

The rise of the global society. Innovations and mechanisms

by Rudolf Stichweh

The essay pinpoints three central elements behind a theory of global society: historical events, structures and processes. To understand globalisation it is necessary to assume an historical point of view. Only in this way can structural innovations to modern global society such as functional systems, organisations and networks, be identified. In conclusion Stichweh analyses the “processes” and the “mechanisms” of globalization, applying Niklas Luhmann’s distinction between autonomy and dependence to the distinction between the global and the local level.

Religion, inclusion and exclusion in the age of globalisation

by Sergio Belardinelli

This essay investigates the role of religions in the global society. A global world inevitably tends to upturn traditional patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Today it is important to cultivate cultural identities in a social setting in which every identity should be granted the possibility to flourish. At the same time, it is not necessary to proclaim an unprincipled and indifferent equality between cultures in an effort to overcome the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. Instead, in the age of globalisation there is a need for “inclusive distinctions”.

Globalisation and cultural relativity

by Leonardo Allodi

The essay discusses the relation between cultural relativism and globalisation. The study, with reference to the theses of Ritter, Boudon and Spaemann, maintains that the capacity for self-relativity, typical of the European selfconsciousness, cannot be confused with relativism. By analysing these themes, Allodi is prompted to examine the historical-spiritual process that started with the so-called “axial age”. Scheler’s concept of “transculture” is an original means of conciliating historic relativity and perennial values and to compare cultures without falling into relativism.

The metaphor of the global West in the language of the anti-globalisation cultures

by Paolo Terenzi

The aim of the study is to pinpoint the most relevant common elements of the anti-globalisation cultures. Following an initial presentation and classification of the different social components of the movements, the essay prevalently examines socio-cultural factors. Some common metaphors used to describe the Western civilization are examined: single thought processes (globalisation and culture), the empire (globalisation and politics) and the predator (globalisation and nature).

The experimentation of “family educators” in Bologna

By Riccardo Prandini

The essay try to analyses the experimentation of the “family educator”, a new social service in the welfare system of Emilia-Romagna. The author adopts a “frame analysis” approach to analyse the service and shows that it has not yet developed a new culture of welfare. This outcome is due to the fact that the service is still embedded in a culture that attributes the responsibilities of children education to public institutions and does not succeed in empowering the educational skills of families.

The rappresentation of civil society in contemporary Italy

By Pierpaolo Donati

The paper introduces the design and the progress results of a large research project (1998-2003), carried out by a group of scholars directed by Pierpaolo Donati, on the issue of “civil society” in contemporary Italy. This project deals with both the theoretical and empirical aspects of the topic. It has already produced three volumes, and is expected to send out other volumes within two years. Special emphasis is put on the “relational discourse of civil society” and the role of the third sector (called ‘social private’) vis-à-vis the roles of the State and the market. The empirical data are extremely meaningful in order to clarify the features of the “civil cultures” (understood differently from what is usually called ‘civic culture’), in their qualitative and quantitative dimensions.