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Contested Spatialities of Lifestyle Migration Public policies, local democracy and global market forces

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ABSTRACT

Metropolises and Parks – Uneven spatial development in mountainous regions. How to renew the regional actor's loyalty with the territory?

Text

1. New spatial and functional dynamics

Many European mountain ranges are surrounded by a fringe of economically strong metropolitan areas. Analyses of socio-economic processes in the mountainous regions therefore allow to interpret the new quality of European metropolisation which can be subsumed as "metropolises and parks". Firstly, metropolitan areas attract new economic functions and new population which leads to a periurban enlargement of the agglomerations into the adjacent mountains. Secondly the new metropolitan regions integrate sparsely populated regions inside the mountains if these places offer attractive landscapes for recreative premium dwelling and leisure functions. There, the metropolisation process turns the peripheral parts of the European mountains into leisure landscapes. Metropolises and parks are mutually dependent: The mountain areas are supported by federal state policies only when they open to urban life. The metropolitan cores need the mountain areas as amenities that allow them to attract a highly qualified staff for a high added value economy.

2. Uneven spatial development

Traditional regional disparities between mountains and lowlands caused by different material wealth have been reduced. New inhabitants bring purchase power into mountain regions. The uneven spatial development gets a new quality. Now, the cleavage arises by productive tertiarised cores and consuming peripheries. It is less visible in terms of GDP but it rises in terms of reputation and by a restricted range of future chances. Regional strategies in mountain areas try to sharpen the regional profile. A shift from tourism to residential functions can be observed.

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3. Selective use of landscape resources

Landscape becomes a new resource and commodity. A new in-migration is part of a multilocal dwelling based on an urban life style and an urban economy and enabled by the possibility to work from different places (Perlik 2009). It generates the problem of apartments only part-time used, known in the Alps as "cold beds". There, the new dwelling stands in competition to traditional tourism which developed over many decades to a mountain specific, embedded regional production system.

The use of the mountain regions for residential and leisure purposes is highly selective. The reasons for are mainly consuming motives which are not to be presumed that they generate active regional actors. Therefore the problem of mountain regions in Europe turns from a status as poor periphery to a new dependency on external decision making and purchase power. The question is whether these residential areas as a new type of metropolitan peripheries can keep and enlarge the mountain's territorial capital in the long run.

4. How to embed new citizens and keep their loyalty?

The new residential and leisure functions seem to be more volatile than the former agricultural, industrial and tourist ones. Considering to enhance territorial capital the question to be posed is not "How to attract more residents?" but "How to attract regional actors?" Regions have to search possibilities and strategies to attach the new (part-time) residents to their chosen region and to motivate them to deploy their skills and networks in the mountain interest. Under the conditions of rising volatility this is difficult as the loyalty of all stakeholders to maintain their embedding has to be renewed continuously.

These strategies are in line with new regional policies which set their focus on innovative regions. Its recommendations stress on the means of subsidiarity and devolution and are mainly market-driven. The selective consuming lowers the reach of the actor based approach. Sometimes the local networks are too weak to be innovative. New policy solutions to keep and to enhance territorial capital have to consider that the actor based model is not enough and that the given spatial division of labor has to be questioned as well.

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