SYMPOSIUM – REVIEW/4

THE PARADOX OF EVERYDAY EUROPE: THE CRISIS OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF WIDESPREAD TRANS-NATIONALISM

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This book was undoubtedly published at the most appropriate time. As I read it, the newspapers report the approval by the United Kingdom's House of Commons of the Withdrawal Agreement allowing the United Kingdom to leave the European Union on January 31, 2020. Yet, as Favell and Recchi write in the book's introduction, "whether as work, study and retirement abroad, employment of foreigners, friends' networks, travel, tourism, knowledge of diversity, media use, the consumption of foreign food, music, films ... Would we expect any European member state to be less Europeanised in a sociological sense on these measures - even (perhaps especially even) the one that has now voted itself out of the EU, the United Kingdom? " (p 4).

This is the all-European paradox that the book has the merit of clearly highlighting. The time of publication is so appropriate because this book invites us to adopt a different perspective on the process of European integration, an alternative vision detached from the contingent crisis of Europe. Indeed, this book offers us the opportunity to see something that has been completely overshadowed by the noisy public and political debate

over the past decade about the failure of the European project. In this phase of rebirth of nationalism and the reaffirmation of geographical and cultural boundaries, faced with the increasingly widespread idea of reversing the integration process, this book tells us of a sort of disconnection between society and European politics and puts us in front of an important empirical evidence: despite the current political stalemate at European level, social integration, the one occurring in everyday life, in Europeans' behaviour and social relations, has already happened and continues to happen. A Europe of everyday life, everyday Europe, already exists. Social change in Europe has been underway for some time, it does not recede, and this is evidenced by the increasingly transnational and interconnected lives of European citizens.

As this work clearly shows, the social behaviours and practices of Europeans have changed thanks to the spread of physical and virtual connections across national borders at all levels of society, regardless of political events within the states and in the EU. Thanks to the technological change and the development of media and transport, which have become accessible to an increasing number of users, distances have shortened among Europeans, interactions between them have increased and have become a widespread phenomenon and even something normal. All of this happened without the European population and the politics in the member states recognising the role played by the EU in making it possible, by co-financing infrastructure through structural funds and regulating, for example, air and telephone tariffs.

The key argument of the book is that transnational mobilities and practices, in their diverse manifestations, have entered the everyday lives of Europeans on a much larger scale than has been hitherto recognised. These contribute to erode the borders of nation-state societies and the process of European integration, in spite of its crisis. Social Europeanisation goes hand in hand with globalisation and leads to enhanced transnational relations among individuals.

One of the major merits of this book is to treat this key topic with strong empirical basis. In fact, the book presents us this reality made up of widespread physical, virtual (via internet-based interactive applications) and imaginative (via passively consumed media) cross-border practices using original data, collected and analysed with great methodological rigour.

Being an outcome of the EUCROSS project, which was funded by the European Commission as part of its 7th Framework Program of Research, the book is based on data sources collected through surveys combined with qualitative interviews conducted in six European countries: Italy, Spain, Denmark, UK, Germany, Romania. This allows the authors to take stock of existing literature on different forms of social transnationalism and to add new and in-depth empirical material that incorporates sources that are usually

used to study European social integration, such as the European Social Survey and Euro-barometer. EUCROSS provides exceptional data to evaluate the nature of cross-border cultural practices (i.e. music, food consumption) and their intersection with different kinds of mobility and social dynamics.

But the contribution of this work is not only found in its empirical dimension. As in some influential works that founded the sociology of Europe (Crouch 1999; Mendras 1997; Morin 1988), in this book we can grasp the need to develop a new conceptual structure, suitable for analysing a changing social context. Compared to these works which first deemed necessary to discuss the European population (highlighting its profound internal heterogeneity of norms, institutions, values and traditions), this book, however, adopts some analytical categories designed to overcome the methodological nationalism and to look at the European population beyond the nation states. The concepts of 'banal transnationalism' (Aksoy and Robins 2003) and 'social transnationalism' (Mau 2010), operationalized and implemented in the book, are thus used as analytical tools that allow us to trace a Europe, seen as a daily fact, beyond its internal borders.

The book therefore allows us to have a greater understanding of the geography of transnational ties of Europeans and of the different patterns of everyday social transnationalism underpinning regional societal integration. The book demonstrates a relevant degree of Europeanness intended as a sizeable proportion of Europeans who feel familiar with other European nations. Both extra-European connections, the legacy of imperial and diasporic links, and within-Europe connections are mapped, showing interesting networks with neighbouring nations related to dismantled internal borders and the creation of a European labour market. This has allowed significant numbers of people to gain familiarity with other nations because of personal or professional reasons. Interestingly, respondents of EUCROSS surveys in the six countries examined express a "moderately high" degree of individual solidarity towards EU member states other than their own, claiming that it is important for the EU to aim at achieving solidarity between the peoples of the EU.

At the same time, however, the book also confirms that transnational lives are not automatically associated with greater solidarity within Europe, a shared sense of belonging and support to the EU project. The results of the analysis contained in the book in fact confirm two well-known arguments already widely discussed in the literature on the process of social integration in Europe, but they also add original empirical material that allows us to go beyond these debates and focus attention on how transnational background, experience and practices are modifying and permeating European societies.

The first argument corroborated in the book relates to the social stratification that is reproduced in transnational social practices (see among others Andreotti et al. 2015;

Bauman 1998; Fligstein 2008). As many studies have shown, the most privileged classes of society, and among these, the most educated, are those who lead the most international lifestyles. What is termed a global elite, made up of those who have studied and lived in different countries, have friends, family and partners of different nationalities and have built international careers, is usually placed in opposition to 'common Europeans'. This book confirms that country- and individual-level factors structure cross-border practices. Residents of richer and more globalised societies enjoy a greater facility to visiting friends and family in foreign countries, buying products and services abroad, or forming online personal communities that span beyond their localities. At the micro-level, mobilities are markedly correlated with socioeconomic status, confirming also that the better-off and especially the highly educated turn to cross-border practices significantly more. At the same time, the book highlights how the 'middling' experiences of transnationalism have also become a commonplace possibility of everyday life for ordinary citizens across the continent.

The second known argument relates to what has been conceived as the failure to develop a European identity, traditionally and erroneously understood as a sense of belonging designed on the model of the national one and capable of replacing it, so as to guarantee a strong legitimacy for the political integration project. Again, a large number of studies have shown that different forms of sense of belonging at various territorial levels - local, national and supranational - coexist simultaneously, do not develop at the expense of the other and are not automatically related to the political support (Bruter 2005; Scalise 2015, 2017). On this, the book shows that identification with Europe is not just a variant of a general cosmopolitan attitude, but at the same time European identification is not automatically driven by practices of social transnationalism.

Rather than dwelling on these issues, which are nevertheless touched upon in various parts of the volume and discussed in its epilogue, the book allows us to go further and helps to make sense of the complex geopolitics of transnationalism in the context of nationalist rebirth, in a way which goes beyond simple oppositions of nation-oriented and cosmopolitan-oriented populations.

The general picture that emerges from the different chapters is a variety of social transnationalisms which has stimulating points of contact with the literature on the variety of capitalisms (VoC) (Hall and Soskice 2001; Amable 2003) and with which it would be very interesting to confront it.

In fact, the six countries analysed in the book, which were selected to represent different levels of globalisation, the cleavage between southern and northern Europe and both EU founder states and countries that subsequently joined, also represent different models of European capitalism: Mediterranean (Italy and Spain), Nordic (Denmark), Continental (Germany), Anglo-Saxon (UK) and Central-eastern (Romania).

In analysing these countries, the book reveals a geography that varies across countries and enduring and significant historically rooted differences between them that refer to the divergent paths among capitalist societies, path dependency and historical legacies typically emphasised in VoC literature. The results of the book speak of long-term national specificities in terms of societal values, social participation and civil life which integrate well with the results shown by the various contributions on the different types of socio-economic development and regulation of European capitalisms.

For example, the results described in the volume on the different physical and virtual connections found in the various countries and on the different types of familiarity that Europeans demonstrate with other countries, are an even more interesting element, if read by intertwining it with the analysis of the different institutional and regulatory structures of European capitalisms. This means trying to grasp the relationship between social behaviours, practices and values on the one hand, and the socio-economic development model on the other, by looking at the functioning of various institutional arenas such as the labour market, welfare, education etc.

Ettore Recchi seems to go in this direction in the epilogue of the book when he investigates if a merger of European societies is at all possible and when he analyses the convergence of social structures. Here Recchi shows that the divergence in prosperities and income across EU member states persists and income gap has increased during the crisis in Europe. Recchi refers to the various European welfare systems. It would be interesting to develop this line of research, by further exploring not only the link between social transnationalism and the different functioning of national welfare states, but also the relationship between transnational practices and the different labour market, innovation, and education policies and economic development strategies of the European countries, and how these influence and are influenced by the different patterns of social transnationalism.

The literature on VoC, in fact, shows us that there are different governance models of these institutional arenas and a different ability to produce economic growth and social cohesion between European societies (Streeck 2009; Crouch 2015; Burroni and Scalise 2017). The so called coordinated market economies, which group together Continental and Nordic countries, are characterised by high levels of social cohesion and economic competitiveness, while Mediterranean countries are characterised by low growth and high levels of social exclusion; in the Anglo-Saxon model, and some Central and Eastern European countries (such as the Baltics) economic growth is combined with high levels of social exclusion (Amable 2003; Bohle and Greskovitz 2012; Burroni 2016; Hancké et al. 2007; Sapir 2006).

To the different models of capitalism therefore correspond different types of socio-economic development, which depend on the institutional and regulatory framework of European countries. As is known, in the Nordic model and to a lesser extent in the continental model, active labour policies and investments in education and innovation have favoured high levels of education and employment rates. Labour market flexibility policies have been associated with forms of income support to face new social risks and to reduce inequalities, recalibrating welfare according to the logic of social investment (Hemerijck 2017).

A dynamic labour market - linked to the financial and tertiary sectors - also characterises the Anglo-Saxon and the Baltic models, where high employment rates are favoured by the flexibility of the labour market, even if active policies are underdeveloped and the disparity between jobs with low and high qualifications in terms of working conditions and wages is high, generating greater income inequality and worker vulnerability. The welfare state retrenchment process that began in the 1980s and the market regulation expose those who have economic difficulties and are unable to purchase services on the market (i.e. education) to social exclusion. Therefore, economic growth has gone hand in hand with the growth of inequalities.

Even in the Mediterranean capitalism, labour market flexibility has not been offset by social policies designed to protect vulnerable workers or effective active labour policies. In this case, moreover, low job creation capacity and low productivity inhibit the dynamism of the labour market, amplifying the impact of flexibility in terms of precariousness and discouragement. Family welfare, for which the family plays the role of social safety net, and the inefficiency of the administrative machinery, have contributed to creating a weak institutional system, which explains why the crisis has had such an impact on Mediterranean Europe.

What is the relationship between these different models of socio-economic development and different ways of regulating the labour market and the welfare, referred to here in broad terms, and the different forms of social transnationalism and mobility in Europe? How are these complex mobility dynamics influenced by the functioning and the degree of inclusiveness of the labour market, by the type of social protection guaranteed to workers and unemployed in the various countries, and by the education systems and the development models of the various countries? How much is transnational Europe influenced by the search for more opportunities and chances of better life? At the same time, how does mobility to other countries influence labour markets and socio-economic development in the countries of origin?

The theme of inequality and equity among European citizens, referred to in the book's conclusions, is decisive to explain the variety of social transnationalism and the paradox of everyday Europe: on the one hand the growth of social transnationalism, on the other

the crisis of the European integration project. The rebirth of nationalism and Europe's crisis are a symptom of the growing inequality that afflicts the continent. The growth of socio-economic inequalities among European citizens, within and among countries, does not only refer to income and wealth, but also to the disparities in resources linked to employment, education and skills, opportunities and life experiences and even health (Therborn 2013).

The literature shows that since the 80s, socio-economic inequalities have started to grow again in European countries as a consequence of recent changes in the economy and in society (Alvaredo et. Al 2018; Milanovic 2016). Inequalities have grown in the service economy, much more than in the manufacturing economy of the past and are linked to the growth of the financial sector and other sectors that generate 'high profits for the few' (Crouch 2015).

Inequality is particularly perceived with the spread of temporary employment and low-quality jobs, which generate disparities in living conditions and in the perception of personal insecurity, which, in turn, tend to create social conflicts between workers with different levels of guarantees and status. This has also led to a change in the profile of the most vulnerable social groups, with the replacement of the elderly with young people and families with children (OECD 2017).

Inequality is linked to the reduction of public resources destined for services such as education and health, policy arenas that have increasingly opened up to market regulation. The retrenchment of State's role and the weakening of its redistributive capacity have reduced the production of collective goods, aggravating the problem of inequality and at the same time reducing the prospects of social mobility.

Finally, there is a territorial dimension of inequality which is particularly significant in the debate on transnationalism. The gap between the cosmopolitan European capitals - where the main economic, financial and cultural activities are concentrated - and the peripheral areas, exacerbates the forms of exclusion of the latter from the dynamic cores of the economy and society (Le Galès 2002; Rodriguez-Pose 2017). This has contributed greatly to shaping the strong perception of people far from these global centres, who feel left behind and perceive themselves as losers in the face of globalisation. All this has triggered territorial conflicts within and among countries, particularly evident in the 2016 Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and confirmed in the various general elections that have taken place in several European countries in recent years (i.e. Italy, France, Germany, Austria).

Europeans perceive the increase in inequality during recent decades, in its multidimensional nature, and express a widespread sense of uncertainty about their future, which is hidden behind the noisy political debate on the defence of the nation and its

identity. Populist forces leverage this widespread uncertainty by renewing ethnic conflict and social polarisation. But until the theme of inequality becomes a topic of discussion that goes beyond national borders, and as long as solidarity is only intended in the national self-interest, as the data of this book confirm, despite the growth of social transnationalism in Europe, it is difficult to think that the fracture between politics and society in Europe could be healed.

The link between transnational social practices, support for the European project and the perception of insecurity in its multidimensionality, which also derives from a country's socio-economic development model, appears to be a particularly relevant stream for future research. Looking at the interaction between socio-cultural factors and the institutional and regulatory characteristics of European societies, and their mutual influence, is a stimulating research challenge for the future, because the different models of social transnationalism highlighted in this book, as well as the capitalism models, are not fixed and stable but in constant transformation.

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