UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI CAGLIARI

Economics Seminars

Thursday 9 November 2023 at 12:00

Aula Magna Edificio Baffi

Facoltà di Scienze Economiche Giuridiche e Politiche - Viale Sant'Ignazio 74

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Glowing coals of the stake: Can witch-hunts help explain regional gender inequalities?

Abstract. We investigate the relationship between the spread of witch-hunts in Europe in the early-modern period and the contemporary gender inequalities in European regions. The empirical analysis at the NUTS3 regional level reveals that regions that witnessed the "witch craze" in the past tend to be significantly different from regions without such an experience regarding the sex ratio and several fertility indicators. Moreover, we show that the characteristics of witch-hunts, for instance, in terms of their intensity, severity, duration and timing, but also the gender bias in the persecutions for witchcraft toward the male or the female sex play a role in explaining the regional variation in contemporary gender disbalances. Remarkably, population in regions that experienced witch-hunts have a significantly lower level of egalitarian attitudes toward the role of women in society. We argue that these observations provide indications of a long-term persistence of local social norms related to gender roles in a society.

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