

IGOR JELEN - PETER ČEDE - ERNST STEINICKE -
ERIKA DŽAJIĆ URŠIČ

GEOGRAPHICAL SUPERLATIVES AS POTENTIAL FOR
PROXIMITY TOURISM MARKETING?
THE EXCEPTIONAL POSITION OF THE MONTAGNA
FRIULANA IN THE ALPS

Motivation and Objective. – The following study should be seen as a contribution to applied regional geography and at the same time to integrative geography. During our various scientific activities in the Alps as well as demographic and socio-economic analyses in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy's northeast region¹, we noticed the largely uncharted, special geographic position of the Friulian mountains, specifically the diverse exceptional position of its northern part within the Alps (see the insets/side maps in fig. 1 and 2). This gave rise to the idea of a regional geographical synthesis with which new and application-oriented insights can be gained through compilation. These relate to natural and cultural geographic issues, which we have brought together from various analytical studies. Such an integration of nature and society in form of a synthesis is the essential characteristic of regional geography.

The aim of this study is, on the one hand, to present newly conceived perspectives of regional geography of the Montagna friulana, i.e. the alpine section of Friuli. On the other hand, it should offer suggestions that geographical particularities can be applied in tourism marketing and therefore to regional development of peripheral areas. Above all, the interaction between applied regional geography and proximity tourism should be examined in more detail.

However, this does not mean that our model study on the Montagna friulana can be transferred to other parts of the Alps that are less valued for tourism. While this contribution focuses on geographic superlatives, in other alpine valleys there may be very different unique selling points,

¹ e.g., <https://www.uibk.ac.at/de/geographie/dca/publikationen/>

which also have an untapped potential for tourism marketing. Ultimately, this work is intended to stimulate thinking in this new direction of applied regional geography.

Nonetheless, we have to emphasize that this work is not to be viewed as a territorial-oriented marketing study. From a subject-specific point of view alone, it would therefore be presumptuous to offer recommendations how to promote the geographical exceptionalities of Northern Friuli. In the sense of applied geography, this contribution should be understood as an advisory function and is intended either to inspire professional marketing experts. It is therefore understandable that a concrete proposal for the actual implementation of tourism marketing strategies in practice is lacking.

After a conceptual overview showing the current status of research, the study aims to demonstrate the model area Montagna friulana as an exceptional alpine region in terms of natural and cultural characteristics. Beyond a short summary the study concludes by underlining the marketing potential of geographical unique selling points for proximity tourism.

Theoretical Framework and Status of Research. – As mentioned above, this study is primarily concerned with new regional-geographical perspectives. It makes sense to apply these to proximity tourism. This particular form of tourism focuses on local destinations, short distances and environmentally friendly means of transportation. It also focuses on the idea of primarily rethinking the nearby, everyday environment (Jeuring, Diaz-Soria, 2017; Rantala and others, 2020). An in-depth look at the small-scale interaction of physio and human geographical features as well as cultural and socio-economic characteristics of the immediate surroundings can also contribute to a stronger regional identity. Despite the topicality and relevance of the topic of “proximity”, the existing literature on proximity tourism is quite limited, although this issue was increasingly taken up during the corona pandemic with the restriction of travel freedoms (cf. Salmela and others, 2021; Lebrun, Corbel, Bouchet, 2022).

A generally valid definition of local tourism is not possible due to different concepts based on the parameters of travel time, distance or length of stay. It is not the task here to discuss the various approaches. Instead, this article takes a pragmatic approach to proximity tourism: it encompasses the related possibilities of tourism activities within the Friulian Alps, but also includes the neighboring areas as source areas for

proximity tourists. The scope of this intra-regional tourism is therefore limited to a radius of around 100 km.

Disadvantageous effects compared to other forms of tourism, such as the low added value due to the barely relevant influence on the number of overnight stays, will not be discussed in detail here. However, attention is repeatedly drawn to the educational and didactic added value of field trips for pupils, students and other people in the context of life-long learning – which also has an impact on regional development in the broadest sense. In any case, proximity tourism does not take financial capital to distant countries and should promote environmentally friendly travel.

Applied Regional Geography and methodological challenges. – For Italian and other European geographers, who had developed an idea of applied regional geography, Friuli was a classic and popular study area. As early as 1898, G. Marinelli argues that this interest is certainly linked to its location between the Alps and the Adriatic and on an important north-south and west-east axis.

But the task here is not to again present historical roots, characteristics or problems of the classical regional geography and the so-called New Regional Geography as well as the concepts of region and relational approaches to regions. These have already been deliberated several times, most recently by Minshull (2017) or Paasi (2020). Nevertheless, it seems advisable to point out that the classical regional geography sees itself as a subfield of geography “that examines nature and human aspects in an integrative regional framework”, the New Regional Geography, on the other hand, as a subfield of Human Geography «focusing on the sociocultural construction of regions, their meanings for individual and social identities, and on the power relations embedded in region-building processes» (Paasi, 2020, p. 3).

Presenting his dissertation about “Trentino” in 1898, Cesare Battisti created a completely new geography showing natural and societal aspects together side by side for the first time. Therefore, Battisti could be seen, beside others merits, also as a pioneer of the German *Länderkunde* (Regional Geography). This is also evident from his guides of Trentino landscapes and valleys which can be classified as examples of applied scientific regional geography (e.g. Battisti, 1906).

Most recent publications of classical regional geography do not always

represent the entire physical and human geographical field of a region, but, as early as 1928, are published problem-centered articles in the sense of Spethmann's "Dynamic Regional Studies", i.e., they concentrate on essential topics of an area (morphology, minority, tourism, etc.). The recently relaunched monography of the Alps by Bätzing (2018) also focuses on sustainability in its deliberations.

Thus, the present study also follows a common thread, namely the unique selling point of an area. Furthermore, the authors attach great importance to ensuring that their compilation remains application-oriented.

While the primary tasks of applied geography can be found in regionalization, spatial, regional and urban planning as well as in geopolitics, the practical orientation of regional geography is limited to the popularization of geographical knowledge in the sense of a society-related service. The following sections are intended to draw attention to the fact that regional geography also has a dimension in regional development beyond its educational function and economic policy advice. Especially in the field of tourism, where the landscape generally plays an important role, the application of knowledge from regional competence can make a decisive contribution to emphasizing the endogenous potential and thus to the economic upswing of an area (Castiglioni and others, 2018). One need only think of the demand for geographical unique selling points that are relevant in the plans of destination development, which require a profound knowledge of the area (Bieger, Beritelli, 2013; Steinecke, Herntrei, 2017).

The methodological problems of a regional-geographical reflection are obvious, at least since the *Deutscher Geographentag 1969*, when the traditional regional geography was called into question (Meckelein, Borcherdt, 1970). Even if a "neopragmatic perspective" (Kühne, Jenal, 2021) promises theoretical approaches to regional geography, Aschauer (2001) is essentially right when he emphasizes that it does not represent a research discipline with its own theory. Rather, it depicts a form of representation and thus an addressee-oriented offer of spatial images that always remains selective, preliminary, and demonstrative.

Nevertheless, there are regional geographical research concepts applied, like that of environmental interpretation (Schramm, 1971; Ham, 1992) and, building upon this, that of landscape interpretation. The latter, which covers the natural and cultural spatial structure of an area that can

be experienced on site, is primarily aimed at tourists. To that effect, this approach is to be understood as an instrument for promoting tourism, but it can also make a valid contribution to environmental education.

However, to repeat, this article does not address communication techniques such as how environmental or landscape interpretation is to be conveyed, but rather landscape interpretation in the sense of a further development of tourism expansion strategies. The landscape and recreational value of a region should thereby be emphasized.

In tourism advertising, landscape plays an eminent role. According to Küster (2012, p. 14), this can be characterized as a more or less clearly delimited space of which one has become aware and which is composed of three dimensions that are closely related to one another: that of the natural world (material structures), that of elements of material culture (artefacts and cultural landscape) as well as that of collective history, spatial perceptions and interpretations, traditions, and discourses (cf. also Tieskens and others, 2017, p. 30; Kühne, Weber, Berr, Jenal, 2024). In addition to historical and physio-geographical aspects, visual-aesthetic attributes are particularly relevant for tourism. As the large number of tourism brochures shows, the starting point is usually attractive scenery images that are intended to create a special landscape experience and thus positive feelings for tourists. Even so, according to Lehnes and Glawion (2000, pp. 313f.), “disruptions to the landscape image” can also trigger negative emotions.

This is where this article should come in. It argues that not only “beautiful”, “picturesque”, “exotic” or “bizarre” landscapes and cultural-historical features can be appealing, but also physical and human geographical uniqueness, unique features, special positions, records, or superlatives – independent of visual-aesthetic characteristics. This can therefore also apply to areas commonly perceived as “boring” or “monotonous”, about which there is hardly any tourist information.

The prerequisite for this, however, is a landscape interpretation that is suitable for marketing. Ham (1992) understands this as a communication process that captures the attention of tourists and issues a clear message. The experience of the landscape can thus be significantly intensified beyond the intuitive aesthetic perception if regional-geographic, idiographic insight is conveyed.

Geographical superlatives, sometimes also curiosities, form ideal

unique features realizable for tourism, especially for proximity tourism. In the following chapters, the Friulian Alps are presented in an idiographic way with their geographical features, which lend the region an exceptional position within Europe. The contribution, largely based on a hermeneutic approach, is therefore not to be understood as a case study that allows transferability to other (mountain) areas. It can rather - as indicated at the beginning - be understood as a stimulus to develop alternative tourism strategies in which regional geographical knowledge can be applied.

As already stated, our study does not deviate from the methodology of other regional geographies: it is the result of a compilation - i.e. a synthesis of different, primarily own analytical studies - that has been prepared in a recipient-oriented manner with the intention of gaining new findings. Most of the publications used in the compilation come from the research group led by the authors, which has been working on Friuli for decades². In terms of methodology - besides the integration of the current status of research - we analyzed demographic data of Istat: tab. 1 shows population losses in all 58 municipalities of the *Montagna friulana* between 1952 and 2021.

Montagna friulana – an Exceptional Area. – Friuli Venezia Giulia is an administrative region formed after the Second World War, which received the special status of autonomy in 1963. Morphological units converge in this region in a particularly small space and contribute to a considerable diversity of landscapes: In an approximately 100 km long north-south profile, mountains (Alps), hill zone, plain and coast alternate with each other. Its northern part on the three-border area Italy, Slovenia and Austria is located in the Alps (*Montagna friulana*) and forms the study area.

Northern Friuli or *Montagna friulana* has not shared in the economic upswing that Friuli as a whole has experienced since the '60ies (Steinicke, 1991; Beismann, Čede, Steinicke, 2022). While lately it has been possible to expand job opportunities considerably - especially in the construction and infrastructure industry - demographic figures of all valleys in northern Friuli still show a sharp downturn in the area's population (tab. 1). Adverse topographical and socio-agrarian factors, as well as the lack of non-

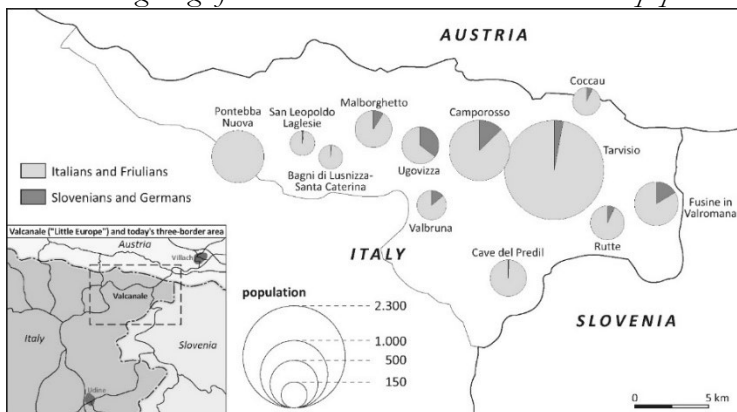
² See 2020 –2023, FWF Project 32500, “The demise of ‘Little Europe’, Assimilation and cultural landscape in North-East Italy”; 2013-2016, FWF Project P25315, “Current Demographic Changes in the European Alps – Effects on the Autochthonous Linguistic Minorities”, Univ. Innsbruck.

agricultural job opportunities, are the primary causes of “Friuli migrante” (Zanini, 1964). Although the large waves of emigration are gradually tapering off, they have left behind a skewed ratio of older people to the population as a whole. This, in turn, has been accompanied by rising death and falling birth rates and is the reason of the current unfavorable demographic structure.

Moreover, the Montagna friulana appears rather hostile to settlement. While Friuli’s frequent earthquakes and rockfalls are more or less irrelevant for the history of migration, this does not apply to climatological, hydro- and biogeographical conditions (Bonetti, 1960; Steinicke, 1991). As discussed in the next sections, their limiting influence is reflected in all areas of life. Together with the cultural-geographical characteristics, they form geographically unique selling points (Steinicke, 2024; Jelen and others, 2023).

Unique Geographical Selling Points. – Nowhere in the Alps is the ethnolinguistic mosaic as colorful as in the Montagna friulana in the north of Friuli. It is where the three major language families of Europe meet – Romance, Slavic and Germanic. No fewer than four different autochthonous ethnic groups live side by side and intertwined in this linguistic “Little Europe”: Friulians, Italians, Germans and Slovenes. Our research group last illustrated this ethnic diversity in 2021 (cf. fig. 1; Plautz and others, 2021, p. 10).

Fig. 1 – *Current weighting of Italian and autochthonous Valcanale populations*



Source: Plautz and others (2021, p. 10)

In some villages of the Valcanale, older locals even use all four languages in everyday life. There in the cultural landscape, various settlement patterns as well as remnants of traditional agricultural facilities and customs are reminiscent of the political affiliation with neighboring Carinthia and Carniola until after World War I (Bonetti, 1960; Plautz and others, 2021).

In addition, there are communities where objective ethnic characteristics hardly coincide with some standard, as is the case with the German language pockets in Sauris, Timau, and Sappada, and in the Slovene-speaking valleys of Resia and Natisone. In all of these, German or Slovene is seen as a kind of village or valley dialect that is widely incomprehensible to foreigners. Sometimes the inhabitants of the language islands, who remained separated for centuries from the respective ethnic mainland, do not identify themselves in strictly expected national categories, but in more nuanced ways (Plautz and others, 2021; Steinicke, Jelen, Čede, 2023). Their dialects, which differ significantly from the respective high-level language, are also codified. As in the Valcanale, however, assimilation into the state language is well advanced in the language islands mentioned, therefore symbolic ethnicity takes a special position. Even though many people no longer speak their autochthonous language, they do try to maintain their ethnic identity in other ways. As Gans (1979, pp. 7-9) suggests, ethnic identity can be expressed in action and/or feeling, which can take new, limitless and symbolic forms, such as maintaining customs and traditions, as well as artefacts in the cultural landscape.

In particular, the typical construction style in the Valcanale as well as in Sauris and Sappada seems to be especially relevant for these rural areas, as it is not only implemented in private residential buildings but also in contemporary public infrastructure projects. Also, the preservation of traditional economic and behavioral patterns (e.g. communitarian regulations about common alpine pastures) as well as the linguistic landscape - i. e. the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, etc. (Landry, Bourhis, 1997) - is emotionally and symbolically significant for autochthons. In addition to this distinct cultural landscape, which corresponds to the ethnic diversity, another highlight of historical and cultural relevance is the spectacular railway from the 19th century, crossing deep canyons with impressive iron bridges - nowadays adapted as a bicycle road, linking the Alps to the northern Adria, offering to cyclo-tourists a unique experience.

All these ethnolinguistic groups are threatened by the enormous depopulation that has gripped the Friulian Alps especially since World War II. Despite its slowing in the last two decades, mainly due to amenity migration developments, this depletion process is stronger than in other parts of the Alps: between 1951 and 2021, the *Montagna friulana* lost well over half of its inhabitants (from 134,380 to 61,759), in the Julian Prealps even close to 80%.

These processes occurred before the spread out of the consciousness of the new economic model based on tertiary activities, above all tourism - then, when such model diffused, it was already too late, the valleys were already demographically vulnerable.

Tab. 1 – *Montagna friulana: population losses per year 1952-2021*

Period	Population losses % p.a.	Period	Population losses % p.a.
1952-61	1.05	1992-01	0.72
1962-71	2.29	2002-11	0.20
1972-81	1.09	2012-21	0.17
1982-91	0.97		

Source: Istat, 1951ff.; <http://www.demo.istat.it>; own calculations)

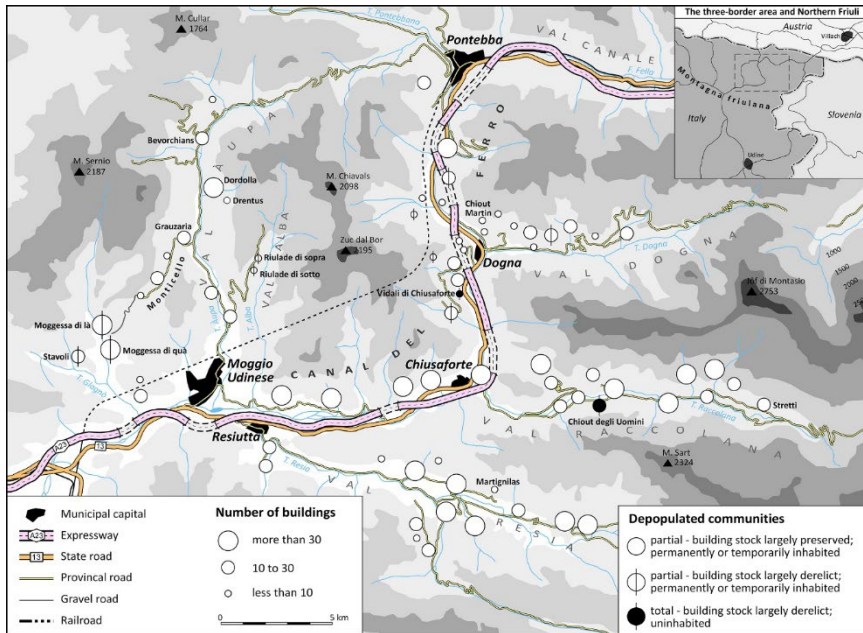
The fact that depopulation in the east of the Italian Alps started later and is progressing more slowly can be ascribed to the previously discussed unfavorable population-biological structures. On the other hand – in contrast to the western and central Italian Alps – there are no large conurbations such as Turin, Milan, Brescia or Verona, which are particularly relevant as source areas for immigration into neighboring mountain regions (Beismann, Čede, Steinicke, 2022). The proximity to a political border with Jugoslavia, not far from the Iron Curtain, also brought for decades economic and thus demographic disadvantages.

This not only accelerated the decay of the cultural landscape, but also led to the emergence of ghost villages and places threatened with desertion. Their concentration in northern Friuli was still unique in the Alps in 2005 (Čede, Steinicke, 2007). To this day, there are still numerous abandoned places; however, our research group could find only two real ghost towns (cf. fig. 2)³. This does not include the largest deserted space in the Alps in

³ Numerous abandoned settlements were visited more frequently during the pandemic.

the extreme west of the Montagna friulana, where the Vajont dam disaster in 1963 wiped out several villages (Steinicke, 1991, pp. 142-155).

Fig. 2 – *Depopulated settlements in the north-east of the Friulian Alps in 2022. While there were 18 ghost towns in the area 15 years ago, due to amenity migration there are now only two completely depopulated villages*



Source: Beismann, Čede, Steinicke (2022, p. 76)

Physical-geographical Particularities. – Without paying homage to a natural determinism, the search for the reasons for the traditional out-migration must not ignore the physical-geographical framework conditions, especially since these also represent superlatives in the Alpine region. The Montagna friulana is one of the highest precipitation areas in Europe. Annual average values of more than 2,500 mm are not uncommon, even in the valleys. In the east of the Julian Prealps they are around 3,300 mm, where in 1961 in Musi (627 m a.s.l.) 6,103 mm per year was measured, representing the Italian and Alpine-wide precipitation record (Valussi, 1971, pp. 123-129; OSMER, 2020). The immediate proximity to the Adriatic Sea, specifically the mild water of Upper Adriatic lagunas, and the damming high mountain wall explains this phenomenon. The associated

high degree of cloud cover also lowers the average temperatures considerably. As a result, small glaciers have survived to this day on the north side of Mt. Canin and the Montasio, the tongues of which reach down to around 1,850 m – a record in the Alps (Colucci and others, 2021; cf. fig. 3). Karstic processes formed a unique scenario of underground caves, with underground small glaciers and lakes. In the Carnic Prealps, south of the Friulian Dolomites, is one of Europe’s deepest speleological practicable vertical caves to be found (Sorgente del Gorgazzo; cf. Cucchi and others, 2018). The deep Cellina Canyon in the same area is not an Alpine superlative, but it is a special feature.

Fig. 3 – The lowest positioned glacier in the Alps north of Monte Canin (2,587 m) in the Julian Alps. This small glacier, which covered 2.37 km² in 1858 but has since shrunk to 0.38 km², nevertheless still reaches down to around 1,850 m. Despite global warming, the particularly high levels of precipitation in recent decades have even allowed it to grow slightly in length and volume from 2008 at least to 2020



Photograph: Federico Savoia (August 2021)

The low line of all vegetation boundaries, caused by the climate, contributes to the disadvantages of the Montagna friulana. This fact catches the eye even on a quick drive through the mountainous region of Friuli. Although they are at the same geographical latitude and at a similar height as the central region of South Tyrol or the Swiss Valais, intensive crops are largely absent on the valley floors due to the aforementioned thermal conditions. Commercial viticulture also does not occur in North Friuli

above 500 m. Still valid and easily traceable are the examples of other altitude limits of vegetation, enumerated by Gortani and Pittoni (1938, pp. 434-436), Gentili (1964), or Valussi (1971, pp. 121-123). Like the timber line, they run 300 m and sometimes up to 500 m below those in the Central Alps. This physical-geographical potential in no way favored the settlement process: only six of the 58 communities reach an altitude level above 1,000 m. Since the valley floors as well as the steeply sloping debris cones are not suitable for settlement, communities and utilized agricultural land are located in sheltered places a few meters above the valley floor or on what is left of terraces. Favorable locations are exceptions, and the expansion of agricultural land is therefore more impeded by nature than elsewhere. Overall, the cultural landscape in the Friulian mountains differs significantly from most Alpine valleys (Steinicke, 1991, pp. 56-60).

A further potential characteristic related to the position, is the fact the *Montagna friulana* is crossed by huge infrastructures connecting long range itineraries – highways, motorways, high speed trains, and pipelines –, which do not evidence particular benefits on the local territory.

Another natural feature of North Friuli is also related to the short distance between the high mountains and the sea. In contrast to the hydrographic systems of other Alpine areas, the spring and base of erosion of all Friulian rivers are situated very close together. The average gradient is accordingly high, which gives the torrents an exceptional impact. The valley floors – in Friulian language called “*Cjanâls*” – are thereby taken up by wide gravel areas, which are sometimes under water for several days during the heavy autumn rains. The Friulian valley floors are continually unsuitable for settlement and agricultural valorization. The bare gravel surfaces of the larger rivers extend far into the foothills of the mountains and are to some extent not cultivated to this day. Characterized by edaphic aridity and a specific natural botanic landscape, this scree-strewn area (the area of *magredi*), which is a striking feature of Friuli and is visible even from space, also represents a unique characteristic within Europe.

Conclusion. – As mentioned at the beginning, this study is a contribution to regional geography and thus to integrative geography, in which nature and societal aspects are brought together. In the form of a problem-centered synthesis, the aim was to suggest a new strategy for tourism marketing, using geographical particularities, unique features and

superlatives for proximity tourism. However, it was not the intention of this article to provide concrete measures for implementation of this type of tourism. There are marketing experts who can develop suitable concepts and models for this. The previous chapters are intended to show that it is possible to gain new insights and present innovative ideas for regional development of peripheral areas using the main method of applied regional geography, namely compilation. This requires not only a good knowledge of the country and its people, but also merging the results of analytical field research in the region concerned. Northern Friuli, the *Montagna friulana*, has offered itself as a suitable example.

There is hardly a region in the Alps where so many natural and cultural characteristics congregate in such a small area. However, this extraordinary diversity of the *Montagna friulana* is not expressed in any way in regional development: rather, the north of Friuli is one of the structurally weakest areas of the Alpine arc. The obvious explanation lies on the one hand in the fact that the variety of natural superlatives are not strikingly reflected in a spectacular landscape; on the contrary, it is seen as sometimes unattractive for tourists⁴. On the other hand, the tradition of exodus due to the departure of the younger, active part of the population has also impaired the area in qualitative terms, so that endogenous regional development has gained very little importance.

The official tourism promotion of northern Friuli hardly considers the geographical superlatives discussed above and continues to propagate the few winter sports and mountain holiday resorts in the Friulian Dolomites, in Carnian and Julian Alps - regardless of the in this respect more attractive neighboring regions⁵. In tourist destination development, however, unique selling points are considered essential for branding. As previously discussed, North Friuli offers a remarkable number of these. In addition, there is regional distinctiveness in cuisine and domestic trades (handworks like wooden furniture, clocks production, or bacon specialties, just to mention few of them) as well as models of New Farming and the Slow Food movement, such as those that have already been successfully implemented

⁴ As far as the *Montagna friulana* is concerned, apart from Sappada and the eastern Julian Alps international tourism brochures focus more on the landscapes of neighboring regions.

⁵ Considering that the images of Fusine lakes and of Lussari sanctuary are among the most diffused icons about the Eastern Alps, even when not signifying much in terms of tourism economic development.

in Val Aupa (Steinicke, 1991; Beismann, Čede, Steinicke, 2022) ⁶. The relevant branding and marketing, however, are inadequate⁷. Not only the multilingual villages and the ghost towns, but also the gravel-laden, bare and uninhabited valley floors, in addition to the established north Friulian tourist centers, could be valorized for tourism as unique features - as has already been done to some extent with the example of the *magredi*.

Likewise, the thermal disadvantage could be viewed not only negatively, but could also, in connection with the two lowest-lying small glaciers in the Alps, the northern part of the Canin and Montasio mountains, pronounce a striking regional distinctiveness.

A role model could be the neighboring upper Soča Valley in the Slovenian Julian Alps, where similar topographical and climatic conditions prevail. Since 2010, it has been possible to offer a wide range of outdoor sports (kayaking, climbing, canyoning, skydiving, etc.) and to build up a new tourism (<https://soca.valley.com>) through the interaction of unique scenic features (e.g. canyons), new tourist infrastructure and marketing. The peripheral valley, which for a long time formed a distinct economic problem area, thus developed into a tourism growth pole (Steinicke, Loeffler, Čede, 2012; Urbanc, Hribar, 2020; Connolly and others, 2021; Besednjak Valič, 2022).

Thus, it is conceivable that previously unnoticed tourist potential can also be exploited in other remote and economically weak Alpine areas. The work at hand should provide food for thought.

As the explanations on the exceptional area of the *montagna friulana* show, proximity tourism can also become a relevant factor in regional development for regions with lower “usual” tourism potential. However, the prerequisite for this is the valorization of the physio- and human geographical particularities also with regard to their accessibility due to shorter distances between the source and destination areas of the tourist flows. As a contribution to sustainability, proximity tourism therefore certainly has future potential, especially against the background of environmentally harmful long-distance travel. As for the *montagna friulana*, such a strategy will certainly not

⁶ The “Friulian earthquake tourism” that has made reconstruction *com’era* (as it was) in Venzone an attraction in recent decades could also be a model for this.

⁷ Although there are a sufficient number of hotels in northern Friuli – and not only in the larger towns and tourism centers.

initiate mass tourism, but in terms of qualitative and environmentally friendly tourism, the impetus for regional development resulting from the special geographical position is by no means unrealistic. In any extent, the postmodern “zeitgeist” would not contradict that.

REFERENCES

- ASCHAUER W., *Landeskunde als adressatenorientierte Form der Darstellung. Ein Plädoyer mit Teilen einer Landeskunde des Landesteils Schleswig*, Forschungen zur Deutschen Landeskunde, 249, Flensburg, Selbstverlag, 2001.
- BATTISTI C., *Il Trentino. Saggio di geografia fisica e di antropogeografia*, Trento, Zippel, 1898.
- BATTISTI C., *Guide to Trento*, Trento, Soc. Tip. Ed. Trentina, 1906.
- BÄTZING W., *Die Alpen. Geschichte und Zukunft einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft*, Darmstadt, wbg Theiss, 2018.
- BEISMANN M., ČEDE P., STEINICKE E., “Neue Pioniere in ostalpinen Peripherräumen. Die Wiederbelebung von Geisterdörfern und partiellen Wüstungen in Friaul”, *Geographica Helvetica*, 2022, 77, pp. 71-84.
- BESEDNJAK VALIČ T., “Becoming a part of regional innovation systems: a study of cultural and creative sectors of two Slovenian municipalities”, *Journal of Global Policy and Governance*, 2022, 11, 1.
- BIEGER T., BERITELLI P., *Management von Destinationen*, Aufl., München, Oldenbourg, 2013.
- BONETTI E., *Gli sviluppi dell’insediamento nel bacino del Fella con particolare riguardo all’area linguistica mista*, Università degli Studi di Trieste, 1960.
- ČEDE P., STEINICKE E., “Ghosttowns in den Ostalpen. Das Phänomen der Entvölkerung im friulanischen Berggebiet”, *Geographica Helvetica* 2007, 62, pp. 93-103.
- CASTIGLIONI B. AND OTHERS (eds.), *Il paesaggio tra conflittualità e integrazione. Materiali da un’esperienza formativa*, Padova, CLEUP, 2018.
- COLUCCI R.R. AND OTHERS, “Recent Increases in Winter Snowfall Provide Resilience to Very Small Glaciers in the Julian Alps, Europe”, *Atmosphere*, 2021,12, 2.
- CONNOLLY G. AND OTHERS, *Managing Tourism Expansion in the Soča Valley (Slovenia)*. *Tourism Cases*, s.l., CABI International, 2021.

- CUCCHI F. AND OTHERS, “Note idrogeologiche sulle sorgenti del Fiume Livenza”, in *Atti della Giornata Mondiale dell’Acqua “Acque Sotterranee: Risorsa Invisibile”*, Roma, 23 marzo 1998, pp. 51-60.
- GANS H.J., “Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1979, 2, 1, pp. 1-20.
- GENTILI J., *Il Friuli: I climi*, Udine, Camera di Commercio, Industria e Agricoltura, 1964.
- GORTANI M., PITTONI G., “Lo spopolamento montano nella montagna friulana”, in ISTITUTO DI ECONOMIA AGRARIA (INEA) (eds.), *Lo spopolamento montano in Italia*, Roma, IV Le Alpi Venete, 1938, pp. 395-463.
- HAM S., *Environmental Interpretation – A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*, Colorado (USA), Golden, 1992.
- HASENAUER L. AND OTHERS, “La «piccola Europa» sulle Alpi orientali sta per scomparire? La Valcanale (Friuli) nella tarda età moderna”, *Geotema Supplemento*, 2020, pp. 29-44.
- ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica), *Popolazione e movimento anagrafico dei comuni (Statistiche demografiche/Annuario demografico)*, Roma, 1951 segg. (<https://demo.istat.it/popres/index.php?anno=2021&lingua=ita>).
- JELENE I. AND OTHERS, “Nuovi montanari, nuove attività e nuove forme di transumanza: l’adattamento dei modelli tradizionali in Val Aupa, Friuli Venezia Giulia”, *Documenti geografici*, 2023, 3, pp. 345-374 (http://dx.doi.org/10.19246/DOCUGEO2281-7549/202303_16).
- JEURING J.H.G., DIAZ-SORIA I., “Introduction: Proximity and intraregional aspects of tourism”, *Tourism Geographies*, 2017, 19, 1, pp. 4-8.
- KÜHNE O., JENAL C., “Neopragmatische Regionale Geographien – eine Annäherung”, in KÜHNE O., SEDELMAYER T., JENAL C. (eds.), *Louisiana - mediengeographische Beiträge zu einer neopragmatischen Regionalen Geographie*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2021, pp. 13-23.
- KÜHNE O. AND OTHERS (eds.), *Handbuch Landschaft*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2024
- KÜSTER H., *Die Entdeckung der Landschaft. Einführung in eine neue Wissenschaft*, München, Beck, 2012.
- LANDRY R., BOURHIS R.Y., “Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study”, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 1997, 16, 1, pp. 23-49.
- LEBRUN A.M., CORBEL R., BOUCHET P., “Impacts of Covid-19 on travel intention for summer 2020: a trend in proximity tourism mediated by an attitude towards Covid-19”, *Serv Bus*, 2022, 16, pp. 469-501.

- LEHNES P., GLAWION R., “Landschaftsinterpretation – ein Ansatz zur Aufbereitung regionalgeographischer Erkenntnisse für den Tourismus”, *Freiburger Geographische Hefte*, 2000, 60, pp. 313-326.
- MECKELEIN W., BORCHERDT C. (eds.), *Tagungsberichte und wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen: Deutscher Geographentag Kiel*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1970.
- MINSHULL R., *Regional Geography. Theory and Practice*, New York, Imprint Routledge, 2017.
- MARINELLI, M., *Guida della Carnia*, Udine, Soc. Alpina Friulana, 1898.
- OSMER (Osservatorio Meteorologico Regionale), *Il clima del Friuli-Venezia Giulia*, Palmanova, 2020 (<https://www.osmer.fvg.it/pubblicazioni.php?ln=>).
- PAASI A., “Regional Geography”, in KOBAYASHI A. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2020 (https://www.academia.edu/41334596/Paasi_Anssi_2020_Regional_Geography?auto=citations&from=cover_page).
- PLAUTZ A.-M., HASENAUER L., JELEN I., ČEDE P., STEINICKE E., “Symbolic ethnicity, cultural and linguistic landscape: remnants of ‘Little Europe’ in the Valcanale (Northeast Italy)”, *National Identities*, 2021, 24, 2, pp. 121-143.
- RANTALA O. AND OTHERS, “Envisioning tourism and proximity after the Anthropocene”, *Sustainability*, 2020, 12, 10, pp. 3948-3964.
- SALMELA T. AND OTHERS, “Tourism proximity: A thematic literature review”, *Finnish Journal of Tourism Research*, 2021, 17, 1, pp. 46-63.
- SCHRAMM W., *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, Illinois (USA), Urbana, 1971.
- SPETHMANN H., *Dynamische Länderkunde*, Breslau, Hirt, 1928.
- STEINECKE A., HERNTREI M., *Destinationsmanagement*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart, UTB, 2017.
- STEINICKE E., *Friaul. Bevölkerung und Ethnizität*, Innsbruck, Selbstverlag, 1991.
- STEINICKE E., “Diseguaglianze demografiche nelle Alpi Europee – spopolamento e ripopolamento ad ovest e ad est”, in *Atti Forum Gran Sasso 28/30 settembre 2023*, 2024, 2, 6, pp. 807-818.
- STEINICKE E., LOEFFLER R., ČEDE P., “In-migration as a new process in demographic problem areas of the Alps. Ghost towns vs. amenity settlements in the alpine border area between Italy and Slovenia”, *Erdkunde*, 2012, 66, 4, pp. 329-344.
- STEINICKE E. AND OTHERS, “Slovenes in Italy: A fragmented Minority“, *European Countryside*, 2016, 1, pp. 49-66.

- STEINICKE E., JELEN I., ČEDE P., “Gefährdete und verschwundenen ethnolinguistische Minderheiten in der Alpen-Adria-Region. Das Beispiel der deutschen Sprachinseln und der istrorumänischen Sprachgruppe“, *Europa Ethnica*, 2023, 80, 1-2, pp. 2-12.
- TIESKENS K.F. AND OTHERS, “Characterizing European cultural landscapes: Accounting for structure, management intensity and value of agricultural and forest landscapes”, *Land Use Policy*, 2017, 62, pp. 29-39.
- URBANC M., HRIBAR M.Š., “Livek: A mountainous border area’s transformation from a ski paradise to a resilient community”, in MARTINEK G. (eds.), *Culture and Climate Resilience*, Basingstoke (UK), Macmillan Publishers, 2020, pp. 45-68.
- VALUSSI G., *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, 2a ed., Torino, Torinese, 1971.
- ZANINI L., *Friuli migrante*, Udine, ed. Doretta, 1964.

SITOGRAFIA

<https://soca.valley.com>

<https://www.uibk.ac.at/de/geographie/dca/publikationen>

I superlativi geografici come potenziale per il marketing turistico di prossimità? La posizione eccezionale della Montagna friulana nel contesto delle Alpi. – Seguendo un quadro teorico, questo studio vuole identificare e definire i superlativi geografici nelle Alpi friulane. L’obiettivo del lavoro è individuare caratteristiche geografiche uniche, da utilizzare in una politica di marketing del turismo di prossimità – materia studiata consuetamente in ambito di geografia regionale applicata. È il caso, in particolare per la Montagna friulana, di una posizione speciale nel contesto più vasto delle Alpi, che sembra scarsamente valorizzata, e anche poco conosciuta, così come per una serie di ulteriori caratteristiche paesaggistiche, culturali e geografiche in senso lato. A nostro parere, non esiste un’altra regione in cui tante caratteristiche naturali e culturali coincidono in un’area così limitata. Tuttavia, tale straordinaria diversità e ricchezza non si riflettono in un adeguato sviluppo regionale. L’articolo intende così ispirare gli esperti di marketing turistico di prossimità, e cerca quindi di dare un contributo alla teoria e alla prassi dello sviluppo delle aree periferiche.

Keywords. – Turismo di prossimità, Montagna friulana, Superlativi geografici, Geografia regionale applicata, Geografia integrativa

Università degli Studi di Trieste, Dipartimento di Scienze politiche e sociali
igor.jelen@dispes.units.it

Universität Graz, Institut für Geographie und Raumforschung
peter.cede@uni-graz.at

Universität Innsbruck, Institut für Geographie
ernst.steinicke@uibk.ac.at

Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije v Novi Gorici
erika.ursic@fuds.si