

The desire of the State: what about publicness? Italy

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After the recent financial crisis in many countries the desire of the State has grown. Yet this phenomenon is ambiguous. People ask for more public intervention but in the meantime the strategies of public expenditure rationalization and reduction get stronger in many national budgets. The request for (civil and social) security increases and the spaces of public debate seem to get smaller, just in the name of the (civil) security. Regarding Europe and the USA as well, some scholars point out the strengthening of the functions of order attributed to the State. As for the American case, the development of new forms of authoritarianism and totalitarianism is today being discussed as a main risk for the democratic system.

After discussing the state of the debate on these topics, the paper develops a hypothesis referring to Italy. The departure point is focused on the long term institutional and social characteristics of publicness in Italy. Between these characteristics, the main ones are the weaknesses of both stateness and civicness. The hypothesis is that, against a stronger wish of State owed to the crisis, the instruments and the spaces of “third parties” are further weakening: that is the instruments and the conditions that are essential for the public dimension.

This hypothesis is developed through an analysis carried out on two levels. The first level regards the national context and focuses on some fields of policy that are particularly important for the issue of the publicness; b) the second level is centred on Lombardy, an exemplary regional case regarding the processes of marketization. In the conclusions, some considerations on the relationship between marketization, authoritarianism and democracy will be developed.

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