

“SOUTHERN EUROPE”: COMMON PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT?

“Southern Europe” has been at the centre of the EU crisis since 2007. Sometimes grouped under the derogatory acronym “PIGS”, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain have been depicted as a cluster of countries still lacking the “contractual system” and the “market forces” shaping modern societies. As such, they represent a threat to the European construction, unless their institutions become more like those assumed to be prevailing in the “core”. Within a “centre-periphery” perspective, on the contrary, the crisis cannot be understood without examining its structural causes, which are rooted in the dynamic and asymmetric interactions between countries at differing levels of development. Central to this debate is whether, and to what extent, the notion of “Southern Europe” can offer insights into the recent developments of a crisis-ridden European Union. That is, «do Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal represent an area shaped by common paths and patterns of development, as well as structural analogies? Or, is “Southern Europe” a misleading notion brought up by polarized political debates?».

These issues are taken up by a recently published book, edited by Martin Baumeister and Roberto Sala, *Southern Europe? Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece from the 1950s until the present day*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt and New York, 2015. Following an interdisciplinary approach, the volume looks both at the current situation and at its historical roots, to answer the broader question whether “Southern Europe” is a useful concept for understanding the European present and recent past.

“Economia & Lavoro” has asked scholars from various countries – from the “Southern European” periphery, to the “core” and the Northern periphery – to take up these questions, starting from the contributions collected in the book.

