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### ***EU Food Safety Policy: an Element of European Identity?***

My research aims to reconstruct the *European food risk management policy*, investigating if and how this can contribute to a reinforcement of the legitimacy and political identity of the European Union. This study configures as an analysis of a specific policy inside a wider research project about European legitimacy and political identity conducted by JERP 5.2.1 *Normative Issues of Regional and Global Governance*, coordinated by Prof. Furio Cerutti (executive coordinator), Prof. Andrew Gamble and Prof. Mario Telò.

Dealing with the implications of EU food safety policies in the European legitimacy and political identity means to analyze the *values*, the *conception of science* and *technique* and *man-nature relation* which are at the base of the EU food risk management. Further, it means also to analyze the efficiency of this normative model in answering to the ethic and social concerns lifted by the impact that the new scientific developments exert on our daily eating habits and health notion.

A research on the relevance of food policies for European legitimacy and political identity cannot exclude the *analysis of risk conception adopted by EU*. It is therefore important to inquire whether the adoption of a determined risk notion could be indicative of a *specifically European cultural setting*, characterized by values, such as *respect for human dignity*, for *freedom of choice* and *public participation* principles, by a *peculiar conception of science, technique* and *relation with the environment*. As a premise, a very relevant issue to be investigated is the *distinction between risk and risk perception by European citizens*. In this sense, analyzing the European strategy efficacy to cope with citizens perplexities towards food risk (for example the widespread scepticism in consuming GMO) means to consider not only *how citizens perceive food risk*, but also how this perception influences the public debate and the *trust relationship between citizens and political institutions*. As relevant factors for the emerging of a determined risk perception, I consider also the role played by European media, in particular during European food scandals (BSE, dioxin), and the role played by 'green' parties.

Another relevant aspect is the analysis of the *market regulation strategies* on the base of the EU risk food management policies. For this purpose, I evaluate the eventual costs due to the competition with other global actors and the relative bearableness of these costs by both institutions and consumers. For example, I focus on the commercial dispute between EU and US on the GMO market and the role played in this debate by the European interpretation of the *Precautionary Principle*. Concerning the specificity of *European* food safety policies compared to *US* ones, I analyze not only the *two risk management models* as they are currently configured, but I also reconstruct *their evolution during the last forty years*. Since mid 60s until mid 80s, the standards of environment and consumers protection in the US were much more severe and innovative than both those of the EU and of each Member State ones. On the contrary, during the following period, an inversion of the previous trend took place: since 90s the European environmental normative system became much more strict and precautionary than the American one. The hypothesis to be investigated is if in the same social and political circumstances the two actors have elaborated very similar regulatory strategies, in spite of the presumed radical cultural, philosophical and values divergences.

#### **Methodology.**

The methodology I use includes both theoretical and empirical tools. With regards to the former, I will use scholar literature on EU food safety policy and EU food risk management as basic sources. As for the empirical part, I will use qualitative tools. In particular I will do discourse analysis of the following sources:

- European Commission Communications and regulations*. This is necessary to analyze EU self-perception about EU food safety policy and EU strategy of food risk communication. It could be relevant also to consider *leaders' public discourses*.
- *Parliamentary debates and debates within the EU Convention*, which is crucial in order to analyze EU self-perception about EU food safety policy and to emphasize possible differences of opinions and policy-making between EU and Member States.
- Sentences from EU Court of Justice and EU Trial of First Instance*, which illuminate the actual legal proceedings of Precautionary Principle.
- *International Agreements*, which show the EU political role as a global actor on the international scene.
- *Debates at international conferences/gatherings*, which give a measure of the way in which international scientific community sees EU food risk management.
- Surveys* (Eurobarometers, World/European Values Surveys, Transatlantic Trends, Pew surveys etc), which help collecting and analyzing public responses to EU risk management and EU risk communication strategies.
- Media and popular book on EU food risk management and food crisis in general*, which I consider pivotal in order to see how they affect public perception of food risk in Europe.