English summaries[*]

(in alphabetical order)

F.M. Battisti, L. Meglio, *Una lettura sociologica del graffito urbano* (*A Sociological Reading of Urban Graffiti*). Does urban graffiti hold sociological value? Is it an artistic phenomenon or an act of vandalism? This article aims to analyze one of the main manifestations that characterize the art and artistic expressions of our cities, through a revision of international sociological literature on the subject. The study shows that graffiti is not the expression of a single civilization, but rather a phenomenon tied to human presence which has always existed, from caverns to modern metropolitan areas.

A. Decataldo, *L'esito delle carriere degli studenti nell'università riformata: il caso Sapienza* (*The Outcome of Students' Careers in the Reformed University System: the case of «Sapienza»*). The article is based on a research program aimed to identify strong and weak aspects of the implementation of the decree DM 509/1999 in the Italian university system and to evaluate whether the characteristics of the decree DM 70/2004 are able to respond to the critical issues that have emerged. The context of analysis is the University of Rome «Sapienza», chosen because of the institution's numerous and composite dimensions covering all branches of scientific disciplines. From a substantive point of view, the phenomena of dropping-out, of delay in the course of studies and of the small numbers of graduations were analyzed using administrative data. From a methodological point of view, students' careers were analyzed through multidimensional longitudinal models. The basic assumption of the research design is that a longitudinal perspective offers a more *exact* and *detailed* overview of university careers, in light of their nature of *processes*. The monitoring of such processes at short intervals of time (a semester) allows a comprehensive reconstruction of events/incidents potentially significant for the final outcome.

L. Di Giammaria, Concetti *di meccanismo. Stabilità, latenza e alcune implicazioni teorico-metodologiche nelle scienze sociali* (*Mechanism Concepts. Stability, latency and Theoretical-Methodological Implication in Social Sciences*). This contribution focuses on the notion of social mechanism and advances a conceptual proposal based on notions of stability and latency. A boundary line distinguishing between mechanisms defined as real, stable and latent entities and mechanisms conceived as analytical instruments used by the researcher, is considered useful. Similarities and differences between the approaches of Mertson, Hedström and of critical realism are analyzed, while considering a type of causal processes that distinguish between *processes activated by mechanism* and *contingent processes*. The essay's theoretical, concep-

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[*] A cura di Melina Rosenberg.

tual and methodological implications seem to put a specific emphasis on procedures of concept operationalization and in general on the explanatory possibilities of social sciences.

A. Fasanella, *Note su realismo e ricerca sociale* (*Notes on Realism and Social Research*). This paper regards considerations on methodological consequences of using a realistic approach to social research. There are three main argumentations. (1) There is no realistic method that could establish itself as a possible alternative to scientific method. (2) The realistic concept of social research refers to a perspective of unmetaphysical realism. (3) The operationalization of sociological concepts related to latent dimensions could benefit by a reduction procedure less oriented towards a lazarsfeldian latent structure analysis and more attentive to the suggestions of the «circumstantial paradigm», as originally formulated by Carlo Ginzburg.

F. Martire, *Lo studio empirico dell'intervista. Tendenze recenti nel dibattito metodologico* (*An Empirical Study of Interviews. Recent Trends in the Methodological Debate*). The essay proposes to reconstruct the main orientations of the methodological debate on *pre-test* questionnaire strategies and on the analysis of interview processes. In particular, the focus is on two techniques that have been recently getting more attention during conventions of international scientific associations: the cognitive interview and the monitoring of the interviews. A restrictive conception of the interviewer emerges from this reconstruction. In this scenario, although researchers look to improve their questionnaires through evaluations of subjects outside the research (interviewees, panels of experts), the interviewers are mainly controlled, instead of being considered as privileged witnesses of survey issues.

J.I. Piovani, M.E. Rausky, J. Santos, *La Scuola di Chicago e i metodi qualitativi: le formulazioni metodologiche nella microsociologia urbana di Ernest Burgess* (*The Chicago School and Qualitative Methods: methodological formulations in Ernest Burgess' Urban Micro-Sociology*). Authors such as M. Bulmer indicate that methodological reflection was not one of the characteristic traits of the Chicago School. However, during the 1920's articles started appearing in the School's review (*The American Journal of Sociology*), which underlined the importance of methodological debate for the development of Sociology. Many of the leading intellectuals, among which Blumer, debated whether social science methods should be derived from natural sciences or be developed endogenously, if they should be formulated prior or subsequently to empirical research. Considering the final outcome of the debate, in this essay the Authors propose to examine the methodological formulations that, explicitly or implicitly, were built in researches on Urban Micro-Sociology conducted by Ernest Burgess, one of the most prominent empirical researchers of the School.

L. Tronca, *Risorse sociali e* personal *networks di sostegno in Italia* (*Social Resources and Personal Networks of Support in Italy*). The object of study of this essay is the distribution of social resources and the characteristics of *personal networks* that connect them, based on a probabilistic sample of the population residing in Italy (N = 1.226 cases). In the theoretical part of the study, the relations among concepts of social resource, personal network and social capital are taken into consideration. Using a *mainstream* approach, the following research hypotheses are discussed: (i) there is an increase in personal contacts useful for obtaining resources, in particular of family-related nature, among Italian residents in the South and on the Islands. (ii) The social capital of the Italian residents in the South and on the Islands is more bonding than that of residents in the North and Center of the Country. (iii) The social capital negatively influences generalized interpersonal trust in all areas of the Country. The results of the empirical research lead to accept the second hypothesis and to reject the first and the third.