

Preface

The Alpine Space covers an area of about 1,200 km in length and 250 km in width. It is situated between and linking the Northern and Western European countries with the European South and is a living area for nearly 70 million people, including the major cities e.g. Vienna, Munich, Milano, Ljubljana, Zurich at the edge of the predominantly mountainous area. The cultural and economic appearance of the Alpine Space has always been shaped by the natural characteristics of the Alps—their topography, ecology and beauty—which gave a distinct influence to the development of regional societies.

In today's increasingly globalizing world, slowly but steadily a challenge rises which gives fundamental changes to the Alpine societies in the near future: demographic change. The changing age structures of the Alpine populations and a shifting social and ethnic composition of traditional societies are main challenges for the future development within the Alpine societies. Moreover, regional disparities within the Alpine Space, resulting from an unbalanced economic and supply infrastructure, the remoteness of some areas and several migration patterns, have a massive but uneven impact on the spatial and temporal dynamics of demographic change on national, regional and local scale level within all Alpine countries. The challenges and opportunities given by the demographic change need to be taken into consideration by politicians, scientific experts, planners and regional developers, when thinking about the future of the Alpine Space societies.

By previous regional development projects we got aware that demographic appraisal showed enormous development disparities within seeming homogeneous regions. Furthermore, some policy makers and spatial planners in Alpine countries developed a vague feeling that demographic change might become a major problem in the future, but that the issue was not at all on top of the Alpine agenda. We recognized a lack of suitable adaptation strategies and actions in response to demographic change and took this as starting point for the pan-Alpine project DEMOCHANGE.

The project “DEMOCHANGE—Demographic Change in the Alps: Adaptation Strategies to Spatial Planning and Regional Development” was funded by the Alpine Space Programme 2007–2013 out of the European Regional Development Fund.

Our partnership of 13 institutions and regional organizations from five Alpine countries thanks the Alpine Space Programme and its bodies for its funding and support during the project's duration.

Already today, some 3 years later, demographic change is a key issue for most Alpine policy makers and spatial planners. As direct outcome of the project DEMOCHANGE a set of analysis and policy development tools as well as a variety of tested pilot actions tackling the issue are available.

We would like to thank all our authors for their contributions, their patience in improving the articles and their constant willingness to give us a constructive feedback. The success and the results of the project are an outstanding example for transnational cooperation among partners from very different disciplines and diverse cultures. Such cooperation needs a sensitive and competent intercultural management which was guaranteed by the partners of all involved institutions.

But the best project partnership and management would be pointless without the thousands of hours local and regional stakeholders invested into their future and that of the future of the Alps as a whole.

München, Germany
Salzburg, Austria
München, Germany
February 2014

Thomas Bausch
Madeleine Koch
Alexander Vesper

Coping with Demographic Change in the Alpine Regions
Actions and Strategies for Spatial and Regional
Development

Bausch, Th.; Koch, M.; Veser, A. (Eds.)

2014, XXI, 229 p. 51 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-642-54680-8