

For further information refer to:

Fondazione G. Brodolini

Via Goito, 39 - 00185 Rome

Tel. +39 06/44249625 Fax: +39 06/44249565

economialavoro@fondazionebrodolini.it

Contents

THE ECONOMY OF TERRITORIES BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND COHESION POLICIES: THE CASE OF INNER AREAS

Luisa Corazza, *Introduction. Inner Areas as a National Issue*

Giuliano Resce, *Inner Areas and Territorial Cohesion Policies*

Nicola Caravaggio, Antonella Rancan, *Inner Areas, from the “Pulp” to the “Bone”: Institutional and Economic Challenges*

Emilio Cameli, Carlo Lallo, Cecilia Tomassini, Giuseppe Di Felice, *When It Rains, It Pours: How Employment Sheds Light on Elderly Dependency in Inner Areas*

Federico Benassi, Salvatore Strozza, *Children of a Lesser God: Foreign Citizens and Inner Areas in Italy*

Luca Di Salvatore, *Inner Areas and Local Labour Markets*

Luisa Corazza, *Let No Place Be Too Remote. Review of Lento pede. Vivere nell'Italia estrema. Una ricerca sul campo Edited by Domenico Cersosimo and Sabina Licursi*

ESSAYS

Līga Baltiņa, Emily Erickson, Terence Hogarth, *Re-thinking Europe's Skill Needs: Reflections following the European Year of Skills*

Lucia Coppola, Isabella Siciliani, Paola Tanda, *Women's Employment and Childcare in Italy*

BOOK REVIEWS

L. Corazza, *Il lavoro delle donne? Una questione redistributiva* (by Annalisa Rosselli)

G. Bonifati, C. Guardiano, *La lingua come sistema e come artefatto. L'emergenza delle relazioni generative nelle attività innovative* (by Federica Rossi)

NOTES ON PUBLICATIONS

by the Editorial Staff

Abstracts

INNER AREAS AND TERRITORIAL COHESION POLICIES

Giuliano Resce

This essay examines the role of cohesion policies in reducing territorial inequalities within the European Union, with particular focus on Italy's inner areas. After tracing the economic roots of territorial disparities, it explores the evolution and instruments of European cohesion policy, offering a critical assessment of their empirical effectiveness. Particular attention is given to the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), regarded as one of the most advanced experiments in place-based and bottom-up policy making. The available evidence suggests initial, though limited, positive outcomes, constrained by structural weaknesses such as institutional fragility, limited administrative capacity, and the prevalence of localistic and short-term political incentives. The essay further develops a critical reflection on the current multilevel governance framework, showing how excessive local discretion, in the absence of adequate institutional conditions, can undermine the allocative effectiveness of interventions. Finally, it highlights the need to strengthen strategic coordination, selection criteria, and technical support mechanisms, reaffirming the central government's role in setting priorities, overseeing implementation, and supporting territories with weaker administrative capacities.

Keywords: European cohesion policy, Italian inner areas, multilevel governance.

INNER AREAS, FROM THE “PULP” TO THE “BONE”: INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Nicola Caravaggio, Antonella Rancan

The article offers a reflection on the state of the art of cohesion policies and their effectiveness in revitalising Italy's inner areas. The first part examines the underlying vision of the economic development policies for the southern part of Italy in the early 1950s, highlighting elements of continuity with current experiences. In the second part, the focus shifts to the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). With a few exceptions that analyse the short and long-term effects of SNAI policies, the economic literature has so far focused mainly on sectoral interventions, specific territories and regions, or individual experiences, such as intermunicipal cooperation. What is still missing is a comprehensive analysis of the main strategies and tools adopted by SNAI, including both national and European funding, in relation to the criteria for resource allocation and the short and long-term economic goals. The present paper aims to fill that gap by examining the criteria used to identify pilot areas and to allocate public funds, as well as the design and, in some cases, the implementation of labour market and local development policies envisaged by SNAI.

Keywords: National Strategy for Inner Areas, place-based policy, SVIMEZ, Italy, economic development.

WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS: HOW EMPLOYMENT SHEDS LIGHT ON ELDERLY DEPENDENCY IN INNER AREAS

Emilio Cameli, Carlo Lallo, Cecilia Tomassini, Giuseppe Di Felice

The Elderly Dependency Ratio (EDR) is a demographic indicator that measures the relative weight of the elderly population (aged 65 and over) compared with the working-age population (15-64 years). It is used to assess the potential economic and social burden that the elderly may represent for the working-age population, based on the assumption that the entire working-age population is actually employed and generating income, and that all over-65s are inactive, and therefore recipients, rather than contributors, of welfare system resources. In reality, this double assumption is increasingly less valid: on the one hand, a significant share of young people and adults of working age are not employed; on the other hand, many elderly individuals remain active beyond the age of 65, or, conversely, leave the workforce well before reaching that age threshold. The distortion produced by these discrepancies is particularly significant in the Italian context, characterised by the progressive concentration of the elderly population in increasingly depopulated “inner areas”, where the actual ratio between the working and non-working population is far worse off than what the EDR suggests. In these areas, improving both the quantity and quality of the employed population aged 15 to 64 becomes essential to prevent the decline of the intergenerational transfer system. This article advances an innovative approach to the analysis of elderly dependency by increasing the level of granularity at the municipal level and by incorporating economic dimensions into the classical demographic indicator. Specifically, a new Effective Elderly Dependency Indicator (EEDI) is introduced, which relates the over-65 population solely to the employed population. The percentage difference between the EEDI and the EDR then serves as a measure of demographic inefficiency in the equilibrium of intergenerational transfers – namely, the additional dependency burden arising from the inactivity of a population that is demographically of working age. Furthermore, a linear regression analysis is applied to estimate the extent to which unemployment and voluntary inactivity among the non-employed contribute to this demographic inefficiency. The findings reveal pronounced territorial disparities. In the southern inner areas, characterised by severe depopulation and over-aging, not only is the gap between the EDR and the EEDI larger, but the explanatory power of the unemployment rate is also weaker, pointing to challenges of a more structural nature – when it rains, it pours. These findings suggest that, in southern regions and inner areas, it is necessary to implement investment policies that are external to the mechanisms of the labour market (e.g., incentives, tax breaks, or contribution reliefs), with a view to revitalising entire local productive sectors, re-engaging discouraged workers, and improving infrastructure and public services.

Keywords: inner areas, Effective Old-Age Dependency Ratio, demographic inefficiency, intergenerational transfers, unemployment.

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD: FOREIGN CITIZENS AND INNER AREAS IN ITALY

Federico Benassi, Salvatore Strozza

The contribution reflects on certain aspects related to the presence of foreign citizens in Italy's inner areas. The analysis focuses on a comparison between these areas and urban centres, addressing various aspects of a highly debated topic – the presence of foreigners in “minor” contexts –, which, to the best of our knowledge, has been little studied in quantitative terms. After a descriptive section that quantifies the foreign presence in inner areas, and reconstructs its profile based on regions of origin and key demographic characteristics, the study shifts to analysing the settlement geographies of specific communities. In the second part, using appropriate multivariate analysis models, the study examines the determinants of foreign presence localisation, distinguishing between inner areas and urban centres, as well as across Italy's three macro-regions: North, Centre, and South. The findings help to refine and, in some cases, empirically verify well-known aspects, while also shedding light on unexpected heterogeneities.

Keywords: local demography, foreign citizens, inner areas, territory, Italy.

INNER AREAS AND LOCAL LABOUR MARKETS

Luca Di Salvatore

To address the stark inequalities in local labour markets, focusing solely on labour policies in the strict sense is not enough; effective public policies for industrial development and territorial cohesion are also indispensable. The role of territories in labour market dynamics cannot be overlooked, given the complex interactions among all elements of the local productive fabric. This essay therefore aims to investigate whether, and how, collaboration among enterprises can affect local labour markets and, in particular, whether the so-called “network contract” can represent a tool capable of regenerating the “territorial capital” of inner areas, chiefly by increasing employment opportunities.

Keywords: local labour markets, inner areas, network contract.

LET NO PLACE BE TOO REMOTE. REVIEW OF *LENTO PEDE. VIVERE NELL'ITALIA ESTREMA. UNA RICERCA SUL CAMPO* EDITED BY DOMENICO CERSOSIMO AND SABINA LICURSI

Luisa Corazza

The review of the volume *Lento pede. Vivere nell'Italia estrema. Una ricerca sul campo* retraces the themes addressed in the book, aiming to highlight its core message: to restore a voice to Calabria's inner areas within the broader narrative and in the discussion of issues affecting local communities. Through the analysis of individual chapters, which focus on the key themes of the fragility featured by such inner areas, the review also reveals a distinct strength of "endurance" in this part of Italy, described as "extremely remote".

Keywords: Calabria, inner areas, education, citizenship.

RE-THINKING EUROPE'S SKILL NEEDS: REFLECTIONS FOLLOWING THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS

Līga Baltiņa, Emily Erickson, Terence Hogarth

Skills have remained central to EU policy making, with recent initiatives emphasising the need for a more demand-driven and future-oriented skills strategy. The EU's Union of Skills initiative aims to address labour and skills gaps through investment in lifelong learning, skills retention, and certification. Reports such as the Draghi Report (2024) highlight skills shortages as a key barrier to economic competitiveness, advocating for stronger skills anticipation and alignment with labour market needs. While previous EU skills agendas have attempted to address these challenges, mismatches persist, exacerbated by digital and green transitions. This paper explores the historical context of EU skills policy, the evolving nature of skills shortages, and the challenges of ensuring effective skills utilisation. It also examines the broader implications of demographic shifts and labour market inequalities, emphasising the need for an approach that balances skills supply, demand, and utilisation.

Keywords: EU skills policy, skills shortages, labour market mismatches, digital transition, green transition, lifelong learning, human capital, competitiveness, workforce development, skills utilisation.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND CHILDCARE IN ITALY

Lucia Coppola, Isabella Siciliani, Paola Tanda

This study explores women's employment and availability of childcare in Italy by using multi-level logistic regression analysis on combined data from the Labour Force Survey and the Survey on Social Actions and Services of Single and Associated Municipalities. The results show a positive association between childcare availability and mothers' employment probability. Potential outcomes of policy interventions are analysed: the current employment probability (55.4%) would increase by 1.8 percentage points (p.p.), reaching the Barcelona EU target of childcare services, and by 2.4 p.p. under the most pessimistic scenario with National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) investments. The results underline the role of childcare policies in promoting women's employment and gender equality.

Keywords: women's employment, childcare services, family-work reconciliation policy.