

Plenary Session 5:
The Alps and Peri-Alpine
Metropolises:
A Competitive
European Macro-Region



Introduction

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Macro-regions play an increasing role in economic and spatial development within Europe. It is necessary to take into account the territorial diversity and functional economic areas to better coordinate EU policies, to improve understanding of territorial processes and to develop strategic and flexible territorial cooperation.

The Alps are without doubt a model region for international cooperation structures. The Treaty of the Alpine Convention serves as an important political frame for the sustainable development of the mountain territory. The European territorial cooperation programme Alpine Space — already going beyond the mountainous area and covering also the surroundings of the Alps — supports territorial cohesion through funding transnational projects with European relevance. However, there is still a lack of involvement of surrounding metropolises and of an understanding of their functional role.

The ForumAlpinum 2010 and especially Plenary Session 5 will change the sometimes traditional attitude of the Alpine networks and start a dialogue between the Alps and partners from outside, especially from the large metropolises in the Alpine surroundings, which do not only belong to the most powerful regions in Europe but also have strong functional relations to the mountain territory (e.g. regarding traffic, tourism, energy production). This dialogue should focus on the opportunities for an Alpine macro-region: How can the Alps and surrounding metropolises benefit each other? What would the Alps be like without large metropolises like Munich, Vienna, Milan, Turin, Marseille, Lyon and national centres like Monaco, Geneva, Zurich or Ljubljana? And what would the metropolises be like without the Alps? How can the Alpine Space Programme contribute to an Alpine macro-region?

What will be the future role of the Alpine Convention?

For discussing these questions, four presentations address the perspectives in view of the European Union, the Alpine regions, the metropolitan region of Munich and geopolitical evolution. Finally, mayors and representatives from metropolises (Munich, Vienna, Turin, Zurich, Ljubljana and Grenoble) and main officials of the Alpine Convention, the Alpine Space Programme and Alpine networks (Alliance in the Alps) will draw conclusions for future cooperation during a round table discussion.

The Concept of European Macro-Regions

Dirk Ahner

The successful preparation and adoption of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in summer 2009 has led to widespread interest in this novel approach. This is reflected in the request of the European Council to the Commission to prepare a similar strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010. It is also reflected in a number of expressions of interest, from different regions and groups of regions, in launching a macro-regional strategy in their own area.

The macro-regional approach is a European process. Following work by the European Parliament the European Council invited the Commission in December 2007 to present a EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. This followed the increasingly visible degradation of the Baltic Sea, but also the need to address the disparate development paths of the countries in the region and the potential benefits of more and better coordination. In June 2009 the Commission presented with its Communication on the EUSBSR a proposal for a strategy seeking to provide both a coordinated, inclusive framework in response to the key challenges facing the region and concrete solutions to these challenges. On 29–30 October 2009, the European Council adopted the EUSBSR and called on all relevant actors to ensure full implementation of the strategy. The European Council also invited the Commission to establish a high-level-group of officials of all EU member states in order to take note of the progress of the strategy and to assist the Commission in the task of facilitating its implementation. The group, which came together for the first time in April this year, assures that no exclusive groups of states within the European Union are established.

The Baltic Sea Region is a good example of a macro-region — a large area that does not fit

established political or administrative limits, but that does have important uniting features, such as common interests to share and common challenges to address. To justify involvement at the European level, there must be common challenges that are difficult to meet by standard intergovernmental or interregional responses. This is also the case with the Danube Region which — as one of the main Trans-European Corridors — is also seeking strategic answers to common economic, environmental and security problems. Both strategies show that macro-regions are very varied and face very diverse challenges.

The integrated approach is fundamental to the success of this strategy. This means that all aspects of policy, whether cohesion policy, the entire range of Union competences or even policy areas within national or intergovernmental domains should be considered in the strategy to the extent that effective implementation of these policies may be enhanced by cooperation and coordination on the macro-regional level.

In the case of the Baltic Sea Region, there are four cornerstones of the strategy: to make the Baltic Sea Region environmentally sustainable (e.g. process waste water), prosperous (e.g. promoting innovation in small and medium enterprises), accessible and attractive (e.g. improving transport links) as well as safe and secure (e.g. better accident response). The strategy is accompanied by a concrete action plan divided into 15 priority areas, and horizontal actions. Each of these priority areas is composed of actions and flagship projects. It is coordinated by one or two member states, which are represented by National Contact Points. A key link to transform the strategy to action on the ground is the establishment of a network of Priority Area

Coordinators – administrations at national or regional level that agree to act as facilitators, encouragers and reporters for the fifteen priority areas of the strategy. These coordinators work with lead organisations identified for each flagship project to ensure that actions are launched without delay and proceed smoothly.

The Council has given clear guidelines to the Commission inviting it to play a leading role in the strategic coordination of the key delivery stages of the strategy, in partnership with the member states and in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. Its tasks are amongst others to prepare updates of the strategy, to take the strategy into account in relevant policy initiatives and to actively facilitate the implementation of actions and the evaluation of the results.

The Commission also has to safeguard an involvement of stakeholders concerned from all levels in the region. In mid-October the Commission will organise a first Annual Forum in the region which will have a twofold function: to inform stakeholders of progress of the strategy and to create a direct channel of consultation among the stakeholders and between the wider partnership and the Commission.

The macro-regional approach is based upon a commonly accepted principle of creating no extra burdens in funding, institutional and legislative terms. The aim is to take full advantage of existing instruments and policies (for example cohesion policy, the strategy for sustainable development, environmental policy, the integrated maritime policy) by concentrating on the multi-sectoral implementation of a comprehensive and integrative work programme.

Such an approach can provide added value in several ways. It can mobilise projects and funding opportunities across borders and across sectors, tackle big common challenges or opportunities, such as the sea environment, or missing transport or energy links. It can serve as a catalyst for strengthening cooperation mechanisms among countries in a region, but also within member states, as can be already witnessed in several countries. By presenting an integrated framework involving all relevant policy areas and countries, it can assure that actions have the greatest possible effects, and promote balanced regional development. Finally, the strategy can contribute to channelling existing funding instruments and habits of cooperation so that their potential can be fully utilised to the benefit of all. But we must also acknowledge that building a macro-regional strategy is a very demanding task that requires a strong daily commitment and relentless efforts from all partners involved. It also compels a common reading, understanding, and vision of the objectives of such a strategy. The com-

mitment of individual regions is the backbone of a macro-region.

The EUSBSR follows the territorial cohesion proposals of the Commission in the Green Paper of October 2008, whereby interventions are built around the needs of functional regions rather than according to pre-determined financial and administrative criteria. This form of macro-regional approach also provides the EU with an innovative policy instrument, which could serve as a good example of efforts to achieve common EU objectives and a more effective coordination of territorial and sectoral policies based on shared territorial challenges.

Nevertheless, before deciding on further macro-regional strategies we first of all need to have convincing gains from the pioneering Baltic Sea and Danube Strategies. The Commission will be reporting on progress as requested by the Council in 2011. But already this year we will draw up an evaluation report. In the meantime, all interested regions may verify if the preconditions for a successful implementation of such a demanding approach — a strong political commitment, preparedness at all levels of governance as well as a strong intensity and maturity of cooperation in the area — are already fulfilled.

Metropolises Gaze at the Alps: Munich Without the Alps?

Christian Ude

The idyllic Alps are to all intents and purposes Munich's calling card, as countless postcards, posters and tourist brochures demonstrate. The upcoming ForumAlpinum 2010 conference will also be evoking this inextricable association between lively Munich and the magnificent Alps, which lend the city and its environs a distinctive Bavarian charm. The Alps are the lynchpin of Munich's recreational environment and enhance the city's quality of life.

That said, the relationship between Munich and the Alps is not only of an affective nature, but also relates to numerous more "mundane" elements such as the fact that much of Munich's drinking water, which is one of the best quality drinking waters in Europe, comes from the Alpine foothills in the Mangfall and Loisachtal areas.

Of the many current issues that engender a close association between Munich and the Alps, I would like to focus here on the following two aspects: the issue of ecologically sustainable Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2018; and the evolution of Munich as a European metropolitan region.

The Alps are a boon for Munich, particularly when it comes to the city's bid to host the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic games. Thanks to its felicitous geographic location, Munich has a unique opportunity to become the first city in the world to host the Winter Olympics after having previously hosted the Summer Olympics (in 1972). On 22 June, 2010 Munich became an official candidate to host the 2018 Winter Olympics; the final decision in this regard will be announced on 6 July of next year.

The thrust of Munich's application for the games has garnered a very positive response from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), particularly in terms of financing, sports arenas, the environmental concept, infrastructure, and experience

with sports events. Thus Munich stands an excellent chance of being selected to host the 2018 Winter Olympics.

The compact event venue concept of Munich's candidacy calls for more than 90 % of the events to be held at only two locations: the Icepark in Munich for the figure skating competition, and the Snowpark in Garmisch-Partenkirchen for the snow events. The bobsled, luge and skeleton events would be held at the artificial ice rink at Lake Koenigssee in the Berchtesgadener region.

That said, the crown jewel of Munich's application is its environmental and sustainability concept, which is based on an ecological strategy developed by the Department of Nature, Sport and Ecology at the German Sport University in Cologne and by the ecological think tank Öko-Institut e.V., with a view to keeping the environmental impact of the Games to an absolute minimum – and particularly their impact on the landscape of Upper Bavaria. The city of Munich is counting on this concept to set a new environmental standard for the Olympics in 2018. The concept includes reusing 1972 Summer Olympics facilities such as the Olympiahalle and the Olympiastadion, as well as the Olympiaschwimmhalle, which will be temporarily converted. Any new facilities that are needed for the 2018 Winter Olympics would be built to the most exacting ecological standards.

Inasmuch as athletes' trips to and from the events will be optimally short by dint of the events being mainly held at two venues, air and noise pollution from traffic will be minimized. Existing transportation infrastructures will be expanded, whereby public transportation will be prioritized, particularly between Munich and Garmisch-Partenkirchen. In Munich's environmental concept, the 2018 Olym-

pic and Paralympic Games will be carbon-neutral, a goal that will be furthered by local projects such as “Sustainable Garmisch-Partenkirchen.” All of the products supplied to athletes and spectators will be of regional provenance. The concept also promotes sustainable added value in the Alpine foothills after the Olympics by virtue of the fact that unavoidable interventions in the natural environment and landscape will be kept to an absolute minimum during the Games.

The European Metropolitan Region of Munich (EMM), which was established in 1995, will also lend support to Munich’s bid to host the 2018 Winter Olympics. The EMM, whose territory extends from Eichstätt in the North to Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the South, and from Augsburg in the West to Rottal-Inn in the East, comprises 24 southern Bavarian counties and more than 26 municipalities, in a roughly 24,000 square kilometer region inhabited by some 5.5 million people. Thus nearly one in every 15 Germans lives in the EMM, much of which lies within the Alpine foothills of Upper Bavaria.

As one of Europe’s leading economic areas, the EMM is strongly technology-oriented, and is home to numerous innovative companies and to a unique network of researchers and scientists, as a study published in February of this year showed. And Munich is also imbued with the atmosphere and spirit of the region’s superb Alpine foothill landscape. Hence one of the key tasks of the EMM is to ensure that the region retains its appeal as a wonderful place to live and work; and one of the key goals in this regard is keeping the Alpine region intact. Munich, the Bavarian Alps, and the lakes and rivers of the Alpine foothills are a tourist magnet for the region, a fact attested to by the more than 30 million tourists who patronize the region’s hotels each year.

The EMM also boasts a superlative infrastructure and one of Europe’s largest airports, which is a key hub for flights between Northern and Southern Europe. However, it is in this regard that action is most urgently needed: the transportation infrastructure desperately needs expansion, particularly in the southern direction. One of the lynchpins of such efforts would be the construction of the Gotthard and Brenner Base tunnels, notably in respect to the possible establishment of a Central European Alpine macro-region. What’s more, in the interest of minimizing noise and air pollution in the ecologically fragile Alpine region and reducing vehicular traffic on the region’s chronically congested roads, it is crucial that a high-speed rail line be constructed. Munich is located right at the interface between two priority projects of the Trans-European Network (TEN); for it is in Munich that the Berlin-Munich-Verona-Palermo and Paris-Stuttgart-Munich-Bratislava routes converge. Ex-

pansion of these two European traffic routes into high-speed rail lines is a key precondition for meeting the key environmental and traffic management goals for both Munich and the region as a whole of promoting increased use of rail transport and Munich’s role as a European metropolitan region in close proximity to the Alps.

Cooperation Between Alpine Regions and Adjacent Metropolises: a First Step Toward a Macro-Regional Strategy?

Nicolas Evrard

Since the beginning of the year 2000, the EU has been facing various political problems. As a solution, the new Lisbon Treaty may give a new impetus for a European Union now composed of 27 member states and 271 regional authorities. Policy-making should now be adapted to a wider diversity and complexity due to a continental challenge.

The European debate on territorial cohesion and on the future of cohesion policy has been focusing on macro-region issues for the last months. The EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has constituted a key element of the Swedish EU Presidency which seems to set the pace for new enhanced territorial cooperations and for better policy coordination according to multilevel governance demands. This trend results from a twofold challenge: the necessary coordination of cohesion policy along with sectoral policies within a limited budget framework and the growing momentum of territorial dimension as a simplifying method for a continental EU.

The territorial agenda of the German Presidency had already opened this prospect since 2006, then giving birth to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. The territorial impact of European policies, as much for the sectoral as for the structural ones, is a real matter of interest, yet too often neglected. This disregard undermines the scope of the whole of EU policies. Political will and an optimistic background have pushed forward stakeholders of the Baltic Sea Region to take profit from the current cooperations in order to enhance the coordination of their policies and improve their integration.

Of course, this issue is not a new one and the AEM already did the spadework on this concept considering mountain territories within the Interact Pro Monte project (IPM). Final notes from evaluation workshops on cooperation tools elaborated within this project all referred to this idea of macro-region (Carpathians, Alps, Mediterranean, and Balkans), equivalent to mountain ranges¹. Since their establishment, working communities such as Arge Alp, Arge Alpen Adria, the former COTRAO, CTJ or CTP have historically led the way to enhanced cross-border and multiregional cooperations. At the moment, Euro regions enjoy a dynamic process of growth and integration.

Trying to Define the Alps: a Bio-Geographic Region or a European Macro-Region?

The Alps historically present a European economic and cultural crossroad, a port of call as well as a meeting place. The Alps, like some sea basins and some river basins, take part of the places which have structured the European space in a common territory.

We can refer to a culture of the Alps; beyond differences, what brings people from the Alps closer to each other is stronger than what pulls them apart — insofar as we do not neglect the internal Alpine diversity which goes beyond the bounds of national, linguistic, economic or religious divisions. From whichever side, the Alps are facing the same issues, suffer from the same constraints and possess equivalent assets eager to be developed.

¹ In the French law on mountain areas (01/09/1985), ranges are defined as: Article 5 (modified by the law n°2002-276 of 27 February 2002 - art. 18 JORF 28 February 2002): "In Metropolitan France, each mountain zone and adjacent zones to it form with it one geographical, economic and social unit called range (massif in French). French ranges are the following: Alps, Corsica, Massif Central, Jura, Pyrenees, and Vosges. The demarcation of each range is made by decree."

At the Committee of the Regions, on the behalf of elected representatives from mountain areas, M. Luis Durnwalder, President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, has been designated as rapporteur for an own-initiative opinion entitled: “Towards a European Strategy for Mountain Areas: a Mountain Ranges Policy”, voted unanimously. This opinion replies to the question marks expressed by the EU institutions on the consideration of mountain territories, on their diversity and on the conceivable positive impact of an EU action to increase their assets. Luis Durnwalder highlighted through this opinion the necessity to answer to the question laid by the Lisbon Treaty’s article 174² with the conception of “massif” (range). This scale for action and strategic coordination, equivalent to sea or river basins macro-regions, enables policy makers to connect together high mountain areas, uplands, valleys and piedmonts, urban and rural areas. Indeed, this scale of decision encourages an efficient and appropriate coordination of structural policies (such as Employment, Regional Development, Rural Development) and sectoral policies (for instance Agriculture, Transport, Energy, Environment, Research, Enterprises, etc.)

Within the French EU Presidency, the AEM organized a symposium at Chamonix-Mont-Blanc on the topic: “Which future for a European Strategy of Mountain Ranges? A renewed approach of territorial cohesion, multilevel governance and sustainable development”. Accounts from this conference point out that, even though elements in favor of an Alpine macro-region cannot be left aside, a better governance and coordination between the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space Programme, between the Alpine networks and the projects of transnational cooperation, between Euro regions and working communities should be promoted. The inter-municipalities (NUTS 4 level) cooperation in the valleys is also considered as a key factor for a sustainable development in the Alps. Hence, there is a vital need to strengthen partnerships between public and private actors, between policies from the states, the regional and local authorities, along with civil society and NGOs. Leverage obtained by such associations represent the bottom line to mitigate cuts in public (and private) investments, dramatically hit by the economic crisis. European assets in the Alps have been significantly emphasized during this conference; if they need to be promoted at the Alpine Space level (so that to reach a “critical mass” to set up European strategies and to give them a real capital gain), it seems necessary that

operational measures would revolve around three components within the Alps: an occidental pole, a central one and an oriental one.

The specific issues linked to the Alpine macro-region transcend the demarcation issue: we cannot only include mere mountain areas without taking into account the influence of regional authorities whose administrative scope is way larger and encompass, except piedmonts, big river basins adjacent to it: that’s what we call the massif logic. If we want this logic to make sense, it should be defined at a large extent and make solidarities between mountains and piedmonts attractive. De facto, as it is already the case with the Baltic Sea Strategy or concerning the Danube, this debate is for the most part an international, intergovernmental one. It obviously affects national governments as much as Alpine regional authorities pertaining to their legal competences which make it also clearly an inter-regional debate.

Still, the sustainability of an Alpine macro-region would blossom only if this new entity is really considered as “Alpine” and takes into account the specific issues related to the Alps while setting its priorities, even more in case of a broad institutional body. Besides, that is how, by improving only projects’ proposals connected with evident mountain issues, that the Alpine Space distances itself from other cooperation programmes, which take less into account the territorial dimension of the Cohesion policy.

Indeed, the Alps can’t be reduced to a functional space, inevitably temporary and technical, if we want them to matter as a European macro-region, i.e. with a strong political and strategic dimension. Through the examples of the Baltic Sea and the Danube, it is clearly the matter of a territorial cooperation and not of a functional cooperation. When geography and history make sense and represent relevant arguments in their favor, there is a direct link between human beings and their surrounding which shapes a specific territory.

Link Between Urban and Rural Areas in a Specific Mountain Territory — The Challenge of Solidarity as a Key Issue of Territorial Cohesion

The question of territorial cohesion as a European political objective is concretely linked to the scale of action. At what scale is there a real added value of European intervention?

The appropriate level of action could add a territorial sense to an integrated cohesion policy that

2 To sum up, Article 174 defines territorial cohesion mainly as the need of a specific consideration of areas suffering from permanent natural handicaps, including mountain areas.

could rely on both, the rural and the urban dimension. For mountain regions, the concept of massifs enables mountain areas, valleys and the piedmont areas to define a common strategy, absolutely necessary for the implementation of the policies of sustainable development, competitiveness and adaptation to climate change.

The destinies of the rural and the urban part (mainly consisting of medium-sized towns) of mountain regions are interlinked for environmental and human reasons. Here is also a key element for a successful Energy-Climate Package, as energy and climate change are, for our regions, closely connected to the solidarity between the town and the mountains.

The same solidarity between the town and the mountains can be found in the centre of the agricultural debate with its needs for local flows and the development of production lines, in the demand for transport and broadband connection, involving sustainable access modes and green transport systems, not forgetting the access to services of general interest and the connection with the knowledge-based economy.

Consequently the debate on access to Services of General Interest (SGI) in mountain regions is very much linked to the debate on innovation and competitiveness. If the mountain population does not want to live from subsidies, they also have to dispose of the means and of the capacity which are required for its endogenous sustainable development. The technical question of the access to supra-regional networks is intensified by the question on the adaptation of the policy of competition and the rules of the single market to permanent natural handicaps.

The central question of how to keep the permanent population in mountain areas will only be successfully resolved if mountains, valleys and piedmont areas cooperate in order to valorise and protect the human know-how, the innovations, and the natural resources in order to “hold” the population and to offer opportunities for good living conditions by consolidating production lines and short circular flows. However, this solidarity cannot be realised in the framework of the classical administrative borders.

In that matter an integration of territorial cohesion in the future European politics would not be a revolution, but an evolution towards a mature EU-policy dimension, by creating opportunities for gathering various actors (elected representatives and political authorities, socio-economic actors, environment actors) from various levels (European, national, regional and local) to work on a shared strategy for a coherent territory.

Toward an Alpine Macro-Regional Strategy: an Opportunity for the Future of the Alps

The Alps have already walked half the way: along with the Alpine Convention and the Alpine Space European Programme for territorial cooperation, we can register numerous Alpine networks (such as CIPRA, Alliance in the Alps, Cities of the Alps, ISCAR, Club Arc Alpin, Alpine Pearls, Best of the Alps, etc.), numerous cross-border territorial cooperation programmes and strong and institutionalized cross-border cooperations, intranational and multiregional cooperations (like the Committee and Commissariat de Massifs des Alpes in France, the consultative Conference of the Alpine Arc in Italy, etc.).

Besides, the Alpine Space (as other mountain ranges) represents a precious asset for Europe. This territory has turned out to be a significant trump card to reach the objectives set by the Energy-Climate Package (especially in regard to the hydroelectricity production). Its water production, consumed by the whole of Europe, makes its sustainability a strategic one. Its industrial assets in know-how of precision industries (plastics engineering, bar cutting, watchmaking, mechatronics, nanotechnologies, photovoltaic and solar, biomass, forestry and passive building, etc.) and in high-quality industries (special metallurgy, agropastoralism, etc.) are essential to the dynamism of the European economy.

To draw a complete picture of the territory, we can add a large number of clusters, universities, R&D centers, a unique grid of SMEs and renewable energies production sites. This compact economic system, well integrated into the global economy, should enhance its network in order to offer the greatest potential to the Alpine Space in terms of growth and employment, as well as a leading role to develop an efficient European Green Growth model.

During the last months, a debate has been opened over the limits which should be set to this macro-region. Delimitations of mountain areas have always been difficult to make, on account of the transverse aspect of their management and their specific organization due to the altitude and their particular geomorphology. This issue often represented a stumbling block in the implementation process of mountain policies. This controversy is actually a trap.

Indeed, the “massif” logic is clearly the most relevant at the EU level (in comparison with a mere pro-mountain global approach). It enables to fuel and balance solidarities between mountain areas, valleys, cities and piedmont areas, whose necessity is particularly striking in the Alps (where 80 % of the inhabitants are living in the cities). Within the Interact Pro Monte project, some suggestions have

been made to improve the efficiency of the Cohesion policy and in particular of the cross-border and transnational territorial cooperation programmes.

The Alpine Space could incorporate adjacent piedmont lowlands in case they would be considered as geographical spaces completing the Alps territory in the strict sense of the word, i.e. mountain territories and the valleys adjacent to them. The substantial requirement of this integration would be that centripetal forces should be stronger than the centrifugal ones.

In the governance of a macro-region for the Alps, regional authorities cannot be ignored. They are greatly involved in the Alpine Space Programme and conduct decisive public policies for the environmental and socioeconomic future of the Alps. Local authorities are the bondsmen of a wealthy daily life of the Alps inhabitants and of their ability to preserve the mountain heritage, to develop their resources and to promote the sustainable development of the Alpine valleys and mountains.

A certain number of Alpine regions are not only located in the Alps area. Nevertheless, they represent important stakeholders in the common fortune of the Alps, as well as the Alpine states, a significant part of whose territory is located outside of the Alps. Yet, a macro-regional strategy requires the commitment of both these two institutional levels, next to the European institutions, to enable an efficient coordination of policies, programmes and funds in a process of efficient and democratic multilevel governance.

In the same way, consulting and hearing socio-professional actors, NGOs and representatives of natural parks is an absolute requirement, in order to fix shared and balanced partnerships inherent to good (horizontal and multisectoral) governance.

To sum up, the Alpine macro-regional strategy should gather the intergovernmental dimension inserted in the Alpine Convention and the regional technical capacity of the Alpine Space Programme. But the third key to success depends on the political commitment granted to this process: regional and local authorities (with the support of the Committee of the Regions), national administrations and minister's personal staff as well as high officials and European Members of Parliament should all involve themselves into this strategy beside the administrators in charge of the Alpine Space Programme and those of the Alpine Convention.

It appears then that the observers³ of the Alpine Convention represent key structures to bring these two Alpine "institutions" closer, due to their transnational dimension and legitimacy, as well as their operational and political capacities.

3 C.f. Observers' declaration to the Alpine Convention ministers, the 12th of March 2009, at the Evian Alpine Conference.

Contours and Perspectives for a European Macro-Region “Alpine Space”

Paul Messerli

Since the launch of the Alpine Convention in 1995, its signatory states have been struggling to agree on implementation protocols and their adoption into law in individual states. The original aim of this ongoing, open-ended process has been to place the Alpine Space under international law; the result has been a redefinition of the Alps as a geographical unit, with the most recent maps representing the Alps in terms of the Alpine Convention’s territorial reach. The Alps therefore not only manifest themselves as a topographical island in the heart of Europe; they also form a political exception, a Sonderfall, insofar as they have been defined in terms of a regime aimed at achieving sustainability.

The EU as co-signatory of the Alpine Convention has always hesitated to agree to certain protocols. Singling out the Alps as a Sonderfall runs counter to EU ambitions to achieve a pan-European policy for mountain areas. Moreover, contradictions with European transport policy may complicate any concessions, for example in regard to the Transport Protocol.

The ForumAlpinum in Munich will address the question of whether it would be possible to overcome such political obstacles to implementing the Alpine Convention, and dispel contradictions resulting from this Sonderfall in Europe if the “Alp Island” was to become part of a larger functional space, a European macro-region.

The EU was successful in pursuing this concept for the first time in the context of its strategy for the Baltic Sea Region; it is a strategy that is currently being implemented in the Danube Region.

The paper explores the issue in order to identify the pros and cons of such a macro shift. Its focus is on the thesis that the accessibility of the Alpine Space to and economic exchange with surrounding

areas have been crucial to its survival — in other words: that the Alpine Space can only participate in economic development if it becomes a complement to the large extra-Alpine conurbations as a region. While this complementarity is inherent in the Alps’ natural and cultural structures, it must also be developed deliberately in order for the Alpine Space to be a successful partner to those extra-Alpine centres.

In an historic macro perspective ranging from the 15th century until the present day, the Alps appear as a bridge, as a boundary and finally as an island: Europe has seen a shift from a geo-economical to a geo-political and finally to a geo-ecological function and significance of the Alps.

The topographic obstacle between markets to the north and south of the Alps led to the creation of “saddle states” such as Savoy, the Helvetian Confederation and Tyrol to secure important trade routes and become participants in the trade.

After the Congress of Vienna the Alps became a secure external boundary for incipient national states. In relationship to extra-Alpine centres of power and population, large tracts of the Alps became peripheral and were economically marginalised.

The realisation that the Alps were Europe’s rooftop garden brought about a change that — since the advent of mass motorisation and mass tourism in the 1950s — has threatened the Alps’ natural environment and unique cultural landscapes. This view was succeeded by the geo-ecological concept of the Alps as an island that has been expressed in the Alpine Convention. It is a policy largely initiated by extra-Alpine centres and has established the Alps as an ecological island, which in turn has caused the Alps to be geo-politically instrumentalised and to be treated as a Sonderfall in Europe.

This outline shows that the Alps' significance to Europe has been subject to historical changes that have increasingly come to be initiated and defined by outside forces, thus restricting the Alpine regions' autonomy. It has also become clear, however, that this is an essentially open-ended process. In other words, nothing need stop the decision makers and development stakeholders at all levels from coming to an agreement on their internal-external relationships, nor on a new concept of the role of the Alps in Europe.

Two fundamental obstacles — one internal, the other external — have impeded the implementation of the Alpine Convention: internal resistance has manifested itself around what has been perceived as excessive emphasis on protection versus use, unduly restricting development opportunities and Alpine populations' autonomous decisions. External resistance, however, has formed around the spectre of an "Alpine OPEC" that might be tempted to make exorbitant compensation claims based on usage restrictions.

For example, it has not been possible so far to develop and position the special status defined by the Alpine Convention as a global umbrella brand for the Alpine Space's unique resources, products and services. This kind of exterior effect would far compensate for interior efforts to comply with the Alpine Convention's usage codex.

As more recent analyses have shown, the Alps are by no means an ecological island. However, they risk becoming increasingly insularised by the ever-expanding metropolises along their periphery, by the attraction of Alpine cities and transit corridors, and by tourist resorts. In between, new categories for future use such as Alpine fallow areas (functioning as zones of temporary retreat) and new wilderness areas are becoming an issue.

At the same time, due to current and future economic and population developments, appreciation of the central resources of the Alpine Space — from hydropower to timber as a commodity, construction material and fuel; from roughage for the production of meat and dairy to recreation areas located at the heart of the world's largest tourist catchment area — is clearly increasing.

Can political obstacles be overcome, development opportunities grasped, and crucial objectives of the Alpine Convention pursued in the context of the concept of a "European macro-region"?

The linchpin of the strategy developed for the Baltic Sea area is the declaration of the adjoining regions to take joint responsibility of the Baltic Sea as a commons, i.e. a common concern, for the purpose of making sustainable use of it as a connecting element, both in their natural and social environment and in their economies and leisure activities. This open strategy is based on some essential principles

such as flexible borders; cooperation at all political levels among partners who are in a position to contribute towards the strategy; and substantial initial investments to create networks and build trust. Together with the EU, the countries, regions and cities are stakeholders who have aligned their projects with agreed objectives — the ecology of the Baltic Sea, ensuring prosperity, accessibility and security — for which they use the EU's and partner countries' traditional subsidies.

To their neighbouring regions and cities, the Alps literally lend themselves as a common concern, a commons. Despite their heterogeneity — in contrast with the homogeneity of the Baltic Sea — they are united in terms of common problems and potentials that can only be resolved and valorised in cooperation with external stakeholders and markets.

Weighing the pros and cons of an "Alpine Space" macro-region, the last part of the paper explores the complementary relationships between the interior and the exterior expressed in development axes that do not run along, but across the Alpine arc. They could lead to true partnerships, more autonomy and overall stronger Alps in the Alpine Space.

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Round Table Discussion: The Alpine Space Macro-Region: Towards a Common Vision?

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Launching the concept of macro-regions, the European Union is actually developing towards (the constitution of) a “new” dimension of spatial development and territorial cooperation. “New” means: trans-sectoral cooperation is based on a common geographical and economical area as the Baltic Sea, the Danube River Basin or the Alpine Space. From a European perspective, such a development seems adequate for creating larger functional regions by evolving already established areas like the Alpine Space, which has been delimited by the transnational cooperation programme of the European Territorial Cooperation (formerly Interreg).

Indeed, a lot of territorial authorities and co-operations are existing in the Alpine Space since long before the upcoming concept of European macro-regions: national states, economic areas, historically defined regions, functional regions like metropolitan regions, communities, territorial networks or treaties like the Alpine Convention. Furthermore no historical or political model exists for building up a territorial organisation around the Alps.

A couple of questions are concerning the interrelations between a future macro-region Alpine Space and existing territorial authorities or co-operations:

How far will a macro-regional organisation be able to integrate a large range of (historically and functionally determined) territories (from metropolitan to rural)?

What will be the role of existing authorities (like the Alpine Convention) in an organisation of a future macro-region Alpine Space?

What authorities have to be assigned (will be admitted) to a macro-regional organisation?

Will macro-regions lead to more co-determination?

Can a macro-regional organisation be established without increasing bureaucracy or postponing decisions?

Until today, the discussion on a macro-region Alpine Space focussed mainly on the perspectives for the implementation of European policies in this macro-region, while a bottom-up discussion among future agents on common objectives is missed. Obviously, the institutional configuration will depend also on the objectives and the financial facilities of such a macro-region. That’s why the round table aims at a debate on common visions with important political decision makers from the future macro-region Alpine Space.

Questions to be addressed to decision makers are:

What are added values for already existing territories and territorial cooperation within a European macro-region Alpine Space?

Will a macro-region lead to increasing economical activities and improve competitiveness ?

Will a macro-region help to improve the use and protection of main resources ?

Can macro-regions strengthen territorial development and improve or maintain infrastructures?

In an optional macro-region Alpine Space a main challenge will consist in finding political convergences between metropolises (lowlands) and mountain regions (highlands). That’s why the round table has been drawn for leading this exchange with participants from nationally important cities and metropolises (mayors or planning directors from Munich, Vienna, Ljubljana, Torino, Grenoble, Zürich) and from the Alps (Alpine Convention, Community network) and from the Alpine Space Programme.

