

Memory, trust and the political culture of the canton

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The history of the bailiwicks survives in the political culture of Ticino. The feeling of being governed from the north by authorities that do not understand the south, the insistence on the equal status of Italian as a national language and the vigilance of Ticinese politicians towards federal decisions that affect the canton's economy all have roots in the experience of subjection. The canton's relationship with the Confederation is that of an equal member, but its politicians are quick to invoke the memory of the *landfogti* when they feel that Bern is neglecting the south, for example in debates over the treatment of cross-border workers, the financial centre's access to the Italian market or the allocation of federal infrastructure investment (Chapters H.I and K.I).¹

For the financial centre, that political culture is an asset as well as a constraint. It produces a strong demand for legal certainty, for local control over tax and economic policy and for respect of Italian-speaking Switzerland in federal institutions (Chapter J.I). It also produces a certain distrust of external authority that can make regulatory change, whether from Bern, Brussels or Rome, politically difficult. The lesson of the bailiwicks for the modern financial centre is that trust in institutions is built by rules that bind the authorities themselves, by judges without a stake in the outcome and by taxes that can be known in advance. These guarantees are now part of Swiss constitutional law. They were not self-evident in the territory that became Ticino, and their history explains why the canton's lawyers, bankers and fiduciaries continue to value them.

1 Notes

1. The references to the memory of the landfogti in current Ticinese political debate are a general observation; no specific statements are cited. ↩

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