What is the role of social innovation in mountain areas in the framework of global urbanisation?
EUROMONTANA: Rethinking territorial balances between urban and rural areas in the European Mountains: How can innovation support win-win solutions? 20 November 2019, Brussels

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1 The origins of the innovation approach

- *Crisis of welfare state (Fordism):*
  - «Limits to Growth» 1972 (loss of reputation)
  - Oil crisis 1973 (loss of cheap supply)

- *Consequences:*
  - Augment productivity and performance
  - Avoid the trap of comparative (dis)advantages, produce increasing returns (extra surplus) by new, unique (= innovative) products
  - Vertical disintegration, global value chains, European desindustrialisation
  - Individualisation, reduction of welfare state
  - Double freedom of development (no prescription but also no aid), self responsability

- Innovation = «*creative destruction*» (Schumpeter 1942)

**Mountains:** Loss of production systems – but not immediately
2 The renaissance of the cities

• Dans les zones de montagne: déclin jusqu'aux années 1970.

• Croissances disproportionnelle dans les régions non-urbaines, dépopulation des villes-centres entre 1974 et 1998.

• Depuis 1998, la croissance démographique s’est de nouveau concentrée sur les grandes villes et leurs zones périurbaines.

→ « Double renversement »
3 Change of Specific Mountain Production Systems

Decline
• Agriculture, Manufacturing industries, Tourism

Increase
• Residences (multilocality, second homes)
• Parks, «wilderness» areas
• Extractive industries
• Day-tripping tourism

Metropolises → AAA-regions (Adaptivity, Attractiveness, Authority)
Mountains → RRR-regions (residences, raw materials, rents)
4 Mainstream Recommendations: Uniqueness and otherness

Product innovations (economic and technical):
- Landscape esthetics
- Differentiated and labelled regional products: food & crafts
- Wellness and events
- Niche tourism, agro-tourism, *tourisme doux*, « revaluation »

Problem:
- A-regions hold the **decision making** because of agglomeration effects
- R-regions hold the **weak value chains** (lacking agglomeration effects)
- The risk of a territorial **cleavage** between the strong and the week
- The risk of **overuse**: the proposed products do no deliver size effects (not self-sustaining) – unless there is intensification
5. Recommendations 2.0: Social innovation

... but what does this mean?
SIMRA (Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas)

Definition Social Innovation

A pragmatic definition of “Social Innovation”

« The reconfiguring of social practices in response to societal challenges which seek to enhance the outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily include the engagement of civil society actors. »

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5. Recommendations 2.0: Social innovation

... but what does this mean?

The international debate shows a mixture between **misunderstanding**, **euphemism and renewal**

- **Misunderstanding**: Social innovation is more efficiency on a social topic (→ application on value chains)

- **Euphemism**: When the welfare state is smashed, the regions suffer less paternalism and more liberty to develop region specific creativity (→ voluntarism)

- **Renewal**: New attitudes, new forms of collaboration
  – but which one?
6 Transformative SI in/for mountain areas

• Strengthening the regional get-together by overlapping closeness, intra-regional distinction and discrimination, gender inequality

• **Opening** against outside by accepting immigration and change and benefitting from external knowledge

• **Re-negotiation** on highland-lowland partnerships.
  → mountains have to understand external demands
  → metros have to accept a lower value adding in mountain areas
Maintaining diversified regional production systems

SIMRA Case study
Réseau Urbain Neuchâtel

Maintaining weak regional production systems

SIMRA Case study
Val Lumnezia Grisons
Attracting new people

Accomodation with integration: Making refugee reception a part of the local trajectory. Cooperative Pacefuturo at Pettinengo, Biella province, an old industrial district of textile industry.
7 Summary

Social innovation is necessary to:

• Avoid «homogeneous» segregated territories

• Transform the current individualised regional development regime

• Maintain fragile regional production systems in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism

• Promote cohesive societies

• Strengthen transborder relations of mountain areas


SIMRA: www.simra-h2020.eu
Thank you!

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3 Which understanding of SI?

- Hosting refugees in mountain areas does not prevent poverty in the world as it helps only a small group of individuals.
- It concerns many goals indirectly.
- But, in mountain areas, also directly: Goal 10, 11, 16