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The challenge of insularity. Business networks between islands and mainland in the South of Italy. The case study of Procida (19th century)

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The present paper is the first step to investigate the diffusion of rural and agricultural credit in the South of Italy over the 19th century in the form of cooperative and mutual credit institutions. Through the specific case study of a micro-reality like Procida, using the approach of the Social Network Analysis, we study the relationships that linked the poor island's credit environment to the financial system of Naples and its province, that in the 1880s testified of an efflorescence of cooperative banks. The study of the business ownership structure and of the corporate boards network of cooperative banks will be essential to analyze the role that these institutions had in the support of the island's economy. Particularly, after a first reconstruction of the numerical consistency of cooperative banks in Procida and Naples, their governance, and their mission, we aim at understanding if cooperative banks really operated in a mutualistic and welfare direction in the island. More specifically, we analyze the ability of Procida rural banks to stay away from the dominant role of the Neapolitan financial elites, to respond to their real mission of "being of help for workers and farmers" and to detach themselves from the "banking carnival" that would have overwhelmed the whole Italian banking system at the end of the 19th century.

Keywords

rural credit, banking history, social network analysis, Procida island

Topics

- Network analysis in human past and history

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