

# NCCR: Full Proposal Phase III

Title of the NCCR            nccr – on the move

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## A European Desert? The Economics and Politics of Protracted Emigration in Crisis Regions (IP41\_EMIGRATION)

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### *Research Questions and Academic Contributions*

In public debates, Europe is often portrayed as a besieged continent whose prosperity, stability and demographic aging constitute a powerful magnet for an economically-deprived and politically oppressed youth in the Global South. Yet shifting the perspective from the continental or state to the regional level reveals a more complex picture: a dual movement of some people clustering in economically dynamic regions and cities ('oases') and others escaping economically ailing ones ('deserts'). Economic crises exacerbate such movements and resulting territorial inequalities. With few exceptions in the fields of geography and demography, the profound economic, political, and social implications of the uneven spatial distribution of migration and mobility flows at sub-state level have yet to be explored. By zooming in on those regional deserts, our project explores the economic and political consequences of protracted regional emigration in the wake of severe global recessions.

Bringing together comparative politics, political economy, and migration studies, the project comprises two PhD theses and one international collaborative Sub-Project. PhD1 asks: *What economic development policies were introduced to address population decline resulting from protracted outflows of residents to the rest of the state or abroad?* PhD2, in turn, asks: *What are the main types of politicization of and party responses to emigration in crisis regions?* Both PhDs share the same *multilevel governance approach* (examining the role and interaction of European, national, and regional governments), *constructivist perspective* (emphasizing the subjective construction of 'crisis' by regional actors), *comparative scope* (6 regions in 3 European countries), and *historical time-span* (comparing the post Oil Shock period: 1973–83 with that of the Global Financial Crisis: 2008–18).

The collaborative Sub-Project expands the comparative scope beyond Western Europe, pursuing three aims: to set up a new research network spanning disciplinary and geographic borders; to enrich our theoretical framework with non-European perspectives; and to maximize the generalization potential of our findings. We thus collaborate with international partners with relevant thematic expertise applied to areas of the world that have been much more consistently exposed to emigration and regional inequalities than Western Europe, at least since 1945.

The project's main academic contributions stem from its original focus on emigration and its regional scale of analysis. In Europe, migration studies have mainly focused on *international immigration*, reflecting the resilience of a nationalist and integrationist epistemology that has long permeated the field. *Regional emigration*, whether to the rest of the state or beyond, results in a distinct, and often more intractable set of problems, potentially unleashing a vicious circle of demographic decline, economic downturn, and political contestation. The regional scale of analysis is promising because it allows us to link (e)migration and mobility issues to broader debates regarding state restructuring (e.g. centralisation vs devolution), economic development policy (people vs place), or ideology (regionalism vs nationalism). Looking at the economics and politics of regional 'deserts' thus allows us to better comprehend the complex interactions between population movements, territorial inequalities, center-periphery relations, and multilevel policy-making.

#### Case selection and methodology

PhD 1 and 2 will compare the same 6 regional cases – Jura and Glarus in Switzerland, Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Martinique in France, Galicia and Extremadura in Spain (Table 6) – over the same two crisis periods: post-1973 Oil Shock and post-2008 Global Financial Crisis.

Table 6: Migration in the Six Selected Regions and their National Contexts

CASES	Territorial structure		Net migration rate	
	1973	2008	1970s	2010s
FRANCE (FR)	Centralized democracy	Decentralized democracy	Positive	Positive
Nord-Pas-de-Calais (PDC)	2 Departments	1 Region	Negative	Negative
Martinique (MTQ)	1 Department	1 Territorial Collectivity	Negative	Negative
SPAIN (ES)	Centralized autocracy	Regionalized democracy	Negative	Positive
Galicia (GA)	4 Provinces	1 Autonomous Community	Negative	Stagnant
Extremadura (EX)	2 Provinces	1 Autonomous Community	Stagnant	Negative
SWITZERLAND (CH)	Federal democracy	Federal democracy	Stagnant	Positive
Jura (JU)	3 Bernese districts	1 Canton	Negative	Stagnant
Glarus (GL)	1 Canton	1 Canton	Stagnant	Stagnant

Regions were selected according to *the method of difference*. They broadly share the same outcome: all are demographic outliers in their respective nation-states, meaning their population either stagnated or declined (relatively and/or absolutely) due to protracted emigration only partially compensated by immigration. Yet they exhibit different structural conditions, which allows us to infer on the importance of key variables in shaping the economic and political consequences of regional emigration, namely: *state structures* (federal: CH, unitary: FR, regionalized: ES); *degree of European integration* (FR 1957–, ES 1981–, CH-EU bilateral relations 1973–); *strength of regionalist mobilization* (strong in MTQ, GA, JU vs weak in PDC, EX, GL), and *economic structures* (post-industrial in PDC, JU, GL vs post-agricultural in GA, EX, MTQ).

Our focus on the two main global economic crises since 1945 rests on three theoretical assumptions. First, global economic crises exacerbate territorial inequalities, producing or aggravating outward mobility flows in specific areas. Second, in a neo-institutionalist spirit, we conceive of global economic crises as “critical junctures” that disrupt established ways of ‘seeing’ and ‘doing’ and foster paradigmatic change. Third, we expect to find significant differences between the two periods.

As for the Sub-Project, the case selection serves the purpose of expanding the comparative scope to non-Western European cases that were confronted by a major domestic economic crisis. Accordingly, our international partners will cover regions in Eastern Europe (post-1990 Romania, post-1981 Yugoslavia) and Latin America (post-1994 Mexico, post-1998 Argentina, post-2014 Brazil).

Methodologically, we combine qualitative with quantitative techniques. In year 1, the team collects economic and demographic data in our 6 regions from public statistical agencies (i.e., EUROSTAT, Swiss FSO, French INSEE, and Spanish CIS). It will also gather relevant policy documents on regional economic development issued by governmental agencies at European, national, and regional levels to identify shifts over time. This will result in two online databases on regional mobilities and economic policies, respectively. In year 2, we work qualitatively in the form of expert and stakeholder interviews (for the post-2008 period) and archival research (for the post-1973 period) within the 6 regions. In parallel, we study regional and national parliamentary debates, newspaper articles, and party manifestos using quantitative methods to better understand regional patterns of politicization of emigration. In doing so we adapt the claims analysis methodology developed in Phase II ([II\\_IP22\\_HISTORY](#) and [II\\_IP26\\_INEQUAL-AGENCY](#)) to the regional scale.

Table 7: Project Planning and Milestones IP41

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Analytical framework and theoretical contribution	Project Leaders and Int. Part.		PhDs	
Collection of statistical data on regional outward mobilities (desk research)	PhDs			
Collection of EU, national, and regional policy documents (desk and archival research)	PhDs & Project Leaders			
Collection of regional press articles and party manifestos (archival research)		PhDs		
Expert & stakeholder interviews in 6 regions (field research)		PhDs		
Regional economic development policy analysis			PhD1 & Project Leaders	
Regional party politics and media claims analysis			PhD2 & Project Leaders	
Comparative analyses				Entire team
<b>Milestones / Output</b>	<b>C1, D1, D2</b>	<b>P1, D3, W1, W2</b>	<b>P2, P3, P4, P5, C2</b>	<b>D4, P6, P7, B1, B2</b>

P1: Theoretical article (IP Leaders), P2 and P3: 1<sup>st</sup> articles by PhDs (co-authored with Project Leaders); W1 and W2: Working papers by PhDs (single authored); P4 and P5: 2<sup>nd</sup> articles by PhDs (based on W1 and W2); P6 and P7: 3<sup>rd</sup> articles by PhDs (with international partners as co-authors)

C1, C2: Conferences at UniNE resulting in a Special Issue or Edited Volume (with Project Leaders, PhDs and International Partners/Int. Part.)

D1: Online repository on regional economic policy, D2: Online database on regional mobilities

D3: Online dataset on politicization of emigration, D4: Policy Brief on 'Responding to emigration: Lessons from the field'

B1 & B2: Submission of PhD theses 1+2 (article-based)

### *Contribution to the Research Agenda and Internationalization of the NCCR*

**MMN:** By breaking the analytical distinction between internal vs. international, inward vs. outward, and regional vs. national types of cross-border movements, the project draws important lessons from the MMN. We understand these distinctions as *categories of political and economic practices*, rather than categories of analysis. We are primarily interested in the way in which they produce *hierarchies* between desirable and undesirable types of mobilities in a given economic and political field. In showing how these hierarchies are discursively articulated by regional elites and institutionally entrenched in regional economic policies, the project illustrates the analytical power of the MMN in empirical research at a new level of analysis.

**Crisis:** Our comparative analysis of the two most profound economic crises since WWII reveals whether and how such episodes increase the politicization of emigration at the regional level, challenge established ways of addressing its consequences, and (re-)produce new paradigms. Our project strikes a balance between an *objectivist* perspective, acknowledging the real and commensurable impact of the crisis across regions, and a

*subjectivist* view emphasizing the diversity of regional narratives and their political and policy implications.

*Internationalization:* The project contributes to the internationalization of the NCCR in four ways: empirically, by comparing regions within and beyond Europe; analytically, by building upon scholarship developed in areas combining chronic emigration and profound territorial inequalities; reflexively, by questioning taken-for-granted concepts in Euro-centric scholarship; and institutionally, by creating a new research network on regional emigration with global partners.