

alpMedia Newsletter - summary 11/2016-01/2017

Urban regions show the way forward



Uroš Brežan accepts the "Alpine Town of the Year" award on behalf of the town. It was presented by Thierry Billet, Ingrid Fischer and Éric Fournier (from l to r) (c) Sonja Karnath

The "Alpine Town of the Year" association is celebrating its 20th anniversary. A brief summary of the facts shows that throughout the past years Alpine cities have been pioneers of sustainable development in the Alps.

Uroš Brežan has kept his promise: in 2016 the mayor of Tolmin, the "Alpine Town of the Year", supported numerous citizens' initiatives with several visible results. The ideas of the enthusiastic citizens of this Slovenian town in the Soča valley formed the basis for an annual programme, assisted by the authorities. One theme addressed was the promotion of public transport, ranging from rail to bicycles, while the inclusion of and support from young people were also very much at the centre of efforts: for example, the introduction of a town council for youth and creative breakfasts for young people. Tourism was the third pillar of the annual programme, featuring courses for foodies and the UNESCO programme around the Clovek biosphere reserve. The "2016 Alpine Town of the Year" thus expanded and implemented its vision of ecologically and socially responsible development.

Sustainably shaping the future

Some two thirds of all inhabitants of the Alps live in urban areas. The creation of an award and a means of networking these regions was the brainchild of Gerhard Leeb from Villach in Austria. In 1997 his hometown became the first locality to be designated as "Alpine Town of the Year". For the past 20 years an international jury has been awarding the title, paying

particular attention to the implementation of the Alpine Convention. The central concern is to combine measures for the protection of the Alpine regions with a sustainable, forward-thinking approach to their development. The activities of the Alpine towns strengthen Alpine consciousness, involve local people, strengthen ties to the region and reinforce co-operation with other Alpine communities.

A lively exchange

For Ingrid Fischer, third mayor of Sonthofen, the 2005 "Alpine Town of the Year", such co-operation is of great importance: "The many innovative people who share their good thoughts with others represent the network's greatest potential." Exchanges of ideas with other municipalities, for example, involve questions of mobility just as much as cultural happenings. Sonthofen's innumerable initiatives and events show that, a decade on, it continues to support the idea of the Alpine town, thereby sustaining the network.

For the anniversary year of 2017 the "Alpine Town of the Year" will be Tolmezzo, capital of the Italian region of Carnia. The opening ceremony will be held in April 2017.

Sources and further information:

www.alpenstaedte.org/en/the-alpine-town-of-the-year-association

Point of view: Adaptation to climate change is inevitable



Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, project manager "climate" © CIPRA International

Despite progress in international climate policy, a rise in temperatures is inevitable. An adaptation now will save costs later, states Wolfgang Pfefferkorn, project manager for climate and energy at CIPRA International. Alpine regions are leading the way.

From 7 to 18 November 2016, the international community undertook negotiations at the international climate conference (COP22) in Marrakech, Morocco, for the implementation of the Paris climate agreement. The signals seen at the end of the meeting were positive, but even if we succeed in limiting further global warming in the future, climate change is inevitable. Therefore, there is no way around climate change adaptation.

Climate conditions will change in the Alps too: temperatures continue to rise, in the winter there will be less snow and the snowline will continue to retreat, while in summer there will be less water available in the Southern Alps.

Cities, municipalities and regions, farmers and foresters, the tourist industry (to name just a few of those affected) must react to this new situation, the earlier the better – not to mention the cheaper, because what we fail to do with regard to

climate change adaptation today will cost us considerably more tomorrow.

Some regions in the Alps have recognised this. One is Surselva in the Swiss canton of Grisons/Graubünden. Under a participative process, those at the top of various sectors considered how they could in future achieve success in the changed climate conditions: they thus developed a toolbox to help make a virtue of necessity. Climate change adaptation can also become a regional engine for innovation.

Now that nearly all the Alpine countries have drawn up national adaptation strategies, they are starting to launch programmes to implement these at the regional and local level, introducing the issue on the ground as to some extent climate change concerns us all!

Examples include the successful pilot programme by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment or the recently presented programme for model regions for climate change adaptation (KLAR) in Austria.

One thing we should not forget, however: in all of these well-meant adaptation measures, we cannot allow that efforts to ensure climate protection – i.e. a reduction in greenhouse gases – are neglected!

Sources:

www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international/projekte/laufend/klima-toolbox (de, fr, it, sl), www.cipra.org/en/positions/climate-change-mitigation-now, www.bafu.admin.ch/bafu/en/home/topics/climate.html, www.umweltfoerderung.at/betriebe/klimawandelanpassungsmodellregionen-klar.html (de)

Winter tourism – a destination shaping change

What are the challenges facing winter tourism in these times of climate change and new patterns of visitor behaviour? CIPRA takes a fictional resort and presents the possible decisions and their consequences: the interactive presentation is accompanied by a web dossier and a position paper.

Winter destinations in the Alps are under pressure as winters are becoming shorter and snow cover thinner, while the costs of infrastructure and marketing grow. There are fewer tourists and these are not just interested in skiing, but also want to enjoy snowshoe excursions, wellness, concerts or tasting local specialities. This requires a rethinking of the offer and even sometimes a move away from tourism and a search for alternatives.

CIPRA shows the challenges to be faced along the way on the basis of an interactive presentation: "Winter tourism – a destination shaping change". A fictional tourist destination looks at examples of different ideas and possibilities, at how these can shape the future, and what effects its decisions will have on the



CIPRA International asks how much further we can allow winter tourism to go. © Johannes Gautier

environment, economy and society. The presentation has been prepared in the context of the alpMonitor project, which shows the upcoming challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in the Alps on the basis of five fields of action.

The questions facing more and more tourist destinations in the Alps are addressed in the CIPRA web dossier "Winter tourism in the Alps". The dossier also contains further information on artificial snowmaking, visitor behaviour patterns and much more. In its position paper "[Solstice in winter tourism](#)", CIPRA presents the reasons why change is required, with six demands underlining the need for urgent action.

Sources and further information:

www.cipra.org/de/alpmonitor/tourismus (de, fr, it, sl), www.cipra.org/de/positionen (de/en), www.cipra.org/de/dossiers/wintertourismus (de, fr, it, sl)

New project financing ensures a sound basis



The PlurAlps project is seeking solutions to demographic challenges such as the ageing and drifting away of the population. © kallejpp photocase.de

Migration, youth participation, mobility, spatial planning: CIPRA International has recently received assurances for the financing of projects in these areas. Here is an overview.

The committee of the EU's Alpine Space Programme, the most important international funding programme for the Alps, recently approved 23 projects from a total of 113 submissions. CIPRA International is a partner in three of them: PlurAlps, GaYA and AlpinnoCT. It is also implementing its own project, WorthWild.

The themes are as diverse as the names given to the projects. PlurAlps reveals the opportunities offered by migration, cultural diversity and pluralism for the Alpine region. CIPRA International is responsible for external project communication and assists in the transfer of results to political decision-makers. CIPRA is also developing a pilot project that will link migration and ecological development.

Alpine Innovation for Combined Transport – AlpinnoCT – is aimed at reducing the negative effects of transalpine road haulage, such as pollution and noise emissions. CIPRA International brings all participants involved in the project together at so-called dialogue events in order to produce and implement common and participative solutions in both the technical and non-technical areas.

Governance and Youth in the Alps, or GaYA, is concerned with democratic processes: the aim is to increase the ability of public institutions to involve young people in decision-making processes. This will mean, among other things, the development of a toolbox containing practical methods and tools that encourage participation.

WorthWild aims to produce an Alpine-wide State of the Art of areas of limited infrastructural development in the Alps. These are especially valuable for biodiversity and climate regulation: the intention is to safeguard them by means of suitable spatial planning tools. CIPRA International is leading the project and will also be developing and testing new ways of raising awareness of this issue. WorthWild is part-financed by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BMUB, BfN), and the Swiss Paul-Schiller-Foundation.

Sources and further information:

www.alpine-space.eu/news-details/748, www.cipra.org/en/cipra/international/projects (de, en, fr, it, sl)

CIPRA mourns Wolfgang Burhenne



Wolfgang Burhenne at CIPRA's 60th anniversary celebrations with the then CIPRA president Dominik Siegrist in Rottach-Egern. © CIPRA International.

The nature conservationist and environmental campaigner Wolfgang Burhenne, whose activities took him all round the world, died on 6 January 2017. The 93-year old was a co-founder and the first secretary-general of CIPRA.

Wolfgang Burhenne had an eventful life. In 1941 the then 17-year old was conscripted into the German army: a short time later he was arrested and placed in solitary confinement in Dachau because he had supported concentration camp prisoners and had procured weapons for the underground. He survived 37 months in Dachau and other camps. After the war he studied law, forestry and political sciences. Apart from his activity as the director of the inter-parliamentary working group, he became involved in nature conservation and environmental politics. Wolfgang Burhenne always remained faithful to the Alps, for example while representing the World Conservation Union IUCN on the committees of the Alpine Convention, where his outstanding knowledge of international environmental law was highly appreciated.

Peter Hasslacher, president of CIPRA Austria, praised this "Alpine citizen of the world" as follows: "Wolfgang Burhenne made his mark on CIPRA in the early years: he then benevolently assisted it, thought ahead on its behalf and paid careful attention to it until the end of his life. He was a universally appreciated doyen of the Alpine Convention and of international environmental law, who also made us aware both of the snags of undesirable regional trends and of the opportunities". Wolfgang Burhenne was an honorary member of CIPRA and in 2011 received the third German Alpine Prize from CIPRA Germany. CIPRA wishes to convey its heartfelt condolences to his family.

Foundations laid for Triglav National Park



A core protection zone of the Triglav National Park in Slovenia, the "Dolina Triglavskih jezer" (Valley of the Lakes). © Martin Hefner (flickr)

It has taken 16 years, but the management plan for Slovenia's only national park is now ready. The participatory process has ensured that it is broad-based in nature.

Triglav National Park is the only national park in Slovenia, and one of the oldest parks in Europe. A law dating back to the year 2000 had set out a management plan for the National Park: in consultation with residents, municipalities, experts, associations and the public, the various interests were then heard and open questions resolved. The Triglav National Park Institute guided the participatory process with workshops and focus groups.

The management plan sets out the conditions for the protection, use, management and development policies for Triglav National Park. The main aim is the conservation of nature and its natural resources: the National Park is also to be preserved as a part of the cultural heritage, with good public infrastructure. In May 2016 – sixteen years after the adoption of the law – all was finalised, with Parliament approving the management plan for the Triglav National Park.

Sources and further information:

[Study: Governance and Public Participation in PAs](#), www.pzs.si/novice.php?pid=10971 (sl)

Open Alps 2017



The Italian town of Como in winter. In summer many refugees are stranded here, stuck on the southern edge of the Alps on their journey northwards. © Michael Gwyther-Jones (flickr)

The end of 2016 saw the announcement of the winners of the 2017 “Open Alps” human rights award. This honour is given to individuals or groups who actively work for the rights of refugees, immigrants, socially disadvantaged persons and threatened minorities in Europe.

This year two organisations are recognised as having distinguished themselves with their special efforts with regard to the ongoing wave of refugees arriving in Europe: the “Associazione Firdaus” run by Lisa Bosia Mirra, cantonal councillor in the southern Swiss canton of Tessin/Ticino; and the “Progetto Accoglienza Rebbio”, an initiative by the priest Don Giusto Della Valle in Como, Italy, which looks after unaccompanied minors on the run.

The award is intended to strengthen these initiatives while making the public more aware that the Alps have repeatedly witnessed migration throughout their history. Last summer this tradition was put to the test with the closure of borders along the Southern Alps, from the Brenner Pass in Austria to Ventimiglia in Italy and Chiasso in Switzerland.

Many rural communities and regions in the Alps are struggling with major demographic challenges such as aging and the population drifting away: at the same time numerous localities are developing innovative models for the integration of people migrating to local communities and the jobs market. Such immigrants may be young families, those seeking alternatives and “new mountaineers”, seasonal workers in tourism or in agriculture, as well as people fleeing wars who are looking for a new home for themselves and their families. The PlurAlps project offers solutions as to how local authorities, business and civil society can contribute to cultural diversity and pluralism becoming a strength for the Alpine regions, with the improvement of social cohesion in local communities. CIPRA International is participating in the project via the not-for-profit company CIPRA Lab.

Sources and further information:

www.sosf.ch/de/themen/asyl/informationen-artikel/offene-alpen-2017.html?zur=41 (de), [PDF Media Release Open Alps 2017](#) (fr, de), www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international/projekte/laufend/pluralps (de, fr, it, sl)

The Alpine Convention declares itself in favour of the “Green Economy”



Pizzocheri, a speciality of the Poschiavo region. Apart from salt and pepper all ingredients come from the Poschiavo Valley. (c) Foto Graubünden Ferien Gian Giovanoli

How should a sustainable economy in the Alpine region look? The Alpine conference held in Grassau, Germany, in October 2016 adopted a report on this topic: its implementation will show how well-suited it actually is.

Picture the scene: lunch in a restaurant on the village square, with the items on your plate only produced and processed locally. One place that this idea – of keeping the value-added chain as regional as possible – is being realised is Poschiavo, Switzerland: the originators of the “100% Val Poschiavo” project were recently granted the Swiss “Milestone” award for sustainable tourism.

The sixth “State of the Alps” report is in fact concerned with such initiatives for climate-friendly, resource-saving economic systems. Work was led by a dedicated team of experts set up under the German presidency of the Alpine Convention for the years 2015/2016. The report shows that the Alpine region already contains numerous innovative, practical examples for sustainable economies and presents experiences and recommendations that demonstrate how the quality of life and wellbeing of local people can be strengthened through the Green Economy. The Alpine countries can now build on these foundations, believes Andreas Pichler, director of CIPRA International. The representatives of the Alpine states adopted an appropriate declaration regarding the report at the Alpine conference. Andreas Pichler, however, emphasises that much work still lies ahead: “We are now hoping that the efforts of the Alpine states will go beyond the principles anchored in their declaration. The conflicts between those seeking a sustainable economy and those advocating one based purely upon

growth must be directly addressed”.

Sources and information:

www.alpconv.org/de/organization/groups/economy/default.html (de, fr, sl, en, it), www.bmub.bund.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Download_PDF/Europa_International/alpenzustandsbericht_VI_en_bf.pdf (en), www.bmub.bund.de/themen/europa-international/int-umweltpolitik/alpenkonvention/aktuelle-meldungen/detailansicht-alpenkonvention/artikel/alpenzustandsbericht/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=289 (de), www.bmub.bund.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/pm/artikel/hendricks-alpen-sollen-modellregion-fuer-nachhaltiges-wirtschaften-in-europa-werden/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=3503 (de)

Sad, but true



Ski-Line(c)DeJongArchitects

Tignes, located in the French Alps, is responding to the retreat of glaciers, and thus of the available ski pistes, with a very special project of its own:

the “Ski-Line”, a modern indoor ski hall situated at an altitude of over 2,000 metres in the midst of one of Europe's highest ski areas. This is intended to ensure a return to the good old days when skiing was possible for 365 days a year. The 60 million euro project was presented by UTN, the Unité touristique nouvelle, which also plans to build a shopping centre, a restaurant, a new Club Med and even an indoor surfing pool with a three-metre high “standing wave” in addition to the indoor ski slope. The municipality of Tignes could almost overshadow the ski hall built in the Arabian Desert in Dubai. Welcome to Absurdistan!

Sources and further information:

www.mountainwilderness.fr/se-tenir-informe/actualites/projet-ski-line-a-tignes-dubai-en-tarentaise.html (fr), www.gloobi.de/tignes-plant-indoor-skipiste-in-2-100-metern-hoehe (de), www.lequipe.fr/Adrenaline/Ski/Actualites/Tignes-espere-construire-le-premier-ski-dome-dans-les-alpes/752848 (fr)

Agenda

18th Swiss Global Change Day, 11.04.2017, Bern/CH. [More...](#)

Sustainable University Day 2017, 07.04.2017, Basel/CH, Organisation: Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. [More...](#)

The Future of Winter Tourism, 3.-5.04.2017, Rovaniemi/FI, Organisation: University of Lapland. [More...](#)

Virtual Alpine Observatory Symposium 2017, 28.-30.03.2017, Bozen/I, Organisation: Bayrische Forschungsallianz/EURAC. [More...](#)