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Migration by Necessity and by Force to Mountain Areas: An Opportunity for Social Innovation

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This article discusses current European migration flows, their impacts on the European Alps, and future options for addressing issues of migration. It explores these issues from the perspective of regional development, taking into account the currently prevailing goals of economic competitiveness and local self-interest. It focuses on the Alps, a region in which rural areas are losing economic, demographic, and decision-making power due to outmigration. An end to outmigration in the Alps is currently unlikely, but there may be other ways to stem the resulting losses. Based on a review of migration literature and 3 case studies, the article explores ways in which programs for hosting and integrating migrants can also benefit long-time residents by contributing in many different ways to the development of mountain areas. From this perspective, efforts to integrate migrants can be seen as a form of social innovation that can contribute to the future of the entire Alpine economic space. Rather than focusing on drivers of migration or its humanitarian or constitutional aspects, the paper explores the potential benefits to all parties of a better integration of migrants into the host regions, and the possibility that this could become a model of social innovation. It suggests an agenda for research on how to reach this potential and agenda points for policy regarding measures to fulfill the potential.

Keywords: *Forced migration; displacement; exclusion; mountain immigration; social integration; social innovation; peripheral regions; European Alps.*

Immigration to the European Alps: a new topic on the European agenda

Migration is a global phenomenon; reasons for migrating are manifold, as are migration's impacts on the receiving regions. The European Alps are located in the middle of a broad migration route from Africa and the Middle East (Altai-Consulting and IMPACT-Initiatives 2017). There are several reasons to look at migration to the Alps.

- The Alps differ from many other potential migrant destinations in that one can conclude from their final destination (Goodson et al 2017) that the majority of those who migrate as a result of poverty and persecution do not voluntarily or primarily seek mountain areas as a refuge.
- At European level, the Alps are one of Europe's most prosperous regions (Iammarino et al 2017; ESPON 2018), with easily accessible settlements at lower elevations. But they lack strong urban centers and jobs. Thus it is not obvious that they may be attractive for migrants. On the other hand, national legislations try to assign refugees across the whole country and therefore also to regions not necessarily chosen by migrants.
- When refugees from the global South come to European mountain areas, 2 groups meet that could hardly be

more different in their social practices. Uprooted, highly mobile migrants, who have skills in coping with the greatest insecurity and misery, encounter local residents whose ancestors have invested much effort in their settledness in difficult natural environments and who are afraid of losing significance and decision-making power due to their declining numbers and the presence of newcomers.
- The Alps have for years been engaged in a debate on the need to pursue a common Alpine identity and common interests and policies to stabilize a fragile environment and ensure residents' quality of life (eg AC 2007–2017). Alpine states' different immigration policies have called this proclaimed common interest into question. Since 2017, they have reintroduced strict border controls, although all countries belong to the so-called Schengen Area in Europe in which travelers can—in general— move freely without having to show their passports. In addition, in July 2017 the Austrian Government announced that it would block the border between the Austrian Tyrol and the Italian South-Tyrol with tanks, should they deem this to be necessary.
- Alpine communities have always claimed a certain level of autonomy from the central power—an autonomy that they have tried to defend and to negotiate (eg Rosenberg 1988) right into the present. From a lowland

point of view, however, today mountain areas are regarded as a public good, at least in environmental and land use questions (Debarbieux and Price 2008). Economically, an opposite development is taking place, which leads neither to local autonomy nor to public control: mountain regions are being integrated into global value chains; the specific resources of the Alps are being commodified as landscape amenities (Perlik 2011, 2019). Since industrialization, mountain regions and lowlands have developed different socioeconomic profiles, balanced by the institutional arrangements and policies of each Alpine state (Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia, and Switzerland). Accelerated globalization makes it necessary for mountain areas and lowlands to renegotiate their relations. The new migration flows may accelerate this necessity (Membretti and Viazzo 2017).

For a long time, socioeconomic and demographic studies of mountain regions both in Europe and elsewhere emphasized outmigration from high elevations to large lowland cities and degradation of peripheral mountain areas (Bätzing et al 1996). Since the 2000s, there has been an increasing emphasis on the opposite trend (Steinicke et al 2012; Bartaletti 2013; Corrado et al 2014; New inhabitants 2014; Löffler et al 2016); these studies focused mainly on immigration of wealthy people. Recently migration of poor people has attracted attention (Dematteis 2010; Dematteis 2011; Membretti 2015; Membretti and Viazzo 2017; Membretti et al 2017; Perlik et al 2019). Therefore, we can distinguish between 3 groups of migrants relevant for mountain areas: migrants by choice, migrants by necessity, and migrants by force.

Migrants by choice: enjoying mountain amenities

Migration by choice typically affects scenically attractive sites and is usually described in the literature as amenity migration (Moss 2006; Moss and Glorioso 2014). The new residents mostly come from an urban milieu and are often well educated. They settle in periurban areas or in resort towns at higher elevations. In European mountains they are mainly multilocal residents who use their home in the mountains temporarily (Perlik 2010, 2011). In the Alps, they fill the gap created by stagnating or declining tourism (Elmi and Perlik 2014). This "lifestyle migration" (McIntyre 2009) changes the socioeconomic structure of mountain areas from regions producing for export (which includes tourism) to residential regions. In such residential economies the wealth is generated mainly outside the region (Segessemann and Crevoisier 2015). The immigrants bring purchasing power to their new communities; in an ideal case, the entire region may benefit. The long-term effects of this trend toward residential economies in mountain areas are debated, because it may weaken existing regional production

systems and induces gentrifying processes (Perlik 2011). As these forms of migration have been already broadly discussed for the Alps (eg Steinicke et al 2012; Löffler et al 2016), migrants by choice are not the subject of this article.

Migrants by necessity: searching for work and affordable housing

Less studied is the migration to mountain areas of poorly trained low-income people. Fusco and Scarella (2011) showed that the gentrification of center-city areas of Marseille and Nice has exerted displacement pressure on the suburban fringe and, subsequently, from the suburban on the periurban mountain area. Well known, but rarely discussed in connection with regional development, is the immigration of seasonal workers for the tourism industry in the Alps. In general this is described from a sectoral point of view (tourism, transport, and housing), and in this specific case affordable housing shortage is provoked in the tourist area. Some of the former numerous industrial districts (*sistemi industriali locali*) in the valleys of the Italian Alps have survived the European deindustrialization (Sega 2017) and attracted foreign workers from the manufacturing sector, for example, Chinese quarry workers who immigrated to the Italian Piedmont (Dematteis 2010). Processes of labor migration can be seen also in other mountain areas of Europe (Solé et al 2014) as well as in Asia, for example, from Nepal to Indian resort towns as south-to-south migration (Sharma 2013). These migrants are often referred to pejoratively as economic migrants, although they see themselves as forced to migrate by poverty, deteriorating environmental conditions, or destruction of petty trade during conflict (Altai-Consulting and IMPACT-Initiatives, 2017). Another type of labor migration is presented by Korpela and Ojala-Fulwood (2018), who describe students' motivation to work in attractive mountain tourist areas as an expression of lifestyle.

Migrants by force: leaving home for political, economic, and environmental reasons

The International Organization for Migration distinguishes between forced migration and labor migration (IOM 2011). In fact, the demarcation between political and economic refugees is always fuzzy, as extreme poverty is also a life-threatening force. From a purely economic viewpoint but also from a resource-focused action theory perspective (Bourdieu 1986) there is no difference between the 2: every action mirrors a personal reflection on investment and risk under a given relation of power and distribution of resources and exhibits many variations (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2011). Different types among migrants by force have been described by Göran Rystad (1990).

With the progressive destabilization of the Middle East and increasing poverty- and persecution-related migration out of Africa, more than 5.7 million people fled between 2008 and 2017 across many countries and the Mediterranean to Europe (for the countries of origin see Altai-Consulting and Impact-Initiatives 2017; for the hosting countries see Table S1, *Supplemental material*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-17-00070.S1), with thousands dying on the way (Table S2, *Supplemental material*). The spatial impacts of this forced migration have so far been scarcely investigated, except when studies point out that certain countries and urban agglomerations are favored. For example, a study from the United Kingdom estimated that 95% of immigrants live in urban agglomerations (Goodson et al 2017). So far, there have been no comprehensive studies on refugees immigrating into mountain areas. However, numerous case studies have been produced in recent years, and the topic is attracting growing interest (eg Corrado and d'Agostino 2016; Membretti et al 2017; Weidinger et al 2019). Existing studies mainly concern the reception of refugees and the conditions under which they are admitted or rejected.

Our review of the literature shows that until now, south-to-north migration of poor people has mainly been researched from the perspective of social issues related to the welfare state, the distribution of services, and the availability of social aid or housing (eg Thieme 2008; Jurado and Brochmann 2013; Kivisto and Sciortino 2015; Sciortino and Finotelli 2015; Boccagni 2016; Thieme and Ghimire 2016). Another focus of studies is the relation between the environment and migration—a concern that has increased in the past few years under the influence of the climate change debate (eg Allan 1987; Piguet and Laczko 2014; Milan et al 2016).

Analyses that link migration of poor people with its impact on regional development have mainly been conducted as case studies in an urban context. Studies of the impact of migration in mountain areas, in terms of both threats and opportunities for regional development, are lacking; and so are more general studies focusing on migration by need and by force to mountain areas. High and low mountains in Europe cover 1,934,650 km^2, or 40.6% of the total area) and are home to 94.3 million people or 19.1% of the total population, according to Nordregio (2004), which uses a rather large mountain perimeter, but it may serve as a basic reference. In a transnational, European view of resolving common problems, it becomes obvious that mountain areas should be involved and participate in migration policies.

The aim of this paper is it to present an agenda for research and policy that could fill this gap. We validate this agenda by taking into account the broad spectrum of migration literature and providing new insights from our own research focus on social practices and mountain development, linking this with the recent demand for studying social innovation to meet the needs of both mountain communities and migrating people.

The significance of immigration to mountain areas

Most studies on labor and forced migration have focused on lowland urban areas. However, there is a growing body of work focusing on mountain areas in Europe (eg Corrado 2012, 2015; Cretton et al 2012; Dematteis 2011; Membretti 2015; di Gioa and Dematteis 2017) and especially Asia. The latter, however, deals mainly with mountain-to-lowland migration and the impacts of this outmigration on land use and ecosystems (eg Allan 1987; Olimova and Olimov 2007; Sherpa 2007; Thieme 2008; Benz 2016; Thieme and Ghimire 2016) as well as on the livelihoods of those who remain in increasingly empty villages (eg Speck 2017).

Although large cities and metropolitan areas are nearly permanently hubs of immigration, this is the case in mountain or rural areas only occasionally, especially in periods of crisis such as after World War II. Migration usually involves an encounter between social groups that are highly mobile and a local, sedentary population whose power strongly depends on regional embeddedness. This can trigger conflicts, but it also offers the host region new knowledge and opportunities. This is particularly true for mountain areas with a relatively low population, where mutual dependencies and social control are many times greater than in cities. Residents in sparsely populated regions cannot avoid each other; reliability and trust are very important. At the same time, immigrants with external knowledge may compete with local residents for jobs, social services, space, and influence, which challenges the existing hierarchy.

Pierre Bourdieu (2002) describes such a situation when he comments on the transformation of the rural French Béarn region in the 1960s: observing young men and women in the rural dance hall, he noticed that nonlocal male dance partners were considered the most attractive and prestigious by unmarried women. These men's reputed general agility held the promise of a higher status than rooted men's local knowledge, or, in other words: The general ousted the local. Mobile people who come from outside are often better skilled. In a dynamic world, they are more successful and may outcompete the people who were the masters of the territory for many centuries. For the newcomers, however, ignorance of existing structures makes their unstable living situation even more difficult. People who come to the mountains driven by poverty or as refugees are even more disadvantaged, because they lack certain opportunities they would have in urban agglomerations (compatriots, social services) and face a local population that has no recent experience with displaced people.

Mountain areas are structurally disadvantaged in their economic development due to their smaller populations and a lack of urban (ie high-performance) economies. Compared to densely populated lowland areas, they lack the multitude of social interactions that are important in regional development (Storper 1995). Such potential interactions represent economies of scale or, spatially speaking, economies of agglomeration. In the age of global communication, face-to-face meetings have become even more important because they are limited to high-end services and decision making, which further advantages the metropolitan regions.

The decline of the nationally defined welfare states—the post-Fordist turn—since the 1980s (Boyer 1990, 2018) has intensified the competition between regions and increased the weight of agglomeration economies especially in terms of inhabitants, jobs, and shaping power. Mountain and rural regions are forced to increase their own responsibility for developing new and well-performing value chains (Perlik 2019), which may also increase the number of inhabitants. In the logic of economic competition, from the point of view of mountain people, however, the immigrants who arrive are often the "wrong" ones because they have limited resources to help mountain areas to improve their marginalized position. An example of a regional disparity between urban and rural regions is the health status of the population, even in rich countries (Feller et al 2018).

However, peripheral settlements should be maintained to avoid large spatial cleavages and to meet the goals of sustainable development, as expressed in regional development policies (eg for Switzerland ARE 2018 and Conseil fédéral suisse 2012). Consequently, peripheral regions should be stabilized by strengthening relations between local actors based on shared values and mutual trust, thus enabling the region to build strong institutions and to acquire new external knowledge. One may cite as proponents, among many others, the pioneers of innovation-oriented regional research, the GREMI (Groupe de recherche européen sur les milieux innovateurs) network. A critique of this position mentions the latent underestimation of the dangers of such a close embeddedness: trust may become a lock-in factor, so that existing social practices are no longer questioned and there is no incentive for innovation, as Grabher (1993) described for the industrial Ruhr area in Germany based on Granovetter's (1973) pioneering work.

Contrary to the approach of agglomeration economies, the social anthropologist Francesco Remotti (2011: 281–301) argues that innovation and cultural creativity (although obviously benefiting from the encounters between different cultures and societies, and sometimes even by the resulting frictions) would "need space to express themselves." Space provided by an impoverished culture or a weak social structure would therefore be more likely to favor development than space in a "thick" culture or a strong social structure (Remotti 2011). This hypothesis is based on demographic processes in the western Alps, where in several cases heavy depopulation has been described as allowing newly arrived persons to take advantage of a new "emptiness." They were able to start entrepreneurial activities in both the economic and cultural fields (Viazzo and Zanini 2014), an observation also made by Cognard (2006) in the French Alps. Thus, demographic weakness and depopulation might paradoxically provide an advantage by opening wider "creative spaces." A similar argument about the new qualities of "Alpine fallows" in Switzerland was made by Diener et al (2006)—and was highly contested by the concerned population. This hypothesis strengthens the widespread, if often superficial, idea that precisely because they are sparsely populated, the Alps lend themselves particularly well to hosting new inhabitants, and as a corollary, that the new inhabitants almost automatically bring the areas they move to back to life by stimulating sociocultural and economic innovations (Membretti and Viazzo 2017: 96).

Both positions—that agglomeration economies favor regional embeddedness and that emptiness opens up new options—have their blind spots. The approach of embeddedness conceals the strong integration of regional value chains into the world market, thus showing a lack of external knowledge. The approach of emptiness as facilitator follows the concept of "creative destruction" (Schumpeter 1942) with a subsequent vacuum. It neglects the significance of established institutions, governance regimes, and regional knowledge (which has been called "institutional thickness"; see Amin and Thrift 1994) for regional development. It also neglects the difficulty of rebuilding communities once such institutions are destroyed. The renaissance of the Ruhr area depended on the persistence of old institutions (Hassink 2007), those structures that Grabher (1993) had criticized. Furthermore this position also disregards the interest of the remaining population in continuing their work and social practices. Moreover, abandoned settlement areas are—as "Alpine fallows"—always objects of conflicting interests, maybe for new investment, cultural activity, or ecologic conservation (Diener et al 2006).

Work and shelter in the mountains

Societies have always faced the dilemma whether to accept or reject newcomers (Viazzo 1989; Siddle 1997; Furter et al 2009; Head-König 2011; Holenstein et al 2018; Ojala-Fulwood 2018). Sometimes they have actively tried to attract certain groups because of their work ethic or special skills. Historic examples include the French

Huguenots and the Danube Swabians, who settled in response to incentives offered by regional aristocrats, sometimes on low mountains like the Polish Beskides. In the Alps, the Walser, who had specialized pastoral skills, were invited by the ruling power to settle the highest elevations in the hope that they would guarantee control of these high-elevation valleys. During the Spanish Civil War, people fled in (or through) the Pyrenees (Fittko 1991; Boya-Busquet and Cerarols-Ramirez 2015). At the end of World War II, many European countries had to integrate East–West migration flows as a consequence of expulsion and displacement, especially the exodus of Sudeten German people to Bavaria (Weidinger and Kordel 2019). The upheavals of 1956 in Hungary and of 1968 in Czechoslovakia again provoked large migratory movements in Europe. In the 1960s, rural regions attempted to attract foreign companies to establish manufacturing industries to absorb the agricultural workforce.

The Alpine population has long experience with in- and outmigration. In former centuries the Alps underwent many waves of temporary or permanent outmigration. It has been argued for Switzerland that the poor performance of small land parcels in mountain areas forced these farmers to outmigrate, while the large lowland plots favored sedentarism, thus making it the rule and migration the exception, although for large parts of the country and society it was rather the opposite (Holenstein et al 2018).

Thus, experience of immigration exists in the Alps but is repeatedly forgotten by the dominant defining power of established sedentary practices. Indeed, experience with earlier waves of outmigration or immigration wanes in people's minds over time. This is the context within which migration of a perceived new kind and scale is raising concerns.

Recent refugees from Africa and the Middle East often aim for northern Europe. In recent months, the restrictive refugee policies of European states have resulted in people getting stuck in Italy. The ridges of the Alps have again become a fortified border (Perlik et al 2019). As mentioned above we can assume that only a few refugees consciously choose a mountain region as their preferred destination. So people arriving in Italy move to the low mountains of the Apennines because of proximity to their landing point after being stranded at the national border; they may move to villages in the foothills of the Alps by chance or may be moved there according to the redistribution principles of national or regional legislation. Today about 30% of refugees in Italy are hosted in mountain municipalities (Figure 1).

Even if the degree of municipal autonomy is high in certain Alpine areas and decisions are usually taken locally, when it comes to refugees, national law defines who is accepted and who is expelled. What our review of the state of the art allows us to conclude is that within the

7 Alpine countries there are at least 4 categories of forced migrants: those who have received a status as recognized refugee, those who are awaiting a decision on their application, those whose application has been rejected but who cannot be expelled because of conflict in their home country, and those whose application has been rejected and who are waiting to be expelled. The question is, what social relations can be established between the local residents and the newcomers?

Between welcoming and rejection

Local residents usually do not decide whether to accept or reject newcomers in an unreflected way—except in crisis situations. Their decisions are based on individual or societal strategies to master their lives. Acceptance and rejection reflect individual experiences and regional history, prevailing norms and values (religion, social movements, historical periods of poverty), and the region's recent position in the urban and regional hierarchy as well as its anticipated future position. For example, analyses after the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom (Great Britain's 2016 decision to abandon its membership in the European Union) showed a seemingly paradoxical pattern. It seemed paradoxical because "remain" or "leave" votes were not linked with voters' current social positions. Instead, their votes were clearly linked with an anticipated economic growth or decline in their region after the referendum. In London, the "remain" majority included the poor and lower-middle-class citizens, while in the deindustrialized Midlands, even the upper-middle class voted "leave" (O'Reilly et al 2016; Rodriguez-Posé 2018). In the case of the typical taxi driver in London, "remain" votes reflected an expectation to participate in the continuing wealth of London's financial sector within the European Union. In the case of the local elites of the Midlands, "leave" votes were based on the fear that accompanies the decline of the industrial milieu.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the importance of such regional industrial milieus was comprehensively described. Especially for Italy, Switzerland, and France, the economic resistance to deindustrialization of industrial districts (also in the mountains) was explained by their historical trajectory and the social capital of their regional production systems based on trust and shared values (Garofoli 1993; Maillat et al 1993; OECD 1997; Courlet 2008). Nevertheless they underwent deindustrialization since the 1990s. Industrial milieus have been weakened, combined with job losses and often a decline in population. The concentration of population, jobs, and decision-making functions in metropolitan regions results in dwindling public support for rural and mountain regions. With the changed paradigms in regional policies in many countries these regions have to operate in international markets with their own,

FIGURE 1 Ratio of migrants to local residents by community in Italy, 2017. About 30% of migrants by necessity and by force in Italy are hosted in mountain areas, mostly in the Apennine Mountains. (Map by Alberto Di Gioa, courtesy of Dematteis et al 2018)
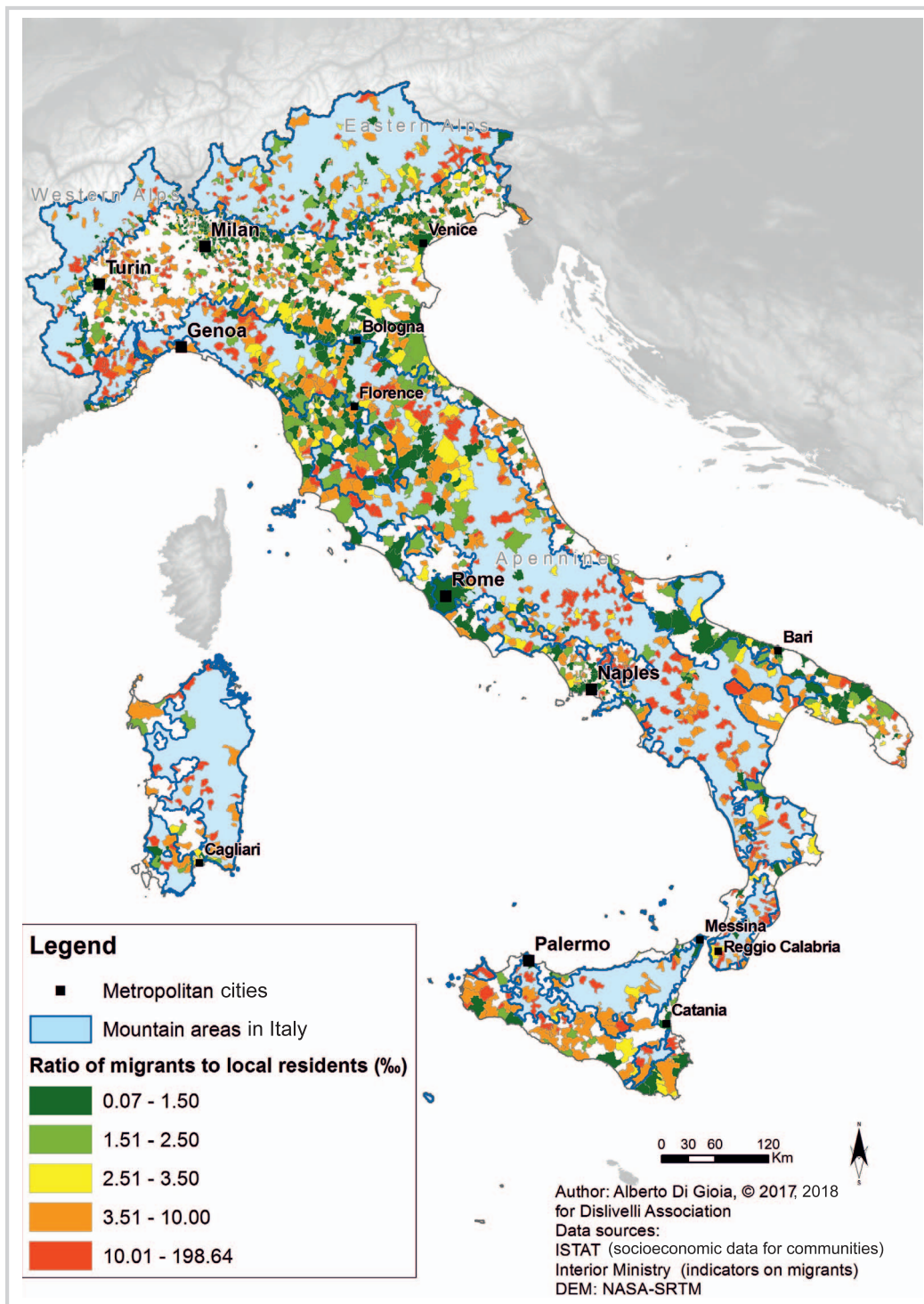
innovative value chains (SECO 2017), or they risk being regarded as low-potential space (Müller-Jentsch 2017). They need loyal and active residents, which is difficult (but not impossible) when many residents are there only part time. Immigration (with a permanent perspective) would therefore be in the interest of mountain regions, but it also involves a risk for the locals, who may lose existing positions of power in the local hierarchy. Inclusion of

foreigners requires trusting them, and trust is not always easy to give. Moreover, local entrepreneurial actors want immigration of highly qualified people; poor refugees do not fit this profile.

In this logic of intensified regional competition, it is a strategic disadvantage to have fewer human resources due to a sparse population. Fewer face-to-face interactions and a less diversified labor market also reduce the dissemination of regional knowledge. And in rural areas, it takes much more effort to integrate new people and to address their problems, especially in the case of refugees (eg physical and mental illnesses, experiences of trauma) than is the case in urban milieus, where welfare and therapeutic institutions are better developed. The approach of economies of agglomeration (Marshall 1920) can be carried over to mountain areas. For mountain areas lacking agglomeration effects, supply of services is critical. With a rising demand and number of cases, services become more productive and better. Therefore agglomeration effects play a role in every location decision in entrepreneurial or community affairs (eg regarding closure of an industrial site, a regional hospital or primary schools). Today even more important is the density and the potential of social interactions (Storper 1995). Therefore agglomeration effects play a role for individual decision making (Ferrario and Price 2014). For migrants, rural and mountain areas offer less potential, as the number of interactions is not as large as in a city. And for small communities, one might think that they would be happy to attract more people. However, the lacking agglomeration effects work differently: because of the size of these communities, individuals are much more mutually dependent and cannot avoid each other. For them several questions arise: will the newcomers be reliable neighbors ready for developing personal relations or friendship, will considerable personal efforts in these relations with many uncertainties be necessary, and might a personal relation actually be useless? Furthermore, it is probable that one's own practices and convictions have to be abandoned during this integration process. The risk of making a wrong decision is considerable, including the risk of abused confidence: images promoted by the media and political parties present newcomers as potential offenders (young men who do not yet know the social practices of the hosting country), disguised terrorists, or people who are as poor as they seem. These images correspond to a true substance where social and economic difficulties are increasingly being shifted from society to the individual or local level. Migrants who do not fit the logic of individual and societal competitiveness are perceived as disturbing and therefore to be excluded.

On the other hand, broad solidarity has been shown by civil society and by old and new NGOs, even in small villages. To mention 2 historic examples: In 1973 after the Pinochet putsch, the Swiss government tried, for political reasons, to limit the number of refugees from Chile to 250. Swiss volunteers, coordinated by the chaplain Cornelius Koch from the small Verzasca valley in the southern Alps, helped to organize the entry of about 2000 people who were hosted privately, including in the mountains. The coordinated action became known as the *Freiplatz-Aktion* (Campaign for free places–for refugees). In 1991, 7 Kurdish families were protected against expulsion in the pilgrimage site Flüeli Ranft in central Switzerland, in an effort coordinated by a teacher in the village. We can interpret these early examples of a "welcoming culture" as a sign that the collective European experience of postwar poverty and East–West migration flows had not been completely buried under isolationist self-interest.

Another motivation today may be found in a new understanding of social responsibility; knowledge about global social, political, and spatial injustice (Soja 2010); and an even better understanding of how global disparities are linked. Consciously or unconsciously, there might be a third reason shared by younger people who see a chance that welcome initiatives may help to make a community more open-minded and that encounters with foreign cultures will bring more social life to their community—beyond the traditional clubs and associations.

The debate on the degree of desirability of immigration (and on what profile immigrants should have) is part of an old debate in the European mountain discourse: Can mountain-specific regional production systems (agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism) be continued on the basis of existing local knowledge and social capital alone? If so, regional embeddedness improves the quality of production while newcomers (especially those "by choice" for residence purposes) weaken the local production system. This position considers both excessive emigration and immigration as problematic, since it may lead either to the collapse of existing institutions or to a displacement of existing actors and their social practices. The opposing position is that immigration is beneficial because it attracts new knowledge from outside. Such a strategy of encouraging immigration was and is usually applied by large cities—in fact this is the raison d'être of a large city. Rural and mountain regions usually did not adopt this strategy because it was not their economic function (as they were mainly producing for protected domestic markets), they did not have the resources (neither international networking nor attractiveness), and they did not have an interest (the newcomers would have reduced the influence of local actors disproportionally). Now, under the conditions of global market integration and increased regional competition also among less populated regions, the lack of external knowledge has clearly become a handicap.

What mountain populations could win: hosting migrants as a social innovation

If migrants do not want to move into mountain areas for intrinsic reasons, and mountain stakeholders are skeptical of migrants, then promoting such migration appears to be doubly questionable: mountain areas do not have the necessary resources, and migrants will not find appropriate networks that seem to suit their needs. But things are never as they seem.

With the shift from the economic model of growth and redistribution (Fordism) to the model of increased growth and increasing returns (post-Fordism) in the 1980s, the differences in functional hierarchy between regions have deepened, and future options of cities and regions have become more strongly divergent. It has been broadly suggested that lateral valleys at higher altitudes should be abandoned as permanent settlement areas, since it is very expensive to sustain their infrastructure (Müller-Jentsch 2017); a similar position argues in favor of a combination of dense urban development and parks (Diener et al 2006). Both arguments have in common that they see a misallocation of resources (no matter whether financial state-funded subsidies, cultural capital, or ecosystem services). The change of economic model from Fordism to post-Fordism means that mountain regions must legitimate the maintenance of settlements at high altitudes toward the lowlands. The population in mountain areas is well aware, meanwhile, that they have to find new business models and accept new jobs such as landscaping and grounds keeping. One result is that they often try to copy best practices from other contexts, creating new sports, building museums, and organizing arts and other events that are not always in line with a financially or ecologically sustainable perspective.

A culture that welcomes refugees might be an alternative or a supplementary option (Gretter et al 2017). Opening the peripheries to new people would be a social innovation that would provide the needed legitimation that mountain people are part of the whole society and do not follow cherry-picking strategies. If mountain communities succeeded in embedding and tying new arrivals, this would help them overcome the concentration risk of monostructured tourism or part-time residency. Even for these sectors, it might be more fruitful in the long run to invest in training new residents for tourism positions instead of depending on unskilled seasonal staff, who are often young people with no professional motivation and no ambition to stay in the job long term (the type of labor migrants described by Korpela and Ojala-Fulwood 2018).

Permanent integration of immigrants would mitigate the trend in certain parts of the Alps toward part-time residency. In addition, hosting refugees could expand the availability of public services in these locations, which could benefit both long-term residents and new arrivals. It would make it possible to staff even smaller villages with professional staff such as social workers, teachers, and health workers. In the context of national refugee law, mountain communities would be able to demand that these jobs be paid at least partly by state subsidies, as many countries (like Germany) increase social services only if there is a specific financial program for pilot projects or for compensating for new, disproportionately costly tasks.

As financial issues have increasingly affected whether migrants are welcomed or rejected, it is important that social services are equally available to old and new residents. This is the only way to avoid distrust of the government and the refugees. The community of Pettinengo (Box 1) has adopted this principle. At the same time we see that communities in a good financial situation are particularly reluctant to accept refugees for fear of endangering the attractiveness of their community, for example, for tourists (Pehm 2007), while poor communities that spend a great deal of money on refugees are rapidly exposed to increased observation and criticism. These difficulties can only be resolved through financial compensation and a carefully conducted political debate at the national level.

With an open reception of migrants, and the willingness to invest public and personal resources in their integration for a longer stay, communities would show that they have realized that they can no longer manage their sustainability in isolation. This would perhaps mitigate the social and political cleavages that have emerged in recent years between mountain and metropolitan areas (see, for example, the debate about the use of space for second homes; Schuler and Dessemontet 2013). For the refugees, it may at first appear to be a disadvantage to be placed in a peripheral area, but quicker integration in decentralized reception centers with motivated staff and neighbors could perhaps be a better help for them. Of course, skills and sociodemographic status play a role in these considerations. It seems understandable that politicians and decision-makers in rural areas primarily prefer migrants with families and skilled migrants from countries with a better education system. However, regions and enterprises that are able to deal with more difficult situations are said to be more innovative and dynamic in other fields and better off in the long run (Porter 1990). This is a strong argument to host poor people despite the fact that financial benefits are not immediate. Although they are still hypotheses, these arguments are worth researching and testing to see whether they hold true in practice.

The recent migrant flows represent a new situation for Europe's mountain regions. They cannot permanently ignore the need for welcoming immigrants and must develop practices to cope with the challenge. They would

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BOX 1: An NGO initiative supports migrants and local revitalization

Pettinengo is a community with about 1500 inhabitants on the outskirts of the city of Biella (population just under 45,000) in a textiles-producing district in the Piedmont region. Over the past 2 decades, the area has undergone a deep socioeconomic and identity crisis, highlighted demographically by a persistent negative natural balance and an aging population. Many of the factories that once provided local jobs are now closed.

Over the last decade, net migration has been positive, thanks primarily to foreign immigrants: in 2017, the 1462 inhabitants included 70 resident foreigners (4.8% of the population), mostly from sub-Saharan Africa and Romania. Even more sizable is the community of asylum seekers, hosted in the village through the NGO Pacefuturo (PeaceFuture), which was founded in Pettinengo in 2001 and has worked on cultural issues and on the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and refugees.

Concerned about maintaining the area and its landscape, in 2008 Pacefuturo launched the project "Sent-ieri, oggi e domani" (Pathways—yesterday, today and tomorrow): this project, undertaken in collaboration with the municipal administration and with active involvement of the local community, aimed at bringing back to life more than 10 km of old factory workers' paths that connected the farms and the larger neighborhoods of the village and were used by the peasant workers to reach the sites of the now-abandoned factories. The project is thus valorizing the woods and the cultural landscape crossed by these paths, countering the abandonment of the area. By combining cultural growth, tourism development, and social solidarity, the project promotes responsible transformation of an area afflicted by a socioeconomic and identity crisis.

Since 2011, in cooperation with the prefecture of Biella, Pacefuturo has welcomed asylum applicants from Africa. In 2017, a CAS (center for extraordinary reception) was created in previously abandoned or underused buildings, and more than 120 refugees (almost all young men) were hosted by the NGO.

What triggered the innovation launched by Pacefuturo was the idea of combining the local need for restoring the cultural heritage with the need expressed by asylum seekers for concrete opportunities of inclusion in the community and in its territory. For these purposes, many of the hosted migrants were progressively involved as volunteers in the restoration of pathways and rural architectural artifacts, in connection with the activities already started with the project "Sent-ieri." The migrants were enrolled as members of the association. They contribute as volunteers to caring for and maintaining the landscape. At the same time, the migrants are also active in cleaning the woods, collecting firewood (which is then delivered free of charge to the elderly in the village), and engaging in other socially useful activities such as clearing snow or pruning in the parks. While working in the field, the migrants also receive qualified training by local trainers (often unemployed people who have no job opportunities) regarding the proper use of tools and job security.

Today Pacefuturo is the most important enterprise in Pettinengo. It employs about 30 people—all long-term residents and all hard-hit by the collapse of local industry—as managers, entertainers, educators, and support staff, providing classes in the Italian language, textiles, beekeeping, wood-cutting, and pottery, as well as other services. The NGO's explicit goal is to use the arrival of foreigners as an opportunity to revitalize the whole area. From its beginnings, the municipal administration of Pettinengo has actively supported Pacefuturo, while requiring that every service offered to the newcomers must be offered to the entire population. Thus, the original residents also benefit from the services offered to refugees.

In Italy (as in other countries with similar regulations) the state gives the hosting organization a set fee (€35 per asylum seeker per day) that can be used to hire staff and contract local services. This creates an incentive to keep costs down and makes organizations responsible for effective use of the funds. The local community also benefits when refugees spend their pocket money in the local shops.

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probably be best off if they acted proactively rather than defensively. At this point, the topic of migration is overlapping with current research on social innovation (Fourny 2018). "Social innovation" describes new forms of organization and closer cooperation between regional actors in favor of better governance for the benefit of individuals and society. It is still contested whether social innovation in mountain areas should comprise all

measures of community cooperation that help regional competitiveness or whether it should focus only on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups (such as refugees). Authors who interpret social innovation in a more transformative sense argue that it should do the latter (eg Andrew and Klein 2010; Moulaert et al 2013; Perlik 2018).

In spatial terms social innovation can therefore be seen as a way to empower marginalized rural areas,

enabling them to contribute to the national task of guaranteeing societal wellbeing. This is on the agenda of the European Union's larger research projects (TEPSIE 2014; SIMRA 2016; TRANSIT 2017) that promote civil society and grassroots actions. When we consider communities' responses to displaced people, social innovation may provide a way to see the links between local and global problems, encourage empathy, and thereby receive respect from people outside the mountains. Applying a culture of social innovation at the local level means establishing a welcoming climate that is not just momentarily enthusiastic but follows an intrinsic motivation, for example, a goal such as investing in the future generation. It would show that local communities have realized that they cannot plan for and invest in the future in isolation, as this would result in demographic and cultural stagnation. In many cases, mountain populations are aware of the need to acquire specific skills to make their institutional infrastructure progress; they see people coming from outside as a source of experience, as the examples below illustrate. Under these conditions, mountain communities might regain the solidarity and funding they need from the lowland majority.

Such openness is expressed in active citizenship, which can include welcoming initiatives (Machold et al 2013; Giannetto 2015) and social enterprises (Borzaga and Galera 2014, 2016; Hulgård 2014). They can constitute a link between humanitarian aid and the search for other social models that are based on solidarity, as shown by the examples in the boxes. Beyond its general goal of peace, Pettinengo (Box 1) emphasizes the model of a nonexclusive welfare state. In Cadore (Box 2), civil society involvement at the local level has helped promote integration through education and the creation of highly qualified jobs. Valle Camonica (Box 3) has combined humanitarian objectives and progressive regional development even within a narrow legal framework of national refugee policy.

An agenda for research and policy

1. Changes in the local power structure in mountain areas

The influx of migrants or their assignment to mountain communities has already resulted in numerous case studies on reception practices. This provides an opportunity to conduct long-term studies to investigate the effects of new external knowledge on communities in mountain regions and analyze the changes in sociocultural practices and local power structures experienced by these communities. Such research should explore the causes and consequences of the acceptance or rejection of immigrants and of asserting more traditional sociocultural practices. It could analyze the participation of new actors in mountain communities' sociocultural and economic life and reflect on whether this leads to a loss of

power of the local people (also by making conflicts of interest among local people visible). Finally, this research could also include the question of whether and how migrants can become active social actors who are motivated to remain and become involved in the community in the long term.

With regard to policy, we suggest focusing on developing successful integration strategies and balancing local conflicts of interest.

2. Informal and formal institutions

The immigration of new residents is changing existing institutions in mountain communities. Research could analyze how informal institutions (long-established social practices, traditional events) tend to be weakened; often they are replaced by formalized regulations. However, new institutions are also being established, a process that stabilizes existing communities. Such institutions can be linked to the development of new social services at local level (such as reopening a primary school). The process of rebuilding and re-establishing institutions through new forms of local cooperation and participation can be described as social innovation, and this process can be both observed and fostered by research. Studying the reception of refugees can thus also serve the research field of social innovation in peripheral areas.

With regard to policy, experience with the realignment of local institutions should be evaluated. This would make it possible for communities to exchange good practices. Communities may also benefit from empowerment programs.

3. Economic development

The involvement of new residents in active community life also has direct economic consequences. It would be worthwhile analyzing how well-accepted and integrated immigrants can drive the development of new businesses and services. This applies in particular to a known lack of services, but also to proposed new services supported by migrant initiatives. Another focus of research concerns the continuation of existing companies facing succession problems or labor shortages. The ability to retain residents for a longer period is an indicator that economic development is taking place and should therefore be evaluated. Population growth can further reinforce this positive development.

Continued reflection on economic structural change under the conditions of increased immigration and peripheral location is necessary both from a research perspective and from a policy perspective.

4. Spatial development

The new forms of immigration into mountain areas also raise the controversial question of whether mountain

BOX 2: A social enterprise supports migrants and helps the local community cope with change

Cadore is an area with about 32,000 inhabitants in northern Belluno province in the Veneto region. It is the center of a once important industrial cluster of small and medium-sized eyeglass enterprises. At the turn of the millennium, the district-based economy started to show the first symptoms of crisis, followed by delocalization of eyeglass production to Eastern countries. Another economic sector that suffered an important crunch in Cadore in recent years is tourism. Traditionally family-run, over the past 2 decades, tourism has confirmed its low propensity to innovate and invest. As a result, Cadore's tourism structures are mostly obsolete and no longer able to compete with the offer delivered by neighboring territories.

The Cadore consumer cooperative, an emblematic social institution founded at the end of the 19th century, was about to close. To give it a new life, following an innovative approach, it was decided to create a social enterprise in the form of a cooperative, capable of offering job opportunities to disadvantaged people and promoting economic development. Cadore Coop emerged on the initiative of the local community, following the proposal made by the mayor of Valle di Cadore and by the Comunità Montana (a jurisdiction in Italy that encompasses all communities in a valley of the classified mountain area). The birth of Cadore Coop can be described as the outcome of a political endeavor that was supported by a critical mass of local inhabitants. The core of this endeavor was the design of an organizational model whereby the local population engages actively in both the production of key services and in debate on issues affecting the Cadore area.

The new Cadore cooperative is composed of individuals, organizations, and local authorities. Its projects include landscape maintenance, for example, landslide prevention, rebuilding of traditional drywall lynchets, and management of municipal services that would otherwise have to close (including a ski lift and a cinema).

The reception of asylum seekers is only one of the diversified activities carried out by the cooperative. It began in 2011, at the request of the Prefecture of Belluno. To date, Cadore has welcomed about 150 asylum applicants, of which 40 are currently accommodated in micro-reception sites in small buildings rented by private individuals. From the very beginning, the cooperative chose to welcome a limited number of asylum seekers and implement a dispersed housing model, which facilitated the inclusion of the newcomers in the local community and their path toward autonomy. Although more problematic logistically, the housing of asylum seekers in small groups was a smart choice, enabling integration and building of trust.

To foster the migrants' autonomy, Cadore devotes significant attention to training, such as in agricultural skills and welfare services. In addition, there have been spontaneous collaborations with local residents. The cooperative encourages beneficiaries to work toward a lower secondary school diploma. Asylum seekers are also actively involved in community life.

At present, of 40 asylum seekers and refugees who reside in Cadore, 16 are regularly employed with contractual agreements, either by the Cooperative in one of its various economic sectors or by other local enterprises. Against this backdrop, a growing number of asylum recipients decided to settle in Cadore at the end of the welcoming program and apply for family reunification: they work in a variety of jobs, including bakery and restaurant services and grounds keeping. New economic initiatives recently launched by Cadore Cooperative include the cultivation of a special mountain artichoke realized by a mixed group of disabled people and asylum seekers. This work enhances the area's Alpine heritage, making it more attractive to tourists and promoting local heritage in an innovative way.

areas should develop differently from the lowlands. This concerns in particular the separation of functions between highly productive metropolitan regions in the lowlands and large recreational and secondary housing areas in the mountains. A strict separation reinforces the territorial cleavages between mountain regions and lowlands. Research would therefore have to examine whether a less pronounced specialization of mountain areas—as a result of a stronger sociodemographic mix—could reverse the trend of declining cohesion between mountain areas and lowlands.

At the policy level, such research would direct attention to both future spatial development policies and the need for a renegotiation of the current territorial division of labor between mountain areas and lowlands, and the concrete impacts of this renegotiation on land use and political and economic functions.

BOX 3: A social cooperative implements national refugee policies

Valle Camonica is a large Alpine valley with about 118,000 inhabitants in Brescia province in the Lombardy region. It is undergoing a transition from manufacturing to tourism focused on archaeological sites and mountain resorts around Adamello Brenta Natural Park and the ski areas of the Tonale Pass and Aprica.

Breno is a small village of about 5000 inhabitants located at the center of the Camonica Valley. It is classified by the Italian government (National Strategy of Inner Areas) as *ultra-periferico* (extremely peripheral) because of its demographic and economic situation. The population in the last decade has constantly decreased: this negative trend, which characterizes many communities in the valley, can be tracked back to socioeconomic factors. Valle Camonica has an industrial tradition in textiles and construction, which started to lose its vitality as of the late 1990s, due to macroeconomic transformations. Within this context, Breno is still an important center for the middle part of the Camonica Valley, offering many public services (postal office, supermarkets, bars, etc). Here, since 2004, the foreign population has continuously increased: from 195 foreign residents in 2005 to 428 in 2016. Today foreign residents constitute 8,4% of the total resident population. In the last few years, this migration increasingly consisted of asylum seekers.

Since 2011, Valle Camonica has participated in a project under the auspices of the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, SPRAR), financed by Italy's Ministry of the Interior. Participants in the "La valle accogliente" project (The Welcoming Valley) include the Province of Brescia, the Comunità Montana Valle Camonica, and 46 communities.

Since 2016, the project has brought 353 asylum seekers to the valley, using a decentralized reception model. It is a bottom-up initiative—unlike the 2011 placements, which took a top-down form, in which 100 asylum seekers were settled in Montecampione (at 1800 m asl) in an abandoned hotel that lacked essential services, was far from population centers, and became overcrowded.

One of the most active promoters of the new approach is the social cooperative K-Pax, a social cooperative created in 2008 to offer assistance to asylum seekers, refugees, and adults with difficulties. K-Pax took the initiative to transfer the asylum seekers from Montecampione to more suitable accommodation, mainly vacant private or public apartments in various communities close to Breno, in cooperation with nonprofit organizations, the public health system, the Comunità montana, and 11 communities. Despite initial opposition to the reception (with serious episodes of racist intolerance, fomented by xenophobic political groups like the neofascist organization Forza Nuova, whose activists, however, came mainly from outside the valley), the cooperative has helped to renovate and reopen the abandoned Hotel Giardino, the only hotel in the village. This has encouraged the rediscovery of the valley as a tourism destination and has created jobs, both for Italian residents and for foreign refugees, active as hotel staff and in tourism promotion.

The hotel, now completely renovated, has become an eco-hotel, the only one in the Valle Camonica that promotes the use of local products and a sustainable approach to tourism: migrants, after a period of specialized training, are directly involved as guides who offer tours to nearby mountain pastures and farms, or as organizers of events such as cooking classes, as well as in a bike-sharing service. These activities always incorporate intercultural exchanges. Revenues from these services are invested by K-Pax in social housing projects for refugees in the valley.

Currently there are 25 places for asylum seekers in the community of Breno, dislocated in small accommodation units within the SPRAR system, and 75 places in CAS spread over the whole Camonica Valley.

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Supplemental material

TABLE S1 Number of asylum applicants in the countries of the European Union plus 5 other countries. It shows a peak of 1,322,825 in 2015, dropping to 704,625 in 2017.

TABLE S2 Deaths and missing persons in the Mediterranean Sea. (Source: International Organization for Migration [IOM], https://missingmigrants.iom.int/, accessed on 18 August 2018)

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