Alpine Refugees

Alpine Refugees:

Immigration at the Core of Europe

Edited by

Manfred Perlik, Giulia Galera,
Ingrid Machold and Andrea Membretti

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PREFACE

As defined by the International Organization for Migration, in its role as the leading inter-governmental organisation addressing the topic, migration entails "the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State". In the mountain regions context, there are many and diverse motives stipulated in the research-based body of knowledge as to the underlying reasons and purposes for migration that include, but are not limited to, people in pursuit of economic and non-economic valued outcomes such as employment and livelihood options, food and water security, or social and political security.

The consequences and outcomes of such migration flows for mountain areas, particularly in out-migration from mountain regions, have long been a subject of inquiry for the mountain research community exploring the human dimensions of change in mountains. This research focus has, over the years, certainly improved our understanding of both the positive and negative outcomes for those migrating and for local mountain communities left behind. However, the increasingly complex interactions in which drivers and processes for global change, and how they manifest – in a coupled biophysical and socioeconomic sense, addressing mountain social-ecological systems – call for broader and more nuanced research foci and entry points for how we orient to the question of migration both in and out of mountain regions, and its consequences and outcomes for society. This has been a subject of key interest and relevance, for instance in the current sixth assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which answers to questions relating to migration and climate change – and implications for climate resilient development pathways – are also expected for mountain regions.

One key and relevant aspect of migration, particularly for in-migration into mountain communities, is the question surrounding refugees and their social role in a changing dynamic in which depopulation from rural mountain areas has long been a concern, such as in the European Alps. The thematic explored in this book, titled *Alpine Refugees: Immigration at the Core of Europe*, is therefore a timely and critically important contribution to the understanding of such an issue for society and policy-making, especially on the specific outcomes and consequences for mountain regions and their communities and the imperative to account for and consider

questions of equity, rights, human dignity, and development prospects for all concerned.

From a mountain research perspective, the scholarly works presented in this book place a collective spotlight on the importance of reconciling both social and humanitarian policies whilst addressing processes of global change, both in terms of the challenges to overcome and the opportunities that present for mountain communities. Based on knowledge derived from cases in four alpine countries, the empirical basis presented is also a key foundation for learning and understanding of these important topics of our times in our changing mountains.

Carolina Adler
Executive Director
Mountain Research Initiative

7 September 2019

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

FOREIGN MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE ALPS: DEGREES OF FREEDOM AND BOUNDARIES OF CONSTRICTION

GIULIA GALERA AND INGRID MACHOLD

Recent international migration research has largely focused on the impact of immigration on both receiving nations and countries of origin. Extensive studies have been conducted that analyze the economic effects of international labour mobility, demographics, a misallocation of skills within the EU, and immigration's fiscal impact. Although research into both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas has grown significantly over the past decade (OECD 2018; McAreavey and Argent 2018; Kordel et al. 2018; Galera et al. 2018), receiving territories have yet to be comprehensively investigated. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to immigration's impact on remote localities such as those in the Alps.

On the one hand, the Alps have long been an area of outmigration and weak economic potential not least due to territory related traits such as remote and isolated settlements at high elevations with distinct cultural traditions. On the other hand, centuries of European history marked by conflicts and political-religious struggles evidence the same land as a place of refuge for persecuted, exiled, and rebellious people (Head-König 2011; Holenstein et al. 2018).

But what characterizes the Alps today? Beside persistent outmigration, over the past two decades the Alps have become a destination for immigrants. Newcomers include those who have chosen to move to the mountains in search of employment and a better way of life (often as multi-local people), and asylum seekers and refugees whose movements are subject to national dispersal policies. In some parts of the Alps migrant numbers have risen significantly; as a result, immigration has become an important factor for demographic change.

The ForAlps (Foreign Immigration in the Alps) network was established in response to this emerging topic and the scant information available on

pan-Alpine migration dynamics. It aims to present a more strategic voice for foreign migration in the Alps, and in so doing gain the attention of the scientific community and practitioners able to address immigration opportunities and challenges in Alpine regions. ForAlps brings together researchers, academics, members of public institutions and non- profit organisations, and journalists, who are active in various disciplines and regional contexts. Alpine Refugees: Immigration at the Core of Europe is an initial outcome for the group, which focuses particular attention on the impact of foreign migration on mountain development. The term "Alpine Refugees" has a double meaning: it refers to those who see their "refuge" in the Alps as a means to improve the quality of their lives and work opportunities, and to those who are seeking refugee status there or elsewhere but are forced to wait for a response to their request while being confined to mountain areas.

The book's central assumption considers the Alps as a crossroads of different cultures, languages, and traditions that presents a unique opportunity to investigate migration on a relatively small scale. According to a comparative perspective, the specific analysis of Alpine migration processes enable a better understanding of the specific development patterns and challenges that lie ahead for other new immigration destinations. As illustrated by country-specific studies of Austria, Italy, and Switzerland, as well as a brief excursion to Germany, the Alps can be regarded as a laboratory where the hostile reactions of local populations and examples of mismanagement go hand in hand with innovative reception initiatives whose use of effective policy tools and strategies have in several instances triggered local development dynamics.

Book contributors include practitioners and social workers who have experimented with innovative reception and integration pathways, as well as researchers with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including geographers, sociologists, political scientists, social anthropologists, economists, and legal experts. Their analyses draw on empirical and theoretical investigations, research actions implemented within the framework of large EU projects, and exploratory case studies and storylines of welcoming reception initiatives.

Multilevel analysis traversing EU, national, and locally based perspectives from varied disciplines enables Alpine Refugees to pursue a twofold aim: (1) to provide a tentative explanation of the determinants that affect migrant exclusion and inclusion in Alpine territories; and (2) to pave the way for innovative policy design enabling more equitable solutions of advantage to both sides when hosting asylum seekers in mountain areas. Several authors illustrate that today's migrants constitute a significant

proportion of the agricultural workforce and population of many rural Alpine regions, which is a key factor of resilience for many businesses and local communities that are otherwise at risk of abandon.

After framing the migration phenomenon according to an EU and national perspective, the book scrutinizes how given Alpine territories located in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland are currently facing migration and asylum challenges, what barriers and limitations they are facing, and to what extent migration triggers innovative policy and territorial projects that can generate beneficial impacts for both migrants and local inhabitants.

Three initial chapters (Part I of the book) frame international immigration flows and patterns of immigrant settlement in the Alps within the European context and the global one. *Emanuela Dal Zotto* and *Angelo Scotto* explore the interplay between social and policy drivers, shedding light on key factors that influence migration management in less populated areas. According to their analysis, these factors include: lack of resources in general, lack of administerial capabilities to manage immigration at a local level, inexperienced policymakers and civil servants, a high share of the population is elderly and therefore generally more conservative and less accepting of migration, and the more noticeable presence of immigrants in small towns and villages. *Adele Del Guercio's* contribution then focuses on a broader context by identifying contradictions within the EU's regulation of current migration. In the author's view, compromised legislation reflects a profound political crisis. In order to safeguard the EU's integration project, Del Guercio calls for the provision of legal entry channels for both migrants and asylum seekers, effective resettlement programs, an asylum seeker relocation policy, and the attribution of relevance to criteria such as family unity or cultural and linguistic affinity with a Member State for international protection requests.

Manfred Perlik's chapter analyzes, in a global perspective of increasing human mobility and need for protection, the current post-Fordist path of regional and state development characterized by high social and regional differentiation. He argues that this development has led to the individualization of social practices and spatial development. The future of Alpine territories is described via three ideal-typical development paths: segregated resort towns designed for wealthy people, the isolationist reactions of socio-ethnic exclusion based on traditional identity, and practices of inclusion based on a broader view of community and society.

Part II of the book explores the impact of immigration in the Alps from diverse perspectives, with a particular focus on socio-demographic, historical and cultural aspects of this phenomenon. In his historical analysis *Pier Paolo Viazzo* highlights that migration to and within the Alps can be

traced back to the Middle Ages when certain religiously inspired or other minority groups took refuge in the mountains. He notes a trend reversal and differential processes of depopulation and repopulation since the second half of the 18th century not least due to land inheritance patterns. In a further step he ascertains whether or not past socio-demographic and institutional processes still influence current developments. *Tobias Weidinger* and *Stefan Kordel* investigate and compare the experiences of refugee cohorts and local responses to rural reception in post-WWII and contemporary Bavaria. Concepts of refugee inclusion and exclusion are developed based on the response of local populations to newcomers and how refugee participation is fostered or hampered in different social situations from the two time periods. An in-depth analysis of specific integration aspects such as housing, employment, and social interaction sheds light on the multidimensionality of social and spatial inclusion and exclusion paths for refugees in a rural setting. In their theoretical approach *Andrea Membretti* and *Pier Paolo Viazzo* discuss the "new peopling" of the Alps with regard to the ownership and rights of tangible and intangible territorial Alpine resources. "Should new inhabitants be considered a threat or a benefit?" and "Whose Alps are these?" are two of the many questions that arise with increased foreign migration; however, any focus on ownership and property rights conceals a much more important question, "Who is actually taking care of Alpine territories?" They reason that viewing the Alps as a space for the common good could open negotiations between new and established inhabitants.

Part III of the book, finally, explores the interplay between different kind of immigration flows in the Alps and local development initiatives, considering separately the national contexts of Austria, Italy and Switzerland. They include general analyses of the migration phenomenon from a national statistical, demographic and policy perspective alongside specific case studies of selected, representative territories and initiatives. Each study provides locally based analysis and an overview of the complex challenges faced by a diverse set of local actors, including recipients, social workers, organisation managers in charge of welcoming newcomers, and public administrations and policymakers who are expected to regulate migration flows and design reception policies.

The first set of contributions focuses on Austria's socioeconomic and political background. It begins with *Gerhard Hetfleisch* and *Anita Konrad's* overview of historical refugee events and asylum, recalling the Habsburg Empire and various adaptations and changes to asylum law in the 20th century to better understand how the Republic of Austria dealt with the recent "long summer of migration" in 2015. *Ingrid Machold* and *Thomas*

Dax's chapter analyzes the multifaceted mobility patterns in Austrian rural and Alpine regions that present growing social diversity and integration needs. As differing perceptions of immigration at local and regional levels underline the importance of framework conditions and incentives for communities, three innovative approaches of governance are introduced that seek to improve how migrants are welcomed and included in rural society. The role of migrants in the Austrian labour market is then analyzed by *Anna Faustmann* and *Isabella Skrivanek*. Their chapter focuses on Austrian migration policies that have developed from guest-worker recruitment to the introduction of a points-based system that determines the specific labour market situation of refugees. Structural characteristics and the role of employment opportunities complement profound analysis of the Austrian labour market. Examples of hosting practices then develop understanding of valuable efforts to include migrants in the social and economic life of particular regions. *Robert Moosbrugger* illustrates social inclusion processes based on experiences of the PlurAlps project in Bregenzerwald, Vorarlberg. *Marika Gruber* meanwhile focuses her analysis on diversity and social inclusion with reference to a specific reception case study in Hermagor, Carinthia. *Florian Stolz* complements this picture with an elaboration of the Tyrolean Integration Compass, an approach primarily concentrated on the future integration of asylum seekers in the regional labour market.

The second set of contributions focuses on Italy; it begins with an analysis of the geographical dimension and spatial patterns of migration throughout the country's Alpine regions in *Giulia Galera, Leila Giannetto,* and *Elisa Ravazzoli's* exploration of the role public and local policies have in supporting asylum seeker and refugee reception and integration. Drawing on preliminary research, the authors focus on the conditions under which the current asylum challenge can turn into a regeneration opportunity for Alpine territories and their local inhabitants. Along similar lines, *Alberto Di Gioia* utilizes georeferenced data and qualitative analysis of forced migrants in Italian mountain territories to investigate some of the characteristics that are shared by a number of representative municipalities engaged in asylum seeker and refugee reception in Piedmont. Key highlighted factors include: the establishment of collaborations on an inter-municipal level; the importance of adopting a broad approach that takes local inhabitant needs into account when defining integration projects; the engagement of local actors that are well rooted in the host territory and employ public-private part- nerships; and the importance of local networks. The potential for interaction between local development and new residents/inhabitants within a public territorial policy framework is then scrutinized by *Michele Nori* and

Daniela Luisi. Italian Inner Areas provide several examples of territories where immigrants have played a key role in maintaining and developing local societies and their embedded socio-cultural heritage. Four selected examples of Italian hosting practices confirm: (1) the key role played by formal and informal inter-institutional and personal networks (*Anja Marcher, Joha nna Mitterhofer, Ingrid Kofler,* and *Verena Wisthaler*); the beneficial impact generated by well-managed reception projects on remote territories that are at risk of abandon *(Andrea Trivero)*: (3) the importance of adopting an entrepreneurial approach which is part of a social inclusion project for the long-term sustainability of integration projects *(Michela Semprebon)*; and (4) the crucial input of new migrants for village revitalization as exampled by Dordollo, Val Aupa, northern Friuli (*Michael Beismann and Ernst Steinicke*).

The last set of contributions is dedicated to Switzerland. *Rebekka Ehret's* contribution firstly describes Swiss Alpine migration in general and then investigates the country's asylum policies with reference to concrete examples of Alpine housing situations. Her analysis provides insights regarding recent political responses to Alpine immigration issues and suggests new research avenues according to a gendered approach in addition to a comparative approach at a municipal level. With specific focus on Valais, *Viviane Cretton* investigates the crucial contradictions characterizing reception interventions between care and deterrence, emergency action and lengthy administrative procedures, and hospitality and expulsion. Her description of four centres located high up in the Alps enables the specificity of hosting asylum seekers in small mountain areas to be scrutinized from both social worker and recipient perspectives. The book's Swiss case studies provide valuable insights into certain key contradictions and challenges that lie ahead for migration management. Whereas the first study sheds light on the dramatic contrast between the positive image young Africans have of Switzerland and the realities of their everyday lives as third-country migrants *(Théogène-Octave Gakuba and Martin Amalaman)*, the second explores how a migrant constructs their individual social space, what external factors influence this process, and how these factors might affect an individual's scope of action and their means to develop embedded local networks *(Flurina Graf)*.

The last chapter of this section, by *Eric Nanchen* and *Sarah Huber*, describes how art and, more specifically, photography can raise decision-maker and public awareness of the challenges facing mountain regions as exemplified by the SMArt program launched in 2014 by the Foundation for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions (FDDM).

The conclusions of the volume are left to two chapters: the first one, by *Andrea Membretti and Manfred Perlik*, analyses how, in the Alpine region, public discourses and reception practices related to immigration flows oscillate in a field of tension between absolute rejection and an unlimited culture of welcome. The authors argue that the large number of contributions in this book elucidates, in different perspectives, this tension: making visible these conflict lines and dichotomies may help to better understand socio-cultural practices in their interdependencies with economic processes, at local and larger scales, favoring the emergence of new form of governance, able to cope with the migration challenge. The last chapter, by *Alessandro Gretter*, finally presents the origins and the actual configuration of the international network *ForAlps*, born in 2016 in response to the important yet not adequately addressed issue of foreign immigration to the Alps. From its very inception, *ForAlps* was perceived as "a network on the move" to cut across diverse Alpine territories and disciplines, including academia, non-profit organisations and local administrations, showing a strong non-hierarchical approach and a proud independence from any political conditioning.

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PART I:

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

CHAPTER 2

PATTERNS OF IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT IN EUROPE: BETWEEN SOCIAL DRIVERS AND POLITICAL CHOICES

EMANUELA DAL ZOTTO AND ANGELO SCOTTO

There is broad agreement on the social causes of migration and on their role in creating the patterns of immigrant settlement in European host countries. Yet public migration policies also play a significant role and we will focus on this. Public migration policies address two aims: they fulfill the needs of the social actors within their economics systems and they try to manage existing migration as a public issue. In their specificity, they shape a country's entry conditions and permissions to stay, and the immigrant's rights and access to services; as a consequence, they create, change, and/or opportunities, and therefore impact at which places migrants will settle and which places they try to avoid.

This phenomenon applies to both "voluntary" and so-called "forced" migration. Even though the complex realities of international migration are difficult to clearly differentiate, these terms are nevertheless useful tools of analysis. For the purposes of this chapter therefore "voluntary migration" refers to the act of those who choose to leave their country of origin – commonly associated with labour or economic migration (Zanfrini 2007) – and "forced migration" as that undertaken by those who have to leave their country or region of origin for reasons of force majeure such as wars or humanitarian crises.

Stephen Castles (2001) coined these definitions when attempting to describe new escape scenarios that occurred in the 1960s as a result of decolonization, which still strongly characterizes much global migration today; he found the single refugee category defined in the 1951 Geneva Convention insufficient. In his 2007 article Roger Zetter subsequently underlines that any distinction between forced and voluntary migration is above all determined by the governance needs of the Global North, as the

factors that trigger the movement of people are too strongly intertwined (Zetter 2007).

Global problems to be solved on the local level

Whereas migration policies have historically been defined and implemented nationally, the role of local administrations in managing immigration has progressively increased in Western countries over recent decades. The reasons for such a development are manifold. Firstly, local administrations have been assigned greater, overall powers and means to act on matters (Bobbio 2002) including immigration (Walker and Leitner 2011); the European Union's principle of subsidiarity, has led to greater interest in configuring local policymaking processes. Secondly, most immigrants have amassed in urban areas, reflective of a predominantly post-Fordist migration context (Ambrosini 2005), where municipal administrations are the main managerial actors, visible since 1990 (Caponio and Borkert 2010). Finally, there is rising awareness that local level decisions and practices in the management of immigration are very relevant in matters of migration settlement, such as spatial segregation (Drooglever et al. 1998; Mahning 2004; Glynn 2006; Peach 2007) and that the conflicts related to increased ethnical and cultural diversity (Pastore and Ponzo 2016) influence national politics, sometimes even in its exclusive spheres, like citizenship policies (McDonald 2012). In 1998 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a volume of collated articles based on case studies of local migration policies in several European, American, and Australian cities (OECD 1998). It was one of the first contributions on this issue and the start of the OECD's research into the local governance of migrant integration that it still pursues today (OECD 2018). Another early research project Multicultura l Policies and Modes of Citizenship in European Cities, which was conducted between 1996 and 2003, analyzed local migration policies in seventeen European cities and provided important theoretical advancements on different types of local policies and modes of immigrant participation in host societies (Penninx et al. 2004). Literature is now copious in terms of both case studies and theoretical analyses in these fields. More recent studies focus on specific issues such as: the application of the multilevel governance approach to migration policy (Zincone and Caponio 2006; Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero 2014; Scholten and Penninx 2016); the role of municipalities in providing services and protection to migrants, and their sometimes adversarial response to national legislation and governments (McDonald op. cit.; Huang and Yang Liu 2016; Bauder 2017; OECD 2017a); and the role of

stakeholders in policymaking processes (OECD 2017b). We would like to highlight these themes amongst all those possible because they are key to understanding the bilateral relationship between patterns of immigrant settlement and public policies: local policymakers base the content of migration policies on both an upper-governmental framework and general political expectations and attitudes regarding immigrants; simultaneously, local migration policies aimed at discouraging or hindering immigrant social and economic inclusion may influence their eventual choices on where to settle.

The attractiveness of the metropolitan areas and the option of the peripheral areas

Most local migration policy studies concern cities and metropolitan areas, because of the above-mentioned concentration of migrants in urban areas, and because big cities have resources and powers that allow them to influence significantly the management of the foreign presence in their territory. However, the settlement of immigrants in small towns and rural areas is assuming increasing quantitative importance. Scholars have recently acknowledged that this form of migration plays a significant role in the development of the main economic sectors of rural economies (see Labrianidis and Sykas 2009 for the impact of rural migrant workers on Greek agriculture) and in the demographic and socio-economic revitalization of these regions (Kasimis 2010; for Spain: Lardiés-Bosque 2018); this recognition has consequently inspired interest in how immigration could be governed by rural administrations.

The management of non-metropolitan immigration is influenced by factors that are different from those affecting urban contexts. Whereas immigration politics and ideological stances may be considered as important as purely administrative tasks that involve many actors in the decision-making process in metropolitan areas, it can be less complex to coordinate related issues for a reduced number of subjects in small, rural municipalities (Ambrosini 2006); nevertheless, non-metropolitan areas have fewer resources, less scope to influence immigration decisions, and policymakers and civil servants with less experience of managing immigrants. Moreover, other factors can complicate the social inclusion of newcomers within a non-metropolitan context: small towns and rural areas in Western countries usually have a demographically older population that generally has more conservative political and social views; and immigrants have a greater social visibility in small and less dispersive contexts than in metropolitan areas (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2017). Non-metropolitan

migration policies are therefore qualitatively different from those in metropolitan areas and form a promising field of research. As noted by Semprebon et al. (2017), case studies on migration policies in small towns and rural areas are more common in Italy than in other European countries because of the specific way immigrants have been distributed throughout the country; however, current trends in migration flows and the emergent policymaking approaches of other European countries and EU institutions may indicate that non-metropolitan areas are becoming a more widely important arena for immigration management. Recent studies suggest that political decisions might also affect immigrant settlement processes and patterns in small towns (Kreichauf 2015).

Forced migration

Forced migration presents a significant aspect of the immigrant settlement debate in rural areas. Unlike economic migration, this phenomenon is closely related to issues of border and sovereignty control, and national policy therefore tends to retain a prominent role in its management. Whereas refugees were largely intellectual elites until the end of the nineteenth century, Europe faced the need to assist and provide reception for millions of internally displaced persons after the First and Second World Wars. After this period had been largely resolved, the phenomenon of forced migration retained its "mass" dimension in the old continent during the 1960s and beyond when decolonization set new flows of African, Asian, and Latin American asylum seekers in motion; the moral duty to welcome those fleeing wars and human rights violations was nevertheless already combined with restrictive European migration policies by the beginning of the Seventies, which generated a particular geography of forced migrant settlement. Measures such as the current Dublin Regulation – which relieves the duty of those European countries where migrants might prefer to seek asylum that are not a standard point of entry to the Union and places the burden of reception on its most external states – illustrate how policies primarily drive forced migrant settlement in Europe. Whereas first-level reception policies for asylum seekers and programs for refugee resettlement and relocation mainly define Europe's formal settlement opportunities, these policies often fail to respond to mass, informal situations.

The recent European refugee crisis has played a significant role in boosting this trend. Even though the legal channels for economic migration are almost completely closed in Europe, strong flows of forced migrants from Africa and Asia have continued in recent years following social and

political turmoil that began in 2011 with the so-called Arab Springs; the rise in asylum seeker numbers has resulted in intense pressure on arrival countries and those that have accepted immigrants. Italy's distribution policy of allocating asylum seekers throughout its territory to avoid excessive numbers in certain areas and spreading the responsibility for reception and assistance activities has often been met with local discontent and some municipalities have even tried to resist the introduction of reception activities within their jurisdiction. Moreover, many asylum seekers have been allocated to rural and mountain areas where, despite a common lack of prior experience of reception and assistance practices, there were plentiful, disused tourism and/or religious buildings that could be appropriated as reception facilities (Dal Zotto and Scotto 2014). Asylum seekers often remain in these rural places only for the duration of the international protection process; their stay does not lead to real settlement.

Outlook

As the presence of reception facilities affect local communities regardless of whether immigrants ultimately stay or leave, certain municipalities have recognized an opportunity in the arrival of newcomers. Key inclusion projects and resettlement programs have led to effective, long-term immigrant participation in the ongoing economic and social life of these receiving societies. Policies that promote immigrant rural settlement opportunities do so for a variety of reasons: many non-metropolitan areas have been subjected to local abandon over time and consequently to depopulation, the demise of traditional economic activities, and the closure of many essential services (Corrado and D'Agostino 2016; D'Agostino 2015). In such contexts, immigrant settlement can be considered a "win-win" situation (Bloem 2014) for both immigrants, who "come from countries where agriculture is the primary driver of the economy" and find an environment similar to that of their origins in which to recover their autonomy, and rural areas that can revitalize their economic and social tissue due to the positive impact of immigrants. Despite recent literature, especially focused on Italy, that analyzes both the constraints and opportunities created in rural areas due to the presence of reception facilities or forced migrant inclusion projects (Membretti et al. 2017), a systematic examination of the effects of resettlement projects in Europe is still lacking; material that charts the long-term experience of these kinds of initiatives in the United States and Australia is more expansive (Casey et al. 2009; Galligan et al. 2014).

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