Digitalization, Rural Development and ‘Localness’

*MiaEngiadina in Grisons Media*

Dr Thierry Amrein

Seminar Paper

What is new in the Swiss mountains? From territorialized communities to delocalized digital community.

Rebekka Flotron
Keltenstrasse 84
3018 Bern
rebekka.flotron@gmail.com
14-101-562

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Introduction

In the recent decades, digitalization\(^1\) has started to characterize almost all aspects of life. In this context, access to digital technology has become a matter of equal rights. Strijker and Bosworth (2015) write that “in order to have equal opportunities for every person, household, and firm, everyone should be connected to high speed internet” (p. 25). However, this has not been achieved: there still exists a “spatial digital divide” between “well-served, [...] urban areas and the underserved, [...] rural areas” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 2).

In Switzerland, rural areas, and in particular, mountain regions are likewise affected by this “digital divide” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2015, p. 2). This divide can result, as economists and researchers have claimed, in these rural areas to become less and less ‘developed\(^2\)’ in comparison to urban areas in Switzerland. In this context, various federal institutions, economiesuisse (2017) and other political and economic institutions promote digitalization, i.e. the establishment of fast internet networks (economiesuisse, 2017; BAKOM, 2018), or education in the field of digitalization (BAKOM, 2018) in all regions of Switzerland. This allows the establishment and maintenance of successful, innovative and stable Swiss economies and as such, it “enable[s] equal opportunities” to all areas, households and residents of Switzerland (BAKOM, 2018, p. 9; Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 25).

It is these discourses that motivated Jon Erni, a then CEO of Microsoft Switzerland, and Not Carl, a former politician from the Engadine, to initiate miaEngiadina, a digitalization initiative for the Grisons’ Lower Engadine. There exist overall efforts from Swiss federal institutions to “utilize digital technologies to connect Swiss Alpine communities in the periphery\(^3\) to urban centres” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 2). However, miaEngiadina is a local initiative and is as such, particularly interesting to research. In concrete terms, miaEngiadina aims to “advance digital development through fibreglass implementation and related offerings such as [...] co-working spaces known as mountain hubs” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, miaEngiadina is involved in the fields of education and healthcare and intends to initiate digitalization in these areas as well.

Overall, it seems that most federal institutions, Swiss economic institutions, politicians and economists concur that digitalization is beneficial for Switzerland overall, but in

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\(^1\) In the context of this work, digitalization is understood to mean “the digital conversion and representation or implementation of information and communication or the digital modification of instruments, devices and vehicles” (Bendel, 2018) – the conversion of “analogue technologies [...] into digital formats” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 2).

\(^2\) In the context of this work, ‘developed’ is understood to mean ‘economically advanced’ (lexico.com).

\(^3\) Bürgin & Mayer (2019) understand ‘peripheral regions’ to be regions “outside the main metropolitan growth area” (Mayer & Baumgartner, in Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 2).
particular, for rural areas as it is presumed that without digitalization, rural areas run the risk to fall further behind in terms of economic development (economiesuisse, 2017). However, because it is central and urban actors, for instance economiesuisse (2017) or the Federal Office for Communication (BAKOM), who construct these discourses, it is relevant to also understand the discourses that are constructed in the peripheral and rural contexts about digitalization. In this context, because miaEngiadina is considered to be a local digitalization initiative, i.e. an initiative from and for the peripheral and rural context, it is the aim of this work to understand the local discursive construction of digitalization, as it relates to rural economic development. To achieve this, a number of media articles about miaEngiadina from local Grisons newspapers are examined. The research question (RQ) below assists this examination:

**RQ:** How is the notion of digitalization constructed in relation to rural development in the selected articles on miaEngiadina?

**Literature Review**

**Digital Connectivity and Economic Development in Rural Areas**

In the recent decades, as introduced above, digitalization has become a buzzword\(^4\) in political, economic and social discourses. In the context of rural economies, digitalization includes, for the most part, fibreglass implementation, and overall, the provision of access to fast internet. In this context, it is in particular the fact that “[r]ural communities have been struggling to keep up with developments in digital connectivity” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 2) which has attracted the attention of researchers. In this context, researchers relate this struggle to the “market for telecommunications” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 10). The establishment of communication networks is more expensive in rural areas, where “connections over long distances, [...] with low population density” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 10) are needed. In the recent decade, however, it has indeed become a bit more profitable to invest in communication network in rural areas. It is nevertheless the case that “urban areas offer still higher returns on investment” (Grubesic & Murray, in Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 11) and this, of course, still influences the market decisions of telecommunication companies (Malecki, 2003; Grubesic & Murray, 2004). Digital connectivity is now considered to be “just as important as other utilities, such as gas, water, and electricity” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 11). This importance of digitalization in the current economic climate has been confirmed

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\(^4\) In the context of this present work, ‘buzzword’ is understood to mean “a word [...] that is fashionable at a particular time or in a particular context” (lexico.com).
in various researches. Gallardo and Scammahorn (2011) and Ford and Koutsy (2005) found for instance, that there is a link between a better provision of digital connectivity, increased entrepreneurial activity, and overall a more stable local economy. Digital technology allows all businesses to connect to central, often more urban areas, which then, can increase their opportunities for profit. In this context, it is of course relevant to discuss whether rural areas indeed benefit from such connections to urban areas (Bosworth & Venhorst, 2017) because other research found that digital development in rural and mountain areas can result in new and innovative businesses to take business and workers from more traditional businesses because these new business owners, who often come from urban areas in search for a better, healthier and close-to-nature life, know more about the efficient use of new digital technologies (Malecki, 2003; Cumming & Johan, 2009). In this context, it is crucial that all business owners, but also individuals, are not only provided with mere access to digital technologies, but likewise have access to information that teaches them about digital technologies (Malecki, 2003; Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 19). It can be assumed that for this reason, miaEngiadina made digital education one of their main aims, both the digital education of children, as well as of adults. Without an education in this area, the mere provision of digital technology cannot lead to economic development and in fact, it can even lead to a further exclusion and marginalization of rural and mountain areas (Malecki, 2003). In this context, however, it is likewise relevant to mention that some individuals in rural, and of course also in urban areas, do not want to use digital technology because “having access to digital connections does not imply that people will use them” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 8). Overall, it can be summarized from the research that “digital infrastructure is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for economic development” (Tranos, 2012, p. 332, emphasis added). Thus, because it is indeed a “necessary [...] development” (Tranos, 2012, p. 332), researchers forecast that “in the end it could prove necessary for governments to intervene in order to achieve universal access” (Holt & Galligan, in Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 11).

And indeed, there now exist a significant number of governmental policies that aim to decrease “regional disparities” (Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 16) through the implementation of digitalization. In this context, it has been found, however, that policies at the national level are not sufficient to ensure that digital inequalities between rural and urban areas are minimized. Rather, it is imperative that such policies also exist at the local, the municipal level (Simpson et al. 2004). Otherwise, sustainable economic development cannot be ensured. It has even been found in various instances that state interventions, on the basis of national policies, resulted in resistance from the affected rural areas because in these areas, state
interventions are often not well-accepted, at least at the start (Kissling-Näf et al. 2001) and in fact, some rural areas enforce deliberate dissociation from urban areas, at least in terms of policies, to ensure that urban intervention does not occur (Malecki, 2003; Bosworth & Venhorst, 2018).

However, it is likewise relevant to note that digital connectivity, in terms of broadband access, is not the sole aspect of digitalization that is promoted in policies and also not the sole aspect of digitalization that is relevant in the context of rural development. As a response to a flexibilization of traditional work structures, co-working spaces have become somewhat of a trend in mountain areas. Co-working spaces are assumed to provide a “supportive and a productive business climate, and also a physical environment where creativity and innovation can flourish” (Fuzi, 2015, p. 462) for innovative business owners whose work is not bound to time and space. Moreover, it is often argued that co-working spaces are ideal because it allows business owners to share knowledge, collaborate and network with other business owners (Fuzi, 2015, p. 462). As such, these co-working spaces can, and are hoped to contribute to the creation of new business models in rural areas (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 16). However, it has also been found that in a lot of cases, initiators or politicians expect economic development to occur simply by making co-working spaces available (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 16). Fuzi (2015) in contrast, found that on the one hand, “simple co-location of members [in the co-working space] is not sufficient to facilitate interaction” (p. 463). Co-working spaces need “community facilitators” to “stimulate collaboration” between the co-workers (Fuzi, 2015, p. 463; Bouncken et al. 2018). Likewise, as Fuzi (2015) showcases, in “weaker entrepreneurial environment”, i.e. in environments where there is a notable lack of economic innovation, co-working spaces are less successful and development-inducing as in stronger entrepreneurial environments (Fuzi, 2015, p. 463). This of course, raises the question of whether it is sensible to establish co-working spaces to induce the strengthening of a weak entrepreneurial environment.

This concludes some of the aspects that are discussed in academic research in relation to digitalization and rural development. To summarize, there seems to be a consensus in research that a digital divide between urban and rural areas can “result in a digital rural penalty that can lead to negative consequences for the economic competitiveness of businesses in rural regions” (Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 8). Thus, the obvious conclusion is to digitalize these areas. MiaEngiadina is an effort to realize this conclusion and an examination of this realization therefore seems to be a relevant contribution to the literature that exists in this context.
**Data and Method**

The data that is examined in this work derives from an article search on *Factiva*, a tool that allows researchers to find newspaper articles from all over the world. *Factiva* was chosen due to its wide reach - it contains 35,000 news sources from 200 countries in 26 languages. A ‘free text search’ which included the words “miaEngiadina” and “Digitalisierung” was conducted. The search was limited to include local newspapers from Grisons. In this context, *Factiva* revealed articles from the two Grisons newspaper *Bündner Tagblatt* and *Die Südostschweiz*. Other limitations were not applied.

The search resulted in 58 articles. These articles were published between 1st January 2014 and 31 December 2019. However, a number of these articles had to be eliminated for various reasons. First, 7 articles had to be excluded from the data because of their status as duplicates. Second, all short articles which served to summarize “news” about miaEngiadina, i.e. articles about press releases or statements, were likewise excluded from the data set as it was determined that such short articles do not indicate much about the manner in which miaEngiadina is constructed in the media. Out of the articles that remained, all articles that did not focus first and foremost on miaEngiadina were then likewise excluded so as to make the dataset a bit more lucid. This resulted in 19 articles from two different media outlets: *Bündner Tagblatt* and *Die Südostschweiz*. It is relevant to note, however, that it is one author, Fadrina Hofmann, who wrote most of the articles about miaEngiadina.

The articles are examined on the basis of a discourse-analytical method. This method allows researchers to structure manifest and latent contents. The ultimate aim of such a method is to establish the common discourses that are used to address, and construct certain issues, social structures, or institutions. This method seems the most sensible in the context of this work, as the main aim of it is to discuss the discourses that are used in a number of Swiss media outlets when miaEngiadina is referenced, to construct “digitalization” in relation to “rural development”.

**Findings**

**Fibreglass Implementation**

The development of the fibreglass in the Engadine is one of, if not the main aim of miaEngiadina. Fadrina Hofmann (2018a) writes in the article “MiaEngiadina on track for success” that the fibreglass network is the “backbone of the project” and is the first concrete manifestation of miaEngiadina’s plan to transform the Engadine into a “first third place– a
preferred retreat, inspiration and networking location in Switzerland” (Hofmann, 2018a; Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 13). In this context, the establishment of the fibreglass network, and in fact, miaEngiadina overall, is considered to be as monumental as the construction of the Rhaetian railway (Carl, in Hofmann, 2018a) because it is, as cited above, the “backbone” that allows that “digitalization [becomes] the engine of the future for the Engadine” (Hofmann, 2018a). Moreover, “it [the fibreglass network] breaks down the borders that are unavoidably set by the mountain [in the Engadine]” (Erni, in Hofmann, 2018a). Later in 2018, Hofmann (2018b) followed up on this with the article “miaEngiadina conquers municipality after municipality”. In this article, she writes about the unanimous vote in Zuoz to invest 600’000 Swiss francs into the expansion of its fibreglass network. In this context, Hofmann (2018b) cites Andrea Gilli, the mayor of Zuoz, who understands access to the fibreglass network as comparable in its importance, to water and electricity supply. Gilli can therefore be assumed to concur with Not Carl (cited in Hofmann 2018a) about the “monumental” character of the fibreglass network of miaEngiadina. Likewise, the fact that the investment of 600’000 Swiss francs into the fibreglass network was accepted with one accord in Zuoz (Hofmann, 2018b) indicates that the majority of the local population agrees with this view as well. Thus, the collaboration with miaEngiadina is, as Gilli further states, “vitally important” (Hofmann, 2018b) for the village.

In a later article, Hofmann (2019e) reports that miaEngiadina’s fibreglass network not only expand to villages and towns in the Lower Engadine, i.e. the above-mentioned Zuoz, but also to towns outside of their initial catchment area. In this context, the article reports that miaEngiadina collaborates with the power stations from St. Moritz and Davos. The representatives of the two power stations argue that miaEngiadina offers alternative access to a fibreglass network which in turn, encourages competition in this area. Before miaEngiadina, the article states, Swisscom did not take serious measures to provide broadband access to marginal areas which means that “without miaEngiadina, the Engadine population would have waited a long time for broadband access” (Carl, in Hofmann, 2019e). An expansion of the network, likewise allows miaEngiadina to lower costs for their customers, which improves their economic position vis-à-vis the giant Swisscom (Hablützel, 2017; Hofmann, 2019e). However, miaEngiadina is, at the moment, nevertheless confronted with efforts of Swisscom to strengthen their presence in the Engadine: Swisscom scheduled to build a number of 5G antennas in the Lower Engadine (Erni, in Hofmann, 2019f). However, because miaEngiadina is a local project, which is likewise well-accepted by the local population, and Swisscom is not, as the article stresses, Jon Erni, as he is cited in the article, does not understand these
efforts as a danger for miaEngiadina’s success as the main internet provider in the area. Rather, he understands it as an additional opportunity because the “development to 5G will take place worldwide” (Erni, in Hofmann, 2019f) and as such, it is essential that the Lower Engadine keeps up (Erni, in Hofmann, 2019f). Overall, the article can be conceded to represent a more critical view toward Swisscom and its efforts in the Engadine, which is illustrated in its emphasis on negative local attitudes toward Swisscom. However, as the last statement of Jon Erni illustrates, miaEngiadina does not share this view to the same extent because Erni and his team, as is discussed in the above-mentioned articles, understand that economic competition in this context, can be beneficial for both the providers, i.e. miaEngiadina, as well as for the local customers.

Co-working

MiaEngiadina operates co-working spaces in Scuol, Flan and Ardez and these co-working spaces, and their significance for the area, are addressed in the media outlet Bündner Tagblatt. In the article “The Workplace of the Future” from November 2017, Maurer (2017) elaborates on the potential of co-working spaces for Grisons overall. The author understands co-working spaces to be manifestations of an “increased flexibilization of the world of work” (Maurer, 2017). In this context, the article interviews Martina Hänzi, a representative of miaEngiadina who works in miaEngiadina’s co-working space in Scuol. The so-called mountain hub in Scuol was established mid-2016 and is, despite “initial start-up difficulties (Mauer, 2017) considered a success which “hit the nerve of the time” (Hänzi, in Maurer, 2017). Hänzi, as cited in the article, emphasizes that locals indeed use the mountain hub in Scuol. However, she then likewise reveals that it is, first of all, workers from outside of the canton (Maurer, 2017). Still, Hänzi seems to be convinced that, even though it is, first and foremost, non-residents who use the spaces, the miaEngiadina’s co-working spaces can contribute to the “repopulation of a rural area” (Maurer, 2017). The article then cites representatives from other co-working spaces who all seem to be convinced of the opportunities that co-working spaces can provide for the area. For instance, co-working spaces can be understood to be ideal platforms for local entrepreneurs and inspired workers to meet and network. For instance, the article “Grison politicians are fans of miaEngiadina” covers an event in the co-working space in Scuol (Hofmann, 2019g). The event includes a roundtable discussion about digitalization. In this context, the article cites various political actors who all seem to agree that “digital means more attractive” (Hofmann, 2019g). In this context, the actors, however, emphasize that it is important that “if one wants to renew, one must build a bridge between the original
and the new” (Engler, in Hofmann, 2019g) and according to them, miaEngiadina manages to “take up what is available and still be very modern” (Engler, in Hofmann, 2019g).

However, the above-mentioned article, “The Workplace of the Future” from the Bündner Tagblatt, likewise ask, in a more critical manner, whether co-working spaces can indeed transform an area in a sustainable manner or whether these spaces are only a “short-term hype” (Maurer, 2017). In this context, the author cites the head of local development who is assured that co-working spaces are “an additional chance for Grisons” (Dinkelmann, in Maurer, 2017). The article concludes with the sentence: “It can be assumed that a lot of changes and developments will soon occur in Grisons” (Maurer, 2017).

While miaEngiadina’s other co-working spaces, and their potential for the area, are indeed discussed in local media, it is, first and foremost, the InnHub La Punt which attracted, and still attracts a lot of media attention – both from local media outlets, as well as from non-local and national media outlets. First, local media has covered the InnHub various times since its initiation. In particular the fact that Lord Norman Foster, an international star architect from Great Britain, was commissioned to realize the InnHub, caused extensive media attention. In an article from the Bündner Tagblatt, the article is titled “Lord Norman Foster creates a village within a village”, Fadrina Hofmann (2019a) writes that the first drafts of the InnHub La Punt attracted a lot of attention from “near and far” because it is “futuristic, but appropriate” (Hofmann, 2019a) for La Punt. In particular, the article elaborates on the fact that, while Foster is British, he has a house in S-chanf, is an enthusiastic cross-country skier, which he pursues, first and foremost in the Engadine, and involves local workers and artists in his vision – Foster envisions that local artists decorate the outside of the InnHub. In the article “The Wahl-Engadiner”, it is likewise mentioned, it a rather extensive manner, that Foster is connected to the Engadine and knows the “local conditions” (Hofmann, 2019b). However, while the international status of Foster is stressed in a lot of the local articles about the InnHub, in the article “La Punt receives a centre for innovative ideas”, an article from Die Südostschweiz, it is likewise emphasized that Foster will work with the local architect Arndt Küchel (Hofmann, 2019d). In other articles, this collaboration is not mentioned. Likewise, in none of the local articles, it is mentioned whether local construction companies will be hired. This is relevant because in the article “Master builders under pressure”, Julian Reich (2017) elaborates on the issue that in the Lower Engadine, there is an increased competition with foreign construction companies, so much so that within the last decades, five local construction companies had to announce their closure. The fact that none of the articles cover press releases that reveal collaborations with local construction businesses is in this context,
notable because the representatives of miaEngiadina are otherwise, as the discussed articles show, vocal about their collaboration with local actors.

However, besides the collaboration with the star architect Foster, it is also the support of local CEOs which attracted local media attention. For instance, Caspar Coppetti, the owner of On⁵ or Renato Fasciati, the CEO of the Rhätische Bahn, are vocal about their support for the InnHub (Hofmann, 2019c). The article “The InnHub is at the threshold of realization” refers to interviews with these two CEOs in which Coppetti and Fasciati announce that their companies will utilize the InnHub for various events (Hofmann, 2019c) – an assurance that the so-called innovation centre is indeed needed. In another article, “The Wahl-Engadiner⁶”, Casper Coppetti further elaborates on his interest in the InnHub La Punt and miaEngiadina overall. In this article from Die Südostschweiz, Fadina Hofmann (2019b) cites that Coppetti considers the Engadine to be ideal to work in an “undeflected, but inspired” manner due to the combination of “nature, movement, interesting people and time”. In this context, Hofmann (2019b) mentions that this attitude to the Engadine is similar to the idea behind the InnHub, and miaEngiadina overall. This allows Coppetti to elaborate on his view on the InnHub. Coppetti, as he is cited in the article, emphasizes that while the InnHub will be a centre for tourists, it is likewise meant to be an innovation and leisure centre for the local population (Hofmann, 2019b). He even mentions that the InnHub can contribute to the repopulation of La Punt and the area overall (Hofmann, 2019b). It can “provide a perspective for the next generation” (Coppetti, in Hofmann, 2019b). With these statements, Coppetti echoes the above-mentioned Martina Hänzi (in Maurer, 2017).

However, the article “Mia, tia, nossa Engiadina⁷” also illustrates a more critical perspective onto the InnHub in La Punt, and miaEngiadina overall. In the article from Die Südostschweiz, Chaspher Pult (2019) elaborates on the discourses around the InnHub and in this context, refers for instance, to the above-mentioned discourse that the InnHub, as a “concrete manifestation of digitalization”, can counteract, to an extent, emigration from the area, which is, as Pult (2019) stresses, a serious issue in La Punt. However, Pult (2019) likewise mentions that the locals are also hesitant about the InnHub La Punt as it is feared that it will become a “ghetto of the digital nomads” (Pult, 2019). It can be assumed that it is as a response to such fears, that both Martina Hänzi (in Maurer, 2017) and Casper Coppetti (in

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⁵ On is an international running shoe company that was founded by Casper Coppetti, Olivier Bernhard and David Allemann. Casper Coppetti is from the Glarus, however, the idea for “On” was reportedly established in the Engadine (Engadiner Post, 2017).

⁶ “Wahl-Engadiner” is difficult to translate, however, it means that the interviewee, Casper Coppetti, is not originally from the Engadine, but he now chose to live there.

⁷ Translation from Rumantsch: “Mine, yours, our Engadine.”
Hofmann, 2019b) feel the need to emphasize that the co-working spaces, and in particular the InnHub La Punt is for both tourists and locals. Likewise in this context, Pult (2019) mentions an older discourse about miaEngiadina which addresses the fact that the initiative is called miaEngiadina and not nossaEngiadina – our Engadine. Nevertheless, the article ends with the conclusion that the InnHub is a chance for La Punt which is “not available to other towns” (Pult, 2019) and as such, should be trusted to become beneficial for “nos Grischuns”.

**Education**

In an interview with Jon Domenic Parolini, the director for education and culture in Grison, Luzi Bürkli (2018), the author of the article in the Bündner Tagblatt confronts Parolini with the accusation that the Grisons government waited too long to implement digitalization measures. In this context, Bürkli (2018) states that it was Jon Erni, in collaboration with miaEngiadina, who worked with ten municipal schools to improve students’ education in media and information technology, and not the local or cantonal governments. In response to these “accusations”, Parolini assures that as director of education, he will familiarize himself with appropriate measures that allow Grisons schools to increase students’ abilities in the area of media and IT. However, Parolini likewise emphasises that he will, first and foremost, consider the schools’ demands because “not every ‘Mayensäss’ needs broadband” (Parolini, in Bürkli, 2018). The interview ends with an elaboration of Parolini’s plans for the digitalization of higher education in Grisons which seem to be prioritized over the digitalization of primary and secondary education in the canton. Parolini, despite Bürkli’s (2018) insistence to address digitalization in education, also manages to change the topic over and over again to the relevance of digitalization for the economy. This biased commitment, as Bürkli (2018) implies, justifies the commitment of miaEngiadina, to the digitalization of all education in the region, which Parolini understands to be a “fabulous initiative” (Parolini, in Bürkli, 2018).

The article “A fresh wind is blowing in the Lyceum Alpinum” from Die Südostschweiz in contrast, covers how miaEngiadina is involved in the digitalization of secondary education in Zuoz. The Lyceum Alpinum is an international boarding school at which 200 internal students and around 90 external students from the surrounding villages are prepared for their general qualification for university entrance (f. ex. for their Matura, their...

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8 Translation from Rumantsch: “Our Grisons”
9 This translation is not quite accurate – the literal translation would be “wonderful initiative”. However, Bürkli (2018) implies a certain level of condescension in this statement. The word “fabulous” was chosen to reflect this level of condescension.
In the article, Fadrina Hofmann (2018d) interviews on the one hand, local, external students who attend the Lyceum, and on the other hand, reports that the then new rector, who believes that “digitalization offers [education] completely new opportunities” (Hofmann, 2018d), initiated collaboration with miaEngiadina in order to establish a competence centre for media an information technology. In this context, it is, however, relevant to mention that the Lyceum Alpinum, as an international boarding school, even though the interviewed students in the article attempt to reveal a different characterization, is still a rather exclusive institution (Hofmann, 2018d) which, due to high semester fees as well as the support from private patrons, can afford to invest into, for instance, a competence centre for media and IT – a privilege that public schools in the Engadine do not have.

**Discussion**

The articles reveal that for local media, or at least for Fadrina Hofmann, the author of most of the selected articles, the ‘local character’, i.e. miaEngiadina, carries immense importance in relation to digitalization and rural development in the Engadine. Therefore, the articles do not include a representation of digitalization itself. Rather, it is miaEngiadina, and not digitalization as an overall trend, that is constructed in relation to rural development in the Lower Engadine: it is miaEngiadina that evokes economic development. In this context, the last section of this work aims to discuss that the ‘localness’ of miaEngiadina in various contexts, is stressed to distance its efforts from the overall urban trend of digitalization. With this, the media, to an extent, contributes to the maintenance of the ‘rural-urban-divide’ and with it, dissociates miaEngiadina and its achievements from the urban centres.

The relevance of ‘localness’ is noticeable when the media covers or interviews collaborators, initiators or members of miaEngiadina. Of course, Jon Erni and Not Carl are from Grisons and this is stressed in all the articles. However, whenever Lord Norman Foster, the British architect of the InnHub La Punt is mentioned in an article, it is stressed that Foster owns a house in S-chanf and that he knows the Engadine well (Hofmann, 2019a; Hofmann, 2019b). In one of these articles, it is likewise mentioned that a local architect works with Foster. Moreover, Casper Coppetti is likewise an initiator of the InnHub La Punt and a collaborator of miaEngiadina. Coppetti is from Glarus and nevertheless, the media achieves to ‘make him local’ as it is, in all articles in which he is mentioned, likewise mentioned that the idea for On came to him on a hike in the Engadine. However, the business is located in Zurich. This insistence on the relationship that these (non-local) collaborators and initiators of
miaEngiadina have with the Engadine, affirms the thesis that ‘localness’ is essential in the context of this digital intervention in the Engadine.

This becomes even more apparent in articles about the efforts of miaEngiadina in the context of fibreglass implementation. The fibreglass network can be considered the “backbone” (Hofmann, 2018a) of miaEngiadina. It is likewise the “backbone” of economic development in the area (Hofmann, 2018b; Bürgin & Mayer, 2019). However, while in the article on the establishment and extension of the fibreglass network in Zuoz (Hofmann, 2018b) the importance of fast internet connection, i.e. better digital technologies, for Zuoz, as well as other towns in the region, is addressed, in the other articles about this issue, the conflict between miaEngiadina and Swisscom, the national telecommunication corporation of Switzerland, is favoured. Swisscom, for financial reasons, has waited a while before it started to invest into infrastructure in rural areas. However, now that the Engadine has its own broadband network, Swisscom started to show interest in the area which created a conflict between miaEngiadina and Swisscom. In this conflict, miaEngiadina seems to be constructed as the ‘hero’ of the Engadine, while Swisscom seems to inhabit the role of the ‘villain’. In one article, Jon Erni, the initiator of miaEngiadina is cited to have claimed that because Swisscom is villainized in the Lower Engadine, it will never be a true rival to miaEngiadina (Hofmann, 2018a). Thus, it seems that one of the reasons, of course not the sole reason (Grubesic & Murray, in Strijker & Bosworth, 2015, p. 11) that Swisscom is not embraced in the Lower Engadine, is the fact that Swisscom is not a local provider. In this context, however, miaEngiadina is not constructed as unrelated to the overall trend of digitalization, as the thesis above insists. Rather, miaEngiadina is constructed almost in opposition with this overall trend, of which, Swisscom and its efforts in the Engadine, is a manifestation.

MiaEngiadina itself, likewise instrumentalizes its ‘localness’ because it is likewise noticeable that in various articles, the interviewed initiators of miaEngiadina and the InnHub La Punt, are cited to emphasize that the co-working spaces of miaEngiadina exist, of course to attract new businesses from outside the canton, or even outside of Switzerland, but that these spaces also exist for the local population (Maurer, 2017; Hofmann, 2019c). However, it is doubtful that the local population can indeed benefit from these ‘mountain hubs’ in a direct manner. On the one hand, as the article of Maurer (2017) addresses that there exist critical voices that assume that co-working spaces cannot sustain themselves as these spaces are mere manifestations of a trend. And indeed, Fuzi (2015) shows that the successful establishment of co-working spaces in a weaker entrepreneurial area, such as the Engadine, are somewhat unrealistic (Fuzi, 2015, p. 463). If this indeed occurs in the Engadine, it is certain that the
local population cannot benefit, neither in a direct, nor in an indirect manner. On the other hand, the article “Mia, tia, nossa Engiadina” addresses the fear that these mountain hubs turn into “ghettos for digital nomads” (Pult, 2019). This fear is voiced in an interview with a resident of La Punt who has a critical view on the InnHub La Punt because, as mentioned above, it is doubtful that the old residents of La Punt will use the InnHub in the same manner as commuters or tourists from urban areas. And indeed, such fears seem sensible when conclusions from the literature in this field are considered because this literature shows that digitalization efforts, be it fibreglass implementation or the establishment of co-working spaces, can lead to an increase in residents or part-time residents from urban areas, who build new houses and innovative businesses that attract other urban residents, who then, further marginalize the old residents (Malecki, 2003). As such, a digital divide (Strijker and Bosworth, 2015) can occur even within one town (Bürgin and Mayer, 2019). To conclude, most articles construct these co-working spaces to be as much for locals, as for non-locals and fail to mention that there exist fears about an imminent divide between old residents and new residents. As such, the uncritical citation of the initiators and collaborators of miaEngiadina almost seems biased. Nonetheless, this further confirms the thesis that most of the selected articles construct miaEngiadina as a ‘local’ initiative that is somewhat unrelated to the overall trend of digitalization while the articles of Maurer (2017) and Pult (2019) understands miaEngiadina in reference with these trend.

The commitment of miaEngiadina in the area of education likewise reveals the relevance of ‘localness’ for the initiative in the media. MiaEngiadina works with the international boarding school Lyceum Alpinum in Ftan. In this context, one of the articles includes interviews with students from this school in which these students are asked about digitalization in education. The school accommodates around 200 students from outside of the area, a lot of them are international students, and around 90 students from the area attend the school (Hofmann, 2018d). The interviewed students are local students from Ftan. This collaboration between the school in Ftan and miaEngiadina can be assumed to benefit, first and foremost, the 200 extra-cantonal and international students who live in the school, Students, who can assumed to be educated in this area. With these interviews with the local students, Hofmann (2018) achieves to localize even this commitment of miaEngiadina. In this context, it is also relevant to mention that the current curriculum in Switzerland, Lehrplan 21, includes a focus on media and IT and the state and the canton supports schools in the implementation of this focus. Thus, it seems that miaEngiadina could invest more into adult education so as to ensure that the above-mentioned digital divide within the Engadine itself,
i.e. between new residents and old residents, does not extend (Malecki, 2003; Bürgin & Mayer, 2019, p. 23). This localization of a commitment that is not local, i.e. investment in an international school, serves as the final confirmation of the above-mentioned thesis.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, it was the aim of this work to illustrate the manner in which local media represents digitalization and rural development in the context of miaEngiadina and its efforts to introduce digitalization in various areas to the Lower Engadine. The examination of a number of articles from the *Bündner Tagblatt* and *Die Südostschweiz* revealed that it is not so much digitalization, i.e. the overall trend that is addressed in the articles. Rather, it is miaEngiadina as an almost unrelated initiative. In this context, most of the examined articles indicate that miaEngiadina is understood in the media as a local and singular phenomenon that is unrelated, or in fact, in opposition to the broader trend and framework of digitalization even if miaEngiadina, as its manifesto shows, is an explicit and unmistakable manifestation of overall digitalization. It can be assumed that this ‘localization’ of miaEngiadina serves to distance its efforts, and its achievements from the urban centre.

As mentioned in the introduction, because discourses around digitalization are constructed in urban contexts, it is relevant to understand digitalization as it is understood in more local contexts. It needs to be admitted that the examination of these articles cannot reveal much about the local understanding of digitalization. However, as discussed above, it revealed some about media conceptualization of miaEngiadina. Thus, further research, with a different method of data collection, is needed to understand the manner in which digitalization is perceived in the Engadine,
Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that I have independently written the present written work and have not used any sources or aids other than those indicated. All parts of the work that have been taken from other works, either in wording or in meaning, have been marked as borrowed, and the source is indicated. The same applies to any drawings and illustrations that may have been included. I am aware that I have otherwise committed plagiarism, that this will be punished with the grade 1 and that I will receive a reprimand from the dean.

Place, Date Name, Signature
Bern, 6 February 2020 Rebekka Flotron
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