

Antinomies of Economic Development in Italy

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*The North/South Divide and the
Role of the Ruling Class*

By

Marco Santillo

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PREFACE

BY AMEDEO LEPORE

From the Southern Question to the resumption of a Europe-wide development

The “problem of Southern Italy”, as Giuseppe Galasso called it, not only has changed its shape, experiencing a substantial evolution compared with the first postwar decades, while becoming the sandbox for several studies and analyses, including international ones. Such a change has been affected by the variations in the geo-economic context between two completely different scenarios, as well as the trends of economic cycles over eighty years and the significant productive transformations at the basis of a twofold industrial revolution focused on the emergence of increasingly disruptive and innovative technologies. The contribution made by scholars to such a perspective has been remarkable, starting with the rediscovery of the role of the «Cassa per il Mezzogiorno», as researches have been undertaken for about fifteen years now, something which has allowed a significant progress in both the historiography and in the expansion of the tools and information available, as well as concerning the start of the current comparisons.

During the timeline of Republican Italy, the way of looking at Southern Italy changed, above all, and it was observed as a part of a European, if not global, perspective. The development gap was no longer considered a simple dichotomy between the North and South of the country, but was rather included within the framework of global economic dynamics.

The scenario at the end of World War Two, saw Italy as fully ready to enter the fray and take up the challenge of total modernization once its reconstruction was complete. The turning point came with a very clever public intervention policy, which succeeded in proposing a new growth paradigm for the Southern regions of the country. Such initiative was centred on agrarian reform and extraordinary interventions. Through the use of a sort of “supply-side Keynesianism”, based on widespread investments and an original process of productive accumulation, it was

possible to give impetus to the Italian “economic miracle” while addressing the economic dualism between the areas of the country with a uniquely effective catching up, which ended up being the only period of convergence for the whole history of unitary Italy.

Within the most recent scenario, after a persistent age of crisis that began with the oil shocks, which in turn triggered an economic decline in Italy as a whole despite some moments of recovery, the effects of the collapse of 2008-2014, together with the closures caused by the COVID pandemic have weighed heavily on the possibilities of a general recovery and a significant reduction in the gap between the North and the South of the country. Yet, it was exactly this period of turbulence that has imposed the need for a broader and more open view of the problems, connecting the Southern and Italian issues to the globalization scenario and to the conditions of an economic process that can no longer be confined within exclusively national borders. As a matter of fact, this last phase has significantly featured the connection between area-based issues and a complex, interdependent and increasingly swift context has strongly emerged – beyond the changing circumstances of globalization itself, which has gone from identifying with neoliberalism to the articulation of a world organized as an “archipelago”. Within such a context, the twin digital and environmental transition, together with the origin of an unprecedented revolution of intelligent machines and the change in the geo-economic structure of the Earth as a whole have placed the dilemma of Southern Italy and its development in a completely original position.

Therefore, also the activity of the researchers and, in particular, of economic historians has taken on some innovative features as it has not only explored the main contradictions and opportunities of Italian economic evolution, but has also linked the national perspective of the analyses to the dynamics of the capitalist system at an international level, in an era full of structural transformations. The re-evaluation of the role of the «Cassa per il Mezzogiorno», in the light of the documentation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development - as the World Bank was called at the time - has opened up a new horizon of research, of great use for the exegesis of economic and institutional facts in post-war Italy and Europe. Furthermore, the study of the Cassa has allowed to start a fruitful reflection on the importance of an organization capable of anticipating growth strategies and verifying their possible use in other underdeveloped areas of the world, therefore achieving a significant contribution in terms of economic theory as well.

Of course, Marco Santillo belongs to this group of economic historians performing a different kind of scientific activity compared with the past, as they strive to focus on both qualitative and quantitative sources and methods of investigation, without prejudice, bias or abstract choices whatsoever. The latter behaviour does often feature a lack of courage in experimenting with innovative paths or in using distinct methodologies and contents that are able to coexist within a single synthesis effort. On the contrary, the pluralism and interdisciplinarity of economic history should lead to improved flexibility and a juxtaposition of research methods, which would in turn further enrich its ability to interpret not only past events, but also to fully position itself among the most appropriate tools for understanding the current context and predicting its evolution. Belonging to an open and inclusive discipline is indeed the main feature of such an approach to history, especially economic history, focused on trying to expand the boundaries of the subject, while offering both creative stimuli and original ideas for research.

Furthermore, this book by Marco Santillo has been published as the culmination of a long commitment dedicated, in several places and on several occasions, to the history of the gap between North and South and the role of the ruling classes in Southern Italy. These issues, which until now have been dealt with separately, are appropriately unified in this work, constituting precise antinomies of Italian economic development, but also representing the two main aspects of the indispensable renewed attention to the solution of the “Southern question” understood both as a national and an European problem. The book begins with an extensive introduction, focused on describing the historical economic methodology used for the analysis of socio-economic imbalances and the function of the ruling class for recovering the internal gap in Italy. These pages show both the author's passion for the South and his rigorous interest in the economic events considered on the basis of a scientific approach. From an epistemological point of view, the distinction between at least three approaches can be seen – namely the historical-evolutionary one, the one linked to the dynamics of poverty and the trend showing and explaining specific skills on an area-based scale – something very appealing, especially when it comes to the examination of economic disparities, particularly if applied to the case of Southern Italy and its historical backwardness. Within such a context, the role of the State, which in the Fordist-Keynesian model took the lead in development processes, becomes central once again.

The instances of historiographical exegesis on the causes of the Italian gap, while providing a plethora of studies on the diversity in the trends of growth between the two parts of Italy, showed a generally shared orientation on the structural nature of the gaps in Southern Italy and on its long roots, which could not arise directly from the process of the *Belpaese's* national unification. Starting from this observation, Marco Santillo aims to precisely describe the trend of divergence between Southern Italy and the rest of the country during the long post-war period, including the economic highs and lows that characterised the Republican era. This examination focuses on the boost provided by public intervention to the spread of the industrial apparatus both at a national level and, starting from 1957, considering the less developed areas of the South.

The other cornerstone of the book, as it may be inferred, is the focus on the tasks and on the behaviours of the ruling classes and, more generally speaking, to the training and endowment of human capital in the Southern Regions. Such is the author's favourite topic, and he rightly considers it inextricably linked to the evaluation of the economic aspects of the Northern-Southern gap, strongly influencing its worsening or improvement by means of economic policy decisions and the development thereof in terms of both a reference and a direction for institutions, businesses and civil society at large.

The main body of the text is subdivided into four parts. The first of them focuses the framework of the backwardness of Southern Italy in a broad historical reconstruction, starting from the origins of the problem and the South-focused debate before the establishment of the IRI, the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, up to the post-World War II period, all the while acting with the full knowledge of the facts useful in solving the strategic issue of the advent of the State as an entrepreneur in Southern Italy. The second deals with IRI's industrial policy and the choices made in the period between the two world wars, concluding with an examination of the initiatives undertaken immediately after the end of the last conflict, which led to the establishment, first and foremost, of the Centro economico italiano per il Mezzogiorno (CEIM, from its Italian acronym), the Italian Economic Centre for Southern Italy and, shortly afterwards, of SVIMEZ. The third part is focused on the analysis of «new Meridionalism» as a *trait d'union*, both theoretical and practical in nature, between the main instigators of the «Cassa per il Mezzogiorno» and modern industrialisation in the Southern areas of Italy, capable of creating an institutional framework to support actions for the South as a whole. The fourth chapter illustrates the different moments of the extraordinary intervention,

emphasising, within this itinerary, the beginnings of a trend reversal in the policies of productive growth that culminated in the golden age and the progress of a decline in the original design of the Cassa with its transition towards welfare-oriented choices. The book ends with two previously unpublished writings by Pasquale Saraceno and Guglielmo Tagliacarne, which belong to the author's preferred historical research, as they deal with the subject of the territorial gap and the actual results of the extraordinary intervention. Such contributions are followed by a wealth of both archival and bibliographic sources, something that shows the significant effort towards providing in-depth information.

Therefore, this book is a considerably useful reflection, not only thanks to the synthesis it offers of a long and complicated evolution of the gap between the North and the South of Italy, of the Southern question and its essential connections, without forgetting the ability to reconcile methodological ideas, conceptual aspects and the actual dynamics of the Italian economy. The author shows that he is able to move between the history of thought and that of economic facts, focusing on a subject that by no means is niche, nor the province of a restricted circle of experts, as shown by the many publications that are appearing during this phase, also on an international level, by young researchers. His merit is that he provides a well-considered text, the result of a constant exchange of ideas and the participation in a common endeavour of a group of scholars, avoiding isolated or solipsistic positions. Furthermore, he manages to suitably juxtapose a series of events from the not too distant past and a full-fledged understanding of the directions taken by the economic history of Southern Italy and the judicious use of a series of study tools capable of grasping the dilemmas of the country nowadays as well. The book as a whole is fully capable of opening and explaining and unpacking an intricate path, by drawing a clear line between the evaluation of the "Southern Italy" as it was during the postwar period, as well as during the affirmation of an issue being undoubtedly European nature. Such a long-term historical view allows us to address the issue of the prevalence of divergence phenomena in the relationship between Northern and Southern Italy, while also learning from the lesson of the "economic miracle" and the redemption of Southern Italy during the first twenty years of the activity of the Cassa, a period when the gap narrowed significantly and consistently. Both the context of the period of extraordinary intervention and the tool chosen to thrust forwards the modernisation of the South cannot be proposed again, given their distance, both from the current framework and from the connections actually offered by a world undergoing radical transformations. However, the recovery policies

marked by the launch of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan have once again placed the issue of the development of Southern Italy at the centre of the government's initiative, within a European and, even more, within an international framework.

As a matter of fact, due to its never-tackled weaknesses, this area has not only suffered the repercussions of the international crisis, but has also shown a capacity for resilience and innovation, ending up taking on a role of experimentation for original recovery policies, as happened after World War Two. The objective of overcoming Italy's historical economic and territorial dualism is now a common necessity, something we must quickly become fully aware of if we want to ensure a future with both growth and progress for the entire country. In any case, this goal must be pursued through the buildup of a new consciousness and the construction of a robust action within the European scenario and the community institutions. Only in this way will it be possible to restore unity and strength to the development strategies that are indispensable for the near future. This intense, research-oriented book by Marco Santillo contributes to the debate on these topics and fosters solid hopes on the possibility of a perspective of real change, both for Southern Italy and for the country as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Research drivers: a historical-economic approach

The theme of socio-economic disparities and imbalances, especially the ones that have been growing on a territorial basis, has always lent itself to several explanatory keys, themselves the result of different scientific declinations built up during particular historical phases and within different cultural contexts. In this sense, the historical-economic methodology represents, due to its peculiarities, a precious tool to focus its analysis diachronically, in order to investigate the triggering causes thereof, to highlight the conflicts and social traumas generated by them, but also to assess the forms of intervention and policies considered as the most suitable towards achieving a progressive rebalancing from time to time.

While the methods for measuring and assessing the gaps are essentially based on the retrieval, study and processing of statistical indices and other socio-economic indicators, from the point of view of literature, in addition to economic sociologists¹ and development economists, as well as public intervention within the economy², it has mainly been economic historians who have delved into the subject matter more extensively.³

¹ Among the founding texts of the 'new economic sociology', the following may very well be mentioned: K. Polanyi, M. Granovetter, *Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness*, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91, No. 3, November 1985, pp. 481-511. According to the theory of *embeddedness*, which is linked to that of neo-institutionalism, all economies are embedded, i.e. incorporated, in the system of social relations. In Italy, economic sociology is headed by the scholars gathered under the SISEC (*Società Italiana di Sociologia Economica, the Italian Society of Economic Sociology*), and in the context of an extensive literature, see, for all: L. Gallino, *Indagini di sociologia economica*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milan 1962; G. De Rita, *La condizione del Mezzogiorno - ieri, oggi e domani - vista da un sociologo*, in "Quaderno Informazioni Svimez" issue 16 - Collana Saraceno no. 3, June 2002.

² Within a wealth of international literature on the topic, the first pioneering studies by the following authors should be noted: P. Rosenstein-Rodan, *The International Development of Economically Backward Areas*, in 'International Affairs', vol. 20, no. 2/1944; F. Perroux, *Economic Space: Theory and Application*, in 'Quarterly Journal of Economics', no. 64/1950; H. Leibenstein, *Economic backwardness and*

While acknowledging the prevalence of economic orientations in the literature, we believe that a full understanding of such a kaleidoscopic phenomenon as the gaps between Northern and Southern Italy, to which, moreover, that of downgrading and poverty (both absolute and perceived) should be associated, requires an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach able to take historical, economic, social and overall cultural analyses into account. To such tools, some inputs from psychosocial analysis should be added as well, since every process involving human beings, especially the ones including poverty, feature a vital psychological element⁴.

economic growth: studies in the theory of economic development, Chapman & Hall, London 1957; R. Nurske, *Equilibrium and Growth in the World Economy*, in "Journal of the Royal Statistical Society", vol. 125, no.3/1962; W. Rostow, *The process of economic growth*, Norton, New York 1962; A. Hirschman, *The strategy of economic development*, Norton & Company, London 1978. More recent studies include: A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, University Press, Oxford 2001; D. Acemoglu, J. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, Crown Publisher, New York 2012; J. Stiglitz, *The Great Divide. Unequal Societies and What We Can Do About Them*, London, Allen 2015; M. Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths*, Penguin Books, London 2018; A. Kërçuku, *Forgotten Italy: Spaces and Identities of a changing geography*, Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning, 6 (1), 2022.

³ As far as Italy is concerned, see the studies by: P. Saraceno, *La mancata unificazione economica italiana a cento anni dalla unificazione politica*, in *L'economia italiana dal 1861 al 1961*. Studi nel centenario dell'Unità d'Italia, vol. VI, Giuffrè, Milan 1961; R. Villari (ed.), *Il Sud nella storia d'Italia*, vol. II, Laterza, Bari 1966; G. Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia. Lineamenti di storia meridionale e due momenti di storia regionale*, Le Monnier, Florence 1977; A. Del Monte-A. Giannola, *Il Mezzogiorno nell'economia italiana*, il Mulino, Bologna 1978. More recent are the studies by: V. Daniele, P. Malanima, *Il prodotto delle regioni e il divario Nord-Sud in Italia (1861-2004)*, in "Rivista di Politica Economica", March-April 2007; A. Brandolini, C. Saraceno, *Poverty and Welfare. Una geografia delle disuguaglianze in Italia*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2007; E. Ritrovato, *I divari regionali nel Mezzogiorno nei primi venti anni dell'intervento straordinario*, in "Rivista Economica del Mezzogiorno", no. 3/2010; 2015, E. Felice, A. Lepore, *Colmare il divario, in La convergenza possibile*, edited by E. Felice, A. Lepore, S. Palermo, il Mulino, Bologna; A. Lepore, *Il dualismo economico e sociale: una condanna storica?*, in A. Lepore, G. Pittella, *Scusate il ritardo. Una proposta per il Mezzogiorno d'Europa*, Donzelli, Rome 2015.

⁴ For all, see: C. Ranci, *Vulnerabilità sociale e nuove disuguaglianze sociali*, in «Sociologia del lavoro», 110/2008, pp. 161-171; S. Marzadro, A. Schizzerotto, L. Vergolini, *Classi sociali o gruppi multidimensionali? Come rappresentare le*

Considering all of the above, we were able to enucleate at least three types of approach to the study of socio-economic inequalities⁵. The first of them, which we could categorise as *evolutionary-historical*, starts from an analysis of old and new inequalities, leading to a wide-ranging analysis of the phenomena of vulnerability, exclusion and sometimes downgrading. A second orientation, which may be defined as *poverty dynamics*, studies the phenomena of backwardness and poverty in evolutionary terms, which means, first of all conceptualising them no longer as a permanent state but as transitory episodes in an interval of variable duration. A third, more innovative approach (called *capability approach*) starts from the consideration that the gaps are not measurable only in material terms, but also on the basis of the actual possibility for individuals to pursue their own life projects thanks to the *capabilities* they possess. Within such an exegetical key, the role of public subjects unquestionably takes the centre stage⁶.

Based on these epistemological premises, we believe it is useful to critically reconsider what has been, and still is, the gap par excellence in the Italian experience, namely that between the North and the South of the country.

The study of the causes underlying the socio-economic gaps between Southern Italy and the more advanced areas of the country is a subject of recurrent interest, on which scholars from different scientific and cultural backgrounds have offered a wide range of interpretations over the years. On one hand, the studies with a focus on the topics have shown and documented the fragility of the Southern production system, while on the other hand, they have pointed out the shortcomings of the training system

disuguaglianze sociali nell'Italia di oggi, in «Stato e Mercato», no. 1/2019, pp. 7-40; C. Volpato, *Le radici psicologiche della disuguaglianza*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2021.

⁵ E. Ferragina, *Chi tutto chi niente*, Bur Rizzoli, Milan 2013, pp. 23-24.

⁶ Among the most interesting studies at the international level, see: M. Nussbaum, A. Sen (eds.), *The quality of life*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993; M. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2011; A. Sen, *Collective choice and social welfare*, Penguin Books, London 2017. Interesting lines of research also at the Italian level, including the following studies: U. Arrigo, M. Sordelli, *Alcuni aspetti problematici nel dibattito su "Happiness and Economics"*, XVI Conference of the Società Italiana di Economia Pubblica, Pavia, University, 7-8 October 2004; L. Bruni, P.L. Porta (eds.), 2007, *Economics and Happiness: Framing the Analysis*, University Press, Oxford; S. Zamagni, 2020, *Disuguali. Politics, economics and community: a new look at social injustice*, Aboca, Sansepolcro.

and, more generally, the lack of a real entrepreneurial culture. Together, all such factors have been hindering, or at least delaying, the development of the Mezzogiorno as a whole. However, there has been no shortage of broader interpretative hypotheses, which, while not disregarding the fundamental parameters of an economic nature (traditionally relating to disparities in income levels, to the distribution of the active population in the various economic sectors, to the different spending capacities and hence of the consumption of individuals and of the various social classes), have also made reference to other elements, among which factors such as the «social capital» (as understood by Coleman and Putnam) play an important role; the implementation of a *knowledge-based* training system; the creation of an infrastructural heritage not far from the «technological frontier» (in such cases, the «fixed social capital» may be mentioned).

Historiography has generally taken for a fact that the difficulties in laying the foundations for a self-propulsive economic development of the Mezzogiorno arise from structural phenomena of backwardness, largely predating the unification of Italy⁷. However, the past, quoting Michele Salvati⁸, is not an eternal doom, since institutions, cultures, mentalities and behaviours can be changed – and have changed, indeed - in history, especially where the social, cultural and political milieus of reference have relied on a team, or rather on a ruling class, capable of leading radical innovation processes.

Starting from a reconstruction of the forms, the features and the effective width of this gap in the long time span between unification and the latest decades of the Twentieth Century, the goal of the Authors was to further explore the terms of the North/South divergence in the long phase of *Reconstruction* and the post-World War II period, a phase that, starting from the inauguration of the «Cassa per il Mezzogiorno » (from here on out, CasMez or Cassa as well), going through the two seasons of the

⁷ The studies by Giovanni Federico, based as they were on the total estimation of the traditional production factors (i.e. land, capital, labour and organisation) align with the traditional view of the structural and pre-unification gap between North and South, a view that has been challenged by some studies carried out by Guido Pescosolido and Emanuele Felice, among others. For discussing this debate further, see: G. Federico, *Ma l'agricoltura meridionale era davvero arretrata?*, in *Rivista di politica economica*, no. 97/2007, pp. 317-340; G. Pescosolido, *Unità nazionale e sviluppo economico. 1750-1913*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 1998. E. Felice, *Perché il Sud è rimasto indietro*, il Mulino, Bologna 2013.

⁸ M. Salvati, 2000. *Occasioni mancate. Economia e politica in Italia dagli anni '60 a oggi*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, pp. 22-23.

Golden and Silver age, would then lead to the regressive season of the extraordinary intervention of the 1990s⁹. Within such a long-term perspective, the problems of the *Reconstruction* considering the context of the then-new Italian Republic, the start of the season of the «new Meridionalism», the social transformations due to the Italian economic miracle, the stagflation of the 1970s, the crisis of the Fordist model and the *Washington Consensus*, were all related to the questioning of classical Keynesian demand-promotion policies and the policies of state interventionism dictated by the *Big Push Model* a brainchild of Rosenstein-Rodan.

Referring to the specific Italian case, it is widely agreed in the literature that the public operator played throughout the 20th Century, and to a certain extent also in the late 19th Century, a crucial role in the process of industrialisation and that Italy was, on the whole and considering the milieu of the capitalist countries, among the most interventionist, so much so that, as Franco Amatori and Andrea Colli have written, we could consider Italy to be in a moment of «early State capitalism». Truth be told, the first major business ventures established after the Italian unification (here, the Author has considered, first and foremost, the construction and management of railways, together with kickstarting the iron and steel industry and the activity of the larger mixed banks) arose from the opportunities offered by the action of public subjects¹⁰. «The interventionist attitude by the State» - as Cohen and Federico have remarked- “has been critically labelled, from time to time, as a «symbiotic relationship between industry and administration», as well as «State capitalism», «political capitalism», but also as «a merger between State and Industry»¹¹. On this, it should be said that the specificity of the Italian case does not reside only in the relevant dimension of the share of the production system managed

⁹ A. Giannola, *La Cassa: protagonista e strumento dello sviluppo*, in *La Cassa per il Mezzogiorno. Dal recupero dell'archivio alla promozione della ricerca*, Quaderno Svimez, special issue 44, Rome 2014, pp. 32-34; S. Palermo, *Il Mezzogiorno nella stagnazione italiana dell'ultimo ventennio. Appunti per una lettura diacronica e di lungo periodo*, in "Storia Economica", XXIV year (2021) - no. 1-2, pp. 413-418, G. Viesti, 2011. *Le politiche di sviluppo del Mezzogiorno negli ultimi vent'anni. Scelte e risultati*, in «Economia e politica industriale», vol. 38, no. 4.

¹⁰ A. Confalonieri, 1997. *Banche miste e grande industria in Italia (1914-1933)*, vol. II, Banca Commerciale Italiana, Milan, p. 315; F. Amatori-A. Colli, 1999. *Impresa e industria in Italia dall'Unità ad oggi*, Marsilio, Padova, pp. 31-41.

¹¹ J. Cohen, G. Federico, 2001. *The Development of Italian Economy (1820-1960)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (Italian translation *Lo sviluppo economico italiano (1820-1960)*, 2001. Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 78-79).

directly or indirectly by the state, as much as in the supporting role that governments have often played with respect to private enterprise, and it is in the performance of such a supporting function in managing industry that public enterprises have contributed, over a long period, towards the completion of the industrialisation of Italy.

Although some economists of a more orthodox liberalist persuasion have severely criticised all public policies aimed at promoting economic development as sources of distortions and waste of resources, scholars with a different scientific approach maintain that public interventions have sometimes been not only useful but necessary to overcome the structural weaknesses of our industrial system. Among these, Pier Luigi Toninelli has pointed out how the sentiment towards the interventions by the State and the judgement on the role of public enterprise have undergone continuous changes over time, depending on the political climate and the dominant cultural model. Therefore, the experience of public big government - often dismissed as something negative overall in the name of the primacy, in terms of efficiency, of private entrepreneurship - should be judged in a more balanced way, not forgetting how it was often the weakness of the market and the lack of entrepreneurial spirit of private actors that paved the way to, and then legitimised, State-based intervention.¹²

Within such a broader exegetical framework on the process of industrialisation in our country, the experience- which is also quite peculiar- of the Mezzogiorno's backwardness should be contextualised, and this also to question the recurring narrative of Southern Italy as the kingdom of wasted public money and a model, in negative terms, of welfarism and parasitism.

The topic has been hotly discussed, and perhaps will be for a long time, from the scientific as well as from the political point of view. In the light of a debate that is still ongoing, with no end in sight, we believe that there are at least two purely economic research questions to be put on the table, contextualising them in the various historical phases. The former concerns the analysis of the impact of public intervention on the overall *performance* of the economic system, both on the national and on the regional basis; on the other hand, the latter concerns the evaluation of this intervention in terms of its influence over the nature and location of productive investments made by both private and public actors. However,

¹² P.A. Toninelli, 2003. *Industria, Impresa e Stato. Tre saggi sullo sviluppo economico italiano*, Edizioni Università di Trieste, Trieste, pp. 12-13.

in order to provide well-rooted answers to these questions, one has to shed light on both some structural and contextual elements that have affected the public intervention policies within the so-called depressed areas, and specifically in Southern Italy. First of all, it should be clarified how the Italian State has made use of the traditional economic policy tools to influence the allocation, distribution and level of productive activity; secondly, one must not lose sight of the fact that the State has gone along with the passive tendency of national industry – often when far from the so-called «technological frontier» - to adopt technologies developed elsewhere, simply adapting them to our context; finally, that the State, especially in the absence of initiatives by private actors, has had to adopt measures incentivising the action of private individuals or intervene in co-participation with them through semi-public enterprises. Such context-related elements have, albeit with different nuances, also influenced for better or worse, and with all their distortions, the process of the late industrialisation of the Mezzogiorno, as remarked by Giuseppe Cenzato already in 1955, during the works of the meeting of the «Comitato Europeo per il progresso economico e sociale», the European Committee for economic and economic progress.

«The study of the depressed areas has been particularly intensified in the post-war period by political bodies and economists in many countries. All have agreed that massive state intervention is indispensable for the economic and social recovery of these areas.

It goes without saying that our Mezzogiorno, although with conspicuous differences compared to other regions of Europe, and even more so compared to the ones in other continents, is a depressed area of our country, for which special provisions are required.

The main features of the Southern problem can be identified in a few figures, which need to be critically examined, [...] even if they are enough to illuminate a state of affairs being incompatible with the morals of a unitary state, and to justify the assertion that the Mezzogiorno could not overcome on its own the great gap that was occurring within the already industrialised Regions»¹³.

An historical review of the role of both policies and public enterprises to promote industrialisation and territorial rebalancing cannot therefore be separated from an analysis of the overall policy outlines that have been

¹³ G. Cenzato, *Situazione e prospettive per l'industrializzazione del Mezzogiorno*, in *Convegno del Comitato Europeo per il progresso economico e sociale (CEPES)*, held on 13-15 October 1955.

historical features of the interventions by public subjects, as well as from a balanced assessment of the operational methods through which such interventions have been carried out during the different historical and political phases, as well as in the several areas considered, including their contexts. Whenever the Mezzogiorno is concerned, one must investigate, mainly through an historical-economic methodology, the propulsive action implemented by those who spent all of their energy to make up for the structural deficiencies of private undertakings, therefore giving birth to the new figure of the *commis d'état*. In this regard - as suggested by Alberto Mortara, especially concerning the case of Italy, namely its Southern regions, during the second half of the 20th Century - a rigorous historical-economic investigation, including the specificity of the role played by the individual actors of public intervention in the economy, should highlight their personal and cultural interdependencies, their paths and the intertwining of their fates¹⁴. Such an approach features a significant scientific impact if applied to an investigation into the ruling class of Southern Italy, as it played a leading role in the politics of public interventions after World War Two.

Concerning the political and economic events of Southern Italy during the 20th Century, scholars usually share the idea that the design of modernisation inaugurated in Nitti's season at the beginning of the Century and then continued in the years of *Reconstruction* and the *Golden Age*, in the two moments of infrastructure building (the so-called «first half» of extraordinary intervention) and then through a process of development driven by large industry, both public and private (also known as the «second half» of the extraordinary intervention), is a topic of absolute historiographical interest, but still partly unexplored nowadays. Indeed, however simplistic it has sometimes been to argue the overall results of the policy of extraordinary intervention in a critical key, it undoubtedly did not have a naive theoretical background, as it was inspired at its foundations by the experience of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the theoretical guidelines dictated by the Big Push Model, itself a brainchild of Rosenstein-Rodan, as well as by the «Harrod-Domar model». It was a policy of intervention, implemented during the second half of the 20th Century, which, moreover, aimed to bring about a change in the culture and mentality within the society in Southern Italy, something that represented the first step towards sustaining a socio-economic growth which was no longer directed from afar. Moreover, concerning the importance

¹⁴ A. Mortara (ed.), 1984. *I protagonisti dell'intervento pubblico in Italia*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, p. 1.

of public industry in the Mezzogiorno, as the driving force behind the economic growth of this macro-region, there is no doubt that, in the peculiar historical phase during which the policy of extraordinary intervention started, both the financial resources and the relevant wide-ranging industrial projects were an almost exclusive feature of State-based industry, which was led by an entrepreneurial class endowed with significant technical and management skills at the time. Furthermore, as long as the reins of the industrialisation process remained firmly in the hands of such a ruling class, the strategy of State-managed big business represented an element of strength rather than of not weakness for territorial rebalancing. We refer to that strong nucleus of the Nitti-inspired ruling class, which sprouted in the early 20th Century, which grew in terms of skills in the context of the innovations of the 1930s with the establishment of the IRI, a reality that was bound to become the protagonist of the first season of extraordinary interventions about twenty years later. Under such a light, men like Giuseppe Cenzato, Francesco Giordani, Pasquale Saraceno, Ezio Vanoni, Donato Menichella, Raffaele Mattioli and Rodolfo Morandi, were the leading exponents of this ruling class, the expression of a quite original Southern Italy, both by virtue of its theoretical foundations and pragmatic objectives. This trend, which would be defined *ex post* as «new Meridionalism», starting from a series of fortunate operational and scientific experiences at an international level, identified the solution to the problem of the Mezzogiorno's backwardness no longer in the exclusive support of the primary sector and the formation of a class of small and medium landowners, but rather in the preparation of an effective programme of State-led interventions aimed at directly favouring the penetration of the most advanced forms of industrial capitalism in this area, for the time.

2. *The ruling class: a restraining element or a driving factor for closing the North/South gap?*

In order to achieve a well-rooted historical reconstruction that can enrich the treating of the gaps and the socio-economic backwardness of the Mezzogiorno compared to the rest of Italy with new elements of evaluation and food for thought, the theme of the ruling classes represents an interesting viewpoint.

Indeed, as Raffaele Mattioli wrote at the time, if it is true that the history of Italy seems to feature the constant presence of major, unresolved socio-economic issues- and here the Author intends to focus not only on the

Southern question, but rather on industrial and innovation policies overall - two topics that would seem to encompass them all is precisely that linked to the lacks in human capital training, something for which the ruling classes represent, at least economically speaking, a significantly strong cornerstone¹⁵.

Along the same exegetical line espoused by Mattioli, several years later Fabrizio Barca was to remark that both the weaknesses and strengths of our country as a system could be traced back to its ability, or otherwise, to select or renew its ruling class on new bases¹⁶. The latter, moreover, paradoxically demonstrated proactive and resilient skills at the most critical junctures, both in the history of Italy and during major institutional changes, while, conversely, it showed little capacity to consolidate results, and thus a substantial immobility, when there were no dramatic emergencies to be faced in the background.¹⁷

An analysis of both the features and composition of the Italian ruling classes has for some time now highlighted a significant ageing process and a simultaneous loss of incidence for the components having a technical, entrepreneurial and managerial matrix, in favour of that of political extraction. Concerning recent years, it is also possible to detect strong elements of crisis in the traditional reservoirs of the managerial class, historically identifiable in the large enterprises (be they public or private), in some institutions of excellence in the Public Administration and in the universities, so that the lack of overall vision and the poor sense of public responsibility, or rather of accountability often shown by those who hold top positions in both public and private bodies, are strong drawbacks nowadays.¹⁸

¹⁵ Raffaele Mattioli, in 1972, in the introduction to the founding act of the *Associazione per lo studio della formazione della classe dirigente nell'Italia unita*, wrote: "[...] The whole period [from unification to the second post-war period] can indeed be seen as a series of occasions and attempts aimed at finally creating an adequate ruling class", in AA.VV., *La figura e l'opera di Raffaele Mattioli* 1999. Ricciardi, Milano-Napoli. On the Meridionalist imprint of Mattioli's thinking, the recent essay by F. Pino, 2023. *Raffaele Mattioli. An intellectual biography*, il Mulino, Bologna.

¹⁶ F. Barca (ed.) 1997. *Storia del capitalismo italiano. Dal dopoguerra a oggi*, Donzelli, Rome, p. XI.

¹⁷ B. Bongiovanni, N. Tranfaglia (eds.) 2006. *Le classi dirigenti nella storia d'Italia*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, pp. V-VII.

¹⁸ In one of their essays, Daniele Checchi and Silvio Redaelli referred to the positive (or negative) externalities that are a product of organising social activities starting from the characteristics of those who hold positions of power in both the economic and political spheres, to conclude that a crucial element for fostering

The interdependence between economic development and the role of the ruling class has certainly not escaped scholars of different backgrounds, as can be seen from the rich literature produced on the subject, stemming from studies of different scientific matrixes. At any rate, when Mezzogiorno is concerned, we believe that some grey areas still remain, from the point of view of research, concerning the analysis of the cultural features and the scientific knowledge held by the ruling class for Southern Italy, including the propulsive function it effectively played (or could have played) in the socio-economic advancement of this area. In this sense, the Author believes that the most fruitful research paths are the ones aimed at rethinking the question of the ruling class by modulating it on the long timescale of economic history, and to connect it with those general problems of development, sometimes underestimated by a kind of Meridionalism altogether detached from the study of the most radical transformations, or the emergence of an industrialised South in the modern sense, fully inserted, and no longer as a second comer, in the dynamics of more advanced capitalism.

Concerning to the action of the ruling classes, in the various historical phases, two conflicting positions have manifested themselves (and still do): the «providentialist» and the «recriminatory» one. The «providentialist» approach is peculiar to those who tend to invoke the shaping and redeeming action of a ruling class capable of tackling society's emergencies and gradually leading it towards the goal of development. The attitude marked by recrimination, on the other hand, is the result of the opinion of the ones who tend to emphasise the basic inability of the ruling classes to deal with the major social and economic issues, i.e. the problems of backwardness, the redistribution of wealth in an equalising sense, the territorial gaps (especially, in the case of Italy, between North and South), the lack of a higher education plan to select the ruling class, leaving the principles of co-optation and inheritance aside.

Concerning the latter problem, it must be said that in our country - with the exception of some instances of excellence, such as the Normale in Pisa, the Polytechnics of Turin and Milan, and the National School of Administration in Rome - there has always been a crippling lack of

lasting processes of economic growth is that the training and selection of the ruling classes warrants the high quality thereof, especially with reference to the needs that arise within the different historical and territorial contexts. 2008, D. Checchi-S. Redaelli, *Scuola e formazione delle classi dirigenti*, in "Treccani Terzo millennio", edited by Tullio Gregory; 2008. Checchi-S. Redaelli, *Scuola e formazione delle classi dirigenti*, in "Treccani Terzo millennio", edited by Tullio Gregory.

«incubators» for the managerial class¹⁹, such as the centres of excellence in the Anglo-Saxon world, based on the Oxbridge model in the United Kingdom²⁰ or on that of Harvard in the United States²¹. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon countries have training systems, mainly private in nature, whose attendants are subjected to a systematic accountability mechanism from which an excellent ruling class, with distinctive skills, then emerges. Other countries, such as France, articulate their training activities according to a more homogeneous and predominantly public logic, on which are grafted some peaks of excellence desired by the institutional decision-maker, such as the ENA and, more generally speaking, the *Grandes Écoles*²².

The almost natural consequence of such a situation is that often, in Italy, the supply of the ruling classes has taken place in ways other than selection based on merit and competence, which has resulted in a significant risk of unpreparedness, a concerning lack of accountability, and finally a poor representation of significant fringes of the economic and managerial elites compared to the more political training facilities²³. So, in every sphere, the proper functioning of the mechanisms for selecting the ruling class is the main key to success; when applied to Italy, this axiom is even more stringent, since our country is structurally lacking in effective deliberative processes able to act regardless of the individual talent of decisionmakers²⁴.

Furthermore, such a situation ended up producing a non-negligible spin-off in terms of historiography, since it has forced scholars to examine the

¹⁹ On the subject of the lack of specific training centres for the ruling class in Italy, see G. Sapelli 1998. *L'Italia di fine secolo. Economia e classi dirigenti: un capitalismo senza mercato*, Marsilio, Venice

²⁰ C. Leys 2013. *The British ruling class*, edited by Leo Panitch, Gregory Albo, Vivek Chibbe, London.

²¹ On the training of the ruling class in both the UK and the US, see 2005. T. Besley, *Political Selection*, in «Journal of Economic Perspectives», vol. 19, no. 3, 2005, pp. 43–60.

²² C.D. Prinborgne 2011 *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation*, Retz, Paris, third edition.

²³ C. Carboni (ed.), 2007. *ÉLITE e classi dirigenti in Italia*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, pp. 77-78.

²⁴ "The current Italian condition, in terms of the ruling class, is ambivalent: while there remains an awareness of the existence of valid ruling classes operating in the most diverse fields, trust in the most symbolically exposed ruling class, especially the political class, has been drastically declining for the past thirty years", 2019. A. Aleotti, *L'illusione del cambiamento*, Egea, Milan.

ruling classes and their action for the purposes of socio-economic growth not before they were, for better or worse, already mature and operational²⁵.

Considering all of the above, from a methodological point of view, one should be aware of the fact that when faced with long-lasting negative influences (such as those of the backwardness of the Southern regions of Italy), the analytical problem necessarily ends up existing on two levels. Therefore, on one hand, one must investigate the extent to which these influences have had a hand in slowing down, or even in congesting, the modernisation process in southern Italy and, on the other, to assess whether everything possible has been done, by those who were institutionally or morally deputed to do so, to remove these resistances.

In partial answer to these questions, a historian of political institutions such as Guido Melis has pointed out how the theme of the ruling classes, with reference to the context of the Mezzogiorno, has peculiar meanings and how it is not scientifically well-founded to claim that the southern *elites* were cut off from the more advanced context of the national *elites*. Rather, the problem would be to understand to what extent the southern ruling classes were able to bring the issues of the South's backwardness to national and international attention; that is, to what extent they were able to represent the peculiarities and socio-economic needs of the South in a broader theatre²⁶. In the wake of this consideration by Melis, we believe that if one wanted to identify a successful attempt and a virtuous process of affirmation of a modern and innovative ruling class, with reference to Southern Italy, this would have to be traced back to the political, social and economic context of the post-World War II period and of the *Ricostruzione*.

The ability to project, i.e. the effective willingness to analyse economic and social processes, accompanied by the cultural effort and skills to orient these processes towards preordained objectives of economic growth: such, according to Piero Bevilacqua, was the historical outcome of the economic

²⁵ According to Emanuele Felice, in the case of the Mezzogiorno, it was precisely the ruling classes, insofar as such classes were not properly trained, that delayed the development of Southern Italy, diverting and squandering, precisely because of their lack of experience, the use of the scarce resources available towards income rather than productive uses, E. Felice, 2013. *Perché il Sud è rimasto indietro*, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 12.

²⁶ Introduction by Guido Melis to the proceedings of the Conference of the «Società per gli studi di storia delle istituzioni» (www.storia.delle.istituzioni.it – Meeting held in 2000 - Introduction by the President of the Società, Guido Melis).

governance action promoted by the ruling class in Southern Italy after World War Two²⁷.

As was pointed out by a team of scholars from the Cattolica University in Milan in the context of a research project promoted by the *Fondazione Agnelli*, examining the training strategies of the Italian ruling classes also meant focusing on the issue of effectiveness when the selection mechanisms of the ruling class, itself in the top positions of the economic system, were concerned: such was a significant relevant topic with respect to the objectives of economic growth and social equity, something that nevertheless clashes with a conceptual difficulty of no small importance, namely what does a ruling class fully entail²⁸.

The classical studies on the matter, with an eminently political and sociological slant, in addressing the theme of the ruling class have generally referred to the elaborations of the Italian school of political science represented by Gaetano Mosca²⁹, Vilfredo Pareto³⁰, Guido Dorso³¹ and in particular to the theory of *elites*, whose international masters were Max Weber³² and his epigone Robert Michels, who identified the constant presence, throughout history, of organised groups in the structure of organised social life, whose behaviour was dictated by the control of the factors and resources that allowed the exercise of power.³³

²⁷ P. Bevilacqua, *Introduzione ai lavori*, in L. D'Antone (ed.), *Radici storiche ed esperienza dell'intervento straordinario nel Mezzogiorno* (Minutes of the meeting held in Taormina on 18-19 November 1994), 1996. Bibliopolis, Naples, p. 11.

²⁸ C. Barone, G. Assirelli 2014. *Le strategie educative delle classi dirigenti italiane*, Fondazione Agnelli, 8° Rapporto sulla classe dirigente, the Eight Report on the Ruling Class.

²⁹ 1996. N. Bobbio, *Mosca e la teoria della classe politica*, in Idem, *Saggi sulla scienza politica*, Laterza, Rome - Bari; 2000. G. Sola, *La teoria delle élites*, il Mulino, Bologna

³⁰ 2000. C. Malandrino, R. Marchionatti (eds.), *Economia, sociologia e politica nell'opera di Vilfredo Pareto*, Fondazione Luigi Einaudi. Vol. 37, Turin

³¹ 1986. G. Dorso, *Dittatura, classe politica e classe dirigente*. Published and unpublished essays, edited by Carlo Muscetta, Laterza, Rome-Bari

³² M. Weber, *Economia e Società*, Donzelli, Rome 2022, edited by Massimo Palma (1st edition, posthumous, 1921).

³³ A pupil of Max Weber, Robert Michels was the author of several essays on the subject of the ruling classes, including R. Michels, *La sociologia del partito politico nella democrazia moderna: studi sulle tendenze oligarchiche degli aggregati politici*, translated from the 1912 German original by Alfredo Polledro, UTET, Turin.

It goes without saying that, in non-monocratic contexts, the polyarchic differentiation of *elites* has meant that power has ended up being divided among several subjects, and it is from here that, since the second half of the 20th Century, we may no longer speak so much of elites as in «ruling class» or rather in the plural of «ruling classes»³⁴. Moreover, the Authors believe that in defining the ruling class of a given society, it is necessary not to confuse it with the dominant class, nor even less so with the political class, with which it is by no means certain - nor is it desirable - that it coincides. In other words, the Authors believe that the ruling class should not be understood as any given professional political class, but as the set of groups acting in the economy, as in politics or culture, which indeed play a leading role in society, by virtue of their concrete decisions and attitudes. These groups are, or become, the ruling class when they explicitly (but sometimes also implicitly) feel jointly responsible for a given community and act for its progress. In other words, they do not limit themselves to representing individual interests or those of their economic or professional sector, but assume a responsibility with a broader profile, even at the cost of sacrificing part of their own legitimate interests.

Nor is the ruling class to be understood as a qualified minority that commands a majority, nor as a class that becomes dominant according to its position of strength in socio-economic terms. Moreover, even if the Authors wanted to go back to accepting *an* elitist approach, the Authors believe, together Pier Luigi Celli, that, at most, one may refer to a minority with intellectual and technical skills, and therefore capable of competently and authoritatively leading an undifferentiated majority, interpreting in a general and public good key the needs of resource allocation and the composition of interests³⁵.

Another aspect, only apparently tautological in nature, which the Authors consider essential from a taxonomic point of view, stems from the consideration that a ruling class is that category of men who are concerned with the formation of the ruling class itself, also in terms of turnover and ideal succession. In other words, it is the not secondary task of a historically well-established ruling class to guarantee the continuity of its

³⁴ It was, therefore, the evolution in an inclusive and participatory sense of society that made historiography put itself in a position to deal with the 'plural' question of the ruling classes, B. Bongiovanni, N. Tranfaglia, *Le classi dirigenti tra poliarchia e storiografia*, in Idem, *Le classi dirigenti nella storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 337-342.

³⁵ 2004. P.L. Celli, *Impresa e classi dirigenti*, Baldini Castoldi Dalai, Milan

mission, obviously not disregarding the evolution of the founding values of a specific social context.

In the light of these premises, the Authors believe that the formulation elaborated by Francesco Barbagallo is heuristically well-founded. He, in turn, drew on the formulation put forward by Mattioli, for whom the term «ruling class» must be understood as that group of men who contribute in the forms and sectors of their own pertinence (be they political, economic, administrative, military, religious, cultural or concerning trade unions) to what is, from period to period and at different levels of competence, the management of the affairs of Italy³⁶. A group of men, one might add, who chose to privilege the profile of responsibility rather than power, and who also by virtue of an uncommon art of mediation, were able to identify areas of convergence of more general interests, rather than caring about and protecting their personal gain. By embracing such an operational and ethical criterion, these men would achieve the important objective of overcoming those clashes that have never been resolved up to now, and indeed are constantly surfacing, between the political class and the economic class, between political society and civil society, between the laws of Italy and the real country, between the ruling class and the governed, and in the final analysis, the same «organic» function (as Gramsci would have it) of the intellectual class should be able to find a more concrete and precise position in this way.

More recently, during a *lectio magistralis*, referring to the legacy of Gramsci, Luciano Violante stated that the ruling class is any given large group of people having both the intellectual and moral authority capable of directing, i.e. of indicating a direction for the society as a whole³⁷

In order to broaden the range of analytical options - as suggested by an outstanding sociologist like Enrica Amaturò³⁸ - one can distinguish at least four approaches to the analysis of the subject «ruling classes», which are not mutually exclusive but rather complement each other.

Taking a «positional» approach, one can consider the ruling class to be that group of individuals who in a given community occupy top positions

³⁶ F. Barbagallo, *Il dopoguerra e la ricostruzione*, in B. Bongiovanni, N. Tranfaglia (eds.), *Le classi dirigenti nella storia d'Italia*, cit., pp. 202-203.

³⁷ L. Violante, *Società civile e istituzioni: il ruolo della classe dirigente*, in «Nomos», no. 1/2018.

³⁸ E. Amaturò (ed.), *Capitale sociale e classi dirigenti a Napoli*, Carocci, Rome 2003, pp. 43-56.

within hierarchical structures, whether public or private. Relying instead on a "reputational" orientation - and this is the second approach - the practical-effectual profile of power phenomena is emphasised, based on the conviction that the identification of the power structure in a given community need not be based on an institutional measurement but rather on parameters of a practical nature. The «decisionmaking» approach, on the other hand, focuses on analysing the observable behaviour and takes the ability of individual subjects in order to influence the outcomes of specific decisions as its main indicator. Lastly, a fourth approach - that may be defined as the «non-decisional» one - is based on the observation that in every community there are pressure groups (aka lobbies) capable of injecting prejudices, values, myths, and institutional practices within societies in order to preserve their own interests, and this is evidently a pernicious model of a ruling class that risks leading to a number of autocratic attitudes.

However, if in the orientations described so far the analysis has focused on the individual features of the subjects making up the ruling class, an alternative approach, based on network analysis, prefers to focus on the relational dimension, in adherence to the principle that power is not exercised by isolated individuals, but rather through the relationships that individuals manage to establish together with a plurality of other subjects³⁹.

Moreover, it should be added that any given ruling class, by its very nature, is called upon to make decisions in situations characterised not only by information asymmetry and uncertainty, but also by intersubjectivity. That is to say, to the extent that decisions involve several actors (in general, several stakeholders, each of whom is the bearer of particular identities and interests), there is a need for the ruling class to mediate between the different positions in order to get to shared decisions.

A moment of synthesis of what has been described so far were the conclusions of the editors of the «V° Rapporto Luiss», insofar as they suggested how it is the adoption of certain strategic decisions that connote the role of the ruling classes. The first is that of knowing how to manage processes of integration between different subjects (such as companies and institutions), as well as between different territories and between local and global dynamics; the second strategy is that of applying the «mutation» already underway to the very creation of the ruling class, in order to

³⁹ For all, see 2016. D. Ruggieri, *D. Ruggieri, La sociologia relazionale di Georg Simmel. La relazione come forma sociale vitale*, Mimesis, Milan

guarantee from generation to generation the turnover of responsibilities and roles that belonged to it, thus going «beyond» its own personal experience⁴⁰. This 'reticular' approach would seem to be better suited, the Author will try to argue in the course of the research, to the specific situation in Southern Italy after World War Two, when it was the ability of a few men (especially the technocrats trained at the IRI) to «network» and find appropriate institutional referents, both nationally and internationally, to allow an authentically reformist season to begin in this area.

In this regard, Gabriella Gribaudi has in her time effectively pointed out how the policy of state intervention for the Mezzogiorno in the post-war period was devised and concretely implemented by a ruling class that from the outset acted as a mediating link between the State and society⁴¹.

The ruling class of this period, indeed, was affirming itself in parallel with the elaboration of a theoretical and political line of intervention that was innovative in many respects, and also became the expression of the new lines that were emerging internationally on the function of the state and on development policies, and it was not by chance that it was within the framework of these conceptions that extraordinary intervention in Southern Italy was able to benefit from the legitimisation and contribution of the international financial institutions.

As a corollary to this approach, the notions of '*broker-entrepreneur*' and «*broker capitalism*» are therefore extremely pregnant, aimed as they are at outlining a ruling class, such as that of the post-war South, whose strength lay not only in the availability of economic resources, but also in the ability to govern social and personal relations, especially in relations with local, national and international institutions⁴². This could also help to definitively remove the recurring anthropological-cultural argument according to which the Mezzogiorno has historically shown a substantial stubbornness when it comes to espousing an authentically entrepreneurial dimension of economic initiative.

⁴⁰ AA.VV., *V° Rapporto Luiss "Generare classe dirigente"*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, April 2011.

⁴¹ 1980. G. Gribaudi, *Mediatori. Antropologia del potere democristiano nel Mezzogiorno*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Turin, p. 23 and p. 34.

⁴² For these notions, developed by social anthropologists to elaborate dynamic models to interpret social change, see 1966. E.R. Wolf, *Kinship, Friendship and patron-client relations in complex societies*, in M. Banton (ed.), *The social anthropology of complex societies*, Tavistock Publications Ltd, London