

The Desire for Unity and the Rhetoric of Separation – The Challenge of Regional Disparities for Democratic Institutions. Conditions of Success, Obstacles and Consequences of Modernisation in East Germany and the Italian Mezzogiorno

(First provisional structure)

- 1. Form inverse starting points to similar problems: Do we find successful transformation and delayed transition or the normalisation of inequality**
 - Successful transfer of institutions as the beginning of new inequalities in Germany
 - Failed projects and breakdown of “perverse keynsianism”? The ending of interventionism in Italy
 - Bringing the living conditions into line during the crisis of welfare state?
- 2. Theoretical analogies of national processes: Social change between external regulation and internal dynamic**
 - Analytical Perspectives of transformation research: Multi-causal models and methodological variety
 - Democratic institutions and local policy-networks
 - Agents, Actors and Mediators in formal and informal arrangements
 - Representation between conflict and consensus
 - Mobilisation of conflicting identities: Political agenda and public opinion
 - Civic society, attitudes and regional culture
 - Economic conditions: Transfer, structural weakness, inefficiency
- 3. Initiatives and instruments of modernisation: empirical studies of success and failure in social transformation processes**
 - National politics and local engagement: Third Sector, cultural associations
 - Identity as a resource of regional development: Entrepreneurship
 - Building up communal institutions, support of economic structures, local networks and associations; documentation of media commentary
- 4. Consequences for politics and society: The limits of diversity in unity and conflict in democratic consensus**
 - Underdevelopment of the regions or old fashioned politics?
 - Modernisation of politics or farewell from utopia?

**Outline of a research project, presented for the doctoral programme of the
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“Many we could learn from the processes, difficulties, unexpected concomitants and consequences of the system’s transformation if we would utilise them as chance to build a realistic perception – apart from reigning ideological shortcomings and historical contingencies – of the circumstances which have emerged in the western society during the last decades.”¹ (Lutz 1996: 52)

Transformation of east-Germany, Modernisation of the Mezzogiorno: Success and failure of regional social change in the light of Italian disorder and German ideal?

The following considerations are based upon the assumption that the actual processes of political and social changes in Germany and Italy represent a worthwhile area for comparative social-scientific studies. The presumably frictionless incorporation of the Ex-GDR into the Federal republic and the long lasting underdevelopment of Southern Italy, seemingly resistant to statal intervention, reveal a common problem of modern differentiated welfare states: the existence and the effects of regional social inequalities and the difficulty to reduce them in an efficient and democratically legitimate manner. Notwithstanding the gross historical and cultural differences the two countries find themselves in situations of transition, which tend to modify the functioning and legitimacy of their political institutions, their practice of political representation and mobilisation. Furthermore they change the relation between state intervention and societal self-transformation. In a brief summary of the national conditions and the related theoretical discussion I will try to justify the purpose of examining different social and political structures and processes in both countries under the perspective of modernisation.²

The transformation of East-Germany and its contradictory effects

Since the decline of the GDR, the fall of the wall and the reunification of the two German states in the years 1989/90 the Federal Republic of Germany is facing new and unexpected problems. The project of political, economical and social transformation of the new “Länder” into a modern, constitutional democracy with a market economy constituted and still constitutes a historically unique challenge. In the first place the

¹ All translations of citations are from M.S..

² As Hradil (1996b) points out, the term “modernisation” should not be accepted as a positive and linear evolutionary trend, facing the integrational deficits and institutional shortcomings of modern industrialised societies. Nevertheless, I will keep this expression, because it outlines the objectives which programs for regional development and processes of transformation are heading for: the introduction and functional implementation of market economy, pluralistic democracy and the welfare state.

incorporation of an economical and social-structural weaker, traditionally and culturally different territory created a formerly unknown reality of regional differentiation and disparity. The new part of Germany deviates clearly from the average of the western parts regarding its socio-economic position, social-cultural patterns of action and its political and administrative reality. To achieve the constitutionally guaranteed and politically proclaimed aim to reach equal standards of living the East will depend on central governmental benefits (transfer of institutions, human resources and subsidies) for a long period.

The shaping of regional differences and the related processes could conveniently be called "construction of peripheries" (Woderich 1996: 84). "Temporarily shortened, modified, multiple splitted and modulated a process is executed which characterises nation building in western Europe, generally: With the internal homogenisation throughout welfare policy, institutional transfer, the rise of a unified market occurs the production of inequalities." (ibd.) Moreover, praticians and social scientiets discover that the transfer of west-german institutions (law, administration, politics and economy) cannot proceed without changing their structural and cultural reality (Eisen 1996, Seibel 1996, 1997, Reißig 1996). In addition, observers recognize that new socio-ecomic conditions, related issues and conflicts simultaneously stimulate or should stimulate changes of the political and social situation of the FRG (Hradil 1996b, Lutz 1996, Reißig 1996). „Meanwhile the repercussions of east-German/east-European transformation processes are of that kind, that they have reached the West anew (transfers, distribution conflicts, modifications of the party system, tendencies of closure in politics and society, modified elaboration of mentalities) and intersect with the internal conflicts and challenges of Modernity. The ongoing event of transformation therefore depends also on a second, new modernisation in the west of Germany." (Reißig 1996: 255, cf. also Hradil 1996b)

Due to this the focus of transformation research, carried out with great empirical expenditure in Germany, enlarges: From the documentation of the constitutional transfer of legal and statal institutions to the analysis of ambivalent, multidimensional institution-building processes (Eisen 1997), the chances and limitations of societal modernisation (Hradil 1996), the relevance, formation and modifications of patterns of action within the developing regions (Koch/Michael 1996), the negotiation and symbolisation of regionally specific collective identities (Schneider 1997, Woderich 1996), the importance of civic culture, voluntary associations (Seibel 1997) and the changed opportunities for political participation. In short terms, it emerges a more precise conception of the multiple developmental options of a modern national state when it is challenged by an insufficiently

modernised, backwarded region³ and by this may reach the limits of political and societal regulation which the general problems of modern welfare states impose.

Contradictory dynamics and open paths in Italy

Concentrating on the above mentioned key features institution building and the political treatment of inequalities, objects of comparisons arise, which are to be found even distant from the historical speciality of post-socialistic transformations⁴. To allow a comparative study of adaptation conflicts, conditions for success, obstacles and consequences of politics for regional social change I suggest to examine the long-lasting problems of the Italian Mezzogiorno in contrast to the new German events. Albeit (or because of) the historical, social-structural and cultural divergences of the Italian case a more general political science or sociological approach reveals partial analogies in problem constellations and reaction to them. Just the extended tool box of transformation research which combines “institutionalistic, methodological-individualistic and interpretative approaches” (Eisen 1996: 57) has capacities to describe and analyse interrelations in the Italian field more detailed than the dominant conception referring to clientelism, particularism, corruption, criminality and underdevelopment has been capable to. “This analytical perspective for the study of social change in Southern-Italy produces a series of effects on the methodological level: At first, it opposes rigid conceptual instruments in dichotomies (tradition vs. modernism; particularism vs. individualism; external vs. internal variables of change). Secondly, it helps to establish positive disciplinary contamination reacting to the complex image of southern development [...] At third it gives analytical space for the ambivalent character of the majority of social change processes”. (Leccardi 1997: 150)

To highlight the differences and common features between Italy and Germany and to identify examples for the success and failure of political measures ought to facilitate social change and modernisation, the Italian situation should be conceived of as very diverse from the German, but supplied with lots of anchors for comparisons: The decline of the old party system and the emergence of new political parties, especially the rise of the new

³ Whether the regional differences between East- and West-Germany and the resulting problems indeed can be classified as modernisation deficits in the context of classical modernisation theory, in itself can be doubted (Hradil 1996, Woderich 1996). Often, it is mentioned that the political regulations figured out in Eastern-Germany show innovative characteristics. In addition, the informal and civic forms of mobilisation actualised before, during and after the overthrow of the GDR-regime, could be interpreted as more direct, authentic and consensual modes of action.

⁴ Wiesenthal (1995b) and Offe (1994: 270f.) emphasise that east-German transformation again must be conceived as a special case of post-socialistic transformation. I agree with them but like to add that the particular advantages (inclusion into a well functioning public sector, high level of subsidies) and distinct disadvantages (cultural persistency, elite substitution, social exclusion of a notable part of individuals) are decisive arguments for the comparison with other western-European societies, e.g. Italy.

type of movement-party , is seen as “a unique process of transformation in western Europe” (Fix 1996: 188) “regularly observable only under conditions of revolutionary system change” (ibid.: 189). The radical change of the political representation structure, followed by the elections of 1994, 1996 and the concomitant modification of election laws smashed the traditional forms of a delicate political consensus, often named “trasformismo” (Fix 1996), “perverse keynsianism” (Trigilia 1996: 149, 183) or “clientelism”. When the reign of money in the republic of bribery “Tangentopoli” breaks down, the “hegemonic dual arrangement on which the Italian republic was founded” (Mingione 1993: 358), i.e. a “consolidated dependence of the population on centrally distributed resources” plus “political party patronage” (ibid.: 356), does not operate properly anymore.

It is obvious, that the presumable restart of the political system in Italy’s “second republic” should not be overestimated as an equivalent to east-German transformation. However, combined with further political and social alterations – e.g. the harder concurrence and obligation for stability caused by European unity and globalisation, the coming of secessionism, the demand for federalistic reforms and the founding of Anti-Mafia-coalitions in the South – a new arrangement of political and institutional relations among the regions and for regional interest formation - becomes possible. The politics of consolidation of the new ruling centre-left coalition, the intend to keep up with Maastricht and the strong mobilisation of Lega Nord-exert subsequent pressure to minimise inefficient subsidies for the South (Trigilia 1996: 169).

Searching for new mechanisms of consensus: Similarities in Differences

In this respect in Italy we face a starting point inverse to the German situation, but characterised through similar problems: It exists persistence in regional inequality which has been long-term stabilised through broad informal , political corruptive mechanisms.

Far-reaching political changes on the level of the entire system which are – not exclusively, but nevertheless - encouraged through failing modernisation policy of the south, lead to a great amount of delegitimisation of institutionalised practices in political and economical exchange and support national segmentaristic tendencies.

On the contrary in Germany a structure of institutions– legitimised through democratic consensus and “useful illusions of unity”- was put on, whose previous form (“phenotype”) changes because of socio-structural conditions and informal patterns of acting. The constellation of existing inequality facilitates the building of “ideological secondary differences” (Wiesenthal 1995A: 26f.) which could be “dramatised to contrary projections

of identity” (Schneider 1997: 135). In both cases it emerges an open and ambivalent situation of social change, in which political institutions and regional specific interest positions must be integrated in social processes of compensation. From the point of view of regional compensation and the bringing into line of living conditions- which have to be negotiated as a political requirement.. Institutional, organisational and individual potentials have to be installed and mobilised to facilitate a national political consensus and the modernisation of peripheral regions.

Theoretical perspectives and empirical fields: Institutions and cultures, informal arrangements, civic society and symbolic conflict

The analogy of the investigation – the societal conditions, constraints and consequences for a successful political regulation of regional modernisation processes – motivates the proposed research project on hand. The theoretical instruments and empirical results of transformation research fit well to draw a comparisons between the regional disparities in Italy and Germany and also possibly produce general results. The following thoughts in form of thesis should specify the relevance and direction of the study.

- Both changing processes and developmental intentions illustrate clearly that the political programs and institutions do not operate independently and without influence of cultural patterns of action and inter-subjective interpretations. Without believes in institutions and representatives of the political system political initiatives peter out. Certainly, the distribution and effect of particularistic orientations and private networks as a feature of regional or national cultures are not a priori in sight . So the weakness of Italian institutions leans the prosperity of small and middle businesses in the North-West as also the clientelistic power relations in the South (Trigilia 1996: 185f), while the peculiarity of East-German value orientations implicate even “Altlasten” as well the engine of modernisation (Hradil 1996: 72-76). As a consequence Eisen (1997: 55) demands process-analysis of structural and cultural dimensions as well as the examination of historical developmental proceeds in institutional building.
- Detailed analysis of political programs, interaction and local implementation require furthermore the distinction of formal and informal practices as well as the identification of “Change-Agents”, who pursue political induced desires and individual actors who want to realise subjective or social-cultural needs. (Eisen 1997: 56) Ubiquity of corruption in the first Italian republic leads to a confusion of needs and desires – therefore the question of new balances in the constellation of external agents and internal actors in the context of exchanging elites arises. With the increase of local

autonomy and competition of national, regional and local actors could evolve more differentiated constellations (Bagnasco 1996: 216)

- This leads to the importance of micro- an macro- level and the role of intermediate institutions for the success of transformation process. With Italy's re-entry into the European currency system and the implicit obligation of budget consolidation the vicious circle of clientelistic deficit-spending and ongoing underdevelopment of the South broke down (Trigilia 1992, 1996: 168) Comparing the activities of the "Cassa per il Mezzogiorno" (ibid. 161f.) and the German "Treuhandanstalt" reveals the interrelation between clientelistic statal standards and rational maximising behaviour on the individual level (Seibel 1997: 491) As in the example of surveying the representation of east-German interests in transferred or internal pressure groups and in organisations of the "Third Sector" the original and internal "opportunities of materiel gratification of needs and of societal participation" (Seibel 1997: 491) of peripheral actors toward central national forces must be evaluated properly.
- Theoretically, there is no doubt that the creation of local infrastructures and action resources are based upon prerequisites of the civic society, i.e. the building of a regional public sphere and associated forms of participation and solidarity (Bagnasco 1996: 216, Leccardi 1997: 155f.) Whether such exigencies do exist within the regions and what kind of mobilisation they may give rise to outlines an interesting field of empirical study (cf. first data in Santoro 1995, Trigilia 1995).
- The occurrence and the symbolic expression of unique regional identities can help constructing positive self-images and ease social-integrative consensus. Beside these identities work also as a mark of distinction and device to pursue conflicts. Auto- and hetero-stereotypes of east- vs. west-Germans or south- vs. north-Italians are not to be underestimated as strategic resource in regional politics. Qualitative empirical work helps improving the communicative documentation and shaping of social relations and informs about the interpretative schemes and the habitus' that people hold (Schneider 1997, Woderich 1996). Regarding the remarkably polemical agitation that the north-Italian movement parties demonstrate, the operative existence of these patterns comes into view, although their substantial effects are yet to determine. Anyway, this scope opens up the possibility to test the often held conviction that there is a "cultural lag" in everyday life of peripheral regions.

To accomplish the intended outlines of the study empirical examples are to determine which unveil the various dimension of social change and successful modernisation politics. Since the making of communal structures in east-Germany is documented extensively, the observation of projects to increase communal or regional autonomy in south-Italy are

promising. To follow young and new private entrepreneurial initiatives (cf. for Germany Koch/Thomas 1996, for Italy Stancanelli 1996) to overcome regional disadvantages by unconventional action constitutes another empirical ground for analysing the interdependence between institutions, national policies, civic resources and cultural-symbolic competencies. Independent of the chosen field and the kind of local data generated – each action sphere and change process must be set into reference to the national political context and the opinion distribution through the media. The diversity and complexity of the proposed areas of research claims for the use of a multi-dimensional theoretical approach as employed by the new directions of transformation research.

Success or Failure: Learning how to modernise the politics of modernisation?

Even a systematic and comparative analysis of modernisation politics in Italy and Germany can only illustrate some aspects of changing political and social structures. Aside the exploration for conditions of failure, success and overcoming of regional disparities this study should almost reveal the contradictory dynamic of national unity and regional diversity with associated potentials of conflict and the difficult mechanism of consensus. In addition to that an analysis of special cases could display how structural and institutional logics as well as collective and individual decisions bring similar problems about in similar situations. The comparison of national political processes promote the tentative formulation of theories, which describe the systematic, but difficult and asymmetrical inclusion of peripheral regions in a broader social context and national, globalised structures as well as their coercion to catch up with internal changes. Besides, theories must synthesise different scientific observations like those of local mentalities or cultures (Bettini 1986), of rent-seeking tendencies and the dilemmata of collective action (Wiesenthal 1995a: 518f.), and of the constant risk of imbalance between social and system integration (Lockwood).

Apart from the simplified distinction of a successful and a failed national political integration and modernisation the research can stimulate evaluative propositions whether Germany will have to face some sort of Italian structural problems later on (cf. Boltho et. al. 1995, Kammerer 1991) or if specific political and administrative configurations could innovate typical Italian shortcomings. More probably, in both countries disparities and conflicts will emerge which are due to the limits of the modern welfare state's efficiency. This anticipation realises that there will not be many historical constellations which permit a similar range of options as the unique condition after the fall of the iron curtain allowed.

Therefore it would be instructive to draw conclusions from empirical results about the politics of modernisation itself could be modernised for being able to avoid the perversion by particularistic interests or the surrender of no-reform.

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