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SESSION 1: RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

STATISTICS AND NATION-BUILDING IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

Reported Submitted by National Statistical Institute of Italy */

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In many respects the end of this century has been characterised by a renewed interest in, and attention to, national issues. In numerous countries national feeling and the awareness of belonging to a national community have been questioned as a result of the sweeping economic, social and institutional changes underway. The globalization of markets and the internationalisation of economic processes are forcing down national barriers and boundaries. Regional integration processes appeal, directly or indirectly, to affiliations and forms of solidarity that go beyond traditional national spheres (for example, Europe, but also NAFTA and ASEAN, etc.). Unemployment, social exclusion, economic and production crises determined by technological breakthroughs and changing markets are eroding the sense of belonging and of identity of many national communities, dividing them between haves and have nots, between those who participate and those who are excluded.

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2. In certain contexts the rediscovery or development of a common historical and cultural heritage in regions or local situations has led to demands to recognise new nationalities; in others the concern for the survival of identities tied to minorities or local cultures feeds the claims of specific national traits and distinctions; in others still, age-

old and never-stilled cultural conflicts have re-emerged replete with their ancient past of hostility. It has been estimated that, world-wide, there are between 4,000 and 6,000 situations of social groups that claim or could claim recognition of national status on the basis of common assumptions of cultural, linguistic, territorial, ethnic or religious homogeneity. The development of statistical systems, methods and techniques, and of capabilities to capture and process data today makes possible a "deep reading" of the different aspects of homogeneity and diversity, of the mode of functioning of different societies.

3. The protection of national feeling, which is seen or presumed to be threatened or violated, finds a basis in the need to build, consolidate, maintain or rediscover bonds of individual and collective identity, new and old community roots, in a context in which competition is forcing individuals to continually adjust their behaviour and culture, causing them to question habits, routines, relationships, etc.. Even national institutional systems and cultures have begun to compete with one another.

4. In this context there is a risk that research and competition may degenerate into conflict, intolerance and discrimination, into regurgitations of xenophobic nationalism, fomenting a culture based on prevarication and supremacy, ethnic, cultural or religious fundamentalism, thus posing serious threats to peace, security and co-existence among peoples. Unfortunately, recent history has offered clear examples of how serious and current these risks actually are. Statistics plays a delicate and difficult role in these processes: it can perform an essential function in supporting research, dialogue and the development of new forms of civil co-existence and collective identity; but it can also find itself prey to risks of manipulation and subordination.

5. The reaction of countries and of the international community to this new demand for identity and recognition of cultural roots has until now been sadly wanting, first and foremost in terms of comprehending the problem and, consequently, in terms of political initiatives and responses. Some people, assuming that the collapse of the Berlin Wall had put an end to such questions, consider the nation an obsolete concept and an obstacle to progress, which is presumed to be moving, instead, in the direction of internationalism and universalism. Others, on the contrary, defend the nation "as is", the bulwark of civilisation against any yield of sovereignty, against cultural contamination and any questioning. Still others preach an indiscriminate application of the principle of self-determination at the regional and local level, with the risk of setting off more or less deliberate, and more or less violent, ethnic cleansing operations. Such reactions reveal an upsetting lack of preparation and reflection. There has not yet been adequate reflection on the role of statistics, either.

6. For this reason we must start by recognising that the national question is today relevant and complex and must legitimately be raised in all its aspects, and that particular attention must be devoted to its relationship with statistics. The question is, of course, qualified by a profoundly different context than in the past. Economic and productive conditions have changed; the technologies and tools of communication, which nurture a cross-fertilisation of cultures and knowledge, have changed; lifestyles and working styles, which are increasingly influenced by guidelines of mobility and flexibility and less influenced by a stable relationship with the territory, with ethnic culture and with religious practices, etc., have changed. Official statistics has also changed. But the question of the nation, of its significance, of its meaning in relation to the identity and cohesion of the community and the effectiveness of its institutional structures remains pivotal. In fact, we believe that in the next century there will be an explosion of nations and national questions born out of the growing integration or disintegration of previous systems, out of the emergence of new cultures or the rediscovery of old values, out of the desire to distinguish local areas or small groups, out of the crossing and separation of different cultural bonds, old and new.

7. The nations and the international community must prepare themselves to manage these processes, turning this explosion into an occasion for cultural growth, for social dynamism and for improvement in the forms of peaceful co-existence among peoples. All the potential that statistics can offer must be used in the service of this evolution.

8. We believe, in fact, that statistics can play a key role in giving the national questions a perspective of civility and progress and in thwarting forms of degeneration and regression. And we also believe that the historical analysis of the relationship between statistics and nation-building may offer important insights into the tasks of statistics, into the risks hazarded when statistics is not given its due, and into the vast opportunities revealed in the choice of different models of organisation and development of national statistics.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF NATION

9. After World War II, and particularly in recent years, historians, sociologists and anthropologists have frequently explored the genesis and content of the concept of nation. We will bypass the different taxonomic classifications scholars have created in attempting to explain the concept in its various manifestations and go straight to the least common denominator these studies share: "nation" involves the assumption by a given society of a common cultural identity, in order to achieve some form of political recognition up to the ultimate level, sovereignty, and the model of the "nation-state". Different factors may predominate in the building of the nation-state. And the process may occur in several ways:

centrifugally -- the political consecration of a specific cultural identity, or centripetally -- the extension of the political boundaries to cover the range of cultural unity.

10. The historical character of the term "nation" and its relationship with specific conditions of economic and social development is of great significance. As Ernest Gellner (GELLNER, 1983) explained on this point - - as if to justify the continual implosion of nationalisms in the 20th century -- the term "nation", in the strict sense, assumes the existence of a specific socio-economic scenario: the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society. The agricultural society, with its well-defined social structure and a network of relatively stable and well-ordered substructures, does not require a unitary identity. The scenario offered by the industrial society is quite different: the criterion of affiliation is fluid and random, and there are no intermediaries between the individual and the global community. In this scenario the role of cultural boundaries takes on a far stronger value of identity and tends to be incarnated in the national state with its strong prerogatives: this is the incubator of the modern concept of nationality.

11. "Industrial society" can be defined, beyond and before being a specific form of organisation of production, as the emergence on the economic plane of a new way of being of civil society. We are alluding, in this case, to the emergence of the "social sphere" defined by Hannah Arendt as "the advent of domestic administration, its activities, problems and organisational tools from the dark interior of the home to the light of the public arena" (ARENDR, 1958). This is the process that innovates the pre-industrial economic concept, centred around the " **paterfamilias**" and the existence of the **oikos**, and through the development of the market proclaims economics "political", i.e. the political economy. At the same time, the public interest in the private sphere of civil society is not only the object of attention of the government, that is the traditional structure of the **princeps**; instead, it is considered by all subjects (or their most qualified part) as their own interest. In this manner that "critical" space is created through which the new civil society, as a private entity, operates in opposition to the State, but at the same time, as a significant interlocutor on the public plane, the same civil society defines itself as the space of political legitimacy (HABERMAS, 1962) and as "public" opinion.

12. Political economy and public opinion are, therefore, necessary, even though not sufficient, elements in the building of modern national identities. And it is precisely through them that statistics has operated in the processes of nation-building.

13. Over time, and particularly in the last decades of this century, both the structure of production and the mode of being of civil society have undergone profound transformations that have had a great impact on the

concept of the nation, its meaning and its function. On one hand, because of the new possibilities of technology, production processes are acquiring wider geographical spheres and greater pervasiveness compared to social and cultural organisation. Production processes are also dematerialising and becoming more flexible. These processes gnaw at the foundations of certain classic prerogatives of state sovereignty, undermining the autonomy and effectiveness of policies and requiring more articulated institutional forms. We can mention, in this regard, the sectors of currency, defence, the regulation of international trade, even public finance. In all the fields in which the State can no longer perform its tasks alone, the instances of international organisation (e.g., the processes of regionalization) and of bringing the institutions closer to the citizens (e.g., fiscal federalism, decentralisation) are reinforced.

14. And society itself is undergoing a profound transformation. Lifestyles and types of households are becoming diversified. Professional, social and geographic mobility is growing. New subjects (women and the elderly) are increasingly participating or asking to participate in production. The cultural level of the population, especially among the young, is rising. Old and new forms of social exclusion and marginalization, unemployment and inequality are emerging. New social and cultural networks -- the non-profit sector, Internet and spare-time activities -- are being generated. These processes are fully reflected in individual and collective identities and determine a continual search for new forms of homogeneity and aggregation to escape isolation and fragmentation. A strong demand to redefine and develop the content and mode of expressing national identity has been born. There are new demands to recognise national claims which, even when they appear to be looking backward, are very much influenced by a vision of the future. Opportunities for individual and collective choice of cultural identity are growing and, in the crucible of cross-fertilisation of cultural movements, their convergences, overlappings, distinctions, differences and reciprocal influences among these opportunities are multiplying. Consequently, cultural identities explode and the opportunities to choose, create or unmake them explode with them. As a result, nations of a same people explode and different peoples aspire to become part of broader national aggregations.

15. The sphere of intervention of public opinion has also been modified. Once a space for rational actors exercising a critical institutional function vis-à-vis the political and social powers, public opinion has now also become the target on which to unleash the messages and conditioning of the mass media. With the growing gap in social roles, the contrast within civil society between those who "create" opinion (the leaders of political, productive and social organisations) and those who "undergo" it, between the institutions of mediation and consensus and the depoliticized sphere of mere cultural consumption, is becoming clearer and clearer.

16. The newest and most innovative aspect of this evolution is the shattering of the simplicity and clarity of concepts that were the basis of the equation "nation-state". Models of a multinational state are advancing (the United States, in certain respects). One nation organises itself into various states or regions (the Federal Republic of Germany, for example). A nation becomes multicultural and able to contain different nations. The exclusive bond between the individual and national affiliation is loosening (e.g., double citizenship, extending the right to vote to "foreigners", etc.). National feeling is becoming more dynamic and "historicized", changing over time, in a lifetime, in history.

17. The modern concept of the nation is not only not exiting the stage but is reappearing widely and in new forms. Today, in fact, there is still no correspondence between processes of globalization and the interdependence of markets, on the one hand, and a clear trend toward cultural convergence, on the other. On the contrary, new forms of sub- or supranational entropy are flourishing. And today we are still operating in a world in which the importance of **public opinion**, even in its passive, mass media communications dimension, is still accepted. It will be up to statistics to restore to **public opinion** its original role by recovering critical spaces for civil society.

18. The profound changes taking place in recent years continue to involve the role of statistics, which, in the process of building the cultural identities underlying the concept of nation, has always performed an important function. If the nation becomes part of history, it becomes subject to the rhythm and pattern of history; history conditions its dynamics. So, if the nation is not, but is becoming, if it does not look backward but forward, statistics is called upon to provide a contribution to "national development" on a continuous basis and in a broad and pervasive manner.

19. European history reveals how diverse have been the channels of formation and consolidation of national communities and how, all the same, statistics has played an important role in all these channels.

III. STATISTICS AND NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

20. In travelling back through the history of statistical thought, we run up against a controversial chapter between the end of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth century. In those years, in fact, the word "statistics" became a definitive part of the majority of European languages. At the same time, this noun was used to express concisely a scientific procedure that made a clean break with earlier studies of "political arithmetics".

21. The incompatibility is only apparent. If we place this event in its specific historical-cultural context, we can comprehend the purpose

assigned to statistics in relation to the building and development of the nation. This purpose implicitly continues to shape the meaning of official statistics even today.

22. The fact that the "era of enthusiasm" (H. WESTERGAARD, 1932) for statistical investigations (1830-1849) overlapped with the historical epoch of greatest expansion of the principle of nationality is no mere chronological coincidence. Starting with the Belgian Revolution (1830), we can affirm that the institution of independent offices of statistics was used as a symbol for the achievement of national sovereignty. The creation of a short-lived -- but significant -- independent statistical service in Hungary during the 1848 revolution comes to mind. It was quashed after only a few months but reintroduced during the Compromise of 1867 which established the Austro-Hungarian Empire on a footing of equality. The equally significant institution of the Imperial Statistics Office in Berlin in 1872 also comes to mind. In a formative phase of national identity, statistics often assumed a key role, weaving civil society into a coherent web and taking on political tasks, as well.

23. Given this active role of political militancy in national movements, consistency with the basic principles of the deontology of official statistics, in particular impartiality and objectivity, was not always respected. In the case of the Italian **Risorgimento**, we might ask whether the civil passions and direct political involvement of many statisticians were in keeping with the statute of "scientific" method of the administration, which did and does characterise the discipline. The post-union devotees of the Italian statistical tradition (A. Messedaglia and F. Lampertico, for example) recall how in certain cases statistics was the "tool of conspiracy and struggle", a "military and fighting" science during the **Risorgimento**. One of the great protagonists of that period of "resurgence" of statistics, Cesare Correnti, admitted this openly. With national unity won, Correnti also expressed his discomfort and a certain reluctance:

I was born for other things [...]. And I put my hand into this numerical shower of stones only out of desperation and the necessity of war. Forty years ago, when we were at the dawn of things to come and life was raging in our hands and poetry in our hearts, our venerable teacher Gian Domenico Romagnosi began to make us aware of how statistics could be a lighter and sharper weapon than the historical lamentations and poetic anathemas handled by so many so well and so uselessly. So I resigned myself, an impatient recruit, to the discipline of averages, tables and numbers, which gave us the possibility of speaking in jargon and codes, and of escaping the circumcision of censorship. (PAZZAGLI, 1980)

As Correnti testified, "militant" statistics was also born out of a reaction to censorship and the scant public information supplied by the "absolutist" governments of the times.

24. On the other hand, cases of political exploitation of statistics in the 19th century are relatively easy to find. The problem that is raised in historical evaluation, and which is also echoed in questions regarding the present, concerns the relationship between statistics and civil movements, between statistics and political-social conflicts, and between statistics and national conflicts. Up to what point can impartial and objective statistics be moved by civil passions, transforming itself into a participant in the interpretation of the travails of society, into a "political" explanation of history? Up to what point can we risk the independence and scientific character of statistics in order to comprehend, document and interpret national questions? The fundamental principles regarding the objectivity of statistics are clear. It is very difficult to apply these principles to the analysis and practice of history. It is by no means easy to strike a balance between the two models, the ideological and extremist models of militant statistics or statistics of the regime, on one side, and of ascetic and detached statistics, on the other.

25. As various studies have shown (SALAI BAVEREZ REYNAUD, 1986; DESROSIERES, 1994), in the case of the principle of nationality we are dealing with a process of codification based on active, conventional elements tied to cultural and political visions in order to "build" a cultural equivalent, between realities not immediately comparable, of a cultural identity that does not exist in nature. For these "subjective" reasons nations have been able to define themselves in different ways through statistics, as any other social institution. There is a very tight link between the political and cognitive dimensions of every codification. This link explains the public significance of statistics, why statistics is traditionally considered a public function, although not necessarily at the government level. We do not intend to fall into cultural relativism in these affirmations and declare that "nations" are arbitrary inventions on the basis of their opposing and often contradictory declinations, which statistics "legitimises" and justifies subserviently and unscientifically. But it is equally unacceptable the militant positivism which raged at the turn of this century breaking the link between the prescriptive and descriptive dimensions of social phenomena.

26. If nations do not exist in nature, but are built and rebuild themselves continuously, statistics cannot be limited to "surveying" and "recording". It must also "understand" and "give a voice" to the aspirations, needs and visions of peoples, relating these subjective elements to facts, analyses, reality. Statistics is not, therefore, a mechanical tool, a mere technique in the service of the user. Statistics

is a science, a method of democratic confrontation, an institutional network of citizens interacting, a language for communication among people. It is not true, then, that any aggregation aiming at "nationhood" can be justified, in its generic and permanent character, if it serves some end, if it creates something that is operative and upon which it is possible to act (DESROSIERES, 1989). The cultural identity that gives substance to the nation exists, and resists, only if it is supported by documented objective and subjective elements, if it is verified by facts; in other words, if it is based on effective, good quality statistics that are able to read and monitor these facts.

27. The history of Swiss statistics provides a positive example of balance between objectivity and participation. In 1847 Stefano Franscini, Interior Minister of the Swiss Confederation, published the first two volumes of the New Statistics of Switzerland. This was not yet an "official" publication, but the political office held by its author anointed the work with an unusual official aura. Franscini's aim, explicitly declared in the closing chapters, was to give Switzerland the image of a "strong" identity to counter the 18th century vision of a fragmented, pastoral, Alpine Switzerland. Franscini was not attempting a mere cultural operation. There was a topical political need pressing upon the country. The year 1847 represented one of the most critical moments in Switzerland's history. The attempt to secede by the conservative **Sonderbund** was manifest. Franscini turned to statistics to demonstrate that the sense of Swiss identity and its form of affiliation were structured according to precise social models (the extension of small landownership, for example), original aggregative forces at the cantonal level and specific cultural idioms drawn from the best European liberal tradition. In other words, Franscini did not simply "describe" the Swiss nation but contributed to building it through the statistical indices on material well-being, on domestic trade, and on prevailing cultural practices.

IV. STATISTICS AND FREEDOM

28. Another aspect is worth stressing. The nexus between statistics and nation, which was so tight in the first half of the 19th century, was also influenced by another element which reflected the political culture of those years -- liberalism. The example of Stefano Franscini demonstrates that the use of statistics to define a specific national identity was all the more necessary the more the principle of nationality resisted definition on the basis of mere ethnic, linguistic or religious criteria, and relied on the exuberant "ideals" of modernity, instead: social interaction, unification of markets, acquired levels of civic culture. The German experience confirms this, even though Germany has always

stressed the importance of the **ius sanguinis** in defining its own criterion of affiliation. In Germany the **Zollverein**, the customs union of 1833, inaugurated the first unified statistical system, which was extended to all member states.

29. The modern nation therefore assigned a key role to statistics. This is the nation based on the model of a liberal society, on the market economy, on the tolerance of diversities.

30. However, it is incumbent upon us to recall that statistics has also operated in other directions. We need only refer to the totalitarian experiences of the 20th century. In Italy, for example, during the Fascist era official statistics were sometimes bent to the need to "nationalise" the masses dictated by the regime, and subordinated to the key "ideological" catch words: ruralism, racial discrimination, rising birth rates.

31. This tension in the relationship between statistics and freedom also emerged in the 19th century in connection with the development of linguistic nationalities. We can draw an example from the International Statistical Congresses (1853-1876) promoted by Adolphe Quetelet. These congresses aimed at introducing harmonised international standards in all the participating states, which corresponded, with few exceptions, to the entire continent of Europe. In 1872, at the VII Session of the congress in St. Petersburg, the German proposal to insert a question regarding language in censuses was accepted. This question was implicitly assumed to be an indicator of nationality. In this way statistics contributed to uncoupling the national problem from the vision of "political economy", which, for example, had been adopted by Francini. It was no longer the integration of markets and the resulting social interaction that made a nation and gave it its "common denominator", measurable in socio-economic indices. In posing the question on language, the censuses encouraged each and all not only to choose a nationality, but to choose a linguistic nationality (HOBSEAWM, 1990). In the censuses of 1880 and 1910 the question had a shattering effect on the cohesion of the Austrian administration (BRIX, 1982).

32. It is interesting to note that Richard Boeckh, the representative of the German delegation at the Congress that pushed for adoption of the language recommendation, was a young philologist who in certain writings (BOECKH, 1866, 1869) had asserted that the statistical characteristics of daily language were the distinctive trait of a nation and were far more important than descent, race or religion. As he saw it, the Ashkenazi Jews should be classified as Germans, since spoken Yiddish was actually a German dialect derived from medieval German. In 1880, as Director of the statistics office of the city of Berlin, Boeckh was the only German statistics official to openly speak of the "abuse and corruption of statistics due to anti-Semitic agitation", referring to the data released

by the Imperial Statistics Office regarding the increase in Jewish immigration from Galicia (HACKING, 1990).

V. THE INTEGRATION AND EXTENSION OF CITIZENSHIP: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LABOUR OFFICES

33. In European history statistics has not only helped define and consolidate the principle of nationality. Within the individual nation states statistics has also been a tool for the progressive extension of citizenship. This, in fact, is the most significant contribution of statistics to the process of nation-building.

34. Nationalism, the pathological degeneration of national feeling, of which there are, sadly, many examples in the past and present, proposes the idea of a monolithic and, in certain ways, ahistorical nation. Ethnicities, languages and religions are, individually or together, presumed to be almost naturalistic criteria of identity. But, if we consider it historically, the nation is a concept built over time, and it changes the more that political and anthropological definitions of the term can be distinguished in its formulation. In other words, the more the criterion of citizenship determines the criterion of nationality, the more the concept of the nation changes.

35. The concerns over "integration", implicit in every definition of cultural homogeneity the nation expresses, brings into focus the role of institutions. The role for instance of schools in building the republican identity in France is well known (OZOUF, 1982). How does statistics operate within the processes of cultural integration? If we look for the minimum common denominator, we find that statistics has co-operated in this process in nation states essentially through one concept -- that of dispersion or variance. Either through emphasis on the descriptive tools of statistics, or in the season of numerical calculus on probabilistic basis, it is above all through the identification of deviations and differences that statistics contributes to the process of building national identity. This is the role statistics played in France from 1801 to 1804, when the first statistical offices were inaugurated on a departmental basis, the so called "statistics of the prefects"; the descriptions of the time converged in registering delays and anomalies in relation to the new individualist society proclaimed in 1789, and which was soon destined to be consecrated in the austere forms of the Civil Code (BOURGUET, 1988).

36. Statistics continued to play this same role throughout the 19th century. The debates on the "normality" of the bell curve bring to mind the heavy ideological investment European culture poured into the development of different statistical methods. Through the identification of a constant regularity within a range of apparently disordered

phenomena, reality was standardised, its anomalies obscured. The "normal law" bore a reference to an underlying deterministic structure, just as the "common man" theorised by Quetelet played a role in expressing the values of moderation and the **juste milieu** adopted by 19th century liberal society (PORTER, 1986). These assumptions provide a valid justification for the attempts to make statistical surveying uniform promoted during the International Statistical Congresses from 1853 to 1878. The belief in a European similarity in customs, socio-economic structures and development trends, as the interpretation of reality indicated by the new statistical procedures, was responsible for this unitary approach. And the significance accorded to the relationship between variance and deviance is what justified the expansion in the 19th century of statistical surveys that, at the time, were defined "moral statistics". Crime, public education, public health, medicine and anthropometrics represented the privileged areas of study in 19th century advanced cultural statistics, as if their task could be condensed wholly in the delineation of a "physiology" of society. Nor in this regard can we forget how the medical applications of statistics were, at the time, significant for the methodological evolution of statistics, as in Francis Galton's theory of regression and correlation.

37. We must bear in mind that the objective of 19th century national policies was to achieve an assimilation, rather than an integration, of differences. Their scope was to affirm a culture of homologation in which diversity had little value in itself; it mattered only as a symptom of a potential "deviance". This is why 19th century statistics borrowed languages, methods and spheres of inquiry from medicine. Statistics was a social therapy, ready to approach differences as if they were potential anomalies to be smoothed over in a homogeneous framework.

38. However the notion of deviance/variance is to be understood not only in its pathological aspect, but in relation to a "normalcy" considered as typical and axiomatic. Ignoring the discomfort arising from the heavy ideological cloak in which it was wrapped at the time, the notion of deviance/variance had structural aspects, connected to the bond between statistics and nation. Every national culture in fact tended to beware of particularities, which are seen as archaic and potentially divisive, factors of resistance to the entropy required by the new society. National culture often did so as an anti-discrimination measure. In other words, statistics became a tool of nation-building in as much as it worked, dynamically and continuously, for the integration of subcultures in the crucible of a new group identity, the nation. That this has often happened by switching the analytical categories of equality with those of uniformity depends on ulterior cultural and epistemological reasons, unrelated **eo ipso** to statistics, which is a secondary epiphenomenon of these broader reasons. What does count, instead, is that statistics, in its work of institutionalisation of a given social structure, has in any case asserted that homogeneity must be proven rather than assumed.

39. Proof of this can be grasped reflecting on the truly extraordinary concomitance, starting in the 1880s, with which the majority of European states began to concentrate part of their statistical functions in the labour administrations. In Switzerland, the establishment of the **Arbeitersekretariat** in 1886/87 inaugurated a long series of social investigations. In France the same took place with the institution of the **Office du travail** in 1891, which wound up shouldering the majority of statistical surveys pertaining to the Ministries of Trade and of Agriculture; in 1907 the **Office du travail** was promoted to the rank of ministry, taking with it its statistics division. In 1908 a **Commission for labour statistics** was instituted in Berlin with the task of supervising the creation of related legislation. In Great Britain the Labour Department was created and charged with similar tasks. In the Hapsburg monarchy a similar office was created in 1898. In Italy a labour office was established in 1902; with its transformation into a ministry in 1920 this office co-opted the Office of General Statistics.

40. The contemporaneous nature of this genesis of a national mechanism to register social experience in Europe is quite singular. And it underscores the fact that the twin perspectives of representation and intervention are hard to separate in relation to the history of statistics. The studies conducted on these particular institutions (TANNER, 1995; FLEMMING-WITT, 1981; DAVIDSON, 1990; de CRECY, 1962; SEPE, 1988) stressed the cognitive tasks these perspectives performed. So intervention and social representation go hand in hand. And statistics, during the years of insurgence of the "worker question", once again became the tool of nation-building, contributing to give a voice and recognition to a new class of "citizens".

VI. THE DIFFERENT PROFILES OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF STATISTICS TO NATION-BUILDING: THE ORGANISATION OF STATISTICS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ADMINISTRATION

41. History shows how the relationship between statistics and nation-building has taken different paths in different European experiences. An analysis of these different paths allows us not only to better comprehend the questions connected to the role of statistics, but also to propose for the present and the future a number of relevant options and lessons.

42. We noted above that the modern concept of the "nation" revolves around two interdependent variables: political subjectivity and cultural identity. The same type of oscillation characterises the modern history of statistics, which is contained between two poles: administration and science. If we take statistics as a tool of nation-building, we can ascertain how each of these components has predominated in the building of a national identity. Predominant but never exclusive components: because of the "institutional" function assigned to it as of the 19th century,

statistics has become an element in the formation of a state rationality (DESROSIERES, 1993) and is able to fully justify its own *raison d'être* with this double status. It cannot opt for one or the other without abdicating its own ability to operate.

43. We will attempt to identify concisely, in regard to the most significant European experiences, the organisational forms statistics has assumed in contributing to performing its tasks in shaping the national framework. The pivotal role of statistics in institutions mirrors the significance attributed to it in the relationship between the state and civil society, the two essential components in the development of the nation. The diversity of models also shows how the institutionalisation of statistics is capable of revealing some of the idiosyncracies of individual national cultures.

44. Using the twin poles of science and administration, we can formulate a sort of progressive list according to the influence exerted by each. As a rule, we classify the organisation of statistics in relation to the birth of the different national states in Europe on the basis of the choice between either a Ministerial Office, or a Scientific Commission, or a mixed model (inclusion of external experts in ministerial bodies). It is then clear that science has been able to have a greater impact in the public organisation of statistics in the case of the choice of the Commission model. Yet history shows that in every case science and administration have both been essential to the development of statistics.

45. Let us take the case of Great Britain. Despite the establishment of a Statistical Office within the Board of Trade (1832) and the institution of a General Register Office (1837), private institutions guaranteed the relevance of statistics, at least in the beginning. As has been noted (CULLEN, 1975), the studies conducted by the Statistical Societies of London and Manchester (both founded in the 1830s) led to the definition of the work of statistics as "a movement of institutions on the road to reform, from Whig to Liberal in politics". Probably because of the social problems arising from the precocious "Industrial Revolution", and because of specific British institutional tradition, civil society participated to a much greater degree in the process of self-representation in Great Britain than in any other European state. Members of the statistical societies were not only anti-Ricardian economists who were strongly in favour of empirical research but, especially in Manchester, certain industrialists who were attempting to put a stop to the moral degradation brought about by industrialisation, by linking progress in production to social order. On the contrary, it was only in 1860 that the *Société de statistique* of Paris was founded. In the British experience the administration certainly played an important part; but its role was stimulated by Parliament through the famous investigations (the 19th century "blue books") which helped to redefine the national identity on specific questions in a formal process closely connected to the issues emerging in civil society.

46. A similar process took place in Germany. On the surface, Germany seemed to rely wholly on the public administration to develop its own statistics. We need only recall the early foundation of the Statistical Office in the Customs Union in 1833; the establishment of the Federal Statistical Office in 1872; the monolithic character of its bureaucratic organisation founded on three levels: the offices of the federated states; the cities, with their autonomous statistical services; and private statistics. Nonetheless, it was not only through administration that statistics co-operated in forming a national identity. It also operated through the influence of an intellectual class. In fact, a constant trait of Imperial and Wilhelmine Germany was the bond between university teaching and the top levels of bureaucracy. In the case of statistics, this bond was even tighter. Despite the purely "practical" foundation of the **Amtsstatistik** in 1872, German statistics continued to have very strong ties, at the personal level and in the circulation of ideas, with the "sciences of the state and of the police", from which statistics originated in the German world. This is shown by the fact that Ernst Engel, the authoritative director of the Prussian Statistical Office from 1862 to 1880, was one of the founding members of the **Verein fur Sozialpolitik**, the laboratory of German social sciences, in which many other German statistics officials collaborated. It is also demonstrated by the official statistics publications, which had great success in the periodicals devoted to the analysis of social sciences and of the state; and by the statistical offices, especially in Munich and Berlin, which also performed intense teaching activity through seminars and lectures (SCHAEFER, 1971; BONSS, 1982; SCHIERA, 1987). It is further reflected in the debate, which continued well into the 20th century, on the autonomous or auxiliary role of statistics as a science, that is whether this discipline played an autonomous or rather only an "instrumental" role, but insofar as an "ordering" one, worthy of respect within the social sciences, which, between the 19th and 20th centuries, were searching for their own charter. The polemics against **Queteletismus**, which in the 1860s also involved the future director of the Imperial Statistics Office, Gustav Rumelin, reminds us of that holistic and historicist conception of science that is a characteristic of other spheres of German culture (HACKING, 1990). But as regards the status of the discipline of statistics it also alludes to a still vital relationship with the 18th century tradition of "political sciences", re-experienced in a practical and specialist context.

47. Let us conclude by noting that the model of statistical organisation in Commissions introduced by Belgium in 1841, and subsequently imitated by Spain and the majority of Italian states prior to unification, constitutes only one mode of representing the science, making it capable of a sort of self-administration. The progressive decline of Statistical Commissions in the 19th century in favour of ministerial bodies or mixed models might also suggest that their practicality was especially tied to two factors: on one hand, a precise epistemological declension of statistics, totally

centred around the autonomy of the discipline, on the other, the homogeneous values in which liberal bourgeois society believed.

48. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the experiences that relied pre-eminently on public administration, as was the case, for example, in France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy following unification. But we must qualify this remark and draw some distinctions. Thus, the example of France teaches that statistics, at least at certain particularly significant moments, served to legitimise on a scientific basis the activities of the administrative structures. If we consider the first Office of statistics of the Napoleonic period, we recall that its establishment and the surveys it conducted were closely tied to the Enlightenment requirement to construct specific knowledge in support of the administrative power the Revolution had so radically transformed: "**La science de l'administration se compose surtout de la connaissance des faits**", read one of the first bulletins addressed to the newly created prefects. The statistics of the time was conceived as a tool to guarantee communications between the citizen and the republican administration. As late as 1819 Joseph-Marie de Gerando, inaugurating the teaching of administrative law in the Sorbonne, still defined statistics in this way (SOFIA, 1988). And the extreme fragmentation of statistical functions within French administrative structures, a characteristic eliminated only after the creation of **INSEE** following World War II, was justified by this definition, which marked the introduction of statistics into French post-Revolution public administration.

49. A comparison with the Italian situation is very instructive because it shows how an identical public organisation of statistics, set in a different cultural and political context, led to different results. In 1861, during the unification process, the Central Statistical Office was established within the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade. This placement was directly borrowed from the French model, which in 1833 had established the general statistical service within the Ministry of Trade. In Italy this situation remained substantially unchanged until 1882, when the consulting body of the Statistical Office, the **Giunta di statistica**, was transformed into a High Council with an integrated representation of public officials and academic scholars. An analogous body was established in France in 1898, stimulated by the Italian example (MARUCCO, 1992). Yet Italian statistics suffered enormously from this dispersion of statistical functions that seemed quite natural in the French ministerial solution. Starting in the 1890s, Italian statistics entered a declining phase, quite the opposite of the statistical boom in the Third French Republic. The Italian case points out how official statistics, even though enjoying administrative authority, can be influential and operative only to the extent to which it finds allies and legitimisation in society and the political system. In the 1890s a very formalistic conception of public administration began to spread in Italy and impeded functional administration from continuing to play a "constitutional" and truly

effective role. In the French model, the very fulcrum and bulwark of public administration resided in the General Office of Statistics. This disinterest of the Italian public administration was demonstrated in those same years by interrupting the prefects drawing up the statistics of the province they headed, until then a post-Unification tradition (GAMBI, 1980).

VII. CENTRALISED AND DECENTRALISED STATISTICS

50. Discussing the relationship between statistics and nation-building we treated centralised, institutional organisational experiences and federal experiences as one. We must recognise that the different institutional forms of national organisation have led Statistical Offices to organise their relationships with the periphery according to different models. From this standpoint the German imperial experience -- centred around the distinction between central, federal, special or municipal statistics -- remains a model, precisely because it impeded an excessive dispersion of resources and energy. It would certainly be a mistake to attribute this co-ordination function performed by the imperial office only to the federal structure of the state. There are other causes, as we pointed out, that made statistics a cornerstone of the material constitution of Germany. On the contrary, we can point out the difficulties the Swiss Federal Office faced, especially in the years following its establishment (1860), in co-ordinating with the individual cantons. But 19th century German statistical organisation obliges us to remember that statistics within the nation states has also operated as a vehicle for forms of multiple affiliation. In the Kingdom of Italy there was a hidden, still unexplored heritage of local statistics drawn up by different administrations (municipalities, chambers of commerce, provincial administrations, etc.). It would be short-sighted not to consider these sources as part of the body of official statistics. Even though they were regarded as local by the Central Statistical Offices, these local statistics were tools in building a strong territorial identity and circulated, above all, in the strategic places and times of the great changes taking place. In the same way, the European experience of "municipal socialism" made a resumption of statistical surveys at the municipal level topical everywhere (ZIMMERMANN, 1994).

51. The process of building national identities often coexisted with these different forms of political identity, even when they were not expressly admitted into the official circuit. Their existence also recalls how, in the strongest moments of cultural identity expressed by the nation-state, there were spaces for other social affiliations and bonds. And these, too, matured and developed using the same statistical tools.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

52. We noted that, today, the nation is undergoing a process of profound evolution everywhere. This dynamic of change is generally misunderstood and often mismanaged. For this reason it may change from a factor of civil growth and cultural enrichment into a threat to stability and of social conflict. History teaches that statistics can be a potent contribution to understanding the processes of change underway. In so doing, it can lead the way to positive solutions to national questions, removing them from the sphere of irrationality, ideology and passion.

53. Furthermore, the nation is also a point of reference that is becoming less and less exclusive. Today it is possible and, in certain respects necessary, to have different affiliations, changeable cultural identities and plural forms of aggregation. Local communities, national societies, professional, religious or ethnic bonds, regional aggregations (such as the European Union, NAFTA, Mercosur, etc.), and the international community require a commitment and attribute the rights and duties of membership to many persons. So there are always more citizens who regard themselves as contextual participants in different communities or "nations". On this level, as well, statistics plays an essential role in identifying and monitoring analogies and differences, convergences and divergences.

54. Finally, the nation today is facing a new context created by globalization, by information and telecommunications technologies, and by the spreading of values of freedom connected to the pervasiveness of the models of the market economy and pluralist democracy. This context leads to a loosening of the objective, natural and, we may call them, "imposed" bonds and to an enhancement of the subjective and voluntary dimensions of nationality, which imply choices, commitment and personal responsibility. In short, the nation ceases to be a "given" and becomes the object of free cultural choice. A recent example illustrates this change clearly. In France there is an age-old debate on the definition of nationality which opposes the defenders of the **ius sanguinis** and the defenders of the **ius soli**. The Commission on Reform of the Nationality Code, established in 1987, distanced itself from this classic opposition in its conclusions, maintaining that nationality must be the result of a choice by the new comer, that this choice must be facilitated as much as possible, and that France must carry out a policy to integrate immigrants. This is not a new position within French culture. In 1882 the religious historian Ernest Renan affirmed that the existence of a nation " **is a daily plebiscite**" and the only legitimate guideline to define affiliation was " **the vote of the nations**" (RENAN, 1882).

55. "This conclusion", noted Touraine, "has a broad scope: against all the definitions, whether of the majority or the minorities, based on data of a social nature or cultural heredity that shapes individuals, this extends the French definition of nationality which becomes the will to

live together, denying that, to be French, one must cease having other bonds" (TOURAINÉ, 1992, p. 391). This evolution could fruitfully be reflected upon the statistical definitions of migrant worker and national worker. In fact, as we know, until now, little progress has been achieved in applying international standards to migration statistics, and the international comparability of these data is scant, also because of the variability, elusiveness and multi-dimensional nature of the concept of nationality.

56. The history of the relations between statistics and nation-building offers rich and well-developed experiences and indications. Different paths have been taken and, as we noted, it would be difficult to build stylised national models of this relationship without falling into abstract generalisations. Still, one fact is certain. Throughout the 19th century statistics worked on behalf of **social cohesion**. This is the common aspect shared by France and Germany, Great Britain and Italy. Within each of these different national experiences, one specific component was the guarantor of cohesion -- within these experiences that we have indicated as necessary for the public relevance of statistics. To put it simply, we can affirm that **political economy** predominated in countries in which economic and production changes were more radical, as in Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution. Vice versa, **public administration** was the key element in countries in which the nation was understood as an artefact of history rather than a natural fact, as in France. Finally, **science** prevailed in contexts in which the scientific method was able to stake its claim to an autonomous role in the different "constitutional" contexts, affirming itself to be a precise political, rather than cultural, choice, as was the case in Germany and Belgium.

57. There are, then, four aspects in the relationship between statistics and nation-building which emerge from this historical excursus and which qualify the fundamental contribution statistics has made in the past and can still make in the future.

1. First and foremost, statistics has contributed to the documentation and analysis of economic phenomena, or better of the processes of "political economy". Today, globalization, the liberalisation of world trade and regional integration, particularly the Economic and Monetary Union and the political integration of Europe, are giving statistics new tasks. So statistics is becoming a basic tool of aggregation and economic development. The experience of the Maastricht convergence indicators and of all the statistics required by the EMU in Europe offers proof of this.
2. Second, the building or rebuilding of a framework of social cohesion, of the sense of affiliation with a community, of shared civic values, of a homogeneous, open and integrated

cultural identity is a fundamental necessity in the face of spreading social exclusion and inequality. This is true at the city and regional level, and also at the level of states and continents. Statistics must bridge a serious gap in our ability to comprehend and measure hardship, the loss of identity, loneliness, abandonment and suffering, individually and collectively.

3. The third aspect concerns the public administration. Today, more than in the past, we require transparency and effectiveness. Statistics plays a fundamental role in promoting and supporting institutional reforms in answer to the needs of the nation and of nations. Federalism, decentralisation, improved co-ordination and strategic planning, redefinition of the social security system, information superhighways, lifelong education and continuing training, etc.
4. The fourth aspect has to do with statistics as a science. As in the past, statistics is also called on today to pose national questions on the level of scientific reflection, facts, real data and feasible solutions. Modern nations have far more need of statistics in the service of science and knowledge than they do of flags, anthems, uniforms, symbols and demonstrations. A society based on information and knowledge makes us dangerously vulnerable to the risk of populism and new forms of manipulation, authoritarianism and aggression, which, as experience has taught us, can easily degenerate into well-known forms of violence, intolerance and oppression. The culture of modern nations is made up of scientific method, above all, and history has to be analysed in a scientific manner, so that it can orientate the future, and make us avoid the errors, and horrors, of the past.

58. These four elements could suffice to identify a common cultural platform for the newly emerging "European nation", the building of which represents the most ambitious objective of the end of this century and the greatest hope for the century to come. However, these elements are certainly enough, in our view, to indicate in which directions statistics can contribute to the development of nations, to the dialogue among peoples, and to social and economic progress.

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