

FWF research project *Lives on the Move*
at the Department for Geography and Regional Research, U of Vienna invites to the
Seminar Day (22.09.2011)

**Sparsely populated areas: economic diversification, mobile labour, community
viability and demography –
A comparative perspective from Australia, Russia and Austria**

Considering the vast differences between the three countries in terms of size, population, historical settlement patterns, political organisation and economy on the one hand, it is striking to see similarities in topics being relevant in current discourses on planning policies and instruments, regional development strategies, changing economic sectors and diversification efforts as well as sustainable socio-economic viability of communities. As a common theme, the five presentations touch on the complex of topics such as job opportunities and changing requirements for professional qualification, vocational training, location of labour force and approaches to (labour) mobility, (domestic) migration and place attachment among people from and attracted by sparsely populated areas.

Convenor

Univ. Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann, vice rector for international relations and human resources at the U of Vienna, project leader of *Lives on the Move* & Gertrude Eilmsteiner-Saxinger, Ph. D. cand., *Lives on the Move*

Chair

Ramon Bauer, Ph.D. cand. at the U of Vienna, research scientist at the Vienna Institute for Demography (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Human Capital

Date/Place

Thursday, 22.9.2011, 10:00 – 15:30 // Seminarraum, NIG/5, Universtitätsstraße 7 / 1010 Vienna

Programm

- 10:00 Welcome and Introduction
- 10:30 **The challenges of recruitment and retention of labour in remote Australia**
Prof. Dr. Dean Carson, Flinders U, Rural Clinical School (AUS)
- 11.00 **A new generation of long-distance commute workers in the Russian circumpolar hydrocarbon industry**
Elisabeth Öfner, Ph. D cand., U of Vienna, scientific collaborator with *Lives on the Move* (A)
- 11:30 **Learning Regions in Austria. A programme for fostering sparsely populated areas.**
Mag. Klaus Thien, Austrian Institute for Adult Education, Vienna (A)
- 12.00 – 13:30 Lunch Break
- 13:30 **Understanding the challenges for economic diversification in resource dependent peripheries: the prospects for tourism as a *post-staples* industry in Australia**
Dr. Doris Schmallegger, U of South Australia/Whyalla (AUS)
- 14.00 **The EU project *Demochange* in the Alps and the social festival *Do something and things will change*: Two approaches coping with demographic change and community viability in Salzburg, Austria**
Univ. Prof. Dr. Andreas Koch, Dep. for Geography and Geology, U of Salzburg (A)
- 14:30 ***Diversify or die*: community viability in mono-industrial regions of the Russian Far North – the case study Vorkuta**
Elena Nuikina, Ph. D cand., U of Vienna, scientific collaborator with *Lives on the Move*
- 15:00 **Final discussion**

Circulation of this announcement is welcome! This is an open seminar (no registration required). The event is supported by the Department for Geography and Regional Research and the Faculty for Earth Science, Geography and Astronomy. The Research Project *Lives on the Move* is funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): [P 22066-G17]
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Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

The Challenges of recruitment and retention of labour in remote Australia

Prof. Dr. Dean Carson, Flinders U, Rural Clinical School (AUS)

The recruitment and retention of particularly skilled labour in sparsely populated areas is an age old challenge. In Australia, recent changes in economic activity, demographic characteristics of the labour force, tax laws, technology, modes of employment, immigration regulations, and social policy have all impacted on how labour relates to the sparsely populated areas. This presentation looks at both the challenges and opportunities that such changes have brought about for remote regions trying to maintain or grow their populations. I will look at escalator migration, LDC workers, and the process of converting people from short term to long term residents.

The EU project *Demochange* in the Alps and the social festival *Do something and things will change*: Two approaches coping with demographic change and community viability in Salzburg, Austria

Univ. Prof. Dr. Andreas Koch, Dep. for Geography and Geology, U of Salzburg (A)

Demographic changes are challenging rural areas in various ways – in the Alpine space challenges are coined by touristic attractiveness on one hand and a lack of job diversity and mobility constraints on the other. While the Demochange project refers to spatial planning and regional development as a more formal approach when coping with regional demographic problems, the social festival is an explicit bottom-up strategy to enhance social-spatial identity and responsibility of affected communities. I will describe the two approaches, their benefits and problems, and results achieved so far.

***Diversify or die*: community viability in mono-industrial regions of the Russian Far North – the case study Vorkuta**

Elena Nuikina, Ph. D cand., U of Vienna, scientific collaborator with *Lives on the Move* (A)

The post-soviet period of economic transformation and the recent economic crisis has had destructive impact on mono-industrial cities of the Russian North. Being established under the soviet system of state planning, these communities have faced with the necessity of modernization. Official position of the Russian government towards mono-industrial settlements considers two options aimed community viability. Those cities specified by the state as “perspective” have been stimulated to diversify their economies. On the other hand, “depressive” cities were induced towards gradual shrinkage both in terms of population and space. This paper intends to look beyond two-sided approach “diversify or die” taken by the federal government in the case of the coal-mining town Vorkuta in the Komi Republic.

A new generation of long-distance commute workers in the Russian circumpolar hydrocarbon industry

Elisabeth Öfner, Ph. D cand., U of Vienna, scientific collaborator with *Lives on the Move* (A)

The Russian circumpolar regions are considered to be the back bone of the oil and gas industry. The number of local workforce is not sufficient to meet the increasing demand of high qualified labour. Therefore, hundred thousands of long-distance commuters from all over Russia are travelling back and forth; up to several thousands of kilometers each month. This paper presents issues of motivation for or objection to make a livelihood as a commuter among students from the Ufa State Petroleum Technical University (research partner institution in *Lives on the Move*). This is contextualized with their ideas, images and spatial constructions of the “remote” Far North.

Understanding the challenges for economic diversification in resource dependent peripheries: the prospects for tourism as a ‘post-staples’ industry in Australia

Dr. Doris Schmallegger, U of South Australia/Whyalla (AUS)

This presentation will illustrate how institutional lock-in inherited from a long-term dependence on natural resource (or staples) export can stifle economic diversification in traditional resource peripheries. A case study of tourism development in remote South Australia will be presented to explain why communities in resource peripheries lack the capacities to transition from extractive staples to attractive *post-staples* industries. The presentation concludes that in-migrants and external human capital are critical to the success of post-staples industries in peripheral areas.

***Learning Regions in Austria*. A programme for fostering sparsely populated areas**

Mag. Klaus Thien, Head of the Austrian Institute for Adult Education, Vienna (A)

Learning Regions are instruments aimed at encouraging lifelong learning and establishing knowledge management in rural areas. In a learning region, relevant stakeholders in the region build a network that focuses on learning. The network develops a strategy for offering attractive learning opportunities in line with regional needs and demands. It defines main areas of activity and draws up educational projects. The objective is to increase the education and training opportunities of rural populations and enhance their interest in further education and training. Austria’s learning regions are supported on the basis of the European Union Rural Development programmes. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Environment is in charge of implementation. At present (2011), approximately 35 regions in Austria take part in the Learning Regions programme.