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**СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ЗАЩИТА В ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ
КАК ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИОННЫХ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИК:
ОТ ИНДУСТРИАЛЬНЫХ ОБЩЕСТВ К ОБЩЕСТВАМ
«ВЕДЬ Я ЭТОГО ДОСТОИН»**

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**SOCIAL PROTECTION IN WESTERN EUROPE AS AN EXPRESSION
OF CIVILIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS: FROM INDUSTRIAL
SOCIETIES TO “BECAUSE I’M WORTH IT” SOCIETIES**

Системы социальной защиты наряду с другими социальными реальностями выражают цивилизационные характеристики обществ. В Западной Европе данные системы развивались в ходе индустриализации в конце XIX в. Некоторые цивилизационные характеристики этих западноевропейских индустриальных обществ могут быть обнаружены в социальном страховании, защищающем работников от индустриальных рисков. Среди этих характеристик можно выделить особую концепцию индивида и связи «индивид-общество». После периода стабильности данная концепция индивида начала трансформироваться, а вместе с ней и ряд характеристик систем социальной защиты. Западноевропейские индустриальные общества эволюционировали в сверхсовременные общества потребления. В этих сверхсовременных обществах, которые я называю обществами «ведь я этого достоин», системы социальной защиты основываются на иной концепции индивида, которая создает специфические проблемы.

Social protection systems are, among other social realities, expressions of civilizational characteristics of societies. In Western Europe, these systems were developed in the context of industrialization in the late 19th century. Some civilizational characteristics of these west-european industrial societies could be identified within the social insurances which protected the workers against industrial risks; among these characteristics, one could distinguish a particular conception of individual and of the connection between individuals and society. After a period of stability, this conception of individual begun to change and, thus, some characteristics of the social protection systems. The west-european

industrial societies evolved towards hypermodern consumption societies. In these hypermodern societies, which I call “because I’m worth it” societies, the social protection systems are based on another conception of individual, a conception which causes endemic problems.

Ключевые слова: цивилизационные характеристики, система социальной защиты, индустриальное общество, социальное страхование, общество потребления, индивид, общество, «ведь я этого достоин».

Keywords: *civilizational characteristics, social protection system, industrial society, consumption society, individual, “because I’m worth it”.*

West-european societies developed themselves as industrial societies during the 19th and 20th centuries. Beyond the occurrence of national specificities, the general industrialization, the scientific and technical developments in Europe contributed to the emergence of a specific way of considering human fate and existence. What one calls “industrial societies” can therefore be viewed as a kind of civilization, as defined by Tylor: “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1871). Among other specific aspects of this west-european industrial society and civilization, this from the mid-18th century emerging new way of considering human destiny brought on the development of systems of social protection against the unwanted consequences of industrial work on working classes and masses. The transformations of work and activity led by industrialization generated indeed new forms of mass poverty, affecting the numerous individuals who could not anymore work because of a disability, of an accident, of illness, or else of their aging (Ewald 1986). The developed response to these social changes took the shape of systems of social insurances in most of the west-european countries between 1883 and 1914. The german government implemented the first social insurance in Europe in 1883, the *Krankenversicherung*, and decreed that every worker had to be affiliated to an insurance corporation. This logic of general protection of workers spread out in all western Europe and can be viewed as the expression of distinguishing civilizational features of the industrial risk society. In the next part of this contribution, I shall further explain the characteristics of the believes on which these social protection systems are based.

Social protection in western european industrial societies from the mid-19th century to the late 20th century: a manifestation of a civilizational way of considering human fate and individual destiny

From the end of the 18th century, a modern vision of mankind and societies wins recognition within most of the european countries. Philosophers and the emerging sociology tend to represent society as an organism, a social and political body. In England, one of those philosophers, Herbert Spencer, pretended that individuals must be considered as the cells of an organ, building together a specialized entity associated to others specialized entities (Delas and Milly 2010: 49). In his book “The division of labour in society” (1893), Emile Durkheim developed his well known theory of social

order maintained by the force of the organic solidarity, grounded in the division of labour. Thus, the french sociologist reinforced the idea that individuals are interdependant and members of a whole (Delas and Milly 2010: 155). Two other scientists, Vilfredo Pareto and Karl Marx, held the same representation that industrial societies (but not only them) are divided in at least two groups: the dominant classes — Pareto termed them “elites” — and the dominated classes. They did also believe that these societies could not exist if they were not divided in interdependant groups (Delas and Milly 2010: 53, 137).

Thus, all these intellectuals propose, in different times and various national contexts, representations of industrial societies which are based on the same organicist idea: individuals are like “specialized cells” building together organs, building together a whole body. Would an organ be sick or would it dysfunction, then the whole body would be in danger. Pareto did emphasize this connection between the parts of the social body and the whole body itself in his theory of equilibrium (Delas and Milly 2010: 53). So did the others philosophers too, assuming that the most important challenge for an organic-based society would be not to collapse, particularly when a part — an organ — of the body gets weakened. These representations were used as arguments by governments to implement systems of social protection, particularly systems of social insurances. In Germany for example, as Bismark and Kaiser Wilhelm the first in 1881 let the german parliament vote on social laws, the following arguments were brought:

“Wir halten es für Unsere Kaiserliche Pflicht, dem Reichstage diese Aufgabe von neuem ans Herz zu legen, und würden Wir mit um so größerer Befriedigung auf alle Erfolge, mit denen Gott Unsere Regierung sichtlich gesegnet hat, zurückblicken, wenn es Uns gelänge, dereinst das Bewußtsein mitzunehmen, dem Vaterlande neue und dauernde Bürgschaften seines inneren Friedens und den Hilfsbedürftigen größere Sicherheit und Ergiebigkeit des Beistandes, auf den sie Anspruch haben, zu hinterlassen“*

In all european countries, the same arguments were used to justify the adoption of laws in order to protect working classes against these particular risks exacerbated by the generalization of industrial ways of production and industrial work. These new laws replaced the old legal systems of civil responsibility, which were based on the rule of fault compensation: in case of work accident, the offender (worker or employer) had to be appointed by a juge and then had to indemnize the victim (worker or employer). The new legal systems, establishing social insurance regimes, were now based on collective responsibility or societal responsibility (Ewald 1986): there were no more

* Excerpt from the „Kaiserliche Botschaft“: *Stenographische Berichte ber die Verhandlungen des Reichstages*. V. Legislaturperiode. I. Session 1881/82, Berlin 1882, S. 1f. In these sentences, Wilhelm the first adresses to the deputees asking them to adopt a legislation in order to maintain the cohesion of the nation, to safeguard the peace within german civil society and to give to the weakest more security in their lives. Further in his discourse, Wilhelm the first explains that the working classes have the right to win more security against work accidents, illness, invalidity and ageing. In the same time, he argues for a repression of socialist movements.

offenders and victims, but corporations and workers both exposed to by the industrial organisation exacerbated risks.

These new social protection systems expressed one of the core principles of the west-european industrial societies and civilization: society and individuals are both responsible of the achievement of progress and social integrity within the model of industrial organisation. On the one side, the industrial organisation was seen by the political and economical elites as the only way to ensure human progress. But on the other side, these elite recognized that the industrial organization caused social problems which concerned the masses of workers involved in the industrial production. Thus, while it was acknowledged that individuals had to contribute to the march of progress of society — this big “whole”, this social body — it was understood that society had to include those individuals who could not or no more, temporarily or definitively, take part to the industrial production. In that way, the implementation of social insurances systems connected clearly the individual fate to the societal industrial fate.

Further in the beginning 20th century, the increase of political philosophies which defined themselves as alternatives to liberalism or socialism enhanced the slow development, in most of the west-european countries, of forms of welfare state. The french politician Léon Bourgeois, laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920, sought a middle ground between socialism and capitalism which he termed “solidarism,” where the better off had a social debt to the poor which they should pay by the income tax, thus providing the state with the necessary revenue to finance social measures for those living in poverty (Audier 2007). All over Europe, the same ideological tendencies stimulated the adoption of social protection systems based on a principle of *reciprocity*: because each individual was considered as a member of a group accomplishing the global order of the industrial society, because every individual was concerned by industrial risks, everyone could be granted of the solidarity from those who share his individual fate (being concerned by industrial risks). This way of considering the individual fate within an industrial organization of society gives rise to the idea that individuals have a right to be protected against risks, to receive compensation or get help to go back to work when these risks touch them. After WW2, this philosophy was extended in most countries of Western Europe to the whole population — and not only to the workers — following the idea of Sir William Beveridge that every human being is concerned by basic needs which should be covered by a system of social security (Beveridge 1942).

During the next thirty years, these principles were clearly expressed in the social protection systems and allowed the production and reproduction of the modern incarnation of individualism: individuals as interdependant components of society, incorporated in a complex but stable system of roles and institutions. But from the energy crisis in the 1970's, this conception of the connection between individuals and society begun to change and to to evaluate toward an hypermodern conception of human being.

West-european hypermodernity: a fundamental civilizational change in the way of considering individual fate and its consequences to the social protection systems

It is probable that the period of economic stability which followed World War II and the mere existence of systems of social welfare slowly caused the development of a

new conception of the individual. The welfare state not only allowed to protect the individuals against risks of the industrial society, but also contributed to a general increase of living standard in the European countries. The period of «the glorious thirty» is characterised by the development of the mass consumption, the strengthening of democracy, the access of always more persons to goods until now reserved for elites. The period 1950–1980 constitutes so a pivotal epoch between a west-European civilisation turned to industrial production and civilisation turned to the mass consumption.

The conception of the individual also changes in second part of the 20th century. Little by little, one consider that the individual is not any more only an entity composing a group or a society, an entity which depends on other entities and contributes to the existence of the collective. In this society that Bauman qualifies as “liquid society” (Bauman 2000), the individuals are called to consume always more, to live in excess, they have in a way a «duty of pleasure» (my own translation. — *R.B.*) (Aubert on 2006: 18). The democratisation of the European societies and the increase of living standard push the individuals to consider that they have as much as others the right to the most emblematic products of the consumption of mass: a car, trips, a home, luxury products, etc. The heart of individual identity moves of a reference to production towards a reference to consumption, little by little the individual is not any more defined by what he exercises as occupation, but by the way he participates in social life and in consumption which is linked there.

The famous slogan used by the firm L’Or al “Because I’ m worth it” from the beginning of 2000s perfectly well illustrates this hypermodern evolution of the conception of the individual. The core idea of this advertising slogan is that any woman has so much value as a star and has the right to access the best cosmetics. She paraphrases a conception of a self-confident individual, which is worthy of being given the best consumer goods. This individual must accomplish his auto-fulfillment first of all (Gauchet 1998), undertake «the invention of oneself» (Kaufmann 2004). De Gaulejac explains the difference between the conception of the individual in west-European industrial civilisation and the hypermodern conception of the individual: «The industrial society fixed the individuals in social frames (class, sex, job, profession, habitat) and norms of behaviour (...) stable and admitted. It is no more like that today. (...). The problem today is rather that the individual must be in a permanent self-defining search, which expresses itself by multiple, successive and concomitant memberships, which the individual is no wanting or being able to settle permanently» (my own translation. — *R.B.*) (2006: 131–132). In the hypermodern society, the destiny of the individual is to fulfill oneself, to build one’s own social life. The allegory of the “because I’ m worth it” individual is double: the individual has the right to build his social existence, but he also has duty to do it. His connection with the society is marked by this right and this duty. On one hand, because he is well worth it, the individual has the right to the support of the society to come true. On the other hand, he must play the game of his auto-realisation and show that he takes the responsibility of his auto-realisation.

As shown before, this civilizational way of conceiving the individual marks the social welfare systems such as they evolved from 1980s. Their evolution is due to a deep

crisis coinciding with the energy crisis of 1970s (Rosanvallon 1992). From the 1980s, the European social welfare systems were systematically reformed. The social insurances adopted the concept of activation, notably in protection against unemployment, accidents, illness and disability. Activation is a philosophy which consists in soliciting the participation of the beneficiary of benefits of insurance in its reintegration in the jobs market (Barbier 2002). For example, an unemployed person can benefit from benefits of the unemployment insurance, but must also participate to a training course or do a work of general interest to increase her competences and so to return faster to job; for disability and accident, the persons concerned will benefit first of all from benefits in order to help them to reintegrate an activity, rather than from permanent private incomes. These changes were qualified by several authors of evolution of the welfare in the workfare (Barbier 2002: 310). Some authors saw there the mere will to give a sense of responsibility to the beneficiaries of welfare, but many indications show that this evolution is also linked to the development of what I call the «because I' m worth it» society. In this perspective, the beneficiaries of benefits of social welfare systems must not be considered only to be victims of general mistrust towards them: on the contrary, themselves are conditioned by this philosophy of “because I' m worth it”.

Recent studies showed that, very often, the beneficiaries of benefits of social welfare systems accept the measures of active participation which are imposed on them (Beuret 2010). Their logic is double: on one hand, they consider themselves to be legitimate beneficiaries of the benefits of social welfare system (because they are worth it!) unlike other persons who are sharpers and profiteers; on the other hand, they consider training courses or job of general interest to be a means to improve their competences and their competitiveness, therefore for their auto-accomplishment. But the conception of the individual of “because I' m worth it” societies does not systematically lead to so positive effects as this one. On the side of the persons who participate in the financing of the systems of social insurance, without benefiting however from benefits, the conception of the individual of “because I' m worth it” societies appears in the form of important waitings towards these systems. For example, in the field of retirement, the most part of the insured parties thinks that they should have the right to benefits of retirement in age between 55 and 65 years, and the reforms of the regimes of pension are made very difficult, in spite of the challenge which represents the ageing of the population. Subjacent idea is that everybody, because he is well worth it, must be able to benefit from benefits since he will consider it pertinent; if somebody must sacrifice himself, it is other one.

The fundamental problem of the conception of the individual of “because I' m worth it” societies is to be seen in the disappearance of the idea that the society and the individual were mutually responsible for their existence. The west-European industrial societies were based on idea that, the industrial organisation of work producing some problems, the victims of these problems had to benefit from a protection. A century later, the society is not any more considered to be a society of production, but since a consumer society; in this vision, the idea of problems caused by to the industrial organisation of production disappeared, it was replaced with the idea that the individuals who do not manage to be inserted in practices of consumption — and therefore

in working practices which allow practices of consumption — are individuals who are not very busy enough for their own fulfillment. Considering this representation, the social protection systems do not have the same role anymore as they had: they became systems of social support, systems which have to help the individual to acquire all competences which will allow him to be inserted in the flux of the characteristic diade job-consumption of “because I’ m worth it” civilizations. Therefore, hypermodern european societies do not anymore accept the idea that contemporary social order produces some problems like structural unemployment, overborrowing of mass, psychical disability. On the contrary, in this philosophy, if the individual does not manage to auto-accomplish, this is not because of the society: it is because he will not have worked on it enough, or then “because he’ s not worth it”.

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