

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

The aims of this presentation are to show the importance of mobility for mountain areas, the different forms of multilocality practiced in touristic and rural-peripheral areas and the mostly unrecognised potential of migrants for social innovation and regional development at the example of the Grisons in Switzerland.

Mountain areas are generally associated with periphery, which in turn is often linked to negative connotations such as backwardness and traditionalism. But periphery is a multidimensional phenomenon, spatially located between different centres. Therefore, mobility is of great importance to mountain areas, both for touristic and rural regions. The out-migration of young people to urban areas and their return, seasonal flows of workers and tourists, second home owners using their property for various purposes, and ex-urban residents looking for a calm rural life lead to a continual state of flux of ideas and people.

In general, the multilocal phenomenon differs in touristic and rural-peripheral areas in the Alps.

a) Life in the touristic area is strongly shaped by seasonal rhythm. Therefore, multilocal living is mostly organized in seasonal blocks and mainly serves to compensate for things lacking in a certain place. Mobility is reinforced by a low level of social and emotional mooring due to the fluid and expensive life in touristic regions. As a consequence, even second-generation migrants often feel little emotional attachment but simultaneously seem to have a broader scope of action, e.g. in educational commuting.

b) In rural-peripheral areas, multilocal living takes place in shorter rhythm as e.g. weekly commuting for the purpose of education, work and leisure. The use of second homes is mostly dynamic and hybrid, depending on current needs (leisure, work, as a place to get emotional and territorial distance in personal crisis). At the same time, peripheral areas, as located between centres, become centrally located and therefore an attractive place to live, offering everything that constitutes Enzensberger's notion of luxury: time, attention, space, peace, nature, and security (ibid. 1997).

Migrants bring new concepts, perceptions of space and mobility into the mountain areas, often with a high propensity to assume risks and create something new. Some of them combine their multilocal living with a great interest in their place of living in the alps and great motivation to participate in the local social life. Multilocality does not exclude local commitment and mooring. Migrants can therefore be seen as excellent actors of social innovations.