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From Nationalization to Neo-Liberalism: Economic Policies and Urban Questions in South Italy

ABSTRACT

Italy is one of Europe's four largest economies and a member of the G8 council of leading economic powers. However, some economic commentators argue that Italy's political influence internationally remains limited because of the economic drag factor of the less prosperous South.

Drawing on ethnographic data collected in Brindisi, this article offers a diachronic analysis of the different policies aimed at solving the so-called Southern Question. It links the local dimension and regional economic policies to national processes and to wider programmes of global restructuring, focusing on the impact of more recent EU policies and the creation of Euro-Regions.

Advocates of the free market and those who see globalization as "encoded within the values of economic liberalism" argue that such restructuring can be enormously beneficial to South-Italian economy for it brings about competitive approaches in a "milieu" often prone to protectionist practices.

Moving beyond the long-established approach that opposes the impersonal relations of the "market" to the personalized exchanges of so-called traditional societies, the analysis takes into account the significance of the interaction between economic, political and cultural aspects in the reformulation of local strategies to attract development funding in the context of shifting administrative and political power.