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# The restructuring of the rural territory through the foundation of new villages, as an engine of urban economic development (Middle Ages-Early Modern Period)

Roberto Leggero<sup>\*1</sup>, Mirella Montanari<sup>†2</sup>, and Marta Villa<sup>†3,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) – Switzerland

<sup>2</sup>Centro di ricerca sulle istituzioni e le società medievali (CRISM) – Italy

<sup>3</sup>Università della Svizzera italiana (USI) – Switzerland

<sup>4</sup>Università degli Studi di Trento Unità di Ricerca VADEM (UNITN DSRS) – Italy

## Abstract

### Introducing the topic

An Italian scholar of the Medieval settlements wrote that establishing new settlements and new communities is a creative and complex initiative "with an eminently political content", even when it is possible to recognize economic reasons or, less frequently, military ones.

We should not be surprised - continues the scholar - if the attention to the topic has been constant and has been highly interesting for historians, archaeologists, historians of architecture and urbanists, generating also a progressive integration of the different knowledge.

### The scope

The aim of the panel is to examine the phenomenon of the foundation of rural settlements between the Medieval Ages and Early Modern Period (with a peak in 11th-12th centuries) as an important engine of urban economic development organization and a pillars of development.

It has further been noted that a city could found and own "an entire and populous village, endowed with its own *poderium* [district]", especially "in an area disputed and bordered by the dominion of others; it was a refined but expensive and completely experimental territorial policy operation, which was not always successful".

Therefore, according to this perspective, the organization of the countryside was closely linked to the needs of the cities of regulating the countryside and rationalizing its productions in the effort of meeting the requirements of urban markets. Founding new settlements was a suitable tool which produced a positive effect both on urban economy and urban political aspirations.

Within this horizon, the countryside would become the place for the manifestation of the power and ambitions of the cities but it was not just a passive playfield. The cities themselves could not underestimate the possibility of rural population rejecting their projects of founding new settlements. Therefore, focusing on the initial stages of setting up a rural settlement project will be of interest especially for the failing initiatives or those that could

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\*Corresponding author: roberto.leggero@usi.ch

†Speaker

not reach a development.

In fact, as well as successful cases, it seems promising to analyze the causes of the failures that appear to be loaded with valuable information on the rural world and its relationship with the urban world.

### **The themes**

There could therefore be numerous and different themes. Here are some examples:

1. To identify the reasons, the lobbies and the forces that build the project and those that implement it in the initial stages;
2. To study the resiliencies or the fragilities of the rural communities in the confrontation with the new settlements.
3. To compare the tools used in different cases such as tax exemptions and other advantages promised to push farmers and peasants moving to the new villages.
4. To examine comparatively the reasons for successes and failures.

### **The approaches**

An approach that uses both written and iconographic sources - if available – as well as archaeological sources is encouraged even if not obliged since it also depends on the suggested topics that the papers will propose.

Papers that will examine alpine or pre-alpine study cases are also strongly encouraged.