



#ReMIGRA22



Fakultät für Bildungswissenschaften  
Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione  
Facoltà de Scienze dta Formazion

Brixen  
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Book of Abstracts

International Conference  
ReMIGRA: Return Migration as an  
Interdisciplinary Research Area

University of Innsbruck, Austria  
June 23/24/25, 2022

## #ReMIGRA22 | THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2022

### Opening

Thursday, June 23, 2022 | 02:00 to 02:30 p.m.

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Ingrid Böhler, Head of Department of Contemporary History,  
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Dirk Rupnow, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and History,  
University of Innsbruck, Austria

### Project Leaders:

Eva Pfanzelter (Innsbruck, Austria)

Andrea Di Michele (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

### Panel 1: Voices of (Return-)Migration

Thursday, June 23, 2022 | 02:30 to 03:30 p.m.

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Andrea Di Michele (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

### A Survey on Re-Migrations in Sicily between 1955 and 1965: Notes for a Mentalities History (IN ITALIAN)

Francesca Frisone (Messina, Italy)

Sicilian emigration after WWII has been extensively investigated, as well as the massive population movements inside and outside the Italian peninsula and islands since the end of the 19th century. Likewise, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of repatriations has allowed historians to identify not only specific “return models” founded on different desires and purposes, but to assess the repatriation’s impact on modernization and/or the conservation processes of migrants’ homelands. However, expectations, mentalities, and specific needs of the re-integrated migrants in their communities of origin have not been thoroughly investigated by academia. Based on unpublished archival material, my paper deals with these specific features of repatriations in Sicily in the early 1960s. The central sources will be a survey carried out in 1964 by the Pontificia Università Gregoriana and the Directorate for Agriculture and Development of the European Commission. This survey takes a snapshot of the socio-economic situation of three backward villages in the center of Sicily. Among the pages of this dossier, I was able to find a specific chapter dedicated to emigration and to the mentality of repatriated as well as “definitive” migrants, based on a sample of about 150 interviews. The survey highlights the irreversible crisis of the agricultural

economy as the main “push” factor of local emigration, and the ultimate breakdown of traditional society, reporting data on migrants’ attitudes, on the general and individual needs of the population towards values, authorities, institutions. The authors argued that the migratory experience, in almost all cases, did not improve community spirit in repatriated people, even after several years of residence abroad; they also believed that it was too difficult, if not impossible, to expect some sort of auto-emancipation of the communities under study, underlining the need to invest money and redirect political efforts to “correct” the human factor. Of course, by looking at this kind of statement, we have to take into account the cultural climate within which this research was done, a specific attitude that deals with the problem of Sicilian economic backwardness by placing it mainly as a cultural and social problem.

#### About Emigrating and Returning: Five Examples from the Aosta Valley

(IN ITALIAN)

Alessandro Celi (Aosta, Italy)

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Aosta Valley was the Italian region with the highest percentage of emigrants compared to its population. Approximate estimates calculate that about 25 % of the population settled permanently in a foreign country, while another significant percentage moved to other Italian regions or experienced seasonal emigration.

All these phenomena have already been studied – albeit partially – for some time; whereas so far, the analysis of return migration – understood as the return of emigrants to their country of origin after decades of living abroad – has been lacking. However, since 2019 research has been promoted by the Presidency of the Region, aimed at reconstructing the history of Aosta Valley migrations. This research made it possible to record many cases of return and to develop the related interpretation grid, whose first results will be illustrated during the conference. This paper will deal with five events, considered exemplary as they make clear the reasons for the return:

- 1) The possibility of buying a farm with the money earned and, therefore, improving one's economic and social condition compared to the one before departure.
- 2) The impossibility of living abroad because of integration difficulties, at least economically.
- 3) The desire to spend retirement in the family home, painstakingly maintained even during the years spent abroad.
- 4) The desire to recover the atmosphere experienced in youth (and the resulting feeling of disorientation when this “recovery” does not happen).
- 5) The will to contribute to cultural and political life in the region of origin.

However, the specificity of the Aosta Valley case lies in the lasting function of stimulus, proposal, and criticism for the region carried out by emigrants and their associations, in a circular process in which emigrant organizations, also supported by the population that remained in the Valley, as well as by the authorities of the Autonomous Region since 1948, exercised a very important role on the population and on the local political world.

#### Biographies

**Andrea Di Michele** is associate Professor of Contemporary History at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. His main research interests are Italian borderlands, Fascism, history of republican Italy, Italians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Italian-Austrian relations. His latest publications are: “Rethinking Fascism. The Italian and German Dictatorships”, Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter, 2022 (ed. with Filippo Focardi); “La difficile riappacificazione. Italia, Austria e Alto Adige nel XX secolo”, Roma, Viella, 2022 (ed. with Andreas Gottsmann, Luciano Monzali and Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler).

**Francesca Frisone** is a Research Fellow in Contemporary History at the Department of Political and Juridical Sciences (University of Messina) within the project “Policy and emergency type laws in the history of the Italian national State”; she also works on immigration in Italy, with a focus on emergency policy and populist use of immigration.

**Alessandro Celi** has obtained the PhD in Contemporary History at the University of Udine. Teaching fellow in contemporary history at the University of Aosta Valley, he is president of the scientific committee of Fondation Émile Chanoux and coordinator of the research project “Mémoire de l’émigration”, promoted by the Aosta Valley Autonomous Region. His articles are published in the last two editions of the report “Italiani nel mondo”.

## Panel 2: The African Experiences

Thursday, June 23, 2022 | 04:00 to 05:30 p.m.

Chair: Eric Burton (Innsbruck, Austria)

### The End of the World as We Know It: Framing Settlers' Return to Italy in the Current International Debate (IN ITALIAN)

Emanuele Ertola (Pavia, Italy)

The connection between migratory flows and decolonization has only recently been the object of specific attention. In particular, scholars like Andrea Smith have thoroughly analyzed the return migration of former settlers, problematizing concepts such as "reflux" and "return", which have proved inadequate. This paper deals with the Italian case, starting from two fundamental assumptions. I draw on Pamela Ballinger's hypothesis that the decolonization of the ex-Italian colonies was a thirty-year long process. I also draw on Lorenzo Veracini's theory about the impossible discontinuation of settler colonialism until the complete departure of the settlers. These two complementary premises will allow me to show how this process materialized, for the Italian settlers, in a long and unsuccessful attempt to adapt to the post-colonial circumstances without losing the old status. A necessary renegotiation between former dominators and former dominated actually never happened; in its place, we see the attempt to maintain roles and privileges, followed by (forced or voluntary) departure. The act of leaving is therefore a central point in the end of the colonial world, also in the Italian case. In the second part, I will explain how, in order to deconstruct and analyze this departure, we cannot treat it in an undifferentiated way. It must be articulated and periodized in three phases: the first immediately after the loss of the colonies, between 1941 and 1945; the second in the 1940s and 1950s; the third in the early 1970s, forced by new regimes (Gaddafi in Libya, Mengistu in Ethiopia) and by the war between Ethiopia and the Eritrean Liberation Front. I will therefore show the differences between these three different waves in terms of consistency, social composition, motivations, and reception by Italy. Finally, I will conclude by placing the Italian case in a comparative perspective. In the context of the other "return" flows from the former colonies to the motherland, particular attention will be paid to the Japanese case. The vast historiographical attention of which it has been the subject allows us to make useful comparisons between different methodologies and results.

### A Work Experience: Narratives of Colonial Past in Post-Colonial Italy (IN ITALIAN)

Alessandro Pes (Cagliari, Italy)

The end of Italian colonialism was sanctioned by the 1947 Peace Treaty and subsequently by the resolutions of the United Nations Organization in 1949. Between 1946 and 1949, the first post-war Italian governments attempted to take over the administration of the colonial possessions they had been in control of lost during the World War. In carrying out this policy, the Italian institutions produced narratives on the colonial past that aimed to convince other countries of the Italian "right" to the "return to Africa". This "right" was based on the assertion that the former colonies were the fruit of the work of the Italian colonists. This rhetoric met the one with which the "refugees of Africa" asked, in the same years, to be able to "go home" to the colonies. Through numerous conferences and public appeals, the Italian settlers repatriated during the Second World War and in the following years claimed their right to return to the colonies, where they owned homes and had work. Through the analysis of different sources (historical diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Giuseppe Brusasca Fund, and associations of former Italian colonists), the paper will reflect on how, starting in 1946, work emerged as the dominant trait in the institutional reconstruction of the Italian colonial past. This narrative was accompanied by an interpretation of Italian colonialism as a migratory movement of proletarians and members of the lower classes, different from that of other colonial powers' European communities dedicated to the exploitation of colonies. The paper will also investigate the ambiguous concept of homeland as it was developed in the communities of former Italian colonists in East Africa and Libya. By reconstructing the various steps in the construction of such narratives, the paper will reflect on how these rhetorics have influenced the way in which Italian society in the Republican period thought of its own colonial past and how the Italian former colonists were depicted as migrants.

### Returning Moroccan Migrants and the Image of International Emigration to Europe (IN ENGLISH)

Abdallah Zouhairi (Casablanca, Morocco)

This paper discusses the influence of return migration on international emigration intentions from a rural Moroccan region known for its long history of emigration to Europe. The definite or long term return of migrants previously settled in Italy and Spain also operates a change in the representation of these countries in particular and Europe in general as an "El Dorado". The history of international emigration in this region began in the 1990s, encouraged by the economic boom in some European countries. The first generation of these migrants succeeded in offering their families back home material and symbolic resources that enabled them to make a rapid rise in their communities. Punctual returns of first migrants to the

country were accompanied by a display of goods and symbols of relative wealth compared to those who remained in the country. These temporary returns to the country led to a positive representation of international migration to Europe to escape poverty and unemployment prevalent in the community of origin. Since the European economic crisis in 2008, waves of return migration have begun to overturn these images of success to a less golden representation of international migration. This reversal has taken place through the fallen social and economic status of return migrants and the narratives of failure and stigma that have accompanied the presence of return migrants in their communities of origin. This reversal of Europe's representation had two consequences: First, the attractiveness of international migration to Europe has diminished among young people in the region, favoring internal migration as more accessible and safer. Second, the social stigma experienced by returnees who have not been able to rebuild a stable economic activity in Morocco has meant that they have maintained a project to return to Europe in the context of undocumented migration attempts through the strait of Gibraltar or the Balkan Road.

### Biographies

**Eric Burton** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck. He specializes in the entangled histories of development, socialisms and decolonization with a focus on Tanzania and East Germany. His most recent articles appeared in the *Journal of Global History*, the *Journal of African Historical Studies* and the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

**Emanuele Ertola** is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Contemporary History at the University of Pavia and Adjunct professor of Contemporary History at the University of Siena. His research deals with various areas of Italian history including fascism, colonialism, decolonization and emigration, on which he has published numerous contributions including "In terra d'Africa. Gli italiani che colonizzarono l'impero" (Laterza, 2017) and "Il colonialismo degli italiani. Storia di un'ideologia" (Carocci, 2022 forthcoming).

**Alessandro Pes** is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary History at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Cagliari. He deals with the history of colonialism and decolonization and the history of fascism in Italy. His research is now focused on the history of the Italian decolonization and the myth of the "good colonist".

**Abdallah Zouhairi** has held a doctorate in sociology since 2014, and he is currently an associate researcher at Hassan II University in Casablanca (Morocco). His current research interests include migration and mobility, shared knowledge, and standard tactics in dealing with precariousness in different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

## Round Table

Thursday, June 23, 2022 | 06:00 to 07:30 p.m.

Chair: Wolfgang Meixner (Innsbruck, Austria) | IN ENGLISH

### Return Migration, Welfare, and the French-Luxembourg Borderlands after the First World War

Machteld Venken (Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

This contribution makes the argument that the decision of an estimated number of 100-200 Luxembourg soldiers who had fought in the French Foreign Legion during the First World War to settle in postwar Luxembourg was caused by veteran welfare provisions. The French-Luxembourg state border line provoked the establishment and implementation of policies and practices of veteran welfare selection, which resulted in the composition of a specific mixed welfare system for veterans. During my presentation, I use individual military and state pension records in order to shed light on the possibilities of individual veterans, including war invalids, to profit (or not) from cross-border welfare by means of return migration. There are clear indications, for example, that veterans waited until the French state declared them to be entitled to a war pension before settling in Luxembourg. Return migration, indeed, did not prevent them from still receiving the French war pension.



*This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 882549).*

### Processes and dynamics of social cohesion in remigration studies

Massimiliano Livi (Trier, Germany)

In the context of the transformations taking place in the international world of states and their legal, economic and monetary order since the 1970s, interdependencies are emerging not only between countries and states, but also between certain regions and people who are part of different migration systems and forms. Migration and remigration as forms of movement across borders are, for example, also important factors in the transfer of knowledge and know-how between countries and regions in which multicultural hubs for the transnational transfer (and production) of goods, know-how and culture are formed.

However, the opening processes of the last 40 years have not only meant the development of opportunities for (re)migrants, but also new individual and collective challenges, which have ultimately led to various closure phenomena. These and other factors are, on the one hand, driving different integration and inclusion processes, and on the other, they have massive effects, both positive and negative, on the different processes and dynamics of creating social cohesion.

In order to better focus on such developments and interconnections, migration research has developed new approaches in recent years, such as the “localist” approach of J. Oltmer, which examines the relational connections and inclusion/exclusion dynamics on the ground, or the post-migrant approach, which proposes breaking the categorical division between “migrants” and “non-migrants”. What perspectives do such approaches (interdependency, local focus, post-migrant perspective) open up for the study of remigration? This input contribution will reflect on this question by means of a reception of the different contributions during the conference. Rather than providing answers, the aim is to generate new questions that will stimulate joint discussion.

### **Return Migration as an Interdisciplinary Research Area. Using the Example of the South Tyrolean “Return Option”**

Eva Pfanzelter (Innsbruck, Austria)

When it comes to the return of refugees, concentration camp survivors, displaced persons, and prisoners of war during and after the Second World War, research started relatively late but has grown significantly over the past decades. There were also studies specifically interested in the Italian case. For the territories on its northern border annexed in 1919, the German-speaking South Tyrol, the situation in 1945 was particularly difficult: Due to the “Option”, an emigration agreement between the dictators Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler in 1939, about 86 percent of the population voted to leave their homeland, and 75.000 South Tyroleans actually left the region to emigrate to the German Reich. At the end of the war all those who had opted to leave found themselves without citizenship – both in Italy and in Austria or Germany. The return of those who had left South Tyrol was possible only illegally until 1948, where an agreement for the return of the “Optants” was signed (the so-called “Optantendekret”). To retrace the history of the organized return migration movement is at the center of the presented project. It will be shown that despite a rather well documented remigration, the disparate archival findings make it difficult to write a conclusive history of the “Return Option”. This is why some aspects of this history have so far been rather marginalized, such as the centrality of economic considerations when giving “Optants” the right to return, which depended on their Nazi past, or when delaying or accelerating cross-border movement.

### **Biographies**

**Wolfgang Meixner**, born 1961 in Jenbach, Tyrol. Studies of European Ethnology, History and Interdisciplinary Subjects at the University of Innsbruck; 2001 Ph.D. Research assistant at the Institute of History at the University of Innsbruck from 1991, since 2007 assistant professor in a tenure-track position. Major fields of research and teaching: social and economic history with quantitative and qualitative methods. From October 2007 until the end of February 2020 he held the position of Vice Rector for Personnel Affairs at the University of Innsbruck.

**Machteld Venken** is a Professor of Contemporary Transnational History at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C<sup>2</sup>DH). Her main research interests are transnational, transregional, and comparative histories of Europe, migration, borderlands, oral history, the history of families and children, and citizen science.

**Massimiliano Livi** studied English and German Literature in Perugia, followed by a doctorate in Sociology of Politics (Münster) in 2005 and in History (Florence) in 2009. He teaches and guides researchers in European Contemporary History at the University of Trier. Since 2019, he has held the UniGR-CBS Chair in Border Studies at the Universities of Trier and Metz. Livi is the author of numerous publications on various topics of Contemporary History, including political and social systems as well work and labor history.

**Eva Pfanzelter** is associate Professor of Contemporary History and its deputy head, as well as at the University of Innsbruck. Her fields of research and teaching are European and regional Contemporary History, Holocaust Studies, Memory and Politics of Memory, Migration, Digital Humanities.

## #ReMIGRA22 | FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2022

### Panel 3: The Value of Numbers

Friday, June 24, 2022 | 09:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Chair: Andrea Di Michele (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

#### Returnees from Work Abroad to Serbia: Full Suitcases of Capital(s)? (IN ENGLISH)

Miloš Milovanović (Budapest, Hungary)

There are pieces of evidence that work experience and skills acquired abroad, by emigrants who returned to the country of origin, increase their incomes more than work participation in the home country. Arguably, studies have reported a wage premium for having been employed abroad for returned migrants in comparison to those without “overboard” working experience (Barrett and O’Connell, 2001; Reinhold and Thom, 2009; Barrett and Goggin, 2010). In this paper, I present a statistical model that explains how return migrations, in the context of the Republic of Serbia, did not offer any evidence of gains for local communities of their origin (region). Namely, by using official data obtained from the Statistical Office of Serbia (SORS) the statistical model confirmed the existence of a negative correlation between the share of return migrants and the level of development, life expectancy (healthy life expectancy), and earnings. Thus, the study has the intention to illustrate how regions with a high share of return migrants underperformed, on average, in comparison to the communities in which the rate of return migrants is modest. The ideal approach to examine this question would be to jointly examine these decisions at the individual level using longitudinal data that followed individuals in a representative sample over time. Unfortunately, data on remigrations are insufficient and cannot meet this norm. Instead, the study utilizes a dataset with measures obtained mainly from the censuses and subsequently published reports at the regional level, therefore, exploring aggregated connections between return migrations and several variables that could explain the achieved level of development. Finally, return migration has a significant effect on home countries, so home countries need to collect adequate data to augment understanding of the consequences of return migration. Eventually, the contribution of migrants to the development of their home country is the mixture of the social and financial capital they bring back, but the usefulness will vary even from one region to another within the same country.

#### Italian “golondrinas” Migrants between the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

An Empirical Verification (IN ITALIAN)

Stefano Gallo (Naples/Pisa, Italy)

Historiography on international migrations has long accepted the existence of a migratory typology that had a particular development between Italy and Argentina at the turn of the

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: the so-called “golondrinas”, agricultural workers who took advantage of the alternation of agricultural calendars between the hemispheres in order to carry out the harvest season, when the intense demand for labor raised wages twice a year both at home and abroad. The “golondrinas” migrations took on peculiar characteristics in the words of the press and commentators of the time, with very decisive traits. On this basis, an enduring mythology about this species of globetrotting laborers was built. “An army of nomads [...] who chased the summers and the times of ripening of the crops on two hemispheres”: this is how Ercole Sori, a leading scholar in the history of Italian migration, described it in 1979. The actual number of this migrant group, however, remains extremely uncertain, with estimates that have fluctuated over time – depending on the scholars and on purely hypothetical bases - between 7,500 and 250,000 units per year; recent international studies have assumed as realistic the estimate of about 20,000 migrants per year. The problem of a more solid quantification remains. Since this is an extremely volatile type of migration, characterized by a continuous cycle of departures and returns, identifying the numbers is extremely complex: the “golondrina” worker can be confused with the mass of migrants who moved to carry out the same type of agricultural operations but decided to stay in Argentina. It is necessary to find a tool that can follow the migrants’ movements over time. An attempt to catch these workers can be made through the analysis of a database containing the landing lists of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires. This source, a copy of which is currently in the possession of the Centro Altrealtie of Turin, was organized under the direction of Luigi Favero in the 1990s by the Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos of Buenos Aires with the contribution of the Einaudi Foundation of Turin, and contains the names of over one million arrivals that took place in the port of Buenos Aires between 1882 and 1920.

#### A Historical Atlas of the “South Tyrolean Return Option” (IN ITALIAN)

Valerio Larcher (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

The “South Tyrolean Option” and “Return Option” share a great potential for historical spatial representation due to the intrinsic geographic mobility of their events and people involved. Moreover, a cartographic-historic approach to the study of these topics may offer new research opportunities both academically and dissemination-wise. This paper aims to introduce the possibilities of analyzing and depicting a return migration via GIS-based technology by showcasing some interactive historical maps created with the ArcGIS suite on the subject of “South Tyrolean Option” and “Return Option” between 1940 and 1952. The interactive maps that will be presented, some of which are already available online, have been created as part of the ReMIGRA project, a joint project of the universities of Innsbruck and Bolzano on the return migration of South Tyrolean optants. These maps ideally represent a form of testing grounds for a possible future interactive Historical Atlas of the “South Tyrolean Option” and derive from the statistical data obtained by the digitization and

analysis of archival documents that have been collected during the project. The paper will highlight how the visualization of the movements of people and that of spatial networks via interactive maps may represent a useful research tool for historical migration studies, as well as for historical divulgation. The active comparison of different data categories and times within the same map, thanks to the use of layers and chronological sliders, will be particularly underlined due to its potential for boosting the analysis' possibilities of various statistical data obtained from the archives.

### Biographies

**Andrea Di Michele** is associate Professor of Contemporary History at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. His main research interests are Italian borderlands, Fascism, history of republican Italy, Italians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Italian-Austrian relations. His latest publications are: "Rethinking Fascism. The Italian and German Dictatorships", Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter, 2022 (ed. with Filippo Focardi); "La difficile riappacificazione. Italia, Austria e Alto Adige nel XX secolo", Roma, Viella, 2022 (ed. with Andreas Gottsmann, Luciano Monzali and Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler).

**Miloš Milovanović** is currently at Corvinus University in Budapest. He graduated in Demography and Population Studies at the University Of Belgrade, in the Faculty of Geography, at the Department of Demography. His present researches are dealing with the influence of aging, migrations, and depopulation on politics, history, and the economy of Serbia, with special emphasis on the field of so-called political demography.

**Stefano Gallo** is Senior Researcher at the Institute for studies on the Mediterranean (ISMed-CNR) in Naples and professor of Migration History at the University of Pisa. He is the Director of the Franco Serantini Library (BFS) in Pisa, and member of the board of the Italian Society for Labor History (SISLAV). His main fields of research are Labor History and Migration History.

**Valerio Larcher** is a native of Bolzano and currently a member of the ReMIGRA research team. He achieved the Bachelor's (2011) and Master's (2014) Degrees as well as his PhD (2018) at the University of Padua, in History, Historical Sciences, and Historical, Geographical, and Anthropological studies respectively. His main research fields are the study and analysis of Historical Atlases and the subject of "History and Video Games".

## Panel 4: Aspects of Trans-Remigration

Friday, June 24, 2022 | 11:00 to 12:00 a.m.

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Chair: Valerio Larcher (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

### "Voluntary" Return instead of Deportation?! A Social Work Perspective on the Return of Refugees in Germany (IN GERMAN)

Claudia Olivier-Mensah (Mainz, Germany)

Ever since in 2015 the "refugee crisis" was proclaimed by Europe and 1.1 million asylum seekers were registered in Germany that year, calls for "the" solution to the problem have become louder and louder: Return! Increasing financial investments in assisted return programmes can be observed in Germany and Europe in general. Beside offensive practices of deportation, asylum seekers are therefore also called upon to "voluntarily" return to their countries of origin. In 2017 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) together with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) initiated the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" to organize and monitor voluntary returns. The talk will be based on the results of the PRIM study ("Project Migrants Interested in Returning"), which was carried out in 2019 at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU). The study focused on refugees from the 13 countries of origin (Egypt, Afghanistan, Albania, Gambia, Ghana, Iraq, Kosovo, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Serbia, Tunisia and Gambia) of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities", which GIZ is implementing. The research is based on the social work concept of the lifeworld-approach and focuses on a comprehensive analysis of the needs, motivations, and wishes of refugees with regard to support services/actors and access to these initiatives in the context of return migration. Based on a quantitative data analysis of the target group and qualitative interviews with refugees and various support actors, data was collected on the needs, living conditions, and future orientations with regard to the topic of return in Germany. An analysis of the options of return as well as the respondents' own perspectives on a potential return is the main focus of the study. In addition, the analysis provides insight on the awareness and use of support services for coping with everyday life as well as the planning of a return. The lecture will discuss the main results of the study and reflect on the myth of a "voluntary" return.

### In Search of Family Roots: Genealogical Tourism (IN ITALIAN)

Cinzia Buccianti (Siena, Italy) and Martina Semboloni (Pisa, Italy)

International migration is becoming increasingly important in Italy, from different points of view: it concerns structural, productive, socio-cultural, and demographic issues. In this context, a new form of tourism is taking on a certain importance, especially at international level. This is return tourism, i.e. citizens who have emigrated abroad or their children who decide to return to the countries of origin of their parents or grandparents in search of their family roots. Since the 1990s, millions of people have been retracing their steps or those of their ancestors, motivated by nostalgia and the desire to see their places of origin again, or by the curiosity to visit the land of their ancestors. Some countries have invested resources and capital into this particular form of tourism. England has focused on genealogical tourism and incorporated it into cultural tourism by creating ad hoc products. Ireland has promoted genealogical tourism through the collaboration of different organizations and by creating the Irish Genealogy Limited, an organization dedicated to researching family history records. In Italy, however, this new form of tourism is struggling to take off. Although there is a certain interest on the part of emigrants or their descendants to retrace their steps or those of their ancestors and return to their lands of origin, Italy underestimates the effects that this phenomenon would have in some inland areas and in some villages that have been characterized by migration processes. This work attempts to outline the characteristics of tourism and of the returning tourist and how this in Italy can represent an opportunity from different points of view. First of all, the repopulation of rural areas, and, secondly, the recovery and rediscovery of traditions that represent the core of the cultural heritage of many Italian realities, which can be shared with those living abroad also through the generations of descendants. In short, ancestral tourism, using Anglo-Saxon language, interprets a marketing opportunity by encouraging an increasing number of people to stay in villages and small towns in Italy with a view to genealogical research.

### Biographies

**Valerio Larcher** is a native of Bolzano and currently a member of the ReMIGRA research team. He achieved the Bachelor's (2011) and Master's (2014) Degrees as well as his PhD (2018) at the University of Padua, in History, Historical Sciences, and Historical, Geographical, and Anthropological studies respectively. His main research fields are the study and analysis of Historical Atlases and the subject of "History and Video Games".

**Claudia Olivier-Mensah**, Prof.<sup>in</sup> Dr.<sup>in</sup> phil., is a Professor of Social Work at the IU International University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, Germany. Her current research interests are migration and flight, return and (re)integration as well as social networks. In her research, she focused

in particular on Sub-Saharan Africa. Characteristic of her work is that she approaches the topic of return migration from a social work perspective.

**Cinzia Buccianti** is Professor of Demography (SECS-S/04) at the University of Siena. Her main interests are historical demography, with particular reference to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and social demography, in particular issues related to aging and decreased birth-rate.

**Martina Semboloni** is a PhD candidate in Political Science, Geopolitics curriculum, at the University of Pisa. Her main interests are the history of population, welfare, and health in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### Panel 5: Transatlantic return migration

Friday, June 24, 2022 | 02:00 to 04:00 p.m.

Chair: Verena Hechenblaikner (Innsbruck, Austria) and  
Giada Noto (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

#### Return to Europe: Transatlantic Temporary Movements from the Habsburg Empire to the United States of America, 1890s to 1914 (IN GERMAN)

Annemarie Steidl (Vienna, Austria)

Nearly eighteen million people left Eastern and Southern Europe for the US from 1890 to the 1930s. US immigration records show that at 27.9 percent, individuals from the Habsburg Empire formed the largest group of US-bound migrants between 1902 and 1911, followed by migrants from the Kingdom of Italy and the Russian Empire. However, migration routes have never been one-way streets. According to US Immigration Bureau records, in 1908, the return rate to Imperial Austria was 39.5 percent, and the percentage of those who returned to the Hungarian Kingdom was slightly lower, at 37.9 percent. About 1.2 million Austro-Hungarians moved to the US between 1908 and 1913, and about 460,000 of them returned. For many, moving back to Europe had always been the plan. One sailed quite a distance in crossing the Atlantic, and this journey included one or more long train rides, nonetheless, many international moves were circular. The increased globalization of the labor market at the end of the nineteenth century transformed lifelong commitments to temporary movements. Return migration and its social and economic consequences were and are vital components in the story of human mobility, but one which has only recently begun to attract serious attention from scholars. Traditionally, returnees have often been viewed as "failures" who

did not adapt to the host country and its culture. On the contrary, it seems that the decision to return was just as likely the result of a positive reason as a negative one, and rather than being viewed as failures, return migrants were simply part of a global migration system in which some people circulated around the world as easily as others moved frequently within circumscribed local areas. The successful ones who came back to Europe were important agents of change, innovators, and investors. They sent back money as remittances during their time in the US, brought back so-called pocket remittances, as well as experiences, skills, and knowledge that greatly helped the economic development of their regions of origin.

#### **The Harbor of Hamburg as Bottleneck: Infrastructures of Trans-Atlantic Return Migration around 1900 (IN ENGLISH)**

Agnes Gehbald (Bern, Switzerland)

The history of transatlantic migration had changed substantially due to the new modes of transportation at the turn of the nineteenth century. With steamship liners connecting Europe and the Americas, the patterns of migration became strikingly different. Port statistics give proof of the thousands of Europeans who emigrated to North America (35 million) and Latin America (8 million) during the “age of mass migration” (1815–1939). However, up to 50 percent of those migrants would return to their home countries after some time abroad. Port cities such as Hamburg were central transfer points not only for the many emigrants, but also for returning migrants. Emigrants decided to come back to their home countries due to a spectrum of reasons, including patriotism, economic success or failure, homesickness, and changed working contexts, with the backward passage being made possible by the new modes of transportation. Little is known about the history of infrastructures and the business of return via port cities as sites of emigration and immigration. This paper will analyze the challenges of return migration in the harbor of Hamburg, which had a channeling function for the transatlantic migration movement in various countries in Europe around 1900. To cope with the return migration dynamics, authorities in Hamburg established new administrative units and made statistical analyses to get an overview of the phenomenon of return. In view of the high rate of returning migrants, local measures included, among other things, the integration of return migrants in the emigrant stations, the introduction of identity cards, and the relocation of railway connections from Hamburg to South Germany, Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Romania, and Bulgaria. For the migrants originating from different parts of Europe, infrastructure management had to bring together shipping and railways to enable them to return home.

#### **“Oh Great America, Oh Beloved Mountains.” Return Migration from the United States to the Modenese Apennines: a Research of Oral History (IN ITALIAN)**

Marco Moschetti (Bologna, Italy)

“Return migration is the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration. [...] Often someone has then complained, perhaps in a footnote, that ‘little is known about those who have returned’” (King 2000). Although history has dealt extensively with migratory processes, the emphasis has rarely been placed on returns (see Cerase 1971; Gentileschi and Simoncelli 1983; Baldassar 2009; Vaschetto 1999, 241-259). But if we talk about gaps in the studies on return migration, we must not refer only to those who, after an attempt in a migration experience, had to return home for legal reasons – as in the case of expulsions or rejections, in the past as in those years – but also to those who, having considered their parable as immigrants to be over, decide to return to their homeland. My work is the story of a field research that began in 2013 and is constantly expanding, during which more than twenty interviews were recorded. Talking with returned migrants who, from the United States where they had landed between the 40s and 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, came back to the mountains of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, somebody showed me a funeral flag of a cousin who died in the Korean War, others told me about the tradition to gather in order to celebrate Thanksgiving, but in an “emiliano” version. The research has brought amazing results, also supported by other materials collected: More than 20 questionnaires were submitted to immigrants who, following the same path toward the United States, decided to remain overseas. In addition, a long and deep archival work was done to reconstruct the history of emigration from the Apennines, including a “snapshot” of the current situation, through the data of the AIRE – the foreign resident Italians registry.

#### **Narratives of Italian Transatlantic Remigration, 1898 to 1936 (IN ENGLISH)**

Lorella Viola (Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

Despite the large body of knowledge dedicated to the study of historical migration, return migration – also known as remigration or repatriation – continues to be a largely neglected topic. The reasons for this are complex, but generally speaking, a lack of interest from historians and scarcity of primary sources are at the root of the neglect. Today, perhaps due to the ever-larger amount of available digital sources, remigration has gained momentum. With specific reference to Italian remigration from the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, the few available studies so far have focussed on the socio-economic integration of returned migrants (about 1,400,000 individuals) (Cinel 2002) and on how such processes may have impacted the wider Italian economy (see for instance, Cerase 1967; 1974); others have looked at the journey itself as a historically charged event (Molinari 2017). Though undoubtedly important contributions to the field, these works either take a macro

approach based on the analysis of historical events, statistics, and socio-economic indicators or they adopt a zoom-in perspective based on a limited amount of small case studies.

By integrating both methods and using for the first time Italian immigrant newspapers as a source, this study innovatively contributes to this understudied field of inquiry. Indeed, because they reported on migration to their main participants, immigrant newspapers – traditionally excluded from mainstream scholarship – offer unique perspectives on how migration was perceived by migrants and narrated to migrants themselves. Specifically, I use Italian American newspapers from 1898 to 1936 as collected in *ChroniclItaly 3.0* (Viola and Fiscarelli 2021) to analyze migrants' account of remigration against the context of the national debate of emigration and remigration. The combination of distant (collocation and bigrams) and close reading methods (critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory) shows that while the Italian public discourse praised and actively encouraged remigration as positive for the country, both economically and socially, Italian Americans' views were more complex and ambivalent. Four main types of narratives have been identified:

1) "I Ritornati" – as returned migrants were called – were framed as individuals improved by the migratory experience and therefore as having good impact on Italian society; this narrative was often found in relation to remittances; 2) Repatriated Italians were described as having deteriorated by their migration, especially morally, and as having a negative influence on Italian society; 3) Italians who had been rejected at Ellis Island or who went back to Italy because of poor health were framed as being a failure at best and as bad for the Italian "race" at worst; and finally 4) Italians who returned during WWI were described as patriotic in mainstream newspapers such as "L'Italia" but naive in anarchic newspapers such as "Cronaca Sovversiva". The discrepancy between the exalted domestic discourse about remigration and the more nuanced – though still mediated – subjective experience of Italian migrants shows how the Italian government's view of remigration – mainly through the lens of domestic economic advantage – deeply underestimated the complexity of migration as a social phenomenon and as a profoundly changing psychological experience. In the long run, this error of judgment deeply damaged Italy as many of those 1,400,000 "ritornati" felt misunderstood and disillusioned and crossed the Atlantic again, this time never to return.

## Biographies

**Verena Hechenblaikner** is a master student of history at the University of Innsbruck and a student assistant at the Department of Contemporary History. She is currently working on her master thesis, which is thematically related to the ReMIGRA project. Her research interests are regional, environmental, and migration history.

**Giada Noto** is a research assistant within the Option Digital project (Unibz & Uibk). She graduated in 2016 in Communication Sciences at the University of Verona and in 2020 in

Historical Sciences with a Master's double degree at the Universities of Bielefeld and Bologna. Her research interests are regional contemporary history, social history, women's and gender history, and post-colonial history.

**Annemarie Steidl** is Associate Professor at the Department of Economic and Social History, University of Vienna. Her research interests include migration and mobility studies, industrialization and urbanization, history of artisans, and gender studies. She published her latest book in 2021, "On Many Routes. Internal, European, and Transatlantic Migration in the Late Habsburg Empire", at Purdue University Press.

**Agnes Gehbald** is a Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Bern. In 2020, she completed her PhD in Latin American History at the University of Cologne. Before, she was a short-term fellow at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University (2018) and a visiting PhD student at the Centre of Latin American Studies at the University of Cambridge (2019–2020).

**Marco Moschetti** is an independent researcher, with interest in geography and history of migration. After a MA in "Anthropology and History of Contemporary Age" with research about return migration from the USA to the Italian mountains, he has obtained a PhD in Social Science and Humanities – Contemporary History, with a thesis about the social inclusion of Italian immigrant in Chicago and their relationship with the African American community, after WWII.

**Dr Lorella Viola** is Research Associate in Linguistics and Digital Humanities at the Center for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH), University of Luxembourg. Her research focuses on the relationship between language, media and society, processes of migration, and migrants' representation, and on developing critical, data-driven methodologies that can assist researchers to explore large historical textual repositories. She also researches how software can enable critical digital humanities practice by embedding the active role of the researcher in the process of knowledge production in a digital environment.

## Panel 6: Aspects of the South Tyrolean Re-Option

Friday, June 24, 2022 | 04:30 to 06:30 p.m

Chair: Eva Pfanzelter (Innsbruck, Austria)

### Return Option in Kanaltal/Valcanale/Kanalska dolina (IN ITALIAN)

Giada Noto (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy)

The paper presents a case study related to the project of Digitization of the DUS-Archives (*Dienststelle Umsiedlung Südtirol*, Resettlement Service South Tyrol) in the Tyrolean Regional Archives and the creation of a database with the records of the Optants, the South Tyroleans migrating to the German Reich after 1939, which has been carried out by the Universities of Bolzano and Innsbruck. The study aims to analyze the impact of the “Option agreement” (*Option*) of 1939 on the territory and on the population of the Kanaltal, a part of the province of Udine, which by virtue of its multilingual population and its recent acquisition to the Kingdom of Italy (after World War I) was included in the resettlement arrangements between fascist Italy and the national-socialist German Reich. A significant part of this research focuses on the Return Option i.e., the possibility to reacquire Italian citizenship, offered starting from 1948 to those who had opted for the Reich. Contrary to what happened in the Province of Bolzano/Bozen, the majority of the Kanaltal people entitled to the Option who had chosen to leave for the Reich did not return to their home villages, as some previous research has shown. Unfortunately, there are very few studies on the subject. The paper will present the current state of this research regarding the newly collected data. The challenges involved in the attempt to reconstruct the Re-Option dynamics in the Kanaltal will be explained, showing how the database can provide a decisive contribution for the reconstruction of this specific history. The first results of the research project will be presented. These focus mainly on the question of Re-Option of the Kanaltal people and the reasons why they did not return, based on political discussions and correspondence between 1946–1948, mainly obtained in the archives of Udine (Archivio di Stato di Udine) and Klagenfurt (Kärntner Landesarchiv).

### The Decision-Making Process and Re-Option of the South Tyrolean Optants from the Perspective of Contemporary Witnesses (IN GERMAN)

Ivan Stecher (Innsbruck, Austria)

This paper first traces the decision-making process of the South Tyrolean Optants after the end of the war – remaining in the new homeland or returning to South Tyrol – and, in a second step, discusses the essential characteristics of their reintegration into South Tyrolean post-war society. The aim of this study is to categorize the reasons most frequently cited by

the witnesses for staying or returning, and to compare these reasons with the current state of research and further research on the legal and socio-demographic background of the time. The same applies to the central factors influencing the reintegration success of the resettlers in South Tyrol. The background of the research focus is the fact that the period between 1939 and 1943 is far overrepresented in the interdisciplinary research literature on the history of the Option due to the thematic focus on option decisions and resettlement – whether on the level of diplomacy history or on the basis of individual case studies – while the events inextricably linked to the *Option* from the post-war years to the economic boom of the 1950s are rarely mentioned. The explanations are based on the thesis that above all, jobs and a system of associations were essential accelerators of integration and at the same time also contributed to the fact that many Optants refused the Return Option after ten years in the “homeland remoteness”. The existence of an apartment influenced the decision to return. However, this could not ensure integration in the case of urban settlements, which risked becoming a place of exclusion and confinement for those who had settled there. More than 50 interviews with contemporary witnesses form the basis for the elaboration of individual decision-making reasons and factors of reintegration success. In addition, historical newspapers, relevant literature as well as diverse archival records makes it possible to enhance understanding about the political background of the time, which contextualizes and complements the output of the Oral History part.

### Border Traffic between North Tyrol and South Tyrol after World War II (IN GERMAN)

Verena Hechenblaikner (Innsbruck, Austria)

The regions of North and South Tyrol have always been closely intertwined politically, economically, and socially. The division of Tyrol in 1919 and the so-called *Option* in 1939, in which the German population of South Tyrol had to opt either for emigrating to the German Reich or for remaining in Italy, marked significant changes in the history of both regions. After World War II, questions such as the return of the South Tyrolean emigrants, the protection of the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol as well as the (economic) relationship between Italy and Austria needed to be clarified. In 1946, Austrian and Italian foreign ministers signed the so-called Gruber-De-Gasperi-Agreement in Paris, which granted the German-speaking inhabitants of South Tyrol an autonomous status within Italy. Although it was still a long way for South Tyrol to full autonomy, this document formed an essential basis for further agreements. With the intention of establishing good neighborly relations between Austria and Italy, it was also decided in Article 3 of the agreement to facilitate border traffic and the exchange of goods. This paper takes a closer look at the border traffic between North Tyrol and South Tyrol after World War II – an important aspect for the returning people – and will present first research results. Initially, there was a passenger agreement between Italy and France, the occupation force in North Tyrol, before a direct agreement was concluded

between Austria and Italy in 1949. While the economic aspects of the border arrangements have already been explored, little is known about the possibilities for people to cross the border, for example to remigrate to South Tyrol. Recently released records of the Austrian Embassy in Rome at the Austrian State Archives in Vienna will be used to outline the making and consequences of the direct agreement – a treaty that already at that time followed the European idea and tried to minimize the barrier of borders.

### Symbolic Policy-Making and Economic Aspects of Return Migration: The South Tyrolean Example (IN GERMAN)

Sarah Oberbichler (Innsbruck, Austria)

Symbolic policy-making and economic aspects are often intertwined, which is especially true for issues related to migration. Migration and remigration are about political, social and economic issues, while public discourse and restriction policies are intended to have a deterrent and symbolic effect. Thus, although economic issues and interests are less present in public discourses, they are not infrequently the main driving force behind political actions. Using the specific example of South Tyrolean return migration after World War II, the so-called return option, this paper takes a closer look at the relationship between economic issues and (symbolic) political discourses and actions, both on the Austrian and the Italian side. The return of South Tyroleans to Italy, who were settled in various parts of the “German Reich” between 1939 and 1943 as a result of the so-called Hitler-Mussolini Agreement, became a major concern after World War II, alongside the issue of South Tyrolean autonomy. While Austrian political figures argued for a fast return of the South Tyrolean optants, Italian figures were concerned about the economic congestion of a possible “mass return”. Pressure on the Austrian side and delaying tactics on the Italian side led to tensions between the two states. The prohibition of return under the guise of denazification, discussions about expropriation, and protracted negotiations on transfer of assets added to these tensions. For some South Tyroleans that wanted to return home, the uncertainty was tragic, as shown in reports of suicides by individual South Tyroleans. Methodologically, this paper analyzes and evaluates political discourses as well as statistical material concerning the return option. Through a meso analytical process, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, digitized archival records from Austria, South Tyrol, and Italy will be examined in order to draw the “bigger picture” on political discourses that accompanied the events at close of the 1940s and beginning 1950s.

### Biographies

**Eva Pfanzer** is associate Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck. Her fields of teaching and research are transnational and transregional contemporary histories of Europe, Holocaust studies, memory and politics of memory, migration, and Digital Humanities.

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**Ivan Stecher** (\*1995). After studying political science in Innsbruck and Vienna (BA) and history and geography in Innsbruck (Mag.), he took up a position as a project collaborator at the Institute of Contemporary History in Innsbruck a year ago. Professional stations in the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic in Vienna as well as in two regional history projects: the documentary movie “Das versunkene Dorf” and the monograph “Dorf unter” (project collaborator).

**Verena Hechenblaikner** is a master student of history at the University of Innsbruck and a student assistant at the Department of Contemporary History. She is currently working on her master thesis, which is thematically related to the ReMIGRA project. Her research interests are regional, environmental, and migration history.

**Sarah Oberbichler** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck. She received her Ph.D. in Contemporary History in 2019 and is currently working on projects for the analysis and visualization of digital newspapers and digital archives. Her research interests are European and regional contemporary history, (return) migration history, media and discourse, and digital humanities.

## #ReMIGRA22 | SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2022

### Internal Workshop ReMIGRA-Team

Visitors welcome!

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## Cooperation partners

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A project of the Department of Contemporary History of the University of Innsbruck in cooperation with the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in Brixen.



## Project funded by

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