

tion activities. A classic paradigm, one revealed in the studies, showed that an “ideal residential area” is represented by “homes with a yard and in less populated areas”. The studies also showed the unwillingness of people to move from their existing living environment.

In the seventh chapter, the authors point out that the number of economic entities in suburbanised areas in the countryside around major Slovenian towns has grown since 1990. Furthermore, they noted that trends of suburbanisation in Slovenia were complemented by the spread settlement model – dispersed construction of new homes and poor use of the old. Finally, they note that suburban areas around Ljubljana and Maribor (for example) are mainly populated by young families with preschool-age children. This is an indicator of the trend whereby the younger population chooses to live in suburban areas, whereas those living in urban centres grow older. As the authors argue, the Slovenian dynamic of suburbanisation has changed from “the initial partial phase (i.e., migration of population from urban areas) to a phase of multifaceted suburbanisation” (p. 99). Therefore, in conjunction with the suburbanisation of lifestyle, economic changes are taking place. In this context, there are important factors that encourage suburbanisation. Underdevelopment of the real-estate market, a characteristic of Slovenia, and an underdevelopment of the transport infrastructure and transport services affect the suburbanisation.

The authors close the discussion by stating that the process of suburbanisation blurs the distinctions between town and countryside, with rural areas becoming increasingly urbanised and the city losing

its central role. The aforementioned dispersed settlement system would yield positive and negative effects: positive in terms of higher standards for residential facilities, rural economic development and the preservation of local autonomy, and negative in terms of burdening the natural environment, the high cost of infrastructure expansion and the disappearance of landscape “identity”.

As a final evaluation of this work, the authors have in an original way

uncovered one aspect of Slovenian society using the concept of space. It is important to examine various aspects of Slovenian life in order to discover further avenues of research. In conclusion, it can be said that the authors have well encompassed the “melancholy in your own garden” aspect of Slovenian life.

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DEMOCHANGE – Demographic change in the Alps: Adaptation strategies to spatial planning and regional development

Project premises

Population aging is one of the most important demographic changes facing western societies at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The Alpine region is faced with an accelerated process of population aging due to:

- Out-migration of young (innovative and promising) people from remote rural areas to urban areas;

- In-migration of older people (from urban areas) to attractive, tourism-oriented areas, seeking tranquillity and proximity to nature during their retirement years.

Europe and other continents face aging trends and other demographic changes that either influence aging (such as population movements) or are influenced by aging (such as the educational or economic potential of the populati-

on). Societies are aware that there are no short-term solutions; however, they can adapt to processes and changes. Demographic changes are also becoming a central issue of spatial-planning and regional-development policies; they are not only affecting the demand for public utilities, infrastructure, services and investments, but are also greatly determining municipal financial capacities. Only timely and rapid adjustment to demographic changes can prevent or mitigate negative spatial consequences.

The DEMOCHANGE project considers demographic changes to be the driving force of spatial development in the Alpine region. However, research findings on the Alpine area show the following:

- A lack of studies on demographic changes;
- A lack of knowledge about planning the dynamics of demographic changes;
- Low awareness of demographic changes and their consequences;
- A lack of discussion of measures to adapt to demographic changes and lack of adaptation strategies;
- A lack of awareness among spatial planners about the importance of demographic changes for spatial development and a lack of ability to include demographic changes in strategies, programmes and spatial-development plans;
- A lack of spatial strategies, programmes, plans and measures for regional spatial planning and development specifics regarding past and expected demographic changes. Existing solutions are often inadequate, the problems related to demographic changes are complex and the solutions therefore cannot be plain or simple.

Project purpose

The purpose of the Alpine Space project DEMOCHANGE is to demonstrate:

- Consideration of demographic changes as a driving force of spatial and

regional development;

- The proper response of aging societies towards inevitable demographic changes in order to mitigate them and transform negative impacts into benefits.

Aims of the project

- To prepare basic and detailed analysis (of past and current) demographic changes in model regions;
- To communicate information on demographic changes and their dynamics and consequences;
- To design adaptation strategies for demographic changes in spatial planning and regional development;
- To accomplish concrete innovative measures to implement strategies in model regions;
- To prepare a set of recommendations for decision-makers in spatial development and regional development for Alpine regions as well as other regions facing similar demographic processes.

Project summary

Work Packages 1 to 3 and Work Package 8 include activities linked to project preparation, management, coordination, communication, knowledge management, information and dissemination according to Alpine Space Programme standards. The main objective of Work Package 4 is to create an overview of the regional and spatial impact (past, current and future) of demographic change in the Alpine area. The project partners will therefore collect and analyze data about Alpine regions in each partner country and at the model-region level. This will be followed by evaluating the suitability of existing spatial plans regarding the demographic changes identified and selection of key issue and their analysis. Work Package 5 includes a series of events (workshops, manuals, findings of the regional coordination group, etc.) to foster an active discussion on demographic changes at the regional level. Work Package 6 deals with adapta-

tion strategies in model regions, incorporation of recommendations into spatial and regional development policies, and fostering the cooperation processes with regional and local interested parties with regard to pilot actions linked to adaptation strategies. Work Package 7 is dedicated to creating concrete plans, strategies and activities for implementing creative measures based on anticipated demographic changes.

Most important project outcomes

- Concrete strategies (for demographic change adaptation) in ten model regions;
- An international exchange network (exchange of experience and knowledge about the adaptation procedure for spatial planning and development);
- Pilot investments for realising concrete measures.

Project financing

The DEMOCHANGE project is co-funded by the Alpine Space Programme, the EU international cooperation programme for the Alps.

Project duration

The project lasts from September 2009 to October 2012.

Project partners

Research institutions, universities, regional agencies and municipalities are involved in the project.

Germany:

- University of Applied Sciences, Munich – Department of Tourism – lead partner
- Office of the Oberallgäu district
- Office of the Garmisch-Partenkirchen district

Austria:

- Regional Government of Salzburg, Department of Spatial Planning
- University of Salzburg, Department of Geography and Geology

Italy:

- Aosta Valley Autonomous Region,

- Economic and Social Observatory
- UNCEM: National Union of Mountain Municipalities, Communities and Authorities
- Free University of Bolzano, School of Economics and Management

Slovenia:

- Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia
- RAGOR: Development Agency of the Northwest Upper Carniola region

Switzerland:

- Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – School of Social Work, Interface Institute for Political Studies
- Interface Institute for Political Studies

- Conference of the cantons of Luzern, Schwyz, Obwalden, Zug und Nidwalden

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More information about the DEMOCHANGE project is available at www.demochange.org.



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