

Teaching the North-South Divide

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Overview

- The North-South Divide: History & critique of a problematic concept
- Developing materials and teaching the topic at A-Level Material



Problematizing 'The North-South Divide'

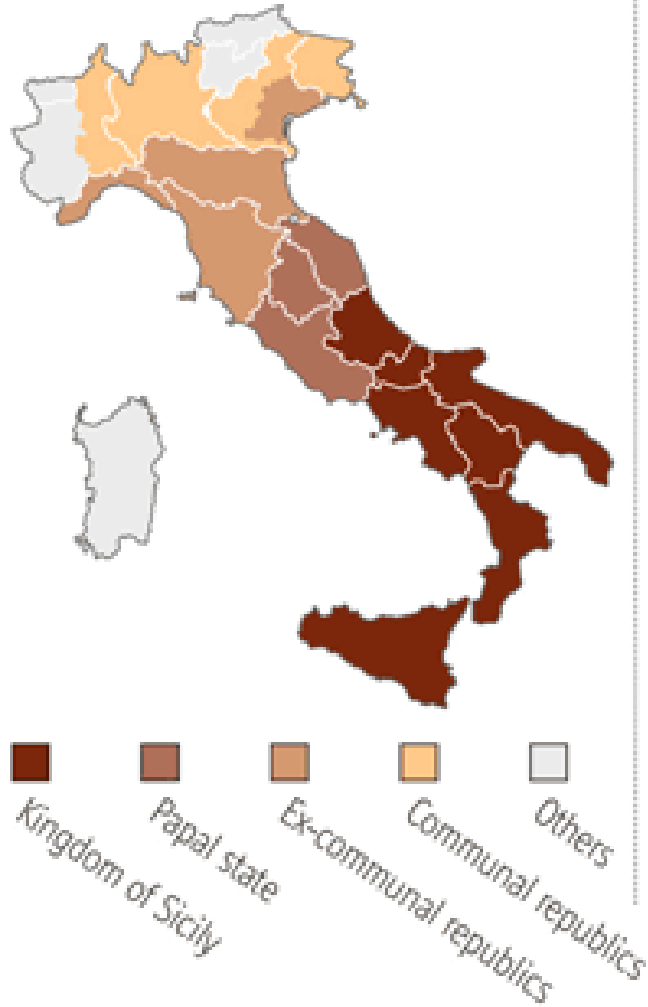
- Term and concept derive from political geography
- Not an Italianist frame of reference
- Maps onto but conceals historical discourses relating to the 'Southern Question' and deriving from the Italian North
- Extends beyond the terms of the SQ to cover all aspects of life - economic, social, cultural, political and health/welfare
- Premised on entrenched value judgments deeply biased in favour of the North

Critique

- Presents as fact but is, in fact:
 - a theory
 - a *very* crude instrument of analysis
 - a distorting lens through which to view and understand complex realities
- Has underpinned extremely questionable research (including on IQ in 2011)
- ‘Empirical data have been inserted into this framework and, if they have not fitted, they have been adapted, reinterpreted or ignored’
- Out-dated and reductive

North v south

Form of government in 14th century
On today's borders



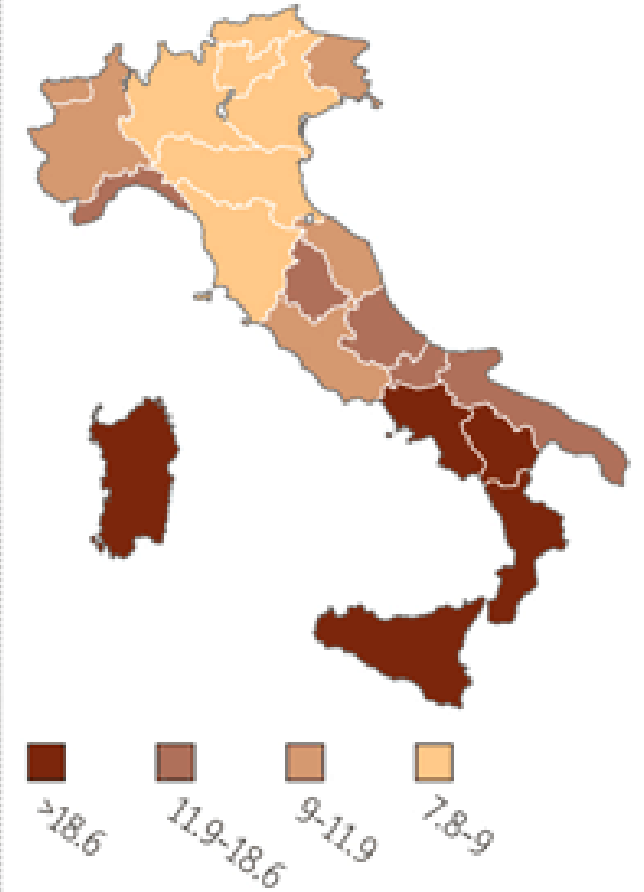
Crime

Extortion and criminal associations*
By region, 2002-05



Black-market labour

As % of total, by region, 2005



The Economist,
2017

*Sum of crimes, 2002-05, per 10,000 inhabitants, Italy=100

Alternative Models Socio-Economic

Le tre Italie

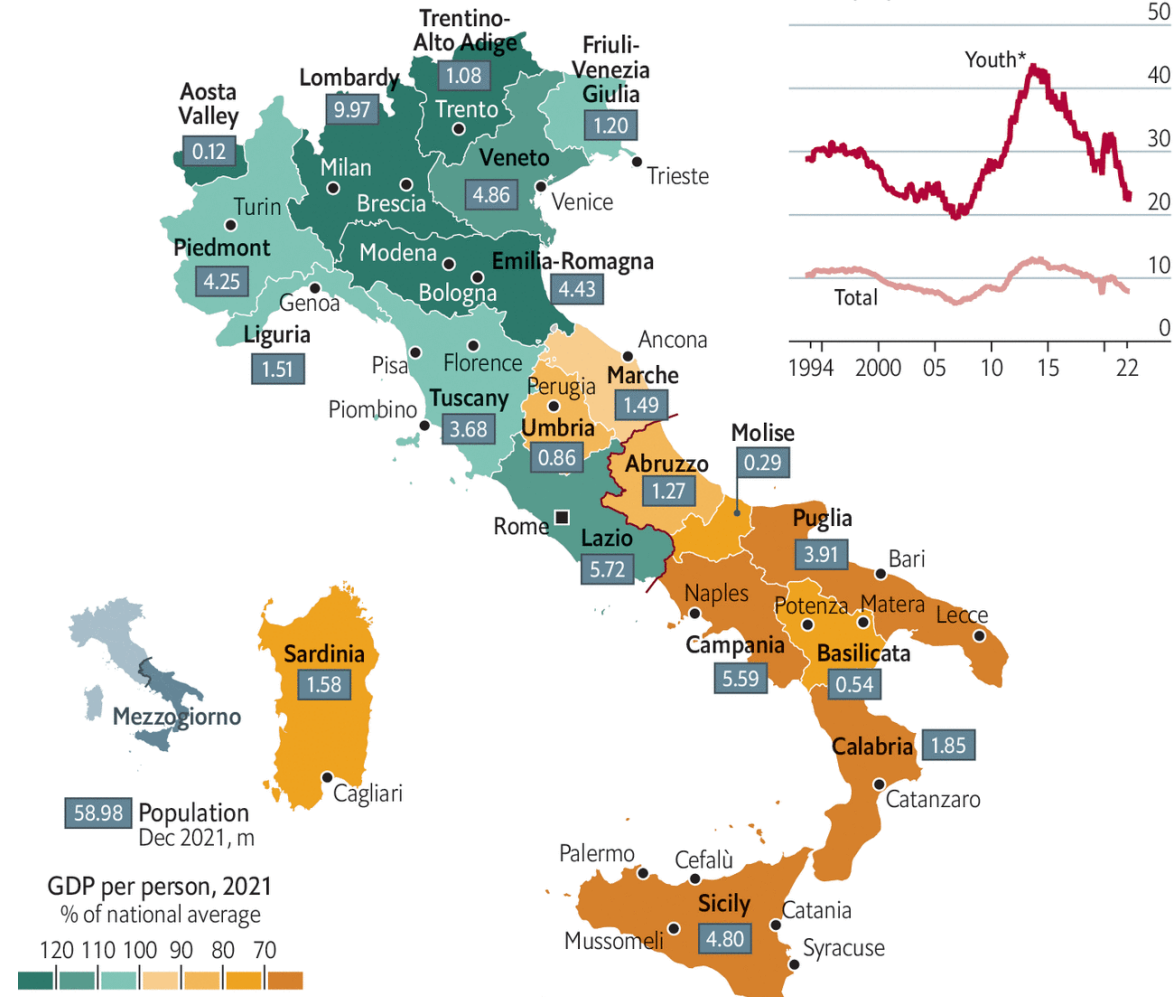


Le cinque Italie



Economics

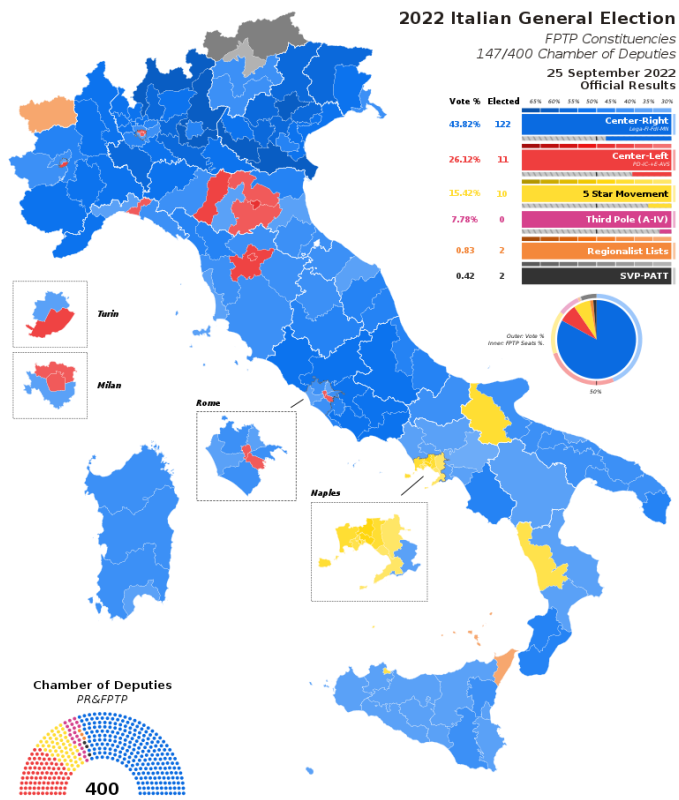
Southern discomfort



Sources: Istat; Eurostat

*15- to 24-year-olds

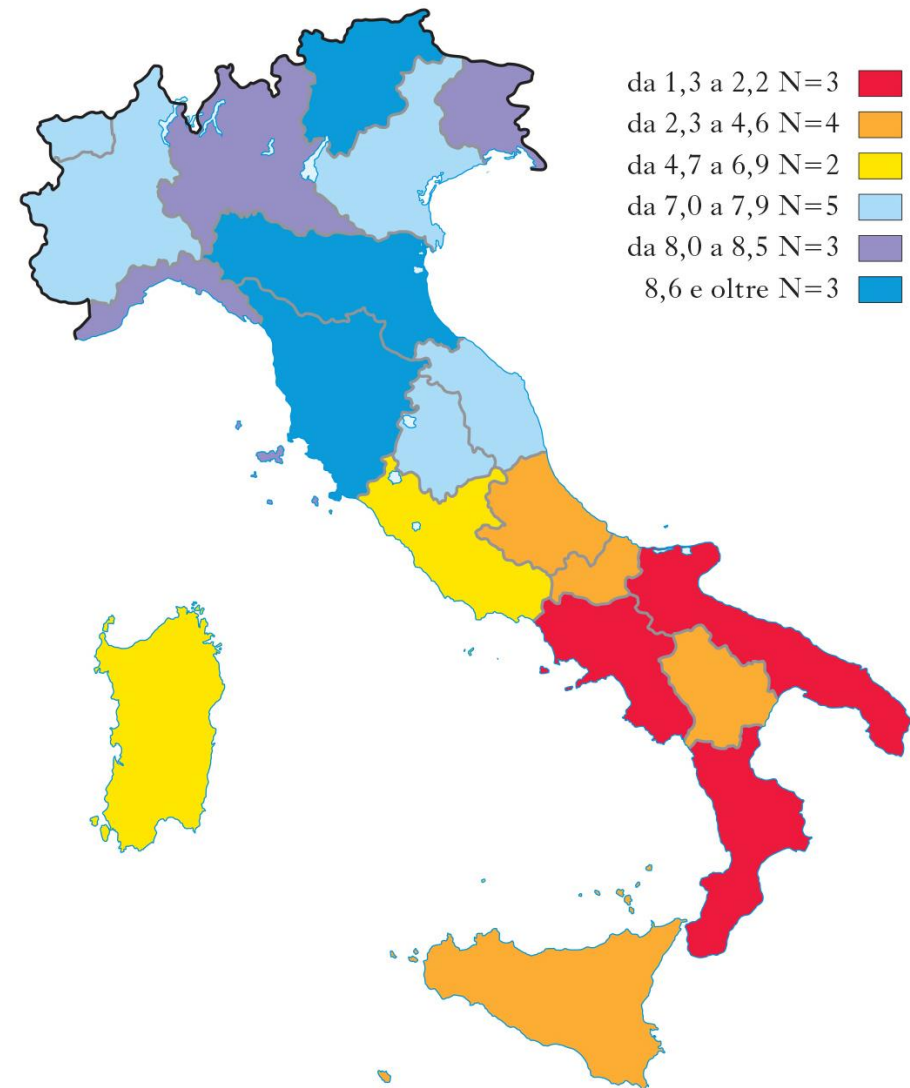
Politics



Presidency following
Regional Elections 2021

Social & Political Capital

Roberto Cartocci, Valerio Vanelli -
L'Italia e le sue Regioni (2015)



Rethinking the North-South Divide

Not as fact but:

- as a concept and as a discourse structuring thought that
 - has been subject to evolution over time (changing borders; moments of reversal)
 - can and should be historicized
 - can and should be subject to critique



The New History of the Italian South



The Mezzogiorno Revisited

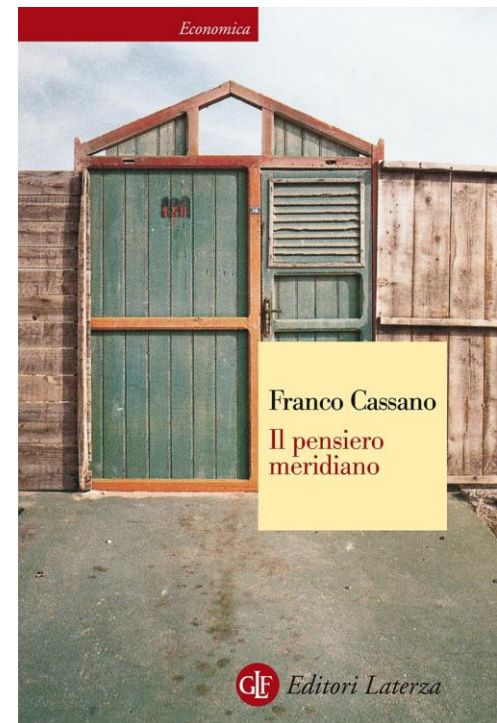
Edited by Robert Lumley
and Jonathan Morris

Historicizing the North-South Divide

- N/S divide as the product of Unification, both economically and discursively, and bound up with process of nation-building
- Premised on pre-existing Grand Tour discourses about *Italy*
- Post-Unification themes: southern underdevelopment a question of innate inferiority vs lack of good governance?
- Compounded by racial theorization: Lombroso; Niceforo, etc.

Critiquing the North-South Divide

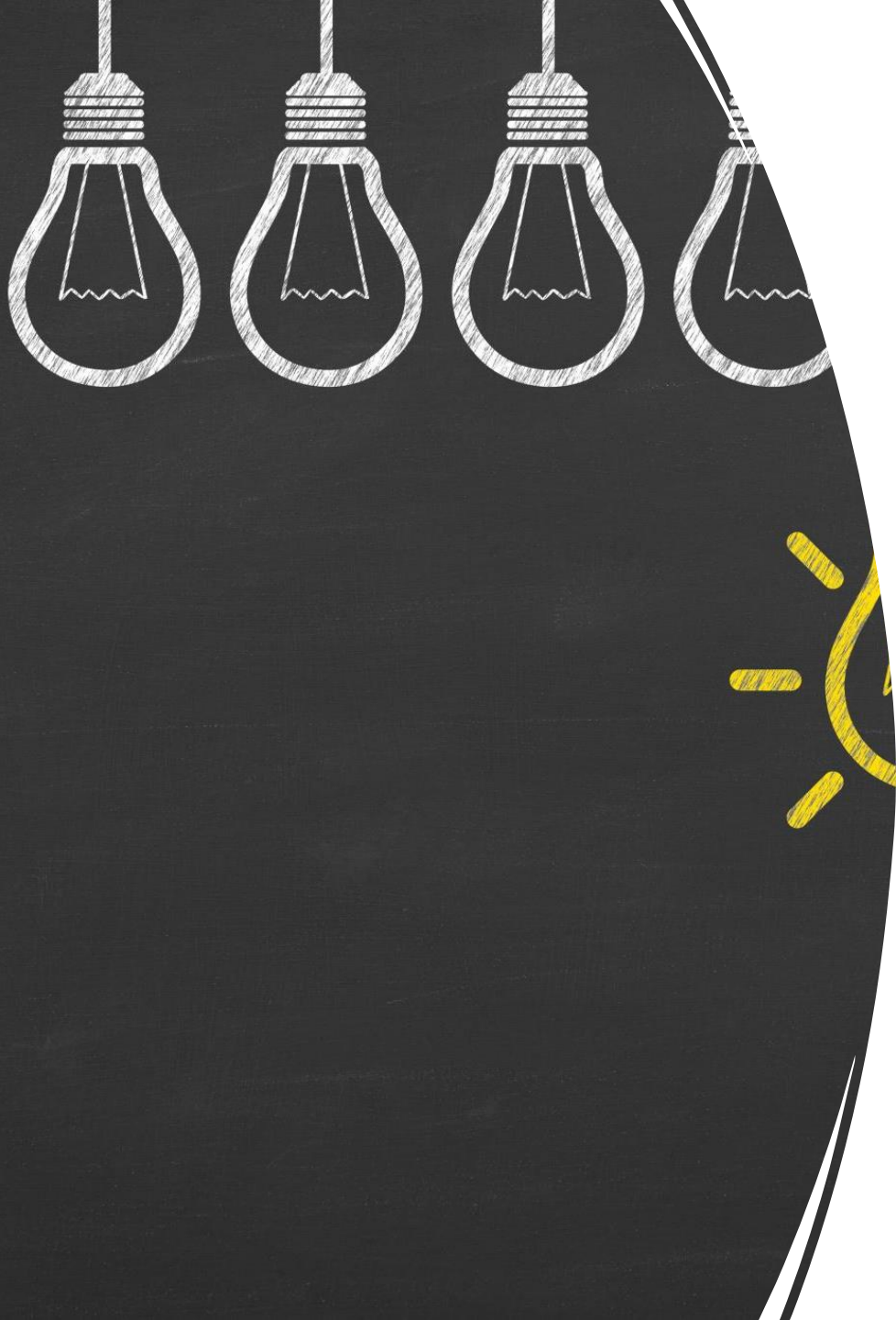
- South exploited by a 'colonising' North
 - Francesco Nitti, Antonio Gramsci, etc.
- N/S divide as masking complex realities
 - IMES (Istituto meridionale di economia e studi sociali), 1980s-90s
- Discourse of N-S divide a distortion of reality:
 - e.g. Cassano: 'nel Sud d'Italia, la modernità non è estranea alle patologie di cui ancora oggi molti credono che essa sia la cura' (1996)



Consequences

- Striking continuities between post-Unification and contemporary political discourses
- Tendency to revert to atavistic explanation when other explanations fail
- Tendency to make data fit the frame





How to approach N-S Divide at A-Level?

- As an opportunity to challenge the presentation of the N-S divide as 'fact'
- As an example of how an imbalance of power results in distorted representations (esp. in news media)
- As an occasion to reframe the question in terms of Italian diversity
- As an opportunity to discuss the relevance of Italy to the wider world (global N-S divide; two faces of modernity)

A look at some oral questions

Peter Langdale



Different types of question

- A. Statements of fact**
 - 1. Economic**
 - 2. Socio-cultural**
- B. Expressed as statement of opinion /migration**

Statements of fact (1)

Socio-cultural

- a) Esistono differenze soci-culturali tra il Nord e il Sud (*differenze / somiglianze*)
- b) Esistono diversi tipi di italiani: quelli del Sud e quelli del Nord (*stile di vita / caratteristiche della gente*)
- c) Il Nord e il Sud d'Italia sono sempre più lontani (*aspetti della vita/stereotipi*)

- See Section 3 of the Project *Le differenze socio-culturali*

Statements of fact (2)

Economic

a) Il divario Nord-Sud in Italia cresce (effetti della geografia / dove lo Stato spende i soldi)

b) In Italia esistono due Paesi diversi, il ricco Nord e il povero Sud (perché? / soluzioni?)

- *Broadly true in terms of economic growth and GDP in 2022/3*
- *For effect of pandemic and recent figures see <https://startingfinance.com/news/le-differenze-economiche-tra-il-nord-e-il-sud-italia/>*

- *See Section 2 of the project* *Economia e industria*

Expressed as statement of opinion /migration

- a) Si dovrebbe fare di più per limitare l'emigrazione dal Sud d'Italia verso il Nord (come limitare l'esodo? / la corruzione)
- b) Oggi esistono ancora troppe differenze tra Nord e Sud (I problemi del Sud / *emigrazione* dei giovani)
- c) Gli italiani continuano a spostarsi dal Sud al Nord (Perché? / Si può vivere bene al Sud?)
 - Facts of migration from south to north rather complicated – see <https://www.today.it/economia/sud-nord-divario-reddito-cittadinanza-mezzogiorno-rapporto-svimez.html>
 - Project: See sections 1 on Criminalità and the interviews in section 4 about migrations.

<https://www.teachitalian.co.uk/divario-nord-sud-project.html>

IL DIVARIO NORD-SUD

Teaching & Learning Materials
for A-Level Italian



by Ruth Glynn (University of Bristol), Cecilia Brioni
(University of Bristol) and Peter Langdale