



Università degli Studi di Cagliari
Dipartimento di Scienze Sociali e delle Istituzioni

AIS-ELO National Conference

Italian Sociological Association - Economics, Labour and Organization Section

Southern Europe: the social regulation of the economy in the Mediterranean capitalism

CALL FOR PAPER 2015

Department of Social Sciences and Institutions

University of Cagliari

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The international financial crisis that began in 2007-2008, and the subsequent difficulties of sovereign debts, have brought back specific traits of the European Southern countries, that have been pinpointed with the acronym PIGS and labelled – according to old and recurrent broad stereotypes in Northern Europe - as undisciplined, lazy, spendthrift. The European Commission, especially following the Monetary Union, considered necessary to impose them drastic government budget control policies, with all the relevant social and economic consequences, as in the emblematic case of Greece. Beyond the contingencies of the last few years, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal have some similarities that, though in different historical sequences, have drawn back the social sciences attention for some time now. Southern Europe countries, in fact, delayed their modernization paths, if compared to the central and northern Europe countries, turning them out as unique. The outcome could be called an "unfinished Fordism", in which production structures, capital accumulation processes and welfare systems have followed a different evolution compared to the so-called standard trends. Therefore, within a framework of decades-long debates on the different varieties of existing capitalism, it has come to light the idea of a "Mediterranean" model of capitalism, in which the State has played a decisive role and the production structure has mostly developed around the small family businesses. At the same time, studies and comparative analyses identified a Southern Europe "social model", in which the weakness and deficiencies of the welfare State correspond to a consequent key role of family structures and a strong segmentation in the labour market, with low employment rates - especially for women - and high unemployment rates. Other analytical perspectives resume the theory of the *core-periphery* dynamics in capitalism, by enclosing southern Europe in a most wide-ranging, and globalized, *World-System* balance.

Some recent studies examine the crisis effects on the South-European societies and economies structures. In particular, in view, on one side, of a strong recovery of the institutionalism perspective studies, and, on the other side, of the overall weakness that the very same institutions showed in the Southern European countries, the focus is given on the effects and consequences resulting from the "reforms" requested and/or imposed by the international institutions such as the IMF, the European Commission and the Central Bank. The measures were *market oriented*, in line with the widely discussed pillar of austerity, and mainly focused on the public spending cost-cutting, the labor market liberalization, the collective bargaining decentralization, the privatizations and the public employment cost-cutting. These kind of reforms usually take place, if so, in social contexts strongly marked by crisis, with high unemployment rates, growth of absolute and relative poverty, production units crisis, cuts in public services, low consumption rates and overall worsening of the living conditions; it is also important to remember that these reforms, even where strictly applied, as in Greece, have not had any positive effects, while indeed causing employment and GDP drops well beyond expectations, still without having any effect on the persistent "anomalies" compared to a modern model of State and capitalism. The most relevant among these anomalies, is the spread of the informal economy, represented by its two sides: the shadow (irregular) economy and the households, neighborhood and reciprocity economies. According to the latest estimates, in Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal, shadow economy rates have significantly grown in recent years (as well as in Germany, France and Belgium).

This picture opens up many research paths and urges important interrogations: to what extent is the informal economy, lacking the public resources, a kind of social safety net during a crisis? Is it, and in what way, a key element in the South-European model adjustment? Has this “safety net” the consequence of creating, in the medium term, constraints hardly surmountable once the economy is recovering? Are there elements differentiating the causes and the function/role of the shadow economy in the Southern European countries compared to those arising in Northern Europe?

It may be particularly interesting to observe how the boundaries and relations between the widespread irregular economy areas and the permanent relevance of the State regulation actually change, especially in light of the more compelling role that, in fact, the anti-crisis policies confer to the Public Institutions action. This trend introduces further domains of considerations and research, especially for what concerns the specific interactions that the two forms of regulation develop in the different cases-country and/or -region.

The Scientific Board AIS-ELO advocates the proposal of insights addressing the 2015 Call for Papers matter from the different analytical perspectives of economic, labour and organization sociology. Theoretical and empirical insights are welcome, provided that they comply with the sociological literature international standards. More generally speaking, priority will be given to insights opening up to new perspectives, approaches and viewpoints, enriching the debate between us and our partners and/or stakeholders.

The insights proposals have to be submitted by **April 30th, 2015**, in **long form abstract**, either in Italian or in English, for a total of **approximately 8000 characters**, to the secretary of the AIS-ELO section (mlpruna@unica.it), who, once confirmed the receipt, will submit the proposals in anonymous-mode to the section referees in charge of a selective evaluation. The abstract must specify in detail the **subject**, the **research query**, the **literature** of reference and the **methodology** used. Applicants are also requested to mention the “paper history”, summarizing whether it takes part of a broader research, if it has been carried out individually or in group, at a national or international level and whether preliminary editions of the work have already been published and/or divulged at other conferences or seminars.

All applicants shall receive a notification on the acceptance or the refusal of their proposal by **May 18th, 2015**. Those selected for the insight presentation to the conference, will be required to exhibit the insight full version by **August 8th, 2015**, no exception made, in order to have it sent to the coordinators and to organize the working sessions.

For any further information, please refer to the e-mail mlpruna@unica.it