

3.7. The Alps, a wilderness? Alpine cities in the ‘wild’ Alps

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Seventy per cent of the Swiss population are ‘agglomerites’ living and working in settlement areas concentrated chiefly in the Swiss Mittelland but also in agglomerations located in the very heart of the Alps. This, combined with continually increasing mobility and a boundless demand for leisure activities makes Switzerland lose 11 ha (over 27 acres) of crop area every day. This ‘consumption-type Switzerland’ contrasts with a ‘wilderness or forest-type Switzerland’ brought about by massive structural changes in agriculture: every day the forest area increases by 13 ha. In his talk M. F. Broggi outlines relevant driving forces and structural conditions, as well as their impact on the wilderness debate in Switzerland.

4. Economic perspectives: subsistence or prosperity?

4.1. Introduction

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Increasing dependence on global economic networks and development has caused enormous worldwide changes. These changes are leading to increasing advantages for favoured places and disadvantages for less favoured locations and require different attitudes towards development.

The alpine countries form a heterogeneous pattern: some areas will be favoured in the future but many will be at an obvious disadvantage. The main economic sector in the alpine region has become tourism: every year thirteen million inhabitants host about sixty (!) million tourists in about five million beds, and they make a turnover of twenty-three billion Euros a year. This huge economic impact has, however, caused enormous environmental and social problems due to traffic, reduced diversity, urbanisation or infrastructure. Most of these problems directly or indirectly originate from tourism.

Tourism development during the last two decades occurred between two poles, i.e. efforts to minimize ecological and cultural impact, contrasting with efforts to maximize tourist-related turnover by expanding tourist facilities and infrastructure. Sustainable development has therefore become the key word for the future of the region.

So what is the overall objective of economic and touristic development in the alpine region? It is to provide those people who must and want to live in the region with jobs and to offer them an economic basis. This aim must be reached under the aspect of sustainability and greatest possible protection of resources. Every future project should be evaluated from this point of view, and prior criteria should be the correlation of turnover and jobs. As a logical consequence, priority should be given to projects which at equal turnover create more jobs.

Among the biggest problems are the transit of people and goods through the Alps, and an overcapacity of touristic infrastructure. Although booking rates fluctuate extremely between high and low seasons and actually have only two extreme peaks (Christmas and August), all capacities have to

be planned and provided to satisfy peak demand, leading to excess capacities in most cases. Intelligent solutions will be required to develop the region in a sustainable way in the future!

The following questions will have to be discussed during this session:

- can the alpine economies play an individual role in the global competition, or do they have to follow the general pattern of globalisation? Will the policymakers and stakeholders be able to find solutions to meet the demands of globalisation?
- are heterogeneous, varied, differentiated and individual structures a solution for future development?
- will it be possible to create enough jobs in the future? Or will there be migration and economic decrease for disadvantaged locations and increased agglomeration in suitable places?
- will sustainable approaches provide a balance between economic output and ecological impact?
- what solutions exist for a reduction of transit and holiday traffic?

This session should address strategies to develop the economy of the alpine region, with the main focus on job creation and the greatest possible protection of natural and human resources.

4.2. Alpine economy – from subsistence to global division of labour

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1. Economic and social evolution may be perceived as a universal process wherein the basic pattern of increasing division of labour (supported by ever more powerful production technologies) is overlaid by context-specific and pathway-dependent particularities. Resulting intercultural differences are usually interpreted as mere time-lags. However, it remains to be examined more closely whether it is correct to assume an ultimately convergent development (in Fukuyama's sense).
2. Any development from subsistence economy to global division of labour and competition, combined with changing economic structures (agriculture/industry/service sector) also leads to changes in locational demands as well as conditions of production, and hence to disadvantages for less suitable locations (i.e. accessibility, urban areas). This also affects the Alps, where a similar segregation process can be observed. Increasing inter-dependence affects all locations, however, including the 'driving poles'; autonomous economic areas are a thing of the past (if they ever existed at all).
3. This situation begs the questions of whether Alpine economy wants to be something special; how this should be legitimised; and how such a process might be steered. Essentially, various strategies offer themselves, positioned differently between conflicting priorities of the market and politics. It is to be assumed that owing to its heterogeneity the Alpine arc is not a priori uniform, but represents a complementary structure. The question remains whether this process should be left to market forces and 'chance', or whether it should be steered from a higher perspective and, if so, according to what principles.

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4.3. What tourists and tourism will look in the future

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The aim of this contribution is to examine the main facts and variables which have to be taken into account to outline the future of alpine tourism. This overview will also include cultural and environmental issues, as well as economic and demographic ones. It will point out sustainable management options of the "playground of Europe" (Leslie Stephen), climate change, urban growth, transport saturation... Finally, it will discuss the interest of alpine tourism and leisure activities as a thematic research topic in its own right.

4.4. Is the game worth the candle? Questions asked by NGOs about the economic sense of tourism

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Tourism is the biggest industry in the Alps. It generates jobs and income, but on the other hand requires huge capital investments and often causes damage to the natural environment and landscape. How much tourism and what kind of tourism are needed in the Alps? Before being able to answer that question, we must first ask another: what is the purpose of tourism in the Alps? To create jobs and develop the economy might be the natural reply. High quality jobs attractive to the resident population and stimulating the local economy, I might add. But things are not always so. We are left with the impression that the great tourism machine which requires major economic investments, uses up vast tracts of the land and resources (water, energy) is anything but a model of efficiency. Perhaps the same result (in terms of employment and economic benefits) could be achieved with the use of less resources (both economic and environmental), so making the system more efficient.

It is worrying to think that so much investment is being made in tourism without knowing what the real economic benefits are. One thing is particularly astonishing: why have the politicians and heads of public administrations not yet tried to find answers to these questions? We already realized the importance of this issue when the Trento Congress was held in 2000.

Normally, the indicators which are regarded as important to assess the success of a particular tourist offering are the number of arrivals, the presence of tourists and the money spent by them. Many analyses have also been made of the average spending for each particular type of offering. On the other hand, few or very few try to establish effectively where the money brought in by tourism ends up.

We take the view that the key indicators must be different. Foremost among them is the value to the local economic cycle created by tourist spending, i.e. the ratio between job creation and the amount of money spent by tourists.

For each investment, a careful assessment should be made to determine what share of tourist spending is retained locally and how much money is used to sustain intermediate import costs and therefore flows out of the region concerned. And what kind of investments (often incidentally of public money!) are capable of bringing better results instead of continuing the headlong flight forward (bigger installations, greater capacities, more parking spaces and wider highways, more accommodation beds, all intended to increase the presence of tourism which may bring higher revenue but almost never creates higher added value). In the case of tourist resorts with a high ratio of tourists to the resident population, we have a distinct impression that tourism is designed first and foremost to

produce a high volume of business, but only a small part of this is effectively beneficial to the local population.

4.5. ‘Future in the Alps’ – awakening the power of the Alps

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CIPRA, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, aims to promote sustainable development in the Alps. In close cooperation with the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL, CIPRA has created a broad-based, three-and-a-half year project funded by the MAVA Foundation for Nature Conservation at Montricher (Switzerland).

‘Future in the Alps’ is a project which contributes to the implementation of the Alpine Convention. Its objective is to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development in the alpine region. Useful information is to be collected and shared with relevant actors in suitable form and in the major alpine languages. The project will run for three and a half years; the estimated budget is some 2.4 million Euros. Its objective is to encourage individuals, businesses and institutions to network in order to stimulate sustainable development with a balanced consideration of ecological, social and economic aspects.

‘Sleeping’ information

Large numbers of local initiatives with plenty of experience in the field of sustainable development have sprung up in the alpine region. If their snowball effect is to be amplified, tools must be created which will enable local actors to access appropriate and useful information quickly and easily. Any links between research and practitioners have been tenuous so far. They must be transformed into solid connections. The challenge lies in strengthening cooperation between actors across national and linguistic boundaries in the Alps, and to encourage interactive exchange between practitioners, scientists, government administrations, NGOs and politicians.

The project consists of three parts: alpKnowHow – identification of existing knowledge; alpService – structure of information dissemination, and identification of needs; alpPerformance – application of knowledge, and definition of future problems. Added value will be created in the regions if the natural environment, culture and alpine identity are integrated. The large alpine sanctuaries and reserves; mountain agriculture and its perspectives; new approaches to alpine tourism; and tourist, leisure and commuter traffic are among the key issues with regard to sustainable development.

Direct exchange between actors

The project aims to create platforms where actors can exchange their knowledge and experience, and benefit from information collected and processed by ‘Future in the Alps’. Results have been made accessible on the Internet (as a database) as well as through publications. To encourage access by ‘grassroots’ users and to promote direct exchange among them, new solutions to selected issues will be presented at meetings, seminars, workshops and educational events.

The project ‘Future in the Alps’ shall be a catalyst for good ideas. Contacts and exchanges established in its context will lead to an ‘Enterprise Alps’ to be initiated after completion of ‘Future in the Alps’ at the end of 2007.

4.6. Sustainable Alpine Space – more than protected area

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Changes which occurred in Europe in the past decade and the process of globalization require a different attitude towards development.

The purpose of this paper is to present the new principles and activities at the European level for balanced and sustainable development, focusing on the alpine space. It deals with activities, procedures, actors, measures and instruments for cooperation, and coordination between various levels and sectors for the definition and implementation of future development prospects for the alpine space.

Special attention is given to the presentation of the Alpine Convention and the EU programme INTERREG III B Alpine Space.

4.7. Alpine communities buffeted by the winds of economic change – Problems and possible solutions

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This paper presents problems a large number of communities are faced with, and gives examples of a few solutions. The following main issues are dealt with:

- many communities' room for manoeuvre is being more and more restricted, especially by increasingly tight budgets;
- their inhabitants are demanding more and better amenities and services; country dwellers expect the same opportunities as people in the cities;
- the average age of the population is increasing while the number of working-age people is decreasing; increasing numbers of old people combined with a decline of intact family structures will mean higher expenses for health care and care-related services;
- rural structures are disintegrating; many farmers have problems finding successors and so numerous farms are being abandoned; whole regions will probably be depopulated, with the young leaving first; later these areas will be completely deserted .

Examples of some solutions will be presented:

- local Agenda 21, a joint planning process for the future of communities;
- finding, encouraging and supporting volunteers who do community service;
- regional cooperation;
- networking with like-minded people.

4.8. Alpine regional development as seen by a local authority – the Municipality of Kranjska Gora

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Tourism is an important feature of the Municipality of Kranjska Gora. With the transformation and urbanization of human settlements, the growth of tourism has created great demand for building land. The local authority aims to develop “soft” tourism in the widest sense of the term. In this endeavour, the local community will deploy its means of action and instruments in the field of regional protection and management. In that spirit, they will endeavour to harmoniously coordinate the needs of the economy, nature conservation and the local population. Existing residential estates must not be allowed to expand into agricultural areas; traffic loads throughout the region will be regulated and limited.

The Alpine area provides us with the conditions necessary for the sustained and balanced development of tourism. In this respect, the Municipality of Kranjska Gora follows the Conventions on Alpine Conservation and the Protocol on Regional Management and Sustained Development.

5. How will alpine societies change?

5.1. Introduction

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Current analyses of change in the Alps seem to show differing outcomes: between the regions in the West and East, inner and peripheral regions, high altitude and valley regions, regions with urban development and those remote from such development, it seems hard to make any generalised assessment of a trend which might be described as “alpine”. Looking at the factors of change, many studies have also revealed an opposition between externalised growth dynamics and regions which are more remote and can count only on their internal capacity to derive value from their cultural and natural resources.

We will therefore try to move beyond an inventory of situations or a reductive assimilation of growth to a loss of identity and take an interest instead in the process of change and the role played by alpine features in this process. This approach would lead to an examination of renewal of specific alpine features in agriculture, modes of life, attachment to the territory or collective sentiment. In the development of societies in the Alps, can we detect the development of original forms of territorialization in which trends towards globalization and modernity might be associated with specific alpine features to produce a renewed but distinctive inserted space? In that case, are these specific features active, mobilized by the population to become constituted as resources, or do they simply form part of a system of constraints in which the alpine character might show first and foremost the weight of a geography which generates marginality? Or, in the opposing configuration, do trends promote a growing similarity of dynamics and life forms in which the alpine character exists only in the form of remaining traces connected with protection, tradition or an instrumentalised image.

These questions seek to determine how change occurs, going beyond the major trend analyses structured by Manichean contrasts of the tradition/modernity, globalisation /localisation type to take