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## HOW DOES POVERTY APPEARS IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES TODAY?

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the nature of poverty of European welfare regimes under its quantitative perspective, monetary threshold of poverty, but also under its qualitative perspective. This approach is particularly present in the entire text. It analyses, with the help of PHOGHE and the Eurobarometer, the construction of poverty from the social assistance institution; the difference between hereditary poverty and the emerging form of poverty caused by poor labour and personal life conditions; and the perception of poverty by those affected by it. After referring with detail to the learning curve of child poverty, the article ends with a typological construction of poverty based on a combined analysis of the labour market situation, of forms and intensity of social relations and of the role of social protection systems.

### KEY WORDS

Poverty, social assistance, poverty threshold, reproduction and perception of poverty, welfare regimes, culture, integration, alienation, child poverty.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The sociology of poverty is aim to simultaneously study poverty as an experience lived by the men and women who are at the lowest level of the social scale and poverty as an element which modern societies are aware of and often try to fight. (Paugam, 2005). Poverty is always a bothersome issue because it is an expression of inequality, if not unacceptable, at least very little tolerable in a globally rich and democratic society, which strives toward a true equality and not just the formal equality of the individual-citizen. Poor people are condemned to having a devalued status, since they represent the destiny that modern societies think they have left behind. Collective attitudes towards poverty vary: the moral distress of those who see in this population group the direct form of expression (Paresse) of lack of culture and irresponsibility, the guilty feeling of those who are especially sensitive to the injustice suffered by these people who are barely surviving, and who remain in a condition which is unbearable for any human (Paugam and Selz, 2005).

The sociology of poverty cannot be limited to a descriptive and qualitative approach to the poor. It must question the very notion of poverty. For sociologists, the binomial reasoning, which confronts the features of the poor to those of the rest of society, is wrong. The definition of the threshold of poverty however carefully done and precise, shall always be arbitrary. If we take the example in France, an index of 50% of the median income per unit of consumption, (600 euros a month) in 2001, 6% of the population was in a situation of poverty, that is, 3.6 million but if we take an index of 60% of the median income per unit of consumption (720 euros a month), they represented 12.4% of the population, that is, double, a total of 7.2 million people<sup>1</sup>. Therefore a little change in the official index for measuring poverty will radically change the percentage of people affected by it. This proves that there is a strong concentration of homes that are at the threshold of poverty and that, depending where we place the threshold, we may be establishing a radical difference between groups of people that in fact live in very similar conditions.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Le rapport de l'Observatoire national de la pauvreté et de l'exclusion sociale 2003-2004, Paris, La documentation Française, 2004, p.18 and on.

This is not to say that we must do away with the statistical indicators of poverty which may be useful to compare different regions and countries. But it is essential not to limit ourselves to that approach. Whereas the quantification of poverty is usually a prerequisite for any analysis, it may become, for a sociologist, an epistemological obstacle in the sense that it can lead to an omission and stands in the way of a questioning of poverty itself.

The key question a sociologist must ask him/herself is simple: what causes a poor person in a certain society to be poor and only poor? In other words; what are the basic criteria for a person to be considered poor in other people's view? What makes a person be defined principally by his/her poverty? Georg Simmel was the first to clearly address this question at the beginning of the 20 century, although some people had outlined some answers prior to him (Simmel, 1998). For Simmel, the public assistance a person from a certain collective receives defines his status as poor. Receiving assistance is the identity sign of being poor, the criterion which establishes their belonging to a specific stratum of the population. An inevitably devalued stratum, since it is defined by its dependency on the rest of society. Receiving assistance in this way means receiving everything from everybody else without being able to establish any type of reciprocal or complementary relationship, at least in the short term. The "poor" person, receiver of help aimed especially at him/her, must accept living, at least temporarily, with a negative image society projects of him/her and they end up interiorizing, this image is associated to the no longer useful and to be a part of those who are sometimes considered to be "undesirable".

In this way, each society defines and gives a socially different status to its poor by choosing to offer assistance. The subject of sociological study per excellence is not, therefore, poverty, nor the poor as such, as a social reality, but rather the relation of assistance – and therefore interdependence– between them and the society they belong to. This analytical perspective studies in a comparative way the mechanisms through which the poor are defined in different societies and searches for the social representations that are found at their origin and which legitimize them. In the same way this perspective also analyses the relation set up by those considered poor with the system of aid they are indebted to, and in a general sense, the experiences they are subjected to in these circumstances and others in their daily lives.

In research on poverty, there is an issue which is not answered, despite being studied frequently. It deals with the relation between two classic ways of poverty: the poverty which is handed down from generation to generation as if it were a fate the people who suffer it are doomed to, and the poverty which suddenly affects people who seemed to be well out of the reach of it. The first affects people as if a curse and is passed on in their attitude with the conviction that there is nothing they can do, given that there is no solution they themselves can provide nor can anything be done by the group they belong to. The second, in contrast, affects individuals who never before have experienced poverty and are therefore now helpless, faced with the material hardships and the inevitable humiliation they will suffer from finding themselves in this new situation. In other words, there is a permanent opposition in social debate between "traditional poverty" or "structural" and "new poverty". Which of these two approaches best corresponds to reality?

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If we accept that in each country there is a proportion of people who remain poor generation after generation and others who are poor in temporary way, poverty is identified, primarily, in economically poorer countries with a stable and reproducible situation, and therefore a social fate, (Paugam, 2005). If we consider Europe, this would be the case in the southern countries.

To prove this, we must compare the situation in France with those around it. The analysis can be simultaneously based on European data which allow us to determine the social representations of poverty and data that allow for the evaluation of intensity of poverty throughout time.

## 2. CHANGING REPRESENTATIONS FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER

To check the hypothesis of the variations in the representations of poverty from one country to another, we can refer to a few questions in four specific Eurobarometers aimed at the perception of poverty issue: the first in 1976, the second in 1989, the third in 1993 and finally the fourth in 2001. One of them was aimed at people who had said they had seen people who were in an extreme poverty situation, poverty or at risk of poverty in their neighborhood or their village. Secondly, they were asked if, in their opinion, these people had always been in this current situation, which could be defined as "hereditary poverty"; or, if on the contrary, they had not been in a poverty situation (poverty after a "fall").

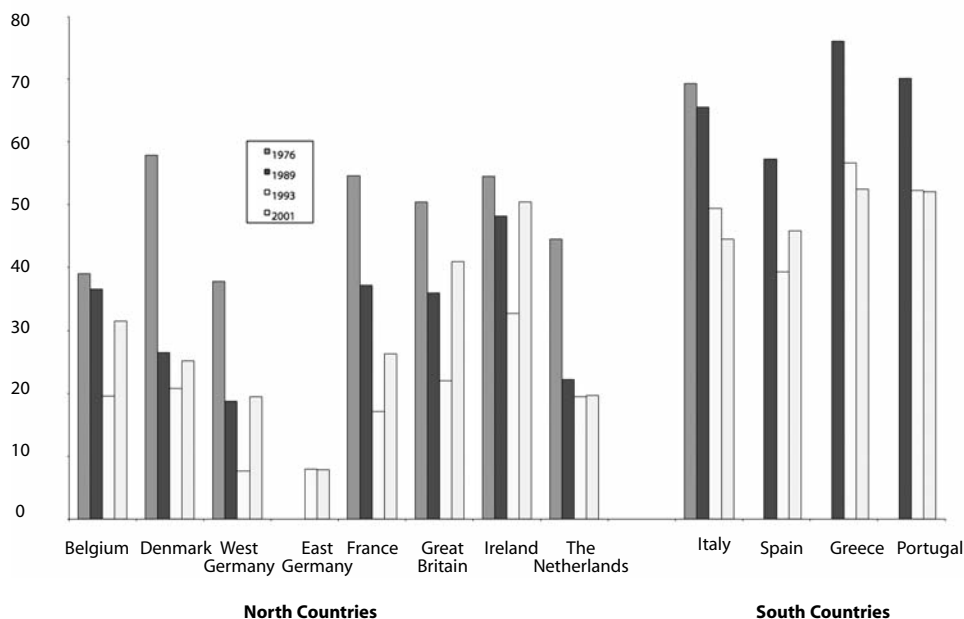
The amount of people who saw poor people or people at risk of poverty varies, as is to be expected, from one country to another: it is much higher in Portugal and Greece. It must be pointed out that it was especially high in 1976 (except Germany); it is globally lower in 1989, increases in 1993, to decrease, almost systematically in 2001, date on which only the Netherlands and Portugal break this tendency.

Graph 1 allows us to see that a very large proportion of the people asked in the Southern countries consider poverty as a permanent situation and reproducible (in 2001 the percentage is 53% in Greece and Portugal, and 46% in Italy and Spain).

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Graph 1

Amount of people who think they have seen poor people in their neighborhood/village who have always found themselves in this situation (hereditary poverty)



The number of people surveyed in this histogram varies from 60 to 500 according to the countries and the years.

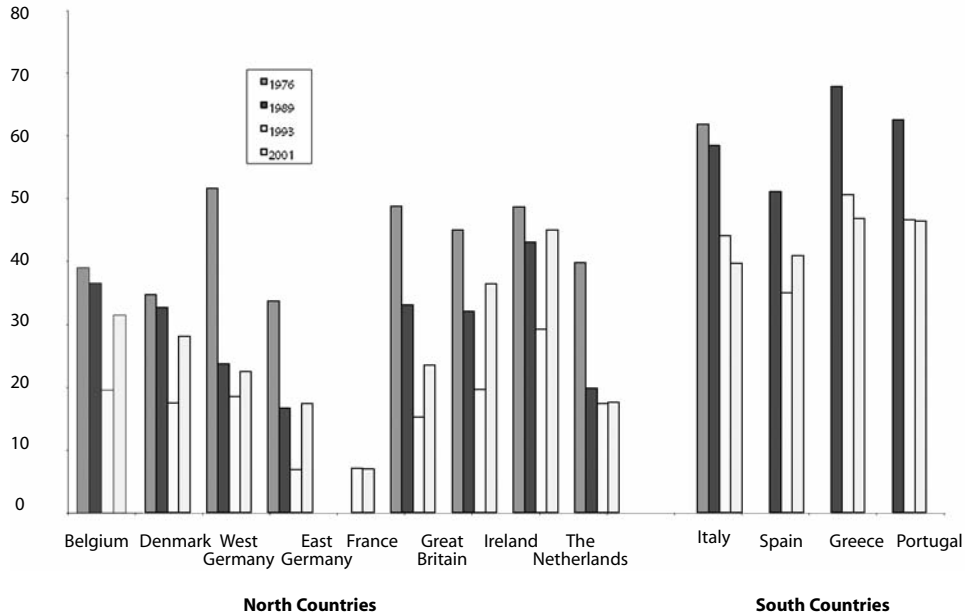
Source: Eurobarometer

It is surprising to observe how the perception of poverty as a phenomenon which reproduces itself also varies depending on the time of the survey. In all the countries this perception also decreases from 1976 to 1993, probably due to the degradation of employment effect, and in contrast, it considerably rose from 1993 to 2001. It is worth mentioning that although the differences among countries are less in 2001, the perception of poverty as something that is inherited is marginal in Germany, Denmark and Holland.

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Graph 2

Number of people who consider the poor people they have seen in their neighborhood/village have fallen in a situation of poverty (poverty appearing after a fall)



The number of people surveyed in this histogram varies from 60 to 500 according to the countries and the years.

Source: Eurobarometer – Lasmus – IdL-

The perception of poverty as a “fall” (graph 2) is, contrary to the previous case, less extended in the Southern countries (28% in Portugal and between 32% and 25% in Spain, Italy and Greece) whereas it is much more in the Northern countries, particularly in Germany (notably in the East with an 86%), in the Netherlands (65%) and in Denmark (53%). It is well known that poverty is perceived in a different way, according to economic development and level of social protection in the country. It is also worth pointing out that the collective data cut down, at least partially, the national contrasts observed from the statistical figures of poverty.

As is the case with hereditary poverty, the number of people who think poverty is a consequence of a fall, also varies in relation to the period of the survey. In 1976, this perception was at its lowest. The dominant representations were heavily influenced by thirty years of uninterrupted growth experienced in European societies after the Second World War. It can also be seen that, in fact, this feature of poverty sharply rose between 1976 and 1993, time during which it reached its peak, except in East Germany, to experience a drop between 1993 and 2001. Therefore, it seems that under the effect of the degradation of the labor market, the population of every country is more

sensitive to the rise of the people in a poverty situation and to the social decline which is associated to this experience and that many people go through. When the circumstances improve, this perception weakens.

### 3. MEASURING OF THE INTENSITY OF POVERTY THROUGHOUT TIME

To measure the intensity of poverty throughout time it is not enough to base ourselves on the collective opinions. It is necessary to confirm this with objective data which allow for precise confirmation of whether these people are facing poverty at a particular time in their life, during a short period of time or, on the contrary, during a long period. Since sociologists and economists resort to longitudinal surveys, that is, surveys repeated throughout time on the basis of the same sample, they are capable of researching the persistence of poverty throughout time. Some of the studies have focused their attention on the fact that poverty in modern societies is above all a transitional phenomenon, or in other words, that poverty affects individuals and homes in a very punctual and temporary way, in such a way that only a small minority is affected in a permanent way.<sup>2</sup> In any case, we must consider national variances and highlight that poverty is a persistent phenomenon in the countries of Southern Europe.

The data obtained from the European Panel of homes have allowed us to establish in the period between 1994 to 1998, that is, five consecutive years, three categories: people who had never before known poverty, people who had experienced poverty at least once (transitional poverty) and people who had experienced poverty for more than one year (recurring poverty). Table 1 allows to establish the difference between four Groups of countries which are approaching different types of *welfare capitalism* (Esping Andersen, 1999).

There is a strong statistical link between the intensity of poverty according to the persistence in time and the ranking of these countries. In the first group of countries, the rate of people in a situation of recurring poverty is the lowest (9.5% in Denmark and 12.5% in The Netherlands). In the second, this percentage increases, it is an average of 18.3% and goes from 15.5% in Germany and 22.7% in Belgium. In the third group, this rate increases even more and is an average of 25.2%. Finally, the last, reaches a 26.1% average reaching a maximum 27.6% in Greece and Portugal. Therefore, we can observe that, overall, poverty persists more in time in countries that have less developed rural areas and where the social protection system is very limited.

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<sup>2</sup> For a few years, researchers who study poverty place a greater importance Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

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Table 1: Intensity of monetary poverty according to persistence in time  
 Period: 1994 to 1998 In %

	Never have been	Transitional Poverty	Recurring Poverty	Total Poor
<b>FIRST GROUP</b>	77,7	10,6	10,7	100
<b>Denmark</b>	77,4	13,2	9,5	100
<b>The Netherlands</b>	77,9	9,6	12,5	100
<b>SECOND GROUP</b>	70,7	11,0	18,3	100
<b>Germany</b>	73,4	11,1	15,5	100
<b>France</b>	68,4	10,4	21,2	100
<b>Belgium</b>	63,9	13,4	22,7	100
<b>THIRD GROUP</b>	61,7	13,2	25,2	100
<b>United Kingdom</b>	61,4	13,4	25,2	100
<b>Ireland</b>	63,8	10,7	25,5	100
<b>FOURTH GROUP</b>	60,8	13,1	26,1	100
<b>Italy</b>	62,1	12,6	25,5	100
<b>Spain</b>	60,0	13,5	26,5	100
<b>Greece</b>	58,5	13,9	27,6	100
<b>Portugal</b>	58,8	13,7	27,6	100
<b>EUROPA</b>	66,2	12,0	21,8	100

Source: European Homes Panel, 1994-1998

Note: The threshold of poverty reference in this table is fixed at 60% of the average income for each country. The equivalence scale used is the OECD modified (1 for the first adult, 0.5 for the rest of adults, 0.3 for under 14).

\*People who have been poor only once between 1994 and 1998

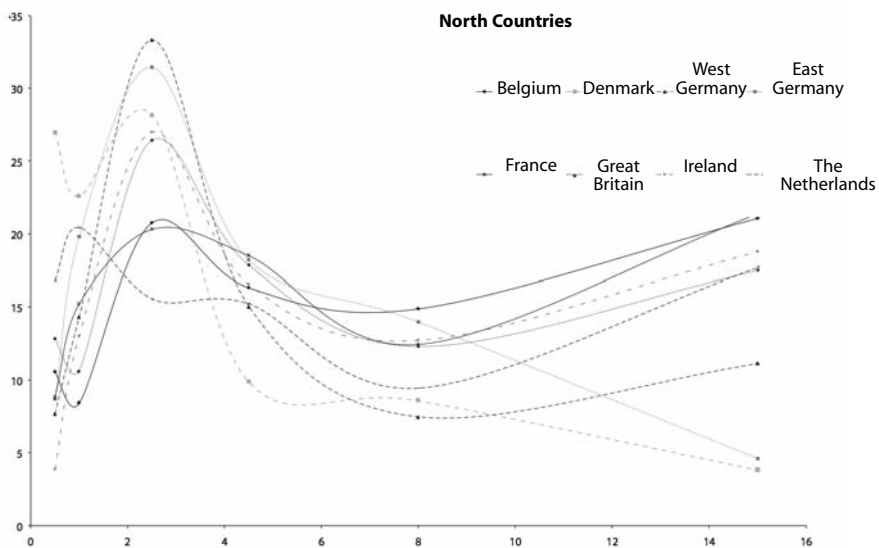
\*\*People who have been poor more than once between 1994 and 1998.



To study the intensity of poverty throughout time, it is also possible to base ourselves in the financial difficulties people experience. In the 56.1, 2001, Eurobarometer on poverty and social exclusion, one of the questions was: "How do you manage with the monthly income of your household?" Those asked had to choose among four answers: "with a lot of difficulty"; "with difficulty"; "easily" and "very easily" and later they were asked to say since when they found themselves in that financial situation. In this way, it was possible to know the persistence of the financial difficulties of those who had chosen any of the first two answers. Graph 3 allows for the analysis of the differences according to countries and especially those between north and south.

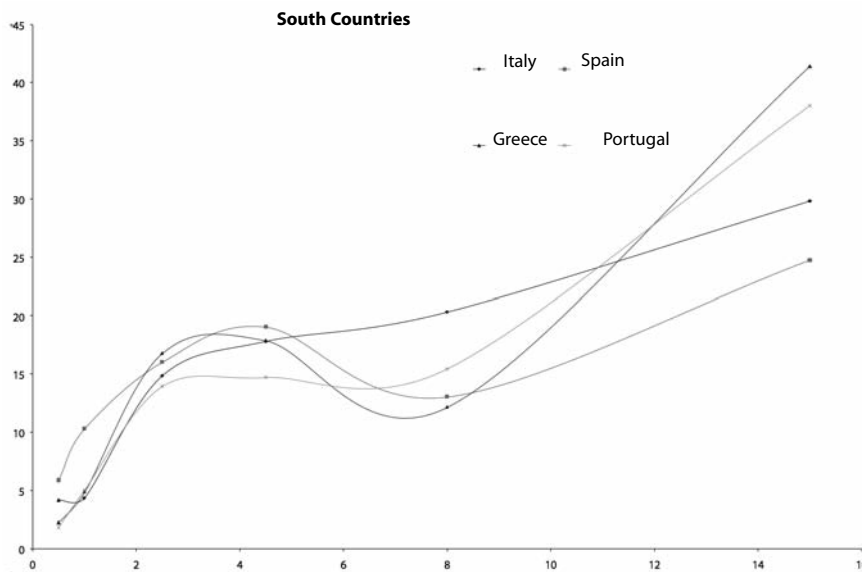
Graph 3

Persistence of financial difficulties according to countries



Source: Eurobarometer 2001

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Source: Eurobarometer 2001

In the former countries, the majority of people who had faced financial difficulties underwent this experience for two to three years, whereas in the latter, the persistence of the difficulties was, on the whole, much longer, since we can see that in each country the majority of the population had financial difficulties for 14 to 15 years. Consequently, we conclude that poverty is a circumstantial phenomenon in northern countries and a structural one in southern ones.

Thus, studies into the intensity of poverty throughout time carried out from longitudinal data or from the question of the persistence of financial difficulties lead us to similar results. The phenomenon appears to be more recurrent and stable in Southern European countries. Or, as has been already seen, it is precisely in these countries where poverty is frequently seen as a hereditary factor. Collective representations are in accordance to the reality observed.

Given that poverty is a more permanent situation in the Southern European countries, it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that it is also in these countries where it is more recurring from generation to generation. Surely, if minors socialize in a poor environment, the chances that, as adults, they will face the same comparable difficulties as their parents is higher. When the explicative variables of poverty are explained, we cannot ignore the analysis of the home environment at origin. In the 60's, the anthropologist Oscar Lewis, from the study of very poor families (in Mexico as well as New York and San Juan) that the culture of poverty tends to be perpetuated from generation to generation due to the effect it has on children. According to him, "when children who live in subhousing standards are six or seven, they have already assimilated the fundamental values and habits of their subculture and are therefore not psychologically equipped to fully take advantage of the evolution and progress which could take place in their lives." (Lewis, 1969; 802). Oscar Lewis highlighted that on an individual basis, the features of what he called the culture of poverty were

a strong feeling of feeling cast out, helpless, dependent and inferior. He also emphasized that, "the absence of effective participation and integration of the poor in the most important institutions in society is one of the crucial features of the culture of poverty. It is a complex problem and it depends on an endless number of factors among which we must point out the absence of financial resources, segregation and discrimination, fear, distrust or apathy and the development of local solutions to the problem" (Lewis, 1969; 803).

The data on European surveys at hand are not comparable to those obtained by this anthropologist over years on the field. They are, however, more statistically representative and allow for large scale comparison. In the Eurobarometer 56.1 of 2001 on poverty and social exclusion, there was a question regarding the person's infancy, in particular about the financial difficulties of their parents at the time in which they were in charge of the upkeep and education.

Statistical analysis has allowed us to study the effect of these financial difficulties in childhood on the financial difficulties as adults. As was to be expected, there is a strong correlation between these two variables: the probability of experiencing financial difficulties as an adult is higher when as a child one has lived in an economically unfavorable environment.<sup>3</sup> However, the intensity of the correlation varies from one country to another, even when taking into account the effect of, not only gender and age but also the effect of the household income. In the Southern countries, the logistic regression coefficients are always higher and statistically significant, which implies that the reproduction of financial difficulties experienced in youth is especially strong. In Northern countries the coefficients are weaker, as a whole, and not always significant. Such is the case in countries like, East Germany, United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Finland in which, whatever the model, the coefficient is not significant. In other words, the tendency to reproduce financial difficulties from youth is noticeably lower in the Northern countries than in the Southern ones.

This is explained, first, by the inequality of incomes, noticeably more important in Southern European countries. The ratio between the amount of income earned by 20 % of the population perceiving the highest income (higher fifth) and the total income perceived by 20% of the population perceiving the lowest income (lower fifth) is a 6.5 in Portugal, 5.7 in Portugal, 5.5 in Spain, whereas it is 3 in Denmark, 3.4 in Sweden and 3.6 in Germany.<sup>4</sup> When the inequality in incomes is high, they stop a part of the population from having access to a better future, and along these lines reinforce the risk of generational poverty. This phenomenon can also be influenced by economic development and employment prospects. Countries which experienced a large economic and social development, as was the case in the "glorious 30's", the opportunity for social promotion was greater than in the less developed countries of southern Europe which were countries with emigration. Poverty has always been related and still is, to a social destiny in those countries or regions

<sup>3</sup> This issue has been object of recent analysis. Cf. Mary Corcoran, "Mobility, Persistence and the Consequences of poverty for Children: Child and Adult Outcomes" in Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman (eds), *Understanding Poverty*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation/Harvard University Press, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Eurostat

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which are economically poorer and where unemployment or infra-employment are high and social protection is not very developed.

Finally, we must include within this phenomenon the explanation Richard Hoggart advanced regarding the culture in the popular milieu in England. "When a person feels they have few opportunities to improve their life conditions and this feeling is not accompanied by loss of hope or resentment, these people, in spite of this, tend to adopt attitudes which allow a life of this type to be "bearable"; avoiding a too vivid awareness of forbidden options; they tend to perceive social tensions as laws of nature; these facts become essential and universal in life"; (Hoggart, 1970: 137). In the rural regions of Southern Europe, the probability of experiencing the chronic poverty experience is so high, that the population facing it is also more used to doing so than in other places. Poverty, therefore, represents a permanent and reproducible situation.

#### 4. A TYPOLOGY OF THE BASIC FORMS OF POVERTY

Three different factors explain the variations of social representations and life experiences in poverty: the degree of economic development and of the labor market, the shape and intensity of social bonds and the nature of the social protection and social action programs.

The degree of development plays a key role. As Tocqueville pointed out in 1835, being poor in very poor country as was Portugal at that time, doesn't have the same effect, for those experiencing poverty, as being poor in a more prosperous country, as was Great Britain after its industrial revolution.<sup>5</sup> Still today that difference must be kept in mind in the European Union, given the persistent inequality in the production rates and development rates among the different countries and also among the different regions.

The representations and experiences of poverty are in the same way, linked to the shape and intensity of the social bonds. Poverty surveys conducted in France have led to the pointing out of a weakening, that is the break, of social bonds. Ever since the first comparative studies, carried out in collaboration with various European researchers, it was observed that this phenomenon was difficult to verify in every country. Therefore, we cannot state that poor people are more isolated in comparison to any other population category in the country they live in. In some cases, it is the opposite; a collective resistance to poverty can be carried out through intense exchanges in the heart of the family and among families, as well as many solidarity actions of proximity, to the point where one may consider that poor people are perfectly integrated into the social web. The sense of poverty in a specific society cannot be understood without a reference to these social bonds.

Finally, poverty experiences may vary in the same way from one country to another on the basis of the social protection system and the models for social action and assistance. The type of

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<sup>5</sup>Tocqueville, *Mémoire sur le pauperisme*, 1835. The magazine *Commentaire* published this text in 1983 in two parts, in their issue 23 (pgs. 630-636) and 24 (pgs. 880-888) and it has also been recently included in a small volume of Allia editions

Welfare State provider has, for example, an effect on the definition of the type of poor people it will take charge of and who it will offer assistance to. In each Welfare State country, one can see how certain groups of socially protected population are changing, in a variable way and depending on the environment and time, in categories of assisted people. The progressive generalization of the system throughout the "glorious thirties" has contributed to the reduction of traditional sphere of assistance, but has not been able to completely eliminate it. The amount of poor people who require assistance is, therefore, largely linked to the capacity of the provider State to retain in the general status of social protection those groups of population which are more vulnerable.

That is, the most relevant explicative factors in this research are, first, of an economic nature (development and labor market), secondly, of a social nature (shape and intensity of social bonds) and lastly of a political nature (social action and protection systems). These three factors have been differentiated for this analysis, however, in real life, they are frequently interrelated.

This analytical frame inspired on Simmel and enriched by these three explicative factors, leads to a basic typology of forms of poverty: *integrated poverty*, *marginal poverty* and *disqualifying poverty*. Each one of them refers, in turn, to a specific social make up.

*Integrated poverty* implies a make up in which the people who define themselves as "poor" are many. They barely differ from other layers of population. Their circumstances are habitual and have as a reference the general problem of a region or specific area which has always been poor. Since the "poor" comprise a large social group, they are not heavily stigmatized. It is reasonable to think that this type of social relation towards poverty has a higher probability of taking place in traditional societies than in modern ones. It ideally shows the situation in preindustrial countries which suffer an economic disadvantage with regards to countries in which economic and social progress has allowed for the guaranteeing of the well-being and social protection for the majority.

Poverty in Southern Europe is close to this type of poverty. These are not, strictly speaking, preindustrial countries – Northern Italy, for example is one of the most prosperous regions in Europe – but there are in each one of them regions that are economically very poor. Poverty is more durable and reproducible from generation to generation in these countries than in those of Northern Europe. Secondly, and this is a key factor, poverty in terms of income does not necessarily imply social exclusion, in particular due to the sense of family solidarity among the more unfavored, a pattern of behavior more common in countries in Southern Europe rather than in Northern Europe, influenced by the ways of socializing, especially in the extended and collective practice of religion. In the same way, the absence of employment can be compensated by an insertion in the networks of the informal economy, and the "clientele" system of social action. Along these lines, if poor people are affected by unemployment, this does not necessarily confer them an unfavored status.

It is possible to observe in this type of poverty the survival of older times in which social protection was assured by relatives in a basically farming economy. Henri Mendras insisted on the social relations these societies create in order to describe them: "Each person is linked to the ano-

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ther through a bilateral relation of global knowledge and is aware of the fact that they are, in turn, known in the same way and the set of relationships forms a group or a collective of inter-knowledge. (Mendras,1976;76). Maurice Halbwachs, also acknowledged that the way of life in rural civilizations made up, especially before the urbanization and industrialization phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a balance and stability for the relationships between individuals: one lived *in situ*, adapted to one another, knowing each other too well to be frequently exposed to the shocks that take place when one goes from a place, a situation, a profession or from one world to another. Trade, more restricted and easier, carried fewer risks. Ambitions were smaller, humiliations less common. They thought and felt in common. The sorrows and problems instead of being concentrated on the verge of individual awareness, were dispersed and dealt with as a group." (Halbwachs, 2002; 378). From this point of view, it is obvious that Mediterranean societies still retain nowadays some features of rural societies. The salaried society, in the sense of a modern society, is undoubtedly less orderly and this type of development allows for the coexistence of productive and exchange systems, if not concurrent, at least contrasting. This heterogeneity can account for, at least in part, the reason why there is a persistence of *integral poverty*, as a basic form of poverty. We would be tempted to state that these organized systems of resistance to poverty would disappear if economic development became more intense in those regions. However, it is convenient to point out that they have remained despite the existence of industrial development programs. The work done by the Welfare State and of different aid to certain types of population groups has not been enough to do away with the solidarity of proximity. It is therefore necessary to analyze the economic and social system which functions as a "whole" and from which we can foresee the strong momentum which in the future may be present in any reform project.

*Marginal poverty* is manifested in a different social make up in which those who are defined as "poor" are not part of a wide social set with very little differentiated from the rest of the social groups, quite the contrary, they are a small number of the population. These "poor people" are regarded as unadapted to the modern world and commonly described as "social cases", which inevitably fosters their stigmatization. It is a residual group, but it focuses a lot of attention from the institutions which deal in social actions. This social relation with poverty has a higher probability of appearing in advanced industrial societies and, those in growth, and in particular, those which are able to limit the importance of unemployment and guarantee a high level of social protection.

Is this form of basic poverty a thing of the past? The social make up of the "glorious 30's" in Europe, also in America, is undoubtedly very close to it. The transformation of poverty from a problem for the majority to a minority problem was, without a doubt, the challenge of modern societies which, after World War II were able to build a wide program of social protection and take advantage of the economic growth to allow for full employment. The exceptional nature of this period allows for the understanding of this enthusiasm for both economic and social progress and the shared belief that poverty had practically disappeared, at least from the shift in the importance of social transfers in favor of a larger segment of population and a perceptible decrease in the need for social assistance. If, however, in this period of time the poor did not disappear and in fact continued to reproduce their poverty from generation to generation as a few sociologists have shown,

they became less visible. They came to make up that "margin" whose importance was convenient to minimize since they seemed to belong to the "residue" of progress. The social bet was going in another direction. Ascribed to "collectives", those with salaries improve their salaries and work conditions. The issue of poverty was overshadowed by the generic issue of inequalities.

This basic form of poverty does not, in spite of this, belong to the past. The analysis of the most recent period, characterized by the increase of unemployment and the temporary nature of it, has lead to confirm that "*marginal poverty*" has not disappeared in all European countries. This social relationship with poverty is not only explained by the strong growth in western economies after World War II. In fact, in the case of Switzerland, but also in Germany and Scandinavian countries, social representations of poverty are relatively stable. This countries have been affected like the rest although - in a less dramatic way - by the degradation of the work market, although poverty has imposed itself strongly as a new social reality. Quite the contrary, in conformance with the shared prosperity and welfare schemes, idealized, no doubt, this event has taken some time to be the object of scientific research and the few scientists committed with this type of research have not managed to stir debates at a national level in these countries. At the public administration and political levels, a resistance to the recognition of the existence of these poor classes has been shown. No doubt in the fear of being accused of not having taken the necessary measures in the regions they are responsible for, politicians have tried to minimize the scope of the social issues. This has occurred, above all, in the political systems organized in a federal way, which confer an important action and decision power to local institutions.

In social representations, *marginal poverty*, corresponds with a minimized poverty, sometimes one that is denied, so that this poverty may also go along with a strong stigmatization of a marginal part of the population, which the State takes care of through assistance. This tendency was confirmed in the 60's and 70's in France and at present in other countries. We can, in fact, find similarities between the period in French history in which social issues related to poverty practically disappeared in favor of a justified discourse over "psychologicalizing" intervention towards individuals judged to be unadapted and the current situation in Germany and Scandinavian countries in which social intervention is always aimed at individuals who are marginal in society on the basis of the logic of the individual response, instead of collective, to the person's needs and in the sense of a strict control of their private life. This approach in social intervention is so easily imposed that it is limited to a residual percentage of the population, knowing that the rest of society can benefit from the advantages of a universal social protection and from the guarantee of never actually living the poverty experience.

Finally, *disqualifying poverty* carries along with it a social make up in which those that are termed "poor" are more and more numerous and repressed by the majority of the productive sector. Both their hardships as well as their dependence on social service actions run the risk of increasing. This basic form of poverty is notably different to *marginal poverty* and *integral poverty*. This form of poverty does not lead to a state of stable misery but rather a process that can cover different population layers which have been perfectly integrated in the workforce up to now. This process

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affects people faced with increasingly greater precarious conditions in income as well as in living conditions and health or in their participation in social life. This phenomenon does not only affect precarious social layers. It affects society as a whole because the insecurity created generates collective anguish. *Disqualifying poverty* has a greater probability of developing in "postindustrial" societies, especially those faced with a strong rise in unemployment and a precarious condition of the labor market.

European surveys have allowed for, as previously mentioned, the observance that the social representation of poverty as a fall is widespread. The predominant image of "poor person" is therefore one of a victim of a social decadence as a consequence of one or more serious ruptures. After the period of the "glorious 30's" in which the lower classes thought they could escape that "poor" destiny which had been the one for previous generations, mass and long-lasting unemployment made the salaried society wonder at the end of the 70's. The sense of social insecurity become solidly fixed in the collective consciousness to such a point that more than half of the French was in fear of being affected by this exclusion. This unease was reinforced by the appearance at the same time of new types of spatial disqualification. In some cases we must even question the use, with the media in mind, of the image and concept of ghetto, imported from the United States, without having previously adapted it to the French and European reality, in spite of the obvious differences. This is how public administrations have been identifying a large number of urban areas "sensitive" in agglomerations. These areas concentrate population affected by the employment crisis. These are progressively emptied of their middle classes and become quickly disqualified. Social relations are usually tense and the depression signs usual. In this way, the crisis in the urban social network adds on to the labor market one and contributes to increase social and economic inequalities.

Data from European surveys confirm that poverty truly responds to a cumulative process of disadvantages. The risk that unemployment is accompanied by economic poverty and social isolation is not an invention. It is something very real. But the risk varies from one country to the next. It is scarce both in Denmark and the countries in southern Europe. On the contrary, it is higher European countries, those that have undergone large scale restructuring and considerable loss of employment.

The German case is paradoxical. If we were to listen to the prevailing discourse about poverty and to the practices of the social action organizations, we would be tempted to define this country as one where there is *marginal poverty*; however, surveys highlight a strong collective resistance to the official acceptance of poverty, to the individualization of the assistance and the stigmatizing of the poor. On the contrary, if we pay attention to the experiences and life of the poor, the risk of social disqualification cannot be omitted in this country, in which the amount of disadvantages a large part of the population suffers approximates it to France or Great Britain than to that in Scandinavian countries. This process has worsened since reunification. A large part of West Germans tend to complain about the taxes they must pay to cover the needs of east Germans. The situation



in Germany is, so to speak, in between *marginal poverty* and *disqualifying poverty*. We should perhaps interpret this situation as an expression of an evolution which follows its own course.

Finally, in those countries which are coming closer to *disqualifying poverty* we must emphasize the constant attempt to find new solutions in the areas of social protection and action. Because of this we are witnessing a growing number of social objectives and actors, which has, in turn, increased the number of people in a position to be assisted in one way or another by social action services. Insertion measures, along with social accompaniment have spread in all countries, but the results of these programs are still insufficient overall if through them we hoped to significantly reduce the unemployment and poverty problems. For all of these reasons, the social relation with poverty leads us to a process in evolution whose effects are yet to be studied in the entirety. This is a situation likely to be extended to other countries.

Once this typology has been empirically proven, we should firstly conclude that poverty is not universal. It takes on different forms according to the society, history and development. With equal income, being poor in Mezzogirone is not the same as being poor in the Paris regions. Being poor in the north of France in the 60's was not the same in any way than being poor today. The group of the poor population can obviously be defined from the basis of an objective measure that may seem unanimously acceptable and imposed upon the others as a universal reference model but, what do those measures mean if at the same time one does not ask themselves what are the social exteriorizations and the experiences lived by poverty? Taking diversity into account is an advance and this typology is a mechanism through which to achieve it. However, we must not reach the conclusion that the different forms of poverty in modern societies are infinite.

These forms of poverty are basic, first, because they have come from an "ideal-typical" reasoning basis, which does not limit itself to picking up the main features of a phenomenon but rather justifies its choice from a series of interrelated hypotheses, frequently taken from the historical knowledge of contemporary societies. These forms are basic because they also relate to precise social make up whose originating source has been proven through empirical surveys. Finally, if these forms are considered basic it is because each one of them represents a type of interdependent relationship stable enough to continue throughout time and become standard as a *sui generis* unit different to the individual elements that shape it. In other words, each basic form of poverty corresponds to a relatively crystallized state of equilibrium in the relationships between unequal individuals (the poor and the "not poor") within a social system that makes up a whole.

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