

Special Issue of the journal *traverse*. Zeitschrift für Geschichte / Revue d'Histoire Industrialisation – Deindustrialisation – Reindustrialisation

Call for articles, deadline 15 August 2024

Since the 1970s, Western Europe and North America have experienced a socio-economic transformation that scholars and policy-makers have termed deindustrialisation. Initially analysed as a trend towards a post-industrial society, deindustrialisation is now viewed as a symptom of deep crisis in the age of globalisation. In Switzerland many companies relocated their factories to low-wage countries, closed production sites, or restructured departments. Workers were laid off, and factory buildings were left to rust or placed on the property market. In many instances, the environmental damage caused by industrial production only became visible or was recognised after the factories had closed. The watchmaking and mechanical engineering industries, along with their associated industrial towns and villages, were particularly affected. The employment structure of Switzerland, which had industrialised early, changed significantly. By the 2010s, approximately half of all industrial jobs had been cut, while employment in the service sector had risen sharply.¹ However, certain industrial sectors, such as the watchmaking industry, observed a resurgence in employment during the 21st century.

Despite this profound change, the deindustrialisation of Switzerland remains a blank spot in the collective memory. The same is true for research. This special issue of *traverse* seeks contributions that explore the reasons for this lack of interest. Conversely, we invite empirical contributions that examine the processes of deindustrialisation in Switzerland since the 1970s. Furthermore, we are looking for contributions that examine deindustrialisation from a *longue durée* perspective and question the often unilinear sequence of industrialisation and deindustrialisation.

Just as with deindustrialisation, proto-industrialisation and the second industrial revolution of the late 19th century, these phases of economic upheaval were characterised by fundamental restructuring of production networks, infrastructure, housing arrangements, innovations in production technology, and a new composition of the working class. They underscore the inherent precariousness of industrial capitalist societies. Examining the spatially and temporally nested processes of industrialisation, deindustrialisation and, potentially, reindustrialisation reveals how social orders under capitalism are continually being dissolved and reconstituted. The special issue aims to capture these dynamics within industrial societies, understanding them as contested terrains populated by a variety of interests and actors. In doing so, it helps to sharpen the concept of deindustrialisation, rather than merely using it as a periodisation for developments in the global North since the 1970s.

¹ Frank Schmidbauer, Martin Baur, Serge Gaillard, Deindustrialisierung: Langfristige Tendenzen und Auswirkungen der Frankenstärke für die Schweiz (Working Paper der Eidgenössischen Finanzverwaltung Nr. 23), Bern 2018, p. 23.

Potential topics:

- The establishment and relocation of production facilities in Switzerland and their social, political, cultural, and ecological consequences
- De-/re-industrialisation as a translocal or transnational process, unveiling interdependencies and dependencies
- Shifts in gendered dynamics within the spheres of production and reproduction
- The relationship between deindustrialisation, migration, and gender history, including the impact of economic crises, downsizing, and relocation on migrants and women
- Industrial conflicts surrounding plant closures and restructuring: (wildcat) strikes, the political negotiation of plant closures, the formation of local or regional solidarity structures of working-class communities, transnational experiences
- The complex interplay between ecology, industrialisation and deindustrialisation: the tense relationship between the environmental movement and trade unions, environmental criticism of industrial production, the effects of industrial disasters and the search for ecological alternatives
- Culture of remembrance and collective memory: commemoration of industrial heritage, the commercialisation of industrial aesthetics by the real estate industry, Switzerland's constructed self-image, the role of migration policy and gender relations in (not) remembering deindustrialization
- The cultural echo of deindustrialisation post-1970s: deindustrialisation as a context for the emergence and spread of punk, industrial and techno, subcultural appropriations of former industrial sites (e.g. squats, cultural centres, illegal parties)

The forthcoming special issue of *traverse*, slated for publication as issue **2/2026**, invites contributions exploring the phenomena of industrialization, deindustrialization, and reindustrialization across various historical epochs. Submissions (in german, french, english or italian) should not exceed 30,000 characters (including spaces) and will undergo a double-blind peer review process. Detailed guidelines and the style sheet can be accessed at <https://revue-traverse.ch/schreiben-fuer-traverse/formale-vorgaben-fuer-traverse/>.

Interested scholars are encouraged to submit an abstract of approx. 600 words, a concise CV, and a list of prior relevant publications no later than **15 August 2024**. Abstracts should be sent to leo.grob@revue-traverse.ch. Authors will receive notification of the editorial decision by 1 October 2024. The deadline for article submission is **1 April 2025**.

Special issue editors:

Tina Asmussen, Gianenrico Bernasconi, Andreas Fasel, Leo Grob, Matthias Ruoss