

Scandinavian Heartland - Business Improvement

Immigration and Repopulation – Experiences in the Alpine Space

Good Practice Examples

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Schaan, 10 Nov 2015

EXAMPLE 1

The new face of Ostana

Summary:

In 1985 Ostana only had 5 inhabitants; in 2015, 150 people lived there, 6 of them children. People from towns like Turin are moving to the countryside in search of jobs and new forms of social life.

Location/region/country: Ostana, Piedmont, Italy.

Period: 1985 to the present.

Description:

Young urban people are moving out to Ostana. New infrastructure includes a municipal hall and a post office, and since 2011 a bar and restaurant, a cultural centre and a festival for regional languages threatened with extinction have been set up. A wellness centre is under construction. The mayor sees his village as a laboratory for new forms of social life. Different cultures and age groups meet in Ostana. Money and new ideas are needed; revitalization of the neighbouring village has not yet worked.

Objectives:

Revitalization of the village.

Activities:

New infrastructure, influx of new inhabitants, laboratory for new forms of social life.

The involvement of the mayor is important for saving villages like Ostana, but also private initiatives. Investments instead of subsidies would help, according to Marco Bussone of UNCEM, the association of Italian mountain municipalities.

The western Italian Alps are particularly hit by rural-urban migration. However, the economic crisis and the closure of firms provides mountain areas with opportunities to exploit their potential in the areas of tourism and culture, offering new jobs in addition to an unspoiled nature and environment.

Unfortunately, ideas and money are often lacking. Municipalities in the West Italian mountain area are supported by UNCEM in, for example, preparing projects for EU funding. In Piedmont, about 40 *borghi* received EU funds for revitalization in 2009. However, the competition for funds by, for example, the better organized Bavarian villages is a problem. Therefore, private initiatives are important. For € 200,000, for example, a complete hamlet or a number of houses can be bought.

Contact:

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Source:

<http://www.nzz.ch/international/europa/die-wiederentdeckung-des-bergdorfs-1.18541340>
<http://www.nzz.ch/international/bildstrecke/ostana-im-piemont-1.18541109#&gid=1&pid=1>



EXAMPLE 2**Affluent migration to Robidišče, Slovenia****Summary:**

The remote village of Robidišče is a typical example of affluent migration. Almost deserted at the beginning of the century, it now attracts second-home owners - especially in the summer months, when the number of inhabitants rises to almost 40.

Location/region/country: Robidišče, Soča valley, Slovenia, the westernmost village in the country.

Period: ca 2000-2014.

Description:

Robidišče, which had over 100 inhabitants just after World War II but only 7 permanent inhabitants at the beginning of this century, is a typical amenity settlement (Steinicke et al. 2012, p. 340). Tourists excluded, 36 people lived here in the summer of 2014. The influx consists of elderly people who spend at least the summer in their native village and people over 40 who work in Nova Gorica, Koper and Ljubljana, their primary residence, and spend the winter there. These people are members of Slovenia's post-independence middle class; a second home in a mountain village increases their social prestige. The main reasons for migration are nature, leisure opportunities and low real estate prices. Robidišče's remoteness is not considered a disadvantage, as modern telecom services are available. In winter, however, access is considered a problem.

In the last two years accommodation for rent to tourists as well as workers who migrate to work in neighboring Italy has expanded strongly.

Objectives: Immigration

Activities:

As of summer 2015, inhabitants and tourist can buy essential everyday items from a mobile shop which serves the village three times a week.

The agricultural and accommodation enterprise 'ECO tourist farm Robidišče', run by a local family, offers accommodation in a 'village hotel' (renovated houses/apartments and B&Bs) and home-made food, sells home-made products such as sheep cheese and organizes guided tours of the village, stone mason workshops as well as work, photo and cooking camps.

A 'mini spa' with an art gallery, a reading room and a games room is under construction; it was financed through crowd funding. The sauna heating plant is to heat hitherto unheated accommodation as well, extending the tourist season. The management of the ECO tourist farm has also reconstructed roads and walls in the village.

Visitors are invited to contribute to long-term projects in the village in exchange for free accommodation.

Every year, design schools organize a workshop in the village.

A restaurant was reopened some years ago.

Results/successes:

The number of inhabitants in summer has grown. Several hundred tourists use the village hotel every year. Infrastructure (restaurant, village hotel, mobile shop) has improved. A number of dilapidated houses were renovated. Agricultural land continues to be used.

Success factor:

Preservation of traditions and realization of new ideas (crowd funding, visitor involvement in developing the village) combined.

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Source:

NEUE ZUWANDERUNG IN DIE ALPEN – DER OSTEN IST ANDERS Peter ČEDE (Graz), Michael BEISMANN, Judith WALDER, Roland LÖFFLER und Ernst STEINICKE (alle Innsbruck)

<http://robdisce.blogspot.li/>

<http://breginjski-kot.com/breginjski-kot/vredno-ogleda/vojasko-etnoloska-zbirka-breginj/>



EXAMPLE 3

Affluent migration to Dordolla/Friuli/Italy

Summary:

Dordolla, where Italy, Austria and Slovenia meet, was characterized by rural-urban migration. As a consequence of various initiatives by newcomers (about one-third of the population) and locals it is now characterized by drive and community spirit, by a determination to preserve and cherish rural life in the mountains.

Location/region/country: Dordolla, Friuli, Italy.

Period: --

Description:

Dordolla is a small village on the Italian-Austrian-Slovenian border. With its vegetable gardens, it nestles snugly on a tiny promontory in the steep and rugged Val Aupa. This is borderland, a truly European corner where the Latin, Germanic and Slavic cultures interact. A history of migrations has created a village of only 50 inhabitants and yet one that can boast of 5 different languages in daily use. Val Aupa is a dramatic example of landscape metamorphosis, with depopulation, reforestation and both a collapse and rebirth of traditional agriculture.

Dordolla was in danger of being deserted completely, but has in recent years seen a rise in the number of inhabitants, which now include a number of foreigners. About one-third of the population are newcomers. An interesting example among the amenity migrants is a young couple from London. Their motives for moving here were 'a life with people instead of against them', the desire to grow their own vegetables and 'having more time for meaningful work while having less need for money'. Both have become integrated in the village, make their skills available, help out with events, take part in celebration and want to continue living in Dordolla.

Objectives:

Attracting new inhabitants, revitalization of a village hit by rural-urban migration.

Activities:

Dordolla is characterized by a strong community spirit and a determination to preserve and cherish rural mountain life. Traditional agriculture once again takes place on the steep slopes surrounding the village; concerts, theatre plays, exhibitions and festivities ensure a rich social life, which revolves around the bar (there is also a shop). Both locals and newcomers are involved in the activities. The abovementioned newcomer from London has used the media – book, film, exhibition and village map with the old field names - to document and show the value of the characteristic local culture.

Contact:

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Sources:

<http://www.christopherthomson.net/dordolla>

<https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dordolla>

<http://www.christopherthomson.net/dordolla-tiere-furlane-article-page5>

<https://rga.revues.org/2547>

<http://www.christopherthomson.net/the-new-wild-de>



EXAMPLE 4

“New Highlanders” – Immigrants, an opportunity for Graubünden?

Summary:

Although emigration is pervasive feature of the peripheral Alpine areas, there are entrepreneurs who see business potential in this environment and decide to move to a contracting region. They come from urban areas and often leave a well-paid job for independence in the mountains.

Location/region/country:

Graubünden Switzerland (e.g. Lavin, Bergün, Guarda, Braggio im Clancatal, Andeer)

Period: 1978, 2011

Description:

The New Highlander trend in the canton of Graubünden has been examined in a 2014 Berne University master’s thesis. These new immigrants are attracted to peripheral mountain areas. Important reasons include enterprise and job opportunities, starting a new phase in life and amenities (such as sport and leisure facilities).

Rural entrepreneurs are more independent and more creative than those in urban areas. “These new entrepreneurs are an important influx for the valleys“ says a local politician Jon Domenic Parolin.

Objectives:

Attracting new inhabitants, innovation, new jobs to the region and development of the region.

Activities:

The master thesis gives the following examples:

- Astrid Herzog left a well-paid job in informatics to start the ‘Velomaid’ bicycle shop in Bergün. It can only offer a part-time job, but her engagement in mountain biking attracts guests to the area.
- Thomas Lampert in Guarda makes cutlery, wrought ironwork and constructional steel. This is one of the numerous firms managed by immigrants.
- Hotel ‘Piz Linard’, owned by Hans Schmid, is a centre of culinary culture and representative for ‘cosmopolitan Engadin’.
- Roland Wiederkehr runs an organic farm with grey cattle. This project has already been imitated by others.
- Maria Meyer and Martin Bienerth, who run the Alpine dairy Andeer in Andeer, were among the top scorers in the World Championship Cheese Contest in Madison, USA.

Contact:

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Sources:

<http://www.srf.ch/news/regional/graubuenden/new-highlander-wie-staedter-die-randregion-aufmischen>

<http://www.suedostschweiz.ch/wirtschaft/zuwanderer-erobern-als-firmengruender-die-buendner-randregionen>

<http://www.lampert-guarda.ch/lebenslauf/>

<http://www.geographischerundschau.de/suche/nach/keyword/Migration>



EXAMPLE 5

Cultivating old traditions: the Sri Lankan sledge maker

Summary:

The Sri Lankan master carpenter Kavithas Jeybalan makes the traditional Arosa sledges, which for legal reasons are now called Schanfigger sledges. In this way, he preserves an old Graubünden tradition.

Location/region/country: Peist im Schanfigg, Graubünden, Switzerland.

Period: 1984-present.

Description:

After fleeing from Sri Lanka, the Tamil master carpenter Kavithas Jeybalan settled in Graubünden. Initially he jobbed for the firm Zogg. When this went bankrupt he took the jump into independence and started making traditional Arosa sledges. With his four employees he makes around 40 of these per year. The net profits from the sale of these upmarket sledges, however, are low because of the high cost. 'But that's not the most important thing', Kavi says. What really counts is preserving the tradition. And he adds, very pragmatically: 'the publicity for my small business should not be underestimated.'

Objectives:

Settling in a profession, integration, new life for old traditions.

Activities:

Kavi would not be able to survive on the basis of the profits from sledges alone, certainly not with five children (he is married to a local woman); interior fixtures such as complete made-to-measure kitchens are his main source of income. He is well integrated and a member of the Peist society for traditional dress.

Contact:

Jeyabalan Kavithas (+41 81 374 13 01)



EXAMPLE 6

Integration through tourism apprenticeships

Summary:

Local gastronomy and hotel firms offer young refugees apprenticeships, and therefore professional training, during their asylum procedure.

Location/region/country: Vorarlberg, Austria.

Period: Since 2012.

Description:

Since 2012, Hotel Zimba in Schruns prides itself on 'Excellence in Apprenticeships'. When the Economic Chamber and Caritas initiated a ground-breaking integration and training programme the hotel joined immediately. For the first time, young asylum seekers (eight of them) were given the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship in one of the six participating enterprises in the tourism sector. Zimba took on an apprentice waiter and an apprentice cook. This was successful, and recently another asylum seeker has started an apprenticeship in Schruns. However, in spite of the positive experience with the young people not all of them stayed the course. An evaluation of the pilot project is expected soon.

Objectives:

Integration and training programme for refugees.

Activities:

The tourism section of the Vorarlberg Economic Chamber has initiated a promising integration and apprenticeship programme together with Caritas Vorarlberg. During a visit to the *Land's* vocational school in Lochau, where two apprentices are now completing a course, Harald Furtner (CEO of the Chamber's tourism section), Elmar Herburger (tourism spokesman of the Chamber) and Karoline Mätzler (head of the work and qualification team at Caritas Vorarlberg) presented information on the project, which is now in its pilot phase. 'Caritas contacted us about Excellence in Apprenticeships enterprises which would accept refugees for apprenticeships', said Harald Furtner. 'We have selected the best, and they would have been able to get apprentices at any time'.

From among those refugees who had applied – legally, refugees can only take up apprenticeships in tourism - Caritas has selected those who seemed most suited for an apprenticeship in the gastronomy/hotel sector. The selection attached great value to good language skills, enhanced through courses if needed.

Eight refugees have already started their apprenticeships or will start shortly. Two will start courses at the vocational school. The young refugees come from Afghanistan (5), Burkina Faso (1), Pakistan (1) and Iran (1).

Positive feedback:

Elmar Herburger's first stocktaking: 'The experience of the enterprises so far is very good, the youngsters show strong commitment and evidently want to use these opportunities.' There are occasional problems because of cultural differences or insufficient knowledge of German. But those in charge of the project at Caritas offer effective guidance. If the apprentices' German is inadequate they follow an intensive course.

Harald Furtner and Karoline Mätzler emphasize that 'the project creates a win-win situation for the young refugees as well as the enterprises.' On the one hand the enterprises get motivated trainees; on the other the young people get solid training and professional qualifications.

An evaluation of the project is foreseen. If positive the project will continue.

At the moment, the following enterprises are providing apprenticeships to refugees:

- Hotel Zimba, Schruns, 1 apprentice waiter (male)
- Restaurant zum Schützenhaus, Feldkirch, 1 apprentice cook (male)
- Hotel Sonne, Bezau, 1 apprentice cook (female)
- Hotel Lagant, Brand, 1 apprentice cook (male)

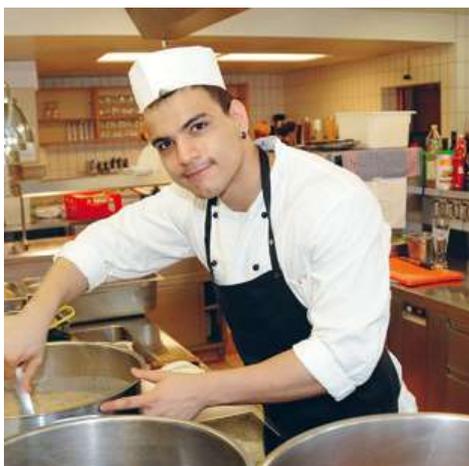
- Dogana, Feldkirch, 1 apprentice cook (male)
- Hotel Zimba, Schruns, 1 apprentice cook (male)
- Inn zum Krönele, Lustenau, 1 skilled gastronomy employee
- Family hotel Lagant, Brand, 1 skilled gastronomy employee

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Sources:

Momentum, Büro für Zukunftsfragen (<http://www.vorarlberg.at/zukunft/>)
<https://www.caritas-vorarlberg.at/aktuell/news/detail/news/24658-integration-im-tourismus-jugendliche-aus-fluechtlingsfamilien-absolvieren-lehren-in-heimische/>
https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/wkv/iv/presseaussendungen/Integration_im_Tourismus_Junge_Asylwerber_absolvieren_Leh.html



EXAMPLE 7

GAISSAPROJECT – a goatherd from Anatolia in the mountains of Graubünden

Summary:

Asylum seekers and refugees learn how to make and market goat products, which allows them to gather experience and possibly find work on a mountain farm.

Location/region/country: Graubünden, Switzerland.

Period: 2015-2018

Description:

Project staff learn Swiss-style goat keeping under professional supervision. Asylum seekers and refugees learn how to make and market goat products, gathering experience for possible jobs on mountain farms. In addition, forests and Alpine meadows are cleared from scrub by the goats. Forest and field edges are 'mown' by the goats. The municipality of Cazis and adjoining municipalities and farms which have shown an interest benefit from the maintenance of cultivated land and the clearing of meadows that had been neglected in the last decades. Grazing on forest meadows in open forests puts these to good use and prevents the forests from becoming dark and blocked by undergrowth. The endangered Graubünden Strahlengais was selected for this project.

Objectives:

Main objectives

1. Integration of jobless refugees and female asylum seekers in the secondary labour market.
2. Forest edge management.
3. Transfer of milk, cheese and meat production skills.

Qualitative objectives

Transfer of goat herding, keeping and milk production skills.

Quantitative objectives

Tending the 2 hectare forest meadow on the land of Cazis municipality.

Time horizon

The project should be self-supporting in three years.

Activities:

The goat project, which started in spring 2015, was formulated by the ecumenic working group AGAPE of the St. Katharina School, the free evangelical parish in Thusis and the reformed parish in Cazis with the aim of offering job opportunities to asylum seekers. The goat herd Kurd Ali Celik (see picture) is a participant in the project.

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Source: <https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/124580/09-09-2015/kurdischer-fluechtling-wird-geissenpeter-der-schweiz>
<http://www.gaissaprojekt.ch/#linformationen/c142d>

