

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FRAGMENTED SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

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Introduction

Western neo-liberal Democracies are often and shortly characterized by having a representative procedure of participation in the public sphere of life, determining a self-ruled form of political regime, affirming the sovereignty of the people in a specific territory; an economic welfare system; political institutions that administrate and organize public life on the basis of their citizens' confidence; public security and order. This instrumental approach to the definition of Democracy, characteristic of a capitalist society, as it was put forward by Joseph A. Schumpeter, means that «the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government. And we define: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote» ([1942]; 2003: 269).

So, Indirect Democracy or Representative Democracy is an effective and recognizably just mechanism whereby political institutions regulate, administrate, and attempt to resolve the conflicts that naturally emerge in everyday life in social communities. They do, through the electoral system, sustain that exceptional and in many ways incomprehensible virtue of the prevalence of the will of the majority that, most of the times, ignores the legitimate, democratic, and morally sustained claims of the minorities that also take an important role in the wealth of a democratic regime. Commonly, we understand the justice of this mechanism, that is, the fair relations between the exercise of power and the citizens' liberty, because they are established in constitutional texts that not only institute power, but also characterize the regime or model

of society – ensure liberty for all in conditions of equality and aim to accomplish fraternity among people.

Constitutionalism becomes the basis on which the legitimation for the existence of modern democracies rests.

On a historical approach we may affirm that the definition of democracy and what it implies for a society or a community in its classical meaning as the *rule of the people* becomes, in particular after the French Revolution, the *rule of the law* of a nation⁶. This shift mixes the old order of meaning with the newer. The elder does not have meaningful grounds to be justified in itself in modern and complex societies, but the newer was not, during this process of change, consolidated. The processes of affirmation of this new understanding based on the rule of law was only established across the 19th century in the Anglo-Saxon world, especially in England and in the United States, but it only reached his peak in Europe after the Word War II.

Once consolidated, constitutionalism in the 20th century is mostly conceived, in its strict and normative sense, as a set of rules or conventions, engaged in democratic principles and values that structure and provide the architectural mechanisms for the exercise of power, establishing its authority and its limits. If we compare the constitutional tests in occidental democratic societies, the democratic principles and values in which this set of rules relies on, we may find, among others, similar features such as: freedom and equality before and under the law; popular sovereignty and the power to control the exercise of power (e.g. through elections) and the right to political representation (see Lutz, 2008). Those features, rooted in Locke and Montesquieu and increased with the *Principle of Liberty* (put forward by, e.g., John Rawls) that ensures equal political liberties to all citizens, provide a sense of fairness and equality in Democratic Representative regimes.

What seems to be a well-designed and good political arrangement has its own intrinsic risks. Ginsburg and Huq identify one of those risks as *Constitutional retrogression*, meaning that there are regimes that could still be considered as constitutional regimes, but they are hardly democratic. For them, *Constitutional retrogression* involves a «simultaneous

⁶I will address this “broader sense” in more detail in § 3.

decay in three institutional predicates of democracy: the quality of elections, speech and associational rights, and the rule of law» (...) [and] five specific mechanisms by which constitutional retrogression unfolds. These are: (i) constitutional amendment; (ii) the elimination of institutional checks; (iii) the centralization and politicization of executive power; (iv) the contraction or distortion of a shared public sphere; and (v) the elimination of political competition» (2018: 117-118)⁷.

Departing from this enumeration, we may identify other different problems and issues that can be addressed when analysing the quality of our democracies, but they are much subtler. In a democratic neo liberal context, one of the most important aspects that keeps people living together without major conflicts among themselves is economic security, that is, the means to pursue their interests and to flourish by achieving their personal or communal objectives and living a meaning and fruitful live. That implies having the opportunities to climb up the social ladder; to access better jobs and functions available in society and to benefit from a fair social welfare system, which is presented as one of the most important conquests in the outcome of World War II, as well as higher degrees of industrialization and consequent economic development, that specially contributed to the pacification not only between societies, but also among citizens.

Combined, equality in political liberty and economic security are the foremost characteristics that endorse the importance of National States in the shaping of modern societies in the second half of the 20th Century, yet that has not prevented the rise of other kind of problems and challenges to the spread of democracy worldwide. Not only at a political level but specially on moral grounds since a State is not only a political entity, but also a National one.

The justification for it relies on the fact that, as societies become more complex and people's relations and interactions increase and become more intricated, so does the bureaucratic level of administration, as well as the level of expertise to deal with such a complex way of political

⁷For this subject, see also: PHARR, Susan J., and Robert D. PUTNAM (eds.), *Disaffected democracies. What's troubling the trilateral countries?*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000 or PLATTNER, Marc F. «Liberal democracy's fading allure», in *Journal of Democracy* 28 (4) pp. 5-14, 2017.

organization. As a result, professional politicians are required to do the job and those politicians, from top to bottom, do not recognize the ability of an average citizen to address such complicated social matters.

Of course, there are and there will always be means to deal with this kind of *Constitutional retrogression*. Unfortunately, the answers that have been put forward are, from top to bottom, forms of authoritarianism and, from bottom to top, as Kriesi identifies, populism: «While their “host” ideology connects these parties to the fundamental structural conflicts in society, the “thin” populist “ideology” connects them to the narrower political sphere and to the political discontent of their constituencies. More specifically, the populist “ideology” refers to the tension between “the elites” and “the people.” This “ideology” puts the emphasis on the fundamental role of “the people” in politics, claims that “the people” have been betrayed by “the elites” in charge who are abusing their position of power, and demands that the sovereignty of the people be restored» (Kriesi, 2020: 248).

1. Modern challenges to Democracy: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Much has been said about the crises of democracy, particularly about the increasing forms of political authoritarianism and populism. As mentioned by Adam Przeworski: «this mechanism functions well only if the stakes are not very large, if losing an election is not a disaster, and if the defeated political forces have a reasonable chance to win in the future. When deeply ideological parties come to office seeking to remove institutional obstacles in order to solidify their political advantage and gain discretion in making policies, democracy deteriorates, or “backslides”» (Przeworski, 2019: 143).

But many scholars have also dealt with that kind of problems and pointed out other causes and some solutions. Although the solutions are often questionable, the causes they endorse may be too exhaustive to summarise in the scope of this article, but, for our intents, the political problems with Democratic Representation here presented are at the core of the weakness of the modern party system and at the same

time of the weakness of the State as the sovereign entity that can provide its citizens with a meaning and fruitful life. The growing abstention in election procedures is not just a sign sustaining that people do not care about who governs them anymore. They seem to care only about their economic conditions: their wages; whether they will be able to have a comfortable house; a good car; education for their children, the opportunity to live in a safe neighbourhood, and so on, as if there was some kind of agreement or a trade between the amount of taxes that are to be paid and the goods that are to be received. As Benoist affirm: «This triumph of the economy over politics is interpreted by liberals as the victory of liberty, while it in fact amounts to a dispossession of the self because it translates into the inability for collectivities to take control of their destiny» (Benoist, 2011:7-8)

As such, we are starting to witness a growing sentiment of frustration, especially because participation in political life, to be involved in determining the shape of our societies, is an important aspect of affirming our own personal identity. In fact, we must not forget that «Democracy implies the existence of a democratic subject, the citizen. The atomized individual as conceived by liberal theory cannot be a citizen because he is, by definition, alien to the desire to live in a community» (Benoist, 2011: 6). Despite our agreement on these assertions, they are made in a perspective that we can not address. For Benoist «Modern democracy is intrinsically linked to modernity, but only by way of a tie to liberalism, which tends to undermine it. The profound cause of the crisis is the unnatural alliance of democracy and liberalism. (...) The expression “liberal democracy” joins together two terms as if they were complementary, when in fact they are contradictory» (Benoist, 2011: 4). In fact, liberalism and even neoliberalism are compatible with democracy. Empirical data provides evidence for it. What strikes us in the former assertions is that they are symptomatic of what could be named as the fragmentation of the social imaginary that is reinforced by globalization. Nevertheless, Benoist touch an important chord: the spread of individualism in national life.

When properly interpreted, the concept of National States must be addressed at an instrumental level and not in its essence or as an end in itself.

That seems to be the confusion that relies on the current cosmopolitanism theories. Those theories seem to defend that we are facing the end of an era; the end of the national states *tout court*, even those that are more recent, and which have emerged from those terrible conflicts, in the sense that was mentioned above, after World War II, after the decolonization process and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The Nation States (even the old nations) are now facing the danger of a new form of indeterminacy caused by modern globalization. The confusion that is important to underline is that what is in question regarding globalization is not the end of National States, nor their political institutions; what may be at stake is the feeling of belonging to a nation and the responses that national states are giving to the claims posed by that feeling.

Many consider that the supposed indeterminacy of modern national states is a result of globalization movements and that is a symptom of the decay or *backsliding* of democracies, but it is far more important to recognize that what is becoming very problematic in the 21st Century is not democracy in itself. Globalization, National States and Democracy go along together.

As the study of Claassen (2020) shows, considering «3765 collected national opinions about democracy, obtained from 1390 nationally representative public opinion surveys in 150 countries, citizens' support for democracy is robustly linked to the stability of democracy, once it has been established» (*Apud* Przeworski, 2019: 241-242)⁸. That should give us a relevant insight about the importance of self-determination acquired by self-rule in a democratic political background of a National State. So, we have to realize that the questions posed by globalization movements are not threats to the existence of National States. We must find the answers to those questions on a different level of analysis.

In fact, Democracies are grounded on a core of values and practices that allows the manifestations of different identities. If those values, attitudes, and practices have a democratic structure that involves

⁸Although Przeworski sustains that those figures may be put in question because he believes that we are facing a democratic decay, nonetheless those figures are accurate and shows the attitude towards democracy in a 2019 survey.

respect, recognition and liberty of expression of differences, living in a globalized world does not present a danger to democracy. On the contrary, it will be, I suppose, although it may be considered paradoxical, the fundamental key to affirm its value. That is precisely what is attested in the *The Global State of Democracy 2019* survey of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA): «More than half of the countries in the world (62 per cent, or 97 countries) covered by the GSoD Indices are now democratic (compared to only 26 per cent in 1975), and more than half (57 per cent) of the world's population now lives in some form of democracy, compared to 36 per cent in 1975. The number of democracies continues to rise, from 90 in 2008 to 97 in 2018. This increase has occurred despite a slowdown in global democratic expansion since the mid-1990s. The large majority (81 per cent) of the world's 97 democracies have proven democratically resilient, having maintained their democratic status uninterruptedly since 1975 or when they transitioned to democracy» (IDEA, 2019).

The opposition that must be undertaken is not against the capitalist character of globalization, since globalization coexists well with democratic regimes. In fact, it seems to flourish better in democratic regimes, but the excesses that were committed regarding its deregulation have led to the diminished importance of citizen participation in political life and, as a consequence, to the diminished trust in their national states. Nevertheless, we are witnessing the manifestation of a desire to ensure some kind of moral regeneration at a national level, which is what opposes the citizens to their economic, political, and even cultural elites.

The needed regeneration in political life, in order to face the challenges that modern times poses to National States and globalism, must be addressed not only in political terms but fundamentally in moral grounds. Political arrangements or even political values must be grounded in their moral sources. Combined they form a social imaginary.

2. The Relevance of Social Imaginaries

In defining social imaginary, we may start with Cornelius Castoriadis. He identifies the social imaginary has not being composed by

conceptions about what a society is but by what gives sense to the symbols, the goods, the institutions, i.e., what configures the *ethos* of a group. In these terms, the best way to define a society is a set of shared and unifying conceptions that provide a significant content and are framed in symbolic structures. Castoriadis refers as examples of social imaginaries the Old Testament to the Jews or the philosophical and democratic conceptions of the Ancient Greece. That is to say that a particular society can only be understood considering his binder and fundamental imaginaries, situated in a particular space and time context. This imaginary provides a horizon of meaning that allows to determine what a society is in ontological terms, as he refers: «The institution of society is in each case the institution of a magma of social imaginary significations, which we can and must call a world of significations» (Castoriadis 1987: 359). It is this set of significant and meaning, supplied by the social imaginary, that provides a specific vision of the world and that creates the proper “world” of a society, i.e., that institutes a society and allows it to be distinguished from others.

Another author, Benedict Anderson, emphasizes the constructive aspect of the imaginative creations but goes beyond the specificity of meaning and signification underling several social imaginaries as a differentiator source between societies. To Anderson, the same social imaginary does not only have a differentiator and identity aspect of a particular society. To Anderson, the social imaginary is not the only identity differentiator of a particular society; it is more than that – it is transversal to different groups or societies, and it is formed and developed in history in its civilizational terms. An example of this conception is the social imaginary underlying the concept of nation. The modern concept of nation has been instituted in many societies, since the end of the 18th century, because people were called to participate and to take part in similar kinds of social practices, forming, due to public participation, imagined communities that helped to fixate new identities or new nations. If we understand nation as «an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign» (Anderson, 1983: 15), we can understand that the social imaginary is not specific of a group or a society, mas but it is shared by different societies.

In those terms, although it is a fact that the forms of his institution-ization diverge from group to group, from society to society, it is always the same imaginary that constitutes the idea of a nation. What is determinant to understand what a nation or a society may be are not the political ideologies, which can be easily identified, but instead the cultural models which are shared in a similar way and the common implicit schemes of world interpretation.

On the other hand, Charles Taylor emphasizes that a modern social imaginary is not the way society imagines, but the way we imagine society. This is a very significant turn in the mainstream theory on social imaginaries. It is no longer a social or sociological theory, an external observation that allows a characterization and an empirical definition of what a society may be, as in Castoriadis; nor a social imaginary like Andersen's, shared by different groups and societies.

Departing from Andersen's thesis, although with an emphasis on phenomenological analysis, Taylor reaffirms the importance of cultural models that enlighten a vision of the world and that are sources of identity to those who share them, but he stresses that the social imaginaries are now modern, i.e., fit not only in groups or nations, but also, in its own way, in the individual.

Paradoxically, the atomism that characterizes modern societies does not diminish the strength of the idea of what a society or a nation is. For Taylor, what we see in modern times is a change in the comprehensible forms of societies as being composed by sacred hierarchies and timeless laws. In modernity, what underlies the moral order of societies is a relation between individuals that fundamentally aims to satisfy their private goods and consider their functional differences at an instrumental and contingent level, since their members are ultimately equal among themselves. Even in instances where the personal identity of the members of a society is marginalized and ostracized, they still consider themselves as equal and free individuals in legal, moral, and political terms.

From here, the consideration about what may be a social imaginary assumes phenomenological contours or begins to be understood, by Taylor, phenomenologically, in the sense of what is designated as

background. Quoting Taylor: «I want to speak of social imaginary here, rather than social theory, because there are important – and multiple – differences between the two. I speak of imaginary because I’m talking about the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories, and legends. But it is also the case that theory is usually the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. (...) Our social imaginary at any given time is complex. It incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life. This incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice. This understanding is both factual and ‘normative’; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice. (...) What I’m calling the social imaginary extends beyond the immediate background understanding that makes sense of our particular practices (...) this understanding necessarily supposes a wider grasp of our whole predicament, how we stand in relationship to one another, how we got where we are, how we relate to other groups... It is in fact that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world become evident». (Taylor, 2002: 106-107).

The context of the social imaginary provides the sense of conjoint belonging, the sense to the way of being in the world in social terms, the sense that justifies the expectations that we can have towards us and the others, i.e., gives the special-time context in which we realize, judge and act in the world; provides the parameters in which people can imagine their social existence.

Significant in Taylor, comparing with other mentioned authors, is that the modern social imaginary has not been established from the 18th century onwards in opposition or against other social imaginaries, either the Greek, Jewish or Christian, with their philosophical, political and religious ideas, or other social imaginaries that coexist with

this Western social imaginary that we have been talking about. The Western modern social imaginary constitutes itself as the relation and the encounter with other social imaginaries, i.e., constitutes an intercultural, intercivilizational form, exploring how its meaning and the institutions of power that reflect them are generated, and, at the same time, works as a trigger of transformation and evolution through acculturation.

It is in this sense that the notion of national community, the one of a nation, demands a comprehension of the specificity of a cultural particularity and not merely an assertion of the political ideologies that may characterize them. In fact, modern ideologies, as liberalism, conservatism or socialism are no longer identity references of a nation; on the other hand, a collective community compromised with certain values and ideals that articulate the same social imaginary in factual political programs seems the most adequate criterion to define, nowadays, what a nation is.

3. The fragmentation of Social Imaginaries

As I have mentioned before, in the present context, States are not just States, they are National States as well. And that poses another type of questions and problems that are fundamentally as important as the present claims of citizens to their national political institutions. Indeed, as Charles Taylor sustains and concludes, in an article entitled *Why do Nations have to become States?*: «In the best of all worlds, nations would not have to become states. It should be one of their options (self-determination) but not the top option. A higher aspiration is supranational unity, following the best of the modern political tradition.» (Taylor, 1993: 58). It is not surprising that the Canadian philosopher, already in 1993, almost 30 years ago, anticipated what seems to be, in our days, an outcome of the so-called crisis of democracy. As mentioned before, the current indeterminacy, in some cases, of Representative Democracy, the *Constitutional retrogression*, the elitism in politics, the inept party system, the menaces of authoritarianism and populism, in their mutual and possible interconnectedness, but, above all, a kind

of feeling of depoliticization of ordinary life is felt by ordinary citizens regarding their National States. In fact, there is an increased feeling that the decisions that really matter, those decisions that have concrete economic and social impacts in our lives, are not made in response to our personal or community claims. Those decisions and the adopted policies, although made and implanted on a national level, mostly depend on or result from international conjunctures. The European Union (EU) is a perfect example.

The most curious aspect is the fact that the project of creation of a European Constitution was not approved by the majority of the member states and one of its highly problematic issues was the attempt to affirm the Christian and Jewish heritage of the European people. Besides everything that could bring Europeans together, they affirm that their identities were not and could not be put in question. The EU is and will still be an alliance of nations – *Walloons and Flemish identify themselves first as Belgians and only indirectly as Europeans, the same with Catalans and Basques in Spain, in spite of their attempts to achieve independency.*

We must therefore ask: what is a Nation? What characteristics must we take into consideration to identify a political organized society as a Nation? Is it sufficient, to know what a Nation is, to call the political organization of a group of people living in a demarcated territory a National State? Are there other characteristics, particularly at a moral level, that could better identify what a Nation is?

Let us start with a quote from Ernest Renan: «A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which, properly speaking, are really one and the same constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other is the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the desire to continue to invest in the heritage that we have jointly received. (...) A great aggregation of men, with a sane mind and a warm heart, created a moral conscience that calls itself a nation» (Renan, 1882: 10-11).

We take in due consideration that the historical context in which Ernest Renan undertakes his reflection is characterized by the enormous proliferation of different configurations and different forms of political organization of societies, such as duchies and principalities,

particularly in Central and Eastern Europe at the late of the 19th century. But, for our purposes, it is more important to stress that for the author there is not any transcendent principle that may inform and justify the existence of the identity of one nation. The affirmed *laïcité* of the National State that emerges from the French Revolution has acknowledgment in Ernest Renan, yet he also does not sustain that the political organization of public life relies only on the territorial criterion to explain what a nation is and how it may be distinguished from others.

From Ernest Renan's quote and in several examples rooted on Hegel's *Zeitgeist*, we may identify a current of thought that has crossed the entire 20th century. That current of thought affirms, broadly speaking, that a Nation is or reflects a sense of common belonging for a group of people grounded in a common history, traditions, systems of beliefs, a cultural heritage, a common language, a sense of shared genetic uniqueness and, likewise, a collective patrimony that is not only spiritual, but also materialized in institutional political structures. In a Nation, people find their own concept of a meaningful life that is worth pursuing; they find a common "world vision" and a moral horizon that justifies their choices and their claims. In a word, in a Nation, people find their Identity. An Identity that is worth fighting for, dying for, and that is what has led to extreme forms of nationalism and the well-known terrible conflicts that our previous generation has experienced.

Those conflicts were brought about, first, in the name of the right to self-determination of different nations, but, secondly, they were based on a project to spread that identity across the world because it was thought that it was not only the best, but also the only worth of being lived. So, as self-determination becomes the right of a Nation to exist, the self-rule of the people becomes the necessary condition for them to affirm their personal identities and that is only fruitful if it is combined with the affirmation of a national identity. That is the means through which the *spiritual principle* is combined with political institutional frameworks to form a Nation.

We know that the concept of Nation is frequently associated to a politically organized society, to a National State that endorses social cohesion between its citizens. However, that is not necessarily the only way to understand it. In fact, social cohesion in a National State could

be achieved by the regulation of social life through law, by establishing common rights and duties, through the satisfaction of the needs of its members; however, those are not the only mechanisms or even the core mechanisms that create the bounds and the sense of belonging that, crucially, characterize what a Nation is.

Put this way, we may consider the concept of Nation without political attributes; more currently, it has been pointed out that if we consider the immaterial or spiritual characteristics of a Nation, then we may find different nations living together under the same political structure, that is, in one same State and, last but not least, there are not many nations in the world that manifest a cohesion and identification between their political institutions and their common cultural or spiritual heritage. Nevertheless, people seem to support their Nation in the same way they advocate the right to manifest their personal identities. Instead of what is commonly supposed, and taken the evidence from history, they take the former as a mean to accomplish the latter.

Conceived in its full amplitude, the concept of Nation involves a particular moral conception derived from a common tradition, a history and a system of beliefs projected in a future shared horizon. It is an ongoing process formed by subjective actions and interactions among individuals that gives birth to a collective identity recognizable and understood by its members who act in conformity with that sense of belonging. Obviously, this is not a peaceful process nor even can it be described objectively or factually by sociological measurable or statistic methods. It is a process of identification and formation of a collective identity that occurs, most of the times, but not necessarily, in a delimited territory, where the public actions and interactions are politically organized, involving the coexistence of different subjectivities that convey, inevitably, multiple ambiguities, to the point of considering the possibility of existing different social identities in a same Nation.

It is important to take in consideration that a personal identity reveals an active and creative agent that, in its intentional actions, appropriates and assumes cultural and social established values and norms, but also recreates values and disclose new meanings to social existence. On the other hand, a collective identity, in the scope of

what we may define as Nation, is composed by members of different communities of shared values and different cultural backgrounds, but, at the same time, members who recognize a similar feeling of belonging, the same sense of citizenship. That does not mean that there are not conflictual claims and demands in the process of manifestation and affirmation of a personal identity and the assumption of a collective identity. It is precisely the outcome of the dialectic between the need of recognition of a personal identity and the opportunities that political societies provide for the manifestation and affirmation of that identity that will form the specific spirit of a Nation. It is important to underline that those conflicts or that dialectic it is not structured only by the normative dimension of the State; more than that, it is regulated by informal mechanisms of acculturation inherent to any contextualized and multidimensional social life (See Greenfeld, 1993).

The true meaning of a Nation resides on the existence of a cultural community with shared founding myths, symbolic meanings, and values but, at the same time, with the perspective of a common and meaningful future horizon of collective realization that justifies social and political arrangements. Therefore, the identity of a Nation is a dialogical, relational one. An identity composed by different and subjective interpretations of what unites its members, and, because of it, it is a shared mental realm, more symbolic than normative, more imaginary than statutory. It provides the context through which a specific political organization may exist and the comprehension and justification of its institutions (See Steger, 2009).

As we experience this changing in the political ideology to the social imaginary as a proper way to express and understand what a Nation is, the feeling of interdependency and the need of a relation and the encounter between cultures and civilizations, which is inherent to that change and to the evolution of the social imaginary, is, at the same time, the reason of his weakening and fragmentation. The thesis is: in the same way the globalized world has been affirming a global imaginary, the social imaginary of a Nation is degrading, what, necessarily, results in a diffuse understanding and in a disfigured affirmation of the personal and collective identity. The national feeling, of belonging to a

Nation, is progressively defied by a global feeling, the one in we belong to the world.

Of course this global imaginary is only possible because it has the means to constitute and to affirm itself, and that affirmation goes through out the action of the individuals that, for reasons like distorted representativity, partisanship, elitism, populism and negative nationalisms, but in particular by economic globalization and by the affirmation of a public opinion through media networks that are formed worldwide (Urbinati, 2014), forge new identities or identify other sources of identity that also give meaning to their being and their *being in the world*, giving rise to new cosmopolitan ideologies. However, this global imaginary is incomplete and dysfunctional since it lacks the foundations and the social and political institutions to constitute itself as a global social imaginary. As already stated, globalization is not accompanied by globalism. Even the United Nations, which could become an effective mean of promoting this globalism, is not only often disunited, but above all it is intended and cannot fail to be a unity of nations.

In terms of the imaginary globalism attempted by economic and political elites, it points out its positive aspects such as the general increase in the standard of living, the reduction of poverty on a global scale and technological progress. However, we can also identify its dangers: accentuated social inequalities and marginalization of those who are left behind, the proliferation of conflicting forms of self-centered satisfaction, the accentuation of individualism and the destruction of the bonds of solidarity between individuals and peoples, environmental destruction and, above all, the weakening of democratic forms of participation in the construction of the world in which we live and want to live in.

Although incomplete and dysfunctional, this global or planetary imaginary is a cosmopolitan imaginary that is created around a social and political sense, individually formed, and affirmed in opposition to the social and political sense of a collectively shared nationality. It emerges through a notion of cultural unity promoted by globalization and a depoliticization of the principles of social and political organization that were until now considered natural and universal. Without the

need for institutional support, allied with an ideal of authenticity based on an individualized, atomized, and radicalized notion of autonomy and self-realization, the consequence is the rise of an ordinary life in which the affirmation of the equal dignity of choices leads to moral relativism.

Conclusion

Globalization has undoubtedly promoted the increase of inequities as it has impeded the affirmation of personal, national or regional identities, promoted the opposition to migrant movements and to the acceptance of refugees, it has weakened the democratic party system and contributed to the impairment of the social bond between the citizens and the National States. Those are only a few examples of some societal problems that we are dealing with, but a wiser reaction to this is not to declare the end of National States nor even to affirm an era of crises in democracy, such as Colin Crouch notion of *Post-Democracy*⁹ that points it as the outcome of elitism (Crouch, 2000) or Ferrajoli pessimism towards constitutionalism and representation (Ferrajoli, 2005) or even Nadia Urbinati on the dangers of populism (Urbinati, 2014).

In what regards globalism, it is necessary that ordinary citizens also directly benefit from globalization or, at least, gain some protection against its dangers, particularly as far the increase of inequities is concerned. Taking Richard Higgott's affirmation into account, «The political system needs compromises that reconcile capitalism with *mass democracy*, not *cosmopolitan democratic elitism*. Governments of a non-populist persuasion need to re-boot the social contract between state and society and provide enough citizen incentive to make citizen preservation of capitalism a major societal commitment» (Higgott, 2018:13).

National States are part of a particular cultural order that aims for modernization and progress and that justifies its power and territorial authority over their populations in the name of national sovereignty. In addition, the implementation of public policies justifies itself as a

⁹The term was coined by Colin Crouch in a 2000 article, published on Fabian Pamphlets, entitled by «Coping with Post Democracy».

form of preservation and reproduction of the uniqueness of a national identity and, at the same time, in a global world, calls for the recognition of its specificity.

For what has been said, we may conclude that National States distinguishes from one another mostly by the comprehension of its cultural uniqueness rather than its normative constitution. It is the sense of nationhood, derived from the imaginary of a Nation that shapes the structure, the constitution, and the regime that National States adopt. In a powerful statement that could help to understand our thesis about National States and nations, «nationalism is rarely the nationalism of the nation» (Anderson, 1991: 8).

It is necessary to attach a moral normativity to globalization where social values prevail over economic ones; it is necessary to affirm a stronger civic ethics, altruism in relations and recognition of the importance of good governance. That should always be a political process, not an economical one, and it will only be possible under a democratic political frame.

It is necessary to reaffirm the structural importance of moral values in politics and not apathetically stand by witnessing the consolidation of instrumental economic values.

It is necessary to go back to our democratic tradition based on values such as honour, trust, loyalty, human rights, respect for differences, equal opportunities. It is necessary to identify the new social imaginaries that may overcome the fragmentation that we are witnessing on national and global levels.

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