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Ivan  
ROGIĆ

Zagreb, Croatia

TRANSITION AND/OR  
(POST)MODERNIZATION



Transition and/or (post)modernization? At first sight, this question seems, if not pointless, then superfluous. The main basis for such an impression lies, first of all, in some sort of intuitive confidence that the word “transition”, precisely and without any cynical intentions on the part of those involved in the transition change, points to a **complete** atlas of developmental tasks in transition countries. The mentioned confidence is further supported by two facts that have significant consequences. The first reflected is in the practices of Euro-American countries. Namely, the main/obligatory changes and measures of their quality assigned to post-socialist countries after 1990 are performed within the framework of transition, and no other. The second is reflected in the practices of the ruling groups in post-socialist countries, such that transitional imperatives are used and applied as a complete set of national development goals. Both of these facts, already due to a type of direct pressure by political institutions that help maintain their “naturalness”, stimulate a critical evaluation – that the list of transition tasks and intentions represents a **complete** list of the main national development goals. The articulate insight of many participants in transition societies should be added to this. Namely, the mechanical efficacy in applying transition imperatives and fulfilling transition tasks, **is no guarantee** of successful management of developmental crises in which, predictably, post-socialist societies have found themselves in, following the exhaustion of the socialist model. We believe it to be reasonable to propose a sketch whereby the above-mentioned critical intention acquires a wider area of argumentation.

### TRANSITION AND MODERNIZATION: TYPICAL DIFFERENCES

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Inasmuch as one can conclude from empirical data, a transitional program encompasses an array of **institutional** changes needed for the transformation from a so-

cialist model of management to a civic one. In other words, a set of institutional changes needed for the transition from socialism to capitalism. These two alternative definitions are not synonymous, yet the second one provides an additional dimension. If nothing else, it helps bring to our attention the possibility that a society pauperized in socialism may **very successfully** “transit” into a **likewise poor** capitalism. If the success of transition is measured by the yardstick of main transition tasks, then that possibility cannot even be clearly envisioned. However, if the success of transition is measured using modernization measures, the possibility not only becomes easily visible, but the need to avoid it becomes an **independent** stronghold of parallel modernization practices. It is worth noting that these **are not the required content** of a transitional program of change. It is easy to see the reason. The transitional program rests on three main tasks: privatization of (public) property; democratization of political relations; and autonomy of the civil (“the third”) sector of the society. The program is based on the hypothesis that such a reconstruction of social reality would, **in itself**, become a sufficient reason for a successful development recovery of transitional societies. Beyond any doubt, the mentioned changes are necessary for “transition from socialism to capitalism”. Private ownership and related market rationality, as well as democracy and civism are at the top of the list of required conditions needed for a successful transition into a civic world. However, blind trust in their automatic effects in a desirable direction clashes with a few unbending conditions of success, without which it is impossible to put together any list of examples of successful social or economic development. Here are some of the more important ones: (1) general technical competence of participants in developmental change; (2) readiness for risky development mobilization (without which there is no good entrepreneurship); (3) capability to imaginatively formulate new objects for “old” cravings (needs); (4) the size of the population “naturally” oriented towards innovative behavior; (5) quality of social heritage of development participants. Although only a few, from a long list of important modernization bases have been mentioned, it is not difficult to perceive that they all have common ground. This can be briefly summed up as **quality of development participants**. If a society does not have development participants of necessary quality, its transitional “elegance” may be sufficient for the kind disposition of Euro-American governments and for the financial “gifts” of the International Monetary Fond. However, it is not

sufficient for the actual autonomous development of the transitional society as a whole. Moreover, without such autonomy, the final balance of the transition process cannot be separated from the process where a dependence framework is exchanged for another. The proposed sketch, thus, advocates a conclusion that transitional and modernization goals and imperatives **are not quite congruent**. It may be useful to explore how that lack of congruence appears from a theoretical stance that maintains confidence in modernization.

Following M. Weber, three separate “sector” processes within the modernization process can be differentiated. Briefly, these are production-technical reconstruction (industrialization), territorial reconstruction (urbanization), and institutional reconstruction (bureaucratization) of society. Their task is of the same kind: to facilitate/strengthen the forms of production, territorial, and institutional autonomy of the society undergoing modernization. Consequently, the modernization section in all separate sectors of social practices is **intentionally the same**. If we follow the path indicated, it becomes clear that the focal point of the modernization intent is **a program of breaking up networks of dependency**. The program is relevant for both society as a whole and for its individual participants. However, a comparison with the transition tasks indicates that the direct **thematic** link between transition and modernization can be determined within only one sector of modernization: in the area of the institutional reconstruction of the society. Contrastingly, the processes of the other two sectors of the transition program are not talked about.

A particularly dramatic separation of modernization and transition imperatives is visible in view that all three sector forms of modernization actuate a precise determination of the internal oriented development; those that we conventionally call **national interests**. It is impossible to stimulate development and choose modernization alternatives in industry, urban network, technical infrastructure, scientific research, and similar fields which, decisively determine the forms of modernization without clear notions determining the way in which the general operation of modernization autonomy practically forms into networks of separate forms of societal activity. Their importance is greater inasmuch as the transition society has more **atypical** structural features, which the transition society displays.

First example: In both Estonian or Croatian society, socialism formed statistical ethnic minority groups with a

surplus of political power; an ethnic minority group was used for the local “thug” system. From the transitional perspective, after the collapse of socialism such groups should have conventional members of a civil sector. However, from a modernization perspective, their persuasiveness in roles as conventional members of the civil sector is at any rate problematic. The reason is that such groups continually derive their social identity from the model of distribution of social and political power as it existed during socialism. According to that model, these minority groups are equal/undiscriminated only **if and when they are** politically and socially privileged. A mere possibility that they are not to be privileged (but undiscriminated) is sufficient reason for persistent enmity toward the other members of the society, particularly toward those who have modernization autonomy as their main goal. In other words, they have formed their social identity **in opposition to** the program of creating a modernizing autonomous society to which they physically belong.

Second example: Reliance on market rationality should be, according to transition rules, obligatory. However, within Croatian society there is much territory that does not have appeal. In these territories, there is a marked absence of youth; there is no suitable or required technical infrastructure; the close proximity of mine fields from the 1991-1995 war period is threatening; the local population still suffers from the images of war cruelty, etc. To believe that “spontaneous” market processes would revive those areas, borders on the fantastic. On the other hand, many of those areas are near the Croatian state border. Past experiences strongly indicate that it is against national interests (security) to leave such areas neglected. The implications of transitional rules seem to suggest that it is best to trust the general market mechanics. The implications of modernization rules indicate that it is necessary to actively shape a renewal and revitalization of such areas on the basis of a special alliance between competent actors.

Third example: Croatian society is an emigration society, similar to Irish or Ukrainian. Without support and cooperation between the “homeland” and the diaspora, as data clearly indicate, many modernization projects undertaken in Croatia especially after state independence (1991), would never have been possible. Transitional rules imply that emigrant groups cannot be recognized members of the civil sector in Croatian “homeland” society. However, modernization rules affirm that the emigrant groups are at the top of the list of modernization participants who successfully make up for the scarcity of competence, money, and

civic courage of the modernization participants “at home”. Therefore, transition rules censor the possibility that emigrant groups have special representation as political participants in the “homeland” society. Thus, the mentioned groups, by the logic of the transition grammar itself, turn into **important, albeit unrecognized** modernization participants. Whereas, paradoxically, according to the same grammar, it has been seen that groups of the colonially privileged, without any modernization merit, with merits of the **opposers** to the modernization program have become conventional members of the civil network.

It is possible to object to the choice of examples by claiming it was based on author's predilection for a kind of analytic irony. Or, that they are protected by a concept of modernization that pays too much attention to **internal** social circumstances. However, by recognizing that there is validity to both objections does not allow a complete rejection of the outlined difference between transition and modernization rules. We are dealing with two incongruent groups of rules and with two incongruent grammars. In typical transitional societies such as the Czech, Polish, or Hungarian, incongruity rarely produces such paradoxes as those that were afore-mentioned. The total network of internal relations and participants is simply resistant to them. In societies with more atypical features, incongruity is not irrelevant. It is self-understood that its effects must be eliminated with regard to the general bases of **civil** transformation. However, in doing so, modernization imperatives **must not** be parenthesized. Their roots in the social processes are “from below”, that is, in the life world of mainstream society. Therefore, they most precisely indicate with which/what kind of actual participants of transformation a particular society may count on. Depending on this, appropriate forms of modernization may be developed. Since such forms are necessarily linked with the transformation of a concrete territory and a concrete technical (industrial) heritage, their institutional performance, in spite of their obligation to be transitionally consistent, cannot be separated from the mentioned fact.

In other words, institutional transformation, required for a suitable transition “from socialism to capitalism”, is **doubly coded**. At one level, it is coded by transitional grammar: privatization/democracy/civism. At another level, it is coded by a grammar of modernization: **success** in creating/shaping a modernistic autonomy of the “in transit” society; that is, success in shaping its new technical and urban reality and the presence of **capabilities for independent development** (society “in transit”).

## MODERNIZATION AND (POST)MODERNIZATION: SCARECROW AND GARDEN

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Many competent analysts write the word “modernization” with discernable caution. The reason is simple. Modernization has prepared/formed many aspects of production/technical, urban, and institutional autonomy. With surprising vigor, it also confirmed issues related to the autonomy of special groups and individuals. However, on the other side, “in the shade”, it remained dependent on several processes and relations that **directly oppose** its autonomous intentions. A more comprehensive review of the mentioned “shady” spots will be presented in a separate study. Here, the original ambition will be abridged to an appropriate summary. The list of “shady”, (even dark) sides of the modernization program most certainly includes: (1) polarization of modernization effects according to the scheme: center/margin; (2) colonization of the “taciturn” subjects (victims), in particular nature and those groups which cannot present anything else except naturalness in their defense (pre-industrial groups); (3) uncontrolled multiplication of risky consequences of development (expansion of “risk society”); (4) concentration of political, production, and financial power under the control of those interested in power itself (outside of control that is derivable from value); (5) blindness for the drama of The Other. To say that emphasizing and critique of features from the list became more frequent since the seventies, when the compound word, “post-modernism”, was used more often, is not allowed. Namely, the modernization process, during the entire period when it was the main base of the civic transformation, **at the same time** also questioned and reacted to multi-type and multiple rebellions (ranging from rebellions in art and cultural practices, such as the cultural Modernism at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to rebellions in technical and political sectors).

In other words, modernization as a **model** unfolds (convincingly argued by A. Toynbee) according to the scheme: modernization/(post)modernization. At the first level it was required to develop forms of social autonomy and progress using technical, urban, and management heritage. At another level, it was required to develop forms of defense against destructive aspects of such a transformation of the world of life. It is useful to note that both the inducement of autonomy (technical, urban, management, and, finally, existential), and defense of life from destructive aspects of such an inducement, are forms of the **same**



program. Their empirical tasks are unequivocally different. However, their goals are congruent.

It is self-explanatory in countries with marginal areas, which are homogenized by modernization processes (modernistic periphery) that they simultaneously experience the attraction of modernization promises and fear of its “dark” features. The main source of fear is not just the force of innovation which modernization processes inject into the mainstream areas of peripheral societies. The source of fear also lies (well justified) in their suspicion that the modernization center may **export to the periphery its own (modernistic) past**. According to that scheme, the modernistic future of peripheral societies is feasible and conceivable only as an archeological offprint of modernistic past societies from the central development circle. In this scheme there is **no place** for peripheral societies to appear as autonomous participants of modernistic transformation **in special “niches of excellence”**. Since, the transitional grammar is blind to the effects of modernization, especially in the technical and urban sectors (i.e., in industry, science, finances, infrastructures, etc.) consistency in its application guarantees a peripheral society just the **basic quality** of an integration framework, necessary for membership in an outer division of the central circle of modern societies. However, this does not guarantee that this new modernization reality created in them will be essentially different from the reality that came about by exporting the modernistic past from countries in the center to countries on the margin. Social participants who consistently strive for a complete (in a model sense) program of modernization are especially sensitive to this possibility. This means for those countries “in transit”, such as Croatia, the only internally legitimate modernization is the one, which is at the same time – (post)modernization.

The proposed statement clearly announces that in this type of usage, the word (post)modernization **is not** synonymous with compounds such as ethical relativism or cynical skepticism. By reducing the meanings of the word, (post)modernism, to those contained in the above-mentioned compounds we are then not inclined to hold a “neutral”, technical, interpretation. However, research on the footholds and motives of such and similar reductions by far surpass convincingly the scope of this study. Thus, we shall limit ourselves to the already presented designation. We hold this essential so that the use of the word (post)modern may retain the semantic “glow” which, conventionally belongs to words such as: development, perspective, defense of life, and the like. Used in such a way,

the word (post)modern becomes a suitable indicator of the multiplicity of efforts, which share their roots with the efforts of modernization attributes mentioned in the previous paragraphs. It is useful here to turn to examples once again.

First example: In spite of a predominantly old-fashioned industry with a predictable ecological roughness, built during the period of socialism, 1945–1990, Croatia has succeeded in preserving its environment better than most other transitional countries “in transit”. New modernization, shaped according to the afore-mentioned model of importing the developmental modernistic past of the center to countries on the margin, would undoubtedly endanger this ecological advantage. The chance of this in fact happening is even greater as Croatian society still cherishes the notion of industry as being the sector which has the self-explanatory right to oppress other sectors of life (socialistic “social base”). A (post)modern correction, however, introduces into Croatian society a developmental orientation fully congruent with its main **modernistic** aspirations. It, simply, imposes an attitude that welfare for the ecological quality of the environment in Croatia is the central basis of (post)modern development.

Second example: Under the protection of transitional privatization, many new owners bought socialist firms. In many cases “rationalization” of corporate transactions had to be organized. The data, however, indicate that quite frequently such programs of “rationalization” end by consistently eradicating research groups, teams, and departments in privatized companies. In this way, companies are being reduced to “efficient” technical users of innovations created elsewhere. It is indisputable that such behavior in industrial everyday reality is a part of the “obligatory forms”. However, it is indisputable that participation in contemporary developmental practices and strategies cannot be formed without a **capability for partnership relations** with other participants in the world of labor. **The basis of these capabilities is developmental research.** Participation, or, in other words, developmental individuality, is an essential component of (post)modernist polarization of the modernization process. In a clearer way, (post)modern sensitivity makes appropriate **modernization** activity within the outlined transition circumstances both easier and possible.

There are many related examples. They, indirectly, show that the (post)modern polarization of modernization processes and models is more than a moral gesture. Although we of course maintain that such gestures are im-

portant, they are not sufficient for a practical orientation of national development, or for choosing key alternatives. In addition, it is necessary to have **the practical capability to “transfer” (post)modernist standards and forms to places with a modernization emphasis.** The right to, and capability of polarizing the process of developmental transformation according to the scheme: modernization – (post)modernization, is thus highlighted as the central framework of including transitional imperatives in rhythm with “modernization from below”; or, into the practice of modernization that are “socialized” by specific life positions of particular “in transit” societies. Only inasmuch as it is included into those rhythms and how much it developmentally functions, as their component, a transitional program has a chance to be more than just an abstract typical modification of European peripheral societies caught in the traps of the epochal “transit”. Moreover, to be more than a directive for transition from a poor socialism – to a poor capitalism.

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