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THE ALTRUISTIC AND REDISTRIBUTIVE EFFECTS OF EMIGRATION: LEGACIES AND BENEFICES IN ITALIAN SWITZERLAND (18TH–19TH CENTURY)

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ABSTRACT

The Altruistic and Redistributive Effects of Emigration: Legacies and Benefices in Italian Switzerland (18th–19th Century)

The article looks at the effects of emigration through altruistic and redistributive uses of remittances sent and earnings brought back home by emigrants. Through case studies of altruistic and redistributive mechanisms, it explores the roles of family strategies and processes of commonization through the public administration of legacies and benefices, focusing on testamentary legacies and ecclesiastical benefices created by emigrants in their places of origin in Italian Switzerland during the 18th and 19th centuries.

KEYWORDS: effects of emigration, altruism, charity, philanthropy, family

IZVLEČEK

Altruistični in redistributivni učinki emigracije: Volila in beneficiji v italijanski Švici med 18. in 19. stoletjem

Avtor v prispevku obravnava učinke emigracije skozi altruistično in redistributivno uporabo remitenc, ki so jih emigranti pošiljali domov, ter zaslužkov, ki so jih prinašali domov. Na primerih altruističnih in redistributivnih mehanizmov raziskuje vlogo družinskih strategij in procesov podružabljanja z javnim upravljanjem volil in beneficijev. Pri tem se osredotoča na testamentarna volila in cerkvene beneficije, ki so jih emigranti ustanovili v svojih krajih izvora v italijanski Švici med 18. in 19. stoletjem.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: učinki emigracije, altruizem, dobrodelnost, filantropija, družina

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INTRODUCTION

Migration produced numerous effects in places of departure. The houses of return migrants, for example, can be considered one of the most visible uses of remittances sent and earnings brought back by emigrants. Additionally, often together with other family members, the emigrants invested in land, small luxury items, moneylending, and other outlets to provide financial security for themselves and their families, improving living conditions and possibly raising their social status. Along with these types of remittance uses—often described as "self-centered" because they directly serve the needs of oneself and one's family—we can observe at least two other categories: entrepreneurial uses (investments in manufacturing, infrastructure projects like railroads, banking institutions) and altruistic and redistributive uses. The latter overlap to some extent with self-centered uses in that solidarity within the family often blends with one that serves the community. All of these overlapping remittance uses, in fact, were part of the personal and family strategies of emigrants in pursuit of the general welfare of their families and to ensure these gains for their children and future generations.[1]

In this paper, I will present some of the mechanisms used by emigrants in the Alpine valleys of Italian Switzerland to pursue these ends through legacies, benefices, and donations. Moreover, I will try to demonstrate that these practices impacted the larger community. Ecclesiastical benefices founded by emigrants in their places of origin strengthened the pastoral care for the community as a whole and, as we shall see, enabled the local children to have access to basic education. A legacy bequeathed to the municipality in the 19th century allowed it to perform new civic functions. These effects can best be observed by looking at how legacies and benefices were managed in the decades and centuries after their creation. In the final part of the article, I will analyze a case that shows how communities were not just passive recipients of charity and philanthropy but often played an active role through their management.

1 A substantial body of literature addresses the topic of remittances and, more broadly, the impacts of emigration on countries and regions of origin. The following selection of works has been particularly influential in shaping my perspective on this subject. For insights into remittances and return migration from the migrants' point of view, see King, 2000 and Harper & Harper, 2005. An anthropological approach is provided by Carling, 2018. For macro-level analyses of the effects on countries of origin, refer to Faini, 2007; Sori, 2009; and Fauri, 2015, pp. 96–109. Regarding the specific impacts of emigration in the Alpine region, see Head-König, 2009; and Lorenzetti, 2020.

MOTIVES FOR ALTRUISTIC AND REDISTRIBUTIVE PRACTICES

In contemporary migration studies, the issue of altruism in the effects of emigration gained attention with the emergence of the so-called New Economics of Labor Migrations (NELM) in the 1980s. Regarding the motivations for sending remittances, NELM shifted focus from the conditions of the emigrant's time abroad[2] to the broader context, including that of departure. For scholars of NELM, the "factors influencing international migration decisions also are likely to shape the outcomes of international migration and remittances, both in the host country and the region from which migrants come" (Taylor, 1999, p. 64), therefore bringing the migrant's family and its "calculated strategies" (Rosental, 1999, p. 117; Stark & Bloom, 1985, p. 175; Corti, 2009, p. 315; Freda, 2024) to the forefront of the analysis of migration, remittances, and returns.[3] The effects of migration should, thus, be placed in a close relationship with the departure and migration project (*projet migratoire*; Rosental, 1999, p. 83), which is not only individual but, in fact, collective. It is often shared with other family members and a broader community, such as a neighborhood or a village.

Marcel Mauss's foundational work, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, demonstrated that gift-giving, far from being purely altruistic, is embedded in networks of reciprocity and obligation that structure social life (Mauss, 2002 [1925]). This insight challenges the ideal of the wholly "disinterested" gift, as expressed by Philippe Sassier, who, in his analysis of the history of poverty in the early modern and contemporary period, defined it as "*l'acte gratuit, désintéressé, transcendant l'ordre terrestre de la nécessité*" (Sassier, 1990, p. 9).[4] In the present analysis, I adopt a more grounded perspective, treating altruism and redistribution as actions oriented toward the welfare of family or community members—whether within the village, municipality, or broader regional context.[5] These acts, which appear in the sources and scholarly literature under categories such as solidarity, charity, and philanthropy, often reflect the intentions and interests of benefactors

2 Viewing, therefore, factors such as earnings and length of stay abroad, economic and political constraints of transferring money, and willingness and possibility of return (Russell, 1986, p. 679).

3 Paul-André Rosental uses the broader term of the migrant's "reference group," which is, in most cases, taken to mean the migrant's family.

4 "The gratuitous, selfless act that transcends the earthly order of necessity."

5 In concrete terms, these acts can take place in favor of a public institution, an association, or any other public entity. Additionally, as I will show below, in most cases, these acts were addressed to the tight-knit community of the village assembly of landowners (*vicinanza*) or the parish.

themselves (cf. Cavallo, 1995, p. 256), thus aligning more closely with Mauss's interpretation of the gift as a socially embedded practice.[6]

What were these needs and desires? According to Angelo Torre (2017, p. 160), the historiography on charity in the early modern age has identified its three principal aims: devotion, prestige, and family strategies (cf. Schnyder, 2011, p. 168). In his study on devotion in Piedmont of the *Ancien Régime* (Torre, 1995, p. 86), he stressed charity's community function (*funzione comunitaria*). On the one hand, this can be observed in the charity practices carried out by collective entities, such as confraternities, which, in effect, constitute the community but also legitimize and sanction internal divisions within villages. On the other hand, an act of charity carried out by an individual (or even by several members of the same family), for example, in the case of ecclesiastical benefices, "*era funzionale ad esprimere 'pubblicamente' l'esito del processo di selezione dell'erede e di trasmissione del patrimonio familiare*"[7] as well as guaranteeing tax immunity for the capital given in benefice. In this sense, a testament has to be seen as a response to tensions—both internal, among different heirs (actual or potential), and external, related to the community's recognition of the chosen heir as legitimate (Torre, 2017, pp. 159–160, 163).

By leaving a testament, one can, at least in the ideal sense, "*condizionare dall'al di là i comportamenti dell'al di qua*,"[8] as Mauro Carboni put it, emphasizing the complex bond between benefactor and benefice.[9] In the case of early modern age ecclesiastical benefices in Italian municipalities, he defined this bond as "*un patto sociale e un 'patto per l'eternità' dove la carità cristiana e il forte senso di appartenenza alla civitas erano associati, e per certi versi piegati, al rispetto della volontà del testatore e alla traditio memoriae individuale e/o familiare*" (Carboni, 2019, pp. 659, 681).[10] Torre similarly distinguished between the more individual side of charity, emphasizing piety and devotion (cf. Adamoli, 2015, p. 14), and the more social side, which is focused on pursuing prestige and conquering privilege as part of the family strategy. Historians of 19th- and 20th-century philanthropy have arrived at similar conclusions.

6 According to Mauro Carboni (2019, p. 658), referring to 18th-century Bologna, "*il dono non era gratuito ma sottendeva uno scambio ed una reciprocità, sia pure asimmetrici: da una parte determinava un legame di* patronage *fra le parti, dall'altra generava l'attesa di una ricompensa sovrannaturale ad una elargizione materiale*" ("The gift was not free but implied an exchange and reciprocity, albeit asymmetrical: on the one hand, it established a bond of patronage between the parties, and on the other, it generated the expectation of a supernatural reward for a material gift.")

7 "It was instrumental in expressing 'publicly' the outcome of the process of selection of the heir and transmission of the family patrimony."

8 "To condition from the hereafter the behaviors of the here."

9 Cf. David & Tournès (2014, p. 7) who reiterated the interdependence of the relationship between the donor and the recipient, whereby the recipient also contributes to the elaboration of the gift process, which then imparts the donor as the recipient.

10 "A social pact and a 'pact for eternity' where Christian charity and a strong sense of belonging to the civitas were associated, and in some ways bent to the testator's wants and individual and/or family *traditio memoriae*."

Christian Topolov considered philanthropy "as an investment proper to the wealthy classes," which must bring benefactors benefits "private or public, direct or indirect, in the field in which one has invested or in another" (Topolov, 2019b, pp. 9–10). Furthermore, philanthropy was and is seen as a means of acquiring respectability and notability, prerequisites for gaining social status and a political role in society (Adam, 2004; David et al., 2006, p. 23; Topolov, 2019a, pp. 470–471).

In the case of emigrants, however, we need to investigate not only the choice of investing money in charity or philanthropy at the expense of other potential outlets but also where they decide to invest it. Indeed, it is precisely in the case of legacies and donations by emigrants in their homelands that we can observe their continued attachment to home both on a material and immaterial level.[11] As suggested (cf. Fauri, 2015, p. 99; Lorenzetti, 2020, pp. 129–130), emigrants often preferred entrepreneurial investments in their places of arrival, especially before the second half of the 19th century. In contrast, in their places of departure, they usually preferred more conservative investments, guaranteeing a stable income, such as land purchase and informal moneylending. Investments in legacies, benefices, and other acts of charity were also typically tied to their places of departure.

MECHANISMS OF ALTRUISM AND REDISTRIBUTION

The contribution of emigrants to charity and philanthropy in early modern and 19th-century Ticino was significant. In the mid-19th century, between 1839 and 1886, the cantonal government held a precise registry of all the legacies and donations created or donated in the canton.[12] From the 514 people listed in the register as benefactors, it was possible to identify 24 as those who experienced migration.[13] Comparing the value of the contributions made by these emigrant benefactors with the total, we see that these 24 alone were responsible for approximately 20% of the total value of legacies and donations—a certainly underestimated percentage

11 The uses of earnings obtained abroad in an altruistic and redistributive sense have remained relatively unexplored in the field of contemporary emigration. A mention can be found in Rapoport & Docquier (2006, p. 1177) who noted the inequality and growth by pointing out that the "growth effects of remittances cannot be dissociated from their distributive effects." In addition, several authors have cited so-called *hometown associations,* i.e., associations created by emigrants to contribute to the development of their place of origin (cf. Bonciani, 2018, p. 26). The topic has also remained in the margins in the field of historical emigrations (cf. Allegri, 1993, p. 182; Lorenzetti, 2017, p. 167), although it is more pronounced in locally focused studies, such as those on emigration in Ticino (cf. Ceschi, 1996, pp. 19–20; Adamoli, 2015, pp. 221–225). Additionally, in Lorenzetti (2020, pp. 124–128), we find an analysis of the importance of family solidarity in the allocation of remittances.

12 ASTi, *Dipartimento dell'interno – registri*, register 21, *Registro dei legati e delle donazioni*.

13 Based on a cross-reference of register data with other sources on Ticino emigration. The result obtained underestimates the number of people with migration experience, especially considering the strong presence of migration in 19th-century Ticino.

that leaves no doubt on the importance of emigration as the origin of redistributive effects. Moreover, this data underpins the importance of charity and philanthropy as investment options for the "migrations of success," i.e., for emigrants who returned home with prominent financial means at their disposal. The archival data does not allow for a large-scale analysis of their investment strategies. Still, the literature on the 19th–20th-century Ticino economy suggests a lack of large investments in industrial or entrepreneurial activities (cf. Viscontini, 2005, p. 519; Lorenzetti, 2010, pp. 95–96). This indicates that research on the effects of emigration in Ticino should prioritize the examination of altruistic and redistributive practices.

To understand their effects, we must first understand the benefactors' motives and the mechanisms they employed to achieve them. Starting with the family strategies as the motive for charitable practices, I will turn my attention to the ecclesiastical benefices or chaplaincies as a mechanism of altruism. They offer a fertile view into the mechanisms of family solidarity due to their dual public–private nature. An ecclesiastical benefice or chaplaincy refers to an office that provides the chaplain with specific obligations and benefits.[14] Obligations included mainly the celebration of a certain number of masses per week; in Italian Switzerland, it was common to find benefices that included the obligation of the chaplain to school the parish's children (Cappelli, 1997). The chaplain typically received an annuity for this office based on the capital bequeathed by the benefactor and occasionally housing and similar benefits. Finally, the benefactor reserved the right to choose the recipient of the benefice and to determine to whom this right of patronage—or *jus patronato*—would pass after their death. The chaplaincy has thus elements of both public and private foundations. On the one hand, it is subject to episcopal authority and is often tied to a publicly owned church (as opposed to a private oratory). On the other hand, the right of patronage ensures the descendants of the benefactor preserve a continuous link over time with the benefice and, in addition, control over the distribution of its benefits.[15] As we will see, in the case of a lack of heirs, the right of patronage could also be passed on to a public entity (a *vicinanza* or a municipality). This was typical among all benefactors in Italian Switzerland. However, migrant benefactors represent an interesting case, as their decision to fund a benefice in their place of origin instead of their place of arrival is indicative of their relation to the homeland.

14 On the ecclesiastical benefice see Greco (1986, pp. 534–540), who defined them as "all those sacred offices held individually by clerics" who receive an annuity. Such a benefice involves "the intervention of a power within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and a presumable perpetuity of the office itself." Moreover, by its very nature, the ecclesiastical benefice includes a patronage (*jus patronato*), i.e., the right to choose the recipient of the office, who then by rule had to be formally invested by an ecclesiastical authority.

15 See also Torre (2017) who, comparing the terms benefice (*beneficio*), legacy (*lascito*), and pious cause (*causa pia*) in their usage in early modern Italy from a sociological perspective, finds that bequests and benefices belong to the category of pious causes and highlights their connection to the process of legitimizing inheritance.

To examine the mechanisms of altruism and redistribution, I will start with the case of a network of merchant families from the upper Vallemaggia (with the lateral valleys of Campo and Lavizzara) in Ticino who, through *compagnie* (merchant companies) established throughout the Holy Roman Empire (Germany, Austria, Hungary) and in Holland, were involved in trade on a European scale between the 17th and 19th centuries.[16] The lively mercantile activity extending throughout Europe did not result in the traveling merchants severing ties with their valley of origin. Instead, these ties were regenerated and consolidated by holding public offices and charitable practices in the villages of origin.

The link between the entrepreneurial activity abroad and the redistributive deeds taken up at home is visible when Maggia Valley merchants offered donations to their municipalities not as individuals but in the name of their *compagnia*. We can find this example in a 1741 agreement between the company Signori Pfiffer, Berna, Bell e Compagni and the clockmaker Giacomo Filippo Framino of Menzionio in Vallemaggia for the construction of a clock tower for the parish church of SS. Fabiano and Sebastiano of Prato and Sornico (known also as SS. Sebastiano and Rocco).[17] Besides donations, merchants would also act on behalf of the municipality through their company, like when the company Miniami, Pfiffer e Compagni appeared in 1773 as the representative of the municipality of Prato in a loan agreement with the municipality of Vira Riviera di Gambarogno.[18]

Turning now to redistributive mechanisms of family strategies, I will examine two benefices founded in the church of SS. Sebastiano and Rocco in Prato on the same day (April 5) in 1762,[19] one by the Berna brothers and one by Carlo Antonio Guidini, members of two prominent families in the Lavizzara Valley merchant group.

The Berna benefice was founded by brothers Davide Antonio and Francesco Giuseppe Berna, merchants in Mainz (Germany), fulfilling the last wishes of their father, Giovanni Berna.[20] The Berna brothers bequeathed the benefice with the capital of 15,000 Milanese pounds left for that purpose by their father, to which, however,

16 These families were the Pfiffer, Berna, Gagliardi, Mignami, Grossi, Tamba, Cotti, and Spagnoli in the Lavizzara Valley (Prato Sornico, Peccia, and Broglio), the Lotti and Balli families of Bignasco and Cavergno, and, finally, the Pedrazzini family with its patronage network in Campo Vallemaggia. An overview can be found in Varini (2019) and Pometta (1987). On Pedrazzini, see Chiesi Ermotti (2019) and on the Balli, see Broillet (2005), and several contributions by Christian Balli (1987; 2012; 2018).

17 "*Una torretta della Chiesa de SS.ti Fabiano et Sebastiano di Prato, cioè che batti le ore in dodici senza ribattere, et che il suo corso sia almeno di ventiquattro ore* [con] *quattro mostre sia sfere nelle quattro parte di detta torretta*" ("A tower of the Church of SS. Fabiano et Sebastiano in Prato, which strikes the hours twelve times without repeating, and whose course is at least twenty-four hours [with] four displays, namely spheres in the four parts of the tower") (ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 10, J51, September 27, 1741).

18 ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 11, K30, February 25, 1773.

19 This can be explained by the role played in the formation of the two benefices by Giovanni Giulio Gerolamo Berna.

20 ADL, *Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Atto di fondazione del Beneficio Berna*, April 5, 1762 (notarized copy, 1867). Cf. Varini (2019, p. 273, note 107) and ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 11, K18, February 1, 1763.

they added other donations in the following years. The benefice entailed a celebration of two masses per week, one in Prato and the other in an oratory of S. Carlo (Pradée). The right of patronage of the benefice was, by the founding act, reserved in perpetuity for the male descendants of the two founders. Still, the character of family solidarity is even more evident from the fact that the benefice, with its obligations and life annuity, was conferred on the third brother, Don Giovanni Giulio Gerolamo Berna, "canon, archpriest and *commissario apostolico* in Locarno, *vicar forane* of the Lavizzara Valley."[21] In the following years, Giovanni Giulio Gerolamo enriched the benefice donations and testamentary bequests, of which the most meaningful was his library, to be opened for the use of priests, canons, and other clerics of the valley, thus creating one of the first public libraries in Italian Switzerland for which he also created strict rules of use.[22]

Several elements of early modern charity practices can be glimpsed in this operation: the two brothers living abroad, following a plan already prepared by their father, managed with the foundation of the benefice to ensure financial support for the third brother and to strengthen the family's presence in Prato and Locarno, where Giovanni Giulio Gerolamo was based. Moreover, they gave rise to the family's prestige and provided for the care of their souls, which is not an insignificant aspect of that era. Finally, the ecclesiastical benefice guaranteed that the capital allocated for this purpose would not be dispersed.

The other benefice was founded by Carlo Antonio Guidini, a "fortunate emigrant from Prato" (Varini, 2019, p. 255),[23] probably a merchant of iron and associated with the Berna family. The benefice, endowed with 29,000 Milanese pounds, entailed the chaplain's obligation to celebrate mass and provide schooling for the children of Prato. For the passage of the right of patronage after his death, Guidini, 67 years old and childless at the time of the foundation, foresaw three consecutive possibilities. The right was intended, in the first place, for his own direct (male) descendants. In case he would die without children, legitimate or otherwise, as actually happened, the right was to pass to his cousin, living in Lorraine in France, and the cousin's descendants. In this case, he set a condition for them to return and settle in the "fatherland." For one reason or another, the right of patronage was not taken over by the relatives in France; thus, according to the third scenario, it passed to the

21 ADL*, Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Notizie del Beneficio Canonicale di Casa Berna in Prato, 1832.*

22 "*Una Biblioteca permanente di libri ad uso Ecclesiastico per la comodità e l'utilità dei Reveredni Signori Parroci, Canonici, Sacerdoti ed altri Chierici appartenenti alla Congregazione della della Velle […] ho deciso e stabilito di destinarla al loro pubblico uso e consulta*" ("A permanent library of books for ecclesiastical use for the convenience and benefit of the Reverend Parish Priests, Canons, Priests, and other Clerics belonging to the Congregation of the Valley [...] I have decided and established that it be designated for their public use and consultation") (ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 11, K44b, *12 regole o condizioni per l'uso della bibliotecha*, January 1, 1784).

23 Guidini appears in the 1755 tax roll of the municipality of Prato (ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi,* box 11, K4, March 17, 1755) with the obligation to pay 6 ½ *denari*, which puts him among the richest taxpayers.

Communità e uomini di Prato (community and men of Prato). So, the municipality was conferred the right of patronage after Guidini died in 1774.[24]

The lack of children probably limited Guidini's ambitions since, in addition to the benefice, he had built an oratory dedicated to the Holy Crucifix in the locality of Vedlà south of Prato, where he also owned land.[25] The two projects—benefice and oratory—were connected, as can be seen in the provision that the chaplain of the benefice had to celebrate mass once a week in the oratory, in addition to the other masses to be celebrated in the parish church in Prato. From this, we can deduce the existence of a project focused on prestige and rootedness in his native territory, which, however, eventually took a more communitarian turn because the administration of the benefice by the municipality allowed access to the chaplaincy by clerical members of other families in the valley (particularly Gagliardi and Berna) and therefore, in a way, ended up more in the service of these families.

As noted, the two benefices also included an obligation to teach children. Guidini, for example, obligated the chaplain to keep the school open to all the boys from the municipalities of Prato and Sornico for eight months every year, from September to April.[26] The obligation of schooling was relatively common for benefices in Italian Switzerland. It has been observed that so-called school chaplaincies (*cappellanie scolastiche*) played a leading role in the education of children in Italian Switzerland villages before the appearance of the modern school system and contributed to a relatively high level of literacy, evidenced by the large volume of letters written by emigrants back home. In the newly created Canton of Ticino, schooling became officially obligatory in 1804. However, it was only in the 1830s and 1840s that the public school system began to emerge. Before that, outside the urban centers, the only schools for elementary education were those run by parish priests and chaplains. They were usually remunerated by the village assembly or through a chaplaincy (Cappelli, 1997, pp. 63–140; Marcacci, 2015). Even though until the mid-19th century, donations or legacies were never created primarily to finance schooling, private and community schools played an essential role in the continuation of emigration and

24 ADL, *Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Atto di fondazione del Beneficio Guidini,* April 5, 1762. Cf. Varini (2019, pp. 286–287) and Cappelli & Manzoni (1997, p. 395). Cf. Pometta (1987, pp. 186–188) who dated its founding in 1745.

25 ADL, *Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Inventario della paramenta et altro, che si ritrova nell'oratorio di Carlo Antonio Guidini Vedlà,* 1761. See also an excerpt from his testament in ADL, *Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Notizie del Beneficio … Guidini,* 1832.

26 *"[…] tenere scuola per otto mesi di ciascun anno a tutti li figli maschi concorrenti del Commune di Prato, e di Sornico, [da settembre a aprile] […] dovrà farsi gratis […] salvo un piccol pezzo di legna per cadaun scolaro ogni giorno da portarsi alla scuola"* ("[…] to hold school for eight months of each year for all male children of the Municipality of Prato, and of Sornico, [from September to April] […] free of charge […] except for a small piece of wood for each pupil to bring to school every day") (ADL, *Prato Sornico*, box 3, *Atto di fondazione del Beneficio Guidini,* April 5, 1762). In an amendment, three years after the foundation, Guidini arranged for a reduction of the school to only six months per year and reduced the teaching to only reading and writing in Italian ("*di solo insegnare e leggere e scrivere volgare*"). The children were now also exempt from having to bring wood (ADL, *Prato Sornico,* box 3, *Notizie del Beneficio … Guidini,* 1832).

the economic benefits the families and communities derived from it. In the *economia dell'assenza* (economy of absence) (Merzario, 2000, p. 32) in Italian Switzerland, basic education was crucial for the survival of the economic system as it enabled people to acquire a skilled trade or, as in the case of Lavizzara families, to engage in commercial activity abroad. School chaplaincies, dating from the 16th through the 19th century, were present throughout much of Italian Switzerland. In Lavizzara alone, in addition to the Guidini benefice in Prato, we find schools in Fusio—where, in 1708, the village curate was obligated to teach—and in Peccia, where a similar obligation was recorded in 1714. In Cavergno, the school for boys could operate without tuition, thanks to the benefice founded by another emigrant, this time one to Hungary, Giacomo La Marca (Cappelli & Manzoni, 1997, pp. 386, 394, 382).

ADMINISTRATION OF LEGACIES AND BENEFICES

In the previous chapters, I presented some characteristics and common threads of emigration's altruistic and redistributive effects that ran through the cases under examination. In this section, I want instead to examine what happened when the legacy administration was entrusted to a public entity. Even though, as discussed earlier, legacies represent an extension of a testator's will that continues after their death, their decisions were unavoidably subject to the interests of those entrusted with the management of the legacy. On the other hand, they often faced the unenviable task of staying true to the legacy's dispositions through changing circumstances and times. When the contradiction between the original will and the necessities of time became too strong, the interests of the living prevailed. Therefore, personal and family strategies employed in creating a legacy had an impact only as long as the legacy continued to be managed by the family. When, instead, the legacy was in the hands of a collective body, such as a village assembly (*vicinanza*), they gave way to more communitarian interests and goals.

This was the case of the Tondü legacy in Lionza in the Centovalli Valley. The Tondü family was established in the Duchy of Parma in trade, textile industry, and banking as early as the 17th century ("I Tondù di Centovalli", 1904, pp. 200–201). Over time, their ties with Lionza faded away.[27] In 1784, a descendant of the family, Sir Ferdinando Tondü "di Parma," donated all the remaining Tondü estate in Lionza and the surrounding Centovalli to the village assembly of landowners (*pubblico*) under the condition that the revenues of the estate be used to annually celebrate in the parish church a mass in suffrage for the family's deceased members.[28] The legacy's estate

27 Several traces of these ties remain, such as a palace built in 1653 and several edifices built by the family for the use of the parish (a chaplain's house, a sacristy, and a chapel) (Fiscalini, 1998, p. 3 et passim).

28 A copy of the founding act is preserved in Archivio Tondü (kept by the Fondazione Tondü in Lionza). See also the transcript in Fiscalini (1998, p. 30).

was comprised of 212 real estate properties, according to an inventory from 1842. They included a mansion (called *Palazzo* or *Palazz*), the chaplain's house, several other houses in the village, and scattered pieces of arable land in the village's territory.[29] The registers of proceeds and expenditures (*Registri dei ricavi e delle spese*)[30], kept between 1843 and 1954, reveal how the designation of the village assembly of landowners as the donation recipient gave rise to unprecedented developments. We find that in the mid-19th century, the administrators of the legacy, i.e., the landowners in Lionza (*patrizi*), still allocated most of the proceeds for the parish church to celebrate mass, as stipulated in the deed of donation. Shortly after, however, they opted for another use of this legacy. Beginning in 1858 and for about two decades, they used most of the annual revenues for the purchase of salt to be distributed among the villagers,[31] leaving the priest with only a few pennies. In the 1880s and 1890s, the money used for salt was redirected to several investments in the decoration of the parish church, most notably the purchase of new bells. In the 1890s, the villagers decided to also substantially lower the rents for the legacy's real estate. This came to light in 1896 when the lack of payments for the masses prompted an intervention by the Diocese of Lugano, which demanded that the administrators observe Tondü's wishes. Among the Diocese's admonitions, we find that in 1893, the legacy's administrators reduced the total rents owed to the legacy by one-third. This was probably an important contribution to the community as records suggest that most tenants were themselves its members. Additionally, the Diocese expressed concern over expenditures it considered excessive—such as maintenance work on the estate—or inconsistent with the legacy's original purpose, including the restoration of a public stairway and the purchase of new church bells. In response, the "illegitimate" expenses, however, were reduced without increasing those for mass, as pointed out by the Diocese. To recapitulate, the ecclesiastical legacy, which in principle involved only the celebration of mass and thus can be considered to be intended primarily for the care of the donor's soul, played an essential role for the people of Lionza over time, though more by their decision than by the will of the legator.

Returning to the case of the benefice founded in 1762 by Carlo Antonio Guidini of Prato, we find instead an administration that tried to remain faithful to the wishes of the benefactors but found itself in a series of difficulties trying to navigate between opposing family interests and financial problems. On the one hand, the Guidini benefice addressed the community of Prato as a whole through the celebration of masses in the parish church and the education of the village's children. On the other hand, it directly benefited the more limited circle of Prato's merchant families since the beneficiaries were chosen among their members. This, in turn,

29 The inventory unfortunately does not include an estimation of the properties (inventory is preserved in the Archivio Tondü).

30 Preserved in the Archivio Tondü.

31 Therefore, effectively transforming this into a salt legacy (*legato di sale*) (cf. Chiesi Ermotti, 2019, pp. 172–173).

led to conflicts among them as to whose son with an ecclesiastical career would be the recipient of the benefice. So, in 1783, after the death of the until-then beneficiary, Giovanni Antonio Gagliardi, the involved families quarreled over appointing a successor. As mentioned, the right of patronage belonged to the municipality of Prato, which first granted the post to another member of the Gagliardi family. This immediately prompted a protest by canon and archpriest Gian Giulio Girolamo Berna, the beneficiary of his family benefice, who demanded this post for his great-nephew, Enrico Giuseppe, invoking a principle of rotation among Prato's merchant families. The newly appointed Benedetto Gagliardi then, in fact, renounced his post in favor of the Berna candidate. Indeed, as he passed away shortly after, there were no more impediments, and Enrico Giuseppe Berna received the benefice.[32] A few decades later, other problems of a financial nature emerged. In 1820, the municipality of Prato felt forced to ask their bishop to convert the benefice into a simple legacy that would partly finance a school and partly be used for masses but would not require a resident chaplain. They argued that finding anyone willing to take the post had become impossible because of the benefice's low pay and poor conditions.[33] Even if, unlike in the case of the Tondü family, all the formal conditions of the Guidini's benefice were respected by its administrators, it still seems that a process of commonization of the private took place. Guidini's project was centered on creating a personal and family legacy to be inherited, if not by his descendants then by his relatives, as we have seen in the foundation act. Instead, it turned into a sort of public, if not common, asset, which other Prato families fought over.

CONCLUSION

The examined cases suggest the importance of altruistic and redistributive practices among the effects of emigration. They allow us to observe the family-centered and, in some cases, community-centered strategies that emigrants from Italian Switzerland employed at home. Ecclesiastical benefices and legacies could protect family interests through time after the benefactor's death. This, however, presupposed the continuation of the patriarchal succession and the continuous presence of the family in the place where the charity was performed. When this did not occur—as in the cases of the Tondü legacy and of Guidini benefice—the benefits of altruism went to the community, which could take the form of the municipality or a cluster of merchant families.

32 ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 11, K43-44a, February 13–October 16, 1783. Then, in 1792, we find as the *possesore del beneficio* Luigi d'Orelli, accused by the representatives of the municipality of Prato of having celebrated mass in the neighboring municipality of Sornico (ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 11, K60, February 24 and March 21, 1792).

33 ASTi, *Fondo Gagliardi*, box 13, M67, s.d. [1820].

Furthermore, we have seen how the effects of charity can be fully grasped only by examining how a legacy or a benefice is managed after the founder's death. After a benefactor's death, legacies and benefices begin a life of their own that must respond to the needs, wants, and aspirations of the living; they are forced to adapt to new circumstances of a financial and political nature. Therefore, as Torre and Carboni have reiterated, even if the testator can attempt to determine the future after their death, there is no guarantee of success.

Finally, the role of charitable and philanthropic practices as effects of emigration warrants further research, which should examine their role in the social and economic dynamics in the places of origin. It remains to be seen how these effects of migration compare to the other impacts, such as entrepreneurial investments, in terms of scale, dynamism, and the ability to affect the regional society's and economy's development.

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The archival sources used are deposited in the archives referred to in the article.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASTi – Archivio di Stato del Cantone Ticino, Bellinzona
ADL – Archivio diocesano di Lugano
ASL – Archivio storico di Lugano
ACA – Archivio comunale di Acquarossa

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POVZETEK

ALTRUISTIČNI IN REDISTRIBUTIVNI UČINKI EMIGRACIJE: VOLILA IN BENEFICIJI V ITALIJANSKI ŠVICI MED 18. IN 19. STOLETJEM

Borut Žerjal

Altruistični in redistributivni učinki emigracije so razvidni v mehanizmih dobrodelnosti in filantropije, ki so se jih emigranti posluževali v svojih krajih izvora. S tem so pomembno vplivali na lokalno družbo, čeprav so bili motivi dobrotnikov pogosto povezani z osebnimi in družinskimi strategijami, katerih cilj je bil pridobitev uglednega družbenega položaja in drugih koristi, kot so na primer davčne olajšave. Dobrodelnost in filantropijo so v italijanski Švici v veliki meri podpirali izseljenci, kar potrjuje register volil in donacij, ki ga je kantonalna vlada vodila med letoma 1839 in 1886: 24 izseljencev od skupno 514 dobrotnikov je prispevalo približno 20 odstotkov skupne vrednosti vseh donacij. Domnevamo lahko, da so imeli izseljenci podobno pomembno vlogo tudi v 18. stoletju, kar potrjujeta dva cerkvena beneficija, ki predstavljata primera uporabe altruističnih in redistributivnih mehanizmov v okviru družinskih strategij izseljencev. V vasi Prato v dolini Lavizzara sta dve trgovski družini, ki sta na Nemškem in drugod po Evropi trgovali z železom, kolonialnim blagom in drugimi proizvodi, leta 1762 ustanovili dva beneficija. Prvega sta v skladu z oporoko očeta ustanovila brata Davide Antonio in Francesco Giuseppe Berna, ki sta živela v Mainzu, cerkveno službo pa sta namenila tretjemu bratu, Don Giovanniju Giuliu Gerolamu, ki je ostal doma. V tem primeru je jasno razvidno uresničevanje družinske strategije, ki je omogočala finančno in socialno stabilnost ter kontinuiteto rodbine. Drugi beneficij, ki ga je ustanovil Carlo Antonio Guidini, pa lahko razumemo kot neuspešen poskus podobne strategije, ki jo je preprečila odsotnost neposrednih dedičev.

V primeru Guidinijevega beneficija je upravljanje prešlo na občino, natančneje pod nadzor drugih vplivnih trgovskih družin iz Prata. S tem je beneficij postopoma pridobil javni značaj in je bil vključen v proces podružbljenja. Pri upravljanju volil in beneficijev s strani javnih institucij se je pogosto odražalo dialektično razmerje med javnim in zasebnim. Volilo družine Tondü, ustanovljeno leta 1784 v Lionzi v dolini Centovalli, je predvidevalo letno mašo za pokojne člane družine v župnijski cerkvi. Vaška skupščina zemljiških posestnikov, imenovana za upraviteljico volila, je konec 19. stoletja prišla v spor s škofijo glede uporabe prihodkov iz zapuščine, saj so bila sredstva uporabljena tudi za druge namene, ki so služili potrebam skupnosti (razdeljevanje soli, različna gradbena dela v župnijski cerkvi, subvencioniranje najemnin za najemnike posestva).

Avtor na podlagi proučenih primerov predvideva, da so altruistične in redistributivne prakse predstavljale pomemben del učinkov izseljevanja. Te prakse so vplivale na celotno skupnost, pri čemer so se konkretni učinki razlikovali glede na namene darovalcev ter specifične okoliščine upravljanja volil, beneficijev ali donacij.

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