

“Putting Family First”: a Sociological Analysis of Doherty’s *Citizen Professionalism* and Participatory Approaches¹

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Abstract. This article proposes a critical analysis of W. J. Doherty's lecture on Citizen Professionalism, also published in this review. Citizen Professionalism is described as a participative or community approach, whose specific features include the strategic role assigned to families in the solution of social problems. In this sense, Citizen Professionalism has an educational task crucial to today's need to learn how to be citizens with a cooperative attitude. In fact, whilst market competition has boosted individualism, an excess of State welfare has encouraged citizens to delegate their every decision and action to professionals or experts. The purpose of the article is to show how the reasons for the effectiveness of community approaches, particularly Doherty's, can be demonstrated through sociological theory: rather than being evidence-based only, this it is founded on the centrality of human and corporate agency to the process of social change and to building personal and social well-being.

Keywords: Citizen Professionalism, Relational Sociology, Morphogenetic Theory, Community-based approaches, Participatory Approaches.

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Introduction

The idea that the production of welfare should actively involve its beneficiaries, now widespread among public officials and social workers, has led to participatory practices aimed at building social networking at different levels.

There is a wider level of participatory democracy, involving whole communities and urban areas: examples of this are participatory budgeting (Marquetti *et al.*, 2012), started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and later adopted worldwide, including Italy (Stortone, 2010), town redevelopment plans (Sclavi, 2012), and renewing local democracy through civic engagement (Warren, 2001). At the other end of the scale there is the level of social networking (Folgheraiter, 2012), whereby interested parties in social care (users, carers, neighbours, volunteers, professional workers, managers, policy makers) can acquire shared power in care planning and decision making: the so-called *Whole Family Approaches* (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008), for instance, focus their action on the family, valuing each member’s skills and resources in the area of child welfare; two examples are the *Multifamily Therapy* (Asen and Scholz, 2010) and the *Family Group Conference* (Maci, 2010; Burford and Hudson, 2000).

Citizen Professionalism stands at an intermediate level, as it involves groups of individuals and families in specific, if heterogeneous, issues (hyper-planning of children’s lives, diabetes, smoking dependency—among others). Begun as the *Families and Democracy Project*, with community initiatives on issues as diverse as overscheduled middle-class children or the challenges of urban unmarried new parents (Doherty and Carroll, 2002), it successively was renamed *Citizen Health Care*, a way of engaging patients, families and communities as co-producers of health and health care (Doherty and Mendenhall, 2006).

These approaches, from participatory democracy to social work, are all based on the idea of drawing in persons related to each other. The literature produced in the last few years indicates that social workers, psychologists and politicians are all converging towards this idea. Their diverse areas of expertise, however, cause them to resist the evidence that a community outlook can smooth differences and lead specialisations and techniques to merge. This perspective requires, in fact, both sociological and

psychological expertise to, respectively, interpret the characteristics of a given social milieu and facilitate communication and decision making within heterogeneous and complex groups.

The object of this contribution is to show the effectiveness of community approaches, particularly family-based ones, such as W. J. Doherty's, through sociological arguments based on the theories of Margaret Archer and Pierpaolo Donati.

The Origin and Characteristics of *Citizen Professionalism*

Doherty (2006) refers his model to five different sources: 1) family therapy; 2) medical family therapy and collaborative family health care; 3) the democratic public work model of the *Center for Democracy and Citizenship* at the University of Minnesota; 4) community organising, with an emphasis on renewing local democracy, reorganising relationships between power and politics, and restructuring the physical and civic infrastructures of communities (Warren, 2001); 5) community-based participatory research, also known as “action research” (Mendenhall and Doherty, 2005; Minkler, 2000; Minkler and Wallerstein, 2003; Israel *et al.*, 2005).

On this foundation, Doherty and his team created the *Family and Democracy Model*, later developed into the *Citizen Health Care Model* and, finally, *Citizen Professionalism*, within the *Citizen Professional Center* at the Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota.

Doherty's approach comes within community psychology, an area he entered after a long experience in couple and family psychotherapy, having become aware of his work being detached from the problems of people in real-life communities:

with a growing sense that my professional services as a marriage and family therapist, my collaborative work with physicians in health care settings, and my academic teaching and research³ were not addressing important problems in the larger community and culture³.

³ All the quotations from Doherty are taken from his lecture published in this same issue (pp. 111-126).

His background, however, led him to connect the individual to the community not directly but *through the family* (Doherty, 2008).

One distinguishing feature of Doherty’s approach is the fact that he does not just promote participatory social planning: he also supports people requiring the participation of families connected to their local community, as problems never affect just one individual and the solutions can only come from “putting family first” (Doherty and Carlson, 2002).

Persons and families must become aware that their own problems maybe affect other families in the wider community:

Is this problem we’re talking about here [...] only an individual family problem? or is it also a community problem? Are the solutions only individual family solutions? or are they also community solutions?

This makes people feel more responsible, both collectively (as a family) and individually, so that each family member (child or adult) can take action towards finding solutions, as “the complex problems we face in health care, human services, government, and education” make “the traditional professional expert and provider/consumer models [...] inadequate”. Doherty affirms⁴:

I believe that the solutions to the serious problems in today’s families will not come mainly from professional services or even public programs, as important as those are. They will come from citizen parents and citizen children working together in communities to take back family life.

Theoretical Grounds for a New Concept of Citizenship

Citizen Professionalism can be read as a combination of a number of elements:

- 1) neither the problems nor the solutions are of a purely individual nature: they affect first individuals and their families and, second, the

⁴ This quotation is taken from <http://www.drbilldoherty.org/parenting.php>.

relationship between families and the community, which leads to a relational concept of welfare;

- 2) problems can only be solved when valuing “the knowledge, wisdom, and energy of individuals, families and communities who face challenging [health] issues in their everyday lives” – that is, through empowerment strategies;
- 3) the fact that persons and families have a similar power makes them feel ethically responsible towards their community.

In Doherty’s theory, these three principles translate as a new concept of citizenship, levelling children with parents, families with communities, ordinary people with experts: citizen children and citizen parents, are all prospective *Citizen Professionals*. This concept of citizens as both providers and consumers is also found in P. Donati’s sociological approach (Donati, 2010; 2011): its application to the study of welfare systems underlies a societal citizenship within a plural societal welfare, with citizens as “prosumers” (pro[viders]+[con]sumers) of relational goods, showing a striking similarity with Doherty’s model.

However, the affirmation that it is better “to look at family and community resources first” and not to work on behalf of communities but *with* them is evidence-based; besides, Doherty notes how these two concepts reflect the political-ethical issue implicit in the opening words of the U.S. Constitution: “We the people”. *Citizen Professionalism* is, in fact, also called *Democratic Professionalism* (Dzur, 2007).

Arguably, the political-ethical issue on its own could weaken the validity of the *Citizen Professionalism* method outside the American context (the latter being otherwise a point of strength).

On the other hand, there are limits to the evidence-based approach. Testing the goodness of a practice on results means, in the broad sense, overlooking the value of its underlying theoretical model. Donati rejects the idea of equating quality with results. He proposes an alternative, relational approach: good practices are not only efficient and effective (i.e., evidence-based); they must also be founded on work methods and principles aimed at empowering the family by giving it a leading role.

Hence the usefulness of *Citizen Professionalism* in arguing the need for activating family relationships through empowerment strategies, if the purpose is to increase the overall wellbeing of a society.

The scientific value of participatory models must be documented not only *a posteriori* (how effective they have been evaluated) but also *a priori*, i.e., as to their theoretical foundation: only a thorough understanding of the reasons why the stakeholders’ involvement is inevitable will show the need to include them in the early planning stages of the interventions.

Today’s need to opt for a participatory, stakeholder-empowerment route cannot, however, be taken for granted; on the contrary, the practical problems in implementing participatory schemes can be discouraging or lead towards apparently more convenient shortcuts.

Towards a Sociology of Participation: from Corporate Agency to Relational Reflexivity

The hypothesis this paper proposes to demonstrate, with the support of contemporary sociological theories, is that individual welfare aspirations can more easily be pursued when the subjects establish trust-based cooperative networks to include as many persons as possible as facilitators of reciprocal life projects (Carrà, 2008).

The theoretical approaches and sociological categories referred to are Archer’s morphogenesis (1995) and Donati’s relational theory (2010).

The argument moves from the consideration that projects are planned and carried out on the assumption that reality is inadequate and needs to be acted on by turning uneasiness into comfort, or preventing future uneasiness. This applies to individual cases tackled by social workers or psychotherapists, as well as to wider-scope planning covering a town area or a whole city and, therefore, to community work; and, further up, to social policies.

Thus, from a sociological viewpoint, planning an intervention and implementing it are actions tending to social *change*. As is well-known, the concept of change has stirred a widely controversial debate from the very beginning of sociological theory: Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Simmel all wanted to explain the deep changes affecting 19th-century society in the wake of industrialisation, the spread of individualism, increasing social differentiation, and the affirmation of positivism and instrumental rationality. These different issues have merged into one

dilemma: whether change depends on a mechanistic determinism whereby man cannot interfere with its laws; or, conversely, whether the minor or major changes which, in time, modify society are made by individuals. These two positions, known as *holism* and *individualism*, are usually attributed to two late-19th-century thinkers: Émile Durkheim and Max Weber. Either position is actually insupportable when taken to its extreme consequences. In short, the dilemma produces a paradox as to the possibility to plan and implement social projects: in fact, the usual assumption of operators (or policy makers) is that they are able to modify the *status quo* and, therefore, affect reality. According to the first hypothesis (mechanistic determinism), any actions intending to bring change (hence, any interventions aimed at generating welfare) would be ineffective; according to the second (the subject can produce change), the operator’s action would be blocked by another social subject, i.e., the user, who would be just as impervious to conditioning. Thus, operator and user would be either powerless or in conflict.

Among the theories focused on social change, Archer’s *Morphogenesis* stands out. Its application to the area of social planning and intervention can help overcome both varieties of reductionism (holistic and individualistic).

Corporate Agency as the Root of Social Change

Within the critical realist framework, Archer (1995) sees change or *morphogenesis* (the term she uses to stress it is a process) as the result of continuous interaction between *structure* and *agency*. At an early morphogenetic stage, structures constitute an actual system environment for actors and social agents. Whatever actions and concepts they may form of it, the system environment is objective, its factors having emerged during previous interactions with different actors and social agents. Within, and influenced by, such an environment, the subjects initiate actions to pursue their own goals; in fact, the distribution of resources, power and expertise (which exerts a form of structural conditioning) causes social groups to develop a concern to either preserve or change their socio-cultural structure, according to whether the latter is seen as a limitation or a resource. Within the socio-cultural interaction groups and individuals mobilise resources and form alliances in their pursuit of material goals and

reflexively constituted ideals. Fundamental, in this second phase, is the capacity of collective agents to move from the role of *primary agents*, simple aggregations of individuals sharing the same life possibilities, to that of *corporate agents*, that is, self-conscious, organised groups, able to affirm and support their own interests. The second morphogenetic phase is exemplified by Doherty’s *Citizen Professionalism*, particularly by schemes such as *Putting Family First* or the *Citizen Father Project*, where mobilising is aimed at modifying characteristics that can be structural (the organisation of children’s out-of-school activities) or cultural (cultural values and models relative to fatherhood). In the third phase, the result of interaction among social groups, that is, of *corporate agency*, interweaves with the structures’ consolidated characteristics to produce new structural and cultural properties which will form the next cycle’s system environment.

In a later essay, Archer (2003) looks into the crucial role played by human reflexivity in the morphogenetic process, explaining why change can only take place through corporate agency, i.e., through action shared by social subjects: corporate agents are groups of persons, each with specific interests pursued through micro-planning, towards whom the context’s structural and cultural properties act as either restraining or facilitating factors. The possibility to alter reality depends on each person’s will to take personal action in order to initiate a *corporate action* with other people who also want to make their way of living sustainable.

Archer’s theory illustrates the nature of the above paradox: through their reflexive activity, operators and users alike can mobilise the resources already present in society in order to fulfil their own plans; thanks to the operators’ competence, their own projects should somehow be based on more effective strategies than the users’. However, even if an operator were to reach certainty about which resources to mobilise in order to assist a subject, a changing process (*morphogenesis*) could only take place if the operator’s and user’s *ultimate concerns* were to meet within a corporate form of agency. Archer “gives a fundamental contribution to the understanding and management of the relationship between *care giver* and *care taker*” (Donati, 2006, p. 40). This is the first argument backing Doherty’s model, according to which the solutions to the grave problems affecting today’s families will not come mainly from professional services

or even public programs: instead, each family in the community and each subject within it should take personal action and feel responsible for providing his or her own specific, irreplaceable contribution.

Man as a Relational Subject

The effectiveness of participatory practices is best clarified through the connection between Archer’s morphogenesis and Donati’s relational theory.

As stated earlier, Archer sees the possibility to change reality when personal action becomes corporate. But why can morphogenesis only derive from corporate action? Doherty’s “political” answer does not appear to fully substantiate the “We the people” concept. Corporate agency is crucial because it meets man’s ineliminable need to be *in relationship*.

According to relational sociology, interacting individuals who decide to join forces are interrelated subjects. That is, human agency does not directly relate to a structure but to other human subjects inhabiting structural and cultural properties. The agency of other subjects can hinder or facilitate an action, and the sustainability of a subject’s projects depends on the choices made by other subjects. Thus, the limitations of personal projects are not just structural factors but the projects of others: an inextricable web of resources and projects forces people into interdependence; more positively, individuals are potential facilitators to each other, as long as they keep a cooperative, rather than competitive, attitude. Reticularity can be a trap of conflicting projects, or a support if the nodes become opportunities for corporate agency.

Transforming the network into a resource is far from easy. It is necessary to develop (educate) people’s ability to reflect on such a network in order to capture the opportunities it offers; cooperative skills must be trained, showing that the possibility to fulfil personal aspirations increases if each person acts cooperatively within their primary networks and life communities.

Thus, the idea of a sustainable *modus vivendi*, which Archer considers the goal of reflexive activity and personal planning, assumes a relational connotation, since sustainability can only derive from converging interests and actions between plural subjects who belong to relational networks, and

from a capacity for joint dialogical reflexivity and joint agency (Donati, 2011).

Therefore, social interventions must feature a sort of *dialogical, relational reflexivity*, as suggested by Donati’s relational rewriting of Archer’s theory. Hence the need to assume the existence of *reflexivity in social networks* which exceeds the sum of individual reflexivities, as these can only produce mass action. Reflexivity in social networks can emerge from a fabric of relationships characterised by trust, cooperation and reciprocity, that is, from the presence of social capital. Reflexivity can be activated in social networks by a relational (or community) intervention, so that social reality may be accompanied rather than conditioned and the subjects inhabiting it may find and implement strategies apt to generate welfare.

In reference to Archer’s theory, Donati (2006, p. 40-41) affirms that the

educational, welfare, counselling and the care professions need to adopt a working attitude whereby to socialise persons does not simply mean to provide normative recipes aimed at introjecting values in them, require their compliance with certain behaviours, or apply to them technologically specialised therapies, but to urge the development of potentialities internal to the person and his/her relational networks. [...] Any flaws or disorientation in people and their *modus vivendi* can thus be referred to, and managed within, a relational guiding framework aimed at developing more mature (autonomous) forms of reflexivity by individual subjects in co-responsibility to their relationships networks.

In other words, it is necessary to carry out interventions aimed at activating subjects and their networks and cause everyone’s reflexivity to converge towards common projects. So, effective changes in the users’ circumstances will come about from the operators’ and users’ joint application of their reflexivity. *Relational reflexivity* allows an operator to facilitate the decisional activity of a user. The resulting project will belong to *neither operator nor user alone* but to their relationship, and its final product will be a form of wellbeing coinciding with neither’s expectations but transcending both.

Moreover, relational reflexivity involves *all* subjects within the operator’s and user’s relationship network (other operators and services, the recipient’s family and members of his/her network): where relationships work towards a common good, each node in the network receives positive feedback. Hence, interventions aimed at producing/recovering wellbeing

operate through relationships networks (Folgheraiter, 2012) which needing a cooperative orientation towards reciprocity.

The Importance of Family Relationships

Relational sociology sees man as a subject involved in a series of relationships at different levels of relevance to society. The family, in fact, is a crucial one, the *matrix* of all social bonds: it is the place where subjective and inter-subjective rights are mediated; where an individual first experiences the need to be supported and give support; where cooperation is needed to achieve super-individual goals; where one learns that cooperation to produce a common good generates welfare for oneself too.

The family is a *sui generis* relationship – as Donati suggests – because in it an inter-gender, inter-generational mediation takes place, as well as one between the individual and society; within the family each individual is defined, as to the other members, in terms of gender and position within the generational sequence (parent and/or child) as well as the life-cycle (age). So the family is “that symbolical map which allows us to think and speak, to translate the familiar into the non-familiar” (Donati, 1998, p. 238).

Moreover, the family represents a sort of island in post-modern society: it is, in fact, a “sphere of relationships oriented towards the totality of the human person” (Donati, 1995, p. 29). Today’s complex, fragmented society tends to lose sight of the person while focusing on social roles: a firm’s employee, a service user, a doctor’s patient, a schoolchild’s parent. Within the family alone these different roles are reassembled as belonging to one subject, such as a working father, who needs to contact public services to obtain assistance, is affected by a certain pathology and must therefore see a medical doctor, and has a child who goes to school. The family experiences this composition as either sustainable or non-sustainable. It is a litmus test, since—in Donati’s words (1998, p. 233) –“it acts willingly or unwillingly, filtering through the life capacity of each generation and, therefore, that of each society”. Hence the function of family relationships as originating social change in any form of society can only affect the next generation through the “limited but specific influence” (*ib.*, p. 236) of the family filter which alters the trajectory of the impact.

Participation as a Strategy to Reduce the Risks of Complexity

To transform the network into a resource by creating corporate agency practices (whether as family relationships or involving more individuals and families) is far from easy, given today’s difficulty in cooperating rather than competing within each network. In fact, one dominant feature of complex societies is the prevalence of multiple, contradictory forms of belonging, the sense of a “homeless mind” (Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1973) typical of subjects lacking a centre of gravity. Combining different forms of belonging is tiresome, as each social environment frequented by a subject has different, often conflicting rules (one example is the hot issue of family/work reconciliation). The need to develop dialogical reflexivity is thus even more obvious, as the subjects’ wellbeing depends on finding a balance within the chaotic belonging networks. It is surely no coincidence that Doherty should have approached community psychology through the problem of children’s overscheduling due to an excessive amount of school-related activities.

Given this framework, an individualist agency (in Doherty’s case, the notion that involving a child in as many activities as possible would assure its welfare) can only be effective in the short term: in the long term it would exhaust society’s relational fabric (by eroding family relationships). On the contrary, a relational perspective suggests that a person’s wellbeing depends on his/her interest to promote, rather than counter, others’ wellbeing: the wellbeing of those related to us facilitates our own.

Also Beck’s *co-operative or altruistic individualism* views a selfish society as untenable: “Thinking oneself and living for others at the same time” is no contradiction in terms but “an internal, substantive connection” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 211). Likewise, Nash’s *equilibrium theory* (1950) shows the advantage of cooperative strategies over individualistic ones. Sennett (2012) too maintains that competition based on the survival of the fittest does not help the market but destroys it: competition and cooperation must travel together.

The first *Citizen Professionalism* project shows that the erosion of family wellbeing (which prompted the launch of *Putting Family First*) is characteristic of complex, globalised, highly differentiated societies.

The extent to which globalisation and complexity are eroding social bonds is exemplified by Luhmann’s theory (1984), developed about 30 years ago,

according to which an unstoppable differentiation process had caused the fragmentation of the social system into a plurality of self-referential sub-systems impervious to external regulations. The contemporary subject is forced to migrate from a sub-system to another trying to combine conflicting rules, without an overarching institution to exert governance and order chaos. This brings about the overscheduling of children, who are expected to perform a number of self-referential activities. Here the exercise of dialogic reflexivity is the only way to contain differentiation and contrast the sub-systems’ self-referentiality. Otherwise, in Luhmann’s view, the overscheduling problem of families in Wayzata, Minnesota, who turned to Doherty, would be paradoxical, as the family and its desire for a good life would be the image of an impossible society overwhelmed by complexity.

It seems that today’s proliferation of participatory experiences, work-life balance practices and projects prioritising families (such as Doherty’s) indicate that person, family and social networks are the only strategy for activating *corporate agency* even where structures invite fragmentation.

Mobilising a plurality of subjects to tackle and solve problems brings an additional advantage. Where causality is as complex and reticular as it is today, it is nearly impossible for one external operator to get a thorough perspective on a problematic event: he/she would not be able to control all the factors causing the need for intervention. By combining his/her professional (psychological, social work, etc.) viewpoint with those of others, especially the stakeholders in the network, and forming with them a grid of strategic vantage points, a richer, more articulate, more objective view can be accessed where the boundaries of subjective perspectives are blurred and can be joined.

Activating Dialogical Reflexivity: an Educational Task

At the beginning of what now is a seminal text about community social work, Twelvetrees (1982) remarks that the many spontaneous, independent activities carried out by people within their communities do not constitute social community work but are, in fact, supported by it. This implies that to

activate a participatory experience specific competencies need to be trained, sustained and seen through.

In fact, Doherty too affirms that everyone is a citizen and, as such, has a duty to be active and assume responsibility within the community; he identifies the *Citizen Professional* as the catalyst of such competencies, which would otherwise remain largely inactive and/or invisible.

The *Citizen Professionalism* approach encourages the citizens' participation and responsibility, and supports them through the *Citizen Professional's* threefold role of: 1) educator; 2) advocate; 3) organizer. Doherty then proceeds to illustrate the tasks relative to each and identifies the following characteristics for the *educator's role*:

Mission: capacity of building for a democratic way of life. Equipping people with the knowledge and tools for decision making, self-care, close relationships, participation in community, less dependence on professionals.

Practice: democratic knowledge sharing. Blending professional and community expertise, with special emphasis on sharing the knowledge and wisdom of community members.

Difference from the traditional educator's role: not hierarchical and expert oriented, two-way learning (everyone is a teacher and a learner), valuing local knowledge and not just universal, academic knowledge.

Examples: community education accessing parents' knowledge and energy; a public health education campaign on lead risk to children carried out by a group of professionals and community members; using Web 2.0 to engage reflection and deliberation.

In short, Doherty sees education as forming the ability to participate, by families and community, to better understand their own needs and resources; its method consists in sharing professional and life experience: the role of the educator and that of the person being educated are not hierarchy-based, as teaching/learning is two-way. Understandably, a form of education aimed at stimulating participation must, in turn, be participatory, i.e., based on peer-education. This also helps overcoming the clear-cut distinction between provider and consumer of (educational) goods and services, as change (i.e., the acquisition of skills) can only take place through the cooperation of two active subjects: the educator and the person being educated.

Why citizenship must be learned is less obvious, but it can be explained along the same lines. As we have seen, aspirations are more easily fulfilled

if the subjects involved form cooperative relationships based on trust, including an increasingly high number of people as facilitators of one another’s life projects. However, this is not always possible, since people do not always act reflexively, i.e., bearing in mind that cooperation and solidarity are more likely to bring their personal projects to fruition. On the one hand, traditional, competition-based market logics have encouraged individualism; on the other, the “Nanny-State” approach to welfare, typical of European countries, has encouraged citizens to shun responsibility or delegate it to operators or experts⁵. This is why the *Citizen Professional’s* main role is that of the educator: *Citizen Professionalism* is a sort of pedagogy for empowering families as to their own welfare and that of the community in which they live. Whilst in the U.S. (the home of *C. P.*) individualism is a bigger problem than an excess of welfarism, it is also possible to take advantage of personal mobilisation; in Italy, on the other hand, a greater inclination towards solidarity must fight against the user’s passivity resulting from all-pervasive, if inefficient, welfare institutions. In harmony with capability approaches (Sen, 1985; Nussbaum, 2003), *Citizen Professionalism* educates the capability to “give life to a democratic cohabitation”⁶: to be citizens does not just mean to enjoy certain rights (e.g., the right to vote), ratify others’ decisions, use services provided by others, but also to participate directly in the construction of democracy (“We the people”).

A twofold capability to be *citizen*, however, must be developed: a *reflexive capability* and a *capability for dialogical reflexivity*. The former is central to most of the new theories in the sociology of education: the development of critical and reflexive skills is opposed to the mere transmission of technical knowledge, to access information sources. A reflexive person makes decisions and acts by norms and criteria within a coherent frame of values. This does not limit personal freedom but prevents exposure to

⁵ For this reason, Braithwaite talks about “a poll-driven democracy”, which spreads where “there are too many decisions and too many people for participatory democracy” (Braithwaite, 2000, p. 31).

⁶ According to Indian economist Amartya Sen, and American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, quantitative parameters (e.g., *per capita* GDP) are not enough for comparing development in different countries: there must be criteria to assess to what extent people can *do* and *be*.

technocratic/economic manipulation (Maccarini, 2003). Indeed, lack of reflexivity leads to aimless wandering steered by the random wake of urges, tastes and fantasies (Maffesoli, 1997); it also eliminates the possibility to impact on social morphogenesis (Rossi, 1998).

Conversely, to educate reflexivity means to teach the exercise of critical capability, allowing an active detachment to prevent the drifting (Maccarini, 2003). Reflexivity rules the emotions without eliminating them, and formulates a project expressing options and priorities, while deciding for a sustainable *modus vivendi* within the complexity of the present and the infinite life chances it offers (Dahrendorf, 1981). In this sense, Archer (2003) affirms that reflexive activity makes humans moral beings, as their choices involve continuous assessments of what is good for them.

Dialogical reflexivity is an upper level of reflexivity accessed through the first. In fact, beside anchoring choices to coherent criteria, an education to reflexivity teaches how to place personal wellbeing within one's community relationships and actively seek others' cooperation to fulfil one's projects (corporate agency).

In conclusion, the practice of participation must be educated and accompanied by a *relational guide* (Donati, 1991); it then becomes educative, promoting acceptance of diversity, mediation, voluntary commitment, the assumption of responsibility within the community, solidarity (Martini and Torti, 2003).

Compared with other participatory methods, Doherty's approach has the added value of active citizenship enabled by family relationships, thus touching a crucial node in the sociology of education debate: the role of familial socialisation, fundamental to modernity, paradoxical to post-modernity, which views the family as the nostalgic residue of an old world (Luhmann, 1988). The family enhances the totality of the person, while society obliterates it. This is why the family's fundamental role in the development of socialisation must be prioritised: its calling to mediate between genders and generations, the individual and society, values and social expectations (Donati, 1998) becomes even more crucial as society increasingly fragments and disperses the person through a myriad of self-referential forms of belonging (e.g., the overscheduled children of Doherty's first project). So, for a correct application of the participatory

approach it is significant that Doherty should perceive citizenship as unfolded first and foremost within the family, where each member must take responsibility without passively depending on the other members' decisions and actions.

Conclusions

The present contribution is intended to offer a strong sociological argument in support of participatory approaches centred on families, such as Doherty's *Citizen Professionalism*. The hypothesis was that individuals' welfare aspirations could more easily be pursued if the interested subjects established trust-based cooperation networks including as many persons as possible as facilitators of one another's life projects. This was based on the assumption that the welfare of a community cannot be entrusted to the initiative of specially appointed operators or experts to whom citizens delegate their every decision and action: welfare can only be produced by the joint work of operators and citizens (Folgheraiter, 2012).

According to the theories of Archer and Donati, even when a competent operator has reached certainty about the resources necessary to support a particular subject, change can only begin if the interests of both operator and user converge within a corporate agency. This actually supports Doherty's model, where each subject within a family and each family within the community should take responsibility and offer their own irreplaceable contribution.

Corporate agency is possible where social networks show themselves able to dialogue and cooperate (Donati's *dialogical, relational reflexivity*, for in it the reflexive abilities of all subjects converge on common projects). Activating *relational reflexivity* allows the operator to act as a facilitator of the user's decision-making ability. The resulting project belongs to both subjects and the welfare it is aimed at producing does not necessarily coincide with either party's expectations but transcends both.

Another argument backing Doherty's approach shows the relevance, in the social network, of the family as a *sui generis* relationship, the origin of all social bonds and initiator of social change; any social pattern whatsoever can affect the following generation, provided it is filtered by the family.

Social change and the promotion of community welfare thus emerge first from corporate agency within the family and then from the joint actions of families within the community. This process, however, is made more difficult, but also more necessary, by the complexity of contemporary society, with its multiple, contradictory forms of belonging: the subjects' welfare depends on the possibility of finding equilibrium within this chaotic reticule, which, for instance, prompted Doherty's mobilisation of families against overscheduling of their children's lives.

The last aspect considered was the educational value of Doherty's *Citizen Professionalism*: in a society where market competition has fostered individualism and state welfare has led citizens to delegate their every decision and action to experts, the concept and practice of citizenship must be learnt anew.

Finally, *Citizen Professionalism* appears as a kind of pedagogy for empowering families in terms of their own welfare and that of the community in which they live.

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