DYNAMIC SOCIOLOGY: A SOCIAL THEORY IN ACTION

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ABSTRACT

Dynamic sociology is the sociological approach that studies the effects of the social forces present and operating in social and cultural systems on the personality systems of individuals, determining the different forms of psychological organization which they assume through cultivation or primary and secondary socialization processes. The paper tries to explain how the original idea of dynamic sociology formulated by Howard Washington Odum in 1947 has developed into current social theory through the integration of some essential theoretical contributions taken from Talcott Parsons, Herbert Marcuse, Nicklas Luhmann, Michel Foucault and Leonardo Benvenuti. The focal points are the distinction between acquisitive and ascriptive societies, the key concept of subjectivity, the plurality of the forms of psychological organization and the range of psychoanalysis. The paper also describes the core of the theory, the pattern variables of the different forms of psychological organization: ascription, subjectivity, post-subjectivity and re-ascription. In conclusion, it illustrates the main training and social research programs carried out on the basis of this approach in the fields of criminology, political sociology and intervention in situations of hardship with social origins.

Keywords: dynamic sociology, social theory, psychoanalysis, subjectivity, forms of psychological organization.

1. The development of a social theory

ALSoD defines dynamic sociology “which takes its name from the ancient Greek term dūnamis” as “the sociological approach which studies the effects of social forces present and operating in the social and cultural systems on the systems of personality of individuals, determining the different forms of psychological organization which they assume through cultivation or primary and secondary socialization processes”[1].

The original idea of dynamic sociology comes from Howard Washington Odum, sociologist and psychologist, who in 1947 published Understanding Society: the Principles of Dynamic Sociology [2]. His approach has two fundamental assumptions:

a) the action on individuals and groups of certain entities named social forces;

b) the existence of a profound psychological divergence between groups of individuals differently shaped by these forces.
Howard W. Odum was so committed to the centrality of the concept of social forces that in 1922 he founded an academic journal of social science with a multidisciplinary approach, published by Oxford University Press, named *Journal of Social Forces*.

Brookover writes in his ASR review of *Understanding Society* that “the major difference between this and other recent texts is that the entire book is organized within the basic frame of reference provided by the contrast between and the problems produced by the shift from folk culture to civilization” [3].

Odum’s book undoubtedly represents the origin of dynamic sociology, but completing the approach has required a long journey through social theory.

The first steps on this journey are the key contributions of Talcott Parsons:

a) the social system is a system of action, a cybernetic hierarchy of four interdependent sub-systems which are, in ascending order: the organism directed to adaptation, the system of personality to goal achievement, the social system to integration and the cultural system to maintenance of the latent structure [4];

b) the connection between society and individual through the mechanism of introjection taken from psychoanalysis of Freud; in the course of primary socialization, the individual introjects as an integral part of his personality the values of social orientation proposed by his/her parents; this is made possible because, since the very beginning of his/her life, the individual is organized as a subject, acting in accordance with certain roles, which include expectations [5];

c) the self-organization of the individual as a subject is an essential step in primary socialization, because it makes possible the attribution of roles. The subject’s own history is a series of transitions from role to role in the different stages of life, from childhood to maturity to old age; without roles and reciprocity of interaction, socialization could not go on at all [5].

Parsons’s most important contribution, however, is the dichotomy achievement vs. ascription. Parsons uses these terms as a structural variable concerning alternative ways of considering the individual object of an interaction process. Achievement means considering the individual on the basis of general criteria of performance, including educational qualifications and capabilities, achieved through instruction, experience and personal commitment. Ascription on the contrary means basing consideration of the individual on ascribed qualities, a combination of features that he or she cannot modify in any way, such as lineage, sex, age, race, and social class of origin [5].

The second step in the development of the dynamic sociology approach is the integration of the theoretical contribution of Herbert Marcuse. Although Marcuse does not give a definition of ascriptive societies, he surely takes this step into account when he refers to the different stages of civilization, using the term acquisitive society in precise reference the modern society of the subject. In addition, Marcuse affirms that cultural factors, which have determined the construction of the individual as a subject, have also “severed the instinctual roots of society”[6].

Marcuse also states that psychoanalysis epitomizes a precise theory of the human being as a subject who is psychically organized to be able to interiorise in a certain way the repression of instincts and to subordinate the principle of pleasure to that of reality, functions essential to the existence of modern, acquisitive society. This means that different kinds of people with a different mechanism of interior repression not only existed in past societies, but could also exist in the future through an inversion of dominance between the principles of pleasure and of reality, and be liberated from permanent repression of the instinctual structure [6].
The third step is the contribution of Nicklas Luhmann, which defines the subject as “a system which makes use of sense”. He also explains that subjectivity “unlike directly lived experience, is not an innate quality, and not something already existing simply to bring into evidence through phenomenological reflection, but a late form of human self-construction, socially full to the maximum with presuppositions” [7].

Luhmann clearly states that subjectivity is just one of the many possible forms of self-construction of the individual, and was preceded by a different kind of man, functioning in response to “the social orders of the past”, based on a “prearranged structure of needs and goals”. In these traditional and pre-modern societies, “something would have existed that represented the ultimate basis of orderly human coexistence”, itself based on “institutionalized foundations of sense at the level of the overall society”, identified as the “cosmic order” or “ultimate interpretation of the world”. On the contrary, in acquisitive societies, those of the subject, “undetermined complexity is replaced by a vision of world intended as reducible complexity” and the basic processes on which sense is based have lost their general grade of institutionalization and are relegated to “partial systems, relatively well identified”, like science and law [7].

The main characteristic of the individual organized as a subject is the ability to make use of sense by him/herself, without referring to foundations of sense institutionalized at the level of the overall society, and thus to be self-referential. The subject is the actor and unique judge of his/her actions, free to choose among many possibilities and to find success and master roles based only on his/her performance [8].

In other words, the subject builds him/herself as the possessor of individual rights, recognized as such by the partial system of law and immunized by the social link with his/her community of origin against any religious entity overseeing his/her life [12].

Society’s control over a self-referential subject is assured by the roles and the expectations of role, in terms of “expectations of expectations”, through the normative mechanism of double contingency. It appears evident in Luhmann that both subject and subjectivity are products typical of modernity, due to the particular path of historical, economic and socio-political development of the Western world from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment and the French and American Revolutions. In other contexts, free of the effects of acculturation during and after the colonial period, an essentially traditional model of man and society would have remained dominant [7].

The fourth step comes from Michel Foucault, who observes that neither mercantile society nor the later bourgeois society of the Age of Reason ever manifested itself as a simple “association of isolated juridical subjects”. Instead the individual has become “the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society”. At the same time, the modern individual conceived as a subject is “a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline’” [9].

Discipline is “the unitary technique”, made possible by the scientific knowledge of the body, “by which the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force”. It is essential in the construction of the subject, who has a manipulable self, because he/she continuously needs adjustment to fulfill roles and to be socially predictable. Along with the other technologies of “accumulation of capital” and “social division of work”, discipline makes possible “the accumulation of men” in the new organizations of modernity: the factories, the armies, the bureaucracies, etc. [9].

The fifth and last step in the development of the approach of dynamic sociology is taken from Leonardo Benvenuti, sociologist and psychologist, who has built his own approach, sociotherapy, intended as an operational use of sociology in an “ecological
approach to hardship”. He adopts many of the ideas of Luhmann and Foucault about subjectivity and subject, and of Marshall McLuhan about media and communication, but also puts forward original intuitions. His approach lies within a perspective of the historical drift of media, linking each radical change in the dominant medium to a different kind of society and a different form of human psychological organization. Ascription is typical of oral media and cultures/societies, while subjectivity is representative of media and societies that are typographic. The product of the new media, on the other hand, is a different form of psychological organization named neo-oral, still not perfectly definable, but in any case different from subjectivity, which at present appears to be in crisis, a surviving product of a medium of the past [10].

A consequence is that for Benvenuti, like Marcuse, psychoanalysis is “a theory of the subject”, which works only if the patients are themselves subjects, formed through a disciplinary approach and thus with a “personality structure”, whereas it fails if there is another form of psychological organization, such as ascription or neo-oral. In addition, concerning the composition of the psychological apparatus, Benvenuti affirms that id, ego and superego exist only in the subject, while in the neo-oral person superego no longer exists. So, like George H. Mead, he considers just two entities, I and Self, the latter being the seat of the systems of representations, which he sums up as identity [10].

Benvenuti’s most important theoretical asset is probably his definition of representation as a combination of two elements, image (the cognitive element) and affective investment (the affective one). An essential part of the work of the sociotherapist, the specialized sociologist who conducts conversations utilizing the phenomenological tool of empathy with a person in a condition of hardship or addiction of social origin, is to understand what his/her form of psychological organization is. Then, the sociotherapist has to map and understand the content and origin of the representations making up his/her system and to trace their contribution to the hardship or addiction. Finally, his task is to bring about changes in one or more of these representations, in order that the person may acquire the autonomy needed to successfully overcome the hardship or addiction [11].

2. The core of the theory: forms of psychological organization

The interpretation and integration of these contributions has made possible the construction of a framework of forms of psychological organization and their respective features, all of which are present in contemporary society.

2.1 - Ascription

Ascription is a simple and very old social technology and a form of psychological organization. It has characterized traditional societies and cultures, from those of ancient and medieval civilizations in Europe and elsewhere to those of the Middle-East, Asia, Africa and large parts of the world up to the present day. Ascriptive societies differ widely from each other, from tribal and primitive to highly sophisticated, and at present, after the acculturation processes of the colonial and post-colonial age, are very rarely pure. China, India and many Eastern and Islamic societies are hybrid types, where subjects and ascriptive people live side by side, and both forms have their strongholds in different roles, organizations and institutions, often giving rise to contradictions and conflicts. In Europe as well, immigration processes have led to the movement of millions of ascriptive people, especially Islamic, into the heart of acquisitive societies, where they have
established strong sub-cultural communities, adding to the continuing presence of already existing *ascriptive* sub-cultures, like those of Roma and Sinthi nomads.

These are the pattern variables of *ascriptive*:  
1) **Hetero-reference**: this is an external element that directs decision-making in the society as a whole and is also an absolute precondition for the processing of experience by individuals; it is a religious/metaphysical or traditional entity or concept, in any case unquestionable and taken for granted;

2) **Necessary sharing**: hetero-reference is also something which “represents the ultimate reason for the order of human coexistence” [7], and so expresses the essence of the “community as necessary sharing” and as the “irrevocable basis of the social bond” [12]; the individual feels deeply bound to his/her community, which may be religious and as such potentially universal (such as the *Umma* for Muslims), or more narrow: a race, for example, a family, a village or a tribe, which in any case represents a sort of *chosen people*;

3) **Inequality**: human beings are not equal and their differences are due to ascribed attributes (birth, inherited religion, lineage, race, caste, sex, age); anyone who is part of the *chosen people* deserves respect and solidarity, while others are enemies, unbelievers or aliens and deserve hate, contempt or indifference; in the community, there are “procedures of 'ascending' individualization” [9], from the lowest subordinates to the chiefs, where everyone has a rigid status conferred by hetero-reference itself, by birth, etc.;

4) **Imperative of tradition**: there are no written and changeable norms from human legislators but rather only rules directly derived from sacred texts or oral tradition, which must be accepted and cannot be changed (the *Sharia* for observant Muslims); these rules regulate in a complete and integral way both the duties toward the hetero-reference and every segment of social life; the community has a group of experts (*Ulema, Mullah, Brahmins*, etc…) with a monopoly on the interpretation of these texts or rules, while power is vested in a unique authority, both political and religious at same time; social life is in large part the “fulfillment of previously established ultimate goals” [7];

5) **Cultivation**: under *ascriptive*, socialization processes have no reason to exist; the newborn is simply cultivated, introduced by the elders to the culture, the “cosmic order” or “ultimate interpretations of the world” [7] of the *chosen people's* community; there are no choices about what to believe, to be or become: almost everything is already decided by ascribed attributes and rigid status; there is no room for an “autonomous use of reasoning”;

6) **Functional unity of Self**: the ascriptive man/woman is complete, and is what he/she is at every moment of life and of the day and has no concept of changeable social roles; he/she does not know the rift between duty and pleasure, working and leisure time; the ascriptive individual simply does what he/she does because of a recognition that it is right; it is part of an order of things that cannot be changed and it is not up to him/her to modify or judge;

7) **Oral communication**: communication and transmission of knowledge are mainly oral, and every relationship is direct and personal, not mediated by social roles; the essential dimension is the empirical one; great importance is bestowed on learning sacred texts and teachings from memory; this does not impede a wide utilization of the *new media*, with images and oral messages;
8) **Intensity and visibility of punishment**: little freedom of action is left to the individual and rules are harshly enforced; disagreement is not admitted; deterrence is not assured by the certainty of the sanction, but by its intensity, its public and exemplary nature [9].

### 2.2- Subjectivity

Subjectivity is an elaborate social technology, requiring several preconditions in society itself [7] which must be in place and working properly to assure its replication:

a) **Irrelevance of religion** as a shared factor in social orientation; religion is downgraded from inherited and “unquestionable truth” to “personal belief”, one of the many possible choices in the private sphere of the subject, while the State is secular and neutral regarding atheism and the different religions;

b) **Equality of rights**, civil, social and political, which must be granted and pledged to all subjects; this also means the irrelevance of ascribed attributes;

c) **Balanced structure of opportunities**, in terms of the possibility of gaining access to the diverse roles of society, feasibly reachable through a prearranged and knowable system of performances and selections;

d) **A single map of reality** shared by all the subjects, with a prevailing rational and symbolic dimension;

e) **Disciplinary approach** in all phases of socialization and in every context, from family, to school, to all organizations;

f) **Merit system**, which allows every subject to advance in a mode proportional to his/her capacities and investment in terms of effort and self-denial;

g) **Certainty of sanction** in case of transgression of the law and social rules.

Subjectivity is the form of psychological organization of the individual that functions in acquisitive societies. Typical of Western modernity, it is handed down through primary and secondary socialization processes, with these pattern variables:

1) **Self-reference**: the subject is a self-referential system “who makes use of sense”[7]. He/she is oriented to self-actualization, to the realization of his/her social destiny, solely responsible for his/her own decisions and actions because subjectivity entails an emancipation from any reference to superior entities of a religious or metaphysical nature, operating as a shared “sense of the overall society” [7].

2) **Principle of reality**: the psychological system of the subject is disciplined and able to distinguish between what is simply possible and what is in fact feasible; the subject has largely interiorized the repression of his/her instinctual structure [6] so as to be able to give up or at least delay the fulfillment of his/her own desires or sometimes even needs, in favor of the achievement of an objective future that is not only possible but feasible [10];

3) **Internalization of rules**: this is the internal consequence of the socialization process, of an introjection into the individual's personality system of modes of orientation consistent with the norms of the social system and the values of the cultural system [5]; the subject must have interiorized the majority of repressions, so that they become “automatic and unconscious” [6];

4) **Social predictability**: this is the external consequence of the socialization process, which reflects on social behaviours and entails both the mutual identification of other individuals as subjects and the sharing of the same
social structures, in terms of “expectations of expectations”, in accordance with the normative mechanism of “double contingency” [7];

5) **Manipulable self**: this is necessary if the individual is to follow the path of disciplinary instruction, and to satisfy the specific requirements of the social role, which to a greater or lesser extent requires the systematic adoption of institutionalized behaviours and subordination to a disciplinary order;

6) **Functional differentiation of Self**: this is the specific modality by which the subject as a system making use of sense reduces his/her internal complexity [7] and increases his/her performance [6]. This reduction leads to a division of his/her life into areas with distinct and separate boundaries (family, work, social and political activity, leisure time, religion, cultural and sport interests) in which he/she becomes a social actor, interpreting different roles;

7) **Capability of selection**: to achieve his/her goals, the subject has to be able to reduce external complexity through the ability to make selections among the disordered variety of actions and messages in the environment; this is possible by means of the institutionalization of some behaviours [7];

8) **Capability of performance**: to reach his/her goals, the subject must display a capacity to convert potentialities into performances, which are “concrete expressions of a capability to create, increase and improve socially useful objects” [6]; with a combination of performances the subject carries out projects and assumes roles, pursues a career and fulfils his/her social destiny;

9) **Orientation to the future**: the subject has an idea of time that is linear and open to the future, because the actualization of his/her potentialities requires the availability of time; present and future are so interdependent that “the present almost seems to stop having its own role in life” [10];

10) **Symbolic communication**: the subject's communication takes place mostly at the symbolic level, where values, norms and roles may exist [7]. Literacy is fundamental for the subject, along with the capacity for the symbolic processing of empirical situations through language and reasoning.

The gradual decline of the preconditions for the replication of subjectivity, together with the new media and the action of social forces has opened the way for two new forms of psychological organization: **post-subjectivity** and **re-ascription** [13].

### 2.3 - Post-subjectivity

**Post-subjectivity** is a condition of undisciplined egoicity, a way out of subjectivity toward a complete liberation from any internal repression of instinctual structures [6]. Not a social technology, it is simply a form of psychological organization that can vary widely, from weak subjectivity to maximum peaks that may bring a propensity toward situations of serious hardship and/or various kinds of addiction [12].

These are the pattern variables of post-subjectivity:

1) **Narcissism**: the post-subject, socialized to subjectivity, but in a way which may be weak, inadequate, incomplete or ephemeral, retains the self-reference typical of subjectivity, but doesn’t direct it to the future, in planning terms, but to immediate pleasure and gratification. All attention is concentrated on him/herself and his/her own sensations and emotions;

2) **Principle of pleasure**: in the post-subject this principle prevails, while the principle of reality is marginal and unreliable; he/she is more or less unable to inhibit instinctual structures or distinguish the possible from the feasible;
3) **Suppression of the future**: the post-subject has no linear notion of time, and therefore is basically incapable of long term planning; the future often does not represent for him/her a promise, but a threat to be removed. His/her time is flattened into an eternal present, where every choice appears reversible;

4) **Immunization from rules**: removing the future, the post-subject also has a vague and indeterminate perception of the risks and consequences of his/her behaviour; he/she is disinclined toward discipline and rules, and simply pursues the satisfaction of his/her needs and desires of the moment;

5) **Social unpredictability**: the post-subject doesn’t identify others as subjects whose expectations are to be considered, and becomes more or less socially unpredictable; his/her total focus on his/her own self is accompanied by complete indifference to others and to their fate, emotions or suffering;

6) **Difficulty of adaptation**: the post-subject, whose *childish omnipotence* has never been efficaciously disciplined by parents, school or other socialization agencies, lacks a *manipulable self* and every adaptation bothers him/her; he/she has also a high degree of difficulty in managing *frustration*;

7) **Functional disorganization of Self**: the post-subject has an inadequate functional organization of self; he/she loses to a variable degree the capacity to interpret *roles* and to hold them separate from each other;

8) **Difficulty of selection**: the post-subject has difficulty making any lasting choices and therefore coping with the redundancy of the environment or the continuous flow of information from the new media. The outcome is either a degradation of the gateway of the psychological system, which becomes hyper-reactive, or a strengthening of it, bringing a condition of apathy, a growing difficulty in feeling emotions, and a need to seek ever stronger ones;

9) **Difficulty of performance**: in spite of his/her potentialities, the post-subject is often unable to direct them along a coherent path, and thus has an inclination to be fickle in all activities, from studies to work to family, with a high degree of inconsistency in any kind of responsibility undertaken;

10) **Neo-oral communication**: rather than the symbolic, the post-subject prefers the empirical dimension in which satisfaction is more immediate, or the completely virtual dimension offered by the new media, where he/she can embody other identities or freely invent his/her own, and the barrier between the imaginary, possible and feasible does not exist. His/her communication is centred on videos and iconic symbols as well as non-verbal elements [13].

**2.4 - Re-ascription**

*Re-ascription* is a condition of relapse into ascription, a way out of *subjectivity* in favour of a new kind of hetero-reference. In acquisitive societies, the self-referential individual of subjectivity, in certain critical situations or when he/she must face and interpret a complex reality which is difficult to explain, understand and endure with his/her cognitive and logical resources alone, may abandon the free use of reasoning. This in order to seek refuge in some kind of hetero-reference, which may drive him/her into a new, reassuring community dimension, the sole aim or destiny being “salvation”.

The *pattern variables* of re-ascription are very similar to those of ascription:

1) **Hetero-reference**: this place may be filled by a sect, a social movement, an entity, a new cult or religion, or a particular interpretation of a traditional one, as in the
case of fundamentalist groups, whose doctrine and vision of the world becomes an “unquestionable truth” orienting every life and relationship choice, and also giving precise meaning to new currents of experience;

2) **Necessary sharing**: once joined, the group cannot easily be left; it appears to be the only reality able to satisfy the relational and emotional needs of the former subject; every resource is shared with or belongs to the whole group;

3) **Inequality**: human beings are not equal: the members of the group are the new *chosen people*, and its leaders deserve obedience because they have undergone some kind of investiture by the hetero-reference and have charismatic powers;

4) **Imperative of rules**: the rules of the group are essential for its survival, and so respect for them is emphasized and connected with elements of sacredness;

5) **Cultivation**: socialization of the former subject is blocked or destroyed, because previous social and often even family links are interrupted in a sort of cognitive and emotive restructuring, with a reduction in the social structure of the group;

6) **Functional unity of Self**: the former subject can no longer properly cope with social roles because the membership of the group becomes central and essential, requiring his/her primary or total allegiance;

7) **Oral or neo-oral communication**: within the group, communication is mostly oral or through the new media, including the transmission of information and relevant knowledge, which often passes through the mediation of charismatic leaders who may be cyber enhanced by blogs, social media or other devices;

8) **Intensity and visibility of punishment**: dissent is usually forbidden; anyone who transgresses the strict rules of the group, invariably harshly enforced, must be punished or expelled through a public sanction, visible to everybody [13].

3 - **The theory in action: training and research programs**

3.1 – The E.U. “Daphne 2“ Programme

The first social research and teaching program to include the dynamic sociology approach was the *Assistance to Victims of Crime* project (A.Vi.Cri.), approved and financed within the European Commission’s “Daphne 2” Programme, managed by the Faculty of *Psychology* 2 of “Sapienza” University of Rome together with the *Central Directorate of Criminal Police* of the Italian Ministry of the Interior. The project, aimed at enhancing relations between police operatives and crime victims, had the partnership of the Ministry of the Interior of Lower Saxony (Germany), the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary (UK) and the London Metropolitan Police - Scotland Yard (UK).

The project offered training courses for 150 officers and officials intended to serve as instructors of operatives in the different Italian police forces. The courses started on March 31st 2008, with thematic modules in jurisprudence, professional police techniques, forensic medicine, psychology and sociology [14]. The sociology module focused on the cultural perspectives of victimization, following dynamic sociology in three steps:

a) the police officers first had to learn to identify themselves as *subjects* and to understand the features of *subjectivity*. Among other things, their uniform was presented as a visible summary of the artefacts of subjectivity, hiding ascribed attributes and highlighting those that are achieved;

b) secondly, they had to reflect on the possibility that the victims, witnesses and perpetrators of crime they came into contact with during their service might be either *subjects* or people of a different *form of psychological organization*: 
1) **ascription**, for immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Islamic countries, especially in sub-cultural environments, along with Roma or Sinthi nomads;

2) **re-ascription**, for fundamentalists or members of sects or religious groups;

3) **post-subjectivity**, for most teenagers or other young people with a risky and disordered lifestyle or situations of hardship or addiction;

c) thirdly, the police officers learned how to build behavioural strategies to cope effectively with people with different forms of psychological organization and to manage problems related to their specific condition of victimization.

### 3.2 – The “Sapienza” research on the Five Star Movement

The course in *Public Relations and CSR* of the Communication and Social Research Department of “Sapienza” University of Rome carried out social research on the Five Star Movement, the Italian political landscape’s great novelty, in two steps:

- a) an ethnographic study through participant observation at the Movement’s offices and events in Rome between March 25th and May 27th 2013;

- b) an online questionnaire, handed out to a sample of Movement voters at the 24-25 February 2013 political elections, between April 13th and June 14th 2013 [15].

The theoretical orientation of the entire research project was that of the dynamic sociology approach, because of the nature of the pillars of the Movement doctrine:

1) the constant reference to “the Net” as an eschatological entity and to the concept of **community**, referring at a macro level to the idea of a unique **online community** on the internet, freely sharing information and resources, and at the micro level to the base groups of the Movement, named **Meetups**;

2) the negation of self-reference as a value;

3) the lack of an organizational structure with positions, offices and roles;

4) the prohibition on making public declarations or comments, granting interviews to journalists or participating in television broadcasts;

5) the denial of the prospect of a political career, together with a declared preference for amateurism and inexperience in politics;

6) the rejection of honorific attributions for institutional roles achieved through political activity, including the commitment of those elected to Parliament to be named simply “citizens”, as a mere expression of community;

7) the use of an innovative mix of oral and new media communication, with meetings and assemblies, along with blogs and social media on the internet;

8) the presence of **charismatic leadership**, embodied in the actor Beppe Grillo;

9) the limitation on the right to individual dissent, leading to many sensational cases of banishment, including those of several members of Parliament [15].

These rules seem to call for a sort of anthropological revolution, where **subjectivity** as the main form of psychological organization is replaced by a model of **re-ascription**. One of the study’s aims was to understand what forms of psychological organization were to be found among the Movement’s activists and voters and the nature of their commitment. Both the ethnographic research and the on-line questionnaire with some focused indicators have shown that all three forms of psychological organization, **subjectivity**, **re-ascription** and **post-subjectivity**, are present. The **re-ascriptive** form a core of faithful followers who declare that they would never change their minds about supporting the Movement and that they get information mostly from its online sources. The **subjects** are those on one hand more rationally persuaded by its positions, but also
more discriminating and open to the possibility of withdrawing their support in case of mistakes. The post-subjects are those from whom the Movement has gained fluid and unstable support, especially by means of a completely innovative form of communication.

3.3 - The social hardship intervention activities of AISoD

The definition of social hardship given by AISoD is “a condition of difficulty in the capacity for complexity reduction, affective investment and/or performance/choice. This condition may affect relationships, planning for the future, determining and pursuing existential, familial, work-related or developmental goals, and adaptation to environmental requirements, as well as the formation and maintenance of any temporary or lasting condition of dependence on relationships, stimuli, activities or substances.” [1].

What the dynamic sociologist is expected to do, making use of his/her academic and professional competence and special training, is “to intervene in the program of help to the individual, to the family, to the collective or to the organization, by means of individual conversations and group activities”. His/her specific expertise includes “theories, concepts and methods of sociology, methodology of social research and social psychology” and the use of “socio-dynamic analysis, diagnosis and intervention techniques, in the field of situations of social hardship” [1].

CONCLUSIONS

Dynamic sociology is an approach which provides a theoretical framework, possibly a useful basis for interpreting people and social phenomena in a different and in some ways original perspective. The rationale for this is that forms of psychological organization are entities which find their position in the frontier zone between the social system and individual psychological systems. They are the forms of human action and experience, fundamental ways of being, structural prerequisites underlying the system of personality, which may assume a widely differentiated range of orders and traits. For these reasons, dynamic sociology is a sort of “open contribution of sociology to psychology”, where both disciplines appear essential and complementary. The main task of dynamic sociology today is to provide practical orientation to the professional activity of the sociologist, within a perspective open both to the operation in the field of concepts and theories and to continuous theoretical development from field experience feedback.

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