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PREFACE

We are proud to present the 2018 issue of the *Annals of the Department of MEMOTEF*. It is always a challenge to bring out a new volume of collected papers directed at providing readers with peer-reviewed scholarly articles on a wide variety of issues, from theoretical aspects to application-dependent studies and the validation of emerging research methodologies and technologies. Our mission is to publish high quality scientific research manuscripts representing state-of-the-art research in the different scientific disciplines in the Department of MEMOTEF in areas ranging from economics, econometrics, economic history, economic policy, economic geography, demography, languages, mathematics and statistics. With this aim in mind, the *Annals* welcome original contributions not only from the Department researchers, but also from external scholars emphasizing the Department's international orientations and overseas connections. Namely, this issue includes papers from other research institutions both in Italy (other research Departments and ISTAT) and from abroad (Argentina, Germany and Russia).

An exciting development is that the *Annals of the Department of MEMOTEF* has been included in the list of the scientific journals recognized by the Italian institution for the evaluation of academic research (ANVUR) for most of the scientific fields active in the Department¹ and it is in the list of the best-ranked journals (Class A) for Geography. As mentioned in the previous volume, the journal has taken the digital turn, and therefore this issue is most likely to be the last 'paper' edition. Subsequent issues planned by the editorial team and advisory board will appear on Sapienza University's open-access journal system (OJS), an international digital platform.

The editorial board has decided to maintain the journal's traditional division into three parts, with the core section – *Papers* – devoted to selected peer-reviewed research papers, the second focusing on *Notes and Discussion*, and the third is a collection of *Book Reviews*.

The contributions appear in alphabetical order according to the author names. In the first contribution, Nicola Acocella explains how the institutional design of the European Monetary Union (EMU) is based on markets and the single currency, as defined by the European Central Bank (ECB). This design, together with pre-existing asymmetries and regulatory constraints, has caused imbalances between core and peripheral countries. The author makes some suggestions on the kind of amendments which would serve democratic and economic purposes.

The second contribution by Silvia Cavalieri deals with the monitoring of a bilingual education project (IBI/BEI Project) carried out in Italian primary schools. Data were gathered on curricular subjects delivered in English. Results showed that the project gave children an opportunity for internationalization, but a major limitation arose from the fact that this sort of fully immersive educational environment did not continue in subsequent stages of the child's education.

Giovanni Di Bartolomeo and Stefano Papa's study is the result of an experimental economics research project. Using an investment game, they analyze the effect of different kinds of unilateral messages on trust and reciprocity. They found that, in investment games where more than two strategies are available, coordination is more difficult to achieve and miscommunication is more likely to occur.

Ana N. Feldman analyzes the role of the International Monetary Fund in the 2008 financial crisis. In particular, she examines IMF annual reports (World Economic Outlook) in the period 2005 to 2012, through a statistical analysis of Textual Data using the software *Taltac2*, developed by Sergio Bolasco, a former professor of statistics in the Department of MEMOTEF.

Suzanne Gervers carries out an in depth study of "non-commercial" hospitality-networks in the digital age, namely *Couchsurfing*, in which she particularly outlines some underlying historical ethical principles in order to understand present-day forms of hospitality.

In Carmen Graziano and Giuseppina Guagnano's paper, the authors aim at empirically verifying the economic effect of two public spending components such as social transfers and public gross fixed capital formation in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, in compliance with a context of public spending

¹ Area CUN 10, 11 and 13.

control. The econometric analysis is based on a dynamic panel regression and shows that public gross fixed capital formation and social benefits other than transfers in-kind can have both a positive effect (the former), and a lesser or negative effect (the latter) on economic growth.

Antonio Parisi and Brunero Liseo's study describes a fully Bayesian analysis for a general regression model with skew-elliptically distributed errors. In particular, they propose a set of weakly informative prior distributions and a Monte Carlo sampler. All methods described in the research are implemented in a new version of the R package *mvst*.

Isabella Santini's paper explores which macro-economic, institutional and contextual factors have contributed more than others to a decrease in the vulnerability of countries during the recent economic crisis in terms of NEETs (*not engaged in education, employment or training*), and whether these factors also allowed recovery in the post-crisis period, thus contributing to a substantial reduction in NEETs. The results call for a more detailed reflection on those active labor market policies and appropriate strategies, to be shared at European level.

Lidia Scarpelli presents a case study of the region of Lazio, in particular the province of Viterbo and its surrounding landscape. She investigates how, despite the evident transformations which have taken place over the last fifty years, the area still retains a distinctive agricultural and rural character.

Donatella Strangio, Nadejda N. Pokrovskaia and Fabrizio D'Ascenzo present recent developments in Russian-Italian co-operations, in particular in the last two decades. They especially highlight Italy's role as a global source of innovation and creativity, exploring the importance of Italy's cultural heritage, which has undoubtedly laid the foundations for Italy's preeminence in sectors like the food and fashion industry.

The study by Marina Zannella reports on how gender discrimination in China and India dramatically affects female survival, causing imbalanced sex-ratios in the population. She analyses changes which have occurred in the number of missing women in the two Asian countries during the period 1980-2000, distinguishing between the two main causes of the female shortage: prenatal and postnatal discrimination.

The *Notes and Discussion* section in this year's volume presents two reflections which both deal with current European issues of great relevance. Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo critically assesses the difficulty in reaching a European subsidiarity approach in order to solve problems of migration and mobility. He highlights the need to seriously apply the *acquis communautaire* through multilevel European governance and local institutions. Adriana Conti Puorger's note underlines the relationship between cohesion and research policies at the European level. She highlights the need for economic convergence in order to eliminate regional disparities, and the role of research policies as the only means to concrete regional and technological development. The *Book Reviews* this year are also of contemporary relevance, Guido Candela reviews the scientific work of an academic scholar of our department (Nicola Acocella); the other review by Annabel Potter refers to a prominent study on the problem of rising socio-economic crisis in Europe and its political foundations.

The success of a journal depends directly on the number of quality articles submitted for publication and on the attentive review process. We warmly thank the authors who responded to the call for papers and the anonymous referees for the time and effort they put into their mentoring and for assisting authors in the improvement of their manuscripts. This issue and the journal itself would not be possible without the great support of the Editorial Board members, and we express our sincere thanks to each individual member. We also appreciate the support of the Director of the Department of MEMOTEF, and all the Department researchers and professors who generously offer their precious expertise and constant encouragement.

November 2018

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