

Introduction

Derek Boothman, Fabio Frosini, Marco Gatto, Giacomo Tarascio

1.

The *dossier* published in this issue, entitled *Hegemony after Gramsci: Hegemony in the Shadow of the “Post”* (edited by Fabio Frosini, Marco Gatto and Giacomo Tarascio), presents an elaboration of the works from the seminar of the same title held in Urbino from 8 to 10 May 2024,¹ which is the sixth in a series that began in 2014 entitled *Hegemony after Gramsci*. The theme of that seminar, and consequently of this *dossier*, is an examination of the readings which, over the last thirty years or so, have on the one hand posed the problem of hegemony within the cultural and political transformations characterising postmodernity, and on the other hand proposed reformulations of hegemony in light of this new theoretical and cultural scenario. The question from which we began, in formulating the project of that seminar, is as follows: once it is accepted that the watershed between the 1970s and the following decade marks, primarily in Europe and North America, a highly significant phase shift (on the economic and political front entirely to the detriment of the working classes), to what transformations and pressures is the concept of hegemony subjected?

In the preceding period, at least until the 1960s, analyses as well as uses of this concept had concerned its relationship with Lenin on the one hand, and its degree of innovation on the other. This second aspect includes the interpretations of scholars who – like Norberto Bobbio, for example – emphasized Gramsci’s originality, or even his “post-Marxism”. The term itself was not used at the time, but it later appeared, not by chance drawing partial inspiration from Bobbio, in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

¹ The participants in that seminar were (in alphabetical order): Miriam Aiello, Andrea Ampollini, Giulio Azzolini, Javier Balsa, Mimmo Cangiano, Sebastiano Citroni, Giuseppe Cospito, Paolo Desogus, Federico Di Blasio, Roberto Finelli, Eleonora Forenza, Fabio Frosini, Anxo Garrido Fernández, Marco Gatto, Francesca Izzo, Benedetta Lanfranchi, Guido Liguori, Pietro Maltese, Francesco Marola, Miguel Mellino, Ingo Pohn-Lauggas, Maurizio Ricciardi, Emanuela Susca, Giacomo Tarascio, Giuseppe Vacca, Stefano Visentin.

Indeed, during the 1980s, coinciding with the rise of postmodern approaches in the Western world (developed since the 1960s), the notion of hegemony underwent important and decisive innovations. These did not all move in the same direction, but generally revealed the insufficiency of the theoretical framework within which it had been maintained until that point. Our interest focused on several exemplary cases, all revealing significant tensions, not only theoretical but also political.

The first case considered concerns the innovation to which the concept of hegemony was subjected to enable it to address issues related to a complex and advanced society like that of the West, thus including themes of culture, new social movements, and the obsolescence of classic dialectical categories for their comprehension. The ultimate origin of this type of reading can be traced to the United Kingdom around the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the birth and rise of Cultural Studies. This occurred through what amounted to a rediscovery of Gramsci as compared to the earlier English receptions of the 1950s.² From this point, the interpretation of the concept of hegemony assumed particular and original characteristics, sometimes unconsciously: suffice it to note the centrality of the term “counter-hegemony”, a keyword in the culturalist reading, yet absent from the *Prison Notebooks*.

An important turning point for this type of reading of hegemony lies in the way this concept was counterposed to, or adopted as an alternative to, Louis Althusser. Here we encounter a somewhat curious phenomenon: while, from Birmingham to London, Gramsci was established as an alternative path between Soviet Marxism and Althusserian Marxism (but with a strong proximity to the latter), in Italy he became the intellectual pivot of a traditional response to the new cultural and social trends also represented by Althusserianism. This is particularly evident in the 1967 Gramsci conference, famous for Norberto Bobbio’s paper which fuelled the image of Gramsci as a “theorist of the superstructure”. This proposal – the result of a rather mechanistic reading of Marxian categories – located the moment of hegemony as the exclusive content of the superstructure, thus providing one of the cornerstones for what would become, as mentioned, the interpretations

² See D. Boothman, *Le traduzioni di Gramsci in inglese e la loro ricezione nel mondo anglofono*, in «in-TRAlinea», 7, 2004-2005, available at the site: <https://www.intralea.org/archive/article/1632> (23 December 2025).

of Chantal Mouffe (the first to translate Bobbio's essay into English),³ Perry Anderson, Ernesto Laclau, and, above all, the Cultural Studies later followed by the galaxy of *post-* and *studies* that have been influential.

In this context, Subaltern Studies occupy a particularly prominent position. This brings us to the second case examined. Starting from an initial niche, the Indian Subaltern Studies collective quickly condensed within itself the tensions of other "*post-*" movements, eventually adopting «a new concept of the *world*»⁴ as its frame of reference. Hence the heterogeneity in how the relationship – or *non*-relationship – between subalternity and hegemony was assimilated, leading to differentiated and peculiar interpretations within the collective itself – particularly between Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

It is through these interpretative keys that the various currents and readings which have engaged with hegemony after Gramsci will be explored, highlighting their original characteristics and – above all – their autonomy from the *Prison Notebooks*, in order to outline an overview of some of the strands of thought that have focused on the change in the hegemonic framework within Western societies and global transformations. These are the threads connecting Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism, Negrian post-workerism, and Subaltern Studies, all in their own way critical revisions of the concept – or theory – of hegemony; all three underlie so-called *post-hegemony*, that is, the grouping of theories – or *post-theories* – that declare the overcoming or the end of hegemony.⁵

Obviously, we do not presume to encompass the entire complex of *posts* and their ramifications in a single monographic issue. For this reason, future issues of the «International Gramsci Journal» will provide opportunities to return to these themes.

2.

The *dossier* opens with an essay by Roberto Finelli, which has as its starting point Notebook 22, *Americanism and Fordism*, in order to

³ See *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. by Ch. Mouffe, London-Boston-Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, pp. 21-47.

⁴ S. Mezzadra, *Presentazione*, in *Subaltern Studies. Modernità e (post) colonialismo*, a cura di R. Guha e G. Chakravorty Spivak, Verona, ombre corte, 2002, p. 7.

⁵ See P. D. Thomas, *After (post) hegemony*, «Contemporary Political Theory», 20, 2021, pp. 318-40.

highlight how Gramsci developed a *theory of capital as a total institution*. This insight transcends the structure-superstructure metaphor, arriving at a conception of social being in which the sphere of capital production generates both culture and the generalized forms of consciousness, thereby expanding capital itself into a paradoxically unique factor of socialization. It thus becomes possible to understand the functionality of culture in maintaining and reproducing a social organization based on capital, characterized by the dialectical pairing of hollowing-out and superficialization, which has shifted from postmodern ideology to the ideology of the infosphere.

Marco Gatto explores developments in cultural and literary theory over the last forty years, identifying adherence to postmodernity as its main direction and questioning the shift from theory to a narrative form of theoretical discourse. Consequently, he identifies the dominance of capitalist abstraction, founded on the hollowing-out and relocation of the concrete onto the plane of appearances and symbolic forms. This analysis brings to light the anti-theoretical temptations in contemporary thought.

In Paolo Desogus's essay, the Gramscian concept of the "national-popular" is examined. The essay highlights the central role of this concept within the philosophy of praxis: it is indeed both a cultural and a political category. Through a critical engagement with the theoretical trajectories of Italian workerism and post-workerism, the essay underscores the importance for Gramsci of the categories of mediation, hegemony, and cultural struggle.

From an opposing perspective, Pietro Maltese reconstructs the path of approach to and recuperation of Gramsci's theory undertaken by Antonio Negri, compared to the misunderstandings and rejections of the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to the sometimes still reiterated dismissals from the post- or neo-workerist galaxy, Negri progressively exhibited openings towards the philosophy of praxis and some of its Gramscian categories (hegemony, passive revolution, modern Prince). The essay shows how, in the end, Negri made Gramsci's questions his own to understand contemporaneity and decipher postmodernity, aiming at defining an institutive communist project.

In his essay, Anxo Garrido contrasts the post-foundational proposal of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe with reflections arising

from Gramsci's treatment of the question of metaphor and the development of a theory of translatability. To this end, two theses are argued: first, that the post-Marxist framework constitutes a successful translation of the anti-economic problem within the coordinates of a post-structuralist philosophy; second, that the intrinsic limit of this translation lies in the inability of the post-Marxist framework to incorporate Gramsci's theory of translatability, a fact highlighting the analytical limits of the formalism of such a reading.

Benedetta Lanfranchi investigates the dynamics of hegemonic forms and the conditions for counter-hegemonic possibilities within the increasingly digitalized modes of production characterising the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). In this direction, the "hegemonic form" theorized by Jean Baudrillard in the 1970s is brought into tension with the current formulation of the *digitalocene*, a concept proposed here as a theory in development drawing inspiration from Jason W. Moore's formulation of the *Capitalocene* as the world-ecology of capitalism. Starting from these premises, the essay interrogates the impact digitality is having on the political sphere through the Gramscian categories of common sense and good sense.

The *dossier* concludes with a triptych of essays dedicated to Subaltern Studies. In the first, Giacomo Tarascio reconstructs the origins and conceptual development of hegemony within the trajectory of Subaltern Studies, particularly through the writings and experience of Ranajit Guha, the principal animator and theorist of the Indian collective. For this purpose, the early readings of Gramsci in India and the political-cultural formation context of Subaltern Studies are analysed, before moving on to the conceptualization of hegemony, intersecting Guha's elaboration with the main theoretical moments marking the publication of the collective's twelve-volume series.

In his article, Stefano Visentin begins from the reception in India of Gramscian concepts of hegemony and passive revolution, particularly by Partha Chatterjee. Chatterjee develops Guha's thought, through a more political than a theoretical distancing, coining a new definition of "complex hegemony" to apply to the Indian postcolonial State. In an analysis conducted in parallel with the economist Kalyan Sanyal, Chatterjee shows how the Indian dominant classes seek to impose a new type of hegemony, which ultimately also em-

employs populist tools, to control and direct the subaltern classes, although the results of this project may never lead to final victory.

Finally, Ingo Pohn-Lauggas addresses the debate sparked off by the critique levelled by the sociologist Vivek Chibber against Subaltern Studies. Chibber's aim, in particular, was to demonstrate the «failure of Subaltern Studies» by illustrating a series of theoretical and historical misunderstandings that led to the resuscitation of an essentializing orientalism. However, while Gramsci does not feature in Chibber's theoretical argument, Partha Chatterjee and Gayatri Spivak in their responses refer to him extensively. Spivak, in particular, takes the opportunity presented by the debate to recapitulate her own reading of Gramsci and, above all, her use of the concept of subalternity.

In the *Archive* section, we publish the English translation (by Derek Boothman) of the entry *Dialectics*, written by Giuseppe Prestipino for the *Dizionario gramsciano 1926-1937*.

3.

This issue features a miscellaneous section opening with an essay by Richard Howson, Charles Hawksley, and Nichole Georgeou, which addresses the case of the proposed referendum that, on 14 October 2023, was intended to recognize Indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants within the Australian Constitution, providing them with a “Voice” in Parliament. The study of events takes its starting point from a critique of the Australian government and its insufficient support for the referendum, thus demonstrating a lack of that commitment to moral and intellectual education characteristic of an “integral” State. A Gramscian analysis of the referendum is therefore proposed, first outlining its methodological premises and then describing the vote within Australia's changing demographic structure.

In Marco Secci's essay, the way in which Gramsci refused to adopt Raffaele Corso's definition of folklore as a «contemporary prehistory» is re-examined. Secci argues that the concept can be reconsidered in the light of Gramsci's critique and his conception of folklore as a dynamic system akin to language. From here, it is shown how folklore functions both conservatively, preserving repressed social

elements, and subversively, offering resources for cultural resistance. Furthermore, it is shown how the critique of folklore remains crucial today in the face of conspiracy theories and disinformation.

In the final essay proposed, André Wagner Rodrigues de Sousa and Luciana Cristina Salvatti Coutinho illustrate the paths taken to identify Gramscian studies on education, particularly those concerning objects of analysis dating back to the imperial period of Brazilian history. From a bibliographic perspective, the study synthetically presents the reception of Gramsci's work in Brazil through academic research in the educational field, before addressing some important studies that have sought to collect and analyse Gramscian production within the Brazilian context of recent decades.

4.

During the preparation of this issue, Charles Hawksley passed away. He was a longstanding friend of the «*International Gramsci Journal*», an active supporter and former editor, from when it was first published at the University of Wollongong (Australia). The editors, the scientific committee, and the editorial board express their deepest condolences and sincere affection to Charles's friends, family and most of all to his partner Nichole, she too a member of our scientific committee. At the same time, we underscore the honour and privilege of being able to host Charles's last, significant work, a joint publication with Nichole and Richard Howson (see above), the fruit of a sincere political commitment linked, in a Gramscian manner, to rigorous scientific analysis.