

Chair: TBA

### 8.21 Paolo Tedeschi – New agrarian productive systems for a modern agriculture: notes on Lombard agriculture from the Napoleonic period to the Fascist regime

The aim of this paper is to show some aspects of the main changes concerning the Lombard agrarian sector from the Napoleonic period to the fascist regime: this analysis allows us to see how landlords' choices about the exploitation of their lands changed the agrarian productive systems following the example of the best European country areas. This paper shows how the transformation of the Lombard agrarian sector and the related modernisation of productive systems were the result of more variables which were sometimes endogenous (that is they were strictly linked to 'free' decisions of landlords, peasants and public authorities organizing the agrarian sector) and in other cases exogenous (that is, they depended on diseases or technological innovations which 'forced' decisions of landlords, peasants and public authorities). This paper particularly shows the main effects on Lombard agriculture of the following events:

- 1) The changes in land-ownership, that is, the progressive diminution of the aristocratic landlords (who preferred secure incomes and invested little to improve the productivity of their land) and the increasing of the bourgeois landlords (who were disposed to invest a lot of money to renew farms, to use new productive processes and to purchase some modern machinery).
- 2) The diseases of vines such as powdery mildew, peronospora and phylloxera, which rationalised the distribution of vineyards in the hills (vines remained only in the best land) and forced them out of the plain (they were substituted by mulberries and corn).
- 3) The diseases of silkworm such as pebrine and diaspis pentagona, which reduced gains from silkworm breeding and forced farmers to give more attention to cereals: this increased the production of wheat and maize and, at the same time, the number of landlords who leased out their lands by a fixed-rent tenancy (cash paid).
- 4) The great crisis of the agrarian market (in the 1880s when cheap cereals arrived from America), which forced farmers to change rotation systems and increase the planting of forage crops for cattle, and consequently favoured investment in livestock buildings (that is the creation in the plain of new, modern stalls dedicated to dairy cows): this favoured the reduction in the number of people rearing cattle in the Alpine valleys and the increase in the plain of the number of farms with a great cowshed. This increased the production of milk and cheese and enlarged the dairy market.
- 5) The evolution of the technology which gave farmers some more efficient agrarian machines and moreover chemical fertilisers and hybrid seeds: so they could increase their yields and crops but at the same time they needed more money for these new technologies;
- 6) The creation at the end of the nineteenth century of institutions such as rural co-operatives and friendly societies, the *Latterie sociali* (that is, the co-operatives which processed milk to produce pasteurised milk and some cheese and other dairy produce), the *Casse rurali* (that is the co-operative rural banks) and some other bigger banks which were particularly dedicated to the agrarian credit market: these institutions gave farmers and cattle-breeders the opportunity to distribute their products easily to the market (and so prices decreased without reducing the mark-up) and to receive particular benefits (such as the insurance for hail or epizootic apthra, or the sickness and disablement subsidy) and to borrow money paying a low interest rate (and so to make more investment in their farms).

7) The improvement of know-how in agronomics and zootechny which arrived from the best European rural areas: this was linked to the creation and development of new agronomic schools and agrarian and zootechnic institutions (such as the *Cattedre ambulanti di agricoltura* and the *Istituto Zooprofilattico*) which encouraged farmers to give more space to clover and leguminous plants in rotation of crops and to increase their live-stock.

8) The evolution of the fiscal laws concerning the land, that is the increasing in taxation during the nineteenth century, and at the same time the reduction of the social power of landlords in a society where factories increased their number and dimension (during the last decennia of the nineteenth century Lombardy became the most important industrialised region in Italy).

9) The birth of agrarian trade unions and landlords' associations and the consequent changes in agrarian contracts of peasants, sharecroppers and tenants: the labour cost increased and obliged landlords to renew the productive systems and at the same time forced the last *rentiers* to sell their lands.

10) The fascist laws concerning the main cereals (the *Battaglia del grano*) and milk and dairy products (the *Carta del latte*): the *Battaglia del grano* oriented investment in favour of increasing the cultivation of cereals and at the same time reduced investment in the quality of the more profitable products (as olive oil and wine); the *Carta del latte* changed the methods used for cattle breeding and also modified the procedures for milking and the distribution and preservation of the milk and finally obliged dairy farmers to renew their productive systems.

The paper particularly illustrates the positive aspects of the modernisation process and also the limits, that is, when was it possible to improve production quality and when bad decisions prevented it (as in the case of wine, whose quality generally remained low). Furthermore this paper allows us to verify the changes and explain their effects on different cultivations and productive systems: in fact Lombardy is a region where there exists a great variety of pedologic areas and agricultural environments such as Alpine valleys, morainic hills, the plain (dry and irrigated) and the Riviera of the lakes (which have specific microclimates). This also means that this paper can have a paradigmatic value for many other agricultural areas.

**Paolo Tedeschi** is *Ricercatore* (Lecturer) in the Economic History at the Department of Economics of the University of Milan-Bicocca and *Chargé de cours visiteur* in the Economic History at the Department of History of the University of Leuven UCL. He has a PhD in Economic and Social History from the University 'Bocconi' of Milan (Thesis on Agrarian History). Recent publications include: 'Sale or Gratuitous Transfer? Conveyance of Family Estates in a Manufacturing Village: Lumezzane in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries', in *Continuity and Change* 3 (2008); 'Marché foncier et systèmes de production agricoles dans l'Italie du nord au XIXe siècle: le cas de la Lombardie orientale', in *European Review of History*, 5 (2008).

## 8.22 Marie-Lucie Rossi – Performances of agriculture in Reggio Emilia in the nineteenth century: an economic and social construction

Reggio Emilia between Milan and Bologna in Italy even today is famous for four products (PDO): the Red cow (*vacca rossa*), the White pork (*Yorkshire Reggiano*), the Yellow cheese (*Parmigiano Reggiano*) and the Sparkling 'black' wine (*Lambrusco*). The analysis of accounts books from farms justifies these associations. Until 1859 integration with markets in Austrian empire predominated, raising cattle for meat (*bovi* and *giovenco*). With the closure of borders after 1876 and the creation of the new Italian domestic market, we developed the cheese industry (*casello*). While the wheat crisis and the phyllosera crisis were raging in Europe after 1885, Reggio Emilia, easily transformed the meat-cattle industry into a dairy cattle industry and built new vineyards with the money from the sale of fat pigs. Indeed, between 1854 and 1873, the import of English pig breeds improved the local breed, resulting in a new breed of swine from Reggio Emilia, which invaded European markets. These non-stop changes are explained by the system of sharecropping qualified in Reggio

Emilia as ‘perfect sharecropping’ (*perfetta mezzadria*), because, together, farmers and capitalists were business associates (*soci*). It was an operating system which required collaboration between landlords and peasants for mutual benefit: every participant provided (gradually if necessary) half the capital and immediately in exchange received half the revenues. This flexible and integrated system is responsible for the agricultural performances in Reggio Emilia throughout the nineteenth century.

**Marie-Lucie Rossi** is working on the unpublished archives of the great families of the Italian aristocracy. The practice of the agricultural accounting books leads her to follow the passage of heritage conservation with rents in search of a business income. However, this profit wants an optimum collaboration between land, capital and labour with the development of flexible contracts based on inputs of capital by all the members. Reading theoretical books of accounting also allows her to understand that this passage is the result of a tax policy that encourages entrepreneurial agriculture. After a PhD at the EHESS, she is preparing a HDR (Habilitation à diriger des recherches) at Paris1 Sorbonne.