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# Beyond the Cold War? Arendt's Reception in Germany and Italy

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# Beyond the Cold War?

## Arendt's Reception in Germany and Italy

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### 1. Introduction. Arendt, an Iconic Intellectual?

In 2012, German film director Margarethe von Trotta shot a film on the life of Hannah Arendt. The film was released on the occasion of *Holocaust Memorial Day*, 27 January. On 14 October 2014, *Google* devoted its homepage *Doodle* to Hannah Arendt for the anniversary of her birthday. In 2015, Israeli film director Ada Ushpiz made a documentary inspired by the life and thought of Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa: The Spirit of Hannah Arendt*, which went on to win best documentary at the Santa Barbara Film Festival in 2016. In a review of the documentary published by *The New York Times*, Arendt is described as:

A prolific and unclassifiable thinker, a political theorist, moral philosopher and polemicist of unmatched range and rigor [Scott 2016].

Similarly, in a recent review on Fry's book *Arendt: A Guide for the Perplexed* [2009], the sociologist Bowring highlights how:

The last two decades have been a fertile period of innovation and growth in scholarship on Hannah Arendt, a figure who, being radical, liberal and conservative in almost equal measure, has never ceased to divide opinion [Bowring 2012, 373].

In the following paragraph, however, he objects to Fry as in her analysis she didn't develop a "real discussion of the relationship of Arendt's ideas to friendly or competing theoretical approaches" [*ibidem*, 374]. The sociologist criticizes the

author's quasi-mechanical correlation of Arendt's peculiar intellectual style and the uniqueness of her thought, calling into question a correspondence between her increasing popularity and the growing academic interest in her works [e.g. Densberger 2008].

Bowring's comments seem to pinpoint a current manner of interpreting Arendt's notoriety which is chiefly based on the idiosyncratic aspects of her biography. According to this framework, Arendt's phases of success and failure are connected to the controversies caused by some of her essays and public speeches, i.e. her parallelism between National Socialism and Stalinism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1951], her élitist position on the USA's racial question stated in "Reflections on Little Rock" [1959], her thesis of the banality of evil in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* [1963a] and, not least of all, her refusal of philosophical history in her interview with Gaus in 1964. This kind of analysis is not, however, able to elucidate why Arendt reached an iconic status in many (western) countries fifteen years after her death. Thus, it is not so much a question of rejecting the role some aesthetic and moral factors of Arendt's personality played at a certain point in her "iconic consecration" [Bartmanski 2012], as one of considering these factors as a relational quality and not an individual one. This entails the observation of how they take on different meanings and values according to the different socio-cultural contexts where Arendt has been received (by distinguishing, for instance, between an "iconization" process influenced by political purposes and one imbued with market-oriented values).

Another frequent way to interpret Arendt's reception is to look at the process historically. Three phases are generally teased out. The first one, in the early post-war period, is dominated by a liberal understanding of two of her concepts, totalitarianism and the republic, discussed respectively in her works *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1951] and *On Revolution* [1963b]. The latter, between 1960s and 1970s, corresponds to the hegemonic phase of Marxist theories and is marked by a decline of her notoriety, because her category of totalitarianism, chiefly used by liberal thinkers. Since the end of the 1970s the decline of Marxist theories pushed a new generation of new Marxist thinkers to search new theoretical and symbolic sources. In this regard, Arendt's idea of "the political" offered anchorage for overcoming the ideological impasse of orthodox Marxism in front of the social and political changes at stake. On the other hand, Arendt's biographical and intellectual experiences, from her exile to her "controversial" theses in the post-war period, began to be progressively reworked in a new model of the "free-rider" thinker, useful to overcome the parallel crisis of the model of the organic intellectual [e.g. Esposito 1988; Baule 1996; Kallscheuer 1998; Brunkhorst 1999; Müller 2000; Traverso 2001; Dal Lago 2003; Söllner 2004; Faulen-

bach 2004; Sontheimer 2005; Forti 2006; Benhabib 2006; Flores D'Arcais 1995; Fiseti 2006a; Zuckermann 2007].

Although the historical framework seems to compensate for the emphasis given to idiosyncratic factors in explaining Arendt's reception, this parable of Arendt's "notoriety", from a liberal to a new Marxist appropriation of her works, presents some problematic aspects. First, it is unclear what "liberal thinker" or "new Marxist thinker" specifically mean. In other words, it seems these categorizations assumed a taken-for-granted status [Fry 2009], whereas little attention is devoted to the meanings they can take on within concrete historical mappings of intellectual positions. This vagueness concerns the very understanding of "thinker" and "intellectual", as it is not clear in which specific fields the supposed thinkers or intellectuals act and how their ideas operate. For example, to what extent were Marxist theories and Marxist scholars dominant in the academic field? And in which disciplines? Finally, the identification of these three phases, each one imprinted by a specific "type" of intellectual with different political dispositions (liberal, Marxist and new Marxist), produces an image of Arendt's reception as one characterized by the swift changes of a (transnational) intellectual field, which also leaves some questions about Arendt's reception in local intellectual milieus.

In my case study on Arendt's reception in two European countries, Italy and Germany, I will therefore try to adopt a "meso-level" perspective in an attempt to mediate between an analysis based on idiosyncratic factors and an explanation based on a macro historical-social and cultural changes. In this regard I will chiefly adopt a Bourdieusian point of view and focus on a few fields of knowledge in which Arendt was received from 1945 to 2015. Two premises are, however, important to my analysis.

First, in many introductions to Arendt's works and life, her reception often appears as a homogeneous global process that developed in similar ways in different (Western) countries. Through my case study, I will try to illustrate how, each time, the circulation of Arendt's thought has been affected by "the objective relation between the institutions and the agents implicated in the process" [Bourdieu 1985, 21] and how it depends on the norms of the fields of knowledge where the process took place [Bourdieu 2002]. Thus, beyond the several affinities the Italian and German cases present,<sup>1</sup> the different genesis and structure of their intellectual and academic fields led to different ways of both interpreting and legitimizing Arendt's theories and life [e.g. Lamont 1987; Bourdieu 1984 and 1985; Cattani *et al.* 2014].

<sup>1</sup> For instance, they have a similar "negative" recent past. During the student protests in the 1960s and 1970s the field of social sciences and humanities (SSH) was influenced by the emerging of Marxist theories and intellectuals, and their decline in the 1980s caused disorientation among leftist intellectuals.

Second, I will conceptually distinguish between academic, intellectual, journalistic and literary fields of cultural production (albeit in the analysis I will focus chiefly on the first two), in order to observe how their interpenetration affects Arendt's reception in the different historical contexts where she is appropriated. By following Bourdieu's analysis of the academic field, I will consider six different forms of capital in order to measure the distance of each disciplinary field from the influences of the economic and political spheres: scholastic cultural capital, the capital of academic power, the capital of scientific prestige, the capital of intellectual notoriety, the capital of political or economic power and that of political disposition [Bourdieu 1984, 60-61]. Hence, with respect to the academic field, it could be claimed that in principle each disciplinary field, according to its own logic and social structure at a given moment, presents one or more concurrent systems of legitimation [*ibidem*, 99] which oscillate between two poles, one dominated by temporal forms of power and the other one by scientific criteria. The different equilibrium between these two poles determines the degree of openness of a discipline, for example, with respect to the possibility to include little-objectified forms of knowledge and heterodox actors. However, as we will see in the following sections, one of the main questions is what happens when scholars act outside their disciplinary fields, how their specific disciplinary capital is used in another field of knowledge.

In this regard, Bourdieu's analysis in *Homo Academicus* leaves two questions unanswered.

First, the French sociologist considered the relationship between the different fields of cultural production (academic, intellectual, literary and artistic, and journalistic) in terms of a hierarchy according to the degree of codification of the knowledge they produced and according to the accessibility of these forms of knowledge by different audiences. That allowed him to pinpoint a set of possible positions between the restricted field of cultural production, reserved to the producers themselves, and a more market-oriented field of cultural production, such as the journalistic one [see also: Bourdieu 1985]. However, he did not consider how the circulation of different types of capital specific either to the academic field or to the literary, intellectual and journalistic field can bring out "inter-field" spaces [Hartley 2017] dominated by a form of "meta-capital" [Couldrey 2003]. The main point is to what extent the knowledge produced within are recognized (and legitimated) outside these spaces. With respect to the reception of Arendt, I will try to highlight how her legitimation in Germany in these "inter-field" spaces had a contrasting effect. If it is true that the types of logic ruling these spaces had favored a widespread dissemination of her ideas in several (disciplinary) fields of knowledge also, especially in effective communicative symbolic forms, it is also true that this kind

of circulation of her ideas prevented their legitimation and canonization for a long time.

Second, in *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu identifies criteria to distinguish between the academic, literary and journalistic fields, but not between the academic and intellectual fields. On the one hand, he recognizes the capital of intellectual notoriety as property of the academic field, on the other hand he does not explain who can be considered an intellectual and if they form a separate field from the academic one. This difficulty is evident also in the contrast between the indicators Bourdieu selects to define the capital of intellectual notoriety (i.e. belonging to some cultural institutions, participation in television programs, collaboration with “intellectual” newspapers, and so on) and the idea that the intellectual field follows a logic opposite to these fields of cultural production, which are dominated by temporal forms of power [Bourdieu 1984]. Thus, for the analysis of my case study, I will try to redefine Bourdieu’s understanding of the intellectual field and especially the idea that actors compete here exclusively “for cultural legitimacy” [Bourdieu 1966, 89], by considering two further dimensions proposed by Baert [2011a and 2011b], Collins [2011] and Sapiro [2003]. According to Baert, public intellectuals use “their authority or standing within society to take a firm stance, to mobilize the wider public and bring about socio-political change” [Baert 2011a, 410]. The intellectual field is in this way interdependent with both academic, political [Collins 2011] and economic institutions [Sapiro 2003]. Thus, in a given intellectual field public intellectuals occupy different position according to the volume of the capital they possess and the structure of this capital, that is “the proportion of economic and political resources as opposite to cultural resources” [Sapiro 2003, 246]. As a result, on the one hand in each historical moment we can recognize different ideal-typical figures of intellectuals even indicative of different types of politicization of intellectuals [*Ibidem*, 234].<sup>2</sup> On the other, struggles in the intellectual field can either focus on recognition in the academic field, or they are “broader political power struggles that surpass issues of prestige or institutional (author’s note: academic) recognition” [Baert 2011b, 416]. In other words, the consecration of a key thinker within the intellectual field can concern the competition for political and/or cultural legitimacy, according to the forms of capital dominant in the field at a given moment.

Conversely, consecration in the academic field can be understood in terms of canonization, a process that envisages struggles “regarding the nature and purpose

<sup>2</sup> By analyzing the structure of the French literary field Sapiro identifies four types of writer engaged in the political sphere: “the notabilities”, “the aesthetes”, “the journalists” and “the avant-garde”. This kind of analysis will be developed in a further article on Arendt’s reception.

of a university education” [Baehr 2002, 179]. By contrast to consecration as public intellectual, canonization involves restricted public interested in constructing pure theories [Bourdieu 1984, 3] and in attributing some works and their authors a classical standing [Carreira da Silva and Brito Vieira 2011, 356].

## 2. Structure of the Work

On the basis of this premise and of a qualitative and quantitative analysis<sup>3</sup> of Arendt’s reception and consecration in Germany and Italy, this work will highlight how the main differences between the two local reception processes relate to the different social and symbolic structures of the intellectual and academic fields of the two countries, which depends chiefly on their different distances from the political and the economic spheres.

More in detail, in the following section I will try to illustrate how the different political situations of the two countries in the early post-war period diversely influenced Arendt’s liberal reception. For instance, whereas in Germany Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism was useful to the ideological opposition between the two German states, in Italy the intellectual hegemony of an antifascist memory blocked public discussion on and public use of this category for decades [e.g. Fistetti 2006a]. Second, in the 1960s the impact of Marxist theories on the intellectual and SSH-fields differed greatly between the two countries. In Germany the “student protests” became a protest against their father’s generation for what they did or did not do under the Nazi regime and their silence in the early post-war period, including the old generation of Weimarer intellectuals. As a consequence, the intellectual field experienced three new ruptures within the existing fraction of leftist intellectuals: between dogmatic and undogmatic Marxists, between leftist intellectuals “integrated” in the academic system and heterodox academic actors, and between the intellectuals close to the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and those who looked to the communist parties in

<sup>3</sup> The quantitative analysis is mainly based on work devoted to Arendt from the 1950s to 2015 (monographs, book chapters and articles in journals). This indicator enables us to simultaneously capture: the fields of knowledge where her works have been received, the core and peripheral mediators of Arendt, and the central topics related to Arendt’s thought. For the qualitative analysis I carried out 30 interviews with core mediators of Arendt’s thought in Italy (12) and Germany (18). The main purpose was to grasp the correlation between their status trajectory in the academic, scientific and political-cultural institutional locations they moved across [e.g. Mulcai 1979; McLaughlin 1998; Gross 2008, 282-283] and their understanding of Arendt’s theories. Supplementary data for the analysis portion are: biographical information on Arendt’s mediators in the two national academic fields, texts of pivotal authors on Arendt’s reception and work on the history of SSH-disciplines and the intellectual fields of the two countries. For the German case I also analyzed Arendt’s quotation in *Die Zeit*, one of the country’s main weekly journals from 1950 to 1989.

the Eastern bloc (including the GDR). This fragmented milieu of leftist intellectuals was even opposed to conservative liberal intellectuals. Conversely, in Italy, despite of the existence of extra-parliamentary leftist groups there too, the intellectual field was less fragmented. Furthermore, in Germany in some SSH-disciplines, student protest favored the introduction of pseudo-scientific forms of knowledge into the field. Yet already by the post-war period in some fields, such as political science and partially sociology, the capital of “intellectual notoriety” played a pivotal role, because of the public (political) task of direction in the country democratization process. Conversely in Italy, the delayed institutionalization of sociology, political science, political philosophy and history of political thought on the one hand, and limited access to academic careers at the end of the 1970s on the other, safeguarded these disciplinary fields from either the penetration or the affirmation of unorthodox criteria with respect to the principles of scientific evaluation. As a result, in Italy since the 1980s Arendt’s reception in the newly formed field of political philosophy and history of political thought presented an “institutional character.” Furthermore, despite their closeness to new Marxism in the past, Italian pioneers of Arendt’s mediation belonged to solid networks in the philosophical field and had all a philosophical background. In other words, they possessed two forms of cultural and social capital useful to legitimizing new disciplines and to constructing a “cohesive social milieu” in order to ensure the durability of the habitus [Bourdieu 1984]. These two cultural and social aptitudes also favored a rapid dissemination of Arendt’s theories in codified interpretative forms first within the subfield of political philosophy and later in the broader philosophical field.

In Germany, by contrast, at the beginning of the 1980s Arendt’s reception was carried out chiefly within the intellectual field by liberal thinkers (either conservative or “progressive”), from Habermas to Sternberger, Dahrendorf and Sontheimer. Despite their conspicuous amount of academic power, scientific prestige and intellectual notoriety, their reception remained marginal until the end of the 1990s. It was also prevented by the emergence of a new generation of mediators after 1989 who shared the experience of basic democratic groups belonging to the milieu of spontaneous undogmatic Marxists in the 1970s and early 1980s [Kraushaar 1978; Keller 1999; Wesel 2002; Oy 2007; Kapferer 2008; März 2012].<sup>4</sup> Arendt’s consecration was mainly through this second group, acting in “inter-field” situations and spaces [Hartley 2017] in the liminal area between the academic (especially in the disciplines of po-

<sup>4</sup> See, in particular, interviews with political scientist and journalist Wolfgang Heuer (October 2014); educational scientist Christine Thürmer-Rohr (November 2014); Germanist Sigrid Weigel (November 2014); and Peter Rüdell, Manager of the Department of Environment and Culture within the *Heinrich Böll Foundation* of the German Green Party (March 2017).



litical science, educational sciences, German literature and sociology), intellectual, journalistic, artistic and, last but not least, political fields. This kind of consecration had three implications. First, it mainly had an “iconic character” and offered a chance for scholars to rethink their own self-concept as intellectuals [Joli 2012] beyond the left-right opposition which had been rooted for quite some time in the political and cultural divisions between East and West Germany. Second, it was favored by the existence (or possibility of constructing) a broader “homologous audience” (broader with respect to Italy) [e.g. Cattani *et al.* 2014], created by a similar experience in Germany of political, cultural and economic crisis during the German unification process. Finally, only over the last decade have we seen a new wave in Arendt’s reception, carried out by a new generation of political scientists in particular. Their aim of canonizing Arendt in political science entails, however, a rupture with the previous dominant group acting as Arendt’s mediator in order to construct a more homogeneous interpretation of Arendt’s thought, based on theories which became pivotal in the discipline, such as Habermas’ s theory of “communicative action.”

### 3. The “Liberal Phase” of Arendt’s Reception

An often underestimated (and partially ignored) aspect in the analysis of Arendt’s German reception is the fact that she was a participant in the German intellectual field. In 1948, three years before her masterpiece *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was published in the USA, she published a collection of essays in Germany [Arendt 1948]. In 1955, the same year she translated *The Origins* into German, she also edited the collection of all Hermann Broch’s theoretical works for a German publisher [Arendt 1955]. In 1959 she received the Lessing-Preis from the city of Hamburg and her acceptance speech was published a year later by her main German publisher, *Piper Verlag* [Arendt 1960]. In 1962 she contributed an essay to a commemorative work for the philosopher Erich Voegelin, with whom she had corresponded publicly on the phenomenon of totalitarianism a decade prior. In the following years up until her death, she constantly contributed via introductions or forewords to literary and (political) philosophical works. Finally starting in 1946 she collaborated with two new, pivotal “intellectual journals” of post-war German society: *Die Wandlung* (founded by her mentor Jaspers, her ex-professor Alfred Weber and her friend and political scientist and journalist Dolf Sternberger) and *Der Merkur*. Thus, in Germany, Arendt had a discrete amount of “intellectual notoriety” to “spend” in the local intellectual field. However, how much did her intellectual notoriety influence her earlier reception? And in which ways?

According to Forner, in this phase of political, economic and “moral” reconstruction for German intellectuals, journalism constituted “their primary sphere” for “recasting its relationship to the public as a dialogical rather than tutelary one” [2014, 191]. The founding of “intellectual journals” were political and symbolic acts to break with Germany’s past and, at the same time, to reflect on it and its consequences. Mostly it offered the possibility to both distance oneself from the “traditional figure” of the German Mandarin (subordinated to the state’s will) and to overcome the anti-intellectual position of the Nazi regime with its anti-Semitic roots. Intellectuals played a special role, in particular political scientists, who returned from exile with the aim of initiating a local democratic process [e.g. Söllner 2013]. Political science was indicated by the American occupying forces as the most suitable discipline to accomplish the task of re-educating German people on democratic values and rules [i.e. Müller 2000; Dreyer, Kaim and Lang 2004; Moses 2007]. By contrast, philosophy [Plümacher 1996] at this stage showed an institutional and epistemic continuity with the philosophical thought of the Third Reich [Buchstein and Göhler 1990].

Yet dealing with the German past in terms of guilt and/or responsibility as a “critical exercise” [e.g. Schildt 2011] also meant discussing the question of the German Federal Republic’s political form and values. This issue was aggravated by the relationship between the two German states in the climate of the cold war. In this regard, the attachment to traditional German cultural concepts, such as those of *Geist* (spirit), *Kultur* (culture) and *Bildung* (“bourgeois” education), was crucial to making sense of a German (cultural) identity [e.g. Payk 2008; Schildt 2011; Forner 2014]. That entailed both a disapproving sentiment towards mass culture as a danger to the democratic collective self-consciousness of Germans and a literary field that was entangled with the political intellectual field.

However, one frequently-neglected aspect is the role of liberal conservative intellectuals close to Adenauer’s memory politics in “overcoming the past” [Wolfrum 2004]. That is evident especially in their idea of integrative republicanism, used to legitimize a post-totalitarian redemptive community [Moses 2007]. Furthermore, the work of Arendt, Bracher or Friedrichs on totalitarianism, which highlighted the similarity between National Socialism and communist dictatorships, was pivotal for their theoretical and political background, influenced by the two German states’ ideological opposition. This ideological imprinting also characterized the academic field until the end of the 1980s at which point it was exacerbated by the dissemination of Marxist theories in the field. An example of the “intellectual” importance of the totalitarianism category is the research conducted on the political system of the GDR-state (*DDR-Forschung*) begun in the 1970s and the research on Extremism (*Extremismusforschung*) started in the 1980s. To sum up, in order to understand Arendt’s liberal

conservative reception, there are two crucial aspects: a (partial instrumental) use of her category of totalitarianism as a theoretical milestone for both political public debates and empirical studies [e.g. Ludz 1988; Jesse 1994] and the nexus between anti-totalitarianism and integrative republicanism that overcame the breaking point of the protests of 1968.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, the “*League for the freedom of science*” (“*Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft*”), founded in the early 1970s in reaction to the student protests, played a central role. The League included many prominent liberal professors such as Herman Lübbe, Wilhelm Hennis,<sup>6</sup> Hans Mayer, Ernst Nolte, Friedrich Tenbruck and Richard Löwenthal [Lietzmann 1999; Moses 2007; Wehrs 2014]. In the 1980s, some of them participated in the historians dispute that took place in intellectual journals (mainly *Die Zeit* and *FAZ*), against “progressive” liberal intellectuals, who were closer in some cases (e.g. Habermas and Brumlik) to a new-Marxist milieu.

The dispute, as others orbiting around the German past, highlights a further “supposed” and “idealized” characteristic of “intellectual journals”, that is, their neutral position with respect to the ideological opposition determined by the cold war. Beyond the different appropriation of Arendt by liberal progressive or conservative thinkers, the main point is that her works and concepts (and not only that of totalitarianism) fit well with the pivotal issues being debated in the intellectual field at this stage. This aspect emerges clearly if we look at quotations of Arendt in *Die Zeit* from 1950 to 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Beyond the political use of Arendt’s category of totalitarianism by liberal thinkers, her work has been strongly criticized in Germany and abroad for lacking methodology [Benhabib 2006; Maffei 2009]. See, for example, the reviews of historian Golo Mann, “Vom totalen Staat” (in *Die Neue-Zeitung-Die Amerikanische Zeitung in Deutschland*, 20/21 October 1951: 14), and of the political scientist Erich Vögelin “The Origins of Totalitarianism” (in *Review of Politics* 1/1953: 78-86).

<sup>6</sup> Hennis at this stage was one of the main supporters of Arendt’s understanding of totalitarianism. Interview with Söllner (October 2015).

TAB. 1. *Arendt Quotations in Articles (Organized by Author Profession) from 1950 to 1989*

Year/Profession	1950s		1960s		1970s		1980s		Average	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Journalists</b>	1	11.1	12	27.9	18	40.9	34	37.8	65	34.9
<b>Writers/Artists</b>	3	33.3	1	2.3	3	6.8	17	18.9	24	12.9
<b>Professors</b>	1	11.1	10	23.3	10	22.7	15	16.7	36	19.4
<b>Politicians</b>	0	0	1	2.3	2	4.5	6	6.7	9	4.8
<b>Journalists/Professors</b>	0	0	5	11.6	3	6.8	5	5.5	13	7
<b>Not Classifiable</b>	4	44.4	14	32.6	8	18.2	13	14.4	39	21
<b>Total</b>	9	99.9	43	100.1	44	99.9	90	100	186	99.9

Note: Column percentage.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

TAB. 2. *Capital Cultural (Scholastic) of the Authors by Article from 1950 to 1989*

Cultural Capital	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	Average
<b>Low</b>	33.3	11.6	18.2	17.8	17.2
<b>Medium</b>		9.3	18.2	13.3	12.9
<b>High</b>	22.2	46.5	45.4	54.4	48.9
<b>Not classifiable</b>	44.4	32.6	18.2	14.4	21
<b>Total</b>	99.9	100	100	100	100

Legend: Low level: high school diploma; Medium level: Master's degree; High level: PhD degree of habilitation. Not classifiable: either the author is not mentioned, s/he is a not German, or no information was found.

Note: Percentage Value.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

TAB. 3. *Quotations of Arendt's Main Works from 1950 to 1989*

Quoted Works	Source and Target Texts (year)	1950s-1960s	1970s-1980s
<i>Report from Germany</i>	1950 (1986)		3
<i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>	1951 (1955)	4	6
<i>Rahel Varnhagen</i>	1957 (1959)	3	3
<i>The Human Condition</i>	1958 (1959)		15
<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>	1963 (1964)	13	25
<i>On Revolution</i>	1963 (1965)	3	11
<i>On Violence</i>	1970 (1970)		5
<i>Truth and Politics/Lying in Politics</i>	1967 (1967)/1972 (1972)	2	3
<i>The Life of the Mind</i>	1978 (1979)		3

Source: Author's Elaboration.

The first observation concerns the author population. Even if the number of journalists is higher than the number of other professionals, it represents on average only 34%. The group of professors is the second to stand out, followed by writers and artists (chiefly dramaturgists or filmmakers). The second table makes it clear how the majority of authors (and not only professors) possess either a PhD or a Master's degree. While the data could be also interpreted as symptom of a "deviant career" [Bourdieu 1984, 87] with respect to the academic one, the fact that many of the authors possess a high level of scholastic cultural capital attests, in a certain sense, the group's "intellectual character." A further interesting aspect regards their political capital (beyond their political dispositions). Until the end of the 1970s<sup>7</sup> such capital was quite absent, to then increase progressively in the following decade, showing a larger spectrum of political orientations with respect to the earlier period: from conservative intellectuals close to the CDU (e.g. Golo Mann), to intellectuals close to the liberal party (Ralf Dahrendorf), the SPD (e.g. Kurt Sontheimer) and the newly founded "Green" alternative radical party (Bahro and Daniel Cohn Bendix).

Finally, table 3 stresses three aspects of Arendt's early reception. First, the high number of quotations of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is only partially due to the dispute it provoked when it was published. If its broader reception in the field in comparison to Arendt's other works can be attributed to the more journalistic nature of the essay, it was also in part because it favored the dissemination of some effective formulas.

<sup>7</sup> With exception of historian Golo Mann, a supporter of the conservative CDU party, Schroers, a writer and member of the liberal FDP party, at this stage is closer to the social democracy and to CDU politician and theologian Eugen Gerstenmaier.

For instance Arendt's thesis of "the banality of evil," after being received by several critics, above all by historians (i.e. Golo Mann), became paradigmatic of one of the main questions of the German intellectual debate: the responsibility of the ordinary German people during National Socialism. Second, her work on totalitarianism received little attention and only in relation to her thesis on "antisemitism." On the one hand, the success of the "banality of evil" formula probably depended on its dealing with the National Socialist past. On the other hand, a different text by Arendt published in the early 1960s, *On Revolution*, brought up important questions concerning then the (democratic) legitimation of the political institutions of the German federal republic. Finally, *The Human Condition* [1958] attracted the attention of German intellectuals only after the 1970s, for two aspects: the democratic danger constituted by "mass societies" as conformist societies, and the importance of public space for the praxis of democracy and the relationship between work, society and technological progress.

Beyond these considerations on her masterpieces, it seems that after the 1960s mentioning Arendt become a "praxis" for very different subjects and issues. However, what also clearly emerges is her twofold intellectual status as scholar of political theory (or philosophy) and as an expert in literature. By contrast, her Jewish identity and roots in the intellectual milieu in the Weimar Republic at this stage represented only a secondary element to her legitimation in the field. Finally, the interest in Arendt did not decrease after the student contestation; the point, however, is which position her audience occupied in the changing intellectual field.

With respect to Germany, Arendt's reception by liberal thinkers in Italy presents several differences. First, until the translation of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in 1964, Arendt was an unknown author. Two texts of hers were translated almost simultaneously as the treatise on Eichmann: *The Human Condition* and *On Revolution*, in 1964 and 1965 respectively. These two texts appeared for two different publishing houses, but both within a two book series overseen by the philosopher Enzo Paci, one of the main Italian representatives of existentialism and phenomenology, who founded the philosophy journal *aut aut* in 1952, a publication which broke with the dominant philosophical tradition of metaphysics [i.e. Neumeister 2000].<sup>8</sup> *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was instead translated only in 1967, once again in a book series overseen by Paci.

The delayed reception of Arendt's first masterpiece was due to two correlated aspects that characterized the Italian post-war intellectual field. First, until the end of the 1960s, neither political science nor political philosophy existed as autonomous

<sup>8</sup> See interview with Carlo Galli (March 2015).

disciplines. Second, antifascist collective memory, partially controlled by the communist party, occupied a hegemonic position in the intellectual field. As a result there was little space for a debate on the Italian Fascist Regime in terms of totalitarianism [Ridolfi 2004; Salvati 2004; Fistetti 2006a]. An interest in Arendt's work on totalitarianism began in the 1970s, parallel to the crisis of Marxist theories, but it remained marginal. However, two works are important enough to mention.

The first is an anthology of essays on European fascism, *Il Fascismo. Le Interpretazioni dei Contemporanei e degli Storici*, edited by conservative historian Renzo De Felice [1970], who since the early 1960s had tried to contrast the hegemonic Marxist interpretation of fascism, and was criticized heavily for doing so [i.e. Goglia and Moro 2002]. Nevertheless, out of the entirety of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, De Felice selected one paragraph from the second volume devoted to an analysis of "imperialism," and used it to support his thesis on the influence of atomized mass society in the inception of totalitarian regimes and to generally exclude Italian fascism from the totalitarian phenomenon.

In *Il Liberalismo in un Mondo in Trasformazione* [1972], the second publication from philosopher Nicola Matteucci, the author proposes an alternative understanding of liberalism inspired by Arendt's idea of freedom as an "ethic of freedom," which hints at the efforts of free and liberal men who fight against anti-liberal regimes. Then, unlike De Felice in this and in subsequent texts [i.e. Matteucci 1989; 1990; 1995], Matteucci used Arendt's category of totalitarianism to critically redefine the tradition of liberal thought. However, his main contribution to the dissemination of Arendt's ideas relates to his lectures at the University of Bologna.<sup>9</sup> In the 1980s, two of his pupils, Carlo Galli and Simona Forti (who belonged to the next generation after Galli) were among the pioneer mediators who helped introduce Arendt's thought into the canon of the new discipline of political philosophy – although they end up abandoning the liberal interpretation of Arendt's thought carried out by Matteucci.

Thus, on the eve of the 1980s, in Italy there suddenly was an increased interest in Arendt's oeuvre, despite her very feeble prior reception. By contrast, Arendt's reception in Germany remained, at this stage, "trapped" in the liberal milieu of the intellectual field, not least because of the "intellectual notoriety" capital she accumulated there when she was alive.

<sup>9</sup> See interview with Carlo Galli (March 2015) and Simona Forti (April 2015).

#### 4. Arendt's Twofold Consecration in Germany and in Italy

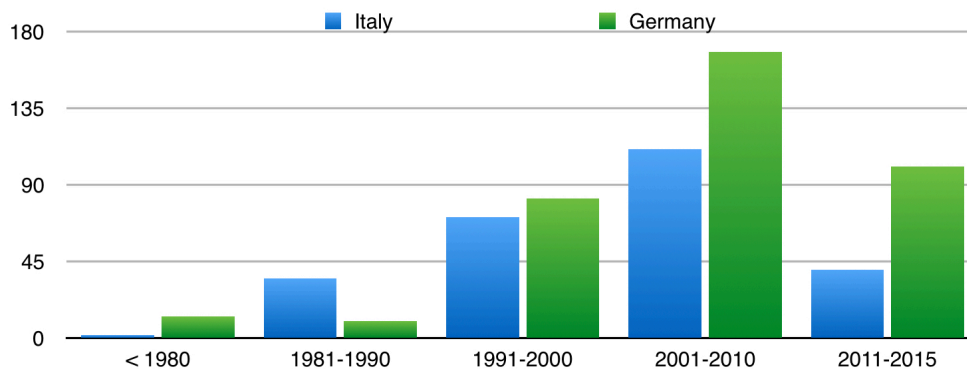


FIG. 1. Dissemination of Publications on Arendt in Germany and in Italy until December 2015

Note: Numeric Value.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

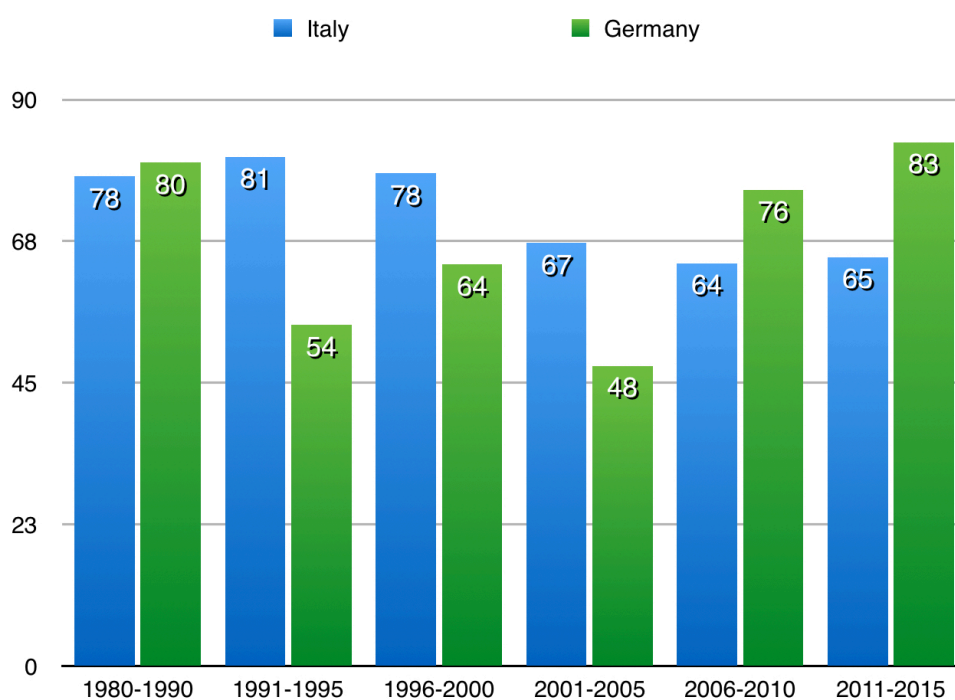


FIG. 2. Work on Arendt Published by Academics from 1980 to 2015

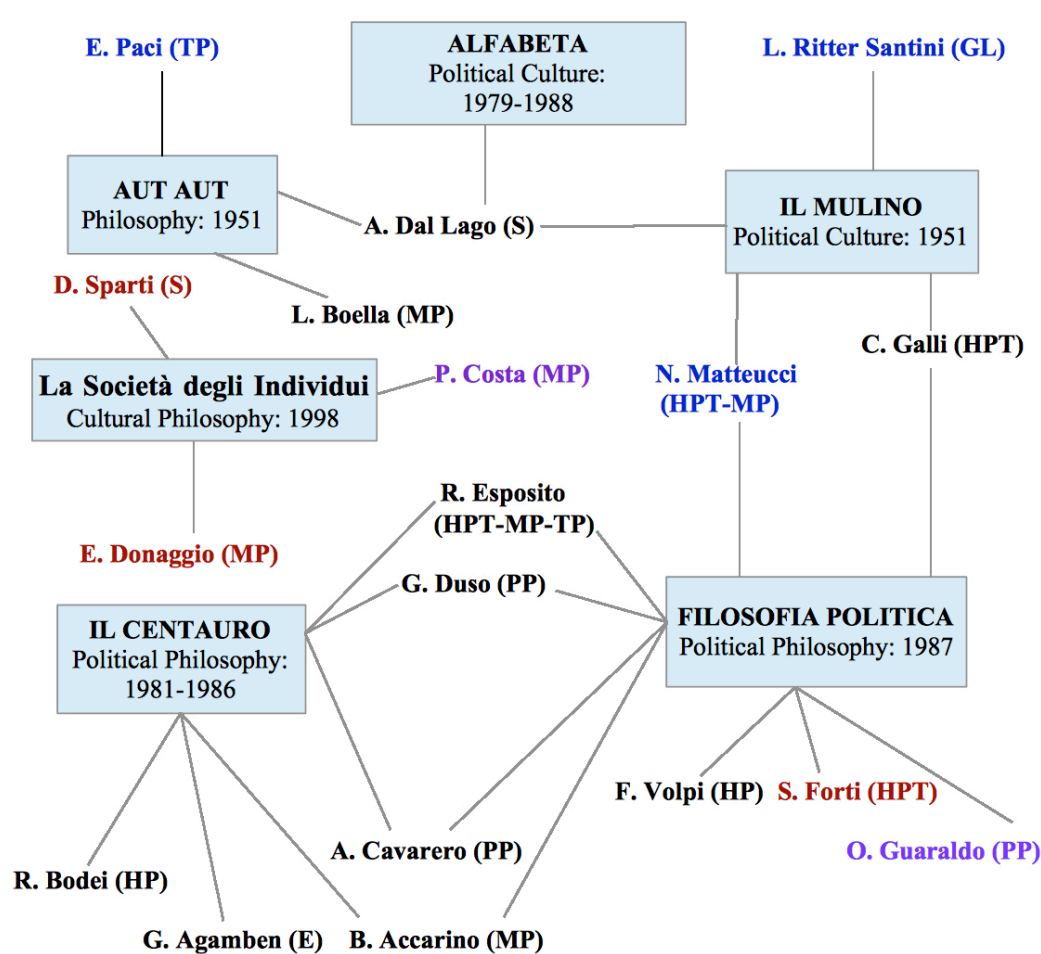
Note: Values in Percentage.

Source: Author's Elaboration.



If we look at the body of work devoted to Arendt from the 1960s to 2015, the data (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) clearly highlight the different penetration of Arendt's thought within the Italian and German academic fields over time.<sup>10</sup> In the 1980s, the number of texts on Arendt in Italy is threefold than in Germany. Mainly articles published in scientific or prestigious political-cultural journals, at this stage their chief editors were also Arendt's main mediators, as shown in Fig. 3.

<sup>10</sup> The collected data regards the sum of books, book chapters and articles containing the name "Arendt" in the title. The classification of a work as academic or non-academic is derived from the profession of the author at the stage when s/he wrote his/her work on Arendt. For academic authors, I also consider their field and academic position.



**LEGEND:**

- GL: German Literature
- HP: History of Philosophy
- HPT: History of Political Thought
- MP: Moral Philosophy
- PP: Political Philosophy
- S: Sociology
- TP: Theoretical Philosophy
- E: Esthetics

FIG. 3. Italian Political-Cultural and Scientific Journals Where Articles on Arendt Have Been Published (1980s and 1990s)

Source: Author's Elaboration.

One further important difference that emerges from Fig. 2 relates to the trend of Arendt's reception in the academic field. In Italy it is positive until the mid-1990s, in the main phase of her canonization, especially in political philosophy, which de-

creased slowly in the last two decades. Conversely, in Germany there is discontinuous development. In the 1970s and 1980s, the relatively high percentage of work written by academics on Arendt is a product of her reception in the intellectual field (i.e. Habermas, Vollrath, Sternberger). However, the number of publications on Arendt remained very low. In the early 1990s, the increased interest in Arendt corresponds chiefly to her appropriation by non-academic authors, so that only in the last decade can we identify a clearly positive trend for Arendt’s reception in the academic field.

This claim can be verified if we examine to what extent the appropriation of Arendt’s thought by academics affected the academic field. To deal with this question, it is helpful to analyze the volume of academic power of the Italian and German Arendt’s mediators since the 1980s.

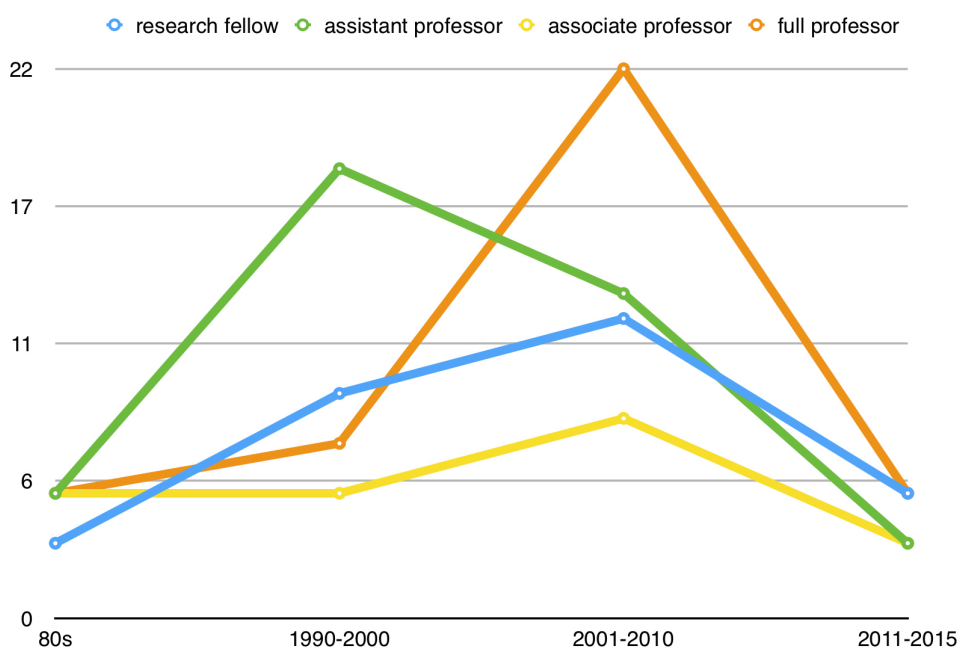


FIG. 4. Academic Space in the Italian Reception Field from the 1980s to 2015

Note: Numeric Value. The data set is based on the different positions held by Arendt’s mediators over time. The research fellow category also includes the position of teaching assistant. For the German case, “temporary professor” includes both habilitated academics waiting for a chair and “junior professors,” a position introduced by Italian law in 2002.

Source: Author’s Elaboration.

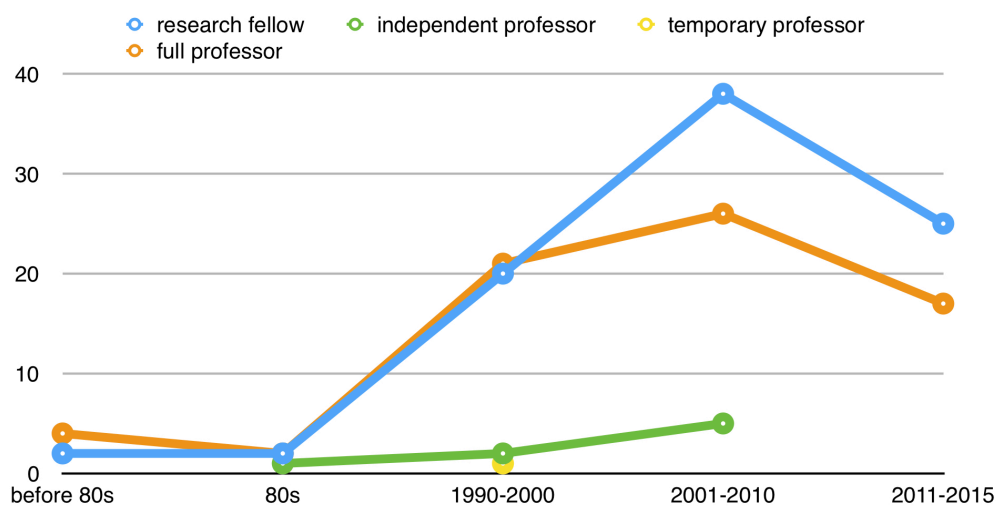


FIG. 5. Academic Space in the German Reception Field from the 1960s to 2015

Note: Numeric Value.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

A comparison between the two data sets shows notable differences between the two countries. In Italy the number of full professors who wrote about Arendt increased quite consistently from the 1980s to 2010. In the first phase, the main mediators are professors or researchers with an average amount of academic power. The increase after 2000 of the number of full professors is mainly due to the presence, over time, of some of Arendt's core mediators advancing their careers (i.e. the academic careers of Simona Forti, Roberto Esposito, Laura Boella, Adriana Cavarero, Olivia Guaraldo). Conversely, in Germany the component of precarious academic employees is the most represented over time. In the last decade, a new generation of young academics (junior professors) emerged with a still low-medium academic status. Thus until the mid-2000s, the prevalence of mediators with little academic power highlights the difficulty of legitimizing Arendt's thought in the academic field, that is, of constructing institutional networks to support its dissemination and to create legitimate interpretations of her work and concepts. Also, the higher level of fragmentation of Arendt's reception into more disciplines (Tab. 4) is indicative of her feeble reception in the German academic field. Two further aspects should be taken into account: the elevated symbolization of Arendt within the German public space and her "polarized" appropriation by social actors (individuals and institutions) with conflicting political dispositions.

TAB. 4. *Distribution of German Publications on Arendt by Author Profession and Discipline.*

	PHIL	PS	Lit.	S/SS	H	ES	GS/MS	Ot. d.	Jour/Ed.	Others	Total (n)
<b>Articles in Journals</b>	16,7	28,6	4,8	8,3	8,3	3,6	1,2	4,8	10,7	13,1	84
<b>Books</b>	15,1	24,3	7,9	5,9	1,3	0,7	2,0	3,9	16,4	21,7	152
<b>Chapters in Books</b>	15,9	25,4	15,9	6,5	6,5	4,3	5,1	1,4	7,2	10,9	138
<b>Total</b>	15,8	25,7	10,2	6,7	5,1	2,7	2,9	3,5	11,8	15,8	374

Legend: PHIL: philosophy, PS: political science; Lit: literature and cultural sciences; S/SS: sociology and social sciences; H: history; ES: educational science; GS/MS: gender studies and media studies; Ot. d.: other disciplines; Jour/Ed.: journalists and editors; Others: other disciplines.

Note: Row Percentage.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

TAB. 5. *Distribution of Italian Publications on Arendt by Author Profession and Discipline.*

	PHIL	H. Pol. Th.	Lit.	S/SS	H	ES	Ot. d.	Jour/Ed.	Others	Total (n)
<b>Articles in Journals</b>	40,9	3,6	0,9	5,3	5,3	0,9	5,5	6,2	26,8	110
<b>Books</b>	69,6	9,4	3,1	4,3	6,2		3,1		15,6	46
<b>Chapters in Books</b>	41,7	1,9	1,9	7,8	3,9	1,0	8,1	11,7	21,4	103
<b>Total</b>	46,3	3,9	2,3	6,7	4,2	0,8	7,0	7,3	22,4	259

Legend: H, Pol. Th.: History of Political Thought. A high number of authors identified in the "other" category are philosophy teachers.

Note: Row Percentage.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

In the following section I will try to better highlight Arendt's consecration in Germany after 1989 within "inter-field" spaces where different institutions (cultural, intellectual, scientific, academic and political) and forms of capital are at stake. As a result of these parallel and competing consecration processes, which also involved political institutions, Arendt's iconic reputation increased as a symbolic resource to redefine the symbolic cultural boundary of German collective identity (and memory) during the German reunification phase.

#### 4.1. Arendt's Consecration After the German Reunification

As many of my interviewers stressed, the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the cold war meant that Arendt and the category of "totalitarianism" were no longer taboo for leftist intellectuals and agents.

One of the main protagonists of Arendt's consecration after 1989 was the *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* cultural foundation, connected to the Green Party (*Die Grünen*). Interest in Arendt by party representatives was, however, evident by the 1980s, highlighted by the appearance of an article written by the social scientist and GDR-dissident Rudolf Bahro in *Die Zeit* in 1984.<sup>11</sup> Bahro came to the Green Party in 1980, a year after its inception. As a GDR-dissident, he fulfilled a symbolic role at this stage since he simultaneously represented an alternative position to Western Marxism (mainly that of the *Frankfurt School*), dogmatic Marxism and conservative thought.<sup>12</sup> In his article, Bahro rejected the ideological use of totalitarianism and contrasted Arendt's universalistic definition of the "free person" to the concept of the apolitical "human mass" characteristic of totalitarian regimes. At the end, he stated that Arendt's concept of a "free person" can be applied to participants in the ecologist and peace movements (*Ökopax-Bewegung*), overcoming both the Marxist "belief in progress" and the "antiquated bourgeois categories" of interest groups.

However, Bahro's public use of Arendt remained isolated. Despite Arendt being known in the milieu of undogmatic new Marxists, her symbolic capability was still low. It is only after German reunification, in a political period marked by the search for positive symbolic sources to rework the two German negative pasts and the political and cultural fractures created by the cold war, that her *name* and her *personality*<sup>13</sup> gained importance for several (political) actors. For instance, in the early 1990s the renaming of streets and public institutional buildings (such as schools) constituted one of the main battlegrounds of a struggle which took place materially, in physical public spaces. Especially notable in ex-GDR cities,<sup>14</sup> it revealed traces of the previous ideological and political cultural clashes [e.g. Grüning 2010]. In this context, one of the proliferation of memory symbols, Arendt, a German-Jewish woman, was one of the more "quoted intellectuals" for accomplishing this task of "reconciliation." This also had counter-productive effects on her "popularity," as an ironic article in *Die*

<sup>11</sup> Bahro's comment on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was published on 16 March 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Between the 1970s and the 1980s dissidents of the Eastern bloc who had expatriated to Western countries played a central role in reintroducing the concept of totalitarianism in the intellectual debate [Traverso 2001].

<sup>13</sup> See interview with Peter Rüdell (March 2017).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, one of the streets adjacent to the Holocaust Mahnmahl in Berlin has been renamed in "Hannah Arendt."

*Zeit* (October 23, 1992) on the inauguration of a high-speed train named “Hannah Arendt” illustrates.

In this general context of Arendt’s renaissance, the *Heinrich Böll Foundation* established a *Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought* (*Hannah-Arendt Preis für politisches Denken*) in 1995. The creation of the “Arendt-Preis” was announced by politician Daniel Cohn Bendit during the “*Hannah Arendt Tagung*” (Arendt conference) that took place in 1994 in the city of Bremen.<sup>15</sup> Cohn Bendit joined the Greens in the 1980s after a long period working as a political organizer of the spontaneous, undogmatic leftists who had settled in Frankfurt. He personally knew Arendt in 1968, when she offered him money for pursuing the study in memory of his parents (who were Arendt’s friends since their emigration to Paris as Jewish intellectuals).<sup>16</sup>

Three passages of his speech seem crucial to understanding Arendt’s political-cultural significance for the Greens. First, Cohn Bendit distanced himself both from dogmatic Marxists, because of their “too abstract theory,” and from the main representatives of the *Frankfurt School*. Second, he declared Arendt’s theories useful to answer to three questions on the German past evoked by the student movement in the 1960s, in order to explore new ways for “enlightened” socialism: “what is totalitarianism,” what is “democracy” and what is “a republic?” Third, Arendt was a new model of intellectual, that of a “free thinker.” If in the early phase of the “Berliner Republic” and the institutionalization of the Green Party, Arendt and Arendt’s thought was a pivotal source to construct an own specific space in both the political and the intellectual field. Ten years later, taking the position of Ralf Fücks, President of the *Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation*, the reason for Arendt’s consecration seems very different. On the occasion of the *Arendt-Preis*, Fücks [2007]<sup>17</sup> stressed Arendt’s central role in promoting a critical public space, adopted Habermas’ terminology as he did so: Arendt’s idea of “communicative power” was seen as an intrinsic property of a public sphere that needed the support of political institutions [e.g. Orozco 2005].

On the other political-cultural front, the *Hannah Arendt Institut für Totalitarismusforschung* (*Hannah Arendt Institute for Research on Totalitarianism, HAIT*) plays

<sup>15</sup> “Sie war keine engagierte Philosophin [...]” (author’s note: she was not an involved philosopher), <http://polylogos.org/philosophers/arendt/arendt-phil.html>

<sup>16</sup> The correspondence was first publicized in Arendt’s biography by her scholar Elisabeth Young-Bruhel [1982] and recalled in his interview on Arendt “die philosophische Madonna”, published in occasion of the 30th commemorative day of her death (*Die Welt*, 3 December 2005) [Gespräch 2005].

<sup>17</sup> Fücks was, in the 1970s, a leading figure of the West German Communist Liga (Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland) and later of the Committee for Democracy and Socialism (Komitee für Demokratie und Sozialismus). As highlighted by Güllner [2012], the Greens arose from the dissolution of the various dogmatic and undogmatic leftist movements that chiefly shared an anti-institutional culture.

a pivotal role in appropriating and iconizing Arendt. The *HAIT* was founded in 1993, legally by the Saxon Parliament and symbolically by political dissidents of the former German democratic republic. Its research activities focus on the political and social structures of German dictatorships and those in the Eastern European countries under the Soviet regime. The choice to name the institute “*Hannah Arendt*” was not conditioned by a deep interest in her work,<sup>18</sup> rather it fulfilled a symbolic function. For this reason, the Institute has not infrequently been accused to misusing Arendt’s totalitarianism concept in order to compare the Nazi regime with the GDR.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, a third institution also used Arendt’s name symbolically: the *Körber Foundation* in Hamburg, closer to the Social Democratic Party.<sup>20</sup> The foundation created the *Arendt Prize* in 1995. The scope of the prize was “to promote the development of open, free and democratic civil societies in Eastern European Countries” (welcome address of Krzysztof Michalski, quoted in Dahrendorf [2000, 28]) and not least to incentive “an innovative use of academic autonomy” [*ibidem*].

Beyond the different political dispositions or capital of the three institutions, we can identify some common features in the way they consecrated Arendt, either for her “courage” in thinking differently (*Andersdenken*) or for her concept of totalitarianism and of civic society. These institutions act in “inter-field” spaces brought out by the interplay between non-academic cultural and scientific institutions, political organizations and (individual and/or institutional) scholars. In this regard, the first two examples have an especially paradigmatic character. Indeed, the *HAIT* involves political scientists and historians who worked at the University of Dresden. The first generation included political scientists who initiated research in the 1980s on totalitarian societies as envisaged by orthodox Marxists.<sup>21</sup> The *Heinrich Böll Foundation*, on the other hand, involved professors and journalist-professors who belonged to the milieu of (spontaneous) undogmatic Marxists during the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> The main protagonist was political scientist Antonia Grunenberg, one of the founders of the prize. In 1998, when she held a chair at the University of Oldenburg, Grunenberg also founded the “*Hannah Arendt*” research centre. Furthermore, before starting her academic career she worked for a long time in the expert commission for the *Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED<sup>23</sup>-Dictatorship* (*Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with the Vice Director of the Institute, Uwe Backes (October 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Interviews with Annette Vowinckel (October 2014) and Sigrid Weigel (October 2014).

<sup>20</sup> See interview with Peter Rüdell (March 2017).

<sup>21</sup> See interview with Uwe Backes (October 2014).

<sup>22</sup> See interview with Peter Rüdell (March 2017).

<sup>23</sup> The SED was the socialist ruling party of the GDR-State.



Thus, compared to Arendt's early reception by liberal scholars, after 1989 forms of capital other than intellectual notoriety or scientific prestige were at stake. The climate of transition (*Wende*) favored the adoption of Arendt as a symbolic figure of the Berliner Republik [e.g. Baule 1996] within parallel inter-field spaces characterized by different political orientations. Each one produced its own iconic meaning for Arendt which co-existed, side by side. Yet the high level of participation in these inter-spaces of scholars with a delayed academic career or little academic power capital ("adjunct professor-journalist") is also indicative of the difficulty of legitimating Arendt in the "restricted fields" of cultural production.

#### 4.2. *Arendt's Difficult Legitimation in the German Academic Field*

If we cross Fig. 2. with Table 4, we can pinpoint three phases of Arendt's reception among academics: the first is between the mid-1960s and the 1980s; the second from 1989 to the end of the 1990s, and a third after 2000.

In the first phase, pivotal mediators are scholars with high capital of scientific prestige and intellectual notoriety, born in the first decades of the Twentieth century and who knew Arendt personally:<sup>24</sup> Ernst Vollrath was Arendt's friend and colleague at the *New School for Social Research* in New York in the early 1970s, Jürgen Habermas met her in the 1960s in New York,<sup>25</sup> and Dolf Sternberger studied with her in Heidelberg at the end of the 1920s. Only Ernst Vollrath can be considered an Arendt scholar [e.g. Volpi 1987] and devoted multiple publications to Arendt. Dolf Sternberger wrote only two articles in the year after her death, but he took over Arendt's idea of republic to coin the well-known concept of constitutional patriotism [1979]<sup>26</sup> and offer an alternative theoretical framework to the liberal conservative idea of nation-state [i.e. Kallscheuer 1998; Benhabib 2006; Müller 2000 and 2008]. During the historians dispute, Habermas reworked the idea of constitutional patriotism by forging the expression of "constitutional identity" as opposite to cultural-national identities [Habermas 1987]. Beyond this conceptual transmigration, he had already received Arendt in the 1960s. According to Bluhm [2011], Habermas was initially very critical towards Arendt because of her élitist concept of polis and her negative

<sup>24</sup> At the end of the 1960s Sternberger and Habermas belonged to the left liberal wing occupying an intermediate position between the liberal conservative and the "spontaneous" undogmatic leftists [see Müller 2000].

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Hauke Brunkhorst (November 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Sternberger presented the idea of constitutional patriotism first in his article "Verfassungspatriotismus", published in the *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* on 23rd May 1979.

understanding of society.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, in his habilitation work on the bourgeois public sphere [Habermas 1962], his position appears more ambivalent. Indeed, if he criticized the division Arendt made between the public and the private sphere in *The Human Condition*, he also recognized that in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she developed a useful theory of communication, by stressing the importance of public space for achieving a civic society and autonomous public opinion [Habermas 1962, 47]. A more “positive” reading of Arendt occurred after she published *On Violence* [1970]. In the second edition of his anthology devoted to German political philosophers [1971; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1981], the Frankfurt scholar positively evaluated her understanding of power as sovereignty. Habermas’ masterpiece on the theory of communicative action written in 1981 is a further passage in his use of Arendt’s theory, due not least to his paradigmatic shift from critical theory towards a procedural and normative theory of democracy. This shift seems to be fulfilled in Habermas’ following text on deliberative politics, *Between Facts and Norms*, where Arendt’s concept of power is understood as a communicative power able to produce legitimate right by preserving a public space [Habermas 1992].

Habermas’ reception of Arendt since the 1980s, however, has been neglected for a long time.<sup>28</sup> One of the widespread explanations of its scarce influence is that Habermas received Arendt only selectively. A more satisfying explanation is given by Axel Honneth, who worked with the sociologist Urs Jaeggi at the *Institute of Sociology* at the Freie Universität in Berlin. In an interview held in the mid-1990s, Honneth [1996] highlights two factors which explain the failing influence of Habermas’ interpretation of Arendt. First, even in the 1980s, orthodox Marxist scholars dominated in several important sociology and political science institutes, such as those of the Freie Universität [i.e. Blankenburg 1986]. Arendt wasn’t the only one who was “unwelcome” here; even Habermas was considered a “reformist.”<sup>29</sup> Second, his shift from a philosophical-anthropological approach to a theory of communicative power was unfamiliar, at this stage, even to those closer to the *Frankfurt School* than Honneth himself.

Honneth approached Arendt’s thought first in an essay published in 1980. In it, he contested the effectiveness of the Marxian category of work as characterized by an emancipatory character in front of the transformation of late capitalism. In this regard, Arendt’s Aristotelian understanding of work as human activity allows one to deconstruct the Marxian understanding by distinguishing “the social,” part of the action’s sphere of human intersubjectivity, from the work’s sphere, related

<sup>27</sup> See Habermas’ 1966 review of Arendt’s *The Human Condition* [1958] and *On Revolution* [1963b].

<sup>28</sup> Interview with political philosopher Stephan Gosepath (August 2015).

<sup>29</sup> See also interview with Alfons Söllner (October 2015).

exclusively to the mechanical labour condition of industrial production. As a consequence, the phenomenon of “alienation,” which for Arendt corresponds to “alienation from the world,” indicates the loss of human intersubjectivity in the public realm [Honneth 1980, 204-208]. In two following works, Honneth placed Arendt’s thought closer to the tradition of the critical theory. In the essay “Pathologien des Sozialen” [1994], he compares Arendt’s analysis of mass society with Adorno’s theory of cultural industry. According to Honneth, both the thinkers considered technology to be a barrier for the sphere of human action, and then for the building of a free public sphere. In “Demokratie als reflexive Kooperation” [1999], however, Honneth associated Arendt’s theory of political republicanism with the Habermasian theory of procedural democracy since both theories presuppose subjective freedom as a crucial element for the formation of a public sphere based on communicative understanding. An explicit contribution on Arendt only came much later, in an article written in 2005 where he again stressed the convergent position of Arendt and Adorno on totalitarian societies as resulting from an erroneous development of “the social” [Honneth 2005].

Arendt’s broader reception within the *Frankfurt School* was accomplished by Rahel Jaeggi, Honneth’s assistant from the early 1990s until 2008. In 1996, Jaeggi wrote her Master’s thesis on Arendt and continued writing on her until her habilitation in 2009. Akin to Honneth, her interest in Arendt’s theory [Jaeggi 1997] was initially influenced by philosophical-anthropological issues. In her Master’s thesis, she highlighted the similarities between Arendt’s understanding of alienation from the world with Marx’s definition of alienation, stressing the critical function of Arendt’s theory in light of the conformist character of modern societies. In one of her last essays on Arendt [Jaeggi 2007], she explicitly classified Arendt as a “critic of modernity” and underlined the current relevance of her analysis after the “euphoria of the 1990s” for her idea of a new political beginning.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, according to Jaeggi, Arendt’s theory of “the political” should be understood less as a theory of spontaneous political action and more as a procedural theory to politicize new issues.

Further essays from younger representatives of the Frankfurt school in recent decades oscillate between a democratic-procedural and a philosophical-anthropological analysis of the public sphere. They converge on at least one point: the value attributed to the institutionalization of “political and communicative action” in order to preserve a civic society [Förster 2009], which suggests an attempt to include Arendt in the tradition of critical theory [i.e. Auer, Rensmann and Schülze 2003]. Arendt’s theories then seem mostly useful in order to rework the Marxist tradition in light of

<sup>30</sup> This criticism seems to be chiefly directed towards intellectuals close to the spontaneous undogmatic leftists.

the transformations of late capitalist societies and to reintroduce social questions into intellectual debate. That meant, first of all, revising the image of Arendt as a political thinker disinterested in, if not adverse to, dealing with social issues. In this regard Jaeggi highlights three different understandings of society in Arendt's works: society as mass society, society as world and society as civic society. If the first prevents the formation of a "plural intersubjectivity," the idea of "world" is a precondition for an institutionalized civic society, for starting democratic processes within a political entity. However, as Jaeggi points out, up until the end of the 1990s this framework was neither the object of theoretical and empirical interest nor crucial to the intellectual debate of the time. To explain why, one can take two further aspects into account: 1. For the representatives of the *Frankfurt School*, Arendt was and still is a secondary source to integrate in the critical theoretical tradition; 2. In the 1990s their way of "systematizing" Arendt's thought was unfamiliar to Arendt's core mediators, who were close to the (spontaneous) undogmatic Marxist milieu. Thus in the 1990s, Arendt's core mediators' refusal to adopt the Frankfurt school's interpretation depends not so much on a rivalry between the two schools of thought than on the fact that their interest in Arendt was not ruled by scientific evaluation criteria, as highlighted by the multiple activities on Arendt which appeared in the 1990s, from the *Arendt-Preis* to the non-academic online journal *arendt.net*.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, interviews with Arendt's core mediators reveal an indifferent attitude towards the academic world with its rules and positions, one which is especially visible in their refusal to identify themselves within a discipline and to adopt scientific theories when interpreting Arendt's texts.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, the disciplinary "fragmentation" highlighted by Table 4, more than mirroring a parallel reception of Arendt across multiple disciplines, makes it evident how several Arendt scholars shared a similar academic socialization. In other words they were influenced by the anti-academic culture that developed in the 1970s at those universities (Hamburg, Marburg,<sup>33</sup> Frankfurt am Main, Bremen, the Freie Universität and the Technische Universität of Berlin) where students and teaching assistants protested for a democratic reform of the academic system and to overcome the symbolic boundaries of the existing disciplinary canons. The main disciplines involved in the protest were political science, educational science and German literature. Political science (and especially the subfields of political theory and polit-

<sup>31</sup> See interviews with Wolfgang Heuer (October 2014), Christina Thürmer-Rohr (November 2014) and Christian Volk (November 2014).

<sup>32</sup> See, in particular, interviews with: Sigrid Weigel (October 2014), Wolfgang Heuer (October 2014), Christina Thürmer-Rohr (November 2014), and Barbara Hahn (February 2015).

<sup>33</sup> In the early 1990s a *Hannah-Arendt-Symposium* was held in Marburg.

ical education)<sup>34</sup> experienced what can be called a renaissance of Marxism starting in the 1970s, also in its “undogmatic” realization, especially in Marburg and Berlin. German studies was affected by a “Marxist-materialist trend” at newer universities (i.e. Freie Universität Berlin), hence the main key-thinkers were Adorno, Lukacs and later Benjamin [Smerilli 2010]. The politicization of the discipline not only led to a break with its traditional canon [Becker 1994], but also drew a new group of students to the field, making it necessary to create new chairs [Eggert 2012]. Similar changes also affected the field of educational sciences. Two significant transformations took place between the late 1960s and the early 1970s: a new orientation towards new Marxism with the reformulation of the concepts of “emancipation” and “reproduction” to deconstruct the classist character of education [Brezinka 1981; Kelpanides 1999], and the integration, by law, of pedagogical high schools into the university system. As a result, new academic positions were created, attracting young academics from other disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy and psychology [Kneisler 2015].

To sum up, in the 1990s Arendt’s core mediators were not only affiliated with disciplines whose symbolic boundaries are particularly fluid, but they themselves had little interest in canonizing her thought within those disciplines [i.e. Güllner 2012]<sup>35</sup>. So, except for a few scholars either close to the *Frankfurt School* or far from the milieu of the undogmatic Marxists, Arendt took root only for certain concepts (i.e. the *Frankfurt School*) or in a few specific research fields, such as exile studies in political science, Jewish culture in literature, or gender identity in gender studies.

A meaningful change happened in the new millennium with the emergence of a new generation of Arendt scholars in the field of political science. Although their academic status was medium-low, they possessed a fair scientific reputation at an international level and they cultivated academic aspirations. In this regard, they tended differ from the early generation of Arendt’s core mediators in at least three aspects. First, their interpretation of Arendt’s thought was initially mediated by her American reception, especially that of Sheila Benhabib, and later reworked in the framework of critical theory, a sign of her already-growing reputation [Camic 1992]. In this regard, they criticized the “moral pathos” of her previous core mediators as not useful for realizing Arendt’s thought in light of new theoretical and empirical questions. Second, they wanted to systematize Arendt’s theories in order to make them epistemologically and methodologically suitable for their discipline. Finally, their intellectual exchanges on Arendt mainly occurred within their disciplinary boundaries.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Anja Besandes (October 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Interviews with Wolfgang Heuer (October 2014) and Hauke Brunkhorst (November 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with Christian Volk (November 2014), Birgit Straßenberger (November 2014), Lars Rensmann (October 2015) and Stefan Gosepath (August 2015).

### 4.3. *Arendt and the Institutionalization of Political Philosophy in Italy*

The legitimization of Arendt in the Italian academic field is the result of the interplay of two factors: the institutionalization of political philosophy and the presence of young academics with an average social and scientific standing.

On the eve of the 1980s, Arendt's main mediators were young academics under forty years old who could suddenly obtain a medium-low academic status (Roberto Esposito, Carlo Galli, Alessandro Dal Lago, Pier Paolo Portinaro, Teresa Serra) thanks to the huge academic recruitment which occurred after the university reform of 1980. According to Frickel and Gross [2005], this condition favored the formation of scientific/intellectual movements by academics interested in moving towards higher academic positions. In order to achieve this goal, they were encouraged to break with the traditional boundaries of their disciplines and to renew their symbolic space by creating new disciplinary canons [i.e. Sapiro and Bustamante 2009]. In this case, the first Arendt scholars succeeded both in advancing their careers by continuing to work on Arendt and in legitimizing the autonomous field of political philosophy, which still didn't exist at this stage. This process of institutionalization, however, needed to create a canon, that is, to choose a set of authors and theories considered "proper" for the subject and able to support the originality the operation [*Ibidem*].

Since the beginning, Arendt was on the shortlist of selected authors, together with Rawls and Schmitt. Although these three authors were received by scholars with different interests in political philosophy, such scholars shared an "identity of position" [Bourdieu 1984, 228]. As Carlo Galli, mediator of both Arendt and Schmitt, stated in an interview:

Our generation wanted to reinterpret everything<sup>37</sup> [...] we reinterpreted Nietzsche through Cacciari's negative thought; another currency was related to Rawls (author's note: Salvatore Veca) [...] you did not learn that at university. [Interview with C. Galli, March 2015] (Translation from Italian by the author).

Thus, even if the renewal of philosophical thought and the institutionalization of political philosophy arose from different and competitive schools of thought, its agents shared the same objective and same scientific evaluation criteria.

With respect to the parallel process of solidification of the discipline and of Arendt's canon, there are two further elements to consider: the construction of a network of journals and the organization of "celebrative" conferences.

<sup>37</sup> Galli referred here to academic philosophical thought, as evident in the following part of his discourse.

In the first case, as Fig. 3 highlights, in the 1980s publications on Arendt circulated mostly in journals where Arendt's mediators played a pivotal role on the editorial boards. The first is the philosophical journal *aut aut*, directed since 1976 by Paci's pupil, Pier Aldo Rovatti,<sup>38</sup> one of the main exponents of the emerging theory of "weak thought." For leftist intellectuals and academics, weak thought was a way to overcome the Marxist dominance in the intellectual field and to forecast the crisis of the rational thought [i.e. Silverman 1994; Fistetti 2006b; Gentili 2012]. Members of the editorial board included moral philosopher Laura Boella and sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago, who even shared with Rovatti the experience of the political cultural journal *Alfabeta*, which also published various articles on Arendt around the time.<sup>39</sup> The second journal, *Filosofia Politica*, was founded in 1987 by Nicola Matteucci, Carlo Galli (Matteucci's assistant), Roberto Esposito and Giuseppe Duso, and published by the prestigious *Il Mulino*. In a subsequent phase, Franco Volpi, Adriana Cavarero and Simona Forti (a student of Matteucci and Galli) joined the journal's editorial board, followed by Olivia Guaraldo in 2005, pupil of both Alessandro Dal Lago and Adriana Cavarero. The journal *Il Mulino* was founded in 1951, again by Nicola Matteucci. Germanist Lea Ritter Santini, translator of two of Arendt's works, belonged to the intellectual circle which gathered around the journal since the 1960s, whereas Carlo Galli began to collaborate with the journal in 1985.<sup>40</sup> *Il Centauro*, a more left-leaning political-cultural journal, lasted only from 1981 to 1988, but it also played a central role in re-focusing and re-orienting intellectual interest in political philosophy. Its intellectual identity was founded on its declared detachment from the Italian Marxist tradition, marked especially by the rejection of the model of the "organic intellectual" [Cantarano 1998, 149]. Protagonists of this intellectual movement were again Roberto Esposito, Giuseppe Duso and Adriana Cavarero, together with Remo Bodei, Bruno Accarino and Giorgio Agamben.<sup>41</sup> A decade later, *La Società degli Individui*, a philosophical journal open to social theories, played a pivotal role in Arendt's reception. Since it was founded in 1998, its main collaborators were Laura Boella, Ferruccio Andolfi and Paolo Costa, a pupil of both.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Paci was also Salvatore Veca's professor.

<sup>39</sup> The journal closed in 1988.

<sup>40</sup> *Men in Dark Times* [1968], translated into Italian in 1981 under the title *Il Futuro alle Spalle*, and *Rabel Varnhagen* [1957] first translated in 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Accarino devoted a work to Arendt only in the second half of the 1990s, whereas Agamben even if never wrote directly on Arendt he used successfully Arendt's category of totalitarianism to construct his "lager paradigm", reorienting also the scientific interest in Arendt's works on totalitarianism.

<sup>42</sup> Paolo Costa translated several essays of Arendt. Many of them are gathered in the anthology *Archivio Arendt* [2001 and 2003], edited by Simona Forti.

These networks, ones which illustrate the collaboration between Arendt's main mediators in prestigious scientific and political cultural journals, are mirrored in the first conference on Arendt, held in 1985. Among the participants were Alessandro Dal Lago, Carlo Galli, Remo Bodei, Lea Ritter Santini, Franco Volpi and Roberto Esposito, who also edited the conference documents [1987]. Simona Forti, still a PhD Student at the time, edited a bibliographic appendix of the works published on Arendt for the conference book. In his introduction, Esposito explicitly claimed that the new interest in Arendt's thought derived from the surfacing of new, current theoretical questions that pressed for a "disciplinary renewal" of political philosophy [Esposito 1987, 5].

Since the 1990s, the interest in Arendt had an influence on the broader philosophical field (moral philosophy, aesthetics, theoretical philosophy and the history of philosophy) and stimulated competing interpretations of her thought.□ On the one hand, with the passing of the political and intellectual crisis of the 1980s, the question of "the political" was obscured by the emerging issues of "bio-politics" (and, since the 2000s, bio-ethics also). This shift was pushed along by the international success of Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, published in 1995, and of his "lager paradigm," and by the increasing influence of poststructuralist thought, especially that of Foucault [e.g. Bazzicalupo 2010]. What results is a reading of her two masterpieces, *The Origins* and *The Human Condition*, as a parabolic narrative between human existence (life) and destruction (totalitarianism), to the detriment of the moral issues, as stressed by Boella,<sup>43</sup> which emerged in Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* [1983] and even earlier in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* [1963a]. Nevertheless, beyond this contrast, two other features characterized Arendt's reception in the symbolic space. The first one is the marginal role played by totalitarianism as a historical phenomenon and not only as ontological one [e.g. Fistetti 2006a]. The second one regards the diffidence towards the "systematic reception" of the *Frankfurt School*, partially popularized in Italy by the reading of the philosopher Alessandro Ferrara. In particular, to the analysis of Arendt Ferrara introduced the category of the "example" as a normative element in the discourse of identity [e.g. Ferrara 2008], a departure from the categories of *communitas* and "a-political" coined by Esposito [1988 and 1998].<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Interview with L. Boella, March 2015.

<sup>44</sup> See the interview with S. Forti (March 2015).



## 5. Conclusions

At first glance, Arendt's reception in Italy and Germany seem to have a similar temporal structure: a liberal phase in the early post-war period, when Arendt was also granted international acknowledgment, especially for her analysis of totalitarianism; a second phase when her notoriety declined because of the rise of Marxist theories; and a third phase after 1989 when she regains popularity, thanks to undogmatic leftist intellectuals chiefly interested in renewing the idea of "the political" and in finding a new symbolic orientation in the intellectual field, crossed with the crisis of Marxism. However, an analysis of the social structure of the intellectual and academic fields of the two countries reveals many differences.

The first one is the periodization itself of Arendt's reception. In Italy, Arendt was first received in the 1960s, yet the first attempts by liberal thinkers to rework her theories occurred only in the 1970s. Nevertheless, by the 1980s she was broadly received, especially within the emerging field of political philosophy. This "operation" was possible thanks to the emergence of a new generation of young scholars with a fixed academic position and who belonged to important scientific networks, aiming to improve their academic ranking through a twofold process: on one hand, the institutionalization of the discipline, and on the other, the canonization of certain authors, pivotal for the discipline's legitimation, such as Arendt, Rawls and Schmitt.

In Germany, Arendt's presence within the intellectual field was constant from post-WWII until 1989, despite of the emergence of Marxist theories. Both her work on totalitarianism, in the hands of liberal conservative intellectuals, and her concepts of republic, civic society and moral responsibility, in the hands of progressive liberal thinkers, overtook the symbolic breakpoints of 1968 and 1989, as suitable with the public discourses dominant in the German political past and present. In this case, the proliferation of Marxist groups since the 1970s allowed for the creation of inter-field spaces between the academic, intellectual and political fields that, in the political-cultural phase of the early 1990s, expanded to include political cultural institutions. It is in these inter-field spaces that Arendt's reception took root, especially in the form of her iconization.

The different inception and development of Arendt's consecration in the two countries implied a different way of selecting and interpreting her theories and concepts. In Italy, the focus on "the political" was included within a meta-theoretical framework from the beginning. The paradigmatic change, which started in the mid-1990s, was a shift towards the frame of bio-politics, to which Arendt's category of totalitarianism has also been subordinated. In Germany, by contrast, since the 1950s the question of "what is the political" has been chiefly translated into issues related

to the legitimacy of German political institutions in terms of their “democratic sustainability.” Over time, the concept of totalitarianism filled a contrasting role within public debate on the German past, together with that of moral responsibility and guilt. Arendt’s concepts of power, action (or communicative action), work and world were also particularly received by representatives of the *Frankfurt School* and included in their theories. However, they remained marginal until the end of the 1990s, when they were rescued by a new interest from a new generation of young political scientists, for whom the *Frankfurt School*’s interpretation constituted an important symbolic resource in launching Arendt’s canonization in the field of political theory.

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## Beyond the Cold War?

### Arendt's Reception in Germany and Italy

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**Abstract:** The reception of Arendt's thought in Germany and in Italy presents at first glance a similar trend. From the second postwar until 1968 Arendt is chiefly known for her works on totalitarianism and received by liberal thinkers. During the student protests with the rise of marxist theories her notoriety sinks, especially in the social sciences. The end of the cold war and the following crisis of orthodox marxism mark a new positive trend of her reception as a consequence of the need of left intellectuals to search new symbolic sources to re-legitimize themselves. However, beyond this shared master narrative the reception of Arendt's in the singular SSH disciplinary fields of the two countries presents many differences as different are their social and symbolic spaces and boundaries and their position in the respective national hierarchy of academic disciplines. Aim of the paper is then to analyze Arendt's reception within some pivotal disciplines (i.e. political science, political philosophy) in light of their cultural and institutional history and of the influence of their respective national political cultural context, in particular for what regards their public memory.

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*Keywords:* Arendt; Sociology of Ideas; Intellectuals; Field of Cultural Production; Consecration; Political Philosophy; Political Theory.

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