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IDEOLOGIES AND SOCIAL REFORMS IN EUROPE

workingpaper

Centro Einaudi

N2 2012 ISSN 2036-1246

Laboratorio di Politica Comparata e Filosofia Pubblica

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Centro Einaudi • Laboratorio di Politica Comparata e Filosofia Pubblica
con il sostegno della Compagnia di San Paolo

Working Paper-LPF n. 2 • 2012

Maurizio Ferrera è professore di Scienza politica all'Università degli Studi di Milano. Inoltre dirige il Laboratorio di Politica Comparata e Filosofia Pubblica (LPF) del Centro Einaudi, è membro del consiglio di amministrazione del Collegio Carlo Alberto di Moncalieri (Torino) ed è editorialista del «Corriere della Sera».

e-mail: maurizio.ferrera@unimi.it

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L'idea alla base di questo approccio è che sia non solo desiderabile ma istituzionalmente possibile muovere verso forme di politica «civile», informate a quel «pluralismo ragionevole» che Rawls ha indicato come tratto caratterizzante del liberalismo politico. Identificare i contorni di questa nuova «politica civile» è particolarmente urgente e importante per il sistema politico italiano, che appare ancora scarsamente preparato ad affrontare le sfide emergenti in molti settori di policy, dalla riforma del welfare al governo dell'immigrazione, dai criteri di selezione nella scuola e nella pubblica amministrazione alla definizione di regole per le questioni eticamente sensibili.

LPF • Centro Einaudi
Via Ponza 4 • 10121 Torino
telefono +39 011 5591611 • fax +39 011 5591691
e-mail: segreteria@centroeinaudi.it
http://www.centroeinaudi.it

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Keywords

welfare, ideology, liberalism, neo-liberalism, parties, social reforms, neo-populism

ABSTRACT

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The main argument of the paper is that, in welfare state discourse, neo-liberalism has followed a parabola of expansion (1980-early 1990s), flattening (1990s) and then gradual decline (2000s), leaving room for the emergence of a new post-neoliberal ideological synthesis, aimed at bridging the (readapted) social-democratic and liberal-democratic traditions. Section 1 illustrates the neo-liberal parabola; section 2 presents the analytical framework; the subsequent four sections discuss the rise, impact, nature and future prospect of liberal neo-welfarism. The conclusion wraps up, highlighting the creative mix of normative components which underpins the new ideological synthesis.

FROM NEO-LIBERALISM TO LIBERAL NEO-WELFARISM?
IDEOLOGIES AND SOCIAL REFORMS IN EUROPE

INTRODUCTION

What has been the influence of the neo-liberal ideology on welfare state transformations since the 1980s? How resilient is such ideology and its influence today, i.e. in the early 2010s? The answer to these questions critically hinges on the meaning attributed to the term "neo-liberalism" and, more precisely, to both the noun (liberal) and the prefix (neo). Unfortunately, the English language conflates in the noun three connotations that Italian (and Italy's political theory tradition) keeps separate by using different nouns. The Italian language distinguishes in fact between *liberalesimo*, *liberalismo* and *liberismo*. The first has the widest connotation: it refers to the entire, complex and diverse thought tradition which started with the philosophical contractualism of John Locke and with the doctrines about the constitutional protection of individual freedoms.[1] *Liberalesimo* embraces thus the whole range of offsprings that germinated from the Lockean core: its outer perimeter ends where authoritarianism and collectivism begin and the ideas of negative freedom, its constitutional protection and its lexicographic primacy are rejected.

The second term—*liberalismo*—connotes the combination of the general foundations of *liberalesimo* with specific emphases on additional components: economic (e.g. private property and free markets), political (e.g. universal suffrage and parliamentary democracy), cultural (e.g. neutrality in respect of substantive axiologies), institutional (e.g. strict State-Church separation) and social (e.g. welfare rights and collective responsibilities) components. There is only one *liberalesimo*, but there are several distinct *liberalismi*, in the plural (Sartori 1978; Freeden 2008).

Finally, *liberismo* is essentially an economic doctrine (and not the only liberal one) which assigns primacy to the free market, free enterprise, efficiency and recognises to the state a minimal economic role, essentially that of upholding undistorted competition. Closely linked with marginalist economics, *liberismo*'s starting theoretical and ideological point is the "sovereign" rational individual,

[1] *Liberalesimo* is unfortunately becoming an obsolete word outside Italian academia and, increasingly, also within it, replaced with *liberalismo* tout court. It was coined and used during the first half of the XX century in the context of the debate around Benedetto Croce's idealistic liberalism. The term gave the title to one of the most exhaustive histories of philosophical and political liberalism in Europe, i.e. Guido De Ruggiero's *Storia del liberalesimo europeo* (De Ruggiero 1977).

seen as *homo economicus*, pursuing self-interested preferences—a pursuit that must remain free, as much as possible, from state interference.[2]

Using different terms for different meanings has at least three advantages: it enhances *ex definitione* the clarity of discussion and argument, it avoids misleading analytical overlaps and contains the risk of evaluative contagion (especially of negative evaluations: e.g. from *liberismo* to *liberalismo*, or one type of *liberalismo* to another). Much of the confusion, controversy and normative overtones of the neo-liberalism debate in the Anglo-Saxon context is linked, I submit, to the highly ambiguous, internally "conflated" connotation of the noun. In Italian, the neo-liberal turn of the 1970s/1980s is normally called *la svolta neo-liberista*.[3] The debate is thus encouraged, *naturaliter,* to focus on the essentially economic doctrine which re-formulated, radicalized and re-launched (hence the prefix neo) the classical tenets of *liberismo*.

In this paper, I will connote neo-liberalism in the Italian sense of *neo-liberismo*. I will argue that the neo-liberal creed did have a strong influence on welfare state transformation through the 1990s, but that thereafter a new ideological turn has gradually taken place, which I propose to call "liberal neo-welfarism" (LNW). This turn has drawn insights from different *liberalismi* (of a predominantly democratic and social orientation) as well as from the reformist and democratic socialist tradition, and it has creatively blended such insights into a novel blueprint for welfare state modernisation. LNW has taken roots in both the reformist left and centre spaces of the political spectrum, with incipient signs of a process of internal competitive differentiation.

The paper is organised as follows. I will first briefly review the developmental parabola of the neo-liberal ideology and its influence on the welfare state discourse. I will then present an analytic interlude on the concept of ideology and how to study its adaptation and change. The subsequent four sections will be devoted to discussing the rise, impact, nature and future prospect of liberal neo-welfarism. In the Conclusion, I will wrap up and relate my argument to the general hypotheses on "resilience".

[2] The notion of *liberismo* was coined by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce to connote those liberal doctrines that transform the free market from "a legitimate economic principle into en ethical theory based on hedonism and utilitarianism" (Croce 1928, 11). For Croce, freedom was essentially a spiritual category, necessitating civil and political rights, with private property and the free market as only ancillary (and theoretically dispensable) requisites. His polemical target was the liberalism of Luigi Einaudi, who thought instead that private property, free markets and undistorted competition were necessary conditions of the liberal order, alongside civil, political and social rights (Einaudi 2004). Einaudi was a prominent Italian economist and politician who became the second President of the Italian Republic (1948-1955).

[3] David Harvey's book titled *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* has been translated in Italian with *Breve storia del neoliberismo* (Harvey 2007). French has the same semantic problem as English. Bruno Jobert's influential book on the neo-liberal turn was titled *Le tournant néo-libéral en Europe* (Jobert 1994).

ATTACKING "WELFARE": THE NEO-LIBERAL PARABOLA

As highlighted by several authors, the neo-liberal creed has been an extremely salient stream in the discourse accompanying the transformation of the European welfare state during the last three decades (Mudge 2008; Harvey 2005; Roy, Denzau and Willet 2006). The flow of this stream (and thus its visibility and impact) has not been, however, constant through time. It has rather followed a large parabola, with an ascending phase in the 1980s, a flattening phase around the mid-1990s and a descending phase thereafter. Especially in the latter phase, the welfare state discourse has witnessed the strengthening (we could say the "striking back") of other ideological traditions, which have gradually gained traction within the reform wave that has been reshaping the profile of European welfare.

The neo-liberal parabola is clearly recognisable at both the national and supranational level (Gowan 1999). Its ideological core consolidated through the 1970s, and was centred on the faith in the self-regulating capacity of free markets and their superiority vis-à-vis any other allocative and distributive mechanism in upholding the individual's rational pursuit of wealth. The early national debates on the "crisis" were largely inspired by an economistic critique of the Keynesian welfare state (Steger and Roy 2010) which was accused of two main "excesses". First, too much egalitarianism and taxation and thus less efficiency and entrepreneurship, less risk-taking and innovation as well as distorted incentives. Second, too much bureaucratization and social control (cf. the metaphor of the "nanny state") and thus less freedom and choice, less dynamism, increasing predation by special interest groups, a culture of passive dependence and weakened personal responsibility on the side of beneficiaries and the citizenry more generally (Taylor 2007). Combined with moral conservatism (an emphasis on traditional family values, law and order as well as a disdain for multiculturalism and "diversity"), this anti-welfare ideology triumphed throughout the 1980s and early 1990s under Reagan and Thatcher (who however defined themselves as neo-conservatives rather than neo-liberals). In Continental and Nordic Europe neo-liberal views and proposals never reached the tsunami proportion of the US or the UK, but various countries of these areas witnessed nevertheless the spread of neo-liberal economistic orientations (Larsen and Andersen 2009; Lindbom 2009) as well as the appearance of anti-tax and anti-welfare parties which were able to attract considerable consensus (a typical example was Forza Italia, founded by Silvio Berlusconi between 1993 and 1994).

At the supranational level, during the 1980s and early 1990s economic neoliberalism (and its monetarist core as elaborated by Milton Friedman[4]) succeeded in taking deep roots, especially within the OECD and most international economic

[4] Though linked to the *liberismo* of the 1940s and 1950s, Milton Friedman and the so called Chicago School of Economics developed a new comprehensive economic policy paradigm squarely challenging the then hegemonic Keynesian orthodoxy. Hence the appropriateness, in the Italian language, of the term *neo-liberismo*.

organizations, the European Commission and, later, the European Central Bank. Price stability, fiscal discipline, undistorted competition, free trade, consumer choice, deregulation, liberalization and privatization acquired lexicographic priority over any other economic and social objective (Steger and Roy 2010). In combination with Treaty rules programmatically biased towards "negative integration", economic neo-liberalism was the driving force of the two biggest European projects and achievements of the 1990s: the Single Market and EMU (Ferrera 2005; Leibfried 2005; Scharpf 2009). In their original formulations, both projects displayed a visible anti-social state flavour: the welfare state was mainly seen as a liability, a source of rents and distortions hindering market competition as well as of programmatically irresponsible spending commitments, threatening the soundness of public finances. "Retrenchment", "roll-back", "cost containment", "cuts" were common expressions used to prescribe and describe reforms in the social protection sphere (Ferrera 2008; Taylor-Gooby 2001).

During the mounting phase of the parabola, the neo-liberal discourse did have a tangible institutional impact. The most emblematic national case is of course the UK (Hay 2001; Gamble 1994), where several reforms were adopted in the field of unemployment insurance, second-tier pensions, social assistance and health care, all explicitly motivated and justified in neo-liberal terms. Through the new provisions of the Single European Act and then the Maastricht Treaty, supranational neo-liberalism was able in its turn to impose increasing budgetary and (de)regulative constraints on the internal functioning and structure of national social protection systems, re-orienting their agenda towards efficiency, sustainability and work incentives (Falkner 2010). It is to be noted, however, that despite its unquestionable significance and traction, in its ascending phase neo-liberalism did not succeed in affecting the institutional foundations of the welfare state, i.e. state-funded and state-centred compulsory social insurance. Even in the UK, Thatcherism did not bring about that general overhaul of British welfare that the Iron Lady repeatedly advocated in her speeches (Pierson 1994). On the Continent, the few radical proposals that were formulated by neo-liberal formations (e.g. Forza Italia's plan to privatize the NHS in the first Berlusconi government, 1994—Ferrera 1994—or the demands voiced in the early 1990s by French self-employed associations to break the state *monopoles sociaux*, including in public pensions—Palier 2002) were not even officialised. And in their turn neither the Single Market nor the Maastricht process prompted that "race to the bottom" in terms of social standards which neo-liberal opponents had predicted in the wake of liberalizations, greater "market compatibility requirements" and financial/monetary austerity (Ferrera 2005).

In the early 1990s the ideological climate began to change: the ascending phase gradually halted. At the EU level, after the Single European Act, the Delors Commission started to elaborate a new discourse on "the social dimension" of integration, which inspired the adoption of the Social Protocol to the Maastricht Treaty. Later, a fully-fledged doctrine on the appropriate role of this dimension

was defined (mainly by the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate of the Commission, in collaboration with the European Parliament), under the general rubric of "social protection modernisation" (EC 2005). Such doctrine was not presented as an alternative to the neo-liberal perspective, but as an enriching and coherent expansion: social policy was to be valorised (while modernised) because it was an important "productive factor". The Employment and Social Chapter of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), the launch of the European Employment Strategy (1998) and later the adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights with the Nice Treaty (2000) and the establishment of the Social Inclusion OMC (2001) were a clear result of this discursive re-orientation (Hemerijck 2012).

At the national level, the neo-liberal critique of the welfare state started in its turn to be contrasted by increasingly articulated cognitive and normative counter-arguments. While accepting the challenge (and the desirability) of "modernisation", such counter-arguments suggested that reforms should not only be about efficiency, cost-containment and market incentives but also about efficacy and distributive rationalizations guided by the principles of equity (including gender), inclusion, cohesion. This new discourse was definitely prompted by the threat of a neo-liberal hegemony, but it cannot be seen as a mere conjunctural response to it. It was rather the result of a gradual and laborious re-elaboration (already started in the 1980s) of other classical European traditions (such as social democracy, social and democratic liberalism, and to some extent Christian solidarism) as well as the new Anglo-American school of egalitarian liberalism, emblematically represented by Rawls. This re-elaboration was also prompted by the need to seriously confront the new challenges posed by European integration, globalization and the rise of the service economy. In part for necessity, in part for (conditional, but genuine) conviction, the new discourse came to internalize some of the cognitive and normative elements and institutional constraints of the neo-liberal stream: e.g. financial stability, the need to regain competitiveness, organizational efficiency, individual responsibility and work incentives.

During the 2000s the EU has been a major arena and an important actor for the elaboration of the new welfare state modernisation discourse and agenda. Some of the key programmatic notions (e.g. "recalibration", "active inclusion", "social investment", "social quality" etc.) were developed in (and partly by) "Brussels", providing broad inspiration and specific insights for the Lisbon and later the EU 2020 agendas. A novel strand of intellectual debate has also been launched on how to rebalance economic and social objectives within the EU supranational architecture (Marlier and Natali 2010; Cantillon, Verschueren and Ploscar 2012).

The anti-neoliberal "strike back" has come in separate waves, with different political colours and discursive styles in different countries. A first wave was prompted by the return to power of centre-left parties. Blair's *Third Way*, Prodi's *Welfare delle Opporunità* and later Zapatero's *Nueva Igualdad* are emblematic examples of the different symbolic packages that framed the agenda of welfare reform under centre-

left majorities in the UK, Italy and later Spain. But ideological re-elaboration took place also in countries where centre-left parties had to govern jointly with Christian Democratic or Liberal parties, as in the red-black coalition in Germany and the purple coalition in the Netherlands (Stjerno 2005).

Is there a way to capture—beyond national and party-political variations—the general nature of the post-neoliberal perspective on the welfare state in the EU? When confronted with broad constellations of changing political institutions and normative justifications drawn by distinct intellectual blueprints, but characterised by some degree of coherence and temporal continuity, political theorists sometimes use the notion of "ideological synthesis" (e.g. Mueller 2009). Can we possibly speak in these terms of post-neoliberal developments? Would the expression "liberal neo-welfarism" be an appropriate label for this new ideological synthesis? In the next sections of this paper I will try to argue in favour of a positive answer to both questions.

IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE: THE MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Discursive neo-institutionalism (DI) provides the natural analytical approach to frame the two questions and develop my argumentative strategy. Under the broad rubric of "ideas", DI investigates a wide range of distinct symbolic "objects", conceptualised as "frames", "paradigms", "narratives", "public philosophies", "policy programs" and so on (Béland and Cox 2011). Vivien Schmidt has suggested to group all these concepts in three broad categories, according to their level of generality: (1) philosophical ideas, which offer a deep-seated (ontological and normative) underpinning for understanding the world and the appropriate actions to be undertaken by individuals and groups; (2) programmatic ideas, which provide problem definitions, analytical frames, contextualized norms and principles that allow to diagnose the practical challenges of the real world and elaborate strategies of response; (3) policy ideas, which are circumscribed to particular situations and tailored to different substantive problems (Schmidt 2008).

Schmidt locates ideologies within the first, broadest category. Political theorists are however accustomed to drawing a neat distinction between a "philosophy" (i.e. a specific theory such as Rawls's *Justice as Fairness* or a broader school of thought, such as *Luck Egalitarianism*) and an "ideology" (Freeden 1996 and 2012). Philosophies rest on reflexive rationality, proceed by logical arguments, maintain a critical awareness of their assumptions and of the essentially contestable nature of their normative constructs, tend to elaborate general, typically abstract and a-historical theories, employ a technical, often esoteric language and discursive style. By contrast, ideologies rest on rationality *and* emotions, mix arguments and non-argued assertions (not always logically coherent and sometimes dissimulatory), are only partly aware of their basic assumptions and tend to "de-contest" their values (i.e.

treat them as intuitively "right", non disputed or disputable), elaborate spatially and historically bounded worldviews, expressed in an accessible language, ready for public use. In respect of Schmidt's typology, ideologies should be located in-between philosophical and programmatic ideas: "they keep a foot in the realm of political thought and a foot in the realm of political action" (Freeden 1996).

Each ideology is characterised by an internal structure or "morphology", i.e. a concatenation of concepts and bridging propositions and reasoning. Following Freeden (1996) we can distinguish between three basic morphological components of an ideology: (1) the core components, i.e. the set of "unremovable" concepts and propositions, those that cannot be eliminated without destroying the ideology itself (e.g. the concept of freedom as absence of constraints in the case of Liberalism); (2) the adjacent components, i.e. concepts and propositions that are logically and culturally implicated by the core and offer substance, determinacy and richness to the ideology (e.g. equal opportunity or democracy); (3) the peripheral components, which are more marginally related to the core (e.g. well-being or solidarity) but which are useful for linking the first two components to the spatial and historical context of reference.

Ideologies can be dogmatic or plastic, confident or tentative, absolute or relative—with liberalism displaying the highest degree, precisely, of plasticity as well as programmatic "openness", via processes of trial and error. Ideologies are not mutually exclusive, but can have wide areas of overlaps in all three components (ideological overlapping consensus, paraphrasing Rawls). They can have different levels of generality (Liberalism vs Socialism; Neoliberalism vs Social Liberalism, down to single-thinkers' liberalisms). They can cluster in ideological traditions or even syntheses, which recombine in novel forms the core and adjacent components of lower-level ideologies. Finally, ideologies are born, evolve and decline; they strive to adapt, mainly in response to changes of the two realms in which their feet are planted, i.e. the realm of philosophical debates and the practical realm of political action (including the exercise of power) and policy choice in response to social and economic transformation. Even though less clearly demarcated than philosophical theories, ideologies typically have (and strive to maintain) some visible boundary, with a view to providing a recognisable *Gestalt* to actors engaged in conflict/cooperation within a given framework of institutions and processes.

The morphological approach to the study of ideologies can be very useful for the analytical framing of my two questions and my argumentative line. The rise of the neo-liberal critique to the welfare state can be seen as a clear example of an ideological turn that (1) re-elaborated in a rather dogmatic and over-confident style the adjacent components of classical *liberismo* (the importance of free markets, undistorted competition, consumer sovereignty etc.); (2) got rid of all the "social" peripheral components that the other liberal traditions had come to include within their perimeter during the XX century (cohesion, collective responsibility vs. undeserved disadvantages etc., opportunities for full individual development etc.),

replacing them with a mix of libertarianism and traditionalism; (3) adopted monetarism as an uncontestably superior counter-paradigm vis-à-vis Keynesianism, thus squarely challenging the "social-democratic consensus" of the *Trentes Glorieuses*.

As we have seen, during the 1980s neo-liberalism succeeded in affirming itself as a dominant ideology, reaching its peak at the turn of the decade. In the subsequent period, its traction began to decline and new ideological "bricks" started to be posed in various national and supranational public arenas, drawing the contours of a post-neoliberal perspective on welfare state modernisation which—as anticipated in the Introduction—I propose to label "liberal neo-welfarism". To what extent can an ideological core be identified in this perspective and can we define it—overall—as liberal (*liberale*, not *liberista*)? Can a relatively coherent mix of adjacent components be identified and does the expression "liberal neo-welfarism" capture its overall flavour? Can the new perspective be considered as an ideological synthesis of different traditions (liberal, social-democratic, in part even Christian democratic), drawing a perimeter of "overlapping ideological consensus" which might serve as morphological counterpart to the social-democratic consensus of the 1960s and 1970s?

In order to answer these reframed questions, I will proceed in three steps. First I will try to identify the main triggers of ideological change from neo-liberalism to post-neoliberalism. Then I will sketch a discussion of the actors of change and its impact. Third, I will try to establish whether the new ideological "bricks" can be put together in order to form a relatively coherent new synthesis.

THE RISE OF POST-NEOLIBERALISM

As mentioned, ideological change typically proceeds from transformations which occur in the practical realm of society and/or in the philosophical realm. We can identify at least four distinct transformations which have prompted the rise of post-neoliberalism in welfare state discourse.

The first transformation affected the social and economic environment of the welfare state in the wake of both endogenous and exogenous challenges. Since the 1970s, population ageing, the shift to a service and knowledge-based economy, the change in household patterns and gender relations had been originating serious upheavals in Europe's productive, occupational, demographic and more generally social structures (Hemerijck 2012). Increasing market opening in the EU and beyond altered in their turn the "boundary configuration" on which the Keynesian and Fordist welfare state had rested, exposing territories, social groups and economic sectors to a new set of risks and opportunities (Ferrera 2005). In the wake of such structural transformations (which became increasingly visible and statistically documented during the 1990s), the neo-liberal critique of the welfare state

started to lose credibility. Its diagnosis of the nanny state had been elaborated with reference to the "old" Keynesian state and the welfare capitalism of the *Trentes Glorieuses*; most of the new welfare challenges linked to post-industrialism and globalization were falling outside the scope of the overall analytical and prescriptive frame of neo-liberalism; some of the most acute new social needs could actually be seen as consequences of neo-liberal reforms themselves (e.g. the rising levels of child poverty or income polarization) (OECD 2011).

A second transformation affected the politics of welfare. Under the impact of post-industrialism, post-materialism and "individualization", market opening and globalization, the political markets of European welfare democracies reconfigured themselves away from the social-democratic compromises that had characterised the Golden Age—compromises built and upheld by the expansion of social entitlements to the Fordist "middle mass". The traditional class cleavage started to lose salience in the structuring of political preferences and alliances and the welfare state as such became an issue of contention, increasingly pitting insiders against outsiders and generating a complex "new politics" (Pierson 2001; Armingeon and Bonoli 2006; Rueda 2007). Except for the UK, neo-liberalism proved to be an ineffective ideological glue for building and keeping together new social and electoral coalitions: welfare cuts were unpopular, even for the middle classes. In its formative moment, Berlusconi's Forza Italia enthusiastically espoused the neo-liberal critique against the tax-welfare state. After its failed attempt to reform pensions in order to lower taxes, which led to the fall of its first cabinet after only a few months, Forza Italia hastened to reshape its ideological profile towards more traditional conservative and "social market" moderatism. Being more removed from electoral politics, the EU was politically allowed to stick to neo-liberal orthodoxy for a longer period. But pressed by a growing number of national governments and eventually becoming aware of its own legitimacy problems, even "Brussels" thought better of elaborating the new "inclusion and cohesion" discourse in order to reassure increasingly worried public opinions (Ferrera 2006).

The third transformation has taken place in the philosophical and intellectual realm. In the early 1970s, John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* inaugurated a novel era in Anglo-Saxon analytical political philosophy, reviving Kant's contractual tradition and incisively re-defining the relationship between liberty and equality. Since the publication of Rawls' major volume, philosophical liberalism has been largely engaged in the discussion of the famous "Difference Principle", according to which social inequalities can only be justified if they turn out to promote the greatest advantage of the worst off. Such principle is presented as the rational choice of individuals located in an "Original Position", debating under a "Veil of Ignorance" on how to design a just basic structure of society. If there can be no doubt that Rawls' theory has been by far the most influential contribution of the new Anglo-American school of philosophical liberalism, other approaches have also been developed within it during the last three decades, aimed at combining the core liberal concept of liberty with a system of distribution capable of optimizing the

well-being of individuals and groups within society. "Starting gate egalitarianism" (Ackerman), "Resource based egalitarianism" (Dworkin), and, to a lesser extent, "Desert-based liberalism" (Miller) can be mentioned as other important strands of the Anglo-American school, which launched an attack to the individualistic and libertarian assumptions and anti-egalitarian stance of neo-liberalism. From different perspectives, neo-liberalism was also a target of attack from the Communitarian (Sandel, Walzer) and Republican (Pettit) strands of the Anglo-American debate on social justice, solidarity and cohesion (for a general review, cf. Kymlicka 2011).

As highlighted by "reception" theorists (Laborde 2002), in spite of its esoteric language and technical sophistication, Anglo-American liberalism—and especially Rawls—made rapid and deep inroads into most European national political cultures in the 1980s and 1990s. The "consumption" of egalitarian (and, to a lesser extent, communitarian and republican) liberalism on the side not only of academic philosophers, but also of various public intellectuals, the media and even single politicians, suggests that the neo-liberal parabola had created a demand for alternative ideological positions, capable of framing in different terms the classical trade-offs between liberty and equality, efficiency and equity, and redefining the notion of "social justice" and thus the normative evaluation of welfare state institutions.

The fourth development has finally been the ideological "revisionism" that took place within national political cultures, partly (but not exclusively) as a response to the first two transformations, and in the wake of the new philosophies produced by the Anglo-American school. In the Nordic countries, the national social-democratic traditions based on "strong egalitarianism" coupled with the "work-line" were revisited and became more "prioritarian" (a Rawlsian emphasis on the worst off; acceptance of "just" market inequality) and productivist (active inclusion in order to sustain growth and thus solidarity in the long run) (Huo 2009; Kildal and Kuhnle 2005; Kvist, Fritzell, Hvinden and Kangas 2012). In the UK, the Third Way drew mainly from the tradition of social liberalism and Fabian socialism, revisiting it through the lenses of the new American egalitarian and communitarian liberalism (emphasis on life chances, combining options with social bonds, individual development, but also duties and responsibilities) and building on Gidden's postmodern social theory, emphasising active participation and the enabling role of the welfare state (Beech 2006). Under Zapatero, the Spanish PSOE took new inspiration not only by the liberal egalitarians, but also by neo-republicans (Pettit), with their emphasis on the welfare state as a vehicle and guarantor of "strong citizenship", based on the notion of liberty as "non domination" (Martí and Pettit 2010).[5]

[5] Under Zapatero the PSOE elaborated an original doctrine of "citizens socialism", combining a strong prioritarian egalitarianism (the consolidation of a robust "fourth social protection pillar"—alongside universal education, healthcare and pension—targeted towards the worst off) with an equally strong right-based, non discrimination agenda in defence of "individuality", minority recognition and gender parity (Sevilla 2002).

Albeit less incisive and timely than within the left camp, ideological revisionism has indeed taken place within the moderate camp as well. Under the pressure of secularization and individualization, Christian Democratic parties have gradually relaxed their traditional emphasis on "familialism" and come to terms with the gender equality and "new risks" agendas (Seeleib-Kaiser, Van Dyk and Roggenkamp 2008), drawing significant inspiration from Communitarian thinkers (Stjerno 2005). Partly drawing from *Ordo-liberalismus* and classical Christian solidarism, in Germany the idea of a "social market economy" has been revived on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary (Glossner and Gregosz 2009) and has now found a key position in art. 3 of the Lisbon Treaty. Secular moderate parties have been the last to move, but in the last decade revisionism has been taking place at this end of the political spectrum as well. The goal of welfare retrenchment and tax cuts has been markedly marginalised, for example, in the ideology of the Swedish *Moderaterna*, who have come to support a "modernisation" agenda based on the growth-competitiveness-inclusion triad (Lindbom 2008). Mariano Rajoy won the 2011 election in Spain with a growth-centred platform, largely voided of those neo-liberal proposals in the social sphere that had been endorsed by his predecessor Aznar. British Conservatism has in its turn gradually distanced from Thatcherism, in an effort to incorporate a new "social dimension" through the notions of welfare society or welfare community and, more recently under Cameron, the Big Society (but on this cf. *infra*).

ACTORS AND IMPACT

Ideologies and ideological change can be studied in a pure morphological perspective (i.e. highlighting the internal logic linking core components to adjacent components and peripheries, a logic which to some extent always filters/constrains the relationship between an ideology and its external environment); in a historical-institutional perspective (i.e. looking at formative moments, ideational path dependencies, temporal sequences and critical junctures in which relatively independent macro-processes—a social transformation, an electoral de-alignment, the birth of a novel philosophical approach—intersect with each other, opening up opportunities for ideological reconfigurations); in a discursive institutional perspective, focussing on the practices through which ideologies are constructed, acquire political and policy salience, structure interests and preferences, shape institutional outcomes and so on.

In the DI perspective, ideas (in the widest connotation, from philosophic to policy ideas) circulate through communicative and coordinative discourses (Schmidt 2008). They are carried by individual agents (often directly or indirectly representing social collectivities such as movements, parties, civic, economic, cultural associations, think tanks etc.), which interact in a multiplicity of arenas. Given its dual anchoring (in the philosophical and in the practical realms), an "ideological act"

can be thought as a thought-practice (action) that (a) attributes a specific meaning to a political concept (cluster of concepts), (b) de-contests this meaning (deliberately or unconsciously), i.e. presents it as desirable, good, right beyond dispute, and (c) makes it politically relevant by linking it to policy challenges and/or consensus building. As a rule, ideological acts leave documentable traces behind them, under the form of texts with some material support (à la Searle, 1995).

We can conceptualize the performers of ideological acts as "second hand dealers" (without a pejorative connotation) of philosophical ideas for political purposes, i.e. with a view to problem solving and consensus building. Ideologues can thus range from professional philosophers (or other social scientists with philosophical competence) acting as public intellectuals (e.g. Giddens), "policy middlemen" (à la Heclo), i.e. scholars/intellectuals who operate at the cross-road between academia and policy making (e.g. Vanderbroucke), bureaucrats "with vision" (e.g. Delors), charismatic political leaders who are capable of speaking in the guise of "statesmen-philosophers" (e.g. Blair). These actors can use ordinary discursive arenas (the media, parliaments, electoral campaigns, policy making institutions) but also dedicated arenas, established around a given collective problem.

The rise of post-neoliberalism in the European welfare discourse has been vehiculated by a large number of "second hand dealers". Many exponents of the new Anglo-American school have engaged themselves in explicit ideological campaigning in favour of their welfare-friendly theories, some of them establishing close and preferential personal relationships with individual political leaders: let us think of the Giddens-Blair, Etzioni-Clinton, Van Parijs-Vanderbroucke, or the Petitt-Zapatero couples (Martí and Pettit 2010). In virtually each national political culture it is possible to identify one or more welfare "guru" with post-neoliberal orientation acting as ideologue of welfare state change, often in competition with neoliberal counterparts—but also with hard line defenders of the status quo, especially within the Old Left. At the national level there has been a proliferation of new think tanks of post-neoliberal orientation, which have facilitated the communicative and discursive dissemination of the new ideas (e.g. Policy Network in the UK) (Stone and Denham 2004). Many governments have created national Commissions with outside experts and intellectuals, charged with the task of setting the route for welfare reform, and many of them have become vehicles of the post-neoliberal approach in some version (e.g. the Onofri Commission in Italy).

A sort of "post-neoliberal ideological community" around welfare state "recalibration" (and, more recently, on "Social Europe") has gradually formed since the late 1990s, linked not only by academic exchanges (e.g. within the Forum on "Recasting the European Welfare State" which took place at the EUI in Florence, in 1998/1999: Ferrera and Rhodes 2001), but also by a common engagement in policy advise (coordinative discourse) and intellectual persuasion in respect of the wider public (communicative discourse). Various dedicated think tanks have favoured and accelerated this process. The EU has also played a prime role, as

already mentioned above. The Commission (Employment and Social Affairs), the European Parliament, various EU Presidencies (to name the most active between the 1990s and 2000s: Dutch, Portuguese, Belgian, UK) launched an impressive series of initiatives on virtually all fronts and dimensions of welfare state change, giving space and visibility to post-neoliberal public intellectuals. Through the social OMCs (and more generally its social agenda) the EU has also created novel arenas and incentives for the production and dissemination of the new ideas (Sabel and Zeitlin 2010).

Gauging the impact of post-neoliberalism on actual reforms is of course a complex and difficult exercise. Suffice it here to say that the empirical literature on welfare state change (1) does acknowledge the presence and growing relevance of the new discourse in relevant communicative and coordinative arenas; (2) does confirm that such discourse has given a recognisable contribution to the adoption of some national strategies or specific reforms, especially (but not exclusively) in the UK under New Labour and in the Nordic countries (though with important dissimilarities); (3) points out, however, that so far the implementation of the new programmatic ideas such as "social investment", "active inclusion" etc. (and thus the realization of their underlying ideological principles) has been mixed: scholars' positions range here between moderate pessimism (Morel, Palier and Palme 2011) and moderate optimism (Hemerijck 2012; see also Huo 2009 and Evers and Guillemard, forthcoming). According to Hemerijck, though with significant country variations, "without exaggeration we can … infer from the empirical evidence of long run social policy change that the translation of the social investment paradigm into new welfare provisions has been largely successful" (p. xxx). In more general terms, I concur with Hemerijck and Huo (theoretically and substantively) that the emergence of a new ideological and programmatic paradigm should not be expected to produce congruent institutional outcomes in any deterministic or semi-deterministic way, but must be rather seen as something that generates policy alternatives and opens up options. I also concur with both authors that the alternatives and options opened by post-neoliberalism may well liberate actors from the constraints of institutional stickiness and path dependence as well as the hegemonic chains of the neo-liberal ideology.

LIBERAL NEO-WELFARISM: TOWARDS A NEW IDEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

As mentioned above, ideologies are distinctive symbolic artefacts which must be kept separate from philosophies, on the one hand, and programmatic ideas, on the other hand. Ideologies differ among themselves not only in terms of substance and morphology, but also of generality. At the lowest end we find single-thinker ideologies, at the highest ideological syntheses. The latter are broad combinations of components drawn from different traditions or schools of thought: in a morphological language, they pool the (re-adapted) cores of such traditions as well as

a number of common adjacent components and may even create new peripheries. An ideological synthesis leaves room for differentiation at lower levels, and may well leave outside its scope other competing ideologies (at its own or lower levels). The "social-democratic consensus" which accompanied the consolidation of the post-war welfare state can be seen as an emblematic example of a broad synthesis, within which "left" and "right" could still compete on (non pooled) adjacent and peripheral components.

To a large extent (and if looked at it a high level of generality), what we have described as the post-neoliberal perspective on welfare state modernisation can be considered as an emerging ideological synthesis, which pools together the core values of the liberal-democratic and social-democratic traditions (liberty and equality), de-contesting each of them and their relationship in a new way and re-adapting a number of the adjacent components of each tradition. "Post-neoliberal" is a label endowed with minimal connotative power (at least it makes clear what the perspective *is not*), but can a more effective and appealing label be proposed? *Nomina sunt omina*, naming something largely predetermines its fate, and is thus a very delicate operation, exposed as it is to misunderstandings and mis-appropriations (as well as to the paradox of performing by this very operation a second-order "ideological act"). I tentatively submit here the notion of "liberal neo-welfarism" (LNW). A true child of both traditions, the welfare state (and more generally the notion of "good welfare") has symbolically come to be perceived as the achievement of Scandinavian social democracy: the noun "welfarism" is chosen in the acknowledgement of this fact.[6] The new perspective innovates from the past in both its approach and in the approached objects and problems: hence the pre-fix "neo". The adjective liberal is meant to valorise not only the social-liberal tradition (often labelled as "welfare liberalism" in histories of political thought) but also two other normative commitments: (1) the commitment to individuality, rationality, openness (including economic openness: functioning markets); (2) the commitment to maintain a reasonable balance between competing values and inevitably contrasting normative pulls (Freeden 2008; Magnette 2009).

The LNW ideology tends to de-contest the notion of liberty in at least three ways. First, while recognising the lexicographic priority of negative freedom (à la Rawls), it views it as inextricably linked to positive freedoms and opportunities that allow for self-development and "flourishing" (the Millian perspective). Second, it builds (also) on negative freedom to strengthen the principle of non discrimination and thus generate new types of civil rights with heavy social implications (e.g. gay marriage; gender quotas; minority rights and "recognition"; pro-choice options in ethically sensitive areas: cf. the Spanish experience). Third, it

[6] The elaboration of a "thick" notion of welfare, extended from the alleviation of poverty to the full elimination of material needs and the satisfaction of a wide range of human needs through collective arrangements, is a distinctive achievemet of Swedish social democracy and its political theory (Tilton 1990).

emphasizes the link between liberty and fundamental rights (cf. the approval of the Charter at the EU level).

Likewise, the notion of equality is de-contested by soft-pedalling outcomes in favour of opportunities, "life chances", capabilities and "functionings" (à la Sen). Within LNW, equality assumes moreover (1) a dynamic character: what matters is the life-cycle, not "here and now" equality; (2) a multi-dimensional character (not only income, but other aspects such as minority status and especially gender); (3) a prioritarian character (Parfit 1991): while maintaining universality in access to public services and benefits, social policy (and more generally the tax-transfer system) should prioritize the worst off.

Following the insight of the Anglo-American school, the relationship between liberty and equality is essentially framed in terms of social justice: a concept that is programmatically meant to reconcile the inviolability of basic liberties and democratic procedures with the necessity to accurately and convincingly justify any departure from strict egalitarianism in the distribution of the goods of social cooperation (the "fairness requirement" of social distributions). The notion of social justice is also used to frame and address two other delicate issues: the recognition and integration of ethnic/cultural minorities; the appropriate balance between national (and supranational) standardization and financial solidarity, on the one hand, with sub-national, local and "communal" identities and social bonds on the other hand.

Pooled adjacent components of the emerging synthesis include most prominently the three notions of "productivist" or "flexible" solidarity, "active inclusion" and "social promotion". Taken together, these three notions can be largely seen as bridge concepts aimed at reconciling some tensions typically generated by the liberty-equality dyad: competition vs cooperation, individual vs society, personal vs collective responsibility, desert vs need, choice vs coercion, globalism/ cosmopolitanism vs localism/communalism. Productivist solidarity (a key historical adjacent component of Scandinavian social democracy) refers to the idea that the collective guarantee and provision of social benefits and services is not only an instrument of egalitarian redistribution and social cohesion, but indeed also a productive factor that can enhance economic performance provided that it is based on reciprocity, readiness to work and participation in society. The fight against poverty and social exclusion should be a priority, and ought to be pursued not only by passive transfers, but also through quality services and training opportunities. The counterpart of inclusion is activation, i.e. the expectation/requisite that recipients engage in activities that promise to re-enable them to be economically self-sufficient. The notion of social promotion emphasises the importance of preparing individuals to face the manifold risks of their life-cycles rather than repairing ex post the damages of risks. Social investments (in early education and care, training, work-life balance, long-life learning, active employment services etc.) are key to capacitating individuals in the realization of their life plans (Millian liberty),

in equalising opportunities and guaranteeing fair outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable (prioritarian egalitarianism) and at the same time upholding economic performance and financial sustainability (social-democratic productivism). A fourth (less explicitly debated, but always taken for granted) component might also be added in the adjacent area of the new synthesis: "access to subjective rights". The emphasis on rights is meant to clarify that the institutional core of the European model of welfare, i.e. social citizenship underpinned by robust universal civil and political rights, should continue to be a fundamental pillar also in the re-configured and refocused mix of entitlements and duties. A second clarification is that rights should be individualised, i.e. disconnected from ascriptive conditions and family status.

Figure 1

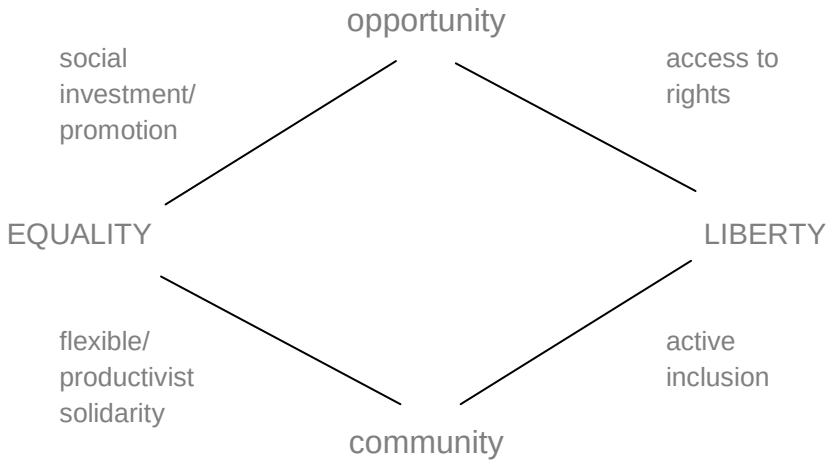

Figure 1 summarizes the key elements of LNW and their relationships. The inner diamond rests on the two core notions of "equality" and "liberty". Their novel de-contestations serve to reframe also other classical concepts associated with welfare states institutions, such as security or redistribution on the "left", individual autonomy or meritocracy on the "right" (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981). At the upper and bottom corners I have placed two ancillary but still general notions, i.e. opportunity and community, often used to bridge the link between the two core components and to substantiate the concept of social justice. The outer square of the figure contains the four main adjacent components of LNW: access to rights, social promotion, productivist/flexible solidarity and active inclusion. Their position loosely reflect the degree of proximity of each component to the core referents and their relationship. There is of course much more in the LNW synthesis (e.g. the wish the "re-embed markets" and the attention to social and political legitimacy in allocative and distributive reforms). But my sketch is sufficiently suggestive, I believe, for highlighting how its key components are indeed clearly distinct from the neo-liberal ideology, with only limited overlaps—mainly as regards the importance of a healthy economy, based on functioning markets and fiscal sustainability.

LIBERAL NEO-WELFARISM: ONE OR MANY?

As documented by a rich literature, above the shared "floor" of the Keynesian social-democratic consensus which characterised the *Trentes Glorieuses*, partisanship on the left-right dimension did matter a lot in shaping spending patterns and institutional profiles of individual countries and composite welfare regimes (for a review, cf. Schmidt 2010). Even if it is true that, since the 1980s, left-right partisanship has been losing its historical relevance for policy choices, we can however expect that the emerging ideological synthesis will still allow for internal differentiations, reflecting national traditions and policy legacies, genuine axiological emphases and orientations as well as political and electoral strategies. LNW has emerged essentially as a reaction to neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, as a result of revisionist efforts within Europe's main ideological families (*in primis* Social Democracy, but also democratic and social liberalism and, to a lesser extent, Christian Democracy) and a certain degree of mutual hybridization. It is worth repeating that, in my perspective, LNW connotes something wider and more general than the so-called "liberal" or "Third Way" turn in social democracy (Huo 2009) and certainly must not be considered as "second" or "third" wave neo-liberalism (as suggested, for example, by Steger and Roy 2010). It is rather a genuine ideological innovation, which recombines, redefines and updates concepts drawn by those traditions that had most suffered by the neo-liberal/conservative attacks during the 1980s and early 1990s. Times seem now mature, however, for a new phase of re-differentiation within the perimeter of LNW. Shared and de-contested symbols are not very effective for electoral mobilization, in respect of neither issue voters nor party identifiers. It should come with no surprise that LNW parties are maturing an interest in elaborating distinct and competitive framings in order to win support.

As noted by Morel, Palier and Palme (2011), the discourse on social investment has already started to display, for example, two recognisable variants: a Third Way, social-liberal variant, and a Nordic, social-democratic variant. In these authors' judgement, the former—though undoubtedly departing from Thatcherite neo-conservatism—"does not represent a clear enough break from neo-liberalism" (p. 360). This incomplete break may well explain why Labour's current leader, Ed Miliband, is pushing the party's discourse in a leftward direction, though not reneging on the fundaments of the Third Way. François Hollande's manifesto for the 2012 elections can also be interpreted as an attempt at recasting LNW in more distinctively socialist terms. Born from the "fusion" of the reformist wings of the old PCI and the old DC, and incorporating at the same time the remains of traditional progressive liberal and secular formations, the Italian Democratic Party (PD) constitutes in its turn another distinctive (and highly) hybrid variant of LNW within a single party on the centre-left, markedly skewed towards the equality/community axis of Figure 1.

To connote other emerging variants of LNW on the centre-right, the debate has recently coined two other labels. The first is "Liberal Communitarianism", an

approach stressing the role of the family, local communities, voluntary associations as key actors for responding to new risks and needs in the civil society arena and not only through the state arena. This vision does embrace many of the elements of LNW, but seems to be bending it towards a distinctive route, which can be interpreted—depending on viewpoints—either as a social-democratization of Christian Democracy (Van Kesbergen and Hemerijck 2004) or as a Christian democratisation of Social Democracy (Seeleib-Kaiser, Van Dyk and Roggenkamp 2008). In both cases, the "liberal" dimension remains somehow in the shadows, especially as concerns the individualization of rights, gender, sexual orientation and "ethically sensitive" matters regarding life and death. The second label is "Progressive Conservatism", coined to denote all centrist and centre-right political formations (including the German CDU, the Spanish PP or the Swedish *Moderaterna*) which have broken with Thatcherism and have come to espouse mild forms of LNW (Diamond 2011).

A detailed and systematic illustration of the specific party-ideological sub-streams which have started to flow within the LNW boundaries falls well beyond the scope of this paper. A few speculative comments may be suggested, however, by looking at the broad families of parties which are present within the European Parliament. Even a summary reading of the various political groups' manifestos confirms that LNW fundamentals are accepted by four families: the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D); the European Popular Party (EPP); the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE); and the Greens-Free Europeans Alliance (Greens-EFA). In the latter two families, however, we find a few national parties which still adhere to neo-liberalism (e.g. the German FDP) or espouse eco-radical ideologies with little link to LNW. Simplifying (from left to right), the labels that promise to capture the likely ideological differentiation within LNW seem to be (cf. Figure 1): "liberal egalitarian" LNW (prime emphasis on equality and opportunity); "social liberal" (liberty and opportunity); "liberal communitarian" (equality and community) and "progressive conservative" (liberty and community).

The European Parliament is home to three other political groups, and this leads us to the issue of ideological competition from without, i.e. on the side of parties that do not embrace LNW. A first question relates to the British Conservatives, by far the most important member of the "European Conservatives and Reformists" (ECR) group. According to most observers of the UK situation, Cameron's Conservatives are to be considered as still essentially "neo-conservatives": they actually represent the most resilient bulwark of this camp in contemporary Europe (Bale 2012). It is recognised that the original ideological foundations of the "Big Society" project were indeed innovative in respect of both traditional conservative thinking and Thatcherism. In the writings about "Red Toryism" that inspired the Big Society project, Philippe Blond (considered by some as Gidden's counterpart in renovating right wing ideology in Britain) embraced some elements of LNW—especially in its communitarian dimension: the distrust in self-regulating markets

and monopoly capitalism, the support for a "civic vision" of community empowerment and for a full-blooded, cohesive "new localism", resting on vibrant economies and strong social bonds (Blond 2010). Such views clearly resonated in the pre- and immediate post-election campaign of 2010. But the Conservative platform was selective from the very beginning and its flirtation with "Red Toryism" has gradually given way to the more traditional "morals plus the market" discourse, increasingly similar to that of US Republicans and even echoing some "Tea Party" ideas (Bone 2012). Neo-conservatism may be no longer "very well", but it is certainly still alive: liberal neo-welfarism has not won its war as yet.

Another and more powerful source of ideological competition from without comes from rising neo-populist parties of the right (grouped under "Europe of Freedom and Democracy" - EFD) and from the radical Left ("European Unified Left"). To paraphrase Le Pen, right wing populism is "socially left, economically right, but above all nationalist" (Le Pen 2011). Its discourse is ambiguous and incoherent: on the one hand it stresses "cohesion", defends acquired social entitlements, calls for additional protections (and protectionism); on the other hand voices against taxation, red tape, state regulation and speaks in favour of non public and communal service provision. Its idea of solidarity is exclusive, reserved to the members of the national, regional, local community, against all sorts of "strangers" and against any process of "opening", supranational integration, globalization. In many EU member states, right wing populist parties have already achieved high support and are eroding the social basis of mainstream parties of both the centre-left and the centre-right (Mudde 2007). In Italy, France, the Netherlands and, increasingly, the Nordic countries, the coalition and/or blackmail potential of such parties forces electoral competition, government formation and policy making to come to terms with them—and thus with their ideology.

Left wing radicalism is also on the rise (March 2011). Its discourse includes nostalgic appeals to the "good old times" of national Keynesianism-*cum*-Third World internationalism, strong anti-globalism, a critique of consumerism, de-growth proposals, radical ecologism. As right wing populists, the radical Left is also against the EU, market opening and free trade. The social basis of these parties is less stable and homogeneous than the New Right, but they thrive on the growing political distrust and alienation of significant segments of national electorates, especially among younger cohorts experiencing social and occupational precariousness. In Italy (the country with the strongest Communist party of the West until the early 1990s) the radical Left formations that splintered away from the PCI after its conversion into a Social Democratic party in 1993 did disturb in various moments and ways the emergence and consolidation of a LNW agenda within the centre-left.

The rising political importance and size of populist competitors from *without* is likely to generate additional (and possibly stronger) incentives for competitive ideological differentiation *within* the perimeter of LNW. François Hollande's

discursive strategy during the 2012 election campaign (an attempt at outlining a socialist-egalitarian variant/supplement of the new paradigm) can be taken as a sign of this dynamic. The rationale for differentiation can be illustrated also *a contrario*. Mario Monti's government in Italy, supported in Parliament by "strange bedfellows" coalition including the Democratic Party (centre-left), the UDC (centre) and the PDL (Berlusconi's party, now led by Angelino Alfano), formed in December 2011 with a platform centred on stability, growth and equity—one could say, a neo-liberal fiscal agenda with all the neo-welfarism that was possible in an emergency situation. The political consequence of this centripetal convergence of mainstream parties has been electoral and ideological centrifugation to the benefit of neo-populist formations—a dynamic that casts a shadow on the future prospects of Italy's politics and her still unbalanced welfare system. The most emblematic example to date of the same syndrome has been offered by the Greek elections of June 2012. Here the two mainstream traditional parties, Nea Democratia and the Pasok (which one would not certainly include among the champions of LNW, but still keep at least minimally within the welfare modernisation perimeter), have find it hard to form a post-election pro-EU coalition, in the face of mounting neo-populist opposition at the extremes.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that neo-liberal ideas (in the Italian connotation of *neo-liberismo*) have displayed a parabola of influence on welfare state transformation which is now in its descending phase. A novel "liberal neo-welfarist" ideological synthesis has gradually affirmed itself, creatively combining insights from both liberalism (*liberalismo*) and social-democracy and using them to elaborate a new vision on the nature and role of the welfare state in a globalizing and knowledge-based economy. In respect of the hypotheses put forward by Schmidt and Thatcher in the Introduction, my argument can be reframed as follows. Resilience has to do with liberalism, not neo-liberalism. NLW keeps in itself not only the core of *liberalesimo* (the protection of negative freedom) but also some key elements of various *liberalismi* (individuality, equal opportunity, non discrimination, the appreciation for functioning markets and a competitive, open economy and so on). At the same time, LNW is not only liberal, as it crucially includes various key elements of the social-democratic tradition as well (solidarity, redistribution, inclusion, universalism and so on). Even during the heyday of neo-liberalism, we know that this latter tradition has remained highly resilient in the Nordic context. It has also played a prominent role in the philosophical elaboration of the egalitarian liberalism paradigm within the Anglo-Saxon academia.

What determined the shift from neo-liberalism to liberal neo-welfarism? Ideologies are symbolic artefacts that bridge between the philosophical sphere and the sphere of practical politics. Loyal to this connotation of the concept, I have

searched (and found) explanation in the spurs that came from discussions within (Anglo-Saxon) political and more general "public philosophy", in the structural transformations that affected European society, economy and politics since the 1990s and, last but not least, in failure of neo-liberalism itself to provide adequate responses.

The transformative potential of LNW is still heavily constrained, today, by the austerity-centred stance of "Economic Europe" and by the weakness of the EU's social dimension. The novel discourse on the welfare state has not affected (and not yet squarely challenged) the prevailing consensus on monetarism and fiscal austerity in the management of EMU. There are some timid signs of new economic thinking appearing in the wake of the crisis (Morel, Palier and Palme 2011), but it is too early to predict whether these seeds can germinate or not. The crisis as such can offer an opportunity for moving from emergence to full bloom of an alternative economic doctrine, but this cannot be taken for granted either (Hemerijck 2012). During the Golden Age, Keynesianism allowed (required, even) a high complementarity between economic and social policies. Moreover, there was a relatively lax and virtuous division of labour between market-making at the supranational level and market-correcting at the national level. As is well known, market making pressures from Brussels have gradually come to override market correcting autonomy at the national level. The chances for LNW to take solid cultural and institutional roots are severely weakened by the economic straitjacket and the EU's asymmetric architecture in which it is embedded and which poses strong limitations to its delivery potential. It remains to be seen whether a solution of the euro-crisis, a new round of institutional reform at the EU level and the elaboration of different economic policy paradigms will create adequate margins of manoeuvre to put the new social ideas into practice and thus defend the new synthesis from a dangerous spiral of populist centrifugation.

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