



Economics Seminars

Friday 30 May 2025 at 12:00

Aula Arcari

Facoltà di Scienze Economiche Giuridiche e Politiche - Viale Sant'Ignazio 84

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The Departed: Italian Migration and the American Mafia (with M. Anelli and Z. Porreca)

Abstract. We document the transplantation of the Sicilian Mafia to the United States, driven by the Fascist repression of 32 Sicilian towns in the 1920s. We trace the long-run impact of hundreds of "mafiosi" expelled from these town, who migrated clandestinely and settled in existing enclaves of Sicilian immigrants in major U.S. cities. Using newly digitized administrative and historical data—covering census microdata, mortality records, and declassified FBI files—we find that 75% of future American Mafia leaders had lived in just 1.7% of neighborhoods, all of which hosted migrants from the Fascist-raided towns. These neighborhoods experienced increased incarceration, redlining, and spillover violence in adjacent areas in the short-run, but higher educational attainment, employment, and intergenerational mobility in the long-run. We discuss some explanations for this complex and persistent legacy of organized crime presence.