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*¿Cuánto hubo de modernización en la Italia demócrata-cristiana?
El Estado frente a la transformación socioeconómica
de 1948-1968*

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Resumen: Según la historiografía italiana, el término modernización hace referencia a la transformación de la sociedad italiana entre 1950 y finales de los sesenta. Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar esos años, adoptando el marco específico definido por la acción de las instituciones del Estado, tratando de aclarar cuál fue la contribución del «Estado» en los procesos de modernización. El análisis comienza a partir del período de transición política e institucional entre el fascismo y la democracia, enfocando el papel fundamental desempeñado por *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) para impulsar, e incluso demorar, las transformaciones institucionales y socioeconómicas. Ha habido una escasa atención a la «conquista del Estado» por la DC, lo que pone de manifiesto la creciente conexión

Abstract: According to Italian historiography, the term *modernization* refers to the transformation of Italian society between 1950 and the late 1960s. This study aims to analyse those years by adopting the specific framework defined by the action of State institutions, trying to clarify which contribution was given by the «State» to the modernization processes. The analysis starts from the period of political and institutional transition between Fascism and democracy, focusing the pivotal role played by *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) to drive, and even delay, institutional and socio-economic transformations. It has been devoted some space to the «conquest of the State» by DC, enlightening the increasing connection between the DC political elites and State elites. During the Sixties, DC gained almost

* This article has been jointly conceived; paragraphs 1, 3, 5 were written by G. Focardi; paragraphs 2, 4, 6, by A. Breccia.

entre las élites políticas de DC y las élites del Estado. Durante los años sesenta, la DC obtuvo casi un control total sobre el aparato estatal, mientras que la modernización estaba ocurriendo «fuera del estado». 1968 podría ser visto como un hito en la historia de la República Italiana, también desde el punto de vista de las instituciones estatales, debido a la reforma sobre la regionalización; pero las regiones solo pudieron ejercer sus poderes desde 1977, mientras el sistema político continuaba siendo dominado por el clientelismo y los círculos de poderosos, muy restringidos tanto a nivel central como local. La modernización continuaría siendo una empresa profundamente extraña para el Estado italiano. Solo una parte de la economía privada y algunos de los organismos semipúblicos se involucrarían en ella.

a complete control on the State apparatus, while the modernization was happening «out of the State». 1968 could be seen as a watershed in the history of the Italian Republic also by the State institutions' point of view because of the regionalisation reform, but the regions would only be able to exercise their powers just from 1977, while the political system went on to be dominated by clientelism and restricted powerful circles both on central and local level. Modernization would continue to be a deeply foreign enterprise for the Italian State. Only part of the private economy and some of the semi-public bodies would engage in it.

Palabras clave: República italiana. Modernización. Estado. Partidos políticos. Prefectos

Keywords: Italian Republic. Modernization. State. Political parties. Prefects

INTRODUCTION

According to Italian historiography, the term *modernization* refers to the transformation of Italian society between 1950 and the late 1960s. Many studies have investigated the changes in culture, in the economic conditions of the population, and the evolution of the economy and the system of production¹. The analysis of these processes raises the question of the role played by the State. For instance, the modernization of the country went hand in hand with increasing urbanization, the expansion of welfare services, social inclusion policies (i.e. compulsory and, therefore, mass education), and attempts at economic and development planning².

Moreover, we can go so far as to assert that, for some protagonists of Italian post-war history, and according to many observers, the prospect of modernization coincided with the initiatives aimed at building a modern democracy, primarily founded on the rights enshrined in the new Republican constitution³. In many cases the analysis of these trans-

¹ Firpo, Tranfaglia and Zunino, 1998.

² Ballini, Guerrieri and Varsori, 2006. Barbagallo, 1994-1996; Collotti and Rossi, 1993.

³ Neppi Modona, 1996.

formations and of their connections with State policies has provoked a twofold response. By using a well-known phrase coined by Luciano Cafagna, scholars have wondered whether modernization has been «active» or «passive»⁴ and investigated the reasons for its widespread lack of coherence and for the North-South territorial divide⁵.

In the historiography of Republican Italy, we notice that the paradigm of modernization is the result of positions and evaluations far removed and external compared to the use made of it by political scientists and development sociologists⁶. These considerations also seem crucial to confront these situations across different States. With this in mind, we note that the use of the category of «modernization» differs in a meaningful way depending on the national setting and the subject area in which it is used⁷.

The research we are conducting within the project *Poder central, poderes locales y Modernización en España (1958-1979): un estudio desde la Historia comparada*, studies the institution of the prefects in Italy during the central years of the Republic. In this article we offer a survey of the historiography and set out an interpretative framework to be expanded on in future research. At this initial stage we investigate the historical context within which the prefects, the main representatives of the government, worked⁸. This implies the need to focus on the dynamics of modernization that have characterized the country by adopting the specific framework defined by the action of State institutions⁹. Therefore, we will provide elements to illustrate to what extent modernization was promoted by the State and its administration, or —on the contrary— by society and private enterprises. Above all, it is crucial to explore the role played not only by central government but also by the local administration, such as the prefectures and the local authorities.

Furthermore, it is necessary to pay special attention to the nature of the role played by the Italian higher-ranking civil servants —i.e. prefects,

⁴ Cafagna, 1988, pp. 229-240.

⁵ Putnam, 1993; Cassese, 1998.

⁶ Mechi, 2003.

⁷ Gavrov and Klyukanov, 2015, pp. 707-713. By mere referring to the definition on Wikipedia, different approaches and linguistic uses of *modernization* are used by the single national historiographies.

⁸ Cifelli, 2008; De Nicolò, 2006.

⁹ Romanelli, 1995.

Chief Executive Officers, magistrates, etc.— and to their relations with the political leadership. That is, we need to know the degree of autonomy public officials had *vis à vis* the governmental majority, namely the administration's political point of reference. In other words, did the 'technicians' espouse and interpret their own model of the State? And if so how was this put into practice and how, indeed, was such a model, at least partially different from the political designs of the executive, evident?¹⁰

This analysis starts from the period of political and institutional transition between Fascism and Democracy, and it ends on the eve of 1968, a watershed in the history of the Italian Republic. However, the perspective adopted here leads us to open up the spectrum of analysis at least to 1970, when some structural reforms of the institutional framework—such as the creation of the delayed regional organization outlined in the Constitution, the introduction of a divorce law, and an act for the protection of labour rights («the Workers' Statute»)—were enacted. This historical reconstruction, focused on the policies of the State authorities and the evolution of the constitutional order, has a crucial political footprint, linked to the pivotal role played by *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) to drive, and even delay, institutional and socio-economic transformations generally traceable to the category of «modernization»¹¹. It will be necessary to devote some space to the connection between the DC political elites and State elites, belonging to the civil service. Indeed, the distinctive balance between the majority party and the bureaucracy was crucial in laying down the contribution made by the public authorities to the Italian processes of modernization—if, indeed, that was what they were.

1. THE FOUNDING ERA: MODERNIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

Contrary to the Fascist dictatorship, the aims of the *pre-Costituente* years (1944-46) were to create a State with strong autonomy at the local level as witnessed by direct elections for mayoral and local government representation and the introduction of the '*regione*'¹². The agendas of the political parties of the Resistance were based on the idea of re-founding the State and its systems through administrative decentralization¹³. In

¹⁰ Capano, 1992.

¹¹ Dibisceglia, 2010.

¹² Botteri, 2008; Pombeni, 1995.

¹³ Franceschini, Guerrieri and Monina, 1997.

1944 the majority of political parties had already stated their opposition to maintaining the role of the '*prefetto*', considered emblematic of the dictatorship and centralized Fascist government.

For example, in France each political party, each *mouvement* of Resistance, each trade union had a detailed project for a new constitution, containing a bill of rights and many articles. We are aware of up to around twenty such projects¹⁴. On the contrary in Italy nothing like this happened: almost all of the Italian partisans were not prepared to write a constitution, so they did not undertake this task, leaving it to the antifascists. There were differences between radical resisters and moderate antifascists¹⁵. The antifascists were the real writers of the constitutional text¹⁶. Moreover, there is a distinction between the constitutional history of the two countries, the political experience of the new political élites, and the sense of state perceived by ministers. Last but not least, while Italian Socialists and Communists never governed before 1945, their French «colleagues» experimented with the «Front populaire» during the Thirties¹⁷.

The *Assemblea Costituente* (1946/47) opted to include the local authorities (*regioni*, *province* and *comuni*) into the Constitution while omitting to explicitly mention the *prefetti* (art. 124), even if they were still in operation¹⁸. The Constitution established 15 *regioni* with ordinary status and 5 *regioni* with special status. This resulted in different apportioning of powers between the central and regional governments and different organization of administrative functions¹⁹. Between 1946 and 1948 four of the five special status *regioni* were created and granted autonomy while the remaining 15 ordinary status *regioni* were enacted in 1970. In February 1948 the constitutional laws of the *statuti* of Sicilia, Sardegna, Valle d'Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige were approved. The fifth *regione* with special status is Friuli Venezia Giulia (1963)²⁰. This episode of regional organization clearly illustrates a distinct characteristic of the difficult process of institutional reform in Italy and highlights more broadly the failure to enact the Constitution: as happened many other times in Italian

¹⁴ Callon, 1998.

¹⁵ Focardi, 2004, pp. 315-347.

¹⁶ Focardi, 2006b, pp. 1064-1080.

¹⁷ Focardi, 2006a.

¹⁸ Fioravanti, Guerrieri, 1999.

¹⁹ Ricci, 1994-98.

²⁰ Cammelli, 2014.

history, and unlike France, there was a significant time lapse between the planning and the subsequent implementation of reforms²¹.

However, during this time, as the Cold War spread, the higher civil servants were already reasserting their control over the workings of the State: the transition to democracy, aided by the amnesty of 1946, had taken place without a radical turnover of personnel, the first case in Europe²². State personnel witnessed the difficulties that arose from the more radical proposals surrounding institutional changes. The DC had guaranteed that reforms and change would be delayed; while the political parties on the left (PCI and PSI) were singled out as the driving force behind the attempts to purge until the amnesty proclamation of June 1946. Moreover, communists and socialists demonstrated a complete lack of institutional administrative planning, leaving the floor open to the proposals of the Christian Democrats and the other parties. Instead of focusing on new organizational models, they concentrated attention on purging, emphasizing the politicizing nature of the *funzionario*. The DC, on the other hand, proposed a model for the State that diluted the political role of the administration; the goal of clearing the Fascists from the political ranks was cast aside in favour of the supreme and 'impartial' need for economic reconstruction and social appeasement after the civil war of 1943-1945. The legislative inertia that characterized any real proposal of reform by De Gasperi's governments of 1947-1948—for example, the new territorial division of public bodies or the enactment of a new law concerning the public administration—was wholly in keeping with the *desiderata* of the bureaucracy that permeated all levels.

After years of continuous institutional changes, implemented as reforms, at times punitive (the purges) at times unforeseen (the 'mystery' of the *Repubblica*) or unfamiliar (the new political partners), the upper ranks understood that following the famous conversation of De Gasperi about the 'Fourth Party'—Confindustria, the world of entrepreneurship and industrialists were at the time closely affiliated to the Liberal Party—the Christian Democrats had initiated a vast strategy destined to gain political alliances²³. Furthermore «De Gasperi's proposal was not simply to return to the past and it is here that his proposals set him apart from

²¹ Rugge, 1995, pp. 215-216; Focardi, 2006a, pp. 679-694.

²² Franzinelli, 2006; Focardi and Nubola, 2016.

²³ De Gasperi, 2008.

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the liberal position»²⁴. De Gasperi succeeded in channelling the consensus of state employees towards the DC thanks to concessions made just before the election; one only has to remember the concessions of April 1948 that increased the phenomenon of mass hiring²⁵. The results of the first political elections, held in April of that year, were the crowning glory of that strategy²⁶.

In 1949 Leo Valiani, one of the leaders of the partisan struggle, stated:

The lack of significant administrative reform by the Resistance meant that the structure survived completely intact and the traditional bureaucrats only partially changed, thereby creating a monarchical climate that owed its survival as the governing administrative class principally to De Gasperi²⁷.

However, a slow transformation of the country began, a transformation that would soon be characterized as a failed modernization²⁸.

2. THE DC: THE CONQUEST OF THE STATE...

The first Republican Legislature (1948-1953) was defined as the legislature of «centrismo» (centrism); a political formula guided by the De Gasperi's DC and composed of four political parties. Through the support of the Marshall plan, important measures were taken to face up to some of the biggest structural issues and «modernize» the Country: the so-called «Piano INA Casa», an extraordinary council housing plan, a (partial) agrarian reform, the foundation of a State body to support the economic and productive development of the South of Italy, called the «Cassa del Mezzogiorno»²⁹. Nevertheless, these were inconsistent measures, decided by the DC and not by the Government or by the administrative authorities. For example, the agrarian reform authorities were entrusted

²⁴ Scoppola, 1988, p. 341.

²⁵ In an urgent situation, the government set up to the State have a welfare role towards casual labour of the public administration who wouldn't find employment in the private sector due to limited skills. Tosatti, 2004, pp. 61-70.

²⁶ From December 1945 to June 1946 all the Presidents of the Ministries Council were christian democrats; DC is the major political party at the election of the *Assemblea costituente* in June 1946 (around 35%) and it won the first political elections in April 1948 reaching to 48%.

²⁷ Valiani, 1949, pp. 52-53; Focardi, 2004.

²⁸ Crainz, 2003.

²⁹ De Siervo, Guerrieri and Varsori, 2004.

almost only to Christian democrats, as their leaders have admitted later. Mariano Rumor, future Prime Minister, wrote: «I readily acknowledge that among the authorities we had included valuable technicians, but also men from the party and its factions»³⁰.

The DC was a party which cut across the social classes and it was divided into different factions, with different leaders succeeding one after the other as Prime Minister or as the party's national Secretary: Amintore Fanfani, Aldo Moro, Mariano Rumor and Giulio Andreotti. Their factions, called «correnti», such as *Iniziativa di base*, *morotei*, *doro-tei*, *andreottiani*, had allied and/or clashed with each other, deciding the political tendency (more or less open to modernization) of the party and of the Government³¹. This manifold political nature of the DC was emphasized by the Vatican's influence, which was crucial for electoral success, through the clergy and the most important Catholic associations. A discussion of modernization in an international comparison, as we propose in our research project, must consider the Catholic Church's role. We could also ask ourselves if there were different speeds of modernization in the dissolving context of *res publica catholica / christiana*³². The early years of the Republic were characterised by a total lack of reform of the political/institutional set-up and of the (public) bureaucracy.

The Regions, the Constitutional Court, the Higher Council of Judiciary, the referendum provision were not enacted: these were essential instruments designed to check and balance the executive power and inserted by the DC into the Republican Constitution of 1948, but they remained a 'dead letter' for many years. This passivity of De Gasperi and of the DC was useful for the party in order to reconstruct the country without some guarantee powers and autonomies, which could have stopped or slowed down the Government's plans. The historiography describes this process —more evident between 1953 and 1956— as «ostruzionismo di maggioranza» (majority obstructionism) from the DC or

³⁰ Rumor, 1991, p. 116.

³¹ For an overview of the long and difficult negotiations between these different trends on the Government settlement and agenda, see for example the Amintore Fanfani's *Diari*, Fanfani, 2012. Overall, see Giovagnoli, 1996; Malgeri, 2005.

³² De Gasperi, 2009.

as the «Costituzione inattuata» (unrealized Constitution)³³: it was starting the period of *possible, protected, or frozen* democracy³⁴.

However, the 1948 Constitution included some important institutions, such as the two Houses, the President of Republic—chosen by the Parliament—and the Government, which had worked in the period 1948-1956. Nevertheless, Italian democracy, in its administrative organizations, in its laws and codes, in its leaders and magistrates, had not changed since the 1930s and this was irrefutable evidence of the lack of Italian institutional modernization. Another example relates to the following decades: the role of the Chief of Police and of the central and peripheral organization remained the same between 1949 and 1969, although their tasks and roles as well as the issues at stake were very different³⁵.

The Prefects were working in this context, after the most radical anti-Fascist factions had tried to delete them from the State legislature. By the end of 1940s, the number of Prefects was firmly established, and they formed a solid and unmoving body of officials³⁶, with fixed features until the 1970s. The Prefects' career steps remained the same through the decades and they were rigid, closed to other administrations or to political designations, and with a slow development. Furthermore, the geographical origins of these officials was unbalanced, because at least two-thirds of them came from the South of Italy (especially from Campania, Sicily and Sardinia) and only 10% of them were born in the North of Italy. So, the less socialised and culturally «modern» parts of the Country—with the lowest levels of industrialization, services and facilities had prevailed. In regard to the education of the Prefects, they usually had a law degree (more than 90%), and there was no school for Public Officials School until 1957, and a school for officials of the Ministry of Interior was only instituted in the 1980s³⁷.

At the end of the first Legislature, the DC began to change its strategy and its appearance. From the fifth Party's Congress, in 1954, a new line had arisen, with younger leaders, who created a new stronger, centralized structure. The aim was to be autonomous from economic and

³³ See for example the activity of Piero Calamandrei during 1950's; cfr. Calamandrei, 1966.

³⁴ Crainz, 1996, p. VIII.

³⁵ Buoncristiano, 1998, p. 32.

³⁶ Vetrutto, 2007, p. 198.

³⁷ Sepe, 2007; Cifelli, 1990.

social powers³⁸, which meant trying to avoid the interference of the Vatican, the representatives of Italian capitalism (Confindustria, the association of Italian businessmen), the upper echelons of State bureaucracy (for example the Bank of Italy), as well the reformist intellectual elite who were, in the main, part of that Liberal political culture which was secular and, at times, had links with the Italian masonic orders.

4. ... AND SOCIAL CONSENSUS

The creation of a ministry in 1956 whose sole mandate was to regulate private and public enterprise —Ministry of State Investments— was an eloquent demonstration of the party's desire both to exploit the enormous potential of the state's presence within the national economy and to feed and supervise the socio-political centrality of the DC. Indeed, until it was dismantled in 1993, this ministry had always been entrusted to a representative of the DC³⁹. The public companies that the DC inherited from Fascism multiplied thanks to the strengthening of a fragmentary welfare state, «Italian style»⁴⁰.

These companies became something of a parallel administration under the firm control of the DC who used them to build and maintain consensus⁴¹. At the same time, a number of laws passed after 1948 sanctioned and excluded civil servants who were members of the left thereby homogenizing even further state employees and the DC⁴².

It was not until after 1956 that the politicians came back to address some of the 'dysfunctionalities' of the system, once again proving the clear link between 'constitution and administration': the absence of constitutional reforms corresponded directly to the lack of reforms in the public administration. Therefore, as we start to see the application of the

³⁸ Fanfani thought that the DC would have become a subject with suitable power in and on society, which could have guaranteed more independence from traditional power centers.

³⁹ Fanfani's political strategy was supported by the increasing importance of the economic Public Bodies. See, for example, the giant oil company *Ente nazionale idrocarburi* (ENI), led by the ex-partisan Christian democrat Enrico Mattei, who menaced the interests of the «seven sisters». In this context the exit of ENI and of all the others public companies of IRI from the Confindustria (1957) was more just symbolic. Perrone, 2001.

⁴⁰ Ferrera, Fargion and Jessoula, 2012; Conti and Silei, 2017.

⁴¹ Serrani, 1978.

⁴² Caredda, 1995, pp. 103-104, who describes some draft law proposed by the Council of Ministers in January 1951.

articles of Constitution, until now largely ignored, the same public administration is bound to follow the decisions handed down from the higher body. According to Sabino Cassese who wrote that «freedom is anchored more in the administration than in the Constitution», we can see that the real rights of freedom, those that had a direct bearing on the everyday lives of citizens, owe their diffusion to the reforms made to the administration as well as to the apparatus of government itself⁴³. Without recognizing the liberties set out in the Constitution, we can see how an administration that is essentially a continuity of the Fascist past could never become an engine of modernization and democratization⁴⁴.

In the second half of the 1950s, while the DC was consolidating its political and social role, Parliament, whose evolution had been stalled in the preceding years, began to make significant steps forward. As the country moved beyond the most critical phase in the Cold War, we see the softening of lines of conflict between the DC on the one side and the PSI and PCI on the other (from 1946 the two Marxist parties had been in a fragile alliance). This was seen in the election of Giovanni Gronchi as President of the Republic. Gronchi, who hailed from the left faction of the DC, was elected in 1955 thanks to the parliamentary votes of the communists and socialists. A year later the Constitutional Court, a pillar of the Republic's new Constitution, was up and running; while in 1958 the *Consiglio superiore della magistratura*, a guarantor of judiciary autonomy, was established.

1956 was the dawn of a great, international turning point that, in Italy, led to the first decisive crack within the Left opposition parties and brought the PSI to consider a governing alliance with the DC. The Soviet invasion of Hungary had repercussions on the political landscape in Italy, bringing about the rift between the left parties. The socialists distanced themselves from the communists and began to look to the DC and its smaller allies —liberals, republicans and social democrats— for an alternative alliance.

These factors also influenced a reform that had been discussed since the fall of the regime that is the passage of a new law concerning the legal status of the state employee. The law that had been passed by Mussolini's government in 1923 was deemed adequate for the new dem-

⁴³ Cassese, 2000, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Pozzi, 2009.

ocratic state; however, this too proved to be a half-hearted reform. To simplify the problem of reform within the public administration to one concerning only personnel was in keeping with a long tradition in Italy. The status of the civil servant took priority over reforming the systems (the bodies and function); the pressures put on the government by the state employees in order to improve their economic conditions therefore became the focus of new legislation. The whole question of the working of the state was reduced to a mere question of the state workers themselves and the administration itself was viewed as a valve to diffuse the problem of unemployment, especially for the southern regions of Italy, as Sabino Cassese firstly explained during the '70⁴⁵. Moreover, the law passed in 1957 was not only flawed but full of limitations: the public administration refused to shed its discretionality, which essentially meant that it acquiesced to the executive branch of government: reducing the areas of interference by the parties would have meant reducing discretionality⁴⁶.

At the same time the DC could not allow significant changes to the laws that governed the activities of State employees, who were for their cultural and political background opposed to deep changes in the administrative organization. In the political elections it was necessary to keep on one's own side a group such as the ever-increasing bureaucracy⁴⁷.

Since then a long series of laws guaranteed the right to permanent employment, often without an open selection, offering the possibility of being employed on a completely arbitrary basis for all those who had had only a brief working experience. Essentially, this led to the very role of the public administration being cast into doubt; it became a means by which the State dealt with one of its major problems, unemployment, rather than being the entity through which the State governed society⁴⁸. The problems that were created —that still exist today— resulted in an irrational distribution of employees in the country; there were too many in the South and too few in the North, with serious repercussions on the equal representation in social and territorial terms of the Public Administration. «Slowly, but surely and progressively, civil society and the ad-

⁴⁵ Cassese, 1977.

⁴⁶ Rusciano, 1979.

⁴⁷ The public administration counted more one million of employments.

⁴⁸ Romanelli, 1976, p. 165.

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ministration separated (...) Thus, the southernization of the public sector (...) helps stress the traditional separation between the 'legal' and the 'real' country». In this way, promotions became «tightly connected to belonging to the DC and all the possibilities of upward mobility of public servants» were controlled by «the highest spheres of bureaucratic hierarchy, who were basically political appointments (high civil servants).

Thus, the question remains of what modernization represented for the DC, as compared to contemporary experiences in Western countries in general and in particular in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. We are advancing an interpretative framework to be verified during the next and various steps of our research⁴⁹.

5. THE SIXTIES: A MODERNIZATION OUT OF THE STATE

In the Sixties the great economic and social transformations of the previous 15 years became finally apparent. Demands and initiatives for cultural change multiplied whilst the prospect of a new period of reformism in the political field seemed to materialise, also favoured by strong economic growth. In a broader view, the political context had indeed been transformed by what is known as the Italian «economic miracle» (1958-63), that led to a definitive industrialisation of the country as well as the beginning of the realisation of full urban development and of the establishment of a consumer society⁵⁰. Since 1959 a new period of powerful and unexpected economic growth took place, the «economic boom»: the Italian GDP went up by 6% in that year, by 7% in 1960 and in 1961 by 8%⁵¹.

The centre-left coalition led by the Christian Democratic party (DC) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), that came to life in 1962, revolved around a program of modernisation and transformation that aimed to focus on the major weaknesses of the country. The cornerstones of this political alliance were the extension of compulsory schooling to the age

⁴⁹ For example, in France during the same time there was a general plan carried out to reform the central public administration, *l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration*. It was known as the Plan Monnet, and there were other measures which placed the public sector at the head of the modernization in France. These projects (more or less radical) conceived by the civil servants were seriously considered and adopted, while in Italy no such plans Italy were enacted. Meynaud and Risé, 1963, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Capuzzo, 2003; Scarpellini, 2008.

⁵¹ Roggi, 1989, pp. 217-218.

of 14, the nationalisation of the electric power industry, the reform of urban planning to prevent unauthorised development, the adoption of a systematic and organised economic plan, and the implementation of a regional system. Only the first two provisions were eventually put into effect because, soon enough, the reform drive of the centre-left majority was stifled by the opposition of the most conservative elements of the Christian Democratic party⁵².

In particular, the issue of a failed urban planning reform is extremely important when it comes to understanding those events. Such a reform, which would have legally regulated what, had been up until then uncontrolled urban development was not approved due to the opposition of the Liberal Party and of a part of DC, especially by local *ca-ciques*⁵³. The need not to lose the support of those involved in the «wild» urban development of Italian territory led the Christian Democrat party to renounce a logical (legal) restriction/regulation as suggested by the most influential Italian architects and urbanists⁵⁴. The DC was always the first party holding a relative majority in the assemblies (the Chambers of deputies and the Senate); the prime minister was always a Christian Democrat until 1982, and the principals ministers of the government were Christian Democrat too. We are interested in analysing the decisions of the DC in this field in order to evaluate if some of its factions caused delays in the process of modernization. This is a hypothesis to be verified⁵⁵.

This event can be regarded as a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the Italian republic: the weak prestige of the (central) government as part of a highly centralised system confronted with the demands of the periphery with which difficult negotiations had to be made. At the same time, however, the implementation of the Constitutional law in the second half of the Fifties brought about some (visible) effects. The Constitutional Court deeply committed itself to the revision of the norms that were a legacy of Fascism, gradually removing the rules incompatible with democratic rights and with the principles of the rule of law.

⁵² Franzinelli and Giacone, 2012.

⁵³ On the draft law of 1962, proposed by the minister of Public works, the Christian democrat Fiorentino Sullo, see De Lucia, 2006; Totaro, 2012.

⁵⁴ Ginsborg, 1989, pp. 368-369. A 1963 film, *Le mani sulla città* by Francesco Rosi, illustrated such issues earlier and in a far better way than most books.

⁵⁵ Cederna, 1956.

Just as important was the evolution of public order policies. After a harsh fifteen-years of repression of the working-class, that reached its peak in 1960 with the «Victims of Reggio Emilia», the participation of the Socialists in the government and of students and members of the middle-class in some of the protests contributed to the adoption of a more tolerant stance by the police⁵⁶. With regard to such a tendency it is necessary to take a look at the role of the prefects, who continued to act «in the periphery» —away from the administrative centre— in harmony with old and anachronistic organisational models, less and less up with the times⁵⁷. At the same time, however, political opposition within the DC slowed down some of the legislative changes necessary for the profound ongoing transformations of Italian society in the Sixties: consider, for instance, the new role of women and of youth, two fundamental societal groups among whom the DC lost support⁵⁸. Significant, in this respect, was the inability of parliament to approve a family law —tackling issues such as the equality of spouses and births outside marriage—, eventually approved with difficulty only in 1975.

A sudden dissolution of the hopes for a change linked to the constitution of the Centre-left coalition contributed to a reinforcement of societal initiatives that multiplied over the 1960s in the cultural, political and religious fields, independently of the parties in Parliament. The Sixties were marked by ever more popular modes of protest that presented analogies with what was happening in other European states. The year 1968 represented the ultimate manifestation of a rebellion that, first and foremost, questioned the conservative approach of political elites. Confronted by the outburst of the protest, the DC proved to be unprepared. We only need to look at its main target audience, the Italian Catholic world, where —also as a result of the Second Vatican Council— a Catholicism «from below» took hold, often in open opposition to the traditional forms of participation of the Church⁵⁹.

Also if we look at the administrative dynamics between the central core and the periphery it is possible to discern the growing difficulties of

⁵⁶ On the events of 1960 the fundamental studies are Cooke, 2000, and Scarpari, 2015.

⁵⁷ Tosatti, 2007, pp. 201-227.

⁵⁸ Tacchi, 2009, pp. 139-167. The judges, especially the ones in the Constitutional Court, were given the task of removing the Fascist dictatorship's articles and laws, in order to implement reforms and so respect the provisions of Constitution Law. An obvious example is the «Zanzara» trial in 1966.

⁵⁹ Cioncolini, 2014.

the governmental class at interpreting and orienting ideas and requests of local origin. In the decades when local autonomies were limited, in some areas of the country —especially in the Centre and North of Italy—, municipalities and provinces showed that they did have room for manoeuvre and for programmatic action, particularly in regard to urban modernisation⁶⁰. Conversely, in some other areas of the country the same local bodies became responsible for a devastation of the urban environment, often as a consequence of an enduring lack of municipal regulatory plans. So the absence of autonomy, the existence of a top-down, centralised system of checks and balances, did not necessarily preclude certain types of action at a local institutional level. Thanks to some local branches of mass political parties, that were more open to requests coming from society, some relations were created between the (administrative) core and the periphery that juxtaposed the traditional top-down mechanisms with significant bottom-up experiences. In reality, the Italian peninsula remains a country characterised by massive differences between the North and the South, more specifically between the cities of the Northern and Central part of Italy and the countryside in the South⁶¹.

In this context, it will be necessary to analyse the role played by the prefects, namely whether they simply carried out governmental directives or, conversely, whether in the debate between the central government and territorial entities on the crucial issues of local government there was any space for an autonomous mediation for, but not only, the prefects themselves⁶². A space that, perhaps, also acquired importance for the parallel weakening of the political-programmatic drive of the centre-left coalition.

6. 1968 AND AFTER: MODERNIZATION THROUGH DECENTRALIZATION?

We are going to conclude with some remarks on the Seventies, offering some short hypothesis to be confirmed during the next step of our research.

⁶⁰ Taurasi, 2005.

⁶¹ Felice, 2013.

⁶² Boffi, 2013, p. 18.

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Which kind of State was Italy after the years 1968-1969? Unlike other European countries, the largest strikes and demonstrations took place in Italy in the autumn of 1969⁶³.

The DC continued to occupy spaces and positions in the public administration. More generally, all political parties, not just the DC, acquired roles to which they were not entitled: for instance, they chose the boards of directors of local banks (the *casse di risparmio*), controlled trade unions in their political sphere, distributed appointments in public bodies, owned several newspapers and had a strong influence on mass-media (radio and TV were state-owned)⁶⁴. Socialists too, despite attempts to the contrary from a respected leader such as Riccardo Lombardi, took advantage of their participation in government to appoint their own people to the highest positions of state bodies⁶⁵.

In practice, political parties would become the main intermediaries between the individual and the state: in the 70s, and even more so in the 80s, some political leaders would build their own, almost private, «electoral fiefdoms» —inside the state-owned postal service, the electric company, local health agencies⁶⁶. Such practices provide further proof of the weakness of the central State with respect to the thorough occupation of the public administration by the DC. At the same time, they reveal the corresponding weakness of the central government to provide political guidelines even within a centralised State —the so-called «weak centralism», evident in the exhausting mediations between the centre and the periphery, the overlapping functions between different state and public bodies, or between state and local bodies⁶⁷.

The leading role of Parliament, remain unchanged, even after the creation of the regions in 1970. These regions would form a further level of organization within a State where political elites were becoming aware of the need to reform its structures and agencies, to make them more decentralised. The first elections for the regions with ordinary statutes were held in 1970, but regions would only be able to exercise their pow-

⁶³ De Felice, 1995, pp. 781-882.

⁶⁴ Perrone, 1991.

⁶⁵ Tamburrano, 1990.

⁶⁶ Among numerous examples, Mura refers to a «lottizzazione politica degli enti» («political carving up of Institutions») in Sardinia. Mura, 2015, pp. 60-65.

⁶⁷ Serrani, 1979.

ers from 1977⁶⁸. The decade began with the «Workers' Statute» of 1970, which introduced the rights guaranteed by the Constitution inside factories and industries. It would be followed by strong unionisation, but also a fragmentation of rules and norms so vast as to reduce public administration «to pieces» (*in briciole*)⁶⁹. Within a political system dominated by clientelism and family ties the influence of restricted powerful circles produced laws which were too specific and narrow and were rarely beneficial for the public good.

Modernization would continue to be a deeply foreign enterprise for the Italian State. Only part of the private economy and some of the semi-public bodies would engage in it. Cultural and social modernization would find its voice in the political and social movements of the period, as well as in the citizens' individual choices. Legislators faced with all these changes observed them shyly from a distance: Parliament would be very slow in taking them into account, with new laws about divorce (1970) and family law (1975)⁷⁰.

How did the State bureaucracy evolve? If we could look inside the organization of the public administration, and specifically at the technology which was then in use —mechanization of public offices—, we would still find ancient stamps, seals, papers, forms, registers, byzantine procedures —and we would find them for many years to come. This world was always late in its efforts to keep up with the computer revolution and did not manage to adapt to the new models of work organization.

The role of prefects and prefectures in the delays and failings of the State bureaucracy must still be analysed carefully and constitutes an issue which is not easy to interpret. The historical literature on modernization mainly deals with processes which took place outside of the Ministry of the Interior, therefore not inside prefectures, and not even among prefects⁷¹. Despite regional decentralization, prefects still engaged in many different issues, and their work continued to have an ambiguous role between service to the State and/or the Republic, and service to the

⁶⁸ The creation of the regions in a few cases was followed by bitter conflicts, for instance in regard to choice of the location of regional assemblies. Particularly well-known are the riots in Reggio Calabria, a city that was overlooked. Ambrosi, 2009.

⁶⁹ Melis, 1996, pp. 501-535.

⁷⁰ Melis refers to «timid decentralisation» («decentramento timido»): Melis, 2014, pp. 269ss.

⁷¹ Tosatti, 2009.

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majority party, the DC⁷². In the following years —with the economic, as well as political and social crisis— prefects started working in a new «emergency» context, dominated almost exclusively by the need to defend the State, whose very existence would be in danger. A still open question is how all these different «emergencies» (terrorism, social conflicts, but also natural disasters, new mass marginalization, large public work projects, etc.) influenced prefects, and how they interpreted the new context in which they operated. A context which was considered to represent an «exceptional» moment, only in part regulated by ordinary legislation.

But this is another step of our research, or another story.

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⁷² Mosca 2016.

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