
International Workshop

Call for papers

Italy in the 'long 1980s': Neoliberalism, International Economic Relations and European Integration

University of Padova

Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies
16-17 December 2021

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This workshop aims at exploring the history of Italy's international economic relations in the 'long 1980s', that is, during the years that witnessed the emergence of a global neoliberal turn, the acceleration of the 'second globalization', as well as the end of the Cold War. In so doing, the workshop devotes specific attention to a number of factors which contributed to the making of Rome's attitudes towards the impressive transformations that occurred in the international economic system between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, such as the reconfiguration of monetary and economic policies at the global level, the evolution of European integration, as well as the massive spread of market-oriented ideas and policy prescriptions across the Western world – and beyond.

The 1980s marked indeed a crucial decade for both Italy and the whole international economic system. Following the turmoil of the 1970s, Italy entered a somehow new phase of its political life at both the domestic and the international levels. After being labelled as the 'sick man of Europe', during the 1980s Italy's macro-economic performances envisaged a twofold – and to some extent contradicting – path. On the one hand, the 1970s' stagflation impasse seemed to be progressively overturned (especially if one looks at the second half of the decade) by significant improvements in the GDP rates. Furthermore, Italy's entry into the European Monetary System (EMS, 1978-1979) and its overall participation in the ever-binding rules of European integration (i.e. the Single European Act, SEA, 1986-1987) went hand in hand with Rome's waxing and waning commitment to the Western struggle against inflation (i.e. the 'Volcker shock' in 1979), which became one of the main policy targets of many central banks at that time. On the other hand, the growing amount of Rome's public debt and the overall management of its budgetary policies during the 1980s depicted a slightly different story. Both these figures, in fact, increased during that decade and fostered a spiral of financial distress that contributed to the emergence of a sort of cleavage between Rome's monetary and budgetary policies until the signing of the Maastricht Treaty and the crisis of the lira in 1992.

These trends did not emerge by chance. The specific features and contradictions that had driven Italy's economic development since the end of WWII – if not earlier – laid the groundwork for the way in which the country dealt, first, with the outbreak of the so-called 'shock of the global' in the 1970s and, second, with the occurrence of a neo-liberal and monetarist-oriented paradigm shift in the management of the international economic relations. In addition, Italy's political and social confrontation at the domestic level played a crucial role. The 1970s mirrored the height of Italy's internal social conflict and the widespread political clash between trade unions, industrialists, as well as new forms of political subjectivities – i.e. the leftist 'new' social movements – who engaged a radical confrontation against the foundations of Italy's capitalism and conservative culture. In parallel, the Italian Communist Party (Pci) increased its electoral consensus and by the mid-1970s seemed to undermine the political primacy of the Christian Democrats (Dc). However, the failure of the 'historic compromise' (*compromesso storico*) strategy, together with the assassination of the Dc's leader Aldo Moro and the fragility of communists' watchwords ('national solidarity', 'democratic alternative', 'third way'), definitely put the Pci out of the governmental area.

The 1980s, on the contrary, marked the emergence of a new political formula, the so-called *pentapartito* (five-party system), and the rise of political leaders, such as the socialist Bettino Craxi, who did not belong to the Catholic tradition. The 1980s' Italian policymakers had to deal with an international climate opinion within which the influence of market-oriented attitudes in the management of economic, social and even private life progressively undermined the pillars of the so-called Keynesian consensus. In this respect, the global spread of both 'Reaganomics' and 'Thatcherism', together with the parallel decline of Soviet socialism's international grip, came to the fore as some of the leading factors in the international 'battle of ideas' that took place during the 1980s.

This workshop is therefore an attempt to historicize the manifold aspects of Italy's international economic relations during the 'long 1980s' and to single out the main turning points and processes that characterized Rome's global interdependences in those years.

PhD students, early career researchers, as well as experienced scholars are invited to submit a short proposal (no more than **500 words**) that would focus on the following issues:

- * The impact of the transnational circulation of ideas on Italy's political and economic system (i.e. Neoliberalism, Ordoliberalism, Neomercantilism)
- * The contribution of Italian intellectuals, policymakers, and collective actors (i.e. political parties, trade unions, business associations, foundations, think tanks) to the shaping of the so-called Neoliberal school of thought at that time
- * Italy's participation in the European integration process (i.e. Rome's role in the EMS, the SEA and the Maastricht negotiations)
- * The perception of Italy's economic performances in the opinion of foreign actors (i.e. diplomatic relations, the attitude of foreign observers towards Italy's economic and monetary policies)
- * The international role of Italy's main economic and monetary actors (i.e. the Italian Central Bank)

Applicants must submit an abstract of no more than **500 words** and a short **CV** by **May 30th, 2021**.

Proposals must be sent in English to roberto.ventresca@unipd.it

Selected applicants will be informed by **June 15th, 2021**. They will be also invited to submit their **paper of about 5000 words** by **November 25th, 2021**.

Logistics will be arranged in the next months according to the evolution of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The organizers will evaluate the opportunity to publish the selected papers in a volume or the special issue of an international journal.

This workshop is supported by the University of Padua under the 2019 STARS Grants Programme DWNS – *Dealing with the Neoliberal Storm: Italy, the Global Monetarist Shift, and the European Integration Process (1979-1992)*

