



Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

Between the identity-based and the global option: Which mountain strategies for a cohesive European development?

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Référence à la session / reference to the session

Résumé / Summary

The most highlighted effects of post-Fordist societies are its economic specialization, the acceptance of cultural differences and the awareness of ecological diversity. Especially for mountain regions they are seen as new opportunities. Although it is well known in the academic discourse that desired diversity can be closely linked with undesired disparities, such repercussions occurred on the spatial level only with a considerable time-lag. This hysteresis effect became visible with the growth of metropolitan areas in the yrs 2000. In the 2010 yrs, we became aware of the ugly face of the new differentiation: the renaissance of regionalist and separatist movements, which claimed a higher share on value adding or even independence with nationalist arguments. In many case it concerns the rich parts of territories. In the case of the UK it where the regions with a failed promised ascent, whose population decided to leave the EU. In 2015, the Alpine states succeeded with a decision of the European Parliament to form a Macroregion for a better performance – with the most successful European regions Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Lombardy and Rhône-Alpes. But we also see the contrary: The demand to develop and enlarge distinctive policies only for the “real” Alps to sustain the traditional value chains and to assert a claimed traditional autonomy of land use against the demographic majority in the lowlands.

The objective of the paper is to show that both alternatives have their shortcomings. They neither do correspond to the sustainability goal, nor do fit to the long-term cohesive interests of Europe. Sustainable development in mountain areas always was interpreted that way that the regional mountain population should stress on their specificities. With the emergence of liberal-productivist (post-Fordist) forms of governance – so the argumentation – this strategy has become obsolete, as the new freedom of decision making in mountain regions is a double one: free in the sense of entrepreneurial action but also free from support and solidarity. It is quest the old paradigm of region-specific development, as its presumptions do not correspond anymore to the changed frame conditions:

- High mobility of individuals, workforce, manufactured goods and capital;

- Urbanized social relations in mountains (commodification of landscape and space)
- Value adding and public management based on economic innovation and increasing returns

This leads us to quest for new strategies for the mountain regions in Europe aiming to maintain equivalent livelihood as well as cohesive societies.

Mountain areas concentrate the structurally weak value chains. They cannot resist as autonomous regional entities. And if they play the role of strong specialized suppliers for the lowlands they tend to overexploit their resources. Therefore, only entrepreneurial strategies (new products, higher prices for quality labelled food, lean management structures etc.) are supposed to be a dead-end as there is not enough stable demand in the long-term for all. Considerable struggles on distribution of resources and income may even increase. The search for alternative regimes has to consider the recent findings and theories:

- There is evidence that multiple cross-cutting cleavages in a society diminish social conflicts in contrary of societies with single but deep cleavage lines (Rokkan/Urwin, 1983).
- Highly sociated communities (i.e. cities) attract new inhabitants as they offer many risks but – up to now – they offer also the tools to resolve them (theory of transaction costs and economies of agglomeration).
- Alternative movements in society start there where young people meet and exchange their ideas. To be sustainable, mountain areas must be part of those dynamic processes – by strong connections to the urban areas or by own urban agglomerations. The theoretical basis derives from the economies of scope, observed by Jane Jacobs as urban diversity in the 1960s, today vulgarized with the notion of Richard Florida's creative class.

Consequently, it seems necessary to diminish the cultural cleavages between mountain and lowland cultures to develop a culture of mutual understanding and respect. This means an alternative to metropolitan mainstream and isolationistic regionalism. It would make necessary to reduce an overemphasized identity-driven mountain policy in favour of more supra-regional and supra-national cooperation and systems of territorial equalization. There are two obstacles:

Firstly, such a cooperation must avoid the problems of the current lowland – mountain relation based on the mechanisms of comparative advantages. They favour structurally the lowland agglomerations and tend to environmental damage and overexploitation. Secondly, for the moment such a strategy is not very realistic as economic and political forces run in the inverse direction. Although, efforts in this direction should be started now. An important key factor could become local initiatives of civil society to form a counterbalance against dominance and overexploitation. They can create social innovations, but only when they master to avoid regionalist egoisms and to deliver best practices fruitful also for the lowlands. The presentation will present recent examples of the Italian mountains where local NGOs are active to host refugees.

urbanization in mountain areas, refugees in mountain areas, cross-cutting cleavages, social innovation, spatial justice

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