



RISE AND DECLINE OF ECONOMIC POLICY AS AN AUTONOMOUS DISCIPLINE: A CRITICAL SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

After Smith's statement of the market virtues the process of gestation of economic policy as a consistent set of rules for public agenda has been rather slow. Until not so long ago economic policy as a discipline was confined to prescribing practical rules intended to explain technical procedures of government intervention. Economic policy as a coherent and to some extent autonomous discipline emerged in the late 1950s in Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Italy, when solid foundations indicating market failures and a theory about conditions for policy effectiveness and design had been developed. This paper intends to explain the reasons for its emergence, the circumstances which helped it to be taught in many Scandinavian, Dutch and Italian universities and a few other European ones, the reasons for its apparent setback and some factors that could facilitate its diffusion in the next years.

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