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PREFACE

This volume of *Annali MEMOTEF* brings together a selection of research contributions that reflect the methodological diversity and thematic breadth of the scholarly activity developed within and around the Department of Methods and Models for Economics, Territory and Finance at Sapienza University of Rome.

Rather than advancing a single unifying theme, this issue offers a multifarious and articulated panorama of contemporary research, encompassing different disciplinary traditions, analytical tools, and empirical domains. This multiplicity is not merely descriptive, but represents a deliberate editorial choice aimed at fostering dialogue across fields and at highlighting the productive intersections between economics, geography, finance, language studies, and related areas of applied social sciences.

Despite the variety of topics and methods represented, the contributions share a common commitment to rigorous inquiry and to the critical examination of spatial, social, economic, and cultural processes. Several articles engage explicitly with methodological innovation, proposing new analytical frameworks or refining existing tools, while others adopt historically or empirically grounded perspectives to revisit established questions through fresh lenses. Taken together, the volume illustrates how contemporary research increasingly operates at the intersection of disciplines, drawing on diverse traditions to address complex phenomena. Within this broad framework, the research articles can be grouped into a number of macro-areas that highlight recurring thematic and methodological affinities.

Theoretical and methodological approaches to spatial analysis constitute a first cluster of contributions. In this context, Ettore Asoni's article addresses the growing field of legal geography by proposing a systematic methodology for the analysis of legal cases from a geographic perspective. By guiding geographers through the reading and interpretation of judicial decisions, illustrated through case-law from the European Court of Human Rights, the contribution highlights both the challenges and the potential of engaging with legal texts. The article underscores the importance of contextualizing judicial reasoning and institutional constraints, thereby fostering more meaningful exchanges between geography and legal studies. Methodological innovation is also central to the contribution by Luigi Capoani, Mattia Banin, and Barbara Brollo, which combines classical and contemporary

tools of spatial economics to investigate wage patterns in the United States. By integrating spatial autocorrelation indices with gravitational models, the authors offer a cross-analytical framework capable of capturing complex patterns of spatial concentration and interaction. Their application to manufacturing and financial sector wages demonstrates the value of spatially explicit methods in enriching the analysis of economic dynamics beyond conventional theoretical models. A complementary methodological perspective is offered by the contribution of Gianluigi Salvucci, dealing with the integration of geographical data in support of official statistics, which addresses the growing need to enhance statistical production through spatially explicit information. By focusing on the role of georeferenced data and geographic frameworks, the article highlights how spatial integration can improve the quality, interpretability, and policy importance of official statistics, reinforcing the dialogue between geography, data science, and institutional statistical systems.

A second macro-area concerns urban and regional systems, with particular attention to empirical regularities and long-term structural patterns. Marianna Belloc's article revisits the distribution of city sizes in Italy over more than two decades, engaging with foundational concepts such as Gibrat's and Zipf's laws. Through a comprehensive empirical analysis encompassing the entire population of Italian municipalities, the study contributes to ongoing debates on urban dynamics and the organization of national urban systems. The findings, while confirming several well-established regularities, also highlight the sensitivity of results to methodological choices, thus inviting further reflection on the interpretation of urban scaling laws. Within the same thematic area, Federico De Andreis and Simone Taddeo investigate the relationship between corporate social responsibility and environmental performance in the context of smart cities. Using a large panel dataset of firms operating in leading innovation-driven urban environments worldwide, the authors show that stronger social practices, particularly those related to workforce and community engagement, are significantly associated with improved environmental outcomes. By combining fixed effect and dynamic panel models, the study contributes to current debates on sustainable urban development and highlights the role of firms as key actors in the ecological transition of smart cities.

A third thematic area brings together contributions that adopt historical, cultural, and educational perspectives, exploring how spatial practices and representations evolve across time and institutional contexts. Matteo Nardozi's article examines the development of the hospitality industry in Italian East Africa during the 1930s and 1940s, positioning it within broader debates on colonial economies and tourism. By engaging with existing theoretical frameworks on the historical roles of hotels, the study offers a critical assessment of whether it is possible to speak of a structured tourism industry in the former imperial territories, or whether structural and political constraints ultimately limited private initiative.

Educational practices and cultural heritage are at the heart of Francesca Sabatini's contribution, which addresses outdoor and augmented geography education in upper secondary schools. Through the presentation of a PCTO project carried out in Rome, the article illustrates how experiential, collaborative, and digitally enhanced fieldwork can foster new forms of engagement with urban space and cultural heritage. By linking geography education with heritage studies and digital storytelling, the contribution advocates for pedagogical approaches that integrate territorial, socio-cultural, and informational dimensions.

A fourth macro-area encompasses language, technology, and applied analysis, highlighting the impact of digital tools on academic and professional practices. The article by Patrizia Giampieri investigates the use of machine translation and language model tools in the generation of academic abstracts, focusing on the Italian-English pair of languages. By systematically comparing automated outputs with an official translation and integrating corpus-based evidence into the post-editing process, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of corpus-driven approaches in improving translation quality. The contribution also reflects on the implications of these findings for translation practice and language education, particularly in academic contexts.

Finally, this volume includes a contribution situated within financial economics and quantitative modeling, which addresses contemporary challenges in portfolio optimization. Denis Velu proposes a two-stage enhancement of risk parity models by integrating mean-variance analysis and expected shortfall for asset selection. Tested across different asset classes, including equities, bonds, and cryptocurrencies, the proposed framework responds to the growing need for robust strategies in volatile financial environments, illustrating how advanced risk measures can be operationalized within practical investment models.

This year, we have omitted the Notes and Discussion section. Meanwhile, the Critical Reviews section features one selected contribution, reflecting both the high selectivity of the section and its focus on emerging scholars, often PhD students or postdoctoral researchers. This section provides a space for critical reflection on established research, methodological debates, and theoretical frameworks. Contributions aim not only to review and synthesize existing literature, but also to identify open questions, suggest analytical tools, and propose directions for future research, thereby fostering scholarly dialogue and innovation. In the present volume, Saverio Di Giorno undertakes a critical examination of the relationship between corruption and economic competition. By systematically engaging with influential studies across different periods, the review highlights how theoretical assumptions, observation units, and empirical measures shape conclusions about the association between corruption and competition. The study identifies four major historical phases, from early development-theory perspectives to contemporary micro-level analyses, underscoring how results vary across spatial scales and emphasizing gaps in extendable measures and definitions. By offering critical tools and identifying new research questions, this contribution exemplifies the role of the Critical Reviews section in stimulating future scholarship and methodological innovation.

The Book Reviews section of this volume offers critical engagements with recent publications spanning demography, geography, environmental justice, and digital geopolitics. The reviews in this section aim to provide readers with informed perspectives on contemporary scholarship, highlighting both methodological and conceptual contributions, as well as potential avenues for further research. The reviews are written by scholars with expertise in the respective fields, who guide the reader to position each work within broader academic debates and applied contexts. More precisely, the first review, by Maria Rita Sebastiani, examines the manuscript *Rapporto sulla popolazione. Verso una demografia positiva*, edited by Daniele Vignoli and Anna Paterno. Sebastiani evaluates the contribution of the volume to demographic research, focusing on its methodological innovations and its

reflections on the dynamics of the contemporary population. The second review, by Gozde Yildiz, provides a critical perspective on *Citizen Science, territorio e comunità: prospettive geografiche per la ricerca e azione*, authored by Venere Stefania Sanna, Cristina Capineri, Giacomo-Maria Salerno, and Michela Teobaldi. Yildiz engages in the discussion of participatory research and the integration of local communities in geographic inquiry, assessing both its theoretical framing and practical implications. Lidia Scarpelli provides the third review, in which she considers the edited volume *La giustizia ambientale in Italia. Diario di una giornata, per parole e immagini*, by Roberta Gemmiti, Maria Rosaria Prisco, and Daniela Festa. Scarpelli highlights the work's approach to environmental justice, emphasizing its innovative combination of narrative, visual documentation, and legal analysis to explore environmental challenges in the Italian context. Finally, Antonella Leoncini Bartoli reviews *Géopolitique du numérique. L'impérialisme à pas de géants*, by Ophelie Colheo. Bartoli examines the book's exploration of digital geopolitics and technological imperialism, discussing how the author frames the interplay between technological development, global power structures, and international policy. Together, these reviews offer readers a curated view of recent scholarship across diverse fields, providing analytical tools, critical perspectives, and insights for both specialists and a broader scholarly audience.

We would like to extend our warm regards to Roberta Gemmiti for her continued contributions to the Journal, and we are pleased to welcome Cesare Di Felicianantonio as new Editor-in-Chief. We also express sincere thanks to Giacomo Spanu, Kseniya Hilo, and Carolina Falaguasta for their dedication and effort during the post-production phase, which has been essential to bringing this volume to completion.

We hope that the present volume will stimulate further dialogue, reflection, and research across the diverse fields represented, offering readers both inspiration and rigorous scholarship, and fostering ongoing engagement within the multidisciplinary community of Annali MEMOTEF.

Finally, we also wish to add our voice to honouring the memory of Professor Raimondo Cagiano deAzevedo, to whom this volume is dedicated. A dedicated contribution, authored by Alessandra De Rose and Cristina Giudici, appears in a separate section of this issue, providing reflections and memories that celebrate his personal and academic legacy.

December 2025

Venere Stefania Sanna
Immacolata Oliva

In Memoriam

This Journal's issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo, who passed away on January 3rd, 2025. He was one of the founders of the Department of Methods and Models for Economics, Territory and Finance and a staunch supporter of our Annals, to which he contributed with prestigious articles.

Professor Emeritus of Demography at Sapienza University of Rome, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Economics from 1996 to 2002 and as Rector's Delegate for International Relations from 2005 to 2012.

A figure of extraordinary academic and human stature, his career stands as an enduring example of dedication to educating new generations committed to the study of population issues and European integration. Among his many appointments, he served for over thirty years as the Italian Government's Delegate to the Council of Europe's Population Committee, where he was also the Chairholder of the position.

At the beginning of the 2000s, he conceived the idea of creating a laboratory to promote cultural diversity and elaborate scenarios for the future of migration, recognizing population, migration, and development as some of the key issues of concern of the time.

He believed international migrations were evolving as a result of the global transformations affecting the world, and he saw migration as an opportunity to foster growth and development as well as strengthen intercultural relations. Out of this vision, in 2008 he founded our UNESCO Chair in Population, Migration and Development - the first UNESCO Chair hosted by Sapienza University. Under his guidance, the Chair has successfully contributed to building capacity in teaching and in research and to promoting a multidisciplinary scientific approach in the field of development, population and migrations, with the basic premise that human rights should be at the core of any approach to human mobility.

Were he with us today, he would remind us that the *acquis communautaire* (a set of rights and duties that Europeans have given themselves over the past decades and that more than anything distinguish the "European model" in the world) is a new frontier among extra-European migrants, asylum seekers and Europeans to be progressively crossed thanks to the access to rights, citizenship and to the fight against any form of discrimination.

This enduring legacy of scholarship, vision and humanity inspired and still inspire generations of young scholars, who found in him a constant example of dedication to research, academic life and civic engagement.

December 2025

Alessandra De Rose, Cristina Giudici