The Lab's Quarterly

2017 / n. 1 (gennaio-marzo)

CONTATTI
lq.redazione@gmail.com

Gli articoli della rivista sono sottoposti a un doppio processo di *peer-review*.
I componenti del Comitato scientifico sono revisori permanenti della rivista.
Le informazioni per i collaboratori sono disponibili sui siti della rivista:
http://dsslab.sp.unipi.it//Sito/The_Lab's_Quarterly.html
https://thelabsquarterly.wordpress.com/

ISSN 1724-451X

"The Lab's Quarterly" è una rivista scientifica, fondata nel 1999 e riconosciuta dall'ANVUR per l'Area 14 – Scienze politiche e Sociali, il cui fine è contribuire all'indagine teorica ed empirica e costruire reti di conoscenza nella comunità degli studiosi e con il più vasto pubblico degli interessati.

I campi di studio riguardano le riflessioni epistemologiche sullo statuto conoscitivo delle scienze sociali, le procedure logiche comuni a ogni forma di sapere e quelle specifiche del sapere scientifico, le tecniche di rilevazione e di analisi dei dati, l'indagine sulle condizioni di genesi e di utilizzo della conoscenza e le teorie sociologiche sulle formazioni sociali contemporanee, approfondendo la riproduzione materiale e simbolica del mondo della vita: lo studio degli individui, dei gruppi sociali, delle tradizioni culturali, dei processi economici e fenomeni politici.

Un contributo significativo è offerto dagli studenti e dai dottori di ricerca, le cui tesi costituiscono un materiale prezioso che restituiamo alla conoscenza delle comunità scientifiche, affinché non vadano perdute.

LQ **The Lab's Quarterly**

2017 / n. 1 (gennaio-marzo)

THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Contradictory Processes in the Italian Situation

di *Gerardo Pastore*[*]

Abstract

What idea of society is summarised in the expression "knowledge society"? According to UNESCO vision, knowledge societies are societies where people have the capabilities to transform information into knowledge and understanding, which should allow them to increase their livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities. This essay intends to present the overall project for an inclusive and competitive knowledge society, as well as proposing a critical analysis of the Italian situation within the process towards the European Knowledge Society.

Keywords

Knowledge Society, Lisbon Strategy, Crisis, Italy, Public Policies

[*] GERARDO PASTORE è is Researcher in Sociology at the Department of Political Science, University of Pisa.
E-mail: gerardo.pastore@unipi.it

This article takes up and develops further the analysis presented in the following essay: Pastore, G. (2016). "Paradoxes of the Knowledge Society. Some Considerations on the Italian Situation", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: SOC2016-1997

Indice

1. KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY: THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND PREMISES

The idea of knowledge society is closely connected to the possible directions of development of contemporary societies. The current historical phase is characterised by the problematic advance of the processes of globalisation and crisis. Some of the significant drivers of change that clearly demonstrate the high degree of complexity in today's social systems include financialization of the economy, opening up international markets, new/net/knowledge economies, transformation of the workplace, intensification of information flows, multiplication of forms of communication and the consequent redefinition of individual-society relations (Bauman, 1998; Castells, 1996; Giddens, 1990; Martell, 2010). In this context, the concept of the Knowledge Society seems to be primarily configured as an attempt to provide an analytical summary of the transformations taking place, to then return to an operational vision of the future on which to normatively base political actions aimed at the definition of a new model of society (Pastore, 2015, 2016). As regards the idea and the need for a Knowledge Society, many scholars have put forth their theories and differing perspectives have emerged out of this international debate (Cerroni, 2006; Gallino, 2007; Pastore, 2009; Stehr, 1994; Vespasiano, 2005).

Robert E. Lane (1966) has surely been one of the first scholars to use a related term "knowledgeable society". According Lane, the knowledgeable society is a society in which its members

> (a) inquire into the basis of their beliefs about man, nature, and society; (b) are guided (perhaps unconsciously) by objective standards of veridical truth, and, at the upper levels of education, follow scientific rules of evidence and inference in inquiry; (c) devote considerable resources to this inquiry and thus have a large store of knowledge; (d) collect, organize, and interpret their knowledge in a constant effort to extract further meaning from it for the purposes at hand; (e) employ this knowledge to illuminate (and perhaps modify) their values and goals as well as to advance them. Just as the "democratic society" has a foundation in governmental and interpersonal relations, and "the affluent society" a foundation in economics, so the knowledgeable society has its roots in epistemology and the logic of inquiry (650).

However, Lane's idea of a knowledgeable society is strictly tied to a special theory of science and it reflects the extreme optimism of the 1950s and the early 1960's that (social) science will help to bring about a society in which common sense has been replaced in major social institutions by scientific reasoning (Stehr, 1994).

In the late 1960's, Peter Drucker, in his studies about the transformations of capitalism and production systems, speaks more specifically of the knowledge society (1969, 19). The revolution he announced is the revolution of knowledge management, which would replace the worker management of the Taylorist and Fordist era. He refers explicitly to changing employment structures and to the growing importance of human capital in new forms of work organisation. «The knowledge opportunities of yesterday were largely for independent professionals working on their own. Today's knowledge opportunities are largely for people working within an organisation as members of a team, or by themselves» (Ivi, 258). Therefore, knowledge is identified as the strategic resource whose management is deemed crucial to the success and competitiveness of individual businesses, as well as entire social and economic systems. This position is not entirely new, if we consider that classical economics has always recognised the important role played by knowledge in the production of wealth. In the *Principles of Economics* (1890) by Alfred Marshall, we read that «Capital consists in a great part of knowledge and organization […] Knowledge is our most powerful engine of production [...] Organization aids knowledge» (IV.I.2.). Austrian economists Friedrich von Hayek and Joseph Schumpeter considered taking the knowledge factor into account fundamental for economic activities. While Hayek (1945) highlights the importance of tacit, specific knowledge of contest and of spatio-temporal circumstances, Schumpeter (1951) stresses the importance of continuous recombination of explicit knowledge. In any case, according to the main theories of the knowledge-based economy, an economy of knowledge should propose significant investments in Research and Development (R&D) and in marketing activities, thereby assigning decreasing percentages of production expenses (substantially related to raw materials, production techniques and workforce) in relation to the final costs (Blackler, 1995; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; McDowell & Christopherson, 2009; Powell & Snellman, 2004; Stehr, 2002). In similar contests, competitiveness should be characterised by specific factors, representing systemic prerequisites for the full realisation of economies founded upon information and knowledge: (1) the presence of big industrial corporations, competitive on a global scale, with ample investment capacity for Research and Development; (2) the availability of plentiful public funds for universities and for financing basic and applied research; (3) the high creation rate of innovative start-ups in boundary pushing technological fields, arising as spin-offs from big corporations, universities and public

research institutes; (4) the capability to finance innovative, high-risk businesses with venture capital societies supporting the creation and development of new enterprises (Rullani, 2004).

2. INFORMATION SOCIETY AND KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY: THE SOCIOLOGICAL DEBATE ON THE NEW MODEL OF SOCIETY

Between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the sociological debate about the new model of society started to become more and more heated (Kumar, 1995). Many scholars assigned a relevant role to the development and diffusion of new information and communication technologies, in the context of the more general process of the transformation of contemporary societies (Bell, 1973; Castells, 1996; McLuhan, 1967; Porat, 1977; Toffler, 1970; Touraine, 1971). In this way, expressions like information society and knowledge society became increasingly used to denote the magnitude of the ongoing transformations. These are not interchangeable or overlapping labels, but rather intertwined and mutually complementary processes: nowadays information and knowledge have come to be constitutive of the way we live (Stehr, 1994; Webster, 2006).

According to Daniel Bell, «the post-industrial society is an information society, as industrial society is a goods-producing society» (Bell 1973, 467). As a matter of fact, the Harvard sociologist would soon start to replace the expression "post-industrial society" with "information society" in his writings. Splitting society into three realms – Techno-economic structure, Polity, and Culture – Bell seems to assign the lead role to the techno-economic structure, considering it as the favoured relation through which social change is built.

> The post-industrial society deals with fundamental changes in the techno-economic sphere and has its greater impact in the areas of education and work and occupations that are the centers of this sphere. And since the techno-economic changes pose 'control problems for the political order, we find that the older social structures are cracking because political scales of sovereignity and authority do not match the economic scales. In many areas we have more and more economic integration and political fragmentation (1973, XXXIII).

Bell's post-industrial society is a theoretical model (an ideal type, as Weber would have said) developed on the basis of some structural tendencies observed in the U.S.A.: (1) the shift of the main economical component (transition from a manufacturing economy to a service economy); (2) the imbalance in favour of the tertiary sector (pre-eminence of professional,

technical and white-collar class); (3) the new centrality acquired by theoretical knowledge as a source of innovation and of public policy creation; (4) the need to foresee and anticipate the future; (5) the establishment of a new "intellectual technology" aimed at a decisional logic (Mattelart, 2002, 69-75).

Synthetically, it is presented the transition from material to immaterial, from hardware to software, from realisation to design, from markets to networks. As previously stated, these steps are connected to the spreading and progressive development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, in this field, offers a useful contribution. His reflection is centred on the concept of informationalism, and according to him «the term informational indicates the attribute of a specific form of social organization in which information generation, processing, and transmission become the fundamental sources of productivity and power because of new technological conditions emerging in this historical period» (1996, 20). In this way, a new technological paradigm is presented: «a new social structure has emerged, a structure made up of electronic communication technologies – powered, social networks» (2004, 41). Summarising, according to Castells:

> The first characteristic of the new paradigm is that information is its raw material: these are technologies to act on information, not just information to act on technology, as was the case in previous technological revolutions.
>
> The second feature refers to the pervasiveness of effects of new technologies. Because information is an integral part of all human activity, all processes of our individual and collective existence are directly shaped (although certainly not determined) by the new technological medium.
>
> The third characteristic refers to the networking logic of any system or set of relationships using these new information technologies. The morphology of the network seems to be well adapted to increasing complexity of interaction and to unpredictable patterns of development arising from the creative power of such interaction [...].
>
> Then, a fifth characteristic of this technological revolution is the growing convergence of specific technologies into a highly integrated system, within which old, separate technological trajectories become literally indistinguishable. Thus, micro-electronics, telecommunications, opto-electronics, and computers are all now integrated into information systems (1996, 71-72).

Therefore, the new paradigm and the Network Society theorised by Castells do not qualify as an overcoming of capitalism, rather they favour its expansion and pervasiveness from a global perspective:

> capital accumulation proceeds, and its value-making is generated, increasingly, in the global financial markets enacted by information networks in the timeless space of financial flows. From these networks, capital is invested, globally, in all sectors of activity: information industries, media business, advanced services, agricultural production, health, education, technology, old and new manufacturing, transportation, trade, tourism, culture, environmental management, real estate, war-making and peace-selling, religion, entertainment, and sports (Ivi, 503).

What appears to be particularly remarkable about Castells' reflection is the idea of the open system, where the structural dimension increasingly intersects with the valorisation of so-called immaterial resources: «the information technology paradigm does not evolve toward its closure as a system, but toward its openness as a multi-edged network. It is powerful and imposing in its materiality, but adaptive and open-ended in its historical development» (Ivi, 75-76).

It is essential to highlight that the social dimension within which Castells positions the historical development of the Network is an example of what he defines as milieux of innovation. The reference here is clearly to the entrepreneurial culture spread in the multiform structures that have appeared in Silicon Valley since 1970, where, favouring innovative and anti-bureaucratic tendencies, creating a space for experimenting with the results obtained through free and cooperative programming. This has taken the form of a kind of revolution of information technology, contributing to the formation of these innovative contexts, where discoveries and applications are able to interact and be tested:

> in a recurrent process of trial and error, of learning by doing; these milieux required (and still do in the early twenty-first century, in spite of on-line networking) the spatial concentration of research centers, higher-education institutions, advanced-technology companies, a network of ancillary suppliers of goods and services, and business networks of venture capital to finance start-ups. Secondly, once a milieu is consolidated, [...] it tends to generate its own dynamics, and to attract knowledge, investment, and talent from around the world (Ivi, 65).

This led to the spreading of the idea of learning organisation, i.e. an actual cognitive system that restores the image of dematerialised organisations and businesses, the distinctive features of which should be determined by the very cognitive nature of the environment, the pervasiveness of knowledge and skills and also the relationship networks developed within and outside workplaces (Argyris, Schön, 1998; Butera, 2009; Miggiani, 1994; Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1997; Senge, 1990).

Japanese scholars Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) described this situation using the model of the "Knowledge Spiral". They envisage a cycle structured into four phases that begin with an exchange of tacit knowledge (socialisation), then continues with a process of knowledge externalisation that makes this knowledge explicit. The combination of tacit and explicit knowledge results in a new level of tacit knowledge being generated, and this new tacit knowledge is absorbed from the organisation (internalisation). As such, the cycle starts again, and the process goes on. Therefore, according to this vision, knowledge creation is as much about ideals as it is about ideas. The core of innovation is to re-conceive the world in line with to this particular mission, vision, or value. To create new knowledge means quite literally to re-create the organisation, and all the individuals in it, in a continuing process of personal and organisational self-renewal. In the knowledge-creating organisation, creating new knowledge is a way of behaving – indeed, a way of being – in which everyone is a knowledge worker (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1997).

Considered in a similar manner, learning should be essentially the result of the dissemination of knowledge accumulated over time and the production of new knowledge. It follows that the level and quality of processes and training (whether formal or informal), as well as operational and relational experiences, become absolutely crucial. As such, as learning is found to be primarily linked to the commitment and determination of the subject in question, it undergoes a further strengthening in contexts whereby the cognitive stimuli are varied and ongoing. In this sense, knowledge is also a relational experience. Therefore, investing in knowledge is fundamental not only for its positive impact on growth, but it could (and should!) have a profound effect in raising the public spirit (Visco, 2014). This is a potentially important contribution to the social cohesion and well-being of citizens. The problem that remains to be solved is how these aims can be pursued effectively and under what political strategy.

3. THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY AS A POLITICAL PROJECT: THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY

Starting from a concept of permanent education, put forward in the Seventies by UNESCO, and continuing up to the present day with the most recent documents issuing forth from the European Commission on the subject of instruction and training, a philosophy of education has come to be broadly accepted; one that addresses the entire life span and singles out – precisely in education and training – those tools which fulfil the

development of the individual, society and the economy.

The plan, from the content of European Community Commission reports, seems to be clear. Having singled out unemployment as the single most important problem facing the countries of the Old Continent, it is crucial to find suitable solutions. It is no longer enough to increase Gross Domestic Product in order to raise employment levels. Economic growth requires parallel and so-called 'active work policies'.

This European strategy has as its immediate objective training and instruction, both of which are capable of helping to prepare workers and school-leavers professionally in order to face the changeable requirements of the work market. The basic principle at the root of each training scheme, according to the Delors Report (Commission of the European Communities, 1993), must be the valorisation of human resources throughout their active lives. The objective of this is to "learn how to learn throughout life". In order to facilitate the passage of school-leavers onto the job-market, broader forms of internship and apprenticeship within companies will be available, coupled with short, very practical professional training courses, to be organised in specialised centres.

The *White Paper* of November 1995, *Teaching and Learning towards the Learning society* (Commission of the European Communities, 1995), reiterates the same issues and states that in order to build a Knowledge Society it is necessary to: encourage the acquisition of new knowledge; bring schools and enterprises closer together; combat exclusion; develop proficiency in three European languages and treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis.

The same philosophy inspires the strategic goal of the European Council of Lisbon in 2000: «becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion».

Almost in parallel to the affirmation of the Lisbon Strategy, there has been a substantial change in the way higher education systems and generic education institutions work. These reforms were legitimised with the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998, and with the subsequent Bologna Process in 1999 for the realization of an "European Space of Higher Education".

Overall, the guidelines of the Bologna Declaration are based on the adoption of common key principles, capable of directing the homogeneous restructuring of European university systems:

- structuring systems into several cycles, giving access to different levels of academic degrees that can be easily read and compared;
- promoting the mobility of students, researchers and professors;
- developing evaluation;

- activating joint courses;
- promoting the European dimension of formative programs;
- improving the attractiveness of the systems;
- developing lifelong learning;
- integrating the formative and the research functions.

These points, developed in greater detail, involve the creation of:

- a system of degrees based upon transparency and comparability, achievable also through the Diploma Supplement implementation, with the aim to promote the E.U. citizens employment and the international competitiveness of European system of higher education;
- a system essentially based on two cycles, I and II level. Access to the second cycle will require a successful first level graduation from a cycle lasting not less than three years. The degree acquired after the first cycle will be spendable on European labour market. The second level degree will allow access to (I or II level) masters or doctoral courses;
- a credit system, like ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), facilitating students' mobility. Credit acquisition will be also possible outside universities, with lifelong learning experiences and professional formation, and their recognition will be made possible by adequate methodologies;
- systems promoting the mobility of students, professors, researchers and administrative staff, overcoming all the obstacles that are currently restricting a true movement freedom;
- a European cooperation in quality evaluation, with special attention to the development of shared and consistent criteria and methodologies;
- a genuinely European dimension for higher education, especially with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility and integrated learning, teaching and research programmes;
- systems of lifelong learning and recurrent education, as an essential element for the development of competitiveness on an international level;
- relationship between higher education institutions and students, with special attention to the needs of families, and enhancing the social dimension of higher education;
- plans for the attractiveness of higher education, from the perspective of European system and valorisation of national specificities.

Overall, the documents taken into account outline a path that, starting from the identification of a material problem such as unemployment, seems to lead to the elaboration of a wide and progressive strategy. From Delors White Paper to Lisbona objectives, it is possible to notice the expansion of the perspective leading to the individuation of a goal to be

shared and proposed as valid for the whole European Community. The formulations are undergoing acceleration in this direction and quickly escalating, with obvious associations to more general dimensions of culture.

With the Bologna Process, probably for the first time, it starts to appear the vision of a common European destiny, beyond the economic, financial and regulatory processes. It should however be noted that, beyond a terminology that converges towards the same idea of knowledge society, a serious assessment of the progress on this path refers to different conceptions about the role and functions of education and formation, and requires a serious reflection about the effectiveness of the actions taken by education and formation institutions.

The ongoing monitoring of the Lisbona Strategy progress highlighted how, despite successes in some important sectors, there are still evident growth, employment and innovation difficulties, especially in the largest euro zone economies, and the ongoing economic-financial crisis has further aggravated the overall situation (Crescenzi, 2011). Hence the relaunching of the "Europe 2020 Strategy", as a way out of the crisis, in line with the Lisbona proposals, confirms that the path towards the knowledge society unavoidable.

4. THE ITALIAN REPLIES TO THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY

This part of the work intends to consider critically the Italian replies to the European Strategy to promote the Knowledge Society as a source of renewed economic dynamism and of social Cohesion. How is Italy positioned within this political project? What are the concrete choices that support the sectors considered to be strategic? Which processes of transformation are underway and with what results?

Considering the Italian situation, the statistical data released by the most accredited national and international research institutes indicate delays in almost all the areas considered strategic for the construction of the Knowledge Society. In fact, it is possible to note that the public investments in education, training and research are among the lowest in the European countries.

In order to evaluate the policies produced concerning the areas of growth and human capital, spending on education and training, as measured in relation to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is emerging as a key indicator that makes it possible to quantify, at a national and international level, how much countries are investing to improve facilities and encourage teachers and students to take an active part in the educational process. In Italy, the percentage of GDP devoted to education and training has

been in decline since 2009, falling from 4.8% in 2009 to 4.1% in 2013 (ISTAT, 2016). The European Countries (EU-28) spend about 5% of their total GDP on education, ranging from more than 6% spent by Iceland (7,7%), Denmark (7,2%), Finland (6.4 % of GDP) and Belgium (6.3 % of GDP), to the 4,5% or less spent by Greece (4,4%), Italy and Spain (4,1%) (EUROSTAT, 2016a).

Generally, countries should invest in education and training to help foster economic growth, enhance productivity, contribute to personal and social development, and reduce social inequality, among other reasons. This is not always possible; during economic downturns, even core sectors like education and training can be subject to budget cuts. But, with reference to the Italian case, the financial and economic crisis shows all the weaknesses of the public system. The data reported, while taking the form of minimum indications, mark the absence of a strategic vision, or rather the obvious contradiction between the propagandistic celebration of the importance bestowed on education and training, and the vicious spiral of reduced public investment in these directions.

Another testing ground for "Italy as a Knowledge Society" is research. Without research, the very idea of the knowledge society is nullified, and it becomes a mere demagogic exercise in discussing development and innovation. Indeed, one of the targets set in the framework of the "Europe 2020" strategy deems it essential to achieve an appropriate balance between spending on research and development (R&D) and GDP, in order to boost levels of productivity, employment and social welfare. Unfortunately, satisfactory results have not been recorded in these contexts either. In particular, public-private partnerships have stayed at very low levels. Over the last 10 years, the intensity of expenditure on R&D in Italy grew by only 0.24 percentage points, insufficient progress to close the gap with other European countries. Spending on R&D as a percentage of GDP is still below the EU average (equal to 2.03%), and far from the national objective for 2020 (1.53%) and even further from the European target of 3% (EUROSTAT, 2016a).

Even in this case, the absence of a strategic vision is evident and is the major problem. In addition, it is appropriate to question deficiencies in the Italian productive apparatus which proves to be altogether too archaic, from both the production process and managerial-programmatic points of view. Several scholars, in fact, invite us to focus on the backwardness of Italian capitalism, on the weaknesses of the entrepreneurial class and on a series of bad habits that have been consolidated over time (Banfield, 1976; Gallino, 2003, 2005; Maddaloni, 2016; Toscano, 2011; Vasapollo, 2007). The route towards the Knowledge Society (to highlight

a crucial issue) is definitely slowed down by the poor constructive and synergistic relationship between training and production processes. The much celebrated lifelong learning is only at the beginning of its possible trajectory; initiatives are still too modest for considering them a scaling event, nor for that matter can they take on the burden of deficiencies found elsewhere (secondary school and university). According to the documentary evidence, the communicative inability among the various levels of education once again produces distortions, overlapping and disorders for which it is difficult to imagine solutions in today's situation. The Italian national economic system – but in particular the members of that system – certainly pays the price, forced to "difficult" recoveries and mediations which necessarily reduce the rate of citizenship of everyone.

These unflattering results do not at all favour the necessary renewal of the economic fabric, especially that arising from the rapid growth of innovative enterprises and employment in highly knowledge intensive sectors. In fact, the apparent disinvestment in knowledge has adverse effects on the overall functioning of the school and university system. The skills of students, and also those of adults, are in decline. This, in turn, results in a decrease in the motivation of Italians to pursue university courses and higher education (De Mauro, 2010; Pastore, 2015; Solimene, 2014). In fact, Italy had the lowest share of tertiary graduates in the EU in 2015 (25.3 % of 30 to 34-year-olds) (Eurostat, 2016).

The real paradox seems to be the mistaken belief that studying is not very cost effective, which is recently spreading.

This false belief that studying is useless (certainly also fuelled by a bad press and bad politics) is undoubtedly due to the labour crisis and the growth of inequality. In times of crisis, in fact, social inequalities have increased and, as often happens, it is the weakest sectors of society and the younger generations that pay the highest price. For them, studying risks becoming an unaffordable luxury; they are forced to give priority to work and, without qualifications, are often condemned to precarious and poorly paid work. In this scenario, the school dropout rate continues to be above the EU average. Furthermore, the percentage of young people between 15 and 24 who are neither working nor in education or training (NEET) has increased, rising from 16.2% in 2007 to 22.2% in 2013 (32.9% in the 25-29 age group) and is now the highest in the EU (EUROSTAT, 2016b).

Yet the data show that study and higher education are still the best way to tackle the financial and economic crisis and find a stable job.

A careful reading ISTAT's findings regarding labour forces survey

show that, over time, having a degree still offers better employment conditions on average, and a distinct advantage in terms of income, at least for employees. In addition, the data reveal how the recent crisis in all the European countries, but especially in Italy, has caused a worsening of employment that is more intense for school leavers than university graduates, both for the labour force as a whole and for young people in particular (ANVUR, 2014; AlmaLaurea, 2015). Of course, the actual difficulties experienced by Italian graduates in find adequate professional positions should not be overshadowed, as they are significantly higher than the average found in other European countries.

However, these difficulties should not detract from the value of study and the importance of training. A similar epilogue would encourage large slices of the population to slip dangerously downward and favour the emergence of new inequalities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis presented thus far has highlighted some of the significant contradictions inherent in the Italian paths towards the knowledge society. There are various paradoxical elements at play: limited resources, low skills, narrowing of the cultural base, the absence of an overview of the system. Moreover, Italy remains a fragmented country, with large differences between the northern and southern regions. This problem is present in other European countries, but not to the same extent as in Italy. The fact that there is still a Southern Question (over 150 years after the Unification of Italy), which is often forgotten or dismissed as a criminal question, is indicative of both a historical failure of public policies, and the major structural difficulties in the processes of cultural transformation (Cassano, 2009; Toscano, 2011). This is a malaise that speaks of a clear separation between the State (formal legality) and civil society (de facto reality), as suggested by Gramsci's still relevant notes (Gramsci, 1975, 2057).

What Gramsci noted in reference to the history of Italy is the missed encounter between nation and people; just remember that, in the writings of this author, the notion of people presents an internal dialectic «connected with its unfolding in a network of relationships, up to the relationship, even if problematic, with the social totality. It is evident that 'people', associated with 'nation' does not refer to a part of a separate society, bearer of a need for political and cultural autonomy, of 'spirit of division'; but rather to a part for which the relationship (positive or negative, organic or dismembered: here lies the question) with social-national totality is at stake» (Baratta, 2003, 47). The aspects highlighted invite reflection

on a poor national spirit, cause and consequence of that "petty and small" individualism against which Gramsci throws out sharp barbs on several occasions:

> Individualism is merely brutish apoliticism; sectarianism is apoliticism, and if one looks into it carefully is a form of personal following [clientela], lacking the party spirit which is the fundamental component of "State spirit". The demonstration that party spirit is the basic component of "State spirit" is one of the most critically important assertions to uphold. Individualism on the other hand is a brutish element, "admired by foreigners", like the behaviour of the inmates of a zoological garden (1975, 1755).

The real paradox is that while we celebrate the knowledge society, Italy is actually always finding new forms of knowledge, with particularistic ties. Almost nothing in Italy seems to escape the logic of tainted proximity. From the various forms of criminality to the various forms of policing, from the entrepreneurs to the unions, from the newspapers to the parliamentary factions, from universities to central and local authorities: no sphere can be said to be free from the assumption that only known people can be trusted (Romitelli, 2009, 78).

Society appears to dissolve into a fine community dust, characterised by actions and, above all, by inaction.

Moving beyond the paradoxes of the knowledge society means first of all breaking down these borders, overcoming the fragmented culture and the logic of small gardens. To use another Gramscian expression, it means launching an "intellectual and moral reform" founded on a profound upheaval of human relationships of knowledge as an element of the construction of a political "hegemony" policy, understood as intellectual and moral direction (Gramsci, 1975); this implies a total transformation of culture, of its production and its methods of dissemination (Frosini, 2009). It means affirming the Society side in the expression Knowledge Society, to create new forms of solidarity and social ties. But it should be noted that «the economic reform programme is the concrete way to present every intellectual and moral reform» (Gramsci, 1975, 1561). It has already been stated that the quantum of public resources made available to Italy for investment in strategic sectors (Education, Research, Innovation) ranks among the most modest of those recorded in developed countries. This deficiency greatly limits all aims for optimisation. But added to this, as this is happening, there is an inability to standardise a procedure that this prerogative would desperately need. Edgar Morin found the foundation of the inability to perceive and conceive fun-

damental and global problems to lie in the fragmentation and compartmentalisation of knowledge in non-communicating disciplines.

> Hyperspecialisation shatters the complex fabric of reality; the primacy of the quantifiable obscures the emotional reality of human beings. Our parcelled form of knowledge produces global ignorance. Our mutilated way of thinking leads to mutilating actions. This is joined by the limitations: 1) of reductionism that reduces the knowledge of the complex units to those of the presumed simple elements that constitute it; 2) of binarism, which decomposes into true/false that which is either is partially true or partially false or true and false at the same time; 3) of linear causality, which ignores the retroactive ring; 4) of Manichaeism, which sees only the opposition between good and evil (2012, 133).

This leads to the proposal of a necessary "reform of thought" that can restore the ability to grasp realities in their complexity and globality and:

> - gather that knowledge of the parts depends on knowledge of the whole, and that knowledge of the whole depends on knowledge of the parts;
> - recognise and treat multidimensional phenomena, instead of isolating each of them in their dimension in mutilating dimension;
> - recognise and deal with realities that are both supportive and conflicting (like democracy itself, the system that feeds antagonisms while it regulates them);
> - respect the different one while recognising the first one.
>
> A thought that isolates and separates should be replaced by a thought that distinguishes and unites. A disjunctive and reductive thought should be replaced by a complex thought in the original sense of the term complexus: that which is held together (2000, 91).

The way out proposed by the French scholar is that of a politics of civility, a new humanism capable of taking on the actual task of creating solidarity throughout the planet (Morin, 2012). This is a paradigm shift that cannot only be limited to the logic of development, but should extend to choices more generally, the values that society as a whole intends to pursue. However, it is important to be incisive to avoid reproducing further futuristic visions that are poorly equipped to make sense of the transformations taking place.

The Italian path to knowledge society continues to be completely abstract in its quantitative and qualitative disparities, and for this reason, it is still inadequate. The lack of planning, because that is what it is, can be even theorised in the framework of a liberalism that leans, perhaps unwittingly, towards a de facto social Darwinism. Here is where the old arts

and ancient vices are re-established, where new vocations and new virtues are required. In fact, it is not possible to think of a knowledge society without vocation and without virtue. The whole framework that supports it would collapse and the sources from which it takes inspiration would be undermined.

A knowledge society requires a policy for knowledge, and the state must recover its function as a guide through the delicate transition from theory to practice.

> When we talk about the politics of knowledge, we are fundamentally referring to two things: governing knowledge knowledge about governing, and how society's knowledge is governed and what the knowledge that governs society is like. These two central points lead to a series of questions of great importance to any democratic society, which must be comprised not only of legitimate decisions but also of adequate knowledge. Democratization refers to the production of knowledge, the availability of knowledge, access to experts or knowledge that guide governance. The democracy of knowledge requires, for example, an examination of how knowledge is distributed throughout a society, how authority and economic growth emerge from knowledge, the influence knowledge has over power relationships (Innerarity, 2013, 67).

The idea of the state as in decline, being overtaken and weakening has been discussed multiple times with reference to the processes of globalisation. Many expressions can be used to designate the loss of state functions and lament the fact of its deterioration in the face of stronger institutions. But the state continues to be a leader, willing or not, in everyday life, in the organisation of assistance for its members and in the planning and training of their civil bases (Borghini, 2015). Italy's problem is still that of not being able to find a convincing answer to the question: what citizenship for what citizen?

It is required a reversal of the trend that should be based on the revival of public policies supporting knowledge and culture, as sources of social welfare (Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi, 2013). In fact, development seems increasingly bound to the activation of a virtuous relationship between strengthening research, increasing education levels and training the population, repositioning the production systems in the direction of innovation, quality and sustainability. Thus, as mentioned, education, training and research take on a decisive role in a modern concept of citizenship and economic planning, and, in this perspective, cognitive work can regain sense, dignity and value.

To guide the reform of systems of knowledge and make up for the delay Italy has accumulated in many areas, it is necessary once again give meaning to constitutional values. It is necessary to reaffirm knowledge as

a basic right for the exercising active citizenship. The public school should be the primary factor of inclusion and social mobility. Freedom of teaching and research should be established as essential principles. On this basis, an authentic re-publicisation of knowledge systems would allow the possibilities that reside in the idea of the open system to be fully carried out and to enhance their participatory effects. The recovery of the public meaning of the process should be interpreted and implemented as a collective reappropriation of educational processes, like the new assumption of shared responsibility on the part of the entire community and all the individuals who go experience life at school, university and research institutions. The horizon of meaning can only be that of knowledge as a common good (Hess, Ostrom, 2009), in order to renew democracy and public ethics.

This aspect of the reflection refers to a scope of issues that have special relevance. If attention is shifted from the subject to the social system, the attitudes of the latter have to be carefully considered, and the preparation or inclination of the system are not necessarily entirely consistent with the proposal of a Knowledge Society. It must be borne in mind that the Knowledge Society collects a large amount of evidence, projective materials, concerns, doubts, ambitions and even poorly hidden intentions of dominion by the most advanced nations. Issues of power cannot be neglected insofar as they guide and strongly influence the processes under way: a very strong implication in the route towards the Knowledge Society that should be considered with particular attention concerns precisely the overall democratisation of processes, which in turn it cannot be only political but generally social and economic

REFERENCES

ANVUR (2014), *Rapporto sullo stato del sistema universitario e della ricerca 2013. 1. Studenti e laureati*, Roma.

ALMALAUREA (2015), *Condizione occupazionale dei Laureati. XVII Indagine 2014*, Bologna.

ARGYRIS C., SCHÖN D.A. (1998), *Apprendimento organizzativo. Teoria, metodo e pratiche*, Milano, Guerini.

BANFIELD E.C. (1976), *Le basi morali di una società arretrata*, Bologna, il Mulino.

BARATTA G. (2003), *Le rose e i quaderni. Il pensiero dialogico di Antonio Gramsci*, Roma, Carocci.

BAUMAN Z. (1998), *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

BELL D. (1973), *The coming of post-industrial society. A Venture of Social Forecasting*, New York, Basic Books.

BLACKLER F. (1995), *Knowledge, Knowledge Work and Organizations: An Overview and Interpretation*, in «Organization Studies», XVI, 6, pp. 1021-1246.

BORGHINI A. (2015), *The Role of the Nation-State in the Global Age*, in Mele M., Vujnovic M., a cura di, *Globalizing Cultures*, Massachusetts (USA), Brill, pp. 89-110.

BUTERA F. (2009), *Il cambiamento organizzativo*, Roma -Bari, Laterza.

CASSANO F. (2009), *Tre modi di vedere il sud*, Bologna, il Mulino.

CASTELLS M. (1996), *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford, Blackwell.

— (2004), *The Network Society A Cross-cultural Perspective*, Cheltenham (UK)–Northampton (USA), Edward Elgar.

CERRONI A. (2006), *Scienza e società della conoscenza*, Torino, UTET.

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (1993), *White Paper. Growth, competitiveness, employment. The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

— (1995), *White Paper. Teaching and Learning towards the Learning society*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

CRESCENZI A. (2011), *La crisi mondiale e la Strategia*, in Decaro M., a cura di, *Dalla strategia di Lisbona a Europa 2020*, Milano, Fondazione Adriano Olivetti.

DAVENPORT T.H., PRUSAK L. (1998), *Working Knowledge. How Organization Manage What They Know*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press.

DE MAURO T. (2010), *La cultura degli italiani*, a cura di Erbani F., Roma-Bari, Laterza.

DRUCKER P. (1969), *The Age of Discontinuity. Guidelines to Our Changing Society*, London, Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd.

EUROSTAT (2016a), *Government expenditure by function for European Union (28 countries)*, Bruxelles.

— (2016b), *Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates)*, Bruxelles.

— (2016c), *Europe 2020 indicators - Italy*, Bruxelles.

FROSINI F. (2009), *Riforma intellettuale e morale*, in Liguori G., Voza P., a cura di, *Dizionario gramsciano. 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

GALLINO L. (2003), *La scomparsa dell'Italia industriale*. Torino: Einaudi.

— (2005), *L'impresa irresponsabile*, Torino, Einaudi.

— (2007), *Tecnologia e democrazia. Conoscenze tecniche e scientifiche*

come benipubblici, Torino, Einaudi.
GIDDENS A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
GRAMSCI A. (1975), *Quaderni del carcere*, a cura di V. Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi.
HAYEK F. von. (1945), *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, in «American Economic Review», XXXV, 4, pp. 519-530.
HESS C., OSTROM E. (2009), a cura di, *La conoscenza come bene comune. Dalla teoria alla pratica*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori.
ISTAT (2016), *Noi Italia. Cento statistiche per capire il paese in cui viviamo*, Roma: retrieved from http://noi-italia.istat.it/
INNERARITY D. (2013), *The Democracy of Knowledge*, New York, London, Blumsbury.
KUMAR K. (1995), *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World*, Oxford, Blackwell.
LANE R.E. (1966), *The decline of politics and ideology in knowledgeable society*, in «American Sociological Review», XXXI, 5, pp. 649-662.
MADDALONI D. (2016), *Whatever happened to Italy? The Crisis of the Italian Pattern of Development in the Era of Globalization*, in «Athens Journal of Social Sciences», III, 4, pp. 299-319.
MARSHALL A. (1890), *Principles of Economics*, London, Macmillan and Co.
MARTELL L. (2010), *The Sociology of Globalization*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
MCDOWELL L., CHRISTOPHERSON S. (2009), *Transforming work: new forms of employment and their regulation*, in «Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society», II, 3, pp. 335-342.
MCLUHAN M. (1967), *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, London, Sphere Books.
MIGGIANI F. (Ed.), (1994), *Learning organization. Idee e sistemi per lo sviluppo aziendale nella società della conoscenza*, Milano, Guerini & Associati.
MORIN E. (2000), *La testa ben fatta. Riforma dell'insegnamento e riforma del pensiero*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina.
— (2012), *La via. Per l'avvenire dell'umanità*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina.
NONAKA I., TAKEUCHI H. (1997), *The knowledge creating company*, Milano, Guerini & Associati.
PASTORE G. (2009), *Verso la società della conoscenza. Analisi e critica del caso italiano*, Firenze, Le lettere.
— (2015), *L'Italia della conoscenza. Ritardi, retoriche e opportunità*, Pisa, Pisa University Press.
— (2016), *Paradoxes of the Knowledge Society. Some Considerations on*

the Italian Situation. ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, (SOC2016-1997).

PORAT M. (1977), *The Information Economy: Definition and Measurement*, Washington, United States Department of Commerce.

POWELL W.W., SNELLMAN K. (2004), *The knowledge economy*, in «Annual Review of Sociology», XXX, pp. 199-220.

ROMITELLI V. (2009), *Fuori dalla socità della conoscenza. Ricerche di Etnografia del pensiero*, Roma, Infinito edizioni.

RULLANI E. (2004), *Economia della conoscenza. Creatività e valore nel capitalismo delle reti*, Roma, Carocci.

SCHUMPETER J. (1951), *The Theory of Economic Development*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

SENGE P.M. (1990), *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York, Doubleday/Currency.

SOLIMENE G. (2014), *Senza sapere Il costo dell'ignoranza in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.

STEHR N. (1994), *Knowledge societies*, London, Sage.

— (2002), *Knowledge and Economic Conduct. The Social Foundations of the Modern Economy*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

STIGLITZ J. E., SEN A. K., FITOUSSI J.-P. (2013), *La misura sbagliata delle nostre vite. Perché il PIL non basta più per valutare benessere e progresso sociale*, Milano, Rizzoli Etas.

TOFFLER A. (1970), *Future Shock*. New York, Random House.

TOSCANO M.A. (2011), *Prove di società. Come uscire dallo stile pubblico "all'italiana"*, Roma, Donzelli.

TOURAINE A. (1971), *The Post-Industrial Society. Tomorrow's Social History: Classes, Conflicts and Culture in the Programmed Society*, New York, Random House.

VASAPOLLO L. (2007), *Storia di un capitalismo piccolo piccolo*, Milano, Jaca Book.

VESPASIANO F. (2005), *La società della conoscenza come metafora dello sviluppo*. Milano, FrancoAngeli.

WEBSTER F. (2006[3]), *Theories of the Information Society*, London-New York, Routledge.

ULTIMI NUMERI

2016, 3 (luglio-settembre):

1. Lorenzo Caglioni, *Le affinità elettive tra il like button e il denaro. Una proposta di analisi critica dalla teoria del valore di Marx alla teoria della colonizzazione di Habermas*
2. Lidia Lo Schiavo, *Teoria democratica e "suggestioni" foucaultiane. Post-democrazia, governance, neoliberismo*
3. Claudia Giorleo, *Il movimento femminista Femen. Una ricerca sul campo*
4. Luca Corchia, *Le competenze e le disfunzioni genitoriali. Un quadro introduttivo dei concetti sociologici sensibilizzanti*
5. Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Kritikkonzepte – eine Vergleichsskizze. Honneth,* Das Recht der Freiheit

2016, 4 (ottobre-dicembre):

1. Sabina Curti, *Sulla psicologia economica e la questione del valore in Gabriel Tarde*;
2. Vincenzo Romania, *Carriera, successo e mobilità accademica. Il caso di Erving Goffman*;
3. Elena Bissaca, *Settant'anni dopo: i Treni per Auschwitz come pratica sociale di memoria*;
4. Silvia Cavallini, *Il percorso "magistrale". Gli studenti analizzano la propria esperienza di studio*;
5. Luca Corchia, *Per orientarsi nell'interazionismo simbolico contemporaneo*.

2017, 1 (gennaio-marzo):

1. Gerardo Pastore, *The Knowledge Society between Theory and Practice. Contradictory Processes in the Italian Situation*;
2. Shkelzen Hasanaj, *Vivere nella diversità. Sviluppo delle tesi interculturaliste in dialogo con il modello multiculturalista*;
3. Rocío Blanco Gregory, Domenico Maddaloni, Grazia Moffa, *Welfare, immigrazione e crisi nei Paesi dell'Europa meridionale. Un confronto tra due regioni: Campania ed Estremadura*;
4. Paolo Gusmeroli, *"Ragazze mie, bisogna andare avanti". Riflessioni bourdesiane sulla trasmissione d'impresa di padre in figlia*;
5. Alice Scavarda, *L'illusione di non esserci. Aspetti metodologici nell'uso dello shadowing nella ricerca sociale*;
6. Vincenzo Romania, Interazioni inclusive. L'Interazionismo simbolico tra teoria, ricerca e intervento sociale, *a cura di Andrea Salvini*;
7. Irene Psaroudakis, *Cirus Rinaldi*, Sesso, sé e società. Per una sociologia delle sessualità.