

An aerial photograph of an industrial complex at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. In the foreground, there are several large, dark-roofed industrial buildings. In the middle ground, a large, multi-story white building with many windows is visible. To the right, there is a parking lot with several cars and a yellow van. In the background, there are rolling hills and a tall communication tower. The overall atmosphere is serene and industrial.

Manfred Perlik

**New and very old regionalism under the conditions  
of new global mobilities and liberal-productivist regimes**

**FOREIGN IMMIGRATION IN THE ALPS  
AND THE PHENOMENON OF REFUGEES**

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# 1. Rationale

- showing the commonalities between the refugees topics and the current spatial processes
- Expression of the current liberal-productivist paradigm of the developed societies of the global North

## 2. Preliminaries

- Since the 1980s a socio-economic change of paradigm. In short: From an equal territorial development to an unequal model which promises higher productivity and increasing returns on investment. **Liberal-productivist regimes.**  
Migration problem in this context. The origins of migration are not new. But the way migration is treated.
- The Alpine space is an urbanized space. **Disadvantaged and advantaged.**
- Before the 1980s: The Alps and other mountain areas lagged behind the core centres. Severe outmigration. **First wave of regionalism.**
- The liberal-productivist turn changed also the development model for regions: Promise, that they could become great again if they act as collective entrepreneurs. A **seemingly new regionalism**, but indeed a very old one: The emergence of separatist movements. Based on the **exclusion of less performant regions and people.**
- The distinction of regions runs like the model of clear focused firms: Highly specialised. Based on a **globalized division of labour**; it accelerates global mobility of all resources from financial capital to human labour. The victims of poverty and violence are part of it.

### 3. Regional impacts of migration flows in the past and today

First: Migrants are never welcome.

But there are differences between the Fordist era (until the 1970s) and today, not only because there are more migrants:

- In Germany the **waves of refugees** after 1945 were integrated, in Switzerland the 1956 Hungary and the 1968 Czechoslovak were welcomed. Of course it was imposed by the western states under the conditions of the Cold War and ethnic thinking. But xenophobe resentments were kept down by the national state's interests.
- Now the migrants are not welcomed either but the states do not defend hosting them. And **for the long-established people their presence causes a supplementary competition** which is higher than before because of liberal-productivist regionalism and individualism.
- The new mobility raises the question about **who has the major right at territories, who has invested in the environment** (cultivating of land, construction of buildings), **adoption of local culture, and who should stay out** because he/she comes too late, follows other social practices and so on. The social question – once estimated as obsolete – has come back.

## 4. Two social fields (social disparities, regional disparities), each with two logics

Looking under the perspective of **migrants**, we have two strands of discussion:

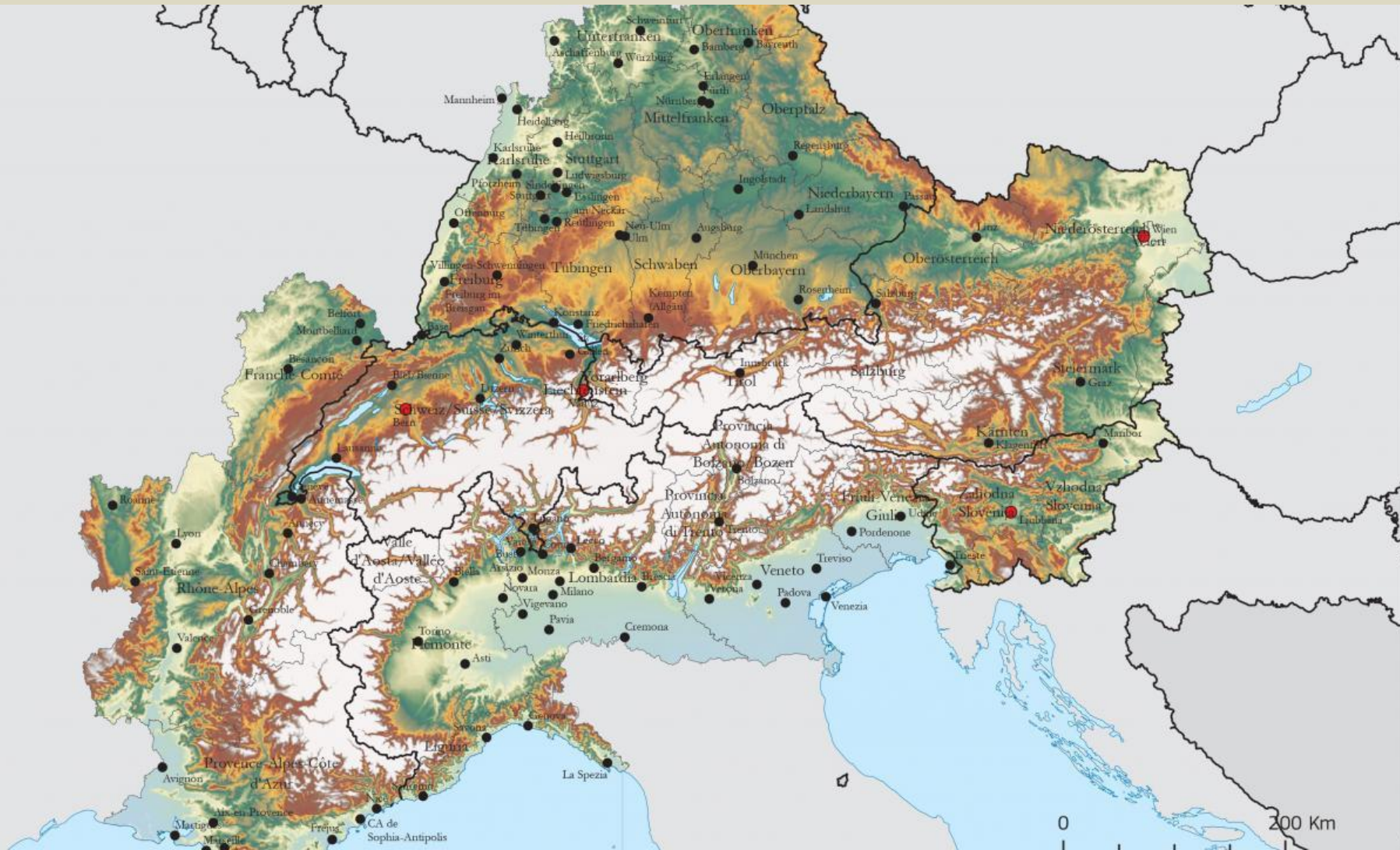
- (a) The difference between an “economic migrant” and a “refugee” are blurred. Under mere economic or ethnologic criteria there is no difference in principle. **Every individuum tries to find for her- or himself the best solution for a better life.** On the other hand, Europe as the hosting continent has to define rules who can come to handle an exceptional situation. A solution cannot orientate on individual interests. Interest of the hosting societies.
- (b) The living conditions in Europe are so much better than in the Global South that it means holding privileges to send migrants back. **Maintaining privileges on the expense of others will aggravate the problem in the future.**

## 4. Two social fields, each with two different logics

Looking under the **regional development** perspective, two strands, too

- (a) The **claim for regional specific development addressed experienced against objective mountain disadvantages**. Thus, regionalism is seen as an emancipatory struggle against spatial injustice. It came up in the 1970s and it was linked with urban to rural migration and the defence of rural interests against urban domination. It was connoted with the struggle of the economically weak regions against the strong regions. It has still its justification but we have to be careful with this argument, because:
- (b) Under conditions of prosperity regional specific development becomes **an instrument to maintain privileges**: “other regions/other people work less and earn more”. This we can call the “new regionalism”: European separatist tendencies. This new regionalism is indeed a very old regionalism as it is a distinction based on exclusion. Here, regionalism becomes congruent with nationalism.

...but also the cooperation of the strongest European regions under the label of an Alpine macroregion.



A. Metropolitan dominance: ongoing increase of agglomeration economies;

polarization

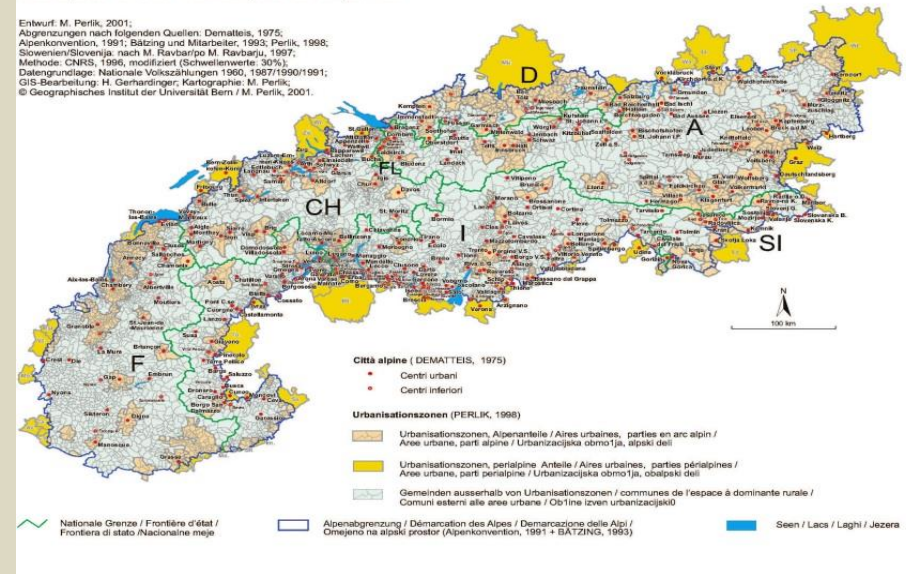
- productive, highly diversified metropolitan regions

- sparsely populated peripheral regions specialized on residence

**Karte 2:**  
**Città alpine 1975 und Urbanisationszonen 1990**  
 Città alpine 1975 et aires urbaines 1990  
 Città alpine 1975 e aree urbane 1990  
 Città alpine 1975 in urbanizacijska območja 1990

Manfred Perik (2001): Alpenstädte - Zwischen Metropolisierung und neuer Eigenständigkeit. Geographica Bernensia P38

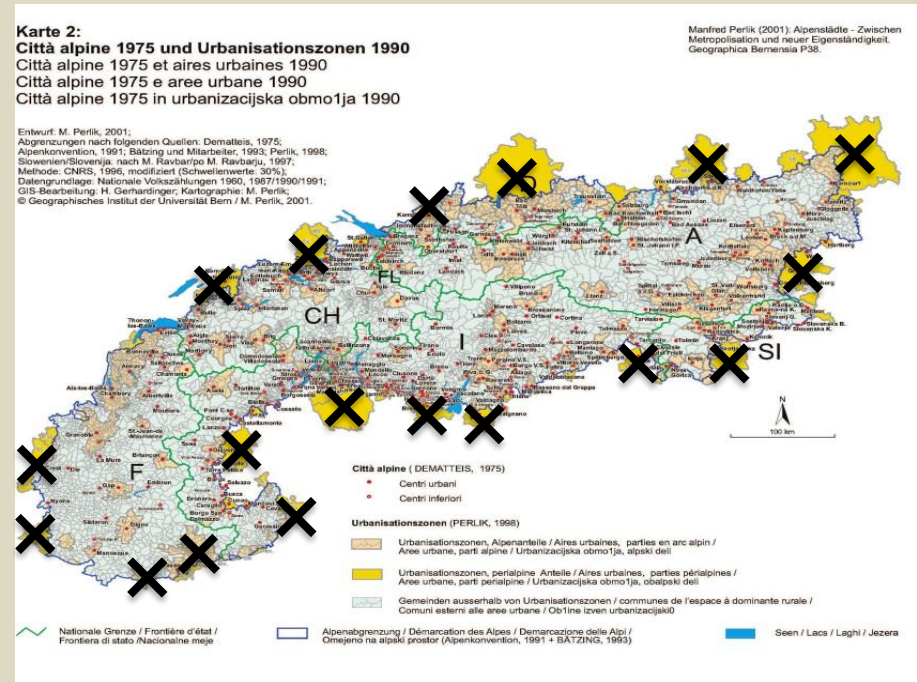
Entwurf: M. Perik, 2001;  
 Abgrenzungen nach folgenden Quellen: Dematteis, 1975;  
 Alpenkonvention, 1991; Bätzing und Mitarbeiter, 1993; Perik, 1998;  
 Slowenien/Slovenija nach M. Ravbarpo M. Ravbarju, 1997;  
 Methode: CNRS, 1996, modifiziert (Schwellenwerte: 30%);  
 Datengrundlage: Nationale Volkszählungen 1960, 1967/1990/1991;  
 GIS-Bearbeitung: H. Gerhardinger; Kartographie: M. Perik;  
 © Geographisches Institut der Universität Bern / M. Perik, 2001.





# Alternative to the mainstream?

B. *Regionalist Isolation:*  
Mountain referring to themselves.  
Identity driven, trying to valorize uniqueness and mountain specificity under the umbrella of supposed common culture.  
Demand for more autonomy with the argument of existing disadvantages, rejecting integration in larger European organisms.



Maintaining privileges under liberal-productivist conditions finds its expressions in new regional concepts:

→ Model 1: The rich regions of Europe find themselves together to claim their interests even ore performant: It is the EUSALP strategy

→ Model 2: The isolationist model: The Alps without urban agglomerations.

- Both models, although in a different way, are based on the new but very old regionalism to ameliorate economic performance. In this view, migrants increase the regional problems as they reduce the productivity and rise conflicts of repartition.
- Actually, we see in Europe nearly everywhere the argument: “we are the disfavoured”, “we want to be distinct”, “we want to be autonomous”, “we prefer small economic circuits” and “we do not want new migrants”.
- Independent of the objective pressure. In fact, disparities and poverty exist also in Europe. But the migration flows were not provoked by the migrants. And: Today the European poors survive because they can afford Asian produced clothes and computers.



For the two strands of the migrants' question (interest of the hosting countries, interest of the refugees) it is more difficult. Both positions have a justification and both are not compatible. We might treat these strands by:

- 1. Pragmatism: In changing the significance according the situation: putting in the foreground this time argument (a) and that time argument (b) or:
- 2. Solving: trying to attenuate both strands so that they become more compatible:
  - (a) there is more hosting capacity than usually thought (“wir schaffen das”)
  - (b) even if we are empathic with refugees we could try to profit from in investing in their integration which makes the better accepted (“Europe is an aging continent which can also profit from young migrants”)

## What to do?

- Ad (a): Creating acceptance for more solidary policies (larger definition of “carrying capacity”)
- Ad (b): May unwanted help to stabilise structurally weak regions so that both sides may profit from the migration?

## Two paradoxes:

- Rural: less dynamic, **less experience with migration**. Larger migrations are long ago (e.g. the Valser), Sparsely population: The impact is higher. Besides solidarity there is large rejection. In sum, the expressed interests of the rural population are against migrants.
  - Migrants, too, prefer urban conditions: There are more possibilities to find family members, friends, paid and unpaid jobs, public services and so on – **the typical agglomeration advantages**.
- Peripheral areas need a younger population. Refugees need good conditions for integration - sometimes better in smaller units.

## Is this idea pertinent?

It is worth to try in the interest of a regional cohesion and a human migration policy:

- Solidary economy (économie solidaire)
- Social innovation
- Transregional/transnational European cooperation
- Reducing of agglomeration advantages (reducing of metropolisation)

# Thank you !

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