

Human Mobility as a Critical Driver of Change? Alternatives to the Populist Dilemma

November 28-29, 2024

Istituto Svizzero, Via Liguria 20, Rome

In Europe, particularly in Switzerland, Italy, and more recently in Germany, the Netherlands, France and the Nordic Countries, immigration remains a crucial topic of sociopolitical mobilization. Debates, both contemporary and historical, often focus on the desirability and costs of migration. This event seeks to shift the narrative towards a different aspect: the innovative impacts of migration on European societies. Human mobility can also be viewed as a driver of comprehensive societal change. To what extent have migrants, both past and present, as well as temporary mobile persons, contributed to social, economic, political, and cultural transformations? Needs and changes that intersect with populist claims and will therefore be analyzed in our conversations.

Initially, the event will trace and contextualize demographic changes in the mentioned societies from a historical perspective. The focus will be on economic and political changes, particularly regarding technological innovations, labor markets, gender discrimination, and consumer behavior. Additionally, the expansion of political participation by individuals with a migration background will be examined to address the experienced transformations and ongoing challenges.

The event will also explore the situation in Italy and other areas of Europe and beyond, investigating whether this perspective can provide new insights into the issues addressed by our conference. Finally, this approach aims to establish a connection with the activities of academic and cultural institutes present in Rome, thereby broadening the scope and relevance of our discussions.

La mobilità umana come motore critico del cambiamento? Alternative al dilemma populista

28-29 novembre 2024

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In Europa, in particolare in Svizzera, in Italia e più recentemente in Germania, nei Paesi Bassi, in Francia e nei Paesi nordici, l'immigrazione rimane un tema cruciale di mobilitazione sociopolitica. I dibattiti, sia contemporanei che storici, si concentrano spesso sull'opportunità e sui costi della migrazione. Questo nostro evento cerca di spostare la narrazione su un altro aspetto: gli impatti innovativi della migrazione sulle società europee. La mobilità umana può essere vista anche come un motore di cambiamento globale della società. In che misura i migranti, sia del passato che del presente, così come coloro che si spostano solo temporaneamente hanno contribuito alle trasformazioni sociali, economiche, politiche e culturali? Esigenze e cambiamenti che si intersecano con le rivendicazioni populiste e che saranno quindi analizzati nelle nostre conversazioni.

Inizialmente, l'evento tratterà e contestualizzerà i cambiamenti demografici nelle società citate da una prospettiva storica. L'attenzione si concentrerà sui cambiamenti economici e politici, in particolare per quanto riguarda le innovazioni tecnologiche, i mercati del lavoro, la discriminazione di genere e il comportamento dei consumatori. Inoltre, verrà esaminata l'espansione della partecipazione politica da parte di individui con un background migratorio per affrontare le trasformazioni sperimentate e le sfide in corso.

L'evento esplorerà anche la situazione in Italia e in altre aree d'Europa e non solo, verificando se questa prospettiva possa fornire nuovi spunti di riflessione sulle questioni affrontate dalla nostra conferenza. Infine, questo approccio mira a stabilire un collegamento con le attività degli istituti accademici e culturali presenti a Roma, ampliando così la portata e la rilevanza delle nostre discussioni.

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Istituto Svizzero, Via Liguria 20, Rome

Thursday 28.11.2024

14.30-15.00: Welcome and Introduction

Maria Böhmer, Istituto Svizzero, Roma

Gianni D'Amato, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

Giuseppe Sciortino, University of Trento

Pieter Bevelander, Malmö University

Drivers of Change I – The Historical and Demographic Dynamics

Chair: Aldina Camenisch, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

15.00-15.15: Leo Lucassen, Leiden University

15.15-15.30: Philippe Wanner, University of Geneva

15.30-16.00: Discussant and Q&A: Salvatore Strozza, University of Naples Federico II

16.00-16.30: Coffee Break

Drivers of Change II – The Economic and Political Dynamics

Chair: Giuseppe Sciortino, University of Trento

16.30-16.45: Martina Viarengo, Geneva Graduate Institute

16.45-17.00: Grete Brochmann, University of Oslo

17.00-17.30: Discussant and Q&A: Pieter Bevelander, Malmö University

17.30-18.00: Break

Keynote by Bridget Anderson, University of Bristol

Chaired by Gianni D'Amato, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

18.00-18.15: Introduction by Paolo Boccagni, University of Trento

18.15-19.00: Bridget Anderson, University of Bristol

19.00-19.45: Discussant and Q&A: Robin Stünzi, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

Aperitivo at ISR

Friday 29.11.2024

Drivers of Change III – The Cultural and Social Dynamics

Chaired by Claudia Finotelli, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

14.15-14.30: Mihaela Nedelcu, University of Neuchâtel

14.30-14.45: Jonas Otterbeck, Aga Khan University, London

14.45-15.15: Discussant and Q&A: Aldina Camenisch, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

15.15-15.40: Break

Drivers of Change IV – Italian Perceptions: Is There a Southern View on Migration?

Moderated by Gianni D'Amato, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

15.40-16.00: Elena Ambrosetti, Sapienza, University of Rome

16.00-16.20: Angela Paparusso, CNR-IRPPS, Rome

16.20-16.40: Discussant and Q&A: Rosa Gatti, University of Naples Federico II

16.40-17:00: Break

Roundtable – Global Transformations: North-South, East-West Perspectives

Chair: Nora Bardelli, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

17.00-17.30: Intro-Talk: Martina Cvainer, University of Trento

17.30-18:30: Roundtable with Claudia Finotelli (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Martina Cvainer, University of Trento, Sayaka Osanami Törngren (Malmö University), Sara de Athouguia (nccr – on the move), Daniska Tampise Klebo (University of Neuchâtel)

Organizing Board:

Maria Böhmer, Istituto Svizzero, Roma

Giuseppe Sciortino, University of Trento

Pieter Bevelander, University of Malmö

Robin Stünzi, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel,

Aldina Camenisch, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

Gianni D'Amato, SFM, nccr – on the move, University of Neuchâtel

Titles and Abstracts:

Leo Lucassen, Leiden University

How cross-cultural migrations are the engine for social change: a long-term perspective

People moving over cultural boundaries, including those between the countryside and cities, seasonal migrations, colonisations in frontier areas of empires and temporary mobilities of organizational migrants (soldiers, sailors, diplomats, workers for multinationals, missionaries) often experience social change themselves, but also the places they end up or stay temporary, as well as the places they leave and may return to. Due to the very limited, state and modernization driven definitions of migrations as final moves between states, the transformative effects of migration and their role in social and cultural changes are grossly underexposed, especially in a long-time frame that includes the era before the rise of nation states in the 19th century. The cross-cultural approach also invites new and unexpected comparisons, for example between 19th century internal migrations and 21st century intercontinental migrations, both driven by household decisions, but due to state formation and the rise of passports and borders regimes, within very different membership regimes

Philippe Wanner, University of Geneva

The composition of migration flows in the 21st century: the case of Switzerland

Recent migratory flows have changed radically, posing new challenges for integration policies. Using official data and the Migration-Mobility survey, we describe the case of Switzerland and show the main changes in the socio-professional structure of the migrant population during the first two decades of the 21st century.

On the basis of these results, we highlight the possible consequences for a host country of changes in the composition of migrants not only in terms of migration and integration policy, but also in terms of economic and social organization.

Martina Viarengo, Geneva Graduate Institute

Labor Market Integration, Local Conditions and Inequalities – Evidence from Refugees in Switzerland

The paper — jointly written with Tobias Müller and Pia Pannatier — examines the patterns of economic integration of refugees in Switzerland, a country with a long tradition of hosting refugees, a top-receiving host in Europe, and a prominent example of a multicultural society. It relies on a unique longitudinal dataset consisting of administrative records and social security data for the universe of refugees in Switzerland over 1998–2018. This data is used to reconstruct the individual-level trajectories of refugees and to follow them since arrival over the life-cycle. The empirical analysis exploits the government dispersal policy in place since 1998, which consists of the exogenous allocation of refugees across cantons, to identify the effects of the local initial conditions. The study finds that higher unemployment rates at arrival slowdown the integration process, whereas the existence of a co-ethnic network does not consistently lead to a faster

integration. It is shown that a change toward more restrictive attitudes over time in a canton (relative to attitudes in other cantons) leads to higher employment rates of the successive refugee cohorts. These effects persist over the refugees' life-cycle. Together these results, highlight the importance of taking a longer run perspective when examining the effectiveness of policies, as the effects may vary over time and different complementary interventions may be needed in the short vs. long-run.

Grete Brochmann, University of Oslo

Immigration and the Norwegian welfare model. Incremental institutional change and political unease.

Immigration has set a significant mark on Norwegian political economy. The change has materialized in slow motion since the formative years of immigration policies in the 1970s. After the two first decades of trying to come to grips with a new and unfamiliar phenomenon, the late 1990s and not least the period after the turn of the century have witnessed substantial, gradual institutional change spurred by economic pressure and political conflict. Any major change in the Norwegian context will need to take the welfare/labour model into consideration. Immigration is no exception, and in fact it affects the core dynamics of the very model. The equality oriented Norwegian model funded by taxes has been characterized by high social expenditure provided within a universalistic framework – legal residency is only criteria for accessing basic income security. A well-regulated labour markets, and active labour market policies have ensured high employment, compressed wages, and modest social inequality, comparatively speaking. The absorptive capacity of the national labour market is thus central for the impact of immigration on the welfare state. Since low employment rate has characterized a number of the immigrant groups in Norway over the years, normative/political issues about reciprocity, trust based social citizenship and “outsidership” has moved to the top of the national agenda. “Cultural conflicts” have added to the unease. To accommodate social and economic issues related to these systemic and political challenges, institutional change has been the major remedy. And since *equal treatment* is a *sine qua non* both politically and systemically, any major change will have to affect the whole population – majority and newcomers. I will in my presentation give examples of such changes, and various kinds of innovative political engineering in order to make the welfare model more “immigration robust” as it is argued, without affecting the major mode of operation as concerns the citizenry written large.

Bridget Anderson, University of Bristol

Rethinking Migration – Challenging Borders, Citizenship and Race

Socio-economic systems and life itself depend upon movement, yet we are poorly equipped to understand mobilities and how they enrich and impoverish our lives. There is nothing new about human movement, but ‘migration’ has become a key concern of policy, politics and the media and across the world ‘migrants’ are positioned as at best a problem that needs managing, but more often as a threat to culture, economy and politics, and more particularly to the nation. This paper will argue for the importance of avoiding the reification of ‘migration’ when analysing the relationship between change and migration. I will argue firstly for understanding human movement as connected to multiple other forms of movement contemporaneously and across time, secondly for understanding the change-making consequences of state responses to movement and thirdly for the importance of explicitly connecting debates about migration with race and citizenship, thinking globally and across time.

Mihaela Nedelcu, University of Neuchâtel

Digital Agency within (Forced) Migration Processes

While biometrics, digital traces and datafication more broadly lie at the heart of e-borders and e-control that are central to contemporary migration regimes, digital technologies have also transformed the migrants’ “capacity to make a difference” (Giddens 1984) in their own lives, and in the societies in which they live or belong. In this talk, I discuss *digital agency* along with three different lines of research: forced migration, transnational families and digital diasporas. Accordingly, I identify three forms of digitally mediated agency within migration processes (which I call *survival*, *care*, and *militant agency*) and argue for a socio-technical relational approach to agency in digital migration studies.

Jonas Otterbeck, Aga Khan University, London

Religious ethics and ideas as drivers of change: Charity, arts and institutions

This paper argues that migration research should pay attention to how migrant initiated religious charities, institutions and art form important networks. These networks are economically, socially and politically important yet tend to be below the radar of researchers, politicians and journalists. The cases are drawn from a UK material where several truly influential charities are started by religious migrants either as individual initiatives or as the initiatives of religious institutions. Further, many religious inspired artists develop there are in relation with these charities and institutions, getting financial support, donating or cooperating on tours or exhibitions. I will use my own research on Muslim artists and mine and colleague Magdalena Nordin’s research on migration and religion to support these claims.

Elena Ambrosetti, Sapienza University of Rome

Shifting Landscapes: Demographic Trends and Immigration in Italy Over the Last 40 Years

Italy transitioned into an immigration country in the late 1970s. Due to its strategic location on the Southern border of Europe, Italy has become one of the most significant entry points and major destinations for immigrants within the EU. Nowadays the population with migration background represents more than 10% of the population resident in Italy. My presentation aims to give an overview of the demographic trends in Italy over the last 40 years focusing on the impact of immigration (and emigration) on those trends.

Angela Paparusso, National Research Council (CNR-IRPPS), Rome

Life satisfaction and institutional trust: comparing Italian and foreign citizens

The aim of this paper is to study the subjective well-being (SWB) of the resident population in Italy, by analysing the association between self-reported life satisfaction and institutional trust, controlling for sociodemographic, human capital and other measures of SWB, whilst distinguishing between Italian and foreign citizens. We use pooled data from seven rounds (2015-2021) of the Multipurpose survey on households “Aspects of Daily Life” carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). Our dependent variable is self-reported life satisfaction. Institutional trust is built as an index of respondent’s trust in the Italian parliament, the government, political parties, the judicial system, and law enforcement. We run OLS linear regression models with wave fixed effects to account for changes in the distribution between the different years. Institutional trust appears positive and a significant predictor of life satisfaction for both Italian and foreign citizens. However, results suggest that institutional trust has a mediating role for the life satisfaction of foreign citizens, meaning that trust in institutions is more important for non-Italian citizens.