of society.

A second contribution worth bringing into consideration in this introduction to the debate on the public or individual responsibility to respond to social risks is that on the theories developed and fine-tuned by Senn. With his concept of “capability” and his reflection on the relationship between growth, individual freedom and inequalities, Senn marks the way to a new perspective because he claims that the reduction of inequalities in the opportunities of the individual and the creation of conditions that permit people to liberate and use their abilities constitutes a fundamental driving force for growth. From this perspective, welfare policies are not determined by their compatibility with the resources available to dedicate to growth, but they constitute a driving force. The production of welfare policies must, from this view-point, be considered as an investment towards development. This change in perspective makes us think that, even from the point of view of the society, ethics are not socially or economically determined and do not enter into conflict with economical rationality. The responsibility of creating the conditions within which individuals can create their own potential coincides with the responsibility of responding to social risks and the creation of conditions that favour growth.

This perspective is particularly important in the current phase of welfare system re-evaluation. Indeed, across Europe, the economic crisis is posing the problem of the capacity to uphold social policies – policies that have characterised the development of Western countries since the end of World War II. It is obvious that the outcomes of this process depend a lot on the perspective from which the debate is set with regard to the relationship between the economy and society. To consider the construction of social well-being as purely a cost for the economic system means that the adoption of ethical values depends on the available of resources. The perspective changes completely if we consider that welfare policies are a fundamental driving force for the generation of growth. In this case, the limit (nevertheless present) is seen in relation to the true capacity to create a virtuous circle between social security and growth. Moreover, it is the same concept of growth that takes on a different connotation. In this view, economics forms one of the dimensions of growth that should be considered as the capacity for the growth of social well-being.

These brief introductory considerations allow me to claim that the crisis is not only an independent variable that determines the development of the welfare systems. Today, the crisis should not be seen as just the reduction of available resources for society, but it should also be seen as something that sanctions the passage from a modern into a post- (or neo-) modern society, breaking the bonds that have characterised the continuity between economics and society.

1. The relationship between well-being, economic growth and social development

The debate on the relationship between economics and society – between social policy and economic policy – is very open. The traditional view assigns to welfare policy the function of responding to imbalances in the distribution of resources produced by the market. Economic growth has produced an increasing

availability of resources that, matched with the increasing claim capacity of the social forces, has led to an increased number of interventions put into act to oppose social risks. This perspective takes the economic dimension to be the most central, thus making the social and relational dimension secondary. However, research (sociological and economical) has demonstrated the necessity to use complex interpretive paradigms. Moreover, our passage into a neo-modern society has strengthened the importance of the dynamics (relational and symbolic) between the social actors. The link between welfare and development is shown to be very strong and biunivocal. Economic policy also affects people's quality of life, their fragility and their relational systems, as well as inequalities, social cohesion, social classes and social identities: all the aspects upon which social policy also intervenes. However, social policies are also able to exert significant effects upon the sphere of pertinence of economic policy. Indeed, facing up to the problems of inequality and social cohesion also allows the development of social capital, trust and identity, which also constitute a fundamental resource for the development, also the economical development, of a society. The process of transformation of the relationship between the economic and the social dimensions in post (or neo) modern society is of interest to all disciplines that deal with well-being (economists, sociologists, psychologists, etc.) Rullani (Rullani, 2006), in his interpretation of the role of social capital in the processes of local development, reminds us that: "economics and society were co-fused during pre-modern society, before the scientific and industrial revolution. ... (and) modernity breaks this bond, and separates the economic field from the rest of the social body."

The break in the continuity between the social and economic spheres, provoked by Fordism, is rooted in the role assigned to welfare policies. The logic that has accompanied the development of the welfare state systems was based on the definition of the responsibility to address the risks connected to economic growth.

In the different countries, different methods have been developed in order to respond to this growing demand for social security. The countries that have followed a purely liberal logic tend to declare that the individual, in the first instance, should take the responsibility to activate the (insurance) mechanisms to protect themselves from risk. The responsibility to respond to risks becomes "social" (i.e. of the community) only when the subject is no longer able to deal with the situation. The protection supplied is only relative to primary needs (socially determined by the context). On the other hand, countries with institutional policy regimes of social-democratic inspiration tend to assign the responsibility of providing subjects with a guarantee against the social risks produced by local development to the state. In both cases, however, an exchange exists between employees and employers. The individual renounces a certain amount of decisional autonomy (entering as executor into standardised processes) and in exchange receives protection (directly and indirectly through participation in social insurance schemes). However, our transit from a modern into a post- (or neo-) modern society, the demand for greater flexibility and the simultaneous globalisation of economic processes no long abide to the logic of social exchange. The transformation of social and economic dynamics has brought about a shift in the risks and their transfer to the subjects that work in the territory. In other words, post-modernity is associated with the re-assignment of the actors' autonomy, and the redefinition of the dynamics and the processes with which the community can face the development of risk factors.

These observations lead us to the conclusion that the disruption of the continuity between economic and social processes is no longer sustainable and that post-modern complexity requires the development of theories, also based on relationships, which allow the system to take on and manage the co-fusion of these two perspectives. This statement also incorporates the necessity to consider the emotional dimension, and the human element that goes with it, as integral to the comprehension and planning of the economic and (even more so) the social connections that connect individuals between themselves and with the organisational forms adopted to cope with social risks. This perspective makes it necessary to reconsider welfare policy as a factor that is inherently linked to local development policy, not as a (restorative) response process to the distorting dynamics of the market, but as a fundamental factor of development that is able to make resources available and give sense to actions.

But the processes that lead to the construction of "sense" are not exclusively characterised by a cognitive dimension, and emotional dynamics also play a fundamental role. With regard to this, Rodger (2004) claims that the modern approach has removed the emotional dimension from the interpretation of social phenomena.

The break in the continuity between economics and society and the emphasis on the scientific and rational dimension, in opposition to the emotional and relational dimension, have resulted in the construction of technical solutions to social unease and to the risks faced by individuals, in which the human dimension

takes on a marginal role. In this way, the discontinuance between economics and society is reinforced and the central role of economic processes is confirmed as a valid alternative for the production personal well-being. Returning to the co-fusion of economy and society, it is necessary to consider the human dimension once again, including its relational and emotional aspects, making it the central element in the planning of social and economic policies. The co-fused re-composition of economy and society places welfare policy into the perspective of the combined integration of public and private actions, with individual and community solidarity placed next to institutional policies. This integrated mix must start from maximising the value of people and their social relationships.

2. Towards which welfare systems?

The second half of the last century saw the consolidation of interventions and policies striving to provide the solutions to risks linked to economic growth. Starting from the perspective of Western countries, a number of studies attempted to construct a classification of the different forms of welfare system. The emphasis of the research had been placed on the specificity assumed by the individual national situations, thus demonstrating the diversity between them. From this perspective, Western countries seem to be characterised more by their differences than by their common factors that have marked the processes of development. This analysis symbolised the European debate (by Titmuss and Esping-Andersen) that took place at the end of the last century, but which was thrown into crisis by three additional concepts.

The first was that introduced by globalisation. Wood and Gough (2006) pointed out that the analyses of the welfare models carried out thus far had only addressed the countries of the West and had only focused on the role played by the state (in the past and at the current time) in the management of welfare policies. The impact of processes of globalisation upon national economies means that the analysis of welfare should not be limited to the countries of the West, but it should encompass all countries that are economically connected. From this perspective, the authors make a first distinction between:

- welfare state regimes; placing all Western countries within this model. The differences between the Western countries that brought Esping-Andersen to adopt his classification of welfare systems are thus diluted when a global perspective is adopted. In all Western countries, a role of the state remains that, although abandoning the function of sole service provider, continues to have a function in the overall process of responding to social risks. By furthering the analysis of the forms and modalities of welfare system development, we can see how historically differentiated welfare systems are present within this model;
- systems based on informal security. The systems of Latin America and Eastern Asia are included within this model. The dominant element of these systems lies in the poor formalisation of rights and the presence of informal response dynamics. The welfare models of the countries of Latin America followed logic of liberal inspiration, while the countries of Eastern Asia pointed towards the development of productivistic welfare, which encourages productive policies that support employment and which places less stress onto protective policy;
- insecurity systems, in which no apparent policies exist that protect against social risks. The countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip can be classified under this model.

The use of a global perspective leads to the demonstration of how a classification centred on the role of the state is reductive and how the response to social risks is always the combined result of the different dynamics of the market, the state and the community.

The second concept is the direct opposite of the first and reflects concepts of “localisation” or territorial differentiation. In all European countries, both the consolidation and the crises of the welfare systems are accompanied by dynamics of localisation, as well as by attempts to re-centralise the governing processes and, in some cases, the management of welfare policies. Such dynamics are attributable to at least two independent processes:

- institutional dynamics that in many European countries (Italy, Spain and Great Britain, as well as Norway and Denmark) have seen the request for an increase in local autonomy with regard to the government and management of policies, but also motions towards their centralisation. The first tendency (localisation) can be explained by the diversification of the economic and local social systems that go with the specific risks and needs. This situation goes hand-in-hand with the crisis over the legitimisation of central power and with the birth of local political movements and parties that have used increasing contractual force

to reopen the discussion on the regional distribution of responsibility. Next to this process of decentralisation of responsibility, tendencies are also manifested towards the re-centralisation of powers and the processes of policy management. The decentralisation of power has, in fact, disrupted the normal processes of governance, which are often characterised by hierarchical dynamics. The central bureaucracies have responded to this problem by putting stress on the possible (and real) risk of increasing inequalities and public spending and by activating processes to centralise powers and by instating new policies that are managed by central government directly. These tendencies have been shifted by the conflict in power between central and local governing parties;

- the dynamics linked to economic systems and local social systems. The reorganisation of local systems (the clusters and the industrial sectors, in particular) shaped by the economic crisis and the development of the culture of corporate social responsibility has produced an entanglement between the type of development and local (or industrial sector) negotiation. In other words, the businesses that have used localisation and territorial identity as competitive factors have also inserted a set of insurance policies (protecting against social risk) into local (or corporate) negotiation. A second aspect linked to the localisation of welfare systems is attributable to the dynamics of the development of the third sector, linked to local social capital and the development of policies controlled by local administrations. Social companies often become social actors capable of renegotiating the development of policy and attracting economic resources that are not public, thus becoming producers of welfare policy independent of the public choice. A final aspect regards the relational dynamics of the community and of the structure of the family, which have different characteristics in different European countries. These dynamics are not independent of each other and the connections between them have contributed towards the differentiation of local welfare systems.

The third perspective could be defined as “specification”. Research into the welfare systems of different countries has shown how is it excessively simplistic to speak about national welfare systems; also because the different policies have taken on specific characteristics. In some countries (for example, Italy and Great Britain), the healthcare policies are of a universalistic type and are still strongly anchored to the central role of the state; while, in the same countries, policies that support employment or pensions have different characteristics. For example, the Italian system has developed in a very similar way to that of the corporative systems of central Europe, while in Great Britain, a Liberal type of system is maintained, centred on the dynamics of the market. In other words, the systems that protect against social risks take on different forms predominantly in relation to the type of risks faced, and so countries can end up being very similar with respect to some policies (the greatest homogeneity probably regards healthcare policies) and strongly differentiated with respect to others (the greatest homogeneity probably regards employment policies). The result is that Italy and Great Britain, for example, have highly differentiated policies with regard to pensions and unemployment, but very similar healthcare policies.

These different perspectives lead to two types of observation. The first regards the processes of analysis and investigation of the welfare systems. From this point of view, we can conclude that the complexity of the analysis of the welfare systems should be handled using a multi-dimensional approach. In particular, the literature suggests that the following are taken into consideration:

- the distribution of institutional responsibility, entrusted to a combination of roles carried out by the state, the market and the community and its informal networks;
- institutional relationships, determined by the conditions of legitimisation of the state, by the processes of centralisation and decentralisation of powers, by the position and by the role performed by the individual countries in the global system;
- the processes of reorganisation of local economic systems, the characteristics taken on by the job market and by the financial market, and the distribution of negotiation power between the different social actors;
- the social dynamics of the local communities, the values, the reference culture and the processes of socialisation of the culture of solidarity;
- the type of social stratification, with attention placed on inequalities, poor equity and social mobility;
- the results produced by the systems in terms of subjective well-being, responses to needs and development.

The upshot of these considerations is that the welfare system classifications that have been used as reference points in the field can no longer be considered as acceptable, and they highlight how the public regimes are not so stable, homogeneous or able to form the “glue” of the national welfare systems. As seen, the forms

that polices take on differ even within the same country and they demonstrate a discrete capacity to resist change within the setting of institution policy.

The second observation refers to the differentiation of the actors that contribute to the production of policies to oppose social risks. The passage from a welfare state system to a mixed type of system (in particular, if we consider the dynamics, in their various manifestations, linked to local negotiation or to the role of the community) makes it difficult to classify the systems according to entitled rights. As an alternative, it would be better to analyse the results produced by the action of the various actors providing care work and social security. The analysis should therefore address risk protection, increased well-being and the reductions in social inequalities actually produced.

This second consideration allows us to make some concluding reflections on the processes of development of the welfare systems:

- we can speak about a European model of welfare that distinguishes itself from that of other countries. All the European states are characterised by three fundamental factors (Hemerijck, 2002), that are: solidaristic intent (objectives: full employment; diffusion of healthcare assistance and education; adequate social providence for illness, old-age, unemployment and invalidity; and social assistance aimed at reducing poverty and marginalisation) that is widely welcomed and supported by the population and present in institutional programmes; polices that consider social justice as an important factor for development and progress and that do not consider economic competition and social cohesion to be contradictory to each other; a high presence of organisations representing the interests and processes of negotiation based on the participation and the involvement of the various social actors.

- despite the transformations, the social state resists making cutbacks in social risk protection. The attempts to cut back on welfare are opposed by the necessity to maintain high social costs that throw into crisis the implicit social contract that regulates the dynamics of social identity and that forms the basis of state legitimacy. The future of the social state does not seem to be predetermined by public resource cutbacks as a result of the economic crisis and by the reduced tax capacity of the state. The processes of reorganisation depend upon the dynamics set in place between the social actors, the durability of their identification within the culture of solidarity and their capacity to influence the strategic choices in relation to the trilemma that characterises the relationship between economic and social policies – that is the difficult choice between: full employment, equalitarian objectives in the distribution of revenue and the containment of taxation pressure.

These elements have characterised the dynamics of economic growth and the parallel consolidation of the social protection systems that accompany economic growth and that form a determining factor (Bertin, 2010). Our passage from modernity into post-modernity has, however, profoundly modified the nature and the characteristics of the needs (the risks and conditions of social unease) in relation to which the welfare systems were first developed. This change represents the scenario with respect to which the changes in act must be considered in relation to the nature of welfare policies and their relationship with the economic dynamics of a post-industrial society.

The forces that are influencing the changes to the welfare systems are: the social dynamics that determine the demand for goods/services and that are able to reduce social insecurity (exogenous change factors); and the manifestation of critical situations in the processes that govern welfare systems (endogenous factors).

2.1 Dynamics arising outside of society: which modify the risks and the demand for social security?

Our passage into post-modernity and into a post-industrial form of economic system is accompanied by the manifestation of distinct characteristics in the individual countries (characteristics that are most likely also highly differentiated within each country). Bonoli (2007) analysed the differences with which such change processes are activated, using Sweden as the benchmark value. Through the analysis of various economic and social indicators, he established that the process was initiated in Sweden back in 1970. The indicator values used in the analysis (employment rate in the service sector, employment rate for women, divorce rate) that were present in Sweden in the 1970s, were achieved in the United Kingdom (1979) at the end the 1970s, in Germany (1989) and France (1988) at the end of the 1980s and, finally, in Portugal (1995), Spain (1996) and Italy (1994) only by the mid 1990s.

The globalisation of the economy and the transit from a modern to a post-modern society are determining profound social changes that are transforming the risks and the demands for social security upon which the current welfare systems are consolidated. These systems are born into modernity, in a sufficiently stable context (in relation to the current situation), in which the risks are concentrated in the initial and the final phases of the life cycle. The principal risk upon which the system of social protection was devised was that of poverty, which is bound to the impossibility of being able to produce an income for oneself and for one's family. Indeed, this risk is intrinsic to the period preceding entrance into the job market and the final phase of life, when people over a certain age are expelled from the job market. The duration of a working life used to be stable at about forty years and during that period the risk of poverty was linked to extraordinary events (illness, injury, etc.) that could make it very difficult for an individual to produce income. But the "liquidity" of the post-modern society has complicated the structure of the risks upon which the system of modern welfare is constructed. The liquidity and the dynamism of a life course accompany the diffusion of risks along a person's entire life span and they need to take into account the processes that are unstable and undergoing continual evolution.

In particular, the analysis of the processes of change must consider:

- the demographic trend and the strong increase in the population of elderly citizens (Bertin, 2009). The demographic dynamic heavily impacts the system of socio-healthcare services as well as the pension system. It is useful to remember that the elderly are the principal "consumers" of resources (public and private) dedicated to the production of welfare. The imbalance in the structure of the population also changes significantly the links between the generations, making the potential care network for the elderly less available. Indeed, we are already talking about the sandwich generation, that sees the adult (in the large majority of the cases, women) occupied with care work in three directions: the grandchildren, the spouse and elderly parents;

- changes in the job market. The speed of technological development and the globalisation of competition tends to reduce the demand for manual labour and renders the skills, that were once considered necessary to stay in the market, obsolete;

- the great increase in the number of women with access to the job market, in the face of a reduction in male employment. The critical aspects of this phenomenon regard women with poor professional skills in particular; women who find it difficult to reconcile work obligations with the care work that they continue to perform and that nearly always falls into their laps. A vicious circle develops because family care work (and therefore the woman's work) is particularly difficult in families with low incomes and with low family social capital. In such cases (and where no public intervention or social networks exist), families are not in the position to buy into the help market (carers for the elderly, baby-sitters, day-care, etc.) in order to obtain support during their critical moments. This inability to cope with emergencies makes their relationship with the job market precarious and reduces available income, thus feeding the vicious circle;

- the instability that characterises the evolution of families. Indeed, family dynamics can no longer be represented by the concept of a "family life cycle", but they present a "spiralling" process or a "lifecourse" in which the events that mark the changes (the building of the family, children, their exit from the family home, family dissolution) can occur a number of times over the life span of a person, building different bonds that make intergenerational solidarity less stable;

- the transformations of cities and the consequent difficulties to build social identity and the scarcity of social relationships. The processes of social transformation which are taking place, the dynamics of globalisation and the rapid technological changes produced by the "internet society" are having significant effects upon the structure of cities. Bauman (Bauman, 2007), taking up the work of Ghaham and Marvin (S. Ghaham, S. Marvin, 2001), claims that: "in nearly all the cities of the world, spaces and zones are being created that exclusively connect with other privileged zones, both within towns and on the international and global level. At the same time, the isolation of these zones from areas that are physically close but economically distant and separate is increasing". The process of building social identity also occurs by looking for the factors and the cultural aspects upon which one can identify with. Identity is a mechanism of social integration, but at the same time it also constitutes a factor of diversification and social exclusion. Different cultures are often experienced as a threat, as aspects from which one needs to defend oneself, and the communities that present similar identities tend to be attracted to each other and to diversify (even geographically) away from cultures considered to be different and perceived as threatening to social order. Social exclusion can encourage the construction of an alternative social identity and the breaking of

processes regarding the acceptance of the norms. Those who live in conditions of well-being end up perceiving those coming from different cultures, those surviving hand-to-mouth or on micro-criminality and those who live in conditions of poverty as abnormal or threatening. These processes determine the vicious circles that reinforce the mechanisms of social exclusion. Indeed, they create lifeworlds formed of individuals lacking economic resources, relationships and social capital and who are unable to use tools or information that require a certain level of intellect. These conditions of exclusion consolidate the sense of identity which bases itself on the contradiction of social rules social rules, and can stimulate illegal behaviours and micro-criminality;

- the legitimisation of the state, turbulence and changes in the policy framework. The economic crisis interlocks with the crisis over the legitimisation of the state, and emphasises processes already in act. The act of learning about the demand for security leads to a growing demand for public intervention. Faced with these dynamics, the state reduces the resources available. This gap between supply and demand produces two effects: it reduces the capacity of the state to impose taxes because the citizens are suspicious about the appropriate use of their taxes and therefore less willing to pay; it reduces the legitimisation of the state as an actor able to direct resources towards the production of common good. When these two elements are matched with a perception of poor efficiency and inequality of treatment, a vicious circle is installed that tends to delegitimise the role of the public institutions. At the end of the last century, the state addressed this problem using public debt, but this strategy has now become impractical and has resulted in other distortions, throwing into crisis the “contract of inter-generational solidarity”.

2.2 The critical elements within the welfare systems: the difficulty in coping with change

The development of the welfare systems has also revealed several internal distorting factors that are influencing the changes. These factors can be ascribable to:

- public spending that is rigid and difficult to direct towards new social risks. Bonoli's research (2007) reveals a correlation between the time-scales of socio-economic change and welfare spending dedicated to the needs typical of post-modern societies. In other words, in Spain, Italy and Portugal (for whom the passage into post-modernity is the slowest) social spending is imbalanced towards healthcare and pension policies and in support of the aging processes, and very few resources are dedicated to risks connected to the inherent fragility in the processes of inserting the young into the job market or supporting employment opportunities for women. Tepe and Vanhuyse (2010) arrive at the same conclusions; they show how Italy, Japan and all have welfare policies that are strongly imbalanced in favour of policies for the elderly. Comparing the social spending regimes between the periods 1986-1992 and 1998-2003, one can easily note how this imbalance has been increasing. Analysing, on the other hand, the countries that invest more in coping with new social risks, one can note how New Zealand, Sweden, Austria and Great Britain come up first. At the opposite end of the scale are Spain, Italy and Portugal, in accordance with the work of Bonoli (2007). These data provide us with a representation of the processes of how resources are used and suggest the existence of a correlation with the processes of transformation present in the different countries; however, they cannot be used to establish a causal relationship between the phenomena. The definition of causal relationships would require a more in depth analysis that groups different variables linked to the cultures of the different countries, their social systems and the dynamics between the social actors that contribute to the construction of welfare policies. The fact remains that, in the face of an overall reduction in available resources and the inability of the states to increase social spending, the different welfare systems appear to possess different capacities for facing the socio-economic changes and for responding to the new social risks that characterise the passage from a modern into a post-modern society;

- a reduction of the protection against risks demonstrated by the development of market logic. Laratta (2010) has shown that the widespread privatisation and adoption of purely market logic in the management of social services presents four types of problems: the different territorial distribution of providers (profit and no-profit private providers) is not a direct reflection of the needs; it risks producing a loss of identity in the no-profit sector (a risk of isomorphic behaviour with regard to the private for-profit sector); it delegitimises the function of the state, undermining its role in the redistribution processes and provision of guarantee against the risks of social break-up; it brings about an increase in social inequalities;

- the increase in the demand and the reduction in resources (consumerism). The demand for social protection is destined to continually increase and will not be stopped by the development of the supply systems. Castel (2004) claims that: “security is never given, or even conquered, because the wish for protection moves like a cursor and leads to new demands as its former goals are met (p.7)”. Thus, the development of social protection systems moves the needle on the demand gauge even higher, activating a theoretically infinite spiral of demand-supply interactions, which can only be interrupted by the finite nature of available resources;

- low efficacy in terms of de-stratification. Studies of the effects in terms of reductions of inequalities in welfare systems provide relatively unhomogeneous results. The analyses show that social inequalities in the use of welfare systems continue, and that the users of the services are those who find themselves in conditions of unease yet, at the same time, are armed with the cultural resources to cope with the difficulties of accessing organisations characterised by bureaucratic logic and language. The informal networks are also often denser and more able to carry out care work (in both a qualitative and quantitative sense) for the less deprived social groups. However, some of our recent investigations comparing the prevention services of the different welfare services have shown that next to these (confirmed) inequalities other more important ones are also present. Citizens belonging to well-off social groups, but who live in contexts characterised by relatively ungenerous and inefficient welfare systems, make use of prevention services to a lesser extent than those belonging to the less well-off groups living in contexts characterised by more generous and efficient welfare systems. These elements signal the need to extend the research, but also the difficulty in activating processes able to reduce social inequalities;

- the fragility of care networks. The previously indicated demographic changes trigger a series of negative effects upon family care work. Women often find themselves having to cope with the demand for care work due to their dual role as grandmother and as daughter. Extended life spans are also associated with an increase in the incidence of illnesses associated with mental confusion, a situation that requires the caregiver to expend a great deal of both physical and emotional energy. Indeed, research has shown the significant frequency with which these conditions of care work provision are associated with the development of depressive states. This condition is particularly critical when the families present low social capital (internal and external) and a low amount of sharing in the execution of care work. A final possibly critical factor can be ascribed to the processes of socialisation within the culture of intergenerational solidarity. No precise studies have yet been carried out, but it is possible to hypothesise that instability within families has critical effects upon the culture of family solidarity;

- the bureaucratisation of services. This aspect is particularly important in the analysis of the processes of consolidation of welfare state systems, or at least of the supply of interventions and public policy aimed at the reduction of social risks. The logic followed by public administration is often characterised by the quest for homogeneous operator behaviour. This is a typical bureaucratic behaviour, which aims to avoid discriminating between subjects who possess the same rights. This structure has favoured the standardisation of the personalisation of responses. The process of standardisation ends up being even more negative during a phase in which the social risks to which it must respond are changing. The actual risks of a post-modern society are surely less subjectable to standardisation and instead require the improvement of the dynamics and relationships between people. Moreover, bureaucratisation introduces rigidity into the processes of service delivery and make it more difficult to meet the new demands for social security;

- the misalignment between the increased complexity of the system and the hierarchical culture of public administration. The evolution of the welfare systems is being characterised in all Western countries by the prevalence of mixed forms (mixed welfare) in which civil society holds an increased importance, and there is an increased presence of actors that provide public services that do not depend on public administration. These actors bring their own specific strategic behaviours and their own abilities to active resources. Thus, the service network is made up of independent actors that contribute to the production of social well-being. Obviously, these networks require interactions between the actors to be developed; but what is sure is that they cannot be governed by the traditional logics employed by public administration. This situation must be handled by developing innovative strategies of governance, which are coherent with the way in which the network connects the social actors.

2.3 The processes of transformation in act

The internal and external dynamics of the welfare systems have activated transformation processes that are profoundly changing their characteristics. In particular, the literature points to various transformation processes that we can summarise as follows:

- *subsidiarity and the increase in the central role of the community.* The diversification of needs and the need to overcome the standardisation of policies combines with the reduction in public resources. These various conditions have activated, in nearly all the countries of the West, the responsabilisation of the territorial solidarity networks to contribute towards the development of social well-being. The organisations of the third sector have demonstrated a clear ability to combine the rules of economic management with solidarity. These organisations have demonstrated themselves to be actors capable of contributing to the development of the local communities and to the consolidation of social capital and cohesion;

- *re-definition of the relationships and the boundaries between public and private actors.* The development of subsidiarity logic has highlighted that the public actor must change its role from being a monopolist provider of services to that of directing the process of the local construction of social well-being. The responsibility of the public actor is to enable the other actors (family, networks of informal solidarity and third sector organisations) to contribute, as well as possible, to the development of social well-being. To this regard, various countries have activated processes to re-evaluate their strategies and technologies of governance (Bertin, Fazzi, 2010);

- *re-commodification.* The presence of new social risks to which the public sector is unable to respond to has placed problems upon the relationships between employers and employees. The economic companies that try to strengthen their relationships with their employees are finding it difficult to contribute to the construction of the conditions that will favour the continuity of their relationship. However, this is not a new situation. It is this requirement that caused both employees and employers to push for the creation the first social security policies and it has led various companies to take on the responsibility for the provision of services for their employees (this process was first manifested in European countries between the two World Wars). Companies are developing corporate contracts that, by means of insurance policies, support the construction of social security systems connected to the role performed by the job market (re-commodification). This situation reduces the universalistic character of social policy and diversifies, in the same local territory, the rights enjoyed by the citizens;

- *functional and/or redistributive recalibration (Ferrara, 2007).* Functional recalibration refers to the process of redirecting resources away from old social risks towards new risks. Changes in social risks are also creating another change process. New social demands are driving processes that lead to the redistribution of social spending, looking to move the resources from the needs typical of modern societies to those characterising post-modern societies. The instability and fluidity of employment, the increase in female employment and women's problems with regard to reconciling productive work with care work, and the mobility of professions are some of the phenomena that present new social risks to which responses need to be found. Functional recalibration can take place at different speeds and possess different characteristics in the different countries. The speed seems to be correlated with the timescales by which the societies are moving from modern economic and social systems into post-modern ones, but also with the degree of rigidity demonstrated by the welfare systems (the power of the groups that represent traditional needs, the cultures of the public and private actors, the structure of public spending and the mechanisms of service provision). Redistributive recalibration refers to the processes activated to re-balance resources and risk protection in favour of the most vulnerable sector of the population and to re-equilibrate rights and protection to those both within and outside the job market. The dynamics previously indicated show how the welfare systems are reducing the universalistic tension that had characterised the phase of welfare expansive towards the end of the last century. The dynamics of re-commodification provide a precise example of these changes. This reduced tension towards universalism re-emphasises the need to develop re-equilibrating policies that favour the subjects at the periphery of the system. In this case, the amplification of the goods able to create social well-being is not defined a priori as a right of citizenship, but it is the result of the combined (but not always coordinated) action of the various actors of welfare policy. From this perspective, redistributive recalibration is fundamental.

3. Conclusions

Welfare systems are undergoing a process of profound transformation in all countries that are developing an economic system. An analysis of European countries indicates that the systems have assumed distinct forms, coherent with the characteristics of the social and economic systems, yet always orientated towards reducing social risks. Globalisation leads to the comparison of the social protection systems and we can presume that such comparison will result in the development of forms of protection that are distinct, but that are always directed at coping with the social risks considered by the different cultures to be the most important.

The forms taken on by the different systems are always shaped by three needs: the universalistic extension of social protection; the re-balancing and the reduction of social inequalities; the coordination and the integration of the interventions performed by the various welfare actors, in particular those performed by the family, the community with its intermediary organisational forms, and the state. A re-evaluation of the dynamics occurring between these aspects allows some courses of action to be identified that can guide this phase of profound transformation. With regard to this, it is useful to remember the importance of:

- reconsidering the contract between the individual, the family, civil society and the state, starting with maximising the value of the human and relational dimension of the person (retaking the human dimension and not seeing it as a result derived from the organisation of the market);
- redefining the processes of integration and governance of the networks of welfare actors;
- the de-standardisation of the processes of provision of welfare goods. The management of a society of risks requires less standardisation and more personalisation in the processes of providing care work;
- re-defining the relationship between economic growth and society and the mission of the welfare systems (ethical choices and strategies for development).

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