Manfred Perlik

Migrants as providers of new regional knowledge in mountains
1. Two approaches in regional development of mountain areas

A. Territorial capital and **agglomeration advantages** are crucial
   - Increasing population as an advantage (economies of scale, agglomeration advantages, embeddedness)

B. Beware of lock-in: New options of the **void** by depopulation
   - The counter-position: Emptiness as a chance (weak ties).

Both positions have good arguments:
- **institutional thickness**, social and territorial capital on the one hand;
- risks of strong ties and **lock-in** (inertia) on the other hand.

I'm clearly prioritizing A. compared to abandoning the European mountain regions (in favour of parks) or compared to a replacement of the current population (in favour of high-end dwelling).
2. Migration flows make regionalist identity policies obsolete

- Alpine policies of the last decades: **Identity thinking**, unique selling propositions, regional competition on international tourist and real estate markets
- Migration makes visible: mountains are **no isolated islands**
- Mountains **have to be integrated** in European policy
- But: Alps have own socio-economic **trajectories**:
  - different problems, demands and requirements
  - the Alps are also a laboratory to study the migration history of Europe (Holenstein/Kury/Schulz, 2018).
- Mountains areas may offer **alternative options for refugees** than the metropolitan hubs.
3. Borders and distinction

• Rejection of the “foreign” is a constant in history and as such it is explainable.

• Especially in the question of regional development:
  - Who may use which area and how?
  - Who has invested in a territory?
  - Which rules should be valid?

• The historic trajectory in Europe favoured sedentarism, especially in the lowlands; it resulted:
  - as the normal case: the sedentary farmer;
  - as the special case: the mobile migrant

• In African countries we see migration as a long practiced strategy which becomes intensified in cases of economic crisis. Sons of poor families undertake rural-to-urban migration and also transcontinental migration. They oscillate between grounded expectations and illusionary dreams (Roth, 2018).

• Regional policies must take into account these historic conditions but should be aware that they are the result of power relations which are not inevitable and can be changed.
4. Refugees can strengthen regional development

In the interest of migrants and locals:

• Refugees should **contribute** to regional development. However, they may not be abused for this purpose. It needs an open communication and transparent declaration - at all levels.

• A policy conforming to **human rights** and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) must be the minimal standard.

• Regions should not take only those people that are obviously beneficial for them. Hosting also complicated individuals gives **knowledge** and competence and skills for the host.

• Hosting unqualified refugees indirectly create **qualified jobs** and can mitigate unilateral cluster risks based on tourism and resort functions: teachers, social workers, psychologists, integration officers, etc.

• Refugees may bring in new external knowledge to marginalized areas which generates Social Innovation.
5. Social innovation in mountain areas

Definition from the Horizon 2020-project SIMRA (Social innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas)

- “The reconfiguring of social practices in response to societal challenges which seek to enhance the outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily include the engagement of civil society actors.”
6. Social innovation: Example Val Lumnezia

- Local actors of a valley with 2000 inhabitants in Grisons/CH, decided to remain agro-touristic; they were searching for external advice; they created the association Pro Val Lumnezia (PVL).
- PVL founded in the 1980s as a political organization as part of the jurisdiction.
- atmosphere of change, spirit of optimism.

Most important outcomes:
- **Environmental NGOs** were brought in, de-blocking of a long lasting confrontation.
- Preparation of the **fusion of the municipalities** of the valley, 2013.
- Now, **second home owners** become integrated.
- Stable, but not growing population.

⇒ Crucial: **searching for new external knowledge and being open for new cooperations with other social actors**
7. Conclusion: Opportunities for mountain regions

- Make hosting refugees a **Social Innovation**.
- Try to prove a **better integration** in smaller units a quality and create an advantage for mountain jurisdictions.
- **Confirm the legitimation** for mountain subsidies by participating on resolving national and transnational problems.
- Benefitting from **external knowledge** of migrants.
8. Bibliography

- SIMRA: http://www.simra-h2020.eu/

Prof. Manfred Perlik, Economic Geographer
- University of Bern, Centre for Development and Environment, CH-3012 Bern, http://www.cde.unibe.ch/
- Chercheur associé à l'UMR Pacte, Université de Grenoble, F-38100 Grenoble, http://www.pacte.cnrs.fr/

→ manfred.perlik@cde.unibe.ch

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