

Discutersi lo spazio. Come le pratiche partecipative toscane dividono la controversia rispetto alla localizzazione di una moschea a Firenze

di Julien O'Miel e Julien Talpin

While participatory democracy is often presented as a means for public authorities to channel conflict in setting up top-down deliberative initiatives, the study of a bottom-up participatory process offers a much complex picture, shedding a new light on the articulation between participation and conflict in the public sphere. The paper presents the results of an ethnographic study of a participatory process that took place in Florence in 2011-2012 at the request of the Muslim community of the city, using a disposition of the Regional law for participation. As a matter of fact, deliberation managed to bring down the tensions around the project of construction of a mosque that could have, as it happened in many other European cities, resulted in a harsh conflict over the symbolic appropriation of the territory. It worked so well that the absence of conflict resulted in very limited participation and discussion in the local public sphere, failing to create a shared legitimate output such as the localization of the future religious center. Despite such failure, the participatory process also fostered the empowerment of the Florentine Muslim community that witnessed the emergence of new leaders and a broader public recognition of its civic status in the city. This indirect outcome of the process could constitute a crucial resource for the future battles over the construction of the mosque. This study therefore confirms the need to study together the policy, the politics and the micro-foundations of participatory democracy to understand fully its consequences. Only when all these elements are analyzed together can the effects of participation be adequately understood.

Keywords: Participation; public space; contentious politics; local government

National Myth-Making and Populist Mobilization in Scandinavia

by Anders Hellström and Magnus Wennerhag

This paper analyzes if and how the Sweden Democrats (the SD), the Danish People's Party (the DPP) and the Progress Party (the PP) in Norway use myths of *national exclusiveness* and myths about *the common man* to radicalize popularly held sentiments to attract votes and gain political credibility in political space. The specific contribution is that we consider national myths to be a relevant political opportunity structure in the political competition of the votes. We conclude that both the SD and the DPP make use of national myths to gain credibility in the political space, in order to sustain populist mobilization in these countries. However, this is not the case with the PP in Norway. One possible explanation is that already before the PP emerged, other political parties in Norway, such as the Center Party, occupied the niche of national myths in the electoral market.

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Keywords: Political Parties; populism; social movements; political contention

Izquierda Unida, venticinque anni dopo. La sinistra radicale spagnola dal 1986 al 2011

di Marco Damiani

After the collapse of the Soviet Union «another» left is now present in Europe, in an attempt to build a reformist maximalist pole, placed on the left of the socialist parties. This experiment lived his first experience in the second half of the twentieth century, when the Spanish Communist Party decided to try to overcome its borders, organizing a broader federation with more political ambitions. *Izquierda unida* (Iu) was born in 1986 and its story has shown alternate results, strongly influenced by the electoral trend of the *Partido socialista obrero español*. Despite this, Iu defends its autonomy, maintaining in time the possibility of structuring an alternative party that differs from the Spanish bipolar parties.

Keywords: Party politics, Left, European Radical Left, Spanish Left, Izquierda unida.

Confliggere cooperando. Un'analisi concettuale del conflitto politico in ambiente coalizionale

di Michelangelo Vercesi

The concept of conflict is both crucial and equivocal in social sciences. Many meanings may be (and have been) ascribed to the word. Here, I seek to provide an empirical definition of social conflict that is linked to the notion of relation. The quality of the definition is tested by climbing down the ladder of abstraction and by using it for the definition and the clarification of a specific type of conflict, whose definition is often neglected in the social literature, that is, the political conflict which explodes in coalitions of political actors, where cooperation exists (or should exist).

Keywords: Contentious Politics; social movements; participation; conflict

Individualism and Social Changes: Real Conflicts and Fictitious Dilemmas

di Vitantonio Gioia

The current individualistic rhetoric conceals the dramatic impoverishment of the category of individualism, starting from the second half of nineteenth century. Individuals are only considered on the basis of their ability to produce and consume wealth, regardless of the social effects of their activities. So, while we look with admiration to the historical phases in which the individualization process contributed to the collapse of the old social systems, creating new models of social relationships, today a radical pessimism and disenchantment characterize the way in which we consider the possibilities of the contemporary individualism in order to change social world through a further development of human faculties. As a matter of fact, the univocal relationship between individual activities and acquisitive spirit, represented in exemplar way in the homo oeconomicus category, leads to exclusively conceive the contemporary individual as a subject of repetitive and routine activities within unchangeable social and economic contexts and not as potential builder of new models of social relationships. Coming back to the rich Enlightenment debate on the relationship between modern individualism and social changes can give significant stimuli for a rethinking of the category of individualism.

Keywords: Enlightenment, individualism, homo oeconomicus, liberalism and socialism, social changes.

Gunnar Myrdal Revisited: Cumulative Causation, Accumulation and Legitimation

di Guglielmo Forges Davanzati

The aim of this paper is to provide a reconstruction of Myrdal's analysis of the factors determining the path of accumulation, in view of the pivotal role played by political institutions in promoting it. It will be shown that Myrdal's theory of cumulative causation, combined with his idea that consensus on the existing social order is a "created harmony", is a powerful analytical tool in understanding a key contradiction of capitalist reproduction (particularly in a neo-liberal regime): namely the trade-off between accumulation and legitimation.

Keywords: Gunnar Myrdal, accumulation, welfare state, political institutions
JEL: B25, H11, E25

Segregation by Age, Aging, and Activism. The Commitment in Advocacy Groups of Retired People

by *Alexandre Lambelet*

Working on the life stories of old-age activists, this paper shows that their activism has to be linked with two types of explanations. This activism can be understood as the result of the exclusion from others organisations that these activists have experienced due to their age. This activism can be understood also as the product of their will to be involved with people from the same generation. Therefore old-age organizations are less a place where elderly interests are defended than a place where elderly people can continue some kind of activism. Finally, this paper demonstrates that the comprehension of where elderly people get involved as activist has to be linked with the structure of inequality (i.e. the age segregation) that exists in social movements as in the whole society.

Key words: Activism, Elderly, Age, Segregation, Socialization, Generation, Political Participation