

Migrations and development in mountain borderlands of Switzerland and Slovenia: a comparative perspective (18th-20th centuries)

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Characterized by different historical paths which have defined their forms of urban and industrial development as well as social traits and identity dynamics, Switzerland and Slovenia have various geographical similarities, as they all include mountain areas, as well as a diversified economic structure and the presence of significant cross-border migratory and mobility events. Influenced by the variable historical roles of the border, the migration practices that developed between the 18th and the first half of the 20th centuries had important effects on the specificities of the economic and social trajectories of the border areas of the two countries.

The project uses a comparative and diachronic perspective to reconstruct and analyse the effects of mobility and migration that affected four territorial realities of Switzerland (the cantons of Neuchâtel and Ticino) and Slovenia (the provinces of Goriška and Styria) between the 18th and mid-20th centuries. In particular, the project aims at verifying the extent to which migration and mobility practices favoured the emergence of specific economic models and peculiar development trajectories in the selected regions. In this perspective, two alternative hypotheses will be considered. The first hypothesis considers the remittances coming from migrants as the origin of the formation of "annuities", based on conservative investments that tend to maintain and defend the existing order in the rural family and its cultural environment. The second hypothesis, which refers to the transnational interpretation of migration, acknowledges that it has contributed to the formation of open economies and "extrovert" models of social development through the contribution of work, the development of skills, know-how and social relations.

On the basis of these hypotheses, the project considers the interactions between national and local development contexts on the one hand, and the propensity of the population to migrate, which may increase as aspirations for better living conditions grow faster than local livelihood opportunities. Migration processes can therefore affect the local development context through their effects on labor supply, consumption, investments, inequality, social stratification, local culture and aspirations.

In order to check these assumptions, the project is structured around three research topics.

The first topic analyses the migrations as phenomena involving flows of goods, financial resources, ideas and relationships that reflect their characteristics and aims. The second topic considers the economic and social inequalities generated by migrations in the territories of departure and arrival. The third topic aims at verifying how and to what extent the borders influenced the incomes of migration and mobility in the territories considered.