



Internet Based Apprenticeship, a New Paradigm for Rural Revitalization

L.S.,

A worldwide phenomenon of young people being pressured to resettle from the countryside to cities has been emerging for quite some time. Due to imbalance between natality and mortality rates, stagnation or decline of agricultural employment and in the absence of other economical alternatives, rural sustainability is lacking. By targeting upward social mobility, migrants arriving from the countryside to the [city](#) try to find a way to escape rural poverty. Ultimately, this results in overpopulation of cities and rapidly shrinking and ageing countryside communities.

Following their relocation, many migrants succeed to improve their initial living standards. However, despite this, a majority still lives under dehumanizing conditions. Experience shows that only 50% fit the job availability and skills requirements of the urban labor market. This means that, unless welfare is available, the other 50% is forced to return to their native villages.

Although most predictions for urban growth do not expect reduction in migration, an alternative to “compulsory” resettling is available. Refival believes that, thanks to a growing number of Internet based tasks on the labor market, jobs that can be executed independently of a specific location are progressively becoming a feasible option. A worldwide fundamental paradigm shift has been rapidly taking place.

Furthermore, Refival assumes that – in case of having proper economic opportunities – many people would prefer the “calm space” benefits of living in the countryside to coping with the overcrowded and rough conditions of megacity outskirts. This implies that concentrating Internet based jobs in rural areas could reduce or eliminate rural-to-city migration and offer people an additional life-style alternative.

Within Europe, one single Internet-based job resettled from city to countryside can on average generate economic sustainability for an estimate of four people (one direct job, one indirect job and two supported inactive persons). With a current labor market of 150 million service industry positions, every percent relocated to the countryside represents 1.5 million jobs. Hence, there is a huge potential to economically revitalize rural areas and improve the living conditions of the 100 million European citizens currently inhabiting them.

Relocating “urban jobs” neither implies entirely stopping migration nor isolating people. It means creating a better structured and less disruptive alternative, being “migration on demand”, through providing “education on demand” and “work experience on demand”. As a result of participating in a planned and gradual “rural to urban” career path based on Internet, potential rural migrants will be locally incubated for more specialized urban labor.

From an urban perspective, more gradual and better structured migration equally makes sense. Since rural living costs are significantly lower, preparing people for the specialized urban labor market requirements is more cost-effective in a rural than in an urban setting. As a policy instrument, it can therefore be used both inside the EU to integrate refugees or unemployed (financed out of the existing welfare budgets), as well as a way to regulate economic migration pressure from outside the EU (financed out of development aid budgets).

The main bottleneck is the fact that countryside areas are less organized and have little political voice. Therefore, policy wise, national or international empowerment is required to achieve the proposed rural-urban balance. The current view sees rural living as marginalized, backward and primitive. This attitude needs to change to one where both countryside and city lifestyles, although fundamentally different, are seen as equally valuable and feasible alternatives.

“Internet based apprenticeship” – as the above approach proposes – is part of Refival’s [“inclusion sourcing”](#) strategy which focuses on active inclusion of deprived areas and/or disadvantaged groups of people such as refugees or unemployed. In order to help people to successfully connect to the labor market and stimulate their social integration, it deploys a mixture of Internet based working and learning facilities.

I need your support! If you know organizations to which my approach could be of interest, especially if you are aware of companies that could be willing to outsource Internet based tasks to refugees in a pilot project, I would be very interested in getting in touch with them.

Kind Regards,

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Further Documentation