Current Demographic Trends in the Alps
Nothing Quiet on the Western Front – Quiet in the East
ROLAND LÖFFLER, PETER ČEDE, MICHAEL BEISMANN, JUDITH WALDER, AND ERNST STEINICKE

Abstract

In this paper we portray the new immigration in the Alps and associated socio-economic effects on peripheral mountain villages formerly dominated by emigration. This demographic trend originated in the French Alps at the end of the 1960s and spread eastward. The Italian Western Alps recorded significant growth in the 1990s, and currently amenity migrants can increasingly be found in the Eastern Alps. In addition to the statistical analysis of the data from all Alpine countries the local research for a better understanding of the processes and the impact of newcomers is indispensable. Using numerous case examples from the Italian and Slovenian Alps, our results were cartographically illustrated and exemplify the current demographic developments in the Alps. The conclusion of this study addresses the Eastern Austrian Alps, citing several reasons why practically no new immigration occurs there.

Keywords: New Highlanders, Amenity Migration, Demographic Change, European Alps, Revitalization

1 Research status and objectives

Since from a global perspective a comprehensive volume of academic literature on the theme of new immigration into the mountains already exists (Stewart 2002; Moss 2006; Moss et al. 2009; Löffler & Steinicke 2007; McIntyre 2009; Gosnell & Abrams 2011 or Abrams et al. 2012), more and more geographers and demographers devoted themselves in recent years to this phenomenon in the Alps. An important role is hereby attributed to both amenity migration and new forms of multi-local living, especially in remote mountainous regions (Pascolini 2008; Corrado 2010; Messerli et al. 2011; Perlik 2011; Beismann et al. 2012; Bender & Kanitscheider 2012, 2013; Corrado et al. 2014).

Beginning with the innovation space French Alps in the 1960s and 1970s these processes diffused first into the Italian Western Alps, with the metropolitan areas of Padania as a

1 Austrian Science Fund research group “Demographic Change in the Alps – DCA“ (P25315-G16); except for PETER ČEDE (University of Graz) all authors are from University of Innsbruck, Austria.
significant potential for the influx of urban population into the mountains, they meanwhile encompass the Italian Eastern Alps and also the Slovene Julian Alps. As studies in Switzerland also confirm the phenomenon of new immigration (Schuler et al. 2004; Hornung & Röthlisberger 2005; Carmenisch & Debarbieux 2011; Messerli et al. 2011), the previous research leads to the overall conclusion that this demographic development advances from west to east. This paper builds on a series of case studies in demographic problem areas in the Italian Alps (most recently Beismann et al. 2012; Steinicke et al. 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014) that could clearly demonstrate that in different areas decades-long predominant emigration was replaced by a new immigration.

The foundation of the present work is on the one hand a pan-Alpine analysis of the population development and the migration occurrences at the communal level. On the other hand, the current demographic problem areas regarding new immigration and related processes in the Eastern Alps are specifically examined, whereby the present development in the Friulian Mountains, in the Slovene Julian Alps and in the demographic problem areas in the Alpine east of Austria is represented in greater detail.

In terms of methodology, besides the evaluation of the current state of research, we considered primarily the official results of the census of all Alpine countries since the second half of the 20th century, as well as the thematic maps of the recent decades that reference them. In addition to these quantitative techniques several research visits of the authors to the study areas provided critical insights. The most important methods on site included – besides own multi-year observations – semi-structured interviews with locals and with new immigrants, workshops with community heads of office and mayors, talks with local labor groups and regional associations, as well as questionnaires. As purposeful proved to be also the data collection method of standardized mapping of functions (land use or building utilization), specifically for quantitatively and qualitatively relevant insights into the process of repopulation of peripheral settlements.

2 Population development in the Alps

To get an overview over the current demographic processes in the Alpine region, it is necessary to know the development of the previous decades. For this purpose the maps of population development in the Alpine region of 1951-1981 and 1981-2000 of Bätzing (2002) were used, generalized and updated (fig. 1). Because of the different lengths of comparative periods, the threshold for the current, from a statistical point of view, period of 2002-2012
was set in relation to that of 1981-2000. All three figures show the areas with significant population losses in the Alpine region delimited according to the Alpine Convention. Until the early 1980s, especially the western and southern parts were the main demographic problem areas in the Alps. Over the following decades, this picture has changed dramatically: while the municipalities in the western part of the Alps gradually recovered from the massive emigration phase, in the East increasingly more areas, some of them extensive, are suffering from a massive population decline. In contrast to the Western Alps, where the problem areas have progressively declined and transformed into immigration areas, the almost all-encompassing population losses occur in Northern Friuli, but especially in the eastern section of the Austrian Alps.

Figure 1: Demographic problem areas in the Alps – east-west contrast

This demographic east-west contrast of the present becomes even more obvious when focusing on a community-accurate representation of the migration dynamics. Figure 2 shows clearly the dualism between the (new) migration areas in the western Alps and the migration areas in the east. Here the different temporal dimension of the phenomenon of amenity migration is evident: in the French Alps some communities could gain new residents already since the mid-1960s, mainly owing to the "Plan neige" launched in 1964. In the meantime one
can find birthrates there that are even capable of population expansion. In the Italian Western Alps (once one of the main out-migration areas) an increased immigration is detectable since the 1990s leading to population gains, although not yet by means of positive, biodemographic characteristics. In the Eastern Alps, however, due to the decades to centuries of population outflow, (over)ageing is still a considerable problem. Therefore, the depopulation numbers are in part still substantial, but even here certain areas, for example in Friuli, are in a demographic transformation process. The particularly precarious situation in the eastern Austrian Alps will subsequently be illuminated in detail.

### Figure 2: Migration balance of the Alpine communities 2002-2012

3 **New Highlanders in models**

Amenity migrants, here also called *new highlanders*, are people who consciously choose to live in the mountains, leaving extra-Alpine cities (for longer periods) and thereby contributing to the revitalization and preservation of peripheral mountain settlements. From the results of our empirical studies two models could be developed.
3.1 The valley model

The first model shows schematically an arbitrary valley in the Italian Alps, with larger tourist centers ignored and the central places with their suburbia excluded from the content. It should reflect the characteristic distribution of types of residents in the various zones of a valley (fig. 3). In the semi-peripheral zone reside already a significant proportion of mostly retired returning migrants, newcomers and owners of second homes. Typically one finds here intact village structures that were not endangered in the past century. If they are, however, not intact here, they usually expose, as former industrial sites, all the more massive structural problems, and their situation is often more problematic than in the rear valleys.

In the peripheral zone, which in the past suffered most noticeably under the exodus, the newcomers are not expected to commute daily. Striking in these communities is the large proportion of secondary residences. Often the local residents no longer make up the majority here. Specifically in recent years many migrants, foreign retirees and newcomers have put down roots. Especially the latter set decisive impulses and are a factor that schools and other utilities are not closed. Among them are young people and families who inherited homes from their ancestors, and who are often referred to in the literature as second- and third generation re-migrants. Only a few years ago it seemed unthinkable for them as young families to consider moving into hopeless, decaying villages. Today, the grandparents' house has not only recreational value. The children should grow up where their parents as children already spent the holidays with their grandparents.

![Distribution of Residents according to Location](image)

*Figure 3: Representative population distribution in a typical Italian Alpine valley*
In extreme locations, finally, there are communities, most of which consist of many individual, scattered hamlets, that today still distinguish themselves statistically as the last emigration areas. Due to the accessibility and exposure, carving out a life in these hamlets has always been difficult. Only a few of the former farmers remain; generally there is a rising number of elderly people. Nevertheless, some newcomers with commitment and niche thinking have found a way to build a new life on the border of the settled area. The existence of many of these villages would certainly be in question without the high proportion of classical secondary residences. Without doubt, in the top two elevation levels the proportion of homes owned by outsiders predominates, and in some seasons even their presence compared to that of the old-established residents.

3.2 The community model

A second model represents the diverse composition of the population, the inflows and outflows and possible "types of transitions," i.e. changes in population status, within a peripheral mountain settlement (fig. 4). The schema can be applied regionally to a valley as well as locally to a single village (cf. fig. 6).
Locals, new highlanders and working migrants have their center of life here and thus form the foundation of the (more or less) year-round resident population. The part-time resident population includes tourists, the owners of second/vacation homes, multi-local residents as well as seasonal workers. Multi-locale residents distinguish themselves through a longer annual presence compared to second- and vacation home owners, pursue their work at this residence (exception: retirees), and participate in the social life of the village community. Similarly, seasonal workers are often several months on site and due to this long continuous stay are usually well integrated into the community. Migrant workers are present throughout the year and get involved – depending on their vested interests – to varying degrees in the village life.

New immigrants in large numbers – often families with children – find themselves in the middle of their professional life, and they brought either their career with them or created a new one on-site. Newcomers are very often among the economic and social innovators within a community. This part of the working population includes people who can, thanks to modern telecommunications technologies, work from home and have to commute only on some days into the larger centers.

In the area of overlap between the local population and new highlanders are on the one hand re-migrants, that is locals who emigrated in search of work and now, usually after retirement, returned, and on the other hand relationship-migrants, persons who immigrated on the basis of a partnership or marriage into the community.

The black dashed arrows illustrate also the dynamics of this typing. For example, an owner of a holiday home over time can become a multi-locale resident or a new highlander, or a seasonal worker a new highlander, if the newcomer decides to completely transfer his/her residence into the community and takes part in the village life outside of each working season. In-migration as well as out-migration are highly dependent on the attractiveness of the community, and the financial situation of the residents and the price development for real estate and living expenses.

### 4 Newcomers in the Italian Eastern Alps

As figures 1 and 2 clearly show, the regions in the Austrian Eastern Alps have, numerically and by area, become the largest out-migration area of the Alpine Arc. Before examining this in greater detail, the new mountain residents in the Montagna friulana should first be addressed. This part of the mountains, which throughout the Alps suffered the greatest
population losses since the Second World War, is particularly suitable to demonstrate the impact of the current immigration model. Revealing is subsequently a look across the border into the Slovenian Alps where during the communist period the emigration was weaker than in neighboring Northern Friuli.

4.1 Case study Sauris

Friuli’s highest community (Sauris di Sotto 1,215 m, Sauris di Sopra 1,390 m a.s.l.) was settled around the middle of the 13th century from the Tyrolean Val Pusteria and to date could preserve its own language, an archaic form of the Puster Valley dialect, not least due to the seclusion that lasted centuries (Hornung 1972; Baum 1980; Denison 1982). Sauris (German: Zahre) represents a special case in two respects: on the one hand, the German-speaking language pocket is characterized by its unique language and culture, on the other hand by a rapid structural transformation from an agricultural settlement to one of economic and tourist activity (Steinicke 1986, 1991).

From the Second World War (pop. 1951: 885) – following the Northern Friulian trend – the population of the municipality of Sauris decreased continuously until the early 1980s. Already reduced to half, it leveled off, however, despite continuing unfavorable bio-demographic factors. Since the late of 1990s it has remained at around 420 inhabitants (pop. 2012: 429), which is related to the relatively attractive local job situation in the secondary and tertiary economic sectors. Today also around 50 commuters and some Romanian migrant workers, who are employed in the local companies, benefit from the favorable labor market situation (especially in the meat industry).

In retrospect, structural change thus has prevented an extensive depopulation; however, together with the community’s newly awakened awareness in the 1980s of its own culture and language and associated tourism marketing of these features, a somewhat contradictory situation has emerged: although the settlement with its rustic wooden buildings and flower-filled balconies gives the impression of an intact rural world, traditional mountain farming agriculture is no longer practiced by anyone in the village. Rather than taking over the parental farms, the young generation decided in favor of the less time-intensive employment in trade and tourism. The ten alpine pastures in the municipal area are managed mainly by the neighboring communities, including by a non-resident large-scale farmer, who is not only the main customer of the community’s entire hay harvest but will in future achieve added value with an agritourism enterprise.
With regard to the development of tourism, in 1994 the community adopted the concept of “albergo diffuso”\(^2\) developed in the 1980s. Accordingly, the traditional but partially dilapidated building stock was renovated to provide housing. In addition to the complete range of a regular hotel operation, the concept is intended to offer the guests an authentic experience in the village. The center of this form of tourist accommodation is located in Sauris di Sopra but now encompasses a total of approximately 140 beds in the whole community. According to the accommodation directory of 2013, there are an additional 189 beds in the municipality, mainly in smaller pensions. All medium and large hotel complexes of the 1970s and 80s (with one exception), however, are presently empty due to non-solvent owners or absence of investors. Their sad appearance is in clear contrast to the revitalized albergo diffuso buildings. A significant part of the residential space of the municipality is designated as second or holiday homes and is used predominantly in the main holiday periods of Easter, at the end of the year, and in the summer, but often only on a few weekends a year. The owners come mostly from cities like Udine, Trieste, Bologna and Bergamo, a few also from Germany. The locals see the growth of the second-home sector with apprehension, but they also know that the appearance of the village is a distinctly unique feature in the tourist competition, and that its maintenance could not be sustained by them alone. Currently the supply of apartments and houses exceeds the demand, which is mainly explained with a temporary lack of purchasing power of potential customers due to the financial crisis.

The comprehensive mapping of the utilization of the buildings including the number of residents in the community of Sauris attests to the remarkable proportion of newcomers. Figure 5 shows this impressively with an example of the village center of Sauris di Sotto.

\(^2\) [http://www.albergodiffuso.com](http://www.albergodiffuso.com)
In the entire community of Sauris, transplanted (marriage) partners whose native language is in most cases Italian, or less often Friulian, can be found in 35 households. While such an influx in the Italian-speaking mountain communities is usually viewed as an advantage, the locals interviewed in Sauris expressed mainly skepticism: they see the relationship migrants as the main reason for the extinction of the local idiom and the disappearance of their particular ethnic identity. This, however, applies to the other new immigrants only to a lesser extent as they are, in contrast to the intermarriage partners, not directly engaged in the everyday inner-family language use.
Figure 6 presents a model of the different categories of immigrants. Newcomers contribute significantly to the positive migration balance and exert positive influence, especially in the economic and cultural sectors. In Sauris, as in other peripheral municipalities in the Italian Alps (Steinicke et al. 2011), are also newcomers located who have built their new center of life here, participate with engagement in community life, and promote the rural culture by assisting in the organization and operation of events and festivals.
4.2 Case study Erto

In the municipality of Erto e Casso (Province of Pordenone), which was evacuated after the catchment lake disaster of Vajont in 1963, the inhabitants were moved into the new town of Vajont (founded in 1971) about 40 km south-east and a newly built district ("Erto Nuovo") above the destroyed settlement of Erto. For many years the residents were not allowed to return to their old homes. Life was nevertheless restored in the old Erto ("Erto Vecchio"): in addition to a few buildings that are inhabited year-round, one finds many second homes (of locals and out-of-towners) as well as restaurants, shops, and a museum. Most of the remaining buildings are being renovated at present (fig. 7). While in Casso only the renovated character of the local architecture stands out, in Erto the impression of an economic spirit of optimism already prevails. New immigrants and owners of second homes contribute significantly to the reawakened village life, which increases the attractiveness for tourists significantly.
Figure 7: Functions in the formerly evacuated Erto Vecchio
4.3 Case study Mazzin

A further field study, conducted in Mazzin in Val di Fassa, shows the transformation of a former agriculturally-dominated village. While in 1982 only one newly constructed large complex for holiday guests existed, numerous buildings of newcomers and for tourists characterize now the local image (fig. 8), whereby the positive effect is reflected especially in the population growth, which amounted to 40% between 1971 and 2011 alone.

![Figure 8: Transformation of the village Mazzin 1858 to 2011](image)

4.4 Ghost Towns in Friuli

From the end of the Second World War, the Friulian mountain communities were characterized by a massive depopulation, further accelerated by the series of earthquakes in 1976, which widely destroyed the settlement area. Even today the statistical results show overall population losses, therefore one would never expect to find traces of a demographic turnaround here. Over the course of several research trips it could be determined, however, that the latest demographic developments in this area no longer differ from those in the valleys of the Italian Western Alps. Even though newcomers still occur to a far lesser number, new residents from outside the Alps are also present in extremely peripheral villages. The reasons for the slower development in the Eastern Italian Alps are on the one hand the
unfavorable bio-demographic structures, which in turn resulted from the previous emigration period. On the other hand – in contrast to the Italian Western Alps – large, densely populated areas like Turin, Milan or Genoa, which exert enormous pressure on surrounding areas and exurbia and also represent a large pool of potential newcomers, are missing here. In addition, it should be emphasized that besides the new immigration vocational departures persist that in some places lead to a veritable population exchange, which Perlik (2011, p. 8) describes as "Alpine gentrification."

Figure 9: Population status in the Canal del Ferro and the adjacent valleys

Even if it is certainly not a mass phenomenon, the process of amenity migration in Friuli is nevertheless currently responsible for the revival of peripheral villages. Although the resettlement measured in population numbers is not always statistically significant, in many cases a few immigrants already are in a position to ensure a revitalization of the community.

Positive effects of newcomers in remote high-mountain regions of the Alps, and therefore also in the Montagna friulana, are the stabilization and revitalization of local structures and buildings as well as the associated resettlement of deserted communities (fig. 9). In addition, through innovation and entrepreneurship many amenity migrants contribute to the revival of
the local economy. Even those who do not live there year-round play a part through the maintainance of their houses, which the native population can no longer accomplish alone. Moreover, the new highlanders prevent a (further) increase of the proportion of elderly people and also counteract declining birth rates.

Dordolla and Stavoli

A specific example of this is found in the village of Dordolla in the community of Moggio Udinese. 12 km away from the main community, it is the only village in the Val Àupa which may be described as unarguably populated. Village life could be characterized recently not only by regular cultural events with many foreign visitors, but also by the proportion of one-third newcomers within the 45 residents who live here year-round (cf. fig. 10). During the summer months, both the population and the proportion of newcomers increase significantly, although at different rates from year to year. For the apparent village development, the positively blossoming village life and the newly formed agricultural efforts, the new newcomers are partly or even primarily responsible.
Differently but in a similar direction transform the ghost villages just a few kilometers away. Due to renovations and maintenance of houses, both by locals and by new immigrants, there is in theory even the possibility of a real revitalization by future generations. Representative for this can be the village of Stavoli (fig. 11): as many as half of the 71 houses are second homes to people mainly from Moggio Udinese, but also from Gemona, Udine, Trieste, and Pordenone. Furthermore, the majority of the (still) empty houses is in good condition and has the potential to be inhabited. This is noteworthy and astonishing mainly because the settlement can be reached only after an hour’s walk. A materials cable lift represents the only transportation aid, but it also ends a few hundred meters from the settlement.
To investigate the existence and distribution of immigrants in remote demographic problem areas of the Slovenian Alps, six contiguous občine (greater communities) in the Slovenian Julian Alps are suitable; all of them have a negative migration balance and are surrounded by rural migrant communities. Exceptions are in the west, where they share borders with Friuli, and in the east, where they are encircled by urban immigration areas (cf. fig. 12).

In the Slovene municipalities the evaluation of official migration statistics is not meaningful for the present study. For example, the village of Tolmin counted 3,525 inhabitants in 2012\(^3\), while its municipal area comprised of 11,628 inhabitants, spread over 72 villages (naselje) more than 50 kilometers apart. In order to learn specifics about the population dynamics at the level of village sections, qualitative studies are essential. Given the number of individual settlements and hamlets, however, it would be difficult on the one hand and inadequate on the other to investigate some areas by random sampling, which is why an intensive field mission in the study area (cf. fig. 12) by the research team was required. Based on the acquisition of

\(^{3}\) Stastistični urad Republike Slovenije
specific features of the physiognomy of the buildings and settlements in the districts, interviews using the snowball method were conducted for each local situation. Accordingly, a usefully-dense network of individual pieces of information that were localized, linked and visualized using GIS support was established. Thus, the study area could be typified in separate zones with respect to the "external influences." The results are summarized in figure 12. A total of four types were eliminated in the areas relevant to the question that reflect inventory and potential for amenity migration.

Region type I: Transition zone outside of exurbia

This region is still in daily commuting distance to the economically active areas around Škofja Loka, Kranj and Ljubljana as well as to the settlements with higher-ranking functions near the expressway/highway towards the Adriatic Sea and Nova Gorica. A few newcomers from extra-Alpine regions can indeed be found here, but they have little influence on the existing building stock and the preservation of the cultural landscape, which seems at least in the medium term endogenously secured.

Region type II: Periphery with tourist approaches

Forestation is here pushing to the foreground, scrub encroachment is evidence of the decline of agricultural use, and compared to region type I the less-well maintained building stock suggests out-migration. In contrast, new buildings and shells related to tourist activities,
similarly sometimes second-, holiday- and summer residences, emerge in attractive scenic locations. Nevertheless represent by far neither the returnees nor the new immigrants a mass phenomenon; however, among other things they support the local construction industry. The Cerkno ski area enjoys rising popularity; in spite of this, profitable tourism and as a result also an increased influx of amenity migrants is not yet occuring.

**Region type III: „Amenity landscapes“**

This region type, which can be found at the lower Idrijca and northeast of it (IIIa), as well as in the far west of the study area at the Nadiža (IIIb), is in several respects the most interesting area regarding the influence of newcomers on local conditions. At first glance, with its nearly closed forest cover and seclusion in the region type IIIa, one would not expect amenities as pull factors for a new immigration. Away from the main traffic routes, however, are clearings and agriculturally utilized plateaus with villages in an attractive location. The areas of Šebrelje (IIIa) and west of Kobarid (IIIb) surprise on several levels by generously redesigned and renovated buildings (cf. also figure 13) that were usually not developed from endogenous resources.

The new mountain residents originate mainly from the larger cities in southern Slovenia, but among them is also a remarkable number from abroad. Equally diversified are the motives, ranging from happenstance, to affordable living with high recreational value, to the desire to pursue undisturbed alternative agriculture. Most newcomers are – not least due to their innovative work – well perceived by the locals.

**Region type IV: „Untapped potential for amenity migration“**

The area lying west of region type IIIa, on both sides of the Soča (IVa), differs as a natural environment only insignificantly from it. The appealing landscape should in fact attract newcomers, but the expansion process of amenity migration has not captured it yet. The town centers distinctly reflect decay, and even the single-family homes built on the outskirts in the last decades are now also subject to deterioration. Construction and renovation activities – except in the communities’ capitals – can hardly be detected at present, and new residents are negligible in numbers.

The area north of the region type IIIa (IVb) also shows hardly any new arrivals, but settlements and landscapes are in a better-tended state. This stems from the fact that here the
local population, after migrating, visit the communities on weekends – especially in the warmer months – and during these stays renovate the old houses and preserve them as recreational homes in view of a future permanent settlement.

**Case study Robidišče**

The example of the village of Robidišče (fig. 13) with over 100 inhabitants immediately after the Second World War, counting only seven permanent residents in the early 2000s, represents the ideal case of amenity settlement (Steinicke et al. 2012, p. 340). In the summer of 2014 already 36 people (without tourists) lived here again. In the past two years the housing space has been greatly developed and is available for rent to tourists but also to foreign workers who are in employment in the near Italy. Meanwhile, newcomers operate a farm again.

*Figure 13: New highlanders in Robidišče at the Slovenian-Italian border*
6 The demographic problem areas in Alpine Eastern Austria

Figure 1 shows that the Austrian eastern Alps in the period between World War II and 1981, compared to the eastern part of the Italian Alps and parts of Alpine Slovenia, were not a particularly distinct depopulation area. Up to the present, however, the situation has changed fundamentally: with the exception of the (suburban-characterized) Vienna Woods and central Carinthia, this Alpine part forms today a consistent demographic problem area in which only a few municipalities show positive net migration (fig. 14).

Following, the question arises therefore as to the reason for this particular development, and it should be contemplated whether the phenomenon of amenity migration in this area – as shown by the example of western Slovenia and Friuli – will occur merely delayed in time. It should also be clarified how such processes are possible at all within the specific natural and cultural environments as well as economic conditions in the east of Alpine Austria.
6.1 The development into an out-migration area

The roots for the development of the eastern part of the Austrian Alps into a demographic problem area can be traced back to the time before industrialization. Accordingly, due to the legal-historical disadvantage of the “Freistiftrecht,” a landlord’s right to disown, instead of leasehold rights for the farmworkers, the framework conditions for innovation processes already before the agrarian reform were far less favorable than in other Alpine areas. In addition, in the late nineteenth century (Gründerzeit) non-farming urban forest prospects emerged (Lichtenberger 2002, pp. 165-168; Penz 2011, pp. 48-49) that extended significantly the already extensive landholdings in the region, thereby reinforcing the persistence of rent capitalist structures and their impact to the present day.

From the 1970s onward, the crisis of the old mining and industrial areas (Eisenerz Region, the Valley of the Mur and Mürz rivers, Hüttenberg), the delayed onset of the tertiarization, as well as, compared to the western section of the Austrian Alps, many parts of Switzerland and South Tyrol, insignificant summer and Winter tourism, were further reasons that the East became a problem area and subsequently an out-migration region. Another factor to be emphasized, especially in the crystalline mountain ranges, is the delayed loss of the agrarian economic sector by up to two decades. Thus, the results of the census 1981 (ÖSTZ 1985) in the mountain areas of Carinthia and Styria still reported an above-average proportion of agricultural workers, a factor related to the dominance of agrarian medium-sized enterprises farmed as primary livelihood (ÖSTZA 1982, 1983). In addition, the migration from individual peripheral settlements took place initially into the principal towns of the municipalities and not yet to a greater extent into the central areas, which first gained prominence as migration destinations from the 1980s onward.

6.2 Current migration movements

A closer look at the current immigration in the eastern section of the Austrian Alps shows that it is – with the exception of urban, suburban, and in commuting distance to the central regions lying communities – still insignificant. According to this, municipalities with negative migration balance dominate in the Alpine peripheral areas of both Carinthia and Styria and also Upper Austria and Lower Austria. Strikingly strong migration losses indicate the communities of the Gurktaler Alps (political districts Feldkirchen and St. Veit; Stöckl 2014, p. 37), which are disadvantaged geographically by transportation network standards.
The reasons for this lie primarily in the lack of local jobs, great commuter distances, but also in the often inadequate municipal settlement and housing policies. The ensuing declining or stagnant birthrates are clearly reflected in the age structure of the communities that are particularly affected by the negative demographic trends. This results, especially in the already heavily depopulated districts outside the municipal capitals, in an increasingly aged population and, consequently, also vacant or unused building stock, which nevertheless is rarely used for amenity migration.

6.3 Causes of the insignificant amenity migration

An analysis of the causes of the insignificant immigration in Alpine eastern Austria revealed several factors, resulting from the specific legal-historical and socio-economic development, that in many cases do not individually appear space-effectually, but are also interlinked in different regional weighting to varying degrees.

6.3.1 Low scenic attractiveness owing to natural conditions

The lack of attractiveness results among other things from the significantly lower altitude, compared to the western section of the Austrian Alps. It extends rarely above 2000 m, particularly in the Gurktaler Alps (Carinthia, Styria) as well as in the Styrian peripheral mountains (Carinthia, Styria, Lower Austria). Extensive afforestation (cf. section 6.3.3) as a result of massive population- and settlement regression since the Gründerzeit also reinforce the perception of densely forested mountain ranges (Andrian-Werburg et al. 2008; Seger 2005a-c, 2011). This affects the narrow side trenches as well as the vast shade sides of the main valleys which are unsuitable sites for new immigration because of topographical conditions. In contrast to the rest of the Eastern Alps, there are also few high-mountain pastures above the timber line remaining, with simultaneous dominance of abandoned agricultural and forestry enterprises, resulting in low pastures below the boundary of permanent settlement whose scenic appeal is therefore also perceived as minimal.

Minimally suited for immigration are large parts of the Styrian and Lower-Austrian limestone Alps due to the unfavorable relief relationships with large vertical distances and periglacially shaped, extremely steep slopes, but not least also because of the prevailing large church- and secular landownership (cf. section 6.3.4).
6.3.2 Peripherally located individual settlements disadvantaged in the transportation network

Characteristic of the convex mountain range character are, moreover, the resulting location criteria of the dominant individual settlements – with the exception of the main valleys and inner-Alpine basins – which are often very isolated and therefore difficult to reach even in the case of advantaged topographical locations on the sunny side. This applies especially to those mountain areas where the decline of the mountain-farming cultural landscape is already far advanced (Čede 1991, 1998; Penz 2005a) and therefore also the transport infrastructure does not meet the contemporary individual as well as public requirements.

6.3.3 Monotonization and standardization of cultural landscapes through afforestation of agricultural land

The increase in forest areas by afforestation of agricultural land, especially in the crystalline mountain ranges in the eastern section of the Austrian Alps, is another major contributor to the low attractiveness of mountain areas in regards to amenity migration. A consequence of this is a further progressive unification and monotonization of the cultural landscape previously structured in small scale (Borsdorf & Bender 2007; Penz 2005b; Tasser & Tappeiner 2008). The causes of this development, which since the 1970s has been shoudered increasingly by the farming population, are closely linked with the population and settlement regression in mountain regions, as already discussed, and with the current problems in the Alpine agriculture, also against the background of the mountain region policy of the EU. Spatially the increase of forest areas with their spruce monocultures has been limited in recent decades not only to topographically disadvantaged locations (such as in the Gründerzeit), but includes increasingly a number of the currently still densely populated favorable areas (Čede 2000, pp. 164-165, 2011). Thereby also the sunny sides affected by natural origon and reforestation lose attractiveness for potential new highlanders.

6.3.4 Vast land ownership and large-scale farming structures

Detrimental for the spread of amenity migration is also the persistence of the large estates created primarily during the colonization of the High Middle Ages and by the expropriation of peasant holdings in the period of the Gründerzeit. In the mountain-farming cultural landscape especially the second phase of the systematic afforestation of agricultural land of those
mountain farms that were acquired in the second half of the 19th century and beyond by the upper-middle class as investment or hunting domain was visibly reflected. Associated with this is the importance of intensive forestry (clear-cutting, logging roads) that manifests itself regionally, especially in north-eastern Upper Styria (Mariazeller Region) and in the adjacent mountain areas of Lower Austria (Ötscher Region), regions that are also disadvantaged by poor transportation links ("Vergessene ländliche Räume" [Forgotten rural areas] – Gramm et al. 2008).

Also worth highlighting are the large-scale farming ownership structures in the crystalline mountain ranges that from the 1970s onwards were increasingly reforested (cf. section 6.3.3). Characteristic of this ownership, particularly with the non-agrarian large-scale landowners, are strong property ownership continuities and therefore – however necessary for amenity migration – only a small amount of properties for sale.

### 6.3.5 Unsatisfactory functional facilities of municipals capitals

This situation is closely connected with the general population decline in the eastern section of the Austrian Alps. In numerous municipal capitals, therefore, local supply no longer exists, and the social and technical infrastructure also proves unsatisfactory (Borsdorf 2005; Machold & Tamme 2005; ÖROK 2006). Particularly drastic is the decline in functional facilities in the former capitals of municipalities affected by mergers and single-settlement area of interspersed church hamlets in the sprawling uplands, which at present – apart from a few exceptions – possess no more functional equipment and thus are also unattractive for amenity migrants.

### 6.3.6 Poor image of mining and industrial areas, extinct and in crisis

Particularly affected by this are in the eastern section of the Austrian Alps the region around the Styrian Erzberg and the mountain areas on both sides of the Valley of the Mur and Mürz rivers. The latter were highly industrialized in the Gründerzeit, and the old industrial sites (Bender 2011; Musil 2011, pp. 20-21) were closed and restructured in the second half of the 20th century and are still image determining today. Both regions could not significantly improve their poor image, despite successful valorization of their historical heritage (e.g., Styrian Iron Road), tourist promotion activities and other regional projects co-financed by the EU. Similarly the Upper and Lower Austrian Eisenwurzen (Broda & Heintel 2009) with their
former iron processing factories, although here better conditions exist for amenity migration due to lower industrial overprint of the Alpine cultural landscape, which are, however, relativized because of the peripheral location of the region.

7 Conclusion

Based on the statistical picture, the present contribution first outlines the reversal of the trend in migration flows in the Alps: while the West has transformed into an immigration region, the East beyond the Europaregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino seems to have developed into a distinct emigration and depopulation area. Qualitative studies in these demographic problem areas show that indeed out-migration continues to prevail there, but in most parts also and concurrently new immigration is noticeable that bears similar characteristics as that in the western Alps.

Examining the question whether in the East the same processes as in the West occur – but only time delayed – requires a spatially differentiated approach. Generally, three spatial categories can be derived:

The Montagna friulana represents the first one. Recent studies show that the east-west oriented demographic change, as discussed several times in this paper, has already affected most mountain communities in Friuli. Since, however, work- and qualification-related migration still continues, a juxtaposition of influx and exodus takes place that is currently still dominated by a negative migration balance. Population gains cannot be determined, however, even with a positive migration balance, especially as the population-biological conditions are extremely unfavorable. This spatial category has now also advanced beyond the Italian-Slovenian border into the municipality of Kobarid.

In other respects the second category predominates in the Slovenian research area: although the potential of the natural landscape is significantly more favorable than in the neighboring Northern Friuli, new highlanders have so far hardly discovered this area. Compared to the western regions are here, however, many indicators for a mere delay of the arrival of amenity migrants.
Figure 15: Correlation of the detrimental factors for a new immigration in the Eastern Austrian Alps (photograph by the authors 2014)

Completely differently emerge the current demographic processes in Alpine Eastern Austria, which now – as already discussed – has become the major problem area of the Alpine Arc. Figure 15 summarizes those interrelated features which distinguish this third spatial category distinctively from the other two. The discussion in chapter 6.3 explains that the eastern part of the Austrian Alps does not have the potential to attract amenity migrants or new mountain residents. Therefore, here a time delay in the demographic turnaround process cannot be considered applicable. On the contrary, it can be assumed that the settlement of new highlanders, in particular in the crystalline central uplands of the provinces of Carinthia and Styria, as well as in the “forgotten rural areas” of the Lower Austrian-Styrian limestone Alps, will remain insignificant in the future.
References


Stöckl, P. (2014), *Aktuelle Wanderungsbewegungen in alpinen Peripherräumen Kärntens. Das Phänomen der* 
*Amenity Migration und Zweit- bzw. Ferienwohnsitze am Beispiel der Gurktaler Alpen*. Masterarbeit am 
Institut für Geographie und Raumforschung, Universität Graz. Graz.

Tasser, E. - Tappeiner, U. (2008), “Kulturlandschaftsvielfalt, Diversité du territoire, Diversità del paesaggio, 
Spektrum Verlag, pp. 248-249.