

The Alps as cultural laboratory



Inspiration, shared experiences and participation: the annual CIPRA conference saw over 100 attendees from every Alpine country meet in Altdorf/CH at the end of October 2019 to discuss the “Alpine Cultural Workshop”. The event was organised by CIPRA International and CIPRA Switzerland.

More than just a backdrop: the “Kulturwerkstatt Alpen” in Altdorf/CH opened up new perspectives. (c) Caroline Begle, CIPRA International

The Alps are a mosaic of stories, people and traditions. In his opening speech at the “Alpine Cultural Workshop”, Giovanni Netzer called for “the opportunities of the Alpine region to be seized and people to be encouraged to make use of the great freedom of these regions”. Netzer, artistic director of the theatre festival Origen in Riom/CH, creates culture in a peripheral region of Graubünden, beyond the established spaces and outside the usual cultural institutions. “Theatrically distant spaces”, such as those offered by the Alps, make new approaches possible.

Environment intertwined with culture

Why would an environmental organisation like CIPRA want to address the issue of “culture”? This question was answered by Katharina Conradin, President of CIPRA International: “Culture is the basis upon which we identify with our environment”. It is only by identifying with something – for example a beautiful landscape – that people are prepared to commit themselves to it. Cultural manager Špela Mrak from Tolmin/SI stressed that culture is an important building block for the future that increases the quality of life for the population: “Culture does not exclude anyone – or at least should try not to exclude anyone”. “In addition to artistic value, culture can also create social and human value.” Roberto Canu from Bardonecchia/I spoke out in favour of overcoming aesthetic reductionism: “In this way culture can provide answers to the classical problems of well-being: such as integration, impairment, population ageing and health issues. This means cultural well-being. This means social innovation.”

Shaping culture

The six afternoon workshops offered participants the opportunity to deepen their knowledge: in some cases they were able to enjoy culture themselves, or even help shape it, for example by taking a walk in the Alps to sharpen their perceptions of the landscape, by practising handicrafts and questioning Alpine clichés, or reading literature on the Gotthard myth. A further workshop dealt with building heritage using the example of empty houses of miners in Idrija, Slovenia. Ideas were developed on how this potential could be used for crafts and culture and adapted to the needs of the 21st century. Museums as places of cultural mediation and Alpine food culture were also discussed.

More information: www.cipra.org/en/ac2019

Point of view: Equal opportunities for trains and trucks!



224 million tonnes of goods rolled through the Alps last year, a new record – more than two thirds of it on trucks. To decrease the pressure on nature and humans along the transit axes, railways and roads have to be on the same level playing field, says Jakob Dietachmair, Project Manager at CIPRA International.

Jakob Dietachmair is Project Manager Climate & Energy, Transport & Mobility at CIPRA

Today, rail freight traffic is not competitive with road freight traffic. There are multiple reasons for this. There is a lack of incentives and subsidies. Furthermore, full

International. (c) Caroline Begle CIPRA International internalisation of the external costs of road traffic, such as environmental and health damage, is absent. Long-distance drivers from low-wage countries are transporting goods throughout the Alps under immense time pressure and for dumping wages, which also aggravates the situation from a labour law perspective.

The Alpine countries alone will not achieve equality between railways and roads. This requires the cooperation of all: the EU, its member states and Switzerland.

Together they can revise the outdated “2008/C 184/7” guidelines on state aid to railways. Use of infrastructure, process management, reduction of external costs, sustainability and research: support mechanisms could be harmonised in all these areas, while the Alpine transit exchange called for by CIPRA and other players could finally be introduced. Under this exchange, lorry journeys through the Alps would be traded as limited goods. This makes sense as the road and rail infrastructure is already reaching its limits and cannot be expanded indefinitely.

However, two points are critical in order to achieve true equality of opportunity. The first is that uniform labour standards in road freight transport must be enforced, monitored and sanctioned. Second, external costs must be fully accounted for. Rail freight transport also generates external costs: depending on the calculation, however, such costs are at most half those of road freight transport. Only when it is no longer economically viable to cause damage to health and to the environment will there be a rethink.

Budding ideas and flourishing projects



Young and imaginative: young people from Liechtenstein and Slovenia seek to increase the commitment to sustainability in their communities. (c) Herbert Wilscher

Building raised plant beds, converting parking spaces, replacing plastic bottles: at the end of the local project, young people from Schaan/LI travelled by train to Maribor/SI and presented their actions aimed at a more sustainable lifestyle.

Raising awareness for more sustainability and implementing their own projects: at the end of the LOCAL (Low Carbon Alpine Lifestyle) project, young people from Liechtenstein and Slovenia met in Maribor from 11 to 13 October 2019 and presented the results of their local activities. An event held at the Schaan youth club saw young people building raised plant beds and drawing attention to sustainable nutrition while, at the Idrija youth centre, young people transformed a car park into a playground for one day. In Tolmin High School they created a vertical garden and introduced reusable, self-designed water bottles for the

whole school.

The LOCAL project brought together the youth club in Schaan, the Tolmin High School and the Idrija youth centre with the Alpine Town of the Year association and CIPRA International to work towards the goal of increasing youth participation in the community and promoting an awareness of sustainability. Sandra Fausch, project manager at CIPRA International, is delighted at the young people's commitment: “It's wonderful to see young people taking the initiative to bring about change. Starting your own project is like planting a small seed from which something bigger can grow. But it also needs to be cared for.”

The LOCAL project was financed by the LLB Future Foundation, the LIFE Climate Foundation and Erasmus+.

Further information: www.cipra.org/de/local (de, fr, it, sl)

A Landscape of Ideas



A living laboratory: Participants from all Alpine countries discuss landscape at the final workshop

What does the future of the mountainous regions look like? Young people from all over the Alps sought answers in the CIPRA “Living Labs” project – on joint excursions, in workshops and through discussions on the topic of landscape.

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of “Living Labs” in Schaan. (c) CIPRA International

A rough piece of wood from the Alpenfeuer, a polished stone from the Rhine, a dried flower from an Alpine pasture: with these objects from their home countries, the participants created their own Alpine landscape on a map. This map opened the final project event of “Living Labs”, held in Schaan from 20 to 22 September 2019. Young adults from all the Alpine countries discussed the future of the Alpine landscape with landscape experts and representatives of CIPRA and presented the results of their national projects.

A memorial fire for the protection of the Alps in Slovenia, a journey on public transport through Bavaria, future scenarios for the mountain area in Liechtenstein: the first day saw participants presenting their actions and events with which they addressed the Alpine landscape in their home countries. During the excursion on the second day they got to know different spatial development projects in Liechtenstein. Among other things, they learned more about the village development of Schaan during a walk with the association ELF.

At the concluding World Café, the participants discussed relevant questions about the Alpine landscape. “It is impressive to see the passion of young people from the Alpine region and to seek together for ecologically feasible solutions. This commitment and joy is most welcome for the future of the Alps”, says Kaspar Schuler, co-Executive Director of CIPRA International.

The two-year “Living Labs” project was co-financed by ERASMUS +, the Natum Foundation and Ivoclar Vivadent AG.

The key to local development



The project’s conclusion in Bolzano: participants in the PlurAlps conference discuss pluralism in the Alps. (c) Maya Mathias, CIPRA International

Pluralism as a strength of the Alps: ten organisations have committed themselves to this as part of the PlurAlps project. They presented their findings at the final conference held in Bolzano/It, including an innovation toolbox for integration together with policy recommendations.

“The history of humanity is a history of migration.” With these words Roland Psenner, President of Eurac Research, opened the concluding conference of the PlurAlps project in Bolzano, Italy. Representatives from the world of politics and society discussed what opportunities migration offers the Alps and how new arrivals can be better integrated into local societies. The partners also presented the results of this three-year Interreg project.

With the help of municipalities, companies and civil society, ten pilot regions in the Alps showed how integration can be successful. In Austria’s Bregenzerwald region, language courses and information made it easier for newcomers to gain access to the labour market; in Italy’s Valle Stura, refugees learned how to manage a mountain farm, while in Jesenice, Slovenia, “cultural mediators” helped them with their questions about language, registration and health. The partners collected the experiences from the pilot regions and published them in [an innovation toolbox](#).

How can the attractiveness of peripheral regions in the Alps be increased? What strengthens social cohesion? How can innovation be promoted? The PlurAlps partners have developed a [White Paper](#) in a participatory process along with decision-makers, stakeholders and experts from the field of migration. It contains recommendations for politicians and society, from communication and integration into the labour market to the conception and implementation of political measures. The White Paper and other results of the PlurAlps project are available online at www.alpine-space.eu/pluralps

PlurAlps was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Interreg Alpine Space Programme and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

On your bike to work? No thanks!



Many commuters in the Rhine Valley rely on cars. How can we be persuaded to change to a well-run public transport system

There are well developed public transport systems and cycle paths in the Alpine Rhine valley, yet the majority of commuters – who number up to 50,000 a day – travel to work by car. A CIPRA project is looking for solutions in this international quadrangle.

Four countries meet in the Alpine Rhine Valley: Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria and Germany. Both the economy and the population are growing, with this growth leading to a steady increase in commuter movements. Congested roads, noise and pollutant emissions are the order of the day. As part of the project “Cross Border Mobility in the Alpine Region

or to use a bicycle? (c) Simon Kneebone

– CBM” in this focal region, a workshop addressed the question of why do the overwhelming majority of people use their own cars, despite the low cost of public transport and journeys to work of less than ten kilometres?

Four experts from various fields such as health research, psychology and behavioural economics worked together with transport companies, political staff in the administration and enterprises in order to develop strategies for behavioural change. According to sports psychologist Ralf Brand from the University of Potsdam, our attention has to be grabbed at the so-called “Decision Prompts”, “exactly at the point where we make decisions”. An example of such decision aids would be a sticker on the mirror of a public toilet with the inscription “Please wash your hands” or a sign on an elevator door stating that it is healthier to take the stairs.

The results of the workshop will be used in the Alpine Rhine Valley with local participants, in the daily work of the authorities and in enterprises in all four countries. The CIPRA publication, Compact, deals with the possibilities of change in our transport behaviour and serves as an aid for enterprises and local authorities.

The project is supported by the European Parliament through the Alpine Region Preparatory Action Fund (ARPAF).

More information:

www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/projects/current/cross-border-mobility

Solemn vigils for dying glaciers



30 years ago, the Lys Glacier reached as far as the point from which this photograph was taken. (c) Legambiente

Many Alpine glaciers have already disappeared due to global warming. In September 2019, vigils in Italy and Switzerland drew attention to this fact.

At the end of September, the environmental organization Legambiente held a requiem for the vanishing Lys glacier in Italy’s Aosta Valley. The Lys glacier is now in the process of disappearing. As Vanda Bonardo explained on the occasion of the requiem, around 200 glaciers have already disappeared across the Alps in recent decades. She is the President of Legambiente and a member of the board of CIPRA Italy. “The glaciers of the Eastern Alps are retreating particularly fast because they are at lower altitudes.” A memorial service for the dying Pizol glacier in Switzerland, the first glacier to be removed from the Swiss monitoring network, also attracted attention. The glaciologist Matthias Huss from

ETH Zurich has been researching this glacier for more than ten years. According to Huss, the cumulative effect of a number of extremely warm years has caused the Pizol glacier to decay. The Pizol commemoration was co-organized by the Swiss Climate Protection Association. With its glacier initiative, the association is calling for greenhouse gas emissions in Switzerland to be reduced to net zero by 2050 at the latest. The Swiss Federal Council has adopted this goal.

The dramatic nature of the situation becomes clear on the Italian side of Mont Blanc. The unusual heat in September and the leachate from the melt may lead to the collapse of huge glacier masses. In concrete terms, up to 250,000 cubic metres of glacier ice could break off (as of 9 October 2019). The affected Planpincieux glacier is being continuously monitored and roads in the valley have been closed for safety reasons. In the long term, the retreat of the glaciers will not only lead to a rise in sea levels, but will also affect the availability of fresh water for agriculture and households in the Alpine region.

Sources and more information:

www.legambiente.it/requiem-per-un-ghiacciaio/ (it), www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NedqSb_2f0 (it), <https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/09/25/news/> (it), www.rainews.it/dl/rainews (it), www.presseportal-schweiz.ch/presse-meldungen/der-pizol-gletscher-ist-tot-gedenkfeier-im-hochgebirge (de), <https://gletscher-initiative.ch/> (de)

Youth demonstrates for Climate- and Alpine Protection



Hundreds of thousands of school students across the Alps went on strike at the end of September. They demanded appropriate action be taken for climate protection across the Alps. CIPRA supported the call together with participants from Youth Alpine Interrail.

For a liveable future: Young people strike in Bern/CH and

across the Alps for more climate protection. (c) Pascal Stadel

“There is no planet B; System change not climate change; Climate protection now!” With messages like these, young people across the world protested at the climate strike at the end of September 2019. From Zurich in Switzerland to Turin in Italy, from Nova Gorica in Slovenia to Bregenz in Austria: in the Alps too, students demonstrated for purposeful measures for climate protection. In Bern, the capital of Switzerland, the organizers spoke of 100,000 climate strikers alone. In the Italian city of Turin around 50,000 people demonstrated for more consistent climate protection, while in Austria's cities the turnout totalled 150,000. In other Alpine countries, too, tens of thousands of young people and adults followed the calls for climate-free demos. “*Global warming is becoming a matter of survival for the population of the Alps, with temperatures rising twice as fast as the global average. It is therefore self-evident that CIPRA, as an Alpine conservation organization, supports the climate-strikers*”, states Kaspar Schuler, co-Executive Director of CIPRA International.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) called for a drastic reduction in CO2 emissions in its last report published in September. A large proportion of CO2 is generated by traffic emissions, so rethinking our current behaviour is urgently required. As a solution, young adults presented their experiences from CIPRA International's “Youth Alpine Interrail” project on 27 September 2019 in Bern. During the summer they travelled by bus and train through the Alps in a climate-friendly way. They enjoyed an inspiring time in the Alps, but also had some bad experiences in some valleys due to poor public transport and a preference of the car traffic. The young travellers demanded the removal of these obstacles and afterwards joined the Climate Demonstration in Bern.

Oh



Solar power from the reservoir: the Lac des Toules, here still without its floating solar power system. (c) Fiesch Wikimedia Commons

Hydropower is all well and good, but what if it no longer supplies enough energy on its own? A Swiss energy company has had an electrifying idea: take photovoltaic elements, equip them with floats, and place them on a mountain reservoir. This has happened at the Lac des Toules in Valais/CH, 1,810 metres above sea level. The solar power system is to be tested there and can supply 220 households with electricity for one year. Because the sun is stronger at higher altitudes, the operators expect a 50 percent greater energy yield than in the valley. If everything runs smoothly and the system also works in winter, a third of the lake will be covered with solar panels from 2021. This could meet the electricity consumption of 6,400 households. How much energy could be generated if all the reservoirs in the Alps were equipped with floating solar panels? One thing is certain: the future in the mountains would look dazzling – in the truest sense of the word.

Source: www.bazonline.ch/wissen/technik/erste-schwimmende-solaranlage-im-gebirge-installiert/story/10830139 (de)

Agenda

Alpine Workshop. The Artisans, 20.10.2019 - 27.09.2020, Bern/CH. [More...](#)

Alpine Refugees. Immigration at the core of Europe, 14.11.2019, Brenner/I. [More...](#)

AlpInnoCT Final conference, 19.11.2019, Brussels/BEL. [More...](#)

EUSALP 3rd Annual Forum 2019, 28.-29.11.2019, Milan/I. [More...](#)

World Biodiversity Forum 2020, 23.-28.02.2020, Davos/CH. [More...](#)