

# Implementation Problems of Regional Policy\*

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## Summary

Management of regional policy in European countries including Switzerland shows that the effects of this policy are very limited and sometimes even directed against its main goals. The main reasons for the partial failure of these programmes are the implementation problems, the imperfections in coordination and in decision-making. These bottlenecks in implementation are more or less known. In this article it is argued that they imply two major dialectical processes: the "bottom-up" versus the "top-down" and the functional versus the territorial. These processes are illustrated and confronted with the main goals of regional policy in Switzerland. The article ends with some suggestions for regional policy during the eighties.

## Résumé

La gestion de la politique régionale en Europe, y compris celle de la Suisse, montre que les effets de cette politique sont très limités et quelquefois contreproductifs. Les problèmes de mise en œuvre et les défauts de coordination et de prise de décision sont des raisons bien connues de l'échec partiel de ces programmes. Il est suggéré qu'ils impliquent deux processus dialectiques majeurs: l'ascendant qui s'oppose au descendant et le fonctionnel qui s'oppose au territorial. Ces processus sont illustrés et confrontés avec les buts les plus importants de la politique régionale en Suisse. L'article se termine par quelques suggestions concernant la politique régionale pendant les années 1980.

## 1. The hypothesis

Motives for the evaluation of regional policy exist in all European countries: there have been and there are changes in the framework of international and national conditions, which influence the effects of traditional regional strategies. Consequently, the discussion about economic policy goals leads to a new emphasis for regional policy, and science itself has developed new theories: It has also made progress in the field

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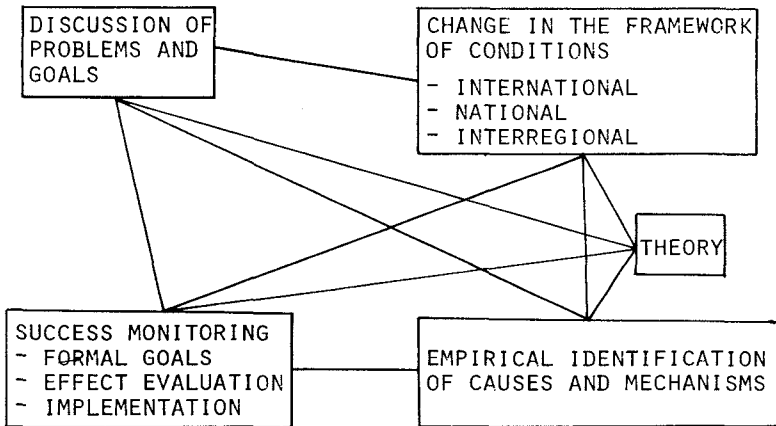


Fig. 1. Basis for the discussion of strategy.

of management. With these motives an intensive discussion about the necessary strategy can take place (Fig. 1) (Rorep, 1981).

Management has three aspects: The formal reaching of goals, the real effects of programmes and projects, as well as an implementation analysis. This article will concentrate on the third aspect. It is based on an on-going analysis of effects of existing strategies which show regional policy in European countries is, as a rule, characterized by the lack of efficient inter-regional directions; selective negative effects of the policy of industrial settlement; and insufficient flexibility in view of the changes in external conditions.

It is presumed that the inadequate result of regional policy is partly caused by its basic implementation problems. Thus, one can hypothesize, that two main forces hinder the implementation of regional policy: a *dominant functional force*, which undermines the territorial base of regional policy on the one hand, and on the other hand, a *dominant top-down force*, which shatters the bottom-up structure that regional policy tries to develop at least in federal countries. These two processes can be described as the foundation of all the other, more concrete implementation problems of regional policy, which are analysed by Baestlein and Konukiewicz (1980).

In this article, Section Two will illustrate the two above mentioned undermining forces, Section Three will deal with the main goals of regional policy, and the last section will develop some indications for a reorientation of regional policy. All illustrations and examples are taken from Switzerland (Brugger, 1981; Hanser, 1981).

## 2. Two short illustrations

### 2.1. *Functionality versus territoriality*

Friedmann & Weaver (1979,7) have shown the dialectics between functional and territorial forces, and they have tried to identify periods of dominance of one concept: "When we review the changing course of regional planning doctrines over the past half-century, two major forces of social integration appear to alternate with each other: territorial and functional. Intertwined and complementary to each other, they are nonetheless in constant struggle. The territorial force derives from common bonds of social order forged by history within a given place. Functional ties are based on mutual self-interest. Given inequalities at the start, a functional order is always hierarchical, accumulating power at the top".

Territorial relationships, on the other hand, though they will also be characterized by inequalities of power, are tempered by the mutual rights and obligations which the members of territorial groups claim for each other. The definition of territoriality is further discussed by Malmberg (1980). It seems that this concept becomes more important when discussed at the same time as the real processes of functionality. An illustration of these dominant functional forces will now be given.

In several peripheral regions of Switzerland one can observe an "out-migration" of decision functions of industrial firms mainly because they have been bought by a transnational enterprise. The most important functions – such as research, information centre, finance and purchasing – are more and more concentrated in the central headquarters in the main cities (Brugger, Flückiger & Müller, 1982). As a consequence, the main centres gain power and the periphery loses decision functions, including more and more leading persons in the economy, in culture and in politics. The periphery will lose more of its potential for a self-reliant development and it will become more dependent. Similar processes have been analysed for Austria by Tödting (1981).

### 2.2. *"Bottom-up" versus "top-down"*

The dialectics between "bottom-up and "top-down" seems to be very pertinent at the present time. Stöehr & Taylor (1981) show the background of the two approaches; they try to identify periods of dominance of one concept over the other. In their definition this dialectics does not only cover the institutional and political aspects, but also economic and sociocultural elements. As a consequence, their definition is very broad and also integrates elements of the above dialectics. A "bottom-up" strategy departs from the basic supposition that the inter-regional division of labour between areas of varying degrees of development generally results in disadvantages to the less developed regions, owing to its cumulative and circular effects. Consequently, the demand for the supervision, reduction or at least the conscious forming of inter-regional relations (for example, the flow of goods, factor movements etc.) takes place. At the same time regional development processes must be produced "from within",

(i.e. by a broad mobilisation of the so-called “endogenous potential”). An integrated strategy is definitely preferred in this connection. In the sense of a broadly conceived understanding of development (Sers, 1977, 2) not only economic but especially socio-cultural dimensions must be considered. The optimal decentralization of the powers of decision in matters of development policy is a very important condition for a “bottom-up” strategy. We shall use the terms “bottom-up” and “top-down” in this more specific institutional-political sense. The “bottom-up” concept is especially respected by regional policy in federal countries like Switzerland.

The Swiss federalist tradition meets the demands of a “bottom-up” development strategy to the greatest possible extent: Swiss regional policy is based on the understanding of an area as the expression of inner economic and socio-cultural coherence; on the aim towards decentralized creativeness of initiative; on distinct involvement in decisions relevant to development policy; and on an active will to create and carry responsibility within a local area. This is very evident politically in the formation of *small* regions of development with *their own sponsorship*. It is also expressed, in the fact that the regional boundaries for promotion are not defined “top-down” (by the federal government), but by individual committees joining together to promote regions with corresponding growth foci. Each region formulates its own development objectives – within the limits set by other factors – and defines for itself the infrastructural measures for the realization of these objectives. In the sense of “bottom-up” strategy more and more attention is also being paid to the socio-cultural objectives in Switzerland. Yet, also here “top-down” forces can be dominant and can undermine the best goals. As one example, a number of studies made clear that the famous Swiss federalism has growing problems. One of them is the centralization of policy-power at the federal level and the weakening of political competence at the local level. This fact has strong effects on the structure of financial competence and potential, which in Switzerland is divided into three (national, cantonal and communal) levels of the political system (Bieri, 1981).

### 3. Goals and strategy of regional policy in Switzerland

Both the functional and the “top-down” process are in conflict with the goals of regional policy. Swiss regional policy is essentially directed at levelling the disparities in welfare between developed (core) and less developed (peripheral) regions. At the same time, the attempt is to enforce the socio-cultural diversity and the inner potential of the regions.

These aims can be summarized by the following formula: “reduction of undesired regional disparities”. In this respect, the following questions are raised:

– Is this reduction motivated by policy of growth, stability or distribution (compensation)?

- How does this formula relate to the basic values of other policy areas?
- What is meant by “undesired”?
- Which spaces should be compared?
- Which disparities are meant?

By adding some remarks to these questions, it might be conjectured whether and how far the goals contain territorial and “bottom-up” approaches.

### *3.1. Is this reduction motivated by policy of growth, stability or distribution?*

Undoubtedly, regional policy in practically all European countries including Switzerland is particularly influenced by a policy of distribution: justice as a general goal is accounted for as a policy of distribution and leads to measures and attitudes which are supposed to correct the effect of market forces. At the same time, during the post-war years a clear growth policy element has been detectable in the way resources are used in peripheral regions and is considered as a contribution to global economic growth. This trend lost its significance at the end of the 1960's and made way for considerations aimed at stability. This is especially expressed in the formula, “guarantee of employment”. At the same time, what has to be repeatedly stressed is that stability does not in any way mean frozen structures and a policy of maintaining structures. On the contrary, it requires the greatest possible ability to adapt to changing market data. Here the desirability, even the necessity of a high degree of willingness to adapt to innovations, becomes clear. This in turn is also a precondition for growth (Brugger, 1980). Therefore balance, growth and stability do not have to be so controversial as academic discussion would like to make them as long as the reduction of disparities is sought not just by means of distributing production factors, but also and above all, by raising and using the potential for innovation of the peripheral areas.

### *3.2. How does this formula relate to the basic values of other policy areas?*

The goals of regional policy are *a priori* by no means consistent with those of other areas of policy. Plenty of potential conflicts between the territorial and sectoral points of view exist and they become apparent through countless disputes in practical policy. An illustration of this is the well-known conflict between regional and labour market policy (Bonny, 1981). It is even more evident in the conflict between regional policy and the global economic goal of economic growth with conservation, or the increase of comparative productivity to gain higher competitiveness on the international level. This is a goal that has gained considerable importance in Switzerland during the past few years, notably since 1973. With this priority it is logical that strategy proposals for regional

policy demand a promotion for cities and agglomerations with reference to a growth centre theory which would be enlarged around export based elements (Giersch, 1979). These and other conflicts first take effect at the level of measures and approach. Accordingly, they should be minimized to the most concrete level.

### 3.3. *What is meant by "undesired"?*

If national income is used as the indicator to measure spatial disparities it becomes possible to establish an inter-cantonal spread of about 1 : 2. How should this imbalance be assessed from a federal point of view? Is it alarming or perhaps not worth worrying about? In comparison with neighbouring countries these are doubtless relatively modest imbalances.

In Switzerland, the regional disparities are rather small when compared with those of other West European countries. This state of affairs must be viewed against the background of a pronounced federalist tradition, bearing in mind that regional policy in Switzerland is comparatively young. On the other hand, in strongly federalist countries even small disparities are usually considered undesirable and steps are taken to diminish them (Hanser, 1981).

In addition, reference should be made to the extension of the sets of indicators: monetary, or in the widest sense quantitative details, are not sufficient to establish regional conditions of life and opportunities. This is why a suggestion by Hollenstein & Lörtscher (1980), has received considerable attention: "Every person wishing to work should be able to find within his own region a job which corresponds to his training within the framework of a differentiated offer of employment". Of course this formulation requires additional qualification: what does "corresponds" mean, and for what sort of region should these ambitions count? At any rate, it indicates a viable direction for discussion of goals (Bonny, 1981).

In view of the formal commitment of active regeneration, there is a wide agreement that the means to long-term, self-sustaining and self-reliant development can only be the creation of jobs in small and medium industries and in tourism. The policy of promoting near and existing industries plays an important role in the efforts to bring work to the worker. Already in this strategy, but also in the development of the tourist industry, an explicit reference is made to the export base concept. Also in infrastructure-subsidies, Swiss regional policy is indebted to neoclassical thought to a certain degree; however, *it also possesses some significant elements of a "bottom-up" strategy founded on the theory of polarization.*

### 3.4. *Which spaces should be compared?*

This question is raised with every estimation and measurement of a disparity indicator. The cantonal national income for the mountain canton of Graubünden probably says little about the situation in the individual valleys of the canton: the average tends to divert from individual prob-

lems. The differentiation between the cantons of Basel-City and Basel-Country is like an artificial separation of an essentially uniform economic region. Labour market processes would have to be analysed in larger regions than the existing planning regions. It is essential to determine the region according to its empirical comprehensibility, at the same time paying attention to consistent limits. Statements should be linked to communal *and* regional *and* cantonal *and* supra-cantonal disparities.

### 3.5. *Is it only a question of reducing disparities or the setting-up of spatial differentiations?*

There is no doubt that it is not the aim of Swiss regional policy to strive for uniformity of living conditions in every region by means of reducing disparities. However, the tendency is for infrastructure policy to work in this direction and, therefore, reference has to be made to the great significance of the region's independence: economically, socio-culturally and politically the sub-regions should experience a strengthening from within and be able to put across an increased identification on the basis of a personal path of development (Bassand, 1981). Apart from unwanted disparities, equally desired differences move towards the centre of the goal discussion: creative autonomy of values and preferences has also found its way into Federal regional policy as a variable goal.

### 3.6. *Discussion*

The whole structural policy of the Swiss Confederation is basically (with the exception of agricultural policy) conceived as encouraging self-help with the aid of subsidies. This is particularly true of regional policy. This political axiom is doubtlessly going in the right direction if regional responsibility and the ability to make decisions can grow out of being confronted with one's own regional problems. Only then can one speak of intact federal structures. However, the intense discussion about Swiss federalism reveals weak points in the effective formulation of this principle. This is obvious precisely in the *discussion of goals*: regional independence should be expressed by the genuine discovery of goals which are formally guaranteed by means of the existing development concepts, but in fact can only be guaranteed for the smaller part. The formulation of the goals of numerous development concepts appear too uniform, not to suspect a lack of political discussion within the region, and an over-strong influence of professional planners unfamiliar with the region: thus, the demand for the most intensive discussion possible of goals within the region is justified, even if there are dangers. For example, one-sided power structures can also lead to one-sided goals. Consideration of one's own (narrow) space often fails to take into account the intentions of neighbouring areas and the Confederation. To sum up: regional policy goals in Switzerland meet with general consensus at the

abstract level. As a rule this hides the unusually large complexity and ambition of these goals :

Complexity with regard to the areas of policy that have to be taken into consideration and have a direct or indirect effect on space;

Complexity with regard to the areas of disparity and the importance of their range;

Complexity with regard to the reference to space.

A high ambition is the result of the long-term nature of the demand and the necessity to include all supporters involved in policy strategy. This becomes especially clear in the demand for vertical cooperation in the community during the discussion of goals and after establishing the goals on the regional level. This does not just necessitate a complex need for consensus on the basis of specific goals and strategies; what appears more important is that regional policy is unable to avoid this mechanism but does not want to acknowledge it in a planning system with no political impact. A precondition necessary for the power to carry out any policy is a sufficiently strong clientele. As a result, it is precisely in the discussion of goals and strategies that there is not a lack of high-minded rhetorical games but simply of the creation of powerful coalitions (Ganser, 1978).

We have seen that the goals of regional policy are very comprehensive and territorial. They also contain the basic objectives of a "bottom-up" development: the full development of a region's natural resources and human skills by the region itself, the search for an integrated economic circuit within less-developed regions and the region's own definition of development goals (Stoehr and Taylor, 1981).

The above-mentioned territorial and "bottom-up" aspects of regional development not only look for a decentralisation of decision-making in economic, political and cultural questions as a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition, but they also contain alternative criteria for factor allocation, for commodity exchange, specific forms of social and economic organization and the respect for great diversity of value systems and aspiration. Without a certain regional identity, without regional self-reliance, which also requires a certain degree of self-finance and self-government, the ambitious goals of regional policy cannot be achieved. Of course, these principles are in sharp contrast to actual "top-down" tendencies. To recall two examples: the role of multiregional and transnational enterprises, which are not controlled by any territorial power, and the tendency of power centralisation in the political system, which leads, as a rule, to dependency of local and regional authorities. We can also take aspects of Swiss regional policy itself, which not only includes certain aspects of functionality and "top-down" but also contains the growth centre concept to a certain degree, which suggests the spatial diffusion of economic growth and development by one or more centres. The developmental role of growth centres involves the simultaneous filtering of innovations and the spreading of the benefits accruing from the result-



ing growth, from core to hinterland regions and within these regions from their metropolitan centres outwards to the intermetropolitan periphery. This growth centre doctrine is technically deficient, because the way it describes growth *down* the urban hierarchy is a too mechanic view.

Another remark on regional policy itself is that nearly every public duty and policy has effects both in the sectoral-functional and territorial dimensions. From the sectoral-functional point of view the goals of regional policy are of little priority, because more specific goals are wanted. Yet, these sectoral policies have effects on the spatial organisations and regional disparities. As a rule the territorial perspective has no chance to influence sectoral-functional policies, because the vertical and horizontal coordination-mechanism is too weak (Bästlein and Konukiewitz, 1980).

Regional policy as a comprehensive policy is a very ambitious and long-term affair which bears seeds of failure within itself. In Switzerland and in many other countries one finds a policy with a dominant territorial and "bottom-up" approach. However, this approach contains a technical, and an ideological base, which is undermined by stronger functional and "top-down" influences. Furthermore, these confrontations are the background for implementation problems in this sort of regional policy. "Bottom-up" development would then require a control of negative effects of "top-down" development with dominant functional forces. This would require the creation of dynamic development impulses within peripheral regions. Regional policy with this normative orientation would therefore need to combine elements of what Hirschmann (1958, 199) called advantage of separatism and of integration: "If only we could in some respect treat a region as though it were a country and in some others treat a country as though it were a region, we would indeed get the best of both worlds and be able to create situations particularly favorable to development." The question is whether and how this is possible.

#### **4. Some propositions for the regional policy of the eighties**

Regional policy is not merely a complex, but also a long-term business. It is only possible to score a success after five to ten years, and changes in trends perhaps only after 30 years. However, every policy is forced into actions of the shortest term possible owing to the usual pressure for successful actions which may not seem very sensible from a long-term point of view. In contrast to this approach regional policy requires as continual a strategy as possible, which also finds its concrete expression in the financial and institutional area of politics. From this point of view what has been achieved should not be questioned, but it should be developed further in a consistent manner.

The theoretical discussion in Hanser (1981) supports the idea of the necessity for a collection of measures as varied yet as consistent as possible. These should be addressed to various destinations (particularly households, business, factories and communities). This would not only make it

possible for a more flexible reaction to various circumstances, but it would also enable a strengthening of vertical and especially horizontal coordination with other policy areas in affected regions. The collection of measures should therefore be made up of three parts of equal value: points of departure for regional policy; active coordination with other policy areas relevant to regions; neutralization of the regional effectiveness of other policy areas. What Hanser's statement basically means for regional policy is an extension of the space reference to the whole of Switzerland; hence, the inclusion of the large agglomerations in the calculation of regional planning policy.

In Section Three a discussion of goals has made it clear that regions are not just areas for exploitation but also areas for living and making, whatever their situation. This means that they should be developed as areas of identification. The preliminary conditions for this are economic, cultural and political opportunities to participate, along with the corresponding offers to participate. They can only promote partial sovereignty which is the preliminary condition for a healthy federalism. Hirschmann (1958) has already referred to the desirable linking of the advantages of regional sovereignty and of national integration. Stöer's (1981a) idea of a "selective independence" is a further development of this argument. Therefore a development strategy "from within" or "bottom-up" is needed not only from a regional policy point of view but also for reasons of national state policy. It certainly cannot be realized without measures of support from the Confederation. What has to be found is the best intermixed relationship between central and decentral elements in regional policy; in the perspective of regional policy this should impose the maximum duty to provide subsidies. These stimulating offers, with accompanying "top-down" knowledge, will mobilize endogenous "bottom-up" resources.

The formula of "selective independence" coined by Stöehr (1981b) is undoubtedly very attractive for Switzerland with its federal state structure and its previous experience in regional policy. Yet, the idea also requires special interpretation. The following adaptation would appear feasible: it is just as important to strive for a normative creativity and independence on the regional level as for an increased availability of resources to realize and materialize the relevant concepts.

The use of endogenous potential in the interests of the region itself naturally concerns human, institutional, business and financial resources, but the catchword "financial transfers" proves that a corresponding "top-down" support is essential. The optimum combination between regional sovereignty and national integration that is sought, is normally described with the norm "solidarity", and it is seldom concretely defined (Hebbert, 1981). In this connection, there are at least two criteria from the regional policy point of view: minimum demands on the quality of regional development concepts, their execution, and horizontal coordination mechanisms for the harmonization of regional and cantonal promotion efforts.

A "bottom-up" strategy or respectively "from within" requires the

creation of endogenous growth processes: Inner-regional cycles and inter-weaving, in the sense of forward-and-reverse-linkage effects. However, division of work and function is essential within functional regions which are sufficiently balanced. At any rate such complementarities should pre-eminently be promoted regionally and not nationally.

As for Switzerland, three further characteristics of such a strategy appear especially important; it promotes existing potential, and is designed to create employment, while striving for the best possible configuration of settlements:

– The need for an innovation-oriented strategy in regional policy is rarely questioned today (Brugger, 1980). What is sought is an increasing innovation in the endogenous production apparatus. This can refer to production, market orientation or organizational and planning matters. In the centre of the idea are production factors of capital organizations and know-how. What is implied by this idea is an increased trend to high-value services, to the demand side in the economic cycle, and to a specific policy oriented towards employment.

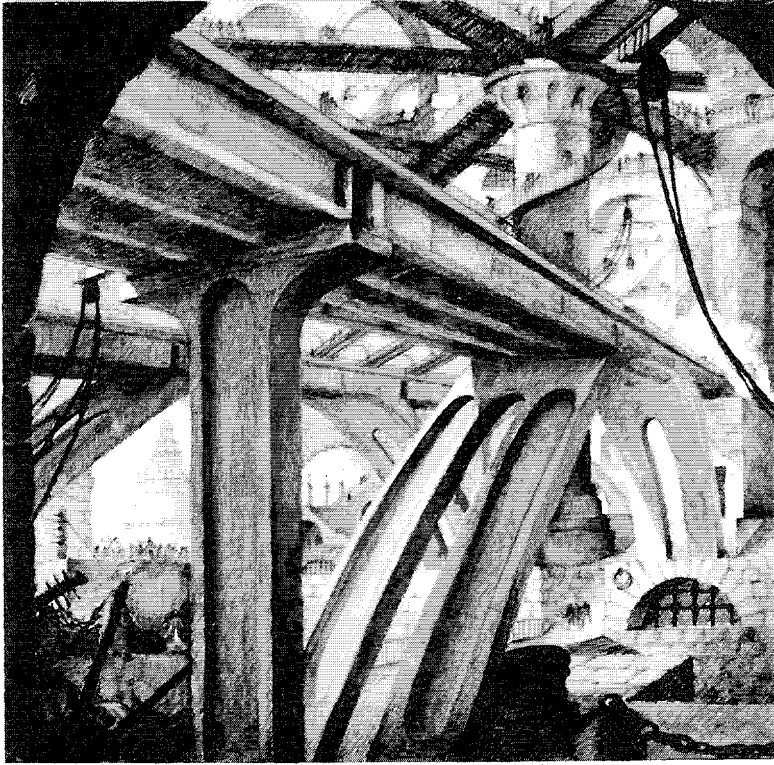
– Such a regional policy, oriented towards employment aims at the labour market goal and accordingly demands the maintenance, revaluation and creation of jobs in the regions being promoted (Scharpf, 1980). It is selective in that it concentrates on small and medium firms as well as on the promotion of high-value jobs linked to innovative activities. It is oriented towards supply and demand, in that it promotes training and further education, re-training and market transparency, especially within functional labour market regions.

– A favourable configuration of settlements would appear essential for such a strategy, in order to be able to provide business and households with the necessary and sufficient infrastructure services within sufficient reach and at comparatively low costs. Accordingly, it would appear necessary to have a certain amount of decentralism oriented towards development, especially if this means that backward-effects can be strengthened. This potential conflict is certainly dependent on the accessibility of the centre from within the region, which gets great priority within the framework of such a strategy.

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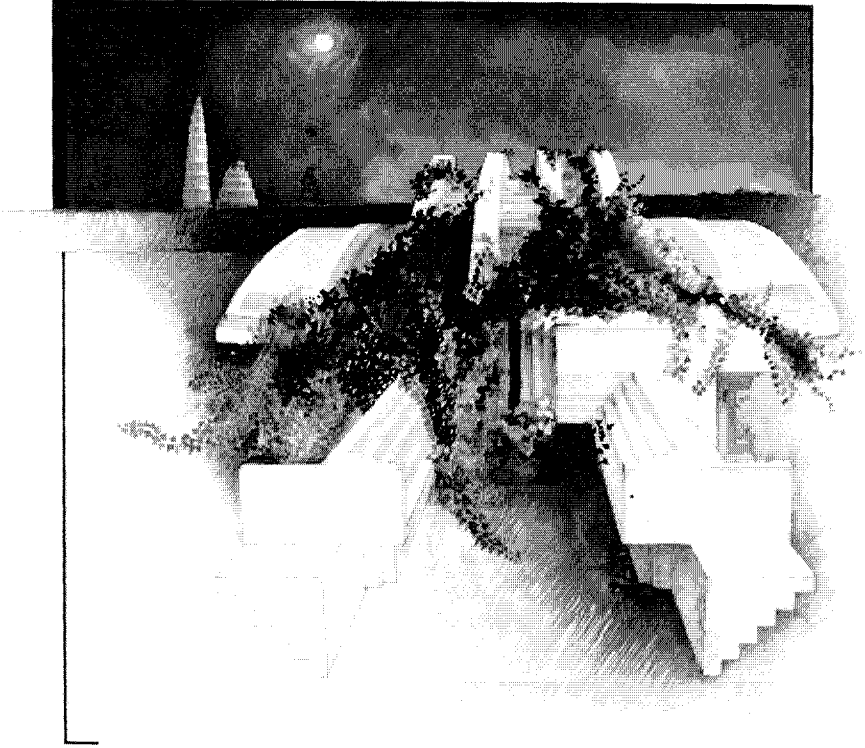
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*"Per me si va..."*. Repères: G. Macchi & S. Zorzi: Pont autoroutier, Incisa (1963); G.B. Piranese: Planche VI et VII des "Carceri" (1760-61); G.B. Piranese: Planche "Mausoleo" (1770-78).

*"Per me si va..."*. Sources: G. Macchi & S. Zorzi: Motorway Bridge, Incisa (1963); G.B. Piranese: Table VI and VII of the "Carceri" (1760-61); G.B. Piranese: Table "Mausoleo" (1770-78).



*Petrarca*. Repères : C. Scarpa : Mausoleo Brion, San Vito di Altivole (1969-72).

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