



International Workshop
on Agritourism

Sustainable alpine tourism, where 'mountaineering villages' meet the farm

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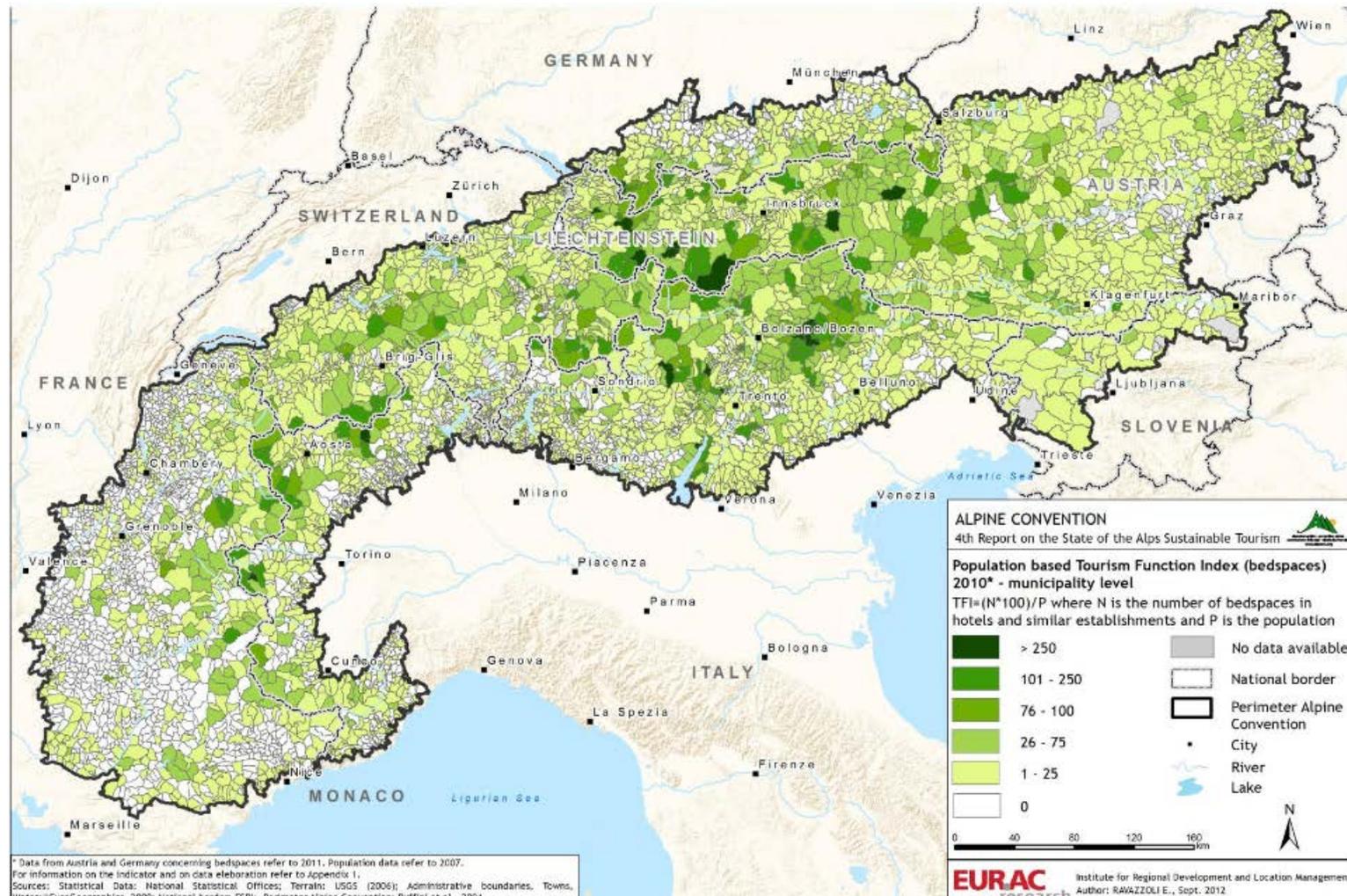
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Sustainable mountain tourism

- Challenges of strong concentration of tourism trends on mountain regions (85% of national tourism in AT), leading to engagement of CIPRA (1952), the agreement on the Alpine Convention (1991), with other mountain ranges following the approach (e.g. Carpathian Convention, Pyrenees, Appenine, ICIMOD, Caucasus; Andean initiative)
- Considerable diversity of tourism intensity across Austrian mountain areas
 - ➔ Mountain support program (since early 1980s, with focus on most remote/less developed tourist areas in Austria)
- **Dichotomy of development trends:** strong concentration in few „hotspots“ (threat of overtourism) and various approaches of „slow trends“.



Population based Tourism Function Index (overnight stays) 2010 (tourism intensity)



Importance of agritourism (farm-accomodation) in Austria

categorie	Number of farms in Austria				
	1999	2010	2013	2016	2020
Farm holdings total	217.508	173.317	166.317	162.317	154.953
Holdings with agri-accomodation	13.236	10.293	10.473	9.103	8.397
In %	6,1	5,9	6,3	5,6	5,4

Source: Agricultural Survey/Statistics Austria

- 60 % of holdings with farm-accomodation are full-time farmer, mostly situated in the mountain area (82%), more than 60% are in three provinces (Tyrol, Salzburg, Styria)



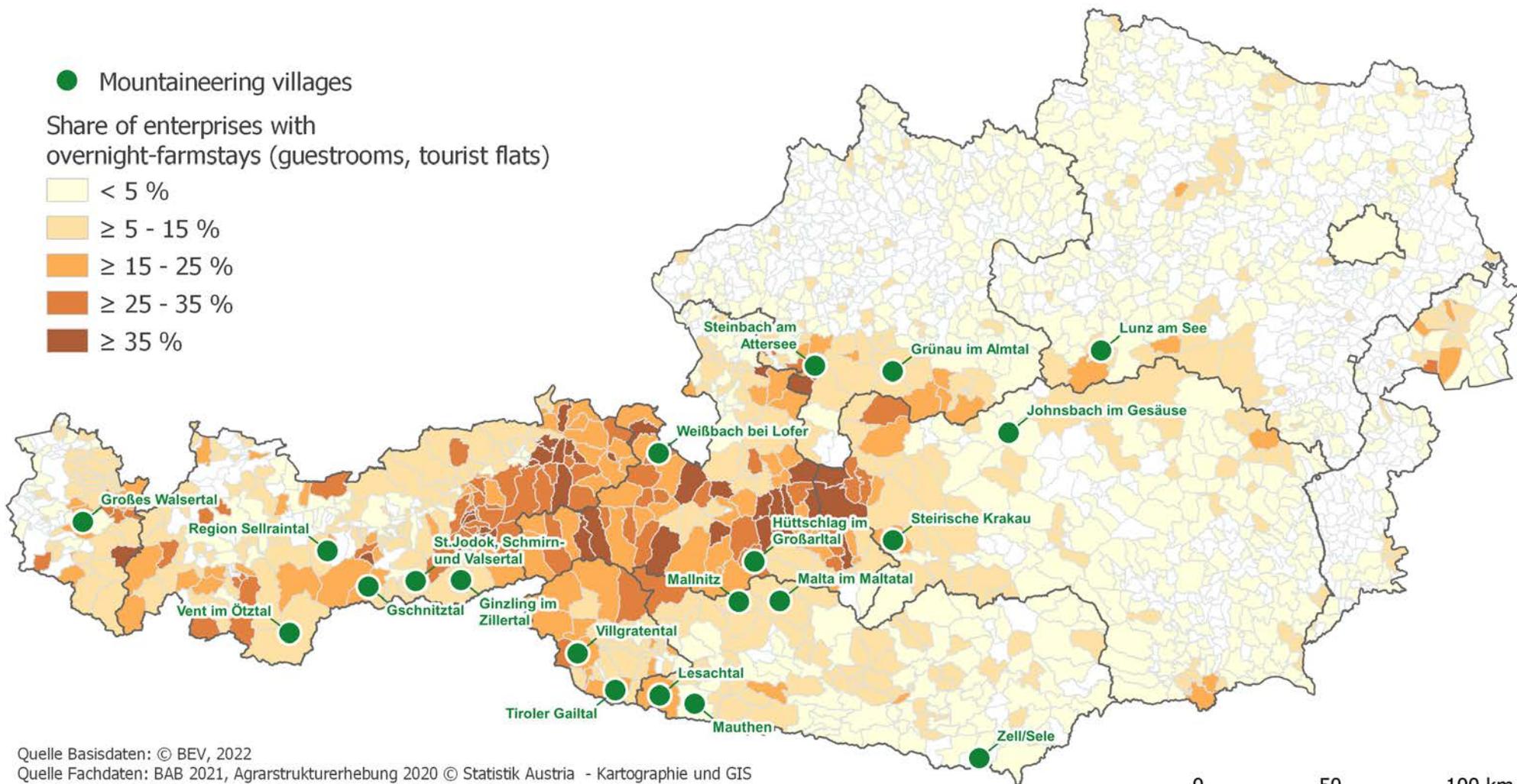
© Farm holiday

Importance of agritourism (farm-accomodation) in Austria including Mountaineering villages

- Agritourism is a relevant sub-sector of tourism in Austria – esp. in regions with low tourism intensity, positive long-term development
- Agritourism enterprises benefit equally from the unspoiled, natural environment, but also from the sectoral tourism infrastructure in the region (interaction, spill-over)
- Analyses show that guest accomodation is responsible for around one third of income and secures the existence of one third of the holdings (Joanneum Research 2021)
- Farm-accomodation was more resilient during COVID-19 than other branches of tourism sector
- Agritourism in mountaineering villages: 427 enterprises with 3.046 guest beds(2018), corresponding to 15% of touristic enterprises and 7% of guest beds are located in the villages

Location of Mountaineering villages (A) and share of A&F Enterprises with agri-accommodation (2020)

Federal Institute of Agricultural Economics, Rural and Mountain Research



Quelle Basisdaten: © BEV, 2022

Quelle Fachdaten: BAB 2021, Agrarstrukturerhebung 2020 © Statistik Austria - Kartographie und GIS

Layout & Design der Basiskarte: LFRZ GmbH, 2020

Datenauswertung & Design der Fachdaten: BAB, 2022

0 50 100 km

Origin and objectives

- Elaborated on initiative of Austrian Alpine Club (OeAV/Abt. Raumplanung), 16 founding villages/small regions (2008)
- Main targets: Realization and support of sustainable, ecological tourism offer – oriented at specificity of mountaineering community
- Contribute to development of economically weak mountain municipalities in remote location
- Implementing project of Alpine Convention (according protocols of tourism, spatial planning, transport etc.)
- Extension of initiative to other Alpine countries, beyond Austria (D, CH, I, SLO)
36 villages (2022) of which 22 in Austria



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„To provide an alternative to technologically advanced tourism, ..., avoids the threatening growth constraint of touristic infrastructure, ... an example to agree on limits for development, ... instrument to preserve at a large-scale, close-to-nature spaces as a supplement to intensively used economic and tourism regions“
(Haßlacher 2013; translated by authors)

Basic criteria and implementation

- Elaboration process (first selection of potential villages, local engagement), new applications
- Criteria for approving 'Mountaineering villages':

Exclusion criteria

(lack of tourism infrastructure, little mountain specificities, lack of village character, high impact from (winter sports) facilities);

Mandatory criteria

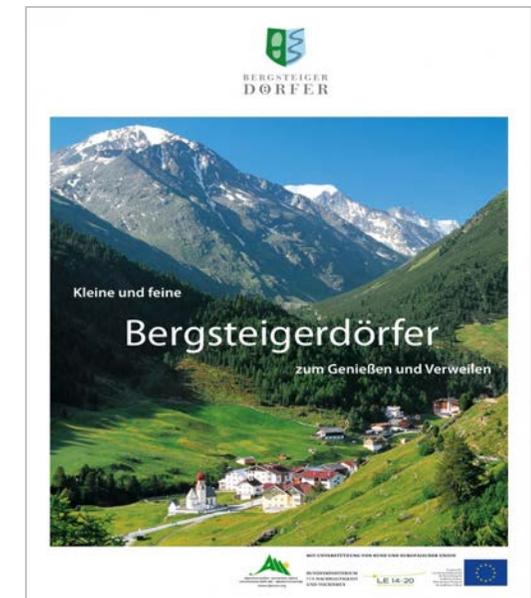
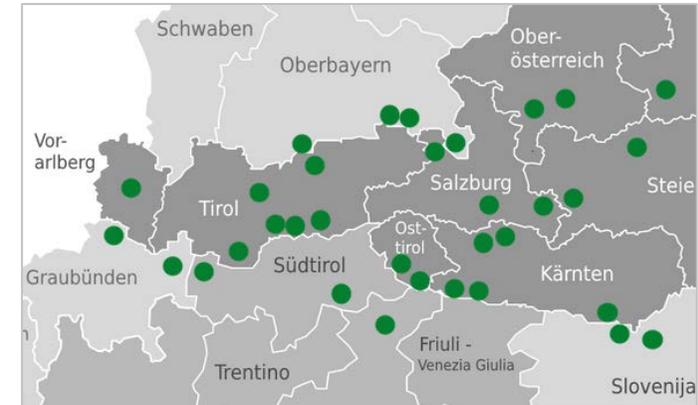
(tourism quality, Alpine competence, quality of appearance of locality, landscape quality, mobility quality, cooperation quality);

Target criteria

(tourist quality, cultural and regional specific features, Alpine competence re. support information, landscape quality re. relevant service offer)

- Supported by OeAV marketing platform
(website: <https://eng.bergsteigerdoerfer.org>, printed products, members of OeAV)
- Cooperation with partner units:
networking with municipalities, tourism boards, partner enterprises, administration units of protected areas
- Some support through Rural Development Program
(implementation in initial phase)

„Fit for municipalities which were not included in intensive winter sports, and which are not eager to be included. An antithesis to gigantism and anonymity in mainstream tourism“ (Haßlacher 2008, translated by authors)



Challenges and expectations

- Establishing the label 'mountaineering villages', to raise **awareness**, unique selling proposition (USP), and destination marketing
- **Stabilization** and (slight) increase of overnight stays and visits to villages, reduce seasonality dependency
- Improvement of partner enterprises in **quality of offer**
- Achieve enhanced value-added (e.g. for agritourism units)
- Utilizing existing infrastructure to secure "living villages" and achieve sustainable local development
- Realize **alternative transport** organization and routing (enhance accessibility and reduce negative ecological effects)
- Common promotion design (platform, coordinate offer and provision of packages)



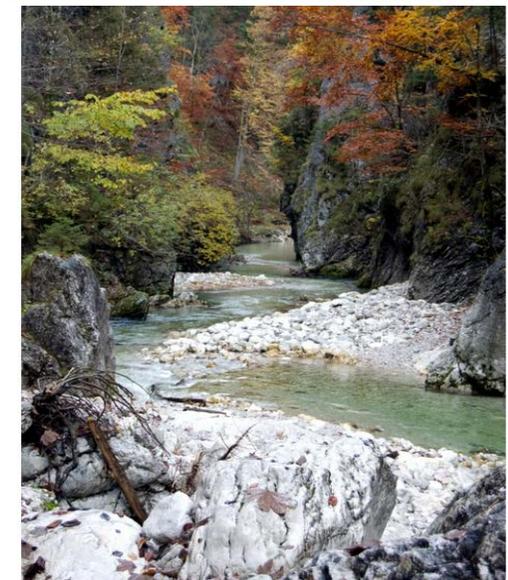
Mountain tours, view on the Saldurseen lakes
(Mountaineering Village Matsch South-Tirol) © Edwin
Heinisch



Climbing (Mountaineering Village Weißbach) ©
Christina Schwann

Performance and assessment

- Heterogeneity of villages, and diverse awareness level of label „Mountaineering Villages“
- Some contribution to local and regional development
- Tourism trends since 2008: for 2/3 of villages slightly positive or stable (1.6 mio overnight stays)
- Typical pathways focus on „**soft tourism**“, as part of strategies for protection areas in mountains, in contrast to tourism „hotspots“, no big investments and local opposition to infrastructure projects (transport, energy, big tourism investments)
- **Exclusionary strategy** for niche tourism development of high-quality, preserving characteristics of „pristine“ nature and mountaineering appeal (two villages – Kals/Großglockner and Reichenau/Rax had to quit the initiative)



Wildnisgebiet Dürrenstein © TVB Lunz am See

Findings in three case studies

- Villages: Johnsbach (Stmk), St.Jodok/Schmirn/Vals (T), Mauthen (Ktn)
- qualitative interviews with stakeholders und local experts ($\Sigma 23$ interviews):
involving main local promoters, tourism board, local administration, partner enterprises, local sections of Alpine Club, managers of protection areas, and top-down guidance by AAC
- Performance of implementation dependent on commitment of these actors, institutions and networking
- Confirming niche product characteristic, target orientation (e.g. mountaineering, family tourism)
- Strong contrast to “overtourism” in some neighbouring mountain contexts



Mauthner Alm mit Mooskofel (2.359 m) © Sepp Lederer



Der Bergsteigerfriedhof © Roland Kals

Conclusions

- Effects of agritourism: **stabilizing farm holdings**, preservation of cultivated landscape, increased local added value
- Initiative itself **dominated by tourism** strategies (despite reference to local development objectives)
- Limited **involvement of local** population, farm structures, recognition of resources
- Label only partially contributing to awareness and tourism performance: potential to improve **professional** organization of label implementation
- Further potential: close cooperation with different types of protection areas (according to geographical specificities), enhance **credibility** (vs flexibility) of criteria, increase inter-municipal **cooperation** and nurture creation of adapted strategies and **innovative ideas**



Helgas Alm, Vals © Werner Kräutler



Schule der Alm, Vals © Werner Kräutler



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Thank you for your
attention