Green paper on the Alps: The Alps touchstone for Europe

Manfred Pils, Peter Glauser and Dominik Siegrist (Eds.)

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Part I: INTRODUCTION.1

The Alps as a Touchstone

Manfred Pils

More than a hundred years ago, when the organisation of the Friends of Nature was founded in Vienna in 1895, the first programmes they offered were trips and excursions to the Alps. Meanwhile the organization has grown into an international movement with over 600,000 members; almost 1000 houses and mountain huts were built, thousands of kilometres of hiking and mountain paths are being maintained, excursions and courses are organised and projects for landscape protection and for the promotion of sustainable development are launched and implemented. Every two years, a European Transborder region, which is of ecological value and worthy of protection is proclaimed "Landscape of the Year". In such "Landscapes of the Year", educational activities are organised, project groups are set up, campaigns are mounted and projects put into practice in the interest of sustainable development. The emphasis is on processes designed to further sustainable economic development in the given region, which are to be launched in cooperation with the greatest possible number of interested groups of the population.

To this day, the activities and programmes of many Friends of Nature groups have remained focused on Alpine and mountain regions. It was thus a logical step to proclaim the Alps "Landscape of the Year" in 1995, the centenary year of the Friends of Nature movement. Already at its Congress in Königslutter, in 1990, the Nature Friends International had adopted an international programme for the protection of the Alps, on which the project "Landscape of the Year 1995t96" was able to build.

Since the Alpine arc with a length of 1,200 km, a width of 300 km and 13 million inhabitants, occupies a vast space, two Alpine areas were selected as model regions in agreement with the NFI national federations concerned. These two regions the Lesach Valley on the southern border of Austria and the Furka-GrimselSusten area surrounding the roof of the Alps in Switzerland were marked out for specific projects.

When the Alps were proclaimed "Landscape of the Year" in 1995, intensive discussions and negotiations were under way about the international Alpine Convention the international "agreement on the protection of the Alps', At the time, only three countries (Germany, Liechtenstein and Austria) had signed this framework convention which had been drawn up by the Alpine countries together with the European Union. In the negotiations regarding the implementation protocols, such as the transport protocol or the tourism protocol, marked differences of opinion emerged about the development of the Alps and the role of the Convention.

Austria, for example, desires a stipulation banning the construction of any additional, major transalpine routes, whereas Italy and France have already launched such projects and Germany and Italy wish for an "Alemagna" right across Austria. Another argument arose over artificial snow production, and the Swiss mountain cantons wished to prevent over-stringent conservation rules which threatened to impede economic development.

These are all distinct individual positions linked to the historical development of each Alpine area. In Austria, Germany, Switzerland and South Tyrol, the Alpine regions have always received intensive aid, specific to each region. As a result, these regions have relatively well developed transport and tourism infrastructures and serve as local recreation areas for nearby conurbations. The logical response to such pressure for development is the implementation of landscape conservation programmer. The western Alps, on the other hand, have for decades suffered from widespread exodus and depopulation; hence the people still living there expect more structural aid. These specific, "regional" conflicts over the Alpine Convention are overlapped by the European Union's interest in abolishing transport barriers and in guaranteeing free choice of transport, as the European single market is brought to completion.

Even if the concept of "sustainable development" is not yet contained in the Alpine Convention the Convention was adopted in 1991, the Conference in Rio took place in 1992 it is unmistakably worded in the spirit of sustainable development, whose purpose clearly is to harmonise economic, social and ecological elements of development. The Alpine Convention undoubtedly provides a suitable general framework for such harmonisation and must not be misinterpreted as a one-sided conservation programme. However, endogenous, regional development requires different development programmes to be drawn up for different regional problems and conditions. The diverse situations call for a two-tier approach.

In many regions, the aims and ideas of the Alpine Convention have fallen on fertile ground. Initiatives for direct marketing and organic farming abound, rural tourism regions are developing programmes for ecological "soft"' tourism, the populations in the Alpine valleys of Switzerland, South Tyrol, the Tyrol and France are actively resisting a further increase in traffic. Despite the marked commitment of all those concerned, it is apparent that sustainable development can only be put into practice within an appropriate political and economic framework, which, in the age of market globalisation, must be a European framework.

In this context one should mention the 1991 "Fresh Meat Directive" of the EU, whose over-stringent hygienic regulations forced many small, regional slaughterhouses to close down, thus putting a spoke in the wheel of direct marketing. Another problem is created by the EU subsidies for the processing of agricultural produce, which have led to a large volume of processing transport

moving back and forth across the Alps. There are many other examples of how directives and measures at the European level may impede or even prevent independent regional initiatives in the Alps or for that matter in other peripheral areas.

Prompted by this development, the Nature Friends International drew up a Memorandum for an Ecological Partnership with the Alps in the spring of 1995, which was presented to the President of the European Parliament Klaus Hansch on March 15. Several proposals contained in the Memorandum have meanwhile been included in political demands. The Provincial Parliaments of the Tyrol and Salzburg, for example, have taken up the demand for establishing the Alps as a special objective region within the framework of the EU structural funds. In order to enter more deeply into the matter of the European framework required for sustainable development in the Alps, the Nature Friends International decided in the spring of 1996 to draw up a "Green Paper on the Alps". The project was implemented with the assistance of experts and is presented herewith.

The Alps have for centuries performed important functions within the framework of the European economic fabric: they have supplied renewable energy and drinking water and have provided efficient transport routes as well as space for the recreation of more than 100 million tourists per year. In addition, the Alps help to stabilise the climate as well as to reduce the danger of floods and, with their wealth of different landscapes, plant and animal species as well as drinking water, constitute one of the continent's major eco-reserves. The Alps are no longer autonomous; a clear division of labour between mountain and lowland regions has long been established, which, at the present time, unfortunately has a detrimental effect on the mountain regions. These important functions must be safeguarded, which means that ultimately Europe has to assume responsibility for the Alps as a special habitat and a site of economic activity. The Alps could become a model for a new Europe of regions, which would accommodate both a functioning single market and the specific social and ecological features and requirements of individual regions.

It is not a matter of securing for the Alps special rights which are not granted to other regions. The Alps could rather serve as an ideal testing ground for practical solutions and statutory measures taken in the interest of sustainable development and thus as an example but also as a touchstone for the sustainability of the European single market.

With this in mind, the Nature Friends International and the Swiss Nature Friends submit the present Green Paper to the European Commission and to all those interested, hoping that it may contribute to the sustainable development of Europe.

1.2. The Alps yesterday, today and tomorrow?

Nicole Frei and Peter Glauser

To understand the current situation of the Alps, it is necessary to trace their historical development.

The Alps were traditionally an agrarian region: sources of income besides agriculture were forestry, crafts and trades, mining, pre-industrial ore processing and pack-animal transport.

Industrialisation and the creation of nation states in Europe in the 19th century caused decisive changes: mountain farming declined and the mountain population began to leave. Developments in the individual Alpine countries took different courses.

Industrialisation

The advent of industrial production and labour in the 19th century triggered the development of an entirely new economic and social system in Europe. On the one hand, the industrial sector ruined all forms of pre-industrial production. On the other hand, mountain farming collapsed, because it was unable to compete on the open European market. This development was engendered by new transport systems, low customs tariffs, the green revolution and increasing mechanisation. The previous division of labour between mountain and lowland areas, between pastureland and grain growing areas ended in favour of the lowland areas. The large-scale devaluation of the Alps was anything but offset by episodic revaluations through the establishment of industrial plants, hydroelectric power stations and tourism.

In France the exodus of the mountain population already set in after the French revolution, when political equality superseded special rights. Large-scale depopulation, especially of the Southern Alps, started in 1848, making them t h e problem area in the Alpine region.

In Austria and in Switzerland mountain farming went into a state of crisis in about 1860/70, when it became part of the market economy and the economic situation of the farmers deteriorated as a consequence. In Austria this was counteracted by creating a great number of industrial jobs in the Alpine area, while in Switzerland economic activity was boosted by "belle époque" tourism. The current, well developed hotel infrastructure goes back to this period. These favourable effects, however, were limited to a few locations.

In the Italian Alps (with the exception of South Tyrol), the traditional, regional economic structures did not collapse until the end of the 19th century, because the impact of industrialisation was only felt after the unification of Italy in

1861. As a result of the exodus from the mountain areas, some valleys were practically depopulated.

Developments in Slovenia took a totally different course. Industrialisation started as late as 1945, with the introduction of socialist models. The result was widespread urbanisation and a wave of migration into the Slovene Alps, because, under the polycentric, regional development policy, jobs were distributed to the various communes and valleys. Only the eastern and western peripheral regions were less favoured by this development. The industrial sector still dominates, whereas agriculture gradually declined, reaching a low in the mid-seventies.' Market interests in this traditional type of farming dwindled and subsistence farming became the rule.

Tertialisation

After the Second World War, there was a development in Europe towards the provision of services, the Alps being transformed into a huge tourism region. The leisure sector started to dominate economic activities and was complemented by non-tourism services, such as the supply of energy and drinking water and the provision of transit routes.

In France selected areas were developed into mono-structural winter resorts. Testtube cities were built in isolation from the local/regional economy and society. National parks became the real centres of summer tourism. A large part of the remaining area gradually deteriorated into a structurally weak region.

In Italy, too, large tourism centres were built from 1955 onwards, without any positive effect on the regional economy. In the 70s however, the emigrant Alpine dwellers started to transform their former residences into holiday homes. Some Alpine valleys were transformed into industrial and service regions, since many Italian business centres are located in the plain of the river Po, in northern Italy. Large valleys in the western Italian Alps are now depopulated.

In Austria tertialisation was delayed by the nationalised industries and the state-controlled banks. This resulted in conditions favourable to a decentralised development of tourism. Private initiative in the sector was encouraged. Whereas the western Alps underwent dynamic development, the eastern Alps remained a structurally weak area.

In Switzerland tourism developed uninterrupted from its beginnings in the "belle epoque". A dense transport network, the widespread construction of alternative accommodation and a nationwide tourism infrastructure supported the local economic fabrics. The numerous hydroelectric power stations were a source of additional income for the Alpine communes.

In Germany, the Bavarian Alps are intensively used for tourism, since they are both an area of Alpine tourism and of local recreation for nearby Munich.

In Slovenia, on the other hand, tourism did not develop at all. The local population was indoctrinated to regard tourism as the "consequence of a bourgeois lifestyle"; and in the later stage of socialism it was described as an unreliable sector. As a result, the local population eyed tourism with suspicion; only in recent years has this attitude started to change in limited areas, where tourism induced changes in the cultivated landscape are now becoming manifest.

The large-scale economic revaluation brought about by tourism is determined and controlled by the big European towns; this means that the Alps are not upgraded as a habitat for the local population, but that certain functions and uses of the service society are outsourced to the Alpine regions. This results in environmental degradation through overuse, the disappearance of a varied cultivated landscape, the loss of identity, etc. In peripheral regions, on the other hand, land use is abandoned with the result that shrub invasion has set in and the diversity of species is declining. This process is reflected in the stark contrast between the built-up, intensively used valleys and the mountain areas which are often lying fallow. Individual structural measures helped locally to counteract these problems, but the overall Alpine crisis persists.

Due to the growing mobility of the population and the poor quality of the environment in the large conurbations on the Alpine rim, the Alps have, since the 80s, gained new importance as an attractive residential area for commuters.

Internationalisation, globalisation

The most recent stage of development is characterised by the globalisation of the markets. Under the mounting pressure exerted on the agricultural sector to deregulate, even the previously quite well protected agricultural production in the mountain areas of Switzerland and Austria is encountering problems. Even in these countries, agriculture has been reduced to an alternative sector producing for market niches.

Nowadays, many problems concerned to the Alps, such as transport and transit problems, demand solutions that can only be found within the overall European context. The Alps have moved from the fringe into the heart of Europe. The future of the European Alpine region is thus no longer determined exclusively in Chambéry, Chur or Innsbruck, but to an equal extent in Brussels, Bonn and Paris. This fact ought to be increasingly considered within the framework of a pan-Alpine policy for mountain areas, by establishing, for example, appropriate transborder alliances. The multilateral and bilateral cooperation agreements, some of which have existed for years, are gaining importance especially as

regards the abolition of borders within Europe. A transborder regional policy must, therefore, take on a decisive role in Alpine life and economic activity.

The challenge of the future

The Alps are characterised by the contrasts between nature and culture, between stagnation and vision, quest for identity and migration, which have been given a new dimension by the ongoing societal and political developments. So far, these ecological, economic and sociocultural problems and contradictions have made it impossible to comply with the demand for sustainable development.

The ecological problems are fundamentally different in character: on the one hand, highly developed Alpine areas suffer from air, soil and water pollution, from wastewater, noise and soil impermeability problems, on the other hand, large-scale serial processes are taking place in the structurally weak areas, causing a reduction in the diversity of species and an increase in the risk of natural disasters. The role of tourism must be reviewed in this light as well. So far, tourism has compounded the ecological and spatial problems instead of supporting the conservation of cultivated landscape.

The economic problems were caused primarily by the collapse of Alpine farming and the creeping decline of industrial production. The tourism sector, which used to be an equalizing factor, drifted into a crisis in the mid9Os. Tourism demand in the Alps is declining dramatically and the change is also felt in related sectors (construction sector, services). Small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, are hit by this development, since most of them lack the funds for major investments. The origin of this crisis does not only lie in international competition but in inflexible and one-sided value added structures. Last but not least, a change of course is becoming necessary as a consequence of mounting environmental strain.

The sociocultural problems are highly complex. In the economically developed Alpine regions the change of values is far advanced. On the one hand, people uncritically adopt innovations for fear of being ridiculed for traditionalist attitudes. On the other hand, the tourists themselves are keen on traditional activities, buildings and customs. However, it is impossible to transform an area and its population into a museum. The mountain dwellers are in any case of two minds about tourism. Although the benefits, such as new sources of income, are obvious, not all the people are aware of them all the time, since they are primarily enjoyed by individuals' a situation which may engender social strife. The adverse effects, on the other hand, are felt immediately: (transit) traffic, noise, and mountains of garbage, short-lived values and products.

The tourists are joined by people migrating to the Alps and their foothills in search of jobs and asylum. The encounters of different cultures and language groups in Alpine valleys can fast lead to conflict and fear. Fear and uncertainty about future developments are, in general, factors which determine positions and attitudes. This state of affairs is often compounded by identity problems, which may cause fixation on that which is familiar and excessive attachment to traditional values.

Living and working in the Alps has become a problem for many families with children of compulsory school age, since many communes are no longer able to provide the appropriate infrastructure. The current situation calls for prompt action in many spheres, if the prevailing problems are not to grow worse. This "repair" and "rehabilitation" work, however, cannot get to the root of the matter. The underlying conditions can only be remedied by fundamentally changing the disturbed relationship between man and the environment, because this is the only way of carrying sustainable development beyond the purely utopian stage. The Pan-European policy must include new programmer and structures, which will conserve the Alps as a valuable and healthy habitat for generations to come.

I.3. Principles governing sustainable development in the Alps

Werner Batzing and Manfred Perlik

Since the Rio Summit, "sustainability" has become a byword and the concept has assumed all the features of a "success story": its interpretations differ from individual to individual and from institution to institution, all of them using it to safeguard their own "sustainability". There is not one politician who will not "sustainably" underline that a certain measure, which he deems important, ought to be sustainable. Quite clearly, the concept is in fashion.

If "sustainability" were stripped of its catchphrase character, it might be replaced by other concepts, such as the "precautionary principle". Whereas, initially, the notion of sustainability had a material connotation, it is now increasingly used to denote intangible values. Lest it should dwindle into a mere empty phrase, "sustainability" obviously has to be linked with tangible ideas.

Sustainable economic activity

Since the introduction of arable and livestock farming, man has transformed the natural landscape into a cultivated one. He has to interfere with nature, lest its natural dynamics should affect him as in a "natural disaster". If man wishes to continue to inhabit the earth, he must assume responsibility for the long-term stabilization of the "ecosystem called earth". At the same time he

has to ensure a degree of development, in order to improve his means of subsistence.

Economic activities claiming to be sustainable must, therefore, meet certain criteria. Important clues are provided by tapping the experience of the agrarian societies (see box). With hindsight, most of them were "sustainable", although such sustainability must be seen against the conditions prevailing at a given time in a given society. Those who claim that in the past people lacked the technological potential for destroying nature, miss the point. They are thinking in terms of the ongoing destruction of habitats (overdevelopment, destruction of biotopes), whereas in former centuries sustainability stood for the maintenance of settlements and the feeding of the population. Given the limited means of those times, it is still possible to identify stages of non-sustainable economic activity in the Alps, for example when large areas were cleared for settlement by the Walser. It follows that sustainable economic activities compatible with Alpine conditions were frequently preceded by painful learning processes.

Four basic rules for sustainable economic activities in the Alps

1. Man must accept limits to use (e.g. by not clearing a protection forest) within a given framework of economic and technical possibilities.

2. The small-scale structure of the natural environment demands that its use by man should also be organised on a small scale.

3. One has to find the golden mean between overuse and under-use as well as the right periods of use, in order to give vegetation a chance to regenerate.

4. A considerable amount of care and repair is required additionally to stabilise land under cultivation.

(BATZING, W. (1993): Nachhaltigkeit auf Grund sozialerVerantwortung. Neue Zurcher Zeitung, 6. /7.3.93)

Sustainable development in the Alps

The Alps currently find themselves in an area of conflict between the interests of local residents and those of non-locals. The two groups hold opposing views of development, both claiming "sustainability" for the development of their choice: 1. one group propagates economic growth and promises fair distribution to those in need. Such a "top down" development, which is, for example, advocated by the European Union, is based on an ideal of justice underpinned by uniform standards: everyone is to receive what is accepted as a valid measure of progress at a given time. From this perspective sustainability stands

for common economic growth as the precondition of common environmental standards.

2. This approach is naturally opposed by the groups whom it casts in the role of losers, since they cannot find majorities for their arguments in favour of preserving the natural environment, such as maintaining autonomy, protecting weak, peripheral rural areas, preserving ways of life that uphold conservative values. This "bottom up" development is advocated by a broad spectrum of diverse movements which frequently find themselves in a kind of unholy alliance.

Consistently implemented, neither approach meets the criteria of sustainability:

- The increasing development of the Alps has accelerated the polarisation between European growth areas and the Alpine periphery, causing more than mere traffic pollution; common development has also meant other directedness and sociocultural loss.
- Aspirations to autonomy, on the other hand, tend to deny the irreversible integration of the Alps into the European/global economies as well as the fact that ecological problems will not stop at national frontiers. The Alps are an integral part of Europe, benefitting, for example, from the availability of Spanish oranges, and serving as a recreation and transit area as well as an energy reservoir. Since the end of the agrarian age, the population in the Alpine region has grown from six to eleven million, and interdependence with other regions has become a matter of course.

A sustainable approach must neither be reduced to ecological interests nor foreshortened into one-sided promotion of sectoral interests. It must rather endeavour to give equal weight to three elements (since the underlying conditions differ, these elements must be differently weighted in the different Alpine areas):

- **Economic sustainability**

Owing to structural changes in the economy since the start of industrialization, the Alps have been downgraded to a peripheral European region. The low value added as compared with non-Alpine Europe has made the Alps dependent on transfer payments from outside. The danger of such a constellation lies in the fact that it is self reinforcing: the structurally weak areas are becoming depopulated, the regions being no longer capable of innovation, and the non-Alpine regions, which make the transfer payments, feel exploited or try to impose their notions of structural change on the mountain areas.

- **Ecological sustainability**

The untested transfer of foreign values unsuited to the Alps generates new, frequently ecological problems (e.g. tourism mono-structures which are crisis-prone and ecologically disastrous). A sparsely populated area tends to be marked out for those societal functions that are undesirable or politically unacceptable in the densely populated ones, or which hold too high a risk for the latter.

- **Sociocultural sustainability**

The lack of regional identity is a decisive factor in reducing a region to insignificance, since lack of self-confidence favours depopulation and stands in the way of necessary change. An exaggerated sense of identity solely focused on regional origin, loathing everything from outside and viewing past values as the only source of self-respect, will have the same effect: it makes no difference, whether a sense of regional identity is totally absent or distorted.

If the sustainability principles of the agrarian society are transposed to the current situation with its specific problems, the following demands seem appropriate:

- The marked polarization between central growth areas and peripheral depopulation areas must be counteracted. In the growth areas, economic interests prevail over ecological ones; in structurally weak regions, the weighting of economic and ecological factors is often governed by sheer desperation; moreover there is no money for ecological progress. Major disparities cause social tensions which jeopardise sustainability.
- The concept of mono-functional areas (large-scale functional separation) must be abandoned, because such areas are crisis-prone and because mono-structures are normally linked with substantial strain on the environment.
- Europe's economic and sociocultural diversity must be preserved, because it holds the human and cultural potential required for the "greening" of Europe's industrial societies.

Sustainability can thus be summed up as follows:

1. Striking a balance between economic, sociocultural and ecological interests with the aim of minimising disparities, avoiding major struggles for income, preventing the predatory use of resources, and providing scope for individual choice and creative action.

2. Striking a balance between values to be preserved and values to be changed, in order to maintain the sociocultural dynamics which help improve living conditions and achieve the object of fairer distribution.

Joint representation of interests' vis-à-vis third parties

In the absence of countervailing measures, the role of the Alps as the periphery of Europe has two major consequences:

- the imposition from outside of a division of labour under which benefits and burdens are unfairly allocated (e.g. recreational function and function as a transit area);
- the Imposition of development patterns/products which were tested (and only successful) elsewhere, because the potential for the development of endogenous, feasible innovations is dwindling (human resources, technical know-how, political clout).

Both developments are in contradiction to the notion of sustainability.

The Alps share their peripheral role with a number of comparable non-Alpine regions. They constitute no special case in Europe. The fact that they are a mountainous region, however, causes certain problems to emerge sooner than elsewhere, which means there is the chance of a prompter response. Moreover, there are spheres in which mountain areas are more disadvantaged than others. In these spheres minimum social standards must be agreed in the interest of social sustainability (e.g. access to educational and health facilities).

For these objectives to be achieved, the Alps must speak with one voice, as one large region within Europe; as appendices of European national states, the Alpine areas run the risk of being played off against one another. For a number of problems (e.g. environmentally sound mobility and access to remote locations) there are no solutions that could be transposed to the Alps. In these cases, endogenous visions are called for. Their implementation must be possible despite outside resistance. In all matters specific to the Alps it is, therefore, necessary to find a common mouthpiece and to minimise internal strife. Such a common stand, which the Alpine Convention is seeking to achieve, would also strengthen the role of the Alps in the context of the Europe of regions.

Internal differentiation by a regionally specific development of mountainous areas

The predominant problems vary from one Alpine country and area to another: Bavaria and Austria are faced with the problem of overdevelopment, whereas people living in the southwestern Alps are faced with economic collapse due to depopulation. Today, the Alps are no longer a uniformly weak region. In line with the overall development in Europe, the contrasts between individual areas have increased and so have the intra-area contrasts. Currently one can identify four principal types of regional development in the Alps (regional referring to

areas with approximately 10 15 communes). Recent regional policy concepts clearly advocate the regionally specific promotion of mountainous areas:

1. Rural regions where agriculture, industry or tourism dominate the (primarily mono-structural) economies. These regions have shrunk in the past 15 years and are expected to shrink even further, as economic activities become oriented towards regional centres or towards extra-regional/extra-Alpine centres. There is the danger of one mono-structure being replaced by another, which is anything but sustainable development. The most meaningful solution would be to preserve high quality farming (which generates a much higher value added with organic instead of conventional produce) and to interweave agriculture with other economic sectors.

2. In many Alpine regions, the population lives in centres or in commuter communes ("centre-dominated regions"). The problems in these regions have come to resemble those in extra-Alpine conurbations and call for a regionally specific conurbation policy. Sensible solutions would be Alpine working communities (e.g. the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenstadte", an organisation promoting the interests of Alpine towns), as well as cooperation agreements with towns outside the Alpine arc ("new twinning arrangements").

3. In a growing number of regions, settlements which have largely retained their rural structure have, nevertheless, lost their functions as endogenous economic areas. As a result the inhabitants have to commute to other regions. These commuter regions do have a relatively high purchasing power, but there is little to be purchased locally. In the long run, the lack of a sense of identity leads to instability instead of sustainability. These regions need their own urban centres, an object which can be achieved by establishing such centres or by strengthening existing ones.

4. In the southwestern Alps of Italy and France, economic activities and settlements have gone into large-scale decline. The exodus from these regions compounds the effect of migration into extra-Alpine conurbations and goes hand in hand with growing mobility, social uprooting and a worsening of existing conurbation problems. The future of such depopulation regions is at serious risk.

A reorientation towards regionally specific planning is to be welcomed in the interest of sustainability. Such planning accepts regional differences as opportunities for innovative action drawing on endogenous potentials instead of vainly trying to adjust to competitors inside and outside the Alpine arc. Taking tourism as an example, this would mean that in many communes it is both possible and sensible to make new provisions for tourism and create facilities which, however, must be fundamentally different from previous ones and must under no circumstances be mono-structural. These communes lack both the money and the experience for conventional tourism, quite apart from the fact

that Alpine tourism is currently in a crisis. New, soft forms of tourism can fill niches while stimulating an environmentally sound restructuring of tourism.

Conserved endogeny can become the starting point for innovation. It can help to check the polarisation process and to maintain small economic areas. The sustainability features of such a development will be less pollution through less mobility and decentralization of responsibility for the areas concerned. The (hackneyed) example of organic agricultural produce is only reiterated here because it is just taking effect and the basic experience gathered in this field can also be transferred to other economic sectors

Conclusions

If sustainability is seen from a one-dimensional functional perspective (ecological, sociocultural or economic), one will arrive at three different answers, hence there must be a common, holistic approach. When taking long-term decisions, more weight will have to be given to environmentally sound economic activities than in the past and social compatibility will have to be ranked higher. A diversified economic structure, even if, in the short run, it should be less productive, is, in the long run, less crisis-prone. A function mix (usually) generates less traffic and transport, which pollute the environment, than a separation of functions. In this light, prospects for maintaining regionalised economic activities are good, if they are adjusted to a reduced and controlled division of labour which permits both the step beyond the borders of parochialism and self-confidence, endogenous ways, products and value judgments. Both aspects are preconditions for sustainability and may be subsumed under the concept of endogenous management of external tertialisation. It is impossible to change the external, underlying conditions (structural changes of the economy, international division of labour), but there is scope for innovative action aimed at ecological, sociocultural and economic sustainability. This is how economic activities which remain based on regional (endogenous) decision-making can be both meaningful and efficient.

Table 1: Decrease of rural regions in the Alps

(Insert table)

The study of 158 Alpine areas (based on 41% of all Alpine communes in 6 of the 7 Alpine countries) shows that the rural areas had already shrunk in 1980 (Table 1). Rural is the attribute used for regions where the majority of the population does not live in centres or commuter communes. The polarization in the Alpine region continued apace in the 80s, lateral valleys becoming increasingly depopulated and agglomerations in the wide, low-lying longitudinal valleys growing. Depopulated areas proper are so far only found in Italy (and France, which was not studied).

Table 2: Decrease of rural regions in the Swiss mountain areas

(Insert table)
In the Swiss mountains (Alps and Jura) almost half of the populations were still living in rural regions in 1980. In 1990 the number had dropped to one quarter. From the data studied it may be concluded that in the meantime (since about 1995) the number of rural regions has further decreased (from 22 to 10) in favour of centre-dominated regions (which have increased from 20 to 24) and commuter regions (which have increased from 12 to 18).

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Notes to readers

For more information go to:

Nature Friends International
Diefenbachgasse 36
A1150 Wien
Tel: +43 1 892 38 77
Fax: +43 1 812 97 89